



**LES SAISONS (THE SEASONS)** is a Fourth Quarter 2018 LVCA dvd donation to the Hugh Stoupe Memorial Library of the Heritage United Methodist Church of Ligonier, Pennsylvania. Here's Kino Ken's review of that documentary dvd.

**11 of a possible 20 points**

**\*\*\* of a possible \*\*\*\*\***

**France / Poland / Norway / Netherlands / United Kingdom (Scotland) / Romania  
2016 color 96 minutes subtitled live action feature semi-documentary  
France 2 Cinema / Galatee Films / Pandora Filmproduktion / Pathe Producers:  
Jacques Perrin, Nicolas Elghozi, Romain Le Grand, Reinhard Brundig,  
Franck Ladrière**

**Key: \*indicates outstanding technical achievement**

**Points:**

- Direction: Jacques Perrin and Jacques Cluzaud**
- 0 Editing: Vincent Schmitt**
- 1 Lighting: Stephane Assié, Bruno Seguer, Laurent Desbruères**
- 2 Cinematography: Stephane Aupetit, Michel Benjamin, Jerome Bouvier,**

**Laurent Charbonnier, Philippe Garguil, Eric Guichard,  
Laurent Fleutot, Sylvain Maillard, Christophe Pottier,  
Jan Walencik**

**Still Photography: Mathieu Simonet, Alexandra Sabathé, Guillaume Valli**

**Special Visual Effects: Arnaud Fouquet, Etienne Grandou,  
Chrystèle Barbarat, Amelie-Anne Chucho,  
Christophe Corgeau, Malik Nahassia, others**

**1 Writers: Jacques Cluzaud, Jacques Perrin, Stephane Durand**

**Music Editing: Cecile Coutelier**

**1 Music: Bruno Coulais**

**Costume Design: Catherine Bouchard**

**Makeup: Julie Brenot**

**Scientific Committee: Gilbert Cochet, Jean Denis Vigne, Eric Baratay**

**2 Sound Design: Philippe Barbeau\*, Martine Todisco\*, Jérôme Wiciak\*,  
Armelle Mahé\*, Gerard Lamps\***

**Sound Editing Supervision: Jérôme Wiciak\***

**Sound Effects: Philippe Penot\***

**Sound Recording: Mari Riviere\***

**Sound Mixing: Philippe Barbeau\*, Raphaël Devillers\*, Antoine Gervais\***

**Casting: Franço Curcio**

**Head of Animal Training: Pascal Tréguy\***

**1 Locations**

**1 Ambience**

**1 Creativity**

**1 Insightfulness**

**11 total points**

**Following WINGED MIGRATION and OCEANS, the French team of Jacques Perrin and Jacques Cluzaud resolved to try their hand at covering the history of wild animal adaptation in Europe over the course of thousands of years. The result is far less impressive than their two previous outings. Here they have bitten off considerably more than they could chew, resulting in some magnificent photography connected to a lame and unconvincing story.**

**Sound and music recording are first-rate. Far more so than lighting. Illumination is disconcertingly variable, leading to fuzziness where clarity would**

be most helpful. Outdoor lighting is hard to manage under any conditions. Yet it's critical to only show viewers shots with adequate definition. This is not always the case here.

Filmed in at least six different countries during a period of several years, SEASONS lacks geographical focus. It wanders arbitrarily across Europe, attempting to impose amorphous chronology upon events only marginally explained by audible narration.

Even worse, filmmakers made a fetish of using imprinted animals, these being no wilder than house pets raised indoors for several years. To suggest they then acted in an unspoiled, "wild" manner is completely absurd.

The main thesis of co-director Jacques Perrin was life is motion. That's questionable. It remained unproven by observations in SEASONS, particularly since much movement seen is catalyzed by artificial machinery. Presence of nearby humans alone in sequence after sequence guaranteed instinctive reactions that interfered with normal wildlife behavior.

About the best outcome of this hybrid documentary was invention of a three-wheeled motorized scooter with individual wheel suspensions and a low front platform for Steadicam operator to ride upon. It allowed greater adventurousness in filming animals on the run.

An ultralight aircraft enabled aerial photography from positions parallel to, or directly behind, flocks of birds in flight. That resulted in breathtakingly innovative and original shots. However, they did not of themselves tell a coherent tale. They were then hammered into a concept format devised by scripters. The result was neither scientific nor "natural."

For this reviewer, the most memorable scenes were those of chamois speeding down wintry cliffs. Their descent was utterly devoid of manipulation by either camera or animal training. It represented what the rest of the film should have depicted, but didn't.

Similarly, bobcat footage ought to have been reflective of savage wiliness. Instead, a succession of individual animals of that species differing in maturity were edited into extended sequences showing indecisive hesitancy and directed reactions to supervising instructors on the part of "actors."

Inclusion of a seated toddler girl being approached by curious wolf recalled like cute interactions with wildlife in family-friendly Hollywood films. This was

clearly a sociopolitical statement designed to showcase conservation credentials.

A wolf chasing and cornering an unbroken horse only to back away at the climax was no more credible than imprinted cranes soaring into the air after a noisy honking horn signaled time to begin aerial ascent. Such unpersuasive mechanical imitation of flight insults audience intelligence and cannot be regarded as documentation of any natural activity.

Bruno Coulais's music score unfortunately echoed too many moods and tempos of previous outings. It imposed external ambience on visual situations. Orchestrations suggested customary interpretations of outdoor settings which led to removal of organic spontaneity, presumably defeating what filmmakers intended.

Repeated close-ups of horses and stags violently assaulting one another catapult SEASONS from children's nature documentary into adolescent reflexive drama. Subtitles further distance the feature from safe or attractive fare for pre-teens.

Of moderate interest to film buffs on the grounds of estimable photography and superlative sound, LES SAISONS is nonetheless a major disappointment not living up to the lofty reputation of creators. Its thesis is one that could have been more effectively tested in a straightforward wilderness drama showing direct interaction between humans and undomesticated neighbors.

Bonus material consists of a fifty-three minute Behind the Scenes documentary retreading the same points tiresomely while answering questions about procedural issues and format in satisfactory lucidness, an eight-minute, non-specific featurette devoted to how visuals were orchestrated by Bruno Coulais, five trailers for the film which are categorized misleadingly as Production Featurettes having a total runtime of six minutes, and an engaging five-minute Animated Image Gallery.