

ANGEL FILMS PRÆSENTERER

Amazonia

Instrueret af Thierry Ragobert



Spilletid: 83 minutter

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Amazonia

Dansk synopsis

AMAZONIA er historien om den lille kapucinerabe Saï, der slynges ud på sit livs eventyr i søgen efter et nyt hjem.

Saï er født og opvokset i fangenskab, men efter et voldsomt flystyrt befinder den lille abe sig pludselig i Amazonas vilde og frodige regnskov. Saïs nyvundne frihed kommer dog ikke uden problemer, da junglen indeholder mange farer for en lille abe, der ikke er hjemmefant i den store regnskov. I mødet med de mange dyr der færdes i regnskoven må Saï lære at beskytte sig imod de dyr, der udgør en trussel mod små kapucineraber. Det står hurtigt klart for Saï, at den bedste chance for overlevelse er at finde sine artsfæller og tilslutte sig dem. Således begynder en eventyrlig og farefuld rejse gennem regnskoven i Amazonas i håbet om at finde et nyt hjem.

AMAZONIA er en særlig film i Rabalder Bio konceptet, hvilket betyder, at den hører ind under konceptet uden dog at være en del af en ny sæson Rabalder Bio. Filmen vises både i 3D og 2D.

Fuldt pressemateriale med billeder kan hentes fra www.angelfilms.dk

Biloba Films and Gullane present

Runtime: 85 minutes - France / Brazil - 2013 - 1.85 - 5.1

Press kit and photos available for download from www.amazonia-lefilm.com and
www.le-pacte.com

SHOT ENTIRELY IN 3D

A film BY Thierry Ragobert

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AMAZONIA takes us into the heart of the biggest forest on Earth to discover the Green Planet. A fiction film about the natural world for the whole family. An ode to the beauty and diversity of the Amazon rainforest, this exceptional landscape that is both untamed and mysterious.

AMAZONIA, a 3D odyssey into the world's biggest rainforest: the Amazon Forest. After a plane crash, Saï, a capuchin monkey born and raised in captivity, finds himself alone and lost in the wilderness of the Amazon jungle. Unprepared, the little monkey feels helpless with this sudden freedom. Facing a new world in which dense and luxuriant vegetation covers everything, Saï has to find his way and protect himself from the traps Nature has laid out. He finds himself face to face with all types of forest animals: jaguars, crocodiles, boas, tapirs, giant otters... Saï soon understands that finding fellow capuchin monkeys and being adopted by them may be his only hope for survival.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Stéphane Millière

« The AMAZONIA project came to life in 2006 on the release of the film THE WHITE PLANET, the grand saga of life in the Arctic in the course of a year. It was after a conversation with Jean Labadie, the coproducer and distributor of that film, that we decided to follow up with a similar project, this time telling the story of another biotope that is essential for our planet: Amazonia, the Green Planet. Like the Arctic, it covers an immense area, an ostensibly hostile place, and yet key for the balance of life on our planet. Like the Arctic, the Amazon basin follows a great annual cycle. Here, it's not about cold and ice, but the rise and fall of the waters. Amazonia breathes, and all the fauna and flora that live there function in time with this breathing.

We didn't want to tell this story as an observational documentary in which we show the most beautiful sequences of animal behavior, as we did for THE WHITE PLANET. To describe the workings of this incredible ecosystem, which is home to more than 10% of the planet's species, it seemed clear we had to find a way to make the spectator experience it almost physically, immersing him or her in the forest, with its sounds and smells, the humidity, that feeling of being crushed that one gets the first time one comes in contact with it, the fear of all that fauna that you can sense rather than see, but which is always present around you. It was essential to convey this story through the device of a character who would have the same experience we would have ourselves. We needed a naïve animal, which would undergo this apprenticeship in the forest. I first imagined this story could be led by a young marsupial which finds itself separated from its mother by the floodwaters, and which would be confronted by the perils of the forest. It was my partner Luc Marescot who came up with the idea of the capuchin monkey, because he'd had the opportunity to see how quickly this species of monkey can learn from its environment. The idea of the capuchin monkey was immediately adopted, and since it had to be unfamiliar with the forest, Luc thought of a monkey living in captivity which, due to a plane crash, found itself lost in the forest where it is forced to learn to live.

I thought the film should recount how this lost link with nature could be re-established, and how nature, at first dark and hostile when one doesn't know its codes, becomes beautiful and welcoming once you know how to read it. In the forest, to those of his species, our capuchin monkey is a stranger. But by watching from a distance, he'll learn to understand the codes, and will end up knowing how to get by in this complex world. We chose to film in the Amazon exclusively with the animals from the chosen area (around 120km north of Manaus), without special effects, without CGI images, with no sequences filmed in a studio. The film had to be true and authentic. To achieve this, we filmed with animals taken in by IBAMA, Brazil's environmental protection agency, which seizes young animals kept as pets in houses or cabins by inhabitants of the Amazon. They entrusted us for two years with these young animals, which lived in a sanctuary, but didn't really know the forest they once came from – exactly like the protagonist of our film. So that the experience of immersion in the forest could be as powerful as possible, the film had to be able to stand alone without any narration. It also had to be filmed in 3D, which had never been done before in the Amazon rainforest, and with animals that were new to the place and others that were wild. Lastly, making this project required a director of talent, an expert in wildlife filming, and one who fully understands the driving forces of fiction. Naturally, we decided to work again with Thierry Ragobert, a companion for 15 years on my major documentary projects and the director of the feature film THE WHITE PLANET. Filming stretched over two-and-a-half years, after almost six months during which the young animals had to get used to the presence of humans and cameras on their territory. All that was built up day after day, with infinite patience in the work with the young monkeys and other animals. We had to continually reinvent the scenes that had been written to adapt to the animals' behavior. And then there was the rain, the equipment breakdowns, the days when the animals wouldn't cooperate, and so on.

