

LES FILMS EN VRAC IN ASSOCIATION WITH AXONE AND STUDIO 37 PRESENT

FROM THE AWARD WINNING DIRECTOR OF THE MONKEY WHO CROSSED THE SEA

LAND OF THE BEARS

A FILM BY GUILLAUME VINCENT

les films en VRAC



Studio 37

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PRODUCED BY LES FILMS EN VRAC
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Synopsis

The Kamchatka Peninsula. A land of legends. The ultimate wilderness on earth. Kingdom of the bears. A mother and her two cubs, a young teenager and a big male are living their bear's life in the most unbelievable settings, a craze of raw nature. The mother bear has one obsession only: to protect and nourish her cubs who, themselves, think only about exploring the world with the recklessness and naivety of youth. The young adolescent bear has to find his rank within the adult world, wandering in quest for a territory. The big male must constantly defend his supremacy and territory, with all his strength, struggle against the relegation and the aging that lurks behind. They cross paths or part away in the course of their adventures in the heart of nature before meeting again for a grand final, spectacular, when millions and millions of salmon are swimming upriver. Bears' survival depends on them. And, soon, they will go on their own way again. And the cubs will have to leave their mother. Unavoidably. So goes life on the Land of the Bears...

Technical Data

Genre :	Wildlife documentary for theater
Director :	Guillaume VINCENT
Script :	Yves PACCALET Guillaume VINCENT
Shooting location :	Russia
Nationality :	French
Shooting format :	Stereoscopic 3D
Release format :	DCP – 35mm – Cinemascope – HD 3D
Running time :	90 minutes
Duration of shoot :	25 weeks
Shooting starting date :	November 2011
End of shooting :	October 2012
Livraison :	July 2013

The Land of the Bears

The Kamchatka Peninsula. The ultimate wilderness on earth.

A craze of raw nature, even brutal sometimes... The most awe-inspiring landscapes: the fierce coasts of the Pacific, three hundred volcanoes (thirty of which are still active), the taiga and tundra with sublime autumn colors, the white silence of winter, a Geyser valley, a death valley, a petrified forest...

A land as wide-ranging as Italy and populated by four hundred and fifty thousand human souls only.

But there are ten thousand brown bears - the biggest in the world! Males weigh more than six hundred kilograms, as opposed to the mere one hundred and fifty kilos of their Pyrenean conspecifics...

The Kamchatka is the last land in the world where bears are still kings – where they still stand as primary occupants, decision-makers and uncontested sovereigns.

Get ready for a great journey in the land of the bears...



Notes on the film

Bears are at the heart of this film. They are its soul...the Kamchatka is their kingdom. The story revolves around several bear characters whose parallel destinies are portrayed throughout the year: the winter, the spring awakening and fierce strife for the scant food available, the reproductive season in summer, the autumn with its marvellous salmon banquets, the return to lethargy and sleep as a new cold and snowy season settles in. The characters and their emotions are leading the narration. The goal is to live an adventure. And as it happens, this adventure is true. It is setting under the eyes of the audience, with wild animals. And this genuineness makes fiction and story.

A new dimension:

The film will be shot in stereoscopic 3D.

Our goal is to immerse the audience in the magnificent landscapes of Kamchatka, to give depth and volume to the frame and landscapes.

The stereoscopic 3D will be worked on to reinforce the impression of genuineness and authenticity (avoiding the artificiality of some 3D treatment). The 3D will enable us to play with more accuracy on sensations of organic and mineral matters.

Last but not least, it will accentuate the presence and the proximity with our main characters, the bears.

The main characters:

A mother and its two cubs: The cubs are born in the dead of winter, in the burrow. In spring, they come out for the first time and fully explore their world. Meanwhile, their mother must think for them about getting food and getting by.

A young bear, a male: He had to part from his mother at the age of two, during the first snow and he is now searching for a territory to settle in, a domain of his own. But the bear is quickly faced with a big problem: the presence of other bears already settled. We follow his wanderings in the most fascinating landscapes – between clashes, inquisitiveness and exploration.

A big male: Despite his size and strength, he must prevail in order to get access to the sparse food available at the end of winter, defend his territory and approach females.

Each of these characters has recognizable physical traits. They cross paths, split and meet again in the course of their adventures in the heart of nature. The story is based on the natural behaviours of real wild animals. It is based on thorough observations of wild bears in the field.

A « choral movie »:

Our characters are going to meet, part away and meet again from one winter to another. Land Of the Bears is a « choral movie » with several characters, like the fictions of the same genre, which are great filmic sagas that portray intertwined destinies.

Each character must face strong stakes that imply all his actions and all the sequences in which he appears. It must overcome obstacles, brave dangers. This may even become a matter of life and death for them.

As in every « choral movie », all our characters will join in the same place for a grand final, for the same event.

In autumn, they will meet on the river bank to catch the salmon that swim upriver. It is a crucial moment: food reserves must be accumulated for the winter. The big male has saved himself the best spot to catch fishes, where the river is the shallowest. The young bear is forced to move higher and has great difficulties fishing in turbulent water. The mother must feed while protecting her cubs from the males– including the largest one who's binging until its paunch bursts.

Then, each animal will go on its own way for the long stretch of a new winter.

Universal themes and strong identification:

The stakes our characters are facing reflect universal themes that the viewer can easily identify with because they resonate in each one of us, humans (and spectators).

Like any mother, the mother bear seems to have one obsession only: to protect and nourish her offspring.

The cubs, themselves, think only about: discovering their world, exploring whatever they come across, with the recklessness and naivety of youth, sometimes unknowingly meeting danger halfway.

The young bear, itself, is like a human adolescent: he must find his rank within the adult world. He is still so fragile yet already without a mother. This year of loneliness will be so tough and full of danger. And he will have so much to learn.

The big male must constantly defend his supremacy and territory, struggle against the aging that lurks behind, a relegation to the rank of a diminished and useless male.

Character identification is further strengthened, facilitated, by the animal itself: the bear is without a doubt among the most popular animals.

The famous biologist Desmond Morris once said, « The law of seduction for animals is that the popularity of an animal is directly proportional to the number of anthropomorphic traits it possesses ». Among other things, Desmond Morris emphasizes the bear's faculty to sit in a vertical position or stand upright and ascertains that « the vertical posture is so characteristic of our species that it provides the former with an immediate anthropomorphic advantage ».

Even without evoking the teddy bears that every human once had as a child, we can say that bears spark off a direct identification. This identification is essential because it helps us create empathy; it facilitates the narration, the comprehension of actions and stories that we are about to tell in Land of The Bears and combine drama, laughter and emotions.

More than a wildlife documentary, Land of the Bears deals with issues we can all relate to—growing up from childhood to adolescence to adulthood, acquiring independence, leaving one's parents, taking the plunge and setting out into the world. It's a pivotal moment in the life of every individual, the anticipation of which, or recollection of which, becomes a core part of our being. It's a period that is tempered with nostalgia and melancholy, but which also provokes great enthusiasm. That is what the film is truly about.

The supporting characters:

In the course of their adventures, our heroes will regularly run across secondary characters, subjected likewise to the laws of seasons, the forest, the waters



and volcanoes. It may well be other bears: another dominant male on the prowl, an old loner or a congener of the young bear who will be, for a short time, his comrade.

Our heroes will also mix with other animals: foxes, lynx or packs of wolves, sousliks – a kind of mischievous and playful marmot, wild swans, red-crowned cranes or Steller's Sea eagles...

These animals not only have parts in full-fledged sequences, but also take part in the lives of the bears: they share their daily lives, flee from them or confront them, feed on the leftovers or fight over decaying carcasses and preys.

More surprising, at high sea, salmon, seals and killer whales have their role to play... because the destiny of the bears is partly contingent upon them. Among these, salmon are key players. They are vital for the bears. They are the ones that turn up in the rivers by the millions and cast the signal for the great gathering, for the grand final that reunites them all. A meeting prepared a long time ago in the small streams, in spring, and at high sea in summer... The movie will tend towards this encounter which is its climax.

The Landscapes

The film banks on wide-open spaces. It exudes the immensity and beauty of nature and offers the viewer a big breath of fresh air: very fresh indeed, in winter, when the temperatures fall below minus 30° Celsius!

An unrivalled and incomparable show! The scale of the landscapes, the magical alternation of seasons, either icy or abounding, a burst of colors, fire, life, the boiling craters, the richly ornamented taiga and tundra, the beaches with black sand, the smoking ponds adorned with all colors, the rivers, waterfalls, the acid lakes colored in turquoise blue, purple or rose... The viewer will not only experience the cruelty of this environment, but also feel its fierce splendour. - almost sensing the scents of volcanic fumaroles, migrating salmon and bear burrows...

The sublime landscapes of Kamchatka – one of the most beautiful place on earth – provide the prodigious scenery for these adventures in which the heroes are the four elements, the volcanoes, the animals, life...

...the BEARS!



Treatment

N.B. : *Land of the Bears* is a wildlife documentary.

