

# Running the Sahara

A feature documentary directed by Academy Award Winner  
James Moll and narrated and executive produced  
By Academy Award Winner Matt Damon

A LivePlanet and Allentown Production, distributed by NEHST Studio

[www.RunningTheSahara.com](http://www.RunningTheSahara.com)

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## **Running The Sahara**

PRODUCERS: Larry Tanz, Marc Joubert, Keith Quinn, Rick Eldridge,  
James Moll  
DIRECTOR: James Moll  
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS: Matt Damon, Jim Van Eerden  
CINEMATOGRAPHER: Harris Done  
GENRE: Documentary  
LENGTH: 102 min.  
LANGUAGE: English  
FORMAT: 24P Digital Video  
PRODUCTION DATES: November 2006 - February 2007  
SHOOT LOCATION: Sahara Desert  
DISTRIBUTION: Larry Meistrich / NEHST Studios

NARRATION: Matt Damon  
FEATURING: Charlie Engle, Kevin Lin, Ray Zahab

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## SYNOPSIS

Running the Sahara, a feature documentary directed and produced by Academy Award™ winner James Moll and narrated and executive produced by Academy Award™ winner Matt Damon, chronicles the attempt of three ultra-marathoners to run across Africa's Sahara Desert. The Expedition begins at the Atlantic coast in Senegal, with a goal to reach the Red Sea in Egypt, running through Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Libya, and Egypt – essentially two marathons per day, for more than eighty days, without a day off.

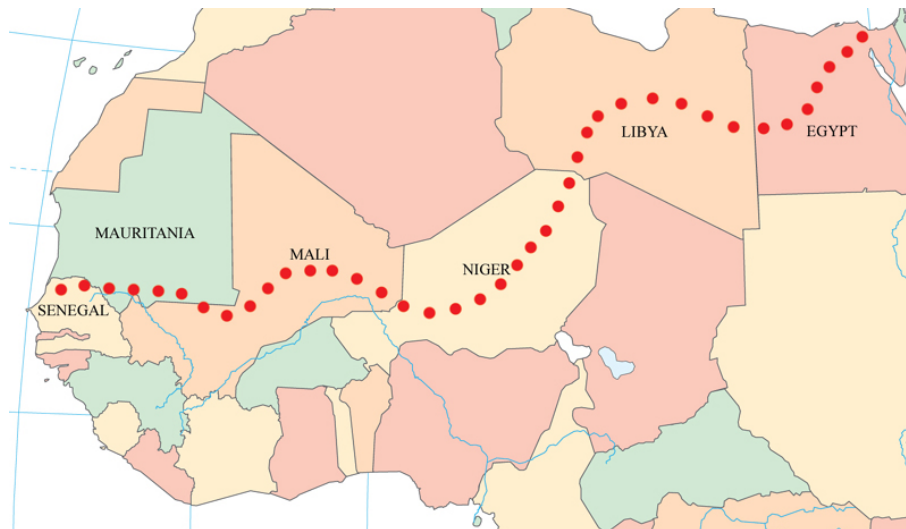
The film's focus is on three runners: Charlie Engle from Charlotte, North Carolina, Kevin Lin from Taipei, Taiwan, and Ray Zahab from Ontario, Canada – accompanied by a support team consisting of an MD, a physical therapist, and a logistics leader.

Running the Sahara is a character-driven film that delves into the life-changing experiences of the three runners as they encounter diverse African cultures and tackle not only the elements, but the physical and emotional obstacles as they run across the Sahara Desert.

This documentary also inspired Matt Damon and the producers of the film to create H2O Africa, a foundation formed to address the need for safe water in Africa. The foundation has raised over four million dollars for safe water programs in the Sahara.

### THE ROUTE and POINTS OF INTEREST:

The expedition began in St. Louis, Senegal and ended at the Red Sea.



## THE RUNNERS



**Charlie Engle: USA – Expedition Team Leader / Expedition Originator**

A 44-year-old American father of two boys, a television producer and one of the best ultra distance marathon runners in the world today, Engle has been a runner, climber and adventure racer for more than 30 years. He recently finished first in both a race across the Gobi Desert and in a seven-day race through the Amazon jungle. He has crossed the Atacama Desert in Chile, charted the jungles of Vietnam and Borneo, climbed to the top of the volcanoes in Ecuador, summited Mt. McKinley and has run across Death Valley. He saw running the Sahara as a personal quest to find fulfillment through both physical and mental challenges, believing that it was an unparalleled journey of discovery.