After more than four months of filming, the director started on the editing and a list of missing shots was drawn up. The two crews headed off again. There were two crews on the ground: one working with our little monkeys, kept safe and sound in a special area in the base camp in the forest; the other to continue its exploration in search of complicated shots of animal behavior or rare species. This second period of filming lasted two months, and was then followed by many weeks of editing in Paris to continue constructing the film. It turned out that we were still missing some important shots, and the two crews had to head back to the forest yet again to film some more. Editing took almost another year after this last expedition. It was a very important stage because in this film with no dialog or narration, all the emotion and narrative progression had to be conveyed by the image. It was all built up, day by day, by choosing images from the hundreds of hours of footage, to assemble, shot after shot, exchanged glances, encounters, combats, and in the end, a story that would keep the viewer in suspense for 85 minutes. AMAZONIA fluctuates between fiction and documentary, with animals which are not trained to be actors, filmed in the heart of the actual rainforest and put together without the artifice of narration. The 3D adds the feeling of immersion in this primary forest. Thanks to the relief, we are right in the vegetation, alongside the little capuchin monkey, sharing his fears, his surprises, his moments of happiness and tenderness. AMAZONIA is a journey of sensorial discovery, an intense film, sometimes funny, sometimes moving, which will change how we see the Amazonian forest forever. »

Fabiano Gullane and Caio Gullane

What first drew you to this project?

Caio Gullane and I have always wanted to participate in a major project about the Amazon rainforest. Ever since we were young, we've often traveled there so we know the region well. We have already climbed the best-known peaks and explored the principal rivers. So when Stéphane Millière invited us to join the AMAZONIA project, we immediately saw it as the one we had always dreamed of making. Because not only would the whole film be shot in the Amazon, but also it was based on the principle that the main characters would be the animals of the forest and the forest itself. We were all the more excited by this project since it would be shot in 3D, using the very latest technology. As for Thierry Ragobert, we loved THE WHITE PLANET. He's a fascinating man who comes from a documentary background, and who turned out to be very personable, warm and authentic, and who expresses his feelings with great sensitivity. Working with him was very positive and uplifting.

How did you develop the script, between France and Brazil ?

I think the main challenge for this project was to make a great fiction film using elements of real life, like nature, animals, the climate, the rain, the floods and drought. As such, the script was crucial. The French screenwriters started out by doing extensive scientific research into the animal species, the great diversity of Amazonian fauna and flora. And when Gullane came on board, we really felt we wanted to bring more dramatic elements into the script. It was at this point that we called in Luiz Bolognesi, an experienced Brazilian screenwriter and dramatist. He allowed us to give a fictional dimension to the elements of nature and to turn them into «characters» to drive the narrative. So it was a collaborative effort between the Brazilians and French to arrive at the finalized script. It was on this basis that we could tell a fictional story from documentary elements.

What memories do you have of filming in Amazonia ?

It was one of the most enriching experiences we have ever had as producers. In Amazonia, climatic conditions are extreme: the humidity can easily reach 90%, it rains four or five times a day, the temperature is often more than 40°C, and its very difficult handling logistics. Often, we could only reach shooting locations by boat or helicopter, or after several days'

walk through the forest. Bringing to life a 3D film in the world's biggest tropical rainforest was a challenge which marked everyone who took part in it: it's mind-boggling to think we ferried in more than 50 tons

of technical and 3D equipment, tons of provisions, anti-mosquito lotion and medication for the crew. In total, it was the equivalent of three years' filming, given that during the first year, a crew of more than 150 people worked in the forest and had to confront many adverse situations. You could compare this adventure to Herzog's FITZCARRALDO, or AT PLAY IN THE FIELDS OF THE LORD by Hector Babenco – both epic films which left their stamp on the image of the Amazon throughout the world. As Tom Jobim said, Brazil is no country for debutants: I'd go further and state that Amazonia in particular is no place for debutants.

You called on scientific experts to act as advisors...

Yes, several groups of scientific experts, mainly Brazilian, advised us in different areas, such as primates, large animals, crocodiles, insects, the jaguar and harpy eagle. But at a given point, scientific consultants could no longer help us because it was dramatic issues that had to be resolved. People had to believe in the film. We worked notably with a very important consultant, who was also our set photographer, Araquém Alcântara, who has been exploring the Amazon for more than 40 years, and who helped us choose the filming locations and to find the specific animals. Araquém revealed to the French and Brazilians the idyllic and magical Amazonia that we were seeking for the film.

What did you think about filming in 3D ?

Shooting in 3D is an extremely interesting experience. It forces you to envision the film whilst always keeping the 3D dimension in mind. It's a whole new approach, which audiences are getting accustomed to around the world. It was an apprenticeship for Gullane and for the Brazilian and French crews who weren't part of the 3D crew. It's very complex technology which requires technical and artistic preparation: defining the place from which you are going to film and the angle of shot you need, or how far you can move the camera axis, since any change in its position requires more than one hour to realign the two 3D cameras.

Was the film hard to finance ?