The following synopsis tells the story as we developed it from the natural behaviours of these wild animals. These behaviours have been extensively documented and are predictable enough to allow the development of a detailed narrative.

Act I : The Winter

Thick clouds roll over us. We cut through them. The 3D immediately immerses us in a world of volumes and depth. As the clouds gradually clear, we glimpse the first, majestic volcanoes of Kamchatka, looming over the rest of the landscape. The tundra extends up the flanks of the volcanoes and, in the plains, the taiga, the Siberian forest, with its bare birches and larches in winter and stripes of dark green cedars on the snow-clad mountains. Little by little, the mist dissipates and reveals a wide aerial shot of the sublime Geysier valley, with its giant geysers, like the Velikan, some of which are vertical or slanted. We fly over mineral formations with fantastic colors and shapes, such as the Malachite cave... We come down and dive at the heart of steam bursts. Here, some thirty geysers boil one after the other. Everything is still covered with snow.

On the ground, no wildlife. Mineral nature is left undisturbed, spilling over in places in wispy fumaroles, water bubbles that swell and explode out of the screen at the audience, or bubbling mud that splatters the ground. Here and there, yellow sulfur escapes from the earth. Certain images will position the point of convergence in front of the window, making the action jump off the screen. But the aim is to anchor 3D in the audience's eye, to prepare them to discover nature in a completely different way, to grasp the beauty, purity and unspoilt wildness of the bears' home. We also set the action in a time, winter, when nature is in its primeval, mineral state. We need to sense its rawness in order to enter fully the world of the bears. Subsequently, the 3D will be softer, using positive parallax to create depth and volume. negative parallax will be used only at certain moments to create a «flying out» effect only where it makes sense.

The trees stand out against the taiga, accentuating the depth of hundreds of oaks or birch trees standing like black lines in the white snow. We gently track forward to emphasize the effect. Through the trees, we discern the entrance to a den. Hoarse whimpers waft out. We slowly approach. Inside, a mother bear tosses and turns. Her efforts exhaust her. Outside, the wind blows. It's started snowing on us (negative parallax on the snowlakes). In the shelter of her den, the bear continues to push, whine and grunt as the snow falls outside the entrance. Suddenly, a cub appears, blind, hairless, but already scrabbling for a teat to suckle on. She has no time to look after it. Ano-

ther cub is on its way. Their mother cleans them off with her tongue, then turns on her back to let them onto her stomach. The cubs crawl to her teats and start to suckle. A magical moment. The mother seems full of affection. The cubs snuggle against her. Outside, while the snow muffles every sound, we hear them suckling frantically, while their mother catches her breath in labored gasps. For now, it's the only breath of life in the icy wilderness.

Act II : The Spring

A dazzling ray of sunshine. Several weeks have past. The snow is beginning to melt. A vast clearing in the taiga. A tiny black speck stands out, dwarfed by the vast landscapes. As we close in, we discern the imposing figure of a large animal—it's the mother bear. At ground level, nearby, we watch her hunt for food, scratching the snow for edible roots. The icy wind whistles through the branches. The bear grunts and pants as she scrabbles for food while she must dig into her reserves of energy just to fight the cold. She finds nothing to eat and returns to the den in the roots of an alder tree. Inside, her two blind, deaf, fuzz-covered cubs seem singularly vulnerable, weighing only a few hundred grams. Eyes still closed, they cling to each other. Their mother lies next to them and wraps them in her warmth. They snuffle through her fur, find a teat each and suckle greedily.

In the tundra, nature slowly comes to life. A few hungry foxes or lynxes venture out to find food. A huge bear suddenly rises up on its hind legs, growling powerfully, for all the plain's animals to hear. Nearly three meters tall and topping 500 kilos, the dominant male's thick coat makes him even more awe-inspiring. He heads for some cedar trees, rears up once more to pull down the branches and pull off the cones that he rips apart to get at the tiny seeds. They are all he'll find to eat today. He shuffles away, sinking into the snow with each step.

In the Valley of Geysers, the Geysernaia river never freezes over. It meanders through the snow, exuding a fine mist. Here and there, fumaroles escape from the yellow sulfur-tinged mountains. Part of the valley is still under snow, but blasts of boiling steam have revealed almost fluorescent green patches of grass that hold out the prospect of food. In this inhospitable landscape, we make out a den, dug out of the mountainside. A still drowsy young bear emerges out. He is still frail, but quite alone, having left his mother's side in the fall when he became too big to stay with her any longer. He wandered in the valley before taking over a vacant den under a tree stump, whose narrow entrance and deep ovoid chamber make it nice and safe. There, he curled up to sleep and now, for the first time in six months, he ventures out. Dying of hunger, he chomps on the delicious fresh grass, his strength slowly returning. This is the destiny of the bears. To wait for spring, when the ice thaws and the first flowers and leaves appear, in order to reassert themselves once more over their territory, the Land of the Bears.

In her den, the mother bear is sleeping, while her cubs nurse away. Feeding her

offspring means she has lost a lot of weight. When she wakes, she sniffs the air and steps outside. She finds a few pine cones and busily extracts the kernels, oblivious to the young wolf prowling in the trees. Then, down below, she glimpses the rest of the wolf pack. The mother bear growls and snorts to discourage the young predator, who eventually slopes back to the others. The bear returns to check the den inside and out for other threats to her cubs. She intimidates other species and fears more than anything else, the often incomprehensible fits of anger of larger, male bears. With a grunt and a glance over her shoulder, she enters the den and snuggles next to her cubs. For the next 18 months, they will be her sole obsession. The Land of the Bears is full of danger and protecting them is not easy. She must show them how to avoid hunters' traps, teach them to be on the alert, ready to fight, and prepare them for every situation.

The rustle of Spring and burgeoning nature gradually replaces the silence of Winter. The ice melts, the streams flow, fresh grass grows on slopes abandoned by the snow. In the taiga, the mother bear leads her cubs out of the den. Shy at first, they are awed by the vast world around them. They are brother and sister. Now, they weigh a few kilos and have thick fur, but they are still fragile. Half of newborn bears die before they are two years old. Their mother must be extremely vigilant, ready to risk her life to save theirs. The cubs are slowly overwhelmed by excitement. Everything is a source of new thrills and sensations—trees, patches of snow, slopes to climb up and skid down, dead leaves to roll in... Watched by their mother, the cubs make nature their playground, rolling, fighting and grappling tirelessly in an expression of their mutual attachment and strength. Their mother chews hungrily on the grass and digs for bulbs. When the cubs are tired of their games, they come back to suckle on her teat. They take a nap. The cubs suck noisily on each other's ears before drifting off to sleep in a tender embrace.

Elsewhere, in the taiga or through the valleys, all bears are eating the fresh new grass that just sprouted out of the ground. They would hunt for any kind of animals to satisfy their hunger after the long winter. A lynx passes furtively between the trees, remaining at a safe distance from the feeding bears. We follow him. Once on the side of the mountain where a thick layer of snow remains, he starts sniffing in all directions. He stops, throws his head into the snow and pulls out something with his mouth, with all his might: the corpse of a dead deer that he may have left there himself. While grabbing the corpse between his fangs, he pulls it several meters towards the river down below. The river opens up on a magnificent landscape: the meanders are bordered by willows that turn silvery under the sun. In the background, stands the Karimski volcano, which towers above a superb lake and bursts every five to ten minutes, throwing plumes of rocks and smoke into the atmosphere. The lynx licks the corpse conscientiously to clean it up, tears away hairs of the fur, spits them out, just to avoid swallowing them. Only then, he begins to devour the prey, starting from its behind. In the forest, the big male bear has halted, he raises his head, wrinkles his nose. He smells out. He is standing several kilometers away from the lynx but, his

sense of smell is so well-developed that he is able to sniff the carcass.

The lynx regularly stops short to quench his thirst at the river. Then he returns and bustles about eating his meal...

Suddenly the lynx nervously raises his head. He heard a noise: the big male bear comes out of the forest.

The lynx seems to hesitate for a while but he has no choice: Even thinned by the winter, the big male is particularly impressive. The lynx takes off and abandons the carcass to the big male. Without even looking at the lynx, he lays his heavy paws on the prey, stretches its skin, begins to eat...

Several kilometers away, another bear has also smelled the carcass. He sets off and arrives at the edge of the river.

The big male has noticed him. He stares at him. The two bears look at each other up and down, beginning a game of intimidation from the distance. The tension is rising.

The big male rises on his hind legs. His opponent imitates him. Seeing them both standing like that, leaves no doubt: the big male is largely more imposing. With his head sticking up, he opens the mouth wide and growls. He rushes at his opponent. A few strikes with his paws and claws are enough to destabilize the intruder. Realizing his inferiority, the intruder retreats and finally disappears. The fight was aborted: the big male was too powerful.

The big male returns to the carcass and starts to feed on it.

He satisfied his appetite but, even so, he is not ready to leave his booty to the first animal to come along. He pulls the prey and hides it under a pile of leaves and branches. He walks away and disappears in the shrubberies.

