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BEGINNER

The Perfect Season for Making a Family Video

Featuring **PETER ARTEMENKO**

“Seasons” is a short film about experiencing a favorite place with favorite people. Captured in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina by Peter Artemenko, this father of three wanted to preserve his sons’ courage, sense of discovery and the energy that so richly saturates the seasons of his own life. He wished to create a family keepsake that will be shared over and over again.

One Snowy Day: Capturing the Environment

I knew I had to open my short film with the winter season and was very excited about shooting in the snow. One of the first things to do for a piece like this is to establish a sense of place; this is the soil in which your story can grow. In my opening shots I showcase beautiful “wonderland” visuals that can basically be part of my nature shot reel.



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To then bring the viewer into the scene, I suggest showing something with a wide sense of space and lots of your environment. There are many ways a family videographer can do this: shoot from several points of view, vary your levels, pan the camera, use a wide angle camera lens. I was feeling experimental that day so I placed my Nikon D800, with the AF-S NIKKOR 85mm f/1.4G lens attached, onto a portable hand-operated camera crane. Camera cranes are not that expensive and they can really help you get some interesting perspective shots. Using a crane is more of an advanced technique, but it delivers a cool look that's within reach once you gain familiarity with prepping your own family videos.

Sense of space established, my next objective is to introduce my little characters who will play in that wonderland. I love the juxtaposition of showing the still, quiet and calm of pristine snow-covered woods as contrasted against the excited and energetic boys rushing to put on their snow gear. I wanted to tap into the emotions and excitement I had felt as a kid whenever we had a snowstorm; as a child I just would not wait to get out there.

In my next segment I want viewers to almost feel the cold air in their lungs. I used a wide angle zoom lens, the AF-S NIKKOR 14-24mm f/2.8G ED, which does a great job at displaying the snow covered woods all around the cabin. I think it's captivating how the 14-24mm interprets what's happening at the edges of the frame as I start to move through the woods. I particularly love the way this lens subtly records my smooth forward movement. To help stabilize handheld capture while I was walking through I used a Glidecam HD-2000.

Some of the time I angled the camera slightly upwards, trying to capture the lens flare through the snow-covered branches. Most of the outdoor snow videography was taken at mid-morning, without a cloud in the sky and just steps from our cabin. I now had more than enough environmental shots, so it was time to head indoors

and get footage of the boys prepping before we headed out for the day.



© Peter Artemenko

Remain open to what may develop; with families at play there's usually not a dull moment.

A Day of Fun: Adding the Family

Once my wife, Pop (the children's grandfather) and I were outside with the kids, I knew the best way to capture things would be by holding the camera in my hands. I think this is just more personal and a videographer can be more reactive. Plus, it illustrates perfectly the dichotomy between photographer and dad: you can't set up a camera on a tripod everywhere your kids go. At some point you need to just experience the moment and be ready to capture it. And know that not all of your shots have to be perfect!

Remain open to what may develop; with families at play there's usually not a dull moment. There were so many great things happening all around. None of my capture was scripted other than your typical red light/green light on a shot. Little boys pretty much only respond to go! Or stop! I knew I wanted to get a shot of them coming out of the house for the first time, but that was really my only "staged" shot. I never told them what to do; that never works.

You have to find a way to enter into what your family is already doing, their world,

and then find the best way to tell that story.

My goal was to capture their sense of wonder, anticipation and innocence—all the stuff that we lose as adults and want back so desperately. You don't get that through staged sequences.

Making Your Own Seasons

Photography is all about stopping motion, completely. Video allows you to capture life in motion as it happens—or even speed it up or slow it down. In “Seasons,” I move slowly through some aspects of life—where my son Will joyfully hovers in midair while flying over a bump in his snow sled. And I hasten things—where stars and clouds speed by through time-lapse photography. Today's DSLRs like Nikon's D800 do a wonderful job of beautifully slowing down or speeding up events. For me, I like working with a full frame (FX) sensor, but I feel the best camera for the job is the one you happen to have with you that day. You really do not need a high-end DSLR to tell your family story.



© Peter Artemenko

Family films become keepsakes that can be shared over and over again.

“Seasons” encapsulates just one year with my family—from our snowy winter in the mountains to summer along the North Carolina coastline and more. I think every family should make a video; whether it preserves just a few hours spent at the beach or something that's captured over a longer time span. Your film will become a family keepsake that can be shared over and over again.

I honestly think that my life is richer because I am a photographer—and now a family videographer. I have been using Nikon cameras and NIKKOR lenses for the past 12 years. I have been shooting video for the past four. I love bringing all those special moments into focus and I know you will too.



Featuring

PETER ARTEMENKO

With a degree from Duke University and a background rooted in photography and design, Peter Artemenko finds inspiration in all things visual. He has a talent for capturing moments in time and revealing the larger story present in those moments. He uses photography, graphic design, and videography to deliver those powerful messages. In his work today, Peter is focused on using these same techniques in an industrial business environment. He translates the language of hands-on manufacturing and engineering work into a story and a message that we can all relate to and understand.

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