



GENERAL PRESENTATION

Apocalypse is the world's best-selling historical documentary series, broadcast in over 200 countries and adapted into more than 20 languages. Winner of numerous awards, it has renewed the codes of the history documentary.

It's a made-in-France success story: production, editing, colorization, restoration and post-production are all carried out in France, employing over sixty people.

The Apocalypse style (a documentary without interviews, using colorized archives, modern sound design and a hard-hitting narrative combining both the small and the big stories) has become a worldwide reference.

APOCALYPSE: THE FALL OF HITLER (2x52')

June 1944. In the East, the Red Army has reached the gates of the Reich. In the West, Hitler must face the Allies and the largest military landing in history. In the autumn of 1944, in an ultimate attempt to regain the upper hand, the dictator orders an offensive in the Ardennes. The operation is a failure and the Allies tighten their grip on Germany, who liberates the concentration and extermination camps. Now lucid about the outcome of the war, the Führer takes his own life on April 30, 1945. Will Hitler's shadow ever cease to loom over Germany?



HOW WE CREATE APOCALYPSE

Historical research

Editing and commentary were carried out in close collaboration with three historians specializing in the World War II: Georges-Henri Soutou, one of France's leading historians, member of the Institut de France and Professor Emeritus of Contemporary History at the University of Paris-Sorbonne; Ivan Cadeau, Head of the Land Office of the Ministry of Defense's Historical Service, expert in the field of operational strategies during World War II; and Alya Aglan, Professor of Contemporary History at the University of Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne and specialist of World War II.

Restoration and colorization

All the archive footage used in the Apocalypse episodes undergoes meticulous restoration prior to colorization. Frame by frame, this restoration erases the wear and tear of time (scratches, stains...) and ensures the highest possible quality. Over 300 hours of restoration were required for these two episodes.

A hallmark of Apocalypse since the first episode, which revolutionized the genre of history documentary, Isabelle Clarke and Daniel Costelle took great care with the color restoration. The CC&C teams, with the help of historians and experts of the period, meticulously documented the colors of each archival shot, frame by frame. Every detail is scrutinized: soldiers' uniforms, military gear and equipment, buildings, protagonists' clothing, interiors, objects, natural settings.... A colorization technique invented 15 years ago by CC&C and François Montpellier. Their team colorizes, frame by frame, around 700 shots per episode. It's a titanic task, requiring nearly 3 months' investment by around 10 people for each episode.

The sound

Most of the edited archives are silent, which is why a colossal amount of sound design work is carried out to bring these episodes back to life and recreate the atmosphere of the period. Each movement or noise in the archives is then edited from original sound recordings by Olivier Beaufret and Léon Rousseau. Thanks to this meticulous work, viewers find themselves immersed in the heart of the war from the very first frame.

Particular attention is paid to the 5.1 and stereo mixes. France Télévisions teams work meticulously over many weeks to achieve cinema-quality results.

The team

Over 60 people are involved in the production of each episode of Apocalypse over a period of almost 2 years. An extraordinary workflow and post-production for a documentary series.



WRITERS & DIRECTORS' NOTE

By Isabelle Clarke & Daniel Costelle

APOCALYPSE: THE FALL OF HITLER is the story of the end of World War II as seen through Hitler's eyes, from 1943 and the turning point of the terrible battle of Kursk. We felt it was important to focus on the despot's point of view, during the decisive final months leading to his downfall. We show how Hitler's state of health, his military failures, his obstinacy in acting alone without listening to his General Staff, and the massive Allied attacks on German cities, gradually locked him into an increasingly delirious isolation. Month after month, the state of the Nazi army was deteriorating, yet Hitler was telling anyone who would listen that he was going to win the war.

We tell the story of the attempt by a few clear-minded officers to end the Führer's life with an assassination attempt that missed him, but from which he emerged more determined than ever. We also show how, in the bombed-out, exhausted Reich, threatened from both East and West, the population struggled to survive, while in the camps the martyrdom of the Jews increased still further. We highlight the horror of their situation through the counterpoint of images from the Führer's inner circle, which show us a life of festivities and pleasures, barely tarnished by the news from the front and the reality of a world in the throes of the Apocalypse.

Our aim is to make the history that shapes our world today as accessible as possible to the general public. By focusing on the witnesses to these dark years, we are able to weave a narrative based on intertwined destinies with which viewers can easily identify.

To illustrate their testimonies, we work in concert with our team of experienced documentalists, who gather the finest images from around the world for each opus. Our team of reference historians is also essential to the historiographical updating of our documentaries. For while we work to educate, historical truth is paramount.

To compensate for the absence of filmed archives of the bunker in which Hitler retreated during the last months of his life, we asked Nord XR to virtually reconstruct the site. This initial collaboration enabled us to faithfully reconstruct the underground refuge of Hitler and his inner circle. With the help of rare existing photos and the support of our historians, this meticulous and detailed reconstruction, in computer-generated images, allows us to project ourselves, in an unprecedented way, into the dark daily life of the Führer's last days.