Tip, tip, tip: small noises of footsteps in the snow. A raccoon dog arrives discreetly and hops. His funny round and slender face, his shaggy hairs and his swiftness have earned him to be one of the yokaïs (forest spirits) in Japanese mythology. For the natives of Kamtchatka, he is the bear's little child, whom stayed dwarf, maybe as a punishment by the spirits for committing a petty theft...

The raccoon dog may have witnessed the entire scene: after peeking left and right, he goes straight towards the carcass hidden by the bear. He plucks up the flesh that still hangs on the bones. He hurries up. Then abandons whatever is left of his prey and whisks between the trees.

The immense landscape is once again deserted and silent.

In the Valley of Geysers, the young bear has eaten his fill of new plants born with the spring.

Stuffed, he ends up laying in the fresh grass, eyes turned towards the sky where clouds come and go. We are under the impression that he indulges himself in daydreams.

But suddenly, he sits up, raises his nose, smells. Behind a rock, appears a dominant male who is now moving towards him, menacing. His instinct of survival compels him to leave at once.

The dominant reclaims his spot: this is his territory, and like any dominant, he will not tolerate the presence of other males, especially the young ones, who may try to evict him.

The dominant raises a long growl, but it is merely for the sake of form because the young bear is already far away.

For the young bear, the peacefulness, the daydreaming, the carefreeness were short lived. He must now face again the reality of his condition: As a young one, he will have to wander for months trying to find an unoccupied territory and established a domain of his own. On territories already taken, he has no chance: he is not strong enough and will inevitably be pushed away. A difficult year: he is without a mother to protect him, still fragile and inexperienced and must fend

alone to find food and avoid dangers.

The young bear rides up a narrow valley that draws away from the Geyser valley, via a torrent tributary of the Geysernaïa River.

The young bear walks along the river, slips on the side of the bank and ends up by the water's edge. He bends down and drinks.

Under the water surface, he notices tens of restless silver gray fish: they are young fish measuring a dozen centimeters at most. The entire shoal clears disperses and gets away.

Once in the water, the young bear bluntly chooses to cross the river. He lets the salmons get away without looking at them any longer: he does not know yet that these salmons will be of crucial importance for him, later on.

Further down, the salmons gathered again into a small shoal. They are swimming down the river. We follow them. Little by little, new salmons join them. They are more and more numerous, they will be hundreds fairly soon: it is the time of migration. The young salmons have spent two or three years in the river, growing, and are now trying to reach the sea to fatten and metamorphose into genuine red salmons.

Nearing the estuary and the coast, there are literally thousands of silvery salmons that wriggle in the water, making its entire surface shimmer, through the grazing sunlight of spring.

They are moving away towards the sea and the broad reach....This is where they will get ready, without knowing it, for the future well-being of bears – the bears themselves aren't aware of this.

Spring follows its course. Temperatures are rising up. The first flowers appear. Streams and rivers are overflowed by waters from the thaw. The Geysernaïa River cascades beautifully. All around, life explodes. Flowers, leaves, scrubs: everything is coming out, flourishing, within few hours or few days. A genuine rebirth...

The camera moves up: immense flocks of birds are filling the sky: with spring, birds are coming back in large numbers on the Land of the Bears. Wild ducks and swans have begun their migration. They are landing by hundreds and thousands, covering almost the whole surface of the Kamchatkan lakes.

Another flock, even more magnificent: Japanese Cranes have left the island of Hokkaido, more south. It is one of the largest bird in the world. Its span can reach 280 cm for a weigh of only 10 kilograms. This bird shows a rare elegance with its fine and rangy body, its red crown and its immaculate white plumage, except for black feathers on its neck, legs and on the ends of its wings. The Japanese Cranes are landing and, as soon as their legs touch the ground, they start to smooth their feathers with their slender beak. They then perform a few dance steps.

A crane takes off, moves away from the group and starts to "patrol". It uses its beak as a harpoon to capture its preys – fishes or frogs.

The two cubs stare at those birds and their spectacular hunting, totally new to them. Then, they turn head in all directions, desperately looking for their mother. She moved away toward the taiga searching for food. The two cubs run as fast as they can to catch up with her, bouncing in a comical manner on their faltering paws.

On the edge of the forest, the mother bear notices the presence of the lynx. She turns back and sees that her two cubs are still quite far away. She stares towards the intruder and gratifies it with a show of force. The lynx faces the mother for a shot moment. But she makes few steps forward and the lynx prefers to turn back. We are following it.

The lynx creeps forward, scrambling toward the mountaintop over rocks and boulders of fantastic hues set against the dazzling white of the residual snow. From the summit, a magnificent landscape appears—the Uzon caldera, formed by the collapse of land after an eruption, mottled with lakes of every tint and source of the Chumnaia river.

It could have been painted by a genius landscape artist—hot springs, bubbling, sulfurous ponds, corpses of birch trees, lush grass, boggy ground and a specific micro-climate caused by the hydrothermal activity.

3D sublimates the magnificent depth of this breathtaking landscape, juxtaposing contrasting colors, bringing the rim of the caldera into the foreground, then the trees, then the plain with the bears in the distance. So far away that they hardly seem to be in 3D, but they are situated in a vast setting, in which the audience finds itself by stereoscopic immersion. Everything is filmed in positive parallax, playing on the feeling of depth and immensity. It's the perfect habitat for bears and dozens of them come and go in the caldera, playing or facing off in a dawn-of-time atmosphere.

Among them, our young bear. He arrived there by the Valley of Geysers. He catches notices the lynx which is hurtling down the slope. He growls in his direction but does not have, unlike the mother bear, enough confidence to confront him. They both avoid each other.

We follow the young bear in his discovery of the caldera, of the species that live in it, of the plants that grow near watering places, hot sources or fresh rivers. He plays inside the tall shrubs, like a kid, funny and waggish, flinging head first in branches that break his fall, rolling inside them, scratching his back, flopping down with his nose first. He seems to have found, once again, a bit of his childhood carefreeness.

In the taiga, the mother bear and her two cubs rummage around a tree. The female cub is only a few months old but she starts to scratch the trunk. Realizing that she can cling onto to it, she climbs. Brown bears can not climb as easily as black bears but the young ones are trying hard. The mother seems indifferent, but she keeps an eye on her daughter who continues to climb, hanging to the trunk, obviously feeling uncomfortable. The male cub is punier and wicker than his sister. He makes several attempts to climb the tree. He gives up and goes practicing on smaller branches, better suited to his size, or even trunks and branches on the ground. He does clumsy and comic acrobatics. He turns around the trunk, hangs with the head down, falls on the ground and starts again. The fragile branches end up breaking under his weight. He falls down but is very persistent and gives the impression of taking a lot of pleasure in these acrobatics.

The mother bear goes back to her meal: she digs out some bulbs and carefully selects the forest plants she deems delectable. She keeps an eye from time to time on her cubs. The wonderful self-confidence of her daughter didn't last long. Once high in the tree, she can't figure out how to get down. She discovers that going down is always more difficult that climbing. She grabs to the trunk, but her claws slip. She clings on a branch, sends distress calls and, finally manages to reach the ground right on her feet.

Once on the ground, the female cub rushes towards her mother. The mother bear starts to stroke her, nibbling her ears and licking her nose.

The big male continues to roam through his territory, in the tundra, with the superb Kronotski volcano in the background. He climbs the riverbank. Once the



ridge is passed, he has a large view on a long beach with dark basaltic sand, bordered by cliffs: it resembles Japanese etchings. And beyond, as far as the eye can see, the Pacific Ocean...

The big male wanders on the beach, leaving heavy and deep footprints in the sand. He lifts up his nose: he has scented something. Actually, further along the beach, there is great agitation. Several Steller's sea eagles keep going at the dead corpse of a stranded seal.

The Steller's sea eagles (Asian cousins of the bald eagle, national emblem of the U.S.A.) are easy to identify with their black and white plumage and their yellow hooked beak that gives them such a scary look. They are the largest and the most powerful of all diurnal birds of prey.

The big male starts to run. As he approaches, eagles are flying off toward the cliff and the trees.

There are laying their large impressive nests. Reinforced and improved each year, some of these nests, built with branches, can be two and a half meters in diameter and four meters deep! The females have laid their eggs which will soon hatch out. The young ones will leave their nests at the end of the summer.

Leaving the seal carcass behind them, eagles are going to fish in the estuary. They glide, spot a fish from above and dash down towards the water. As soon as they graze the surface, they plunge their claws and grab the fish.

The nest and birds stand out in the foreground, while the point of convergence draws our eye to the big male on the beach below.

The big male roams on the beach. He scents and begins to scratch into the sand: he is digging out some shells. He is opening each shell in a very skillful way with one claw, holding it with his other paw.

The big male on the beach, the young bear in the Uzon Caldera, the mother and her two cubs in the taiga, will all follow their own path, their own tasks. Summer is coming and, during the following weeks, every one will follow his own path, his own tasks. But, when autumn will come, they will all meet in numbers at the exact same place.

Actually, they don't know yet, but hundreds kilometers from the Land of the Bear, in the middle of the ocean, salmons are preparing the event that will attract all bears, by the hundreds, at the mouth of the great rivers.