Financing a film is always hard. Given the scale of the project, it was particularly complex, but not in fact the hardest in Gullane's history. We forged a major partnership with Natura, a big Brazilian cosmetics company with a very ecological approach. They work with raw materials from the Amazon, in collaboration with communities attached to sustainable development. Natura realized right away that this film was in line with its aims, its image and its advertising, and they decided to back us. We also concluded a major partnership with Tetrapak, a company that is globally recognized in the field of sustainable development and the preservation of the environment. We received backing from the Bank of Amazonia, which is focused on projects involving the Amazon region. Not to forget the significant participation of GDF Suez, a French company which operates in Brazil. Among our Brazilian partners, we brought on board TV Globo/Globo Filmes, the biggest media group in Brazil, which believed in the film's potential ; Telecine, a cable channel group ; Riofilme ; O Fundo Setorial do Audiovisual (The Sectorial Audiovisual Fund) ; and lastly, our biggest partner, Imovision, who own rights to the film in Brazil and who are helping us sell it internationally.

What do you think of the end result ?

The film is everything we dreamed it would be. A true story that we managed to put together with the fauna and flora of the rainforest. A story with a beginning, a middle and an end, in which we follow the trajectory of a character. We identify with the hero, the capuchin monkey; we're afraid for him, and we share in his joy. The film has a great quality – that of telling a story in an original way, with solely the animals of the rainforest and natural elements. The audience will experience something completely new, from the point of the little

monkey, and will be immersed in the universe of the Amazon. We follow the seasons of the rainforest with this monkey, being chased, meeting his mate, being afraid, finding food, and learning how to behave. He's a monkey who doesn't belong to this environment, yet who ends up finding his own place there: the film tells the story of this little creature who has to learn to become a wild monkey in the Amazonian forest.

Laurent Baujard

« When I discovered the project in 2008, the idea was to make a major documentary on the Amazon, while at the same time using an “emotional base”, which was the story of our little capuchin monkey. This dovetailing between fiction and documentary looked simple enough on paper, and turned out to be the real lynchpin of the film's narrative. To sum up, our aim was to shoot with untrained “actors” who would play themselves in a set that is their actual home. We then had to work out how to shoot this reverse wild-child narrative with the additional difficulty of having animals instead of actors. Of course, the script had been written with the help of scientists and primate specialists and had to be shot with a naturalistic approach that required no constraints in terms of the animals. But we weren't sure how it could be done, what animals we might be able to find and where, and we had no idea of what kinds of behavioral or environmental challenges we might be confronted with. To answer these questions, we called on our wrangler Pascal Tréguy. He and his team joined us in the Amazon to check out the presence and the behavior of our future protagonists. As they found out more about what we'd be faced with there, we were able to develop the script and specify the essentials of how the film would be put together, otherwise known as the shooting plan. We then embarked upon a long learning process about the habits of the various cast members, from capuchin monkeys to jaguars, harpy eagles to Amazonian river dolphins and anteaters to boot. Each brought their own constraints, but also fresh opportunities.

- The capuchins move from tree to tree, covering an average of 2 km per day in a area of around 30 km², in groups of between five and 40 members. Individuals aged between 18-24 months are the easiest to approach before sexual maturity makes them wilder.
- The anaconda mainly lives in the water, its head emerging above the surface as it awaits its prey. It can go without food for weeks at a time. When sated, it stays still and is vulnerable.
- The jaguar is a solitary animal capable of picking up the scent of a human being from several kilometers. In general, a jaguar's territory is no more than 150 km².
- The coati is a very curious creature which willingly allows itself to be filmed as it hunts for food or new encounters.
- The harpy eagle is non-nomadic and monogamous. The female can capture prey weighing up to 9 kg, and is a solitary creature which doesn't like the presence of other creatures.

It was through compiling this type of information relating to some 70 animal species featured in the film that we constructed the shooting plan for AMAZONIA. The work done by the directing team lead by Vincent Steiger and Martin Blum was Herculean! We had to create a giant zone in the middle of the forest. It was a sort of bio-park that would become the film set. In this set, we had to bring together all the animals that would participate in the narrative of the movie. Pascal Tréguy and the ten or so other animal specialists started out by getting the animals accustomed to human presence by using fake wooden cameras arranged here and there in the enclosure. This is known as the “impregnation” period. They were also charged with organizing the shooting of each sequence along with the director, Thierry Ragobert. We also organized some expeditions in the Amazon rainforest for head cameraman Jérôme Bouvier's teams. Their aim was to record the missing footage of various animal behaviors and the background scenes that we were unable to record as part of the main shooting plan. It was during this time that we obtained the aerial shots, wide shots and all the shots used to show

the diversity of the Amazon landscape in relation to the action in the film. Very soon – for financial reasons and also because the film could only be made in the Amazon rainforest – we had to find a Brazilian coproducer. The production company Gullane, an independent like us, came on board. Their experience in the realm of fiction and their knowledge of Brazil were a perfect complement to the skills provided by Biloba Films in terms of wildlife filming and 3D. The great adventure could begin. The next stage was to bring all this together, for better or for worse – fiction crews alongside documentary crews. The complex and fragile 3D technology, dropped into some of the most far-flung, isolated filming locations in the world. The rigors and the technical complexity of a 3D shoot, and the total unpredictability of the location and its inhabitants. Lastly, Brazilians and French, each with their differences. I'd say that nature took care of the rest. Weather, fauna and flora took a devious pleasure in continually upsetting our plans, both in front of and behind the camera. Faced with this daily lesson in humility, the certainties and usual working habits of those involved broke down.

This is one of the keys for the success of the film. Despite the material difficulties, the cultural differences, the approaches that could at times be in opposition – despite all that, every day of the film's production, everyone, from the production crew through logistics to editing, strived to bring their contribution to the edifice.