The production of these new episodes of Apocalypse remains faithful to that of the previous opuses. They are entirely made up of high-definition archive footage, restored using the latest technologies, colorized and with 5.1 sound.

Our ambition is to write a great world history, to go beyond national visions and contribute to mutual understanding between peoples.



ABOUT ARCHIVES USED IN THE FILM

The archive research for APOCALYPSE: THE FALL OF HITLER concludes a cycle begun with the APOCALYPSE: HITLER TAKES ON THE WEST and APOCALYPSE: HITLER TAKES ON THE EAST series, which aimed to present cardinal events of the Second World War in an innovative, hard-hitting way.

With over 35 sources contacted worldwide and 170 hours of footage gathered, the challenge was once again met.

Our series opens in January 1943 in the Wolf's Lair, Adolf Hitler's headquarters closest to the Russian front. It was here that he received his generals to prepare for Operation Citadel, the German assault on Kursk and the greatest tank battle of all time. To illustrate this, we've gathered together the **German news program Die Deutsche Wochenschau**. Broadcast weekly, they are our main working tool. Gathering them exhaustively also gives us an insight into the Nazi party's propaganda machine.

The road to Moscow will never be open to Hitler, and from August 1943 and the Battle of Smolensk, his fall begins. Thanks to our many years of close collaboration with the **Russian archives based in Krasnogorsk**, we have been able to recover exceptional newsreels showing the Russian army reconquering its territory and advancing inexorably towards Berlin.

To counterbalance these official images, particular attention was paid to researching amateur films. These are the hallmark of the APOCALYPSE series. In **Germany, the Agentur Karl Hoeffkes archive** holds a collection of home movies of German soldiers filming their lives at the front. In these unique images, camaraderie, smiles and games often give way to corpses and lost looks. Some reels show the absolute horror of mass executions. The life of the German population is also shown, and little by little, images of family picnics mingle with those of bunkers being built at the bottom of the garden.

In France, we once again follow Fernand Bignon's family as they film their daily lives during the Occupation, thanks to the moving and rare archives of **Normandie Images**.

The rarest and most incredible amateur images in the series - recovered thanks to the German source **La Caméra Stylo** - at first seemed anodyne to us. On a beautiful sunny day in August 1943, we witness a volleyball game and a hearty, convivial meal. The scenery is that of a quiet, picturesque German village. We're actually in Dachau, just a few meters from the concentration camp, and those having a good time in front of the camera are the SS guards...

On June 3, 1944, Adolf Hitler attends the wedding of Gretl Braun, sister of his mistress Eva Braun, and Hermann Fegelein, SS representative to his General Staff. Nazi newsreels filmed the event, but the **archives of Heinrich Hoffmann**, the Führer's personal photographer, give us a glimpse into the intimacy of the celebration. 3 days later, on June 6, 1944, no one close to Hitler dared wake him to tell him that the Allies had landed in Normandy and that the noose was tightening around him.

From summer 1944 onwards, the Red Army's advance in the East was such that the Nazi regime organized the evacuation of concentration camp prisoners to the interior of the Reich. As the Allies drew closer to Germany's borders, the SS forced prisoners to evacuate on foot under extreme conditions, in what became known as "death marches". Our research at the **USHMM** has enabled us to collect a few photos that bear witness to this. These include clandestine photographs of prisoners being evacuated to Dachau.

The search for archives also presented us with another challenge: to continue to evoke Hitler when he no longer came out of his bunker, and to show the generals and main figures of the Third Reich when German newsreels were becoming rarer and disappeared altogether in March 1945. For the first time, we used **drone footage** of the Eagle's Nest, the Führer's impressive chalet on a rocky outcrop in the Bavarian Alps. We also used new technologies to offer viewers a unique experience. Thanks to **3D images from the German company Nord XR**, we are immersed in the heart of Adolf Hitler's bunker in Berlin, while Russian forces are just a few meters away.

A great deal of work was also carried out on the **sound and iconographic archives**. It was in a radio speech that Hitler proved that he had miraculously escaped unscathed from the attack of July 20, 1944, masterminded by several high-ranking officers. The Führer speaks directly to his people, reassuring them that he is invincible and 'protected by Providence'.

For this series, we contacted Hann-Pieter Frentz, son of **Walter Frentz**. A member of the SS, Leni Riefenstahl's cameraman and Hitler's favorite photographer, he is the Eye of the Third Reich. His photographs, often in color, are both fascinating and frighteningly banal: generals drinking tea at the Führer's HQ, while the Führer looks after nothing but his dog Blondie. Finally, to illustrate the last moments in the bunker, we drew on the formidable photographic holdings of **Munich's Bayerische Staatsbibliothek**. This is where Adolf Hitler's last traces can be seen, from the signatures of the witnesses to his marriage to Eva Braun on the eve of his suicide, to his political will to ensure that his 1,000-year Reich would endure to the end.