The camera rises up, leaves the bears, backtracks on the whole plain and skims the mountain tops – The Maly Semiatchik, the Karimski and the Kronotski. Then, the ocean appears and soon enough, land can no longer be seen.

The camera flies close to the water and suddenly dives under the surface to end up right in the middle of a huge school of salmons.

North Pacific Ocean

Tremendous schools of salmons - hundreds and hundreds of fish – meander, curl and twirl, suddenly zipping past us, left and right.

We'll use negative parallax on the fish in the foreground to have a slight zooming out of the screen effect and immersing the audience in the life of the school of fish, which will make the whale attack even more impressive. These salmons are two years older than the ones that left the river this very same summer. Their appearance has changed, they are bigger and larger, their scales are bright red which makes them highly visible from far away. Like every year, guided by a mysterious instinct, they are getting ready to travel thousands of kilometers until they reach their native stream. They spent three or four years feeding at sea. Now, they are sexually mature, ready to spawn at the exact location where they were born. An impressive migration!

The road will be long and full of pitfalls...

A few kilometers away, a group of killer whales patrols. They spread in the sea in a strategic formation (in a fan shape) to have more chance to detect their prey. But they remain in contact with their sonar.

They communicate with each other by a series of clicks and whistles. One killer whale stands in a vertical position. Thanks to his internal sonar, he spots by echolocation the huge school of salmon and warns the others. All the killer whales are heading towards the school of salmons! They are using a coordinated strategy of successive surroundings and underwater sound communication. Killer whales are pushing the salmons to gather in close order. They plow into the school and bite everywhere around them, catching and eating as many fish as they can.

Salmons are trapped and terrified.

A mother killer whale brings back in her mouth a salmon for her young one. Killer whales have a great need to eat. An adult can consume 25 kilograms of salmon each day!

Like always in nature, predators let some of their potential preys escape. A part of the salmon school has managed to escape from the deadly attack.

The survivors are swimming away and carry on their journey to Kamchatcka.

Act III : The Summer

Back at the Uzon Caldera. Summer is well on its way and the caldera is sparkling: the ground turns greenish in places, so do the willow and birch groves. The fumaroles rise above the colorful ponds. Small clouds are reflected on the lakes and rivers.

The young bear pursues his discovering of the caldera, uncovering the species that live in it.

If the heat has returned, so do the mosquitoes! In certain places, billions of them fly around in circles and attempt to sting the mammals, to feed on their blood. The young bear learns this unpleasant lesson to his cost: he desperately, and humorously, seeks to chase away the bugs that vroom around his head.

The young plantigrade goes into a birch grove, beats the stump of a dead tree, and starts sniffing loudly. He rips it open, tears off pieces and discovers that the inside of the dead trunk... is swarming with ants that have laid out their nest. The ants rush out of their gallery to defend their home. With licks, the young bear catches them. He breaks whatever is left over of the stump and reaches the larvae, the most nutritious and tastiest. The feast continues. Satiated, the young plantigrade abandons the wrecked stump.

The place resembles what could very well be a paradise for bears! But there will not be any suitable territory in this region for this young ambitious.

At the turn of a grove, the young bear finds himself nose to nose with a congener of the same age, a young bear that, likewise, wanders without his mother, without a territory, at the mercy of danger. Is he going, like the dominant males, to aggress him, to push him away?

They get closer, sniff each other: they sense that they do not pose a threat to each other. They quickly begin to play together, chasing each other, giving the impression that both have finally found a friend in this hostile world. It may be that this may have revives, in the young bear, the distant memories of the ties that bound him to his brothers or his sisters, at a time when they were still with their mother, carefree, careless, protected and pampered.

Probably calmed down by the fact that they are no longer lonely, the two stooges



Total immersion amidst the bears in their extraordinary world, a brutal and savage wilderness. A mother, her two cubs, a teenage bear and a big male in the Kamchatka peninsula: the power of individual destinies, the grandiose extravagance of the landscapes

dare to venture on the territory of big males, and go on further with their exploration of the caldera. They both catch sight of a young injured reindeer, hitching and unable to run normally. They go hunting, deploying their speed and power. They are impressive. They manage to catch their prey. One of them attempts to keep it for himself in order to devour the prey aside. But the two plantigrades have the same strength: they must share. Once they are done with their meal, the two bears fall asleep a few meters from each other.

Upon waking up, the young bear opens his eyes. No one left: his comrade has disappeared during the night, or maybe in the early morning, without a noise. The young bear sniffs the air but senses nothing. He resolves himself to go on with journey, alone, leaving behind him the memory of this friendship of convenience and short-lived complicity with the other young bear. Once alone, the young bear becomes aware of the presence of numerous males in the caldera: their growls and rumbles seem amplified. Wherever he goes, other males stand in his way: walking along the hot springs, sleeping in the shrubberies, eating the berries at the tips of limber branches, hunting and standing in threatening manners. Too many adult males already occupy the field. There won't be any suitable territory in this area: he must go. In the Taiga, the mother moves forward, followed by her babies. The bear cubs feel at home in this nature. On the way, they always find the time to chew on grasses or turn over a rock in an attempt to find insects...In any event, when they get real hungry, their mother's udders are always there! When their mother, in turn, searches for food, they watch her every move. When she digs the ground for edible roots, they have their snout glued to the ground to make sure they don't miss a thing and to smell the odors released by the vegetation. The mother pulls the root with her teeth. The bear cubs mimic her. Especially her son. He quickly learns to appreciate the taste of these « vegetables », and tries on his own to find them in the ground.

But the mother has already moved on. They must follow. A river runs before her, she crosses it without trouble. But her children are smaller and less powerful. For them, the current is much stronger and the river much deeper. They nonetheless throw themselves into the water: it is always better than to risk losing their mother. Below the surface, we see their small paws frantically bustling about. The bear cubs swim instinctively and try to keep up, at all costs, with their head above the water. They reach the other shore. They advance a few meters inside the forest, and reach a vast flattened tundra that has a lake in its center.

Inside the forest, birds are matching. A couple of Siberian Jays parade and build a nest. Waxwings do the same in a larch. They are imitated by Long-tailed Tits, and Steller's Sea Eagles as well. The huge Hooded Crows, familiar and clever, do up their branch dwelling at the top of a willow. For the bears, as it is for most other species, the mating season begins. Males wander in search for females. Nose to the wind, aroused, they are particularly aggressive, intolerant towards potential rivals. The big male bear comes down the flank of the mountain, sometimes letting himself slide on its haunches. He reaches a vast tundra and moves across the

low Vaccinium shrubs, the Crowberries and the Bearberries. He halts, smells the air and snorts. He sets off again, but a few meters ahead, another male bolts out and stations himself in front of him, standing squarely on its hind legs. A female in rut stalks the area. The fight is inevitable. It will very likely resemble a human wrestling or sumo combat. The two bears threaten each other by carrying out, with arched legs, the menacing « cowboy walk ». They turn around each other, legs stiffened, head low, mouth opened and teeth baring to show their canines. They finally get closer to the point of touching foreheads. A round of observation. The big male moves into the attack. The adversaries stand on their hind legs and begin to brawl like wrestlers. Mouth opened, they try to bite each other, dodge, strike-back, but won't let go under any circumstance. Using all his weight, each bear tries to overthrow his opponent. The fight is fierce and lasts several long minutes. The big male gains the upper hand. He shoves and forces the other to stumble. The later slips and tries to strike back. He manages to catch the big male's ear in his mouth and tries his best to push back his opponent. The fight is fierce. The big male retains the advantage. At the cost of considerable efforts, the other manages to get out of the snare. Once again, the enemies are facing each other, sometimes on four legs, sometimes raised. The big male moves forward. His opponent realizes that he has engaged too much energy in the battle and moves backward, mouth closed, without ever turning his back to his adversary, yet looking elsewhere. This is a sign a defeat.

The big male leans forward and roars one last time. His mouth seems to emerge from the screen, to symbolize the dramatic climax to a tense scene culminating in the other bears admission of defeat. The bear's victory roar must not startle or frighten the audience, but allow them to share the bear's emotions. The next shot, from the bear's POV, will show his opponent skulking away, in positive parallax to accentuate the depth, as in most of the film. Once more, we are immersed, like the defeated bear put firmly in its place in the bears' world. The big male stands alone, triumphant.

The mother stays on the outskirts of the Taiga. She did not miss a single bit of the spectacle, clearly attracted by the triumphant male. The female leaves her cubs behind and stays covered behind the first trees: if the large animal had a fit (which happens sometimes), it would become too dangerous... She is seduced, but does not come any closer: too hazardous. The small bears are disconcerted by the behavior of their mother. They utter small cries. The mother bear hesitates. Tempted, she comes out of the forest, makes few steps towards the big male...and stops once again. She glances back and forth at her cubs and at the big male. Emphasizing contours and contrasts, the 3D accentuates the barrier of the edge of the forest, a line the mother hesitates to cross.