- The film crew, stuck in the mud with its state-of-the-art equipment on the first day of the shoot.
- The editing team, weighed down under hundreds of hours of rushes in the middle of the forest, suffering from a somewhat erratic electricity supply.
- The animal experts chasing after mischievous monkeys refusing to allow themselves to be filmed, or the whole crew, dead beat after several months living in the forest.
- And we, the producers, faced with this operation that was so complex to put together and handle, as much from a financial and legal as from an artistic point of view, and which meant we had to continually adapt.

I remain transfixed by these images, and each of them reminds me how much everyone gave above and beyond to arrive at this astonishing balance that Thierry Ragobert managed to capture in AMAZONIA. Beyond the film, there was a long and dangerous road made up of doubts and audacity. A path of tolerance and openness to others. I'd like to thank here, one by one, the so many who contributed to this. »

THIERRY RAGOBERT – DIRECTOR

How did this crazy project come about ?

After THE WHITE PLANET which I shot in 2006, Stéphane Millière of Gédéon and I said to ourselves: "Why not the Green Planet?" That's when we first thought about shooting in the Amazon rainforest. From the start, it was a matter of finding the balance between fiction and documentary, and immersing the spectator emotionally in the reality of this specific environment. In total, the project took more than six years to bring into being, from its initial conception to its release in theaters.

AMAZONIA is a Franco-Brazilian production...

Absolutely. In fact, the Brazilians had a similar project and, quite naturally, we thought why not pool our wishes and our resources? We could profit from the Brazilians' knowledge of the terrain, while they saw in this collaboration the advantage an outsider's viewpoint and a longstanding French wildlife cinematographic tradition going back to the films of Cousteau, Perrin and Cluzaud, and Rossif.

How did the research and documentation phase go ?

From the moment it became a Franco-Brazilian coproduction, we sought out scientific and documentary skills with French biologists and naturalists, and with their opposite numbers in Brazil for their expertise on the country. In addition, we worked with Araquém Alcântara, a Brazilian photographer who has been crisscrossing the Amazon for a quarter-century and who has published several photographic books on the subject. He's no doubt the Brazilian who knows this territory best. We had long discussions with him so he could advise us on the zones to explore and to help us structure our ideas. It was a very pragmatic approach, characteristic of the documentary, and one I adhered to.

You then wrote a narrative framework ?

With all this documentation, three screenwriters developed a story, and then I intervened with the Brazilian co-writer to come up with the definitive version which, at that point, included the specifics for 3D filming. As in *THE WHITE PLANET*, we didn't want any dialog and almost no human presence, in order to paint the most accurate and most pertinent portrait of the Amazonian forest.

How did you prepare for this over-size shoot ?

There were a great many preparatory journeys looking into the feasibility of the project, then reccies to draw up a working schedule. The first priority was, from the outset, to get close to the animals: was it possible to approach the species we intended, and how? And in particular, what about our capuchin monkeys? So the wildlife team drew up a sort of inventory of the locations where it was reasonable to imagine approaching the animals. Then reccies were done by two first assistant directors, Vincent Steiger and Martin Blum, to select the locations. It was the combination of these two – wildlife contingencies and filmmaking contingencies – which allowed us to arrive at the best possible solution. I took part in half of the trips, which allowed me to get a feel for the locations, and to make some choices about what we had imagined in the beginning, by including the planned sequences or not.

Once on the ground, were you surprised by unusual or unforeseen situations ?

More than 98% of the time! What happened, and what we sometimes envisaged, never took place in the way we expected. The material we ended up with amounts to miraculous moments of real life when the animals being filmed showed us atypical and unusual behavior which corresponded to the emotions we were after for the "characters" in our fiction. When you go to Amazonia, you have to maintain constant humility: even when you have prepared everything, you're often confronted with situations which force you to review everything. You have to stay incredibly flexible and remain open to whatever nature offers. As a result, we stayed attentive to the climate, the bad weather, the availability of the animals, and to fortuitous encounters – which is no doubt the watchword of wildlife documentary making. Then, we intervened to shoot certain transitional scenes, wide shots, and scenery. In short, shots which allowed us to craft the backdrop against which our story would unfold. That's what explains the energy that had to be deployed, the time required to achieve our goals, and the sheer folly of the project. Amazingly, after months of editing the rich material available, we realized that we were coming back to the initial project – in other words to the script which was the fruit of our imagination. Without really realizing, we'd dreamt of a location, then we filmed it, capturing the unpredictable, and we had finally come back to the project we'd first dreamt of.

Was 3D an integral part of the project from the start ?

It was a coincidence between the availability of more flexible and lighter technology, and the subject in itself: filming in a forest was perfectly suited to 3D. Whether for the landscapes, the undergrowth or the huge trees with their immense perspectives, or the animals approaching, we felt we could rediscover through 3D that which we are constantly fed through TV and cinema. That was a channel worth exploring.

The film avoids the traps of anthropomorphism...

We avoided any anthropomorphic temptation, but it turned out that our central protagonist, who is a primate, provided us with a reflection of man, since we ourselves are primates! Above all, the film aimed to portray an initiation quest, which itself could have tipped into anthropomorphism. That said, we adopted neither a journalistic approach, nor an altogether scientific one, but one that is deliberately emotional so it could be a powerful vector for the desired objectives: arousing curiosity, developing a sort of link with faraway, exotic nature, and raising awareness of the threat that hangs over the Amazon. Because I think that by accessing knowledge, we become more aware of the disorder in the world, and more inspired to act.

How did you handle “casting” the capuchin monkeys ?