For a while, she seems uncertain of her next move. But her natural instinct makes the final call for her: she is not fertile, inhibited by her hormones. The fact that she is still suckling her cubs keeps her from ovulating.

The mother bear ends up turning back. She catches up with her cubs. However, if her cubs were older, reaching their second year (which will be the case next year, in spring), then the mother bear would have pushed them away – slapping and even biting them roughly – to go with the male. It is only after several days that she would have returned to her cubs, and would resume caring for them. The mother and her cubs disappear behind the hill, once again united as a family. The big male moves on towards the plain, searching for a more receptive female.

The Pacific Ocean

The salmon, guided by their instinct, sensitive to the currents and the earth magnetic field, continue their journey at high sea, in undulate and silvery schools, dozens of meters long. They have managed to evade orcas, but other predators are awaiting them: the seals and the stellar sea lions. These pinniped hunters whatever they may find, with a clear preference for cods, sardines, herrings and... salmon. Very good swimmers, the seals and sea lions cleave the schools, forcing the salmon to disperse. They then catch them as they pass by. The salmon that escaped from the seals carry on towards the Kamchatka coastline.

Leaving the Caldera, the young bear wanders, on and on, seeking a territory. He walks across the most gorgeous landscapes of the peninsula. A magical universe, almost dreamlike. He climbs the flank of the Maly Sematchik, whose extinguished crater is occupied by a deadly sulphuric and hydrochloric acid lake, which presents an unreal, marvelous turquoise color and is dominated by vertiginous cliffs. He moves along a bank spiked with the tall grasses of the Kronotski Lake, which is as large as the Annecy Lake. In its cobalt blue water, is mirrored a stark volcano, endowed with contours purer than those of Mount Fuji Yama: the Kronotski mount (altitude: 3500 meters). A souslik – a sort of siberian marmot, familiar and « mischievous » - has hidden itself inside its burrow. Wild reindeers are grazing lichens. Some of the males are huge, with colossal antlers. They too are aroused and fight: they are getting ready for the autumn rut. The females watch them as they challenge each other – seemingly not looking, pretending to be indifferent.

The young bear passes under the Karimski volcano, whose phreatic eruptions throw flairs of smoke and ash in the atmosphere every five to ten minutes. He rides up towards the Sémiatchik volcano and arrives in a place that looks hellish, with smoking acid lakes, dark purple or garnet, dug in acid clay and which offer a spectacle of desolation. This is the Death Valley. Not a tree, not a bird, not even an insect. What a stark contrast from the verdant Uzon caldera! The times of carefreeness with the friendly bear quickly faded away! The young bear is desperately lonely in this frightening landscape. The young bear runs alongside one of those boiling acid ponds. Unaware of the danger, he walks too close to the shore... and slips! One of his hind legs gets stuck in the mud. With all his strength, he tries to free himself but his front legs skid on the wet bank. He knocks his claws in the mud and in a desperate effort he pulls himself out. He is now safe and goes back on his trail. The young bear walks by a reindeer that was not as lucky as he was: it is stuck in the mud and the more it moves, the more it sinks into the acid pond. The young bear doesn't even look at it, as if he wanted to erase the picture of what could have been his destiny if he had been stucked any longer.

He understands that his mother will no longer pave the way for him or help him stay clear of the dangers; and he has no friend to walk on his side or share his fear. The young bear climbs up the slopes to get out of the Death Valley as fast as possible.

In the plain, the mother bear moves forward with grace and tardiness. Her cubs are following her closely, as always. A few dozen meters away, a pack of wolves is busy devouring a freshly killed prey – a young reindeer. As they see the mother bear approaching, the wolves attempt to protect their good. They fear the strength of this intruder and try to drive her away.

The mother bear is hindered by the presence of her cubs. She considers leaving, but the wolves are coming from all sides. She charges, but quickly returns towards the cubs to protect them. Frightened, these take refuge under her legs. She charges again. The mother could smash a wolf with a single kick, but she cannot take the risk of moving too far away from her offspring.

The mother bear seems confused. She doesn't know how to behave in order to fulfill the mission she has devoted her life to for the past months, namely, protecting her cubs.

Surrounding her, the wolves get closer and closer to the cubs. The mother doubles her efforts. Her cubs have never been in such a danger!

But, in the end, the wolves turn out to be as confused as the mother bear. She rushes towards them, moves back, rushes again. Her behavior is troubling. And, after a while, the wolves become discouraged.

The mother stands up on her hind feet and checks to make sure they are gone for good. She licks her cubs, eats a little from the dead carcass and abandons it to the first coming scavengers: a fox and several hooded crows that turn up once the mother is out of sight.

The Pacific Ocean

We meet up again with the schools of salmon, now approaching. Under water, they can be seen in close ranks, moving fast. The salmon, take over from each others at the front of the school, like a pack of bikers: leading the way is indeed more tiring. Thus after a while, the fish ahead slide towards the tail of the school and others take over. An astonishing ballet captured in 3D in all its magnificent amplitude.

Out of the water, from a high angle view, one can see many schools, moving like huge snakes, apparently all converging towards a common direction. The camera moves up and we discover the coasts of Kamchatka, very close-by now. After journeying several thousands of kilometers in the Pacific Ocean, escaping orcas, seals and sea lions, the salmon, unerringly return to the mouth of the river from which they came, swim up and reproduce in the very same streams where they were born. Thousands and thousands of salmon, from different species (red, pink, chinooks, etc.) are thus reaching the coasts of Kamchatka and are getting ready to swim up the rivers.

At the mouth of the Chumnaïa River, the water literally becomes red with salmon, that swarm in all directions...

...and this is where the bears are waiting!

Act IV : The Autumn

The mouth of the Chumnaïa river, which takes birth in the Uzon caldera...

A crescent-shaped beach with black sand, bordered by dark basalt cliffs. Seals and Steller Sea Lions float on the perl grey breakers of the Pacific Ocean. The

river pours forth in the sea through a back-beach lake typical of Siberia, which is called a « liman ».

The big male strolls on the beach and moves along the meanderings of the river. Inside the water, the salmon, arrive by the thousands from the north Pacific. For the bears, and for a great part of the Kamtchatkan fauna, these are the promises of a great feast that should allow them to go through the harsh winter...

The big male is joined, at the mouth of the river, by dozens of other plantigrades of both sexes and of all ages.

This constitutes the climax of the film, where all the characters are together battling for their survival.

3D will lend depth and perspective to the river, the central axis along which the salmon swim, while bears line the banks, each on their own plot of land.

While shooting, we will be very close to the animals, an effect that 3D will accentuate, bringing out the tension and danger. There are so many bears that they jostle to claim a space. The audience will be right in the middle of them.

The 3D effect will be more marked than in most of the film to get a sense of the bears scrambling for position, splashing and spraying water, while the salmon flee in panic.

The best spots are the shallowest: the fish that gather there have a hard time swimming, they are slowed down and swarm about by the hundreds, easy to catch...

A bear takes advantage of this windfall and catches two salmon, at a time, that he slides in his mouth. He can't figure out what to do with them – which of the two he should devour first; a bit like the Buridan's ass.

But, the big male arrives.

The battle begins between the two contestants. The fight lifts up gerbes of water, but it is not as violent as it may turn out during the mating season. The big male comes out victorious. The other knows he will find a fishing spot further away. The fish are sufficiently abundant to satisfying everyone's appetite.

The big bear stalks the red salmon, that teem around it.

He catches them with a strike of the jaw and devours them with full mouth. That is at least, early during the season, when he is starving...after that, when he has « done » the majority of its blubber, he neglects the bright pink flesh of his victims and « peels » them in a manner that would appear rather cruel to us. He treats himself with their skin which is rich in fat and vitamins – two ingredients essential in order to go through the long fast of winter.

The real treat for the bear comes when he captures a female salmon whose belly is crammed with eggs. He disembowels his prey and savors the vermilion « coral »: it is a caviar that he eats by the mouthful.

Bored with fishing the big male comes back up the riverside.

Everywhere along the river, squabbles take place between the plantigrades which are searching for the best spots.

But, everywhere also, the bears are binging: they must store up enough energy before the long sleep of the troubling winter...

The young bear finally left the Valley of Geysers and comes down the slope that borders the Chumnaïa. He reaches the area around the river.

The mother bear and her cubs also turn up in the valley.

They come to join the gargantuan feast of autumn.

The young bear tries to find a fishing spot but he is rejected everywhere. He ends up on an uncomfortable bank. He picks up the salmon carcasses that where not entirely eaten by his stronger congeners. He tries to catch the fish where there is no competition: but these spots are found in parts of the river where the water is

too deep and where the flow is too harsh.

The young henpecked dares putting a leg in the current, cautiously, but ends up falling inside it. He swims without trouble, but this does not solve the issue of food!

However, like all other bears, he imperatively has to eat as much as possible.

Otherwise, he won't survive during the long winter.

He is still so puny compared to the other bears... such as this fat male bear who seats in the water, so full of salmon, that he is almost unable to move! It is a question of survival and emergency, now.

A huge male sits with his rump in the water, gorged, almost incapable of moving with all the fish he ate. The mother bear points her snout, as do her cubs, turns around and seeks refuge in the tall grasses as soon as she sees the male that's coming. She must avoid all confrontations. She fears before all for the well-being of her cubs. She will find a quiet spot further away.

She follows the river and reaches a calm meander, a bit deep of course, but accessible and well endowed with salmon. The shore there has a gentle slope. While their mother takes her turn fishing, the cubs are playing, bolting, chasing each other, sending sprays of water, splattering everything around them...

When their mother catches a fish, they rush towards her, sniff the prey and taste, for the first time, the flesh that constitutes both a delight and the source of their livelihood.

Along the water, each day, hundreds of partially devoured salmon cadavers are abandoned by the bears.

A fox comes out of the bushes and jogs. He sniffs the fish leftovers. He begins to devour with appetite a meal that was earned without much of an effort.

Further away, the Sakhaline gulls have settled in boisterous packs and revel themselves in fish carcasses. The birds fight over this resource with spite, strength and shrieks.

The hooded crows dispute them the feast.

Suddenly, all the gulls and all the crows fly off. Several Steller Sea Eagles, sturdy, menacing, land on the black sandy shore. They have no trouble imposing themselves. Their stature et their huge hooked beak constitute solid arguments!

The mighty raptors engage, among themselves, in bitter fights to gain access to their food. Once the battle is won and most rivals moved aside, the victorious eagle tackles the salmon: his powerful beak is well adapted for this kind of meal; he tears off the flesh of the fish and cuts it down into small pieces that are easy to swallow.

The salmon, along the banks that manage to escape from the bears, the foxes, the eagles, can pursue their journey. They swim up the river by sculling. No obstacle scares them anymore.

Waterfalls skim and bubble: The salmon, gain momentum in the swirl and move forward with spectacular leaps, as high as two meters.

A 3D camera will be suspended over the river, facing the salmon, in negative parallax. Dozens of fish will seem to leap out of the screen, acrobatically negotiating the rapids, as a way of underlining their incredible obstinacy.

The surviving salmon, swim with unbelievable stubbornness towards the stream of their childhood, the very place where they were born four years earlier, where their instinct commands them to return in order to give birth.

They begin, in the shallow and well oxygenated waters of high altitude torrents, a wonderful nuptial parade. The female turns around, over a bed of fine grits; the male follows her like his own shadow while rubbing her belly with his beak. From time to time, beauty lowers her caudal fin towards the ground and digs, with a

few frenzied strikes of the tail, a furrow in the sediment: there, she lays strings of bright pink eggs that the male sprinkles as frenetically with his sperm, his own soft roe.

When the female is drained of her eggs and the male of his soft roe, the two parents are exhausted. Within a few hours, they undergo a process of accelerated aging. Their tissues become necrosed, and they all die, all and some. After the hatching, the organic matter from their bodies will indirectly serve as nourishment for « babies » they will never meet, which shall swim back to the sea, where they will fatten and become adults, before swimming back to lay eggs in this very same clear-water streams.

... for the great joy of generations and generations of bears.

At the end of the day, the big male leaves the shore and walks toward the vast tundra, which ends further away with the perfect cone of the Kronotski volcano. The plain is red with Vaccinium leaves, Crowberries and Bearberries, just like the river which was red with salmon! As far as the eye can see, the bushes have ripened their small sweetened fruits, luscious – dark blue for the Vaccinium berries, black for the Crowberries and red for the Bearberries. The big male savors his dessert there. He grabs each twig in his mouth and passes it between his teeth like a rake: He then simply swallows the juicy berries. This dessert constitutes, inasmuch, a factor of survival for the winter: energy and vitamins!

Numerous other bears enjoy these delights in the plain.

The dominant males are scattered, which is what the young bear takes advantage of in order to secure good fishing spots. It is now his turn to catch salmon, a bit clumsily at first, but soon with greater skill. At least he can eat! And try to store sufficient reserves in his blubber for the winter, which he will spend alone, without having a real territory of his own.

After a while, the animal stops, raises his head, sniffs. Short-sighted, he relies heavily on his sense of smell and does not wait to see the dominant males turn up again before running off.

Indeed, the big male comes out of the bushes a few seconds later and goes fishing for salmon, again.

At the four corners of the Kamtchatka, everyone seems to be doing only this: eating, eating and eating again...The mammals, the birds...

The reindeers graze the grass and he lichens mostly, which deserve their name: The animals will have more difficulties filling their bellies at a time when they will have to dig in the snow with the tip of their hooves to uncover vegetables.

The small Raccoon Dog is now a humorous big bowl of hair. He has stuffed himself with insects, young birds, snails, small rodents, frogs. The wolves and the lynx have fed upon the weakest reindeers, the sick or those who were too sickly. Comical and touching is now the bear cubs' figure: their fur has thickened and they have turned into balls of hair...

The cubs, their mother, the big male, the young bear: all are now ready to plunge into the long – and sometimes perilous – winter sleep...

The good season for bears – the one for salmon, the autumn – is over. There are no more fish swimming up the rivers. Those who made it through all the obstacles and managed to reproduce are dead, as well – and their eggs will not hatch before the beginning of winter.

The swarms are joining together, the blizzard coming from the pole is starting to blow, the snow is falling, gently at first, then with large snowflakes.

The reindeers scratch the white cover to find the lichens that will insure their

survival. The wolves are in pack and hunt.

The last bears get back to their winter dwelling, each in his own domain.

The big male has returned to the first slopes of the tundra, under mount Kronotski.

The mother and the cubs return to their den, on the side of the mountain, in the taiga: they enter inside it. They will spend the entire frosty season there.

As for the young bear, he has not yet established his territory and must take possession of a makeshift den.

Epilog: So goes life on the Land of the Bears

Ten months later.

Life goes on in the Land of the Bears. The torpor of winter, the awakening of spring, the summer... each year, inexorably, give its rhythm to the life of bears and of all whom share their territory.

In the fall, we find the young bear, bigger and stronger, climbing a steep mountainside toward a shelter or even a den for the coming winter.

The den is occupied by another male. This time, the young bear challenges him. After a violent clash, the occupant realizes he can't win and must give up his shelter.

Rearing up on his hind legs, the young bear roars triumphantly. He has found his territory.

The big male is still very impressive. He has eaten well all autumn long. One day, he will loose his rank. But it is not for now.

There is one scene that retains our attention more than the others. For few months more, the mother bear has protected her cubs: winter in the den, spring, autumn. But, today, it is time for the separation. Cubs have grown up. They are no more the fragile little bears from the first days. They are ready to confront life. The scene is touching and heart-rending. The mother strays from the two young ones. They move away, each on his one side. They glance at each other for a short time. But instinct guides them: they have to go. Each one has his own life to live.

Maybe they'll meet during their travels in the forest or in the plains: they will probably recognize each other and almost instantly forget each other. It is the law of their species.

The mother bear stays alone. Soon, she will be able to give birth and will devote herself to her new cubs, a new generation...

So goes life on the Land of the Bears.

At this moment, a tremendous volcanic eruption begins, one that only Kamtchatka can produce. The ground shakes, the smokes are getting thicker, lava gushes out of the Bezymianni volcano (or (depending of the time), the Avatcha, the Koriakski, the Kamene, the Tolbatchik, the Chiveloutch or another...(there is always at least one that is spits out).

The young bear, the big male, the mother, her two young children: each one on his own side is contemplating the sight offers by nature.

The earth is at work and releases its wrath. The symphony of the world is played out in flames and fury. There is a clear contrast between the bears that are getting ready to sleep in their den, and the rage of the eruption. The bears, the wolves, the salmon, and every living thing on the land of the bears, also depend on the volcano, since its lava is the blood of our planet.

We fly above the highest plutonic massif in Asia. The Klioutchevskoi is a giant. Surpassed by flair of fumaroles, this active volcano almost reaches the height (4750 meters) of Mont Blanc. It reigns over an empire of colossal glaciers. Right

next to it, its twin, the Kamene, rises beyond the sea of clouds.

Below, lays the infernal crater of the Bezymianni, one of the most brutal volcanos on the planet, where half a century ago, an enormous explosion occurred, one of the most powerful that ever blasted on the globe since the appearance of mankind.

With white bright snow in the background, a peak made of dark lava takes the shapes of a brown bear.

Lava and snow. Such is the Land of The Bears.

The End.



Notes on the production

The bear holds a special place in the popular imagination. Many children have had a teddy bear as their first companion, both a confidant and a protector. It remains in the unconscious as a companion, whose strength and bonhomie provides reassurance. Among animals, it is undoubtedly the most popular.

Through its attitudes, behaviors such as standing, sitting, or performing its famous cowboy walk, the bear possesses a great ability to generate identification in the public and exerts a real fascination.

Land of the bears is a wildlife film aimed at a family audience. It is a spectacular wildlife documentary in the tradition of March of the Penguins or Earth.

Because of the quality of the story we are about to tell, the popularity of the main character and the artistic demands that define us, we strongly believe that this film has the potential to become a commercial success.