It wasn't a matter of capturing our primate heroes. We took capuchin monkeys from sanctuaries for wild animals that had been rescued from trafficking, then we brought them together to make up a group. We then accustomed them to our presence in an open area for more than nine months, which enabled us to film a certain number of sequences. Then, we filmed some complementary images using a zoom lens in wildlife reserves for the wider shots. Since our “actors” were only used to us, but not trained, this meant we had to film them long enough to obtain the necessary elements to tell the story. As a result, we filmed an unbelievable quantity of rushes! On rare occasions, we intervened with the animal wranglers to apply some little strategies, and obtain certain scenes with the capuchins that we needed, by feeding and playing with them.

Tell us about the music...

It had to be Bruno Coulais. I'd worked with him on THE WHITE PLANET, and I'm a total fan of his very intelligent approach to film music. Once again, I thought he was the right man for the situation because it required weaving threads of emotion, bolstered by the 3D image, and he was perfect to fit with this vision. He achieved this by giving the film a score that shifts from narrative – close to the mood of PETER AND THE WOLF – to a music of feelings which passes almost unnoticed, but is nonetheless present. Only the great masters of film music can pull that off.

What's more, the music fits wonderfully with the sounds of the forest...

We had to find a musician who was smart yet humble enough to agree to work together with the sound editor. The film's success depends on this blend of sound effects and music, without one ever taking precedence over the other. During the mixing, we had a lot of discussions about how to achieve a harmony between the two, in the best interests of the film. That was the case, for example, in the storm scene, which includes the power of the orchestra and the intensity of the downpour, without the two paraphrasing each other: you find yourself in the purest emotion.

As with the use of 3D, it was our wish to let the audience to be immersed in this unique environment.

FILMOGRAPHY

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the white planet : Feature, theatrical release / Bac Films / gedeon Programmes

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alexandrie, la septième merveille du monde : bbc / France 2 / nova / gedeon Programmes / Discovery channel / nhk

les derniers jours de zeugma : bbc / Arte / France 2 / rtbf / tsr / France3 / Discovery

Channel / nova wgbh / nhk / gedeon Programmes
cousteau à la redécouverte du monde : A 6 x 52' documentary series / Winner of
Emmy Awards in 1992 and 1991.
voyage de la calypso sur la mer des caraïbes et l'océan pacifique : Winner of an
Emmy Award

GUSTA VO HADBA - DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

The Amazon is a very tough place to shoot. You can't see anything because the light struggles to penetrate the forest, and when it does, it's blinding. There are either these dazzling contrasts in the image, or there's this nasty green light that makes everything look awful! But you can't fight the light so you just have to make it work for you. And that's not to mention the mosquitoes that just love film crew blood, the heat, the rain, the humidity and the sweat that burns your eyes. If you have the slightest technical problem, you have to wait for days and days to get a replacement.

As for the animals, you can hear them but you never see them. And when you finally get yourself behind a lens, you never know what they are going to do or what is going to happen. You can't control anything. So the only thing you can do to stop yourself dying of frustration is do be patient and put yourself in the hands of the wranglers, the specialist fixers for a particular beast, without whom you could do nothing. You have to remain calm, because if the crew is stressed, the animals can feel it instantly. Sometimes a miracle happens, one scene that you manage to shoot exactly how you planned. Or something unexpected might happen – a movement, a glance, a ray of light. Then the beauty floods into the viewfinder and it's magical. A moment of grace. And the whole crew shouts with joy.

JÉRO ME BOUVIER - CHIEF CAMERA OPERATOR

How did you get involved in the AMAZONIA project ?

I knew about the project long before Thierry Ragobert told me about it because from the start, I was in contact with the producer Jean-Pierre Saire, and then with Luc Marescot, one of the writers. Thierry knew of my work and had used some of my polar bear footage for THE WHITE PLANET. He knew I'd worked on this kind of film combining fiction and documentary.

So this kind of cross-genre project isn't new to you ?

I believe in it strongly, even though it's a difficult balance to achieve. Certain shots and certain behaviors just cannot be obtained in "controlled conditions" with tame or trained animals. You have to go after them with wild animals and that's my field of expertise. That combination makes the fiction credible and brings a certain "wildness" to the movie which, to me, is an extremely positive element that you don't get from pure fiction.

Had you worked in the Amazon rainforest before ?

I'd been to the tropical dry forests in Nicaragua and the cloud forests in Costa Rica but this project marked the first time I'd set foot in the Amazon rainforest. Initially, it was just a quick, fairly superficial reccy over a few days with the main crew. Then completely by chance, just before the AMAZONIA shoot got underway, I'd started another big film which was shot in Peru and the Amazon basin. So I'd already spent seven weeks in the jungle when I actually got started on AMAZONIA.

What was your mission on the film ?

To fill in the holes that were left. Thierry had done a first rough cut to get an idea of what might be missing. Then we did an initial shoot that lasted three weeks. A few months later, we did another shoot for four weeks with a very precise list of shots that needed to be inserted in the final edit. Everything had to be done with the lightest possible kit and a very small but

experienced team who were capable of capturing natural behaviors and phenomena that would be impossible to obtain for a traditional film crew.

What were your priorities and your preferences amongst the different animal species and natural locations ?

The shoot at Rio Cristalino in the southern Amazon was extraordinary for the huge variety of ecosystems there, the beauty of the place and for the skills and availability of our local guides. In terms of species, we were truly spoiled, with microfauna, insects, butterflies, amphibians, etc. As it happens, it is the diversity of shapes, colors and textures that is so amazing. Personally, I have a soft spot for spider monkeys and the flooded forest areas that are what makes the Amazon rainforest so special.

Did you have any moments of pure panic ?

Never. I always feel at home in these forests. And the mosquitos and other horror-story creatures like snakes, jaguars and poisonous insects don't change a thing. One needs to learn to understand the forest, to get to grips with the dangers and to know how to minimize them. As soon as you forget the fears one might have about this foreign place, you start seeing it in a different way and that changes everything.