Like the film March of the Penguins, the success of Land of the bears relies on an animal that lends itself to an anthropomorphic vision, served by a strong, structured story - all of this taking place in breathtaking sceneries that are "naturally" filmic, as you will see in the attached portfolio.

The screenplay was written by Yves Paccalet and Guillaume Vincent.

Scriptwriter for Jacques-Yves Cousteau, author of best-selling books including his latest (Humanity is on the way out – and good riddance), former President in France of Green Cross International, Yves Paccalet is a great humanist, and an outstanding popularizer. His experience and knowledge of Kamchatka, where he made long stays, have been very valuable for the development of the screenplay.

Guillaume Vincent comes from the documentary field (wildlife mostly). His Monkey who crossed the sea has received, inter alia, the award for Best Film at the Brussels European Nature Film Festival, thanks to his storytelling skills and the many unseen sequences that were staged. The astonishing sequence of monkeys swimming in apnea was one of the rare stocks purchased by the BBC to be part of the series Planet Earth. He has already shot two television wildlife documentaries in the Russian Far East: Taiga, in the tiger's tracks (France 3 and TF1 International) and Orphan bears of the taiga (Canal + and TF1 Int.). He co-authored several feature-length documentaries for cinema.

For Land of the bears, we will gather around Guillaume Vincent a team thoroughly experienced in wildlife as well as feature-length filmmaking. The director of photography will be Lionel Jan Kerguistel who signed, among others, the images of Guillaume Vincent's previous documentaries as well as those in the feature-film by Nicolas Hulot and Jean-Albert Lièvre, Titanic syndrome (release due in October 2009). The underwater images will be signed by René Heuzey who just shot Oceans by Jacques Perrin.





Director's Statement

Land of the Bears is a spectacular and epic wildlife film.

The idea for the film originated from the passion Yves Paccalet and myself share for Siberia, the taiga, the tundra, the vast stretches of wilderness of the Russian Far East.

It emanates from a common will to show the unaltered beauty, the brute and authentic force of this untamed world. For us, these are embodied in no other places than the Kamchatka and in no other animal than the bear, with such a vigor and such a strength.

Land of the bears is a documentary because everything in it is factual. We are capturing reality – a reality which is often far beyond what imagination can conceive.

Land of the Bears is a theatrical film because it has the dramatic force of an epic tale, of a legend. Indeed, everything seems mythical in this Siberia that we love: the rustling of the leaves, the dull rumbling of the water between the rocks or the whistling of the cold wind in the branches, as if every drop of water whispered a story, every rock contains a hidden tale, every tree concealed a legend.

I have to admit that, in fifteen years of work throughout the world, I have never seen such a stunning wilderness. The silence and the purity of the winter, the quivers of a wakening nature in spring, the outburst of vegetation in summer, the fluttering grasses, glazed by the cold as they are by the sun in our lands, the vast plains or the white mountains streaked by black trees, the wild colors of autumn: everything there is filmic.

Land of the bears allies the fascination for nature with a real desire for cinema, a wide-open spaces cinema – from Dersou Ouzala to the March of the Penguins, through the westerns and the films by Terrence Mallick.

Land of the Bears will be shot in stereoscopic 3D, an obvious choice because the film relies on transcending, as in the greatest westerns, individual destinies and wide-open spaces, situating the animals, our characters, in the vastness of the landscape (a metaphorical force even greater than theirs).

3D will enable us to capture the majestic extravagance of this wilderness while giving the animals incredible presence and bringing the audience close to them.

Stereoscopic 3D is at the heart of the artistic thrust behind the conception of the film and reinforces its guiding principles.

To achieve absolute empathy, we will be alongside the animals at the heart of the action. Kamchatka is undoubtedly the place on earth where the bears are most approachable. There are so many of them and they tolerate a human presence (as much as a bear can!).

Stereoscopic 3D will emphasize our proximity to their presence and heighten the audience's emotions. We will capture the animals' feelings and transmit them to the audience, who will be in total immersion in nature.

By shooting in 3D, rather than adding 3D in post-production the wideshots will capture the magnificent breadth of Kamchatkas panoramas in all their fabulous depth, allowing us to reconstitute the volume of the landscapes and play on the mineral, organic matter of the geysers, ice, fumaroles, stone and lava, as well as the fur of the bears and their rasping breath (that the audience will feel on its neck!).

Given the shooting conditions and the fact that our characters are not actors, this requires technical innovations in the construction of specific rigs and use of different camera configurations, which must be sufficiently mobile and flexible. Our characters are, mostly, easily approachable since they haven't been hunted in the reserves for many decades.

Working with Binocle, we will conceive and develop these rigs specifically for this film. It is a stimulating challenge to take up, in view of the constraints inherent to this type of shoot.

We will favor mirror rigs, which offer a range of stereoscopic effects that immerse the audience in the frame without adding an artificial effect.

The wideshots will involve the use of gyro-stabilized cameras mounted on helicopters and specially adapted to 3D filmmaking. These shots will allow us to take off in every sense of the word, offering lyricism and scope to the camerawork.

3D is more painstaking. Long takes will alternate with montages, but overall the film is not artificially broken down into a number of shots in order to capture the action as it really occurs, which gives this type of film greater impact and accentuates the effect of shorter bursts of action-packed scenes.

For those scenes, we will have to keep the viewpoint simple to facilitate understanding. For others, we will let the audience peruse the screen, letting the eye wander where curiosity takes it. Stereoscopic 3D and the nature of our subject offers us this exciting possibility.

Naturally, stereoscopic also gives the film a spectacular dimension. A few specific shots will be filmed to make the scene leap off the screen—geysers bursting out at us, fumaroles escaping from the ground, snow falling on us, salmon leaping over the rapids, swipes of the bears' paws and even the roar of the big male.

As we envision it, 3D will avoid the pitfalls of exaggerated, artificial effects. That's not my conception of 3D. For me it must reinforce the authenticity and immerse the audience in the surprising reality of the action.

Shooting on 3D or 2D, the storytelling and characterization is fundamental. In Land of the Bears, the characters and emotion drive the plot.

We deliberately chose characters whose preoccupations resonate in each of us, as humans.

The big male, as an adult (whether a man or a woman as far as we are concerned) is subjected to daily pressures, similar to the world of work: keeping one's own rank, keeping one's place, earning respect.

The young bear, as an adolescent, characterizes this fragile imbalance between childhood and the adult world, between heedlessness, the desire to have fun and the first necessities of an autonomous life.

The cubs are like kids fully engaged in discovering their world. Difficult to imagine more readily touching animals than these small bears, it is impossible not to be touched by their first steps, their first cries, their games, their clowning, their clumsiness, their unawareness of the dangers also.

The mother, reflects parents, touched of course, but also preoccupied by the need to protect their children and help them grow up. Conscious also that, inescapably, their children will part away.

There is a particular tugging in these scenes where softness and tension become entangled because we know the inevitable outcome: a separation in the end – scenes that must be filled with a certain melancholy, a beautiful softness, a dramatic and cinematographic intensity. A universality of sentiments that, I hope, will move the viewer.

In the meantime, these are scenes filled with heedlessness and drollery once we take the point of view of the cubs: unconscious of all of this – which will certainly be the case for young viewers who will likely read the scenes in a different manner than their parents.

More than a wildlife film, Land of the Bears centers on a theme that I, as a father, particularly relate to, but which concerns every one of us: the passage from childhood and adolescence, the acquisition of independence, leaving one's parents and, at the same time, taking the plunge, confronting the world.

It's a pivotal moment in the life of every individual, the anticipation of which, or recollection of which, becomes a core part of our being.

It's a period that is tempered with nostalgia and melancholy, but which also provokes great enthusiasm.

That is what the film is truly about.

That's the tone I want to set for the film: caught between laughter, tension, action, emotion, a captivating atmosphere, and affection.

Stereoscopic 3D involves not only physical but also psychological immersion in the bears' world, to reinforce the blend of feelings we have described.

The principle of a choral movie allows keeping up and bringing up this tension and this drama, as we move closer to the grand final.

The eruption of another protagonist is there to strengthen this idea even more: the salmons show up fairly early in the movie. Early on, also, it is mentioned that the destiny of the bears depends on them, even though the bears themselves are unaware of it. Those are the ones that will turn up in the rivers by the millions and cast the signal for the great gathering. We follow them in parallel, preparing for this longstanding meeting, in the small streams in spring, and at high sea in summer; creating around them a certain expectation that will be fulfilled in the grand final. They will all be reunited there. And the film will reach a new level of magnitude.

All these ideas, all these principles will translate themselves in terms of images, of frame and rhythm.

In the style of these westerns that exalt both the individual destinies and the wide-opened spaces, we will favor an alternation between wide shots and close-ups on the characters.

In order to reach the empathy sought-after, we will be filming nearest to the animal and, above all, at their level, while trying to stand at their side, in the midst of the action; plunging the spectator in full immersion. This will be achieved thanks to the bears: the Kamchatka is without a doubt the place on earth where it is easiest to approach the bears. They are numerous and tolerant with humans (That is, insofar as a bear can be).

The wide shots – very wide indeed to cover the vast panoramas of the Kamchatka – set the animal, the character, back into the vast landscape (and, metaphorically, convey the force of a destiny much greater than himself). The wide shots will include the usage of a helicopter-borne camera with a gyroscopic stabilizer, such as cineflex, that enables wide aerial movements and allows flights of fancy, literally as much as figuratively and confers lyricism and scope to the image.

Along the same lines, long sequences and sequences with greater cut outs will alternate. Overall, the film will not be in any manner over-cut in order for the action to be shown in its full extent, which generally makes such films more powerful. The tension, the action will therefore erupt only to be noticed ever better.

The direction of photography will be entrusted to Lionel Jan Kerguistel with whom I have been working for the past ten years, notably on "The monkeys that crossed the sea", "The orphan bears of the Taïga", "Taïga, in the tiger's tracks", the last two of which were shot in the Russian Far East. He also recently glorified the earth and its fits of anger, mankind and his excesses, in the film by Nicolas Hulot and Jean-Albert Lièvre, "The Syndrome of the Titanic".

In addition to his great qualities as a wildlife director of photography, of his keen understanding of lighting for fiction, Lionel Jan Kerguistel has a very particular talent for capturing and sublimating natural light, a key factor for rendering the full beauty of the Kamchatkan landscapes, their lights which are so particular, their sparkling colors: the luminous greens and the multicolored lakes of the Uzon Caldera, the plains reddened by berries and autumn cranberries, the volcanoes, the fumaroles in the valley of Geysers, the taiga and the richly ornamented tundra, the acid waters painted in turquoise blue, purple or pink. He will be able to render the marvelous and the magic – the strangeness also – in these natural sets that appear to be on another planet or seem to originate from the dawn of the world.

The soundtrack will also convey this quest for both reality and magic. It will leave plenty of room for natural sounds: the cracking of the snow under the feet, the fluttering of the tall grasses, the passing of cold wind in the taiga. It will be supported by a score that I would like to be in the style of Carter Burwell or Michael Nyman's compositions – typical of the blend between action and softness that I am looking for.

The text, itself, must transcribe the full scope of a legend of the natural world, thus using a precise vocabulary and chosen to convey strong verbal codes that emphasize the idea of a "Land of legends": terms such as Land of the bears, The people of the bears, must come back as leitmotifs.

Throughout this film and all its principles, we hope to convey the love for nature – raw, wild and beautiful – without having to impose a conspicuous ecological discourse. This natural wonder, which should be preserved at all cost, will be filmed at the scale of the animals, at their level. The spectator will learn to experience it with our characters.

It is a genuine immersion into the animal world, emotional and affective, designed to bring the spectator to learn from it, to love it and, finally, to respect it. As it was once said: "The origin of all sciences, comes from the surprise that things are the way they are1.

In the end, that is 3D's biggest contribution: wonderment.

To conclude, an anecdote: Lionel Jan Kerguistel and myself were shooting in the middle of the taiga, accompanied by one tracker only, searching for the Siberian tiger (at the exact spot where Dersou Ouzala shot his film, by the way). We pitched our tents on both sides of a pathway... which turned out to be (fresh droppings to prove it) the one used by the tiger. Our tracker strongly suggested us to avoid moving the tents because "the tiger will wait until we are gone before passing by"! Yet, the very same evening, he went fetching some supplies buried somewhere in the taiga and came back all shaken up: he had encountered a bear, had been forced to lie down on the ground in order to show the animal proper deference and thus manage to avoid his fit of anger. Quite frankly, who would not want to know more about this animal capable of imposing so much respect to a tracker who, nonetheless, had faced the tiger several times without batting an eyelid?

Guillaume Vincent



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The Authors

Yves Paccalet is writer, philosopher, journalist and naturalist. With Commandant Cousteau, He collaborated in all expeditions from 1972 and published numerous books with the world famous oceanographer. Author of more than 70 books including Kamchatka, land of the origins and the recent best-seller L'Humanité disparaîtra, bon débarras ! (Humanity will disappear, good riddance!), pleading against the growth policy responsible, according to him, for the ecological problems of the planet. Yves Paccalet was president of the Green Cross France from 2006 to 2008.

Guillaume Vincent has been working for 15 years for television networks. He directed, among other films, Brassens, Bad Seed, Gibbons on Phuket, or The Monkey who crossed the sea which received the Best Film Award at the European Nature Film Festival (Brussels). He produced series and documentaries for television (On the trail, Treasures of the Coasts, Sadhu, Journey of faith, Child Soldiers). In Siberia, he has already directed two documentaries: Taiga, in the tiger's tracks and The Orphan Bears of the Taiga. He is co-writer of films for the movie theaters (The Besieged Fortress, White Tuft, the little Beaver, Bonobos, Little Soldiers, Beyond mountains tops) (See complete filmography below)

The Orphan of the Taïga
Documentary 52' - Canal + - TF1 International

Taïga, In the Tiger's Tracks
Documentary 52' - France3 - TF1 International

The Monkey who crossed the Sea
Documentary 52' - France3 – France5 – Télé Images International – RTBF
Best Film in European Nature Film Festival (Bruxelles – 2004),
Prix Taillez in Festival International du Film Maritime et d'Exploration (Toulon - 2004),
Spécial Jury Award in Festival de l'Oiseau et de la Nature (Abbeville–2005)

Mission Barracuda
Documentary 52' - France3 - Télé Images International – RTBF

Gir Lions
Documentary 52' - La Cinquième - Télé Images International- RTBF

Insectes en société
Documentary 52' - ARTE

Save the playful Gibbons
Documentary 52' - France 3 - Télé Images International- RTBF

Call of the Wild
Documentary 26' - TV5 - Cité des Sciences

Fanatic fans (and cameraman)
Documentary 52' - France 3– Planète

Rise of the Hunter
Documentary 52' with Alexandre Bonche – ARTE
Prix Spécial du Jury – Festival de Toulon

Grands Chefs in Nature
TV serie 10x26 minutes - Escales – AB Sat.

Brassens, I'm a bad seed
Documentary 80 minutes - ARTE – Thema evening Georges Brassens

Grands Chefs
TV serie 16x26 minutes - Seasons - Multithématiques - Télé Images International

Life is a Game
Documentary 52' - ARTE

And God created Apes
Documentary 26' –ARTE

Cinema

Babinga
Synopsis in development
With the help of the CNC

Director and writer

Evolution "live"
TV serie – 3x43 minutes - ARTE

The Orphan of the Taïga
Documentary 52' - Canal + - TF1 International

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Cinema

Babinga
Synopsis in development
With the help of the CNC

Bonobos
Co screenwriter
wildlife feature directed by Alain Tixier
SND – MC4 (Jean-Pierre Bailly)
Release : 30th march 2011

Beyond mountains tops
Text writer
Directed by Rémy Tézier, with Catherine Destivelle
Pathé – Tec Tec productions – France 5
Released on the 18th march 2009

White Tuft, the Little Beaver
Text writer
animal feature film directed by Philippe Calderon
TFM – TF1 International – Cité Amérique (Canada)
Released in 2008

The Besieged Fortress
Co-screenwriter – text writer
animal feature film directed by Philippe Calderon
TFM – TF1 International – France2 Cinéma – Canal+ - Cité Amérique (Canada)
Released on the 18th october 2006

Little Soldiers
Co-screenwriter and artistic producer
film directed by François Margolin - 2003

Television - Writer

Children in the Gulag
Documentary 52' -France Televisions – TV3 Catalunya - Histoire

Wild Passion of Guyana
Documentary 52' - Canal +

Sadhu, journey of faith
Documentaire 52' - La Cinquième - Télé Images International

In the tracks of...
TV serie 6x52 minutes - Seasons – Multithématiques – ATTA Productions

Coastal Richness
TV serie 6x26 minutes (2001) - R.F.O. - Outremers/France 3 - Eolis Productions

World of Ants
Thema evening ARTE(1998)

City of Ants
Documentary 52' - ARTE
Prix du public -festival de Montréal 1999,
Prix du public- festival de Toulon 1999,
Prix Spécial du Jury au festival de Bodrum (Turquie),
Nominé au New York Festival for Television

Profession Poubellogist
Documentary 26' - (and production manager) - Canal +

Chaban
Documentary 52' - France 3 - La Cinquième

Beloved Wonderfull Baby
Writer - Thema evening ARTE

Washoe,
the monkey who communicates through sign language
Documentary 52' - ARTE

Our Cousins, the Apes,
Thema evening ARTE

Télévision – producer

Evolution "live"
TV serie – 3x43 minutes - ARTE

Children in the Gulag
Documentary 52' -France Televisions – TV3 Catalunya - Histoire

Vanuatu Magic Kannibal Tour
Documentary 52' (2010) - France Televisions

Sadhu, Journey of Faith
Documentary 52' - France 5

On the trail of...
Documentaries 6x52 minutes - Multithématiques



les films en **VRAC**