What was the hardest thing to shoot ?

Some very specific behavior involving the Harpy Eagle. We spent six days hiding in a tree only to return empty-handed and without the precise footage that we wanted of an adult returning with a monkey hide. But it was worth it, just for the experience. Not everyone gets to spend six days in a Brazil nut tree above that amazing canopy.

How did your kit differ to that of the main crew ?

It was completely different. We had a much lighter camera and very different kit to be able to spend time in the trees with a slimmed-down six-person crew who were extremely reactive, and most of whom had a great deal of experience in working in tropical rainforests.

JEANNE GUILLOT – STEREOGRAPHY

How did you get involved in the AMAZONIA project ?

Shortly before AMAZONIA, I worked on MAKAY, a documentary by Pierre Stine that was produced by Gédéon and shot in 3D in the middle of nowhere in Madagascar. We had to be able to shoot in 3D in some very difficult conditions, but we managed it. AMAZONIA involved a much more in-depth shoot but we had a lot more equipment available, so the production team put my name forward.

What was your approach to 3D in terms of this film ?

My style is to not take a too-spectacular approach full of special effects with things jumping out at you, because I believe that soon becomes mannered and risks being facile. For a film like AMAZONIA, it's more about using the immersive capabilities of 3D to tell a story that takes place in a wonderful environment that is exotic and far away, enabling the audience to empathize with the "characters".

Were there any specific technical constraints ?

The basic principle is that one can see in 3D because we have two eyes that allow us to believe in a reality of space. As such, to shoot in 3D, you reproduce this effect by shooting with two cameras. You have to know how to position those cameras to obtain the desired effect and make the space coherent in terms of the object you are shooting. However, shooting with two cameras isn't that easy in the middle of the Amazon rainforest. To simplify things, rather than placing the two cameras side by side, we set them at an angle on a rig with mirrors, in order to work with fairly small distances.

What was your role on the shoot ?

The job of a stereographer is essentially to manage the technical set-up, the spacing of the cameras, and to make sure this fairly complex equipment works correctly. The most important thing, and that which ensures the quality of the 3D image, is that you soon realize that recounting a narrative in 3D is very different to doing it in 2D. Filming volumes requires a different approach. So you have to think very carefully about the composition of each shot. For example, when you shoot from far away with a telephoto lens, shooting in 3D can sometimes flatten the shot. So my role is to advise the director to work with shorter focal lengths and to get as close as possible to the subject, even when you're filming a dangerous animal. That's why, in the sequence with the jaguar, which had to be able to run freely through the forest, we set up a crew in a cage to protect them. That allowed us to get the camera as close as possible to the cat. That was quite ironic for a nature film – having the animal free and the crew in a cage !

How did the crew familiarize themselves with 3D ?

It is crucial that the different team leaders in the shoot can get to grips with a new medium. And it was amazing that with this film, even though there were several different shoots with different camera operators, they all gradually understood the specifics of shooting in 3D. Even if it was more of a constraint, most of the crew got into it and started thinking about how they could adapt their individual expertise. So my work allowed each of them to understand the medium. Because it is a nature film, everyone is used to keeping a good distance from the animals in order not to scare them, but here it was the opposite and we tried to get as close as possible in order to better use the immersive space.

PASCAL TRÉGUY - HEAD WRANGLER

Head wrangler Pascal Tréguy was one of the cornerstones of the shoot. Without him, we'd have had no animals. Without animals, we'd have had no images. He traveled around Brazil to select 150 capuchin monkeys for the film that were picked for their physique and their character. « Around ten or so were finally cast and they were the “professional” actors who worked with the other completely wild capuchins. They were young monkeys who had been taken from their parents at a very young age, often by poachers, and had ended up in wildlife sanctuaries. First, we had to get them used to us. The animals were kept in a huge pen that was 50 meters square, and covered with a net 15 meters off the ground. A dozen or so handlers worked shifts around the clock to take care of them. There was a period of acclimatization of several months to develop a relationship of trust with the animals. This wasn't about training them, more about letting them get to know us better. I'd already worked with capuchins and I love their intelligence, their liveliness and the depth of their gaze, but I'd never worked with a group, which is much harder to manage. It required patience, diplomacy and a few tricks to supervise these creatures who were wild but who also quite emotionally demanding. They very quickly understand who they are dealing with. In order to maintain the upper hand, you have to be more cunning than they are. But I never work through coercion. Not only does it not work, but also, you can see it on the screen. A treat here and a little toy there and they are happy. Capuchin monkeys have such an amazing nature that the crew members were constantly surprised. One day, they'd no doubt asked too much of them and there was a revolt and they attacked several members of the crew. They demonstrated their solidarity and they forced us to respect it. »

Trained by some of the leading specialists in the animal world, Pascal Tréguy has such in-depth knowledge of animals and such a unique approach that he was a natural choice for the head wrangler on AMAZONIA. Pascal Tréguy adapts to the requirements of each animal rather than forcing them to adapt to his. The capuchin monkey and the numerous animals that make up the cast of this film individually required a very specific approach in order to be able

to film them in the manner required for this kind of movie. He assembled a crew of animal specialists in order to set up the technical arrangements for the shoot to go ahead. The last film he worked on, THE FOX AND THE CHILD, bears witness to his precise and efficient approach. Among the many movies in which he has been involved are DAYS OF GLORY by Rachid Bouchareb, JOYEUX NOEL by Christian Carion, PALAIS ROYAL by Valérie Lemercier, MON PETIT DOIGT M'A DIT by Pascal Thomas, BROTHERHOOD OF THE WOLF by Christophe Gans, LE LIBERTIN by Gabriel Aghion and LUCIE AUBRAC by Claude Berri.

ARA QUÉM ALCÂNTARA - TECHNICAL ADVISOR & SET PHOTOGRAPHER

What was your reaction when you were offered the project ?

Fabiano Gullane contacted me when production started some two years ago, because he'd seen my work. I was very proud that he'd remembered my name and I saw the offer as a recognition of my work. For more than 30 years, I have been seeking to help people discover the nature and peoples of the Amazon rainforest.

How did you get involved in the preparation of the film ?

Other than being interviewed by several writers and having some of my ideas included in the film, I was mainly involved in the reccies. Initially, I showed a map of the Amazon to the director and the producers and advised them of several potential locations where they might shoot. Over a series of meetings, we discussed the various places from an environmental, financial and logistical point of view.

You were also the set photographer...

The experience of being set photographer on this shoot was very gratifying, especially as I was able to talk a lot with the director and the whole crew and provide the viewpoint of someone living inside the Amazon rainforest.

Araquém Alcântara is considered to be a pioneer of nature photography in Brazil. Since 1970, he has dedicated his entire career to his preferred subjects: the nature and peoples of Brazil. Over time, he has become an expert in the Amazon rainforest, a place he loves and somewhere he has visited hundreds of times. His huge oeuvre includes 42 books about the environment. He has won 40 national and international prizes, he has been involved in 75 shows and conferences, and has produced countless articles and photo-reportages for newspapers and magazines in Brazil and around the world. His photographs are regularly included in the most prestigious international collections such as the UCC Coffee Museum in Kobe, the Pompidou Centre in Paris and the British Museum in London. His priority is taking photographs as a means of artistic expression and as a tool for social transformation. Araquém Alcântara is currently one of the artists most involved in the defense of Brazil's natural heritage.

ÉRIC BOISTEAU - SOUND ENGINEER

« In the Amazon rainforest, there's never a shortage of background noise ! The difficulty is being able to isolate the song of a single bird or the cry of a particular beast. Along with my assistant, Florent Villereau, we set up five microphones pointing in different directions some 50 meters away from us to capture the background noise with no interference. Well before sunrise, the howler monkey started waking up the forest and then the birds took over. During the day, the forest is silent, as if being crushed by the heat. But by mid-afternoon, the birds start to sing again. When night falls, the insects and the frogs fill the space with their cries. The Amazon rainforest is like the Mediterranean multiplied by 100. But the most disturbing sound is the trucks of the Trans-Amazonian highway that was picked up by our super-sensitive equipment some 50km away. The loudest sound was the screech of the harpy eagle.

The funniest were the little cries of pleasure from the capuchin monkeys. The scariest by far was the deafening growl of the jaguar. »

MARTIN BLUM – FIRST ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

What was your reaction when Thierry Ragobert talked to you about the AMAZONIA project ?

I was immediately extremely enthusiastic. Brazil and the Amazon rainforest in particular are mythical places and not everyone gets invited to go there. After that, I read the script and realized that it wasn't going to be easy. It was kind of a crazy project !

What did you think of the script ?

When you read it, you immediately see that this film is something of an odd-ball. When you read a "traditional" script, it's quite easy to form an opinion on the quality of the future film. But with this film, and the fact that it's a docu-fiction film, you can't imagine what the final result will be. I found it pretty exciting to start working on a project like that without knowing what the finished film would be like.

Did you participate in the reccies ?

For the first part of the film, I did two months of reccies and I also did a few weeks for the second part. They were the best reccies of my career. For over a week, I had to seek out the best places where we would be able to shoot a fiction scene with our trained monkey meeting wild boto dolphins. Crossing a flooded forest in a dug-out canoe was, without doubt, one of the most amazing things I've ever done. It was incredible. The reccies we did by plane over the Amazon will also stay with me forever.

What did being first assistant director for the second crew on this film involve ?

By definition, the job required a lot of organization and energy for preparing a shoot. It also involved a large dose of psychology and diplomacy. This project also required a lot of patience for working with animals and a degree of self-sacrifice when things didn't go according to plan.

What was it like, shooting in the middle of the Amazon rainforest ?

You always had to check your bed before going to sleep because you never knew what you were going to find in it. One night, I found myself lying down next to a huge brown spider. After a 30-minute battle, I finally managed to kill it. The next day, I discovered that it can kill you.

Were there any disappointments ?

Overall, no. The toughest thing was the days when despite all your hard work, the weather or some technical issue meant we didn't get a single shot. That's pretty demoralizing but you soon muster your enthusiasm for the next day.

Were you ever afraid of any particular animals ?

Once, when we were trying to film a pico de jaca, a kind of pit viper that the wrangler had captured. We were in a rig opposite the snake, which was in a specially-constructed cage. When it was released, I suddenly realized it was a wild animal. It went really crazy and in under 10 seconds had broken through the first level of security and was on the point of getting through the second, just by wriggling. Everyone panicked with all the crew scrambling to get away, because a single bite can be fatal, given the dose of venom it injects.

Did shooting in 3D change anything for you?

Shooting in 3D requires a very different approach to directing than 2D. Each shot has to be

carefully thought out in terms of the requirements of 3D. It was very interesting and enriching to have a new way to think things out. More trivially, shooting in 3D takes a lot more time and we had to take that into account in developing our shooting schedule.

VINCENT STEIGER – FIRST ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

How long have you known Thierry Ragobert ?

We first worked together on THE WHITE PLANET when I was handling the logistics for the shoot.

What was your reaction when he told you about AMAZONIA ?

I'd already been contacted about the project by Stéphane Millière, three years earlier. At the time, Stéphane asked me to work up a first shooting schedule from the first version of the script to get an idea of the budget.

What did you think of the script ? Was a combination of documentary and fiction something that appealed to you ?

I've been specializing in those kinds of films for 28 years now (WINGED MIGRATION, LE DERNIER TRAPPEUR, OCÉANS, THE WHITE PLANET, THE FOX AND THE CHILD, etc.). When I read the script, it was clear that the complexity was in getting the right balance between the two genres: the world of documentary with all the little teams, always on tenterhooks waiting for the perfect natural shot, and that of traditional fiction with its rules and requirements in terms of light and kit.

Did you go on the reccies ?

Yes. I did all of them in order to propose the best possible options for Thierry.

What did your job as first assistant involve? Tell us about those 18 months working in the middle of the Amazonian rainforest...

As I said, the difficulty for the director and first assistant on such a film involves establishing the right balance between documentary and fiction. You have to find solutions to problems that seem insurmountable. The actors are capuchin monkeys living in the wild, and mainly in the canopy which is 50 meters overhead. If you take a documentary approach, you work with ropes and take the camera and cameraman up to where the monkeys live. But with a fiction crew where you are sometimes over 120 people on the shoot, that was Mission Impossible. So we had to find accessible parts of the canopy where a fiction crew could work, so that we could use lighting rigs to get the best possible images for a nature movie destined for theatrical release. The actors were also pretty challenging. Capuchins are very appealing and very intelligent animals, and just like human beings, they have their own particular character. They don't stay in one place for more than a few seconds so it's very difficult to find the right lighting for an actor who won't keep still. Each monkey came from a different place and they'd often been rescued from poachers, so they were different characters and we had to get to know them quickly in order to decide which behavior or situation they would be good for. That didn't help the work schedule. Especially because our capuchin actors were mixing with completely wild monkeys. That was the responsibility of Pascal Tréguy, our wrangler, and his team. The results are pretty amazing and they came from Pascal's patience and gentleness. His natural approach often seemed like psychological therapy sessions. Those are just a few of the difficulties we encountered.

Were you ever scared of any animals ?

Just one: the pico de jaca, the most dangerous snake in the Amazon basin. It's a viper that can grow up to four meters in length and has enough venom to kill five elephants with one bite. Pascal captured one and we tried to shoot a sequence with it, taking all the necessary safety precautions. But we didn't account for the snake's speed and intelligence. Within seconds, it

had understood the weaknesses of our system and almost escaped into the middle of the crew.

Did shooting in 3D impact your work ?

No. We had an extremely professional 3D crew who knew how to make us forget that we were shooting in 3D.

AROUND THE FILM AMAZONIA

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Three books published by Éditions La Martinière, in bookstores 7 November 2013

A beautiful photography book

Amazonia, written by Thierry Piantanida with Brazilian photographer Araquém Alcântara, who have traveled around the Amazon basin for four decades, is the essential accompaniment to the film. It offers the reader an exciting exploration of the rainforest comparable to that of the little monkey, discovering all the inhabitants on the way. The first part of the book is an introduction to the flora and fauna of the rainforest from the treetops to the bottom of the River Amazon. How do the trees stay upright? Why are there so many species living in this forest? How does the jaguar hunt? What is the daily life of the monkeys that live 40 meters above our heads? What is the life like for the bono pink dolphin? The second part is about people: the Amerindians who have lived in the Amazon rainforest for thousands of years, and the people who fish for arapaima, one of the world's biggest freshwater fish. The book describes the destruction of the forest but reveals that 50% of the Amazon rainforest in Brazil is now protected and that deforestation is declining fast. The book, overseen by experts in their field, also contains 3D photographs as well as interactive filmed sequences. A special notebook describes through images the amazing adventure of the first 3D film to be shot in the Amazon rainforest.

232 pages – 240 x 310 mm – € 35

Two books for children

Amazonia, la vie au coeur de la forêt is an educational book for children to discover the rainforest from every angle; from the forest floor where the sunlight barely penetrates, to the canopy – a garden suspended in the sky. It is a vibrant tribute to an ecosystem under threat. After a career in production administration for TV and cinema, Johanne Bernard turned to writing screenplays, after being trained at the FEMIS film school. Written by Johanne Bernard (co-writer of the film AMAZONIA), photos by Araquém Alcântara.

72 pages – 255 x 285mm – € 12.90 / Age 8 and up

Amazonia, le livre du film, is a docu-fiction work that tells the story of the hero of the film, a capuchin monkey, illustrated with images from the film and drawings from the storyboard. Written by Johanne Bernard (co-writer of the film AMAZONIA)

48 pages – 195 x 225mm – € 9.90 / Age 6 and up

AMAZONIA IN A FEW FIGURES

A set measuring over six million square kilometers.

- A dream cast including 40 capuchin monkeys, jaguars, an anaconda, a honey bear, an otter, an eagle, Amazon river dolphins, crocodiles, an armadillo, a coatis, a boa constrictor, trapdoor spiders and a family of sloths.
- Extras on a Hollywood scale: 5,000 animal species, 2.5 million insects and 40,000 species of plant.
- Two years of development, scientific research and writing.
- Nine months of acclimatization for the main animals.
- 18 months of filming in the heart of the Amazon rainforest.
- A crew of 80 with exceptional experience on projects such as OCEANS, WINGED MIGRATION, LA FORET DES PLUIES, LES SAISONS, THE FOX AND THE CHILD...
- Six months of technical research and development into cameras, lenses, 3D tools and machinery were necessary to be able to film AMAZONIA.

A BILOBA FILMS and GULLANE production
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