**Kevin Lin: Taiwan**

At 28-years-old and based in Taipei, Taiwan, Lin is one of the most well-known endurance athletes in all of Asia. A full-time graduate student, he recently won the first ever 150 mile race across the Atacama Desert in Chile, dancing across the finish line while more than half the field had to be rescued from the course. He believes that learning and positive changes are the result of suffering, as suffering only makes one a stronger and better person.



**Ray Zahab: Canada**

A former elite equestrian rider, Zahab has established himself as one of the world's premier endurance athletes, having already run across portions of the Sahara. He was a two-time competitor in the world's toughest foot race – the Marathon de Sables – and he placed 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Trans 333, where he covered 333 kilometers of Niger's Tenere Desert non-stop. When he isn't running across deserts, Zahab is a personal trainer and lifestyle coach with the philosophy that there is a strong mind and body connection to fitness and well-being. His love for adventure sports comes from a passion for progressive challenges – those that acknowledge his limitations and provide endless possibilities for self-awareness.

## PRODUCTION TEAM



**Matt Damon, Executive Producer & Narrator**

MATT DAMON is one of Hollywood's most sought-after talents. Audiences recently saw him star alongside Leonardo DiCaprio and Jack Nicholson in director Martin Scorsese's *The Departed*, with Angelina Jolie in *The Good Shepherd* for director Robert DeNiro and in *Margaret* for director Kenneth Lonergan.

Damon also completed *Oceans Thirteen* and *The Bourne Ultimatum* in recent years.

In 2005, Damon starred with George Clooney in the geopolitical thriller *Syriana* for director Stephen Gaghan. The film was produced by Section Eight Films. That same year, audiences also saw him in *The Brothers Grimm*, starring with Heath Ledger for director Terry Gilliam. He also recently reprised his roles as Linus Caldwell in *Ocean's Twelve* for director Steven Soderbergh, and as Jason Bourne in the box office hit *The Bourne Supremacy*, the second installment in the series following *The Bourne Identity*.

In 2004, Damon reprised his role as Jason Bourne in the box-office hit *The Bourne Supremacy*, the second installment in the series following *The Bourne Identity*. That same year, Damon starred with Greg Kinnear in the Farrelly Brothers comedy *Stuck On You*, and in 2002, in *Gerry* with Casey Affleck for director Gus Van Sant.

In 2000, audiences saw Damon star in *The Legend of Bagger Vance*, for director Robert Redford and in the film version of the Cormick McCarthy book *All the Pretty Horses* for director Billy Bob Thornton.

In 1999, Damon starred in Anthony Minghella's *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, for which he received a Golden Globe nomination for Best Actor. That same year he rejoined *Chasing Amy* director Kevin Smith and pal Ben Affleck in *Dogma*, a film about a pair of outcast angels.

In 1998, he won an Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay with longtime friend Ben Affleck for the critically-acclaimed drama *Good Will Hunting*, a coming-of-age story about a young mathematical genius who, due to his upbringing in inner-city Boston, can't live up to his potential. Damon also earned an Academy Award nomination for Best Actor for his work in the title role. In addition, both he and Affleck received a Golden Globe Award for their screenplay, and Damon also garnered a Golden Globe nomination for his performance. The film, directed by Gus Van Sant, received seven additional Oscar nominations, including one for Best Picture and a win for Robin Williams for Best Supporting Actor.

In the same year, Damon starred in the title role of the World War II drama *Saving Private Ryan* for Academy Award-winning director Steven Spielberg, and in John Dahl's *Rounders*, about a reformed gambler who is drawn back into New York's underground poker world to help a recently paroled friend pay off loan sharks.

In 1997, Damon made a cameo appearance in Kevin Smith's *Chasing Amy*. In the same year, he starred as an idealistic young attorney in Francis Ford Coppola's *The Rainmaker*, based on the best-selling novel by John Grisham.

Damon first gained the public's eye in 1996, when he gave a vivid performance in *Courage Under Fire*, in which he portrayed a guilt-ridden Persian Gulf War soldier tormented by an incident that happened in the heat of battle.

The versatile young actor made his feature film debut in 1988 in a small role in the critically well-received *Mystic Pizza*. He went on to play Brian Dennehy's medical school dropout in the TV movie *Rising Son* (TNT, 1990) and gained further attention when he returned to the big screen as a fascist preppy in *School Ties* (1992). For director Walter Hill, Damon enjoyed a sizeable supporting role as the green second lieutenant new to the West who narrates *Geronimo: An American Legend* (1993) and in 1995, he appeared in *The Good Old Boys*, directed by Tommy Lee Jones for TNT.

In addition to their work in front of the camera, Damon and Affleck partnered to form LivePlanet, Inc. This unique company produces feature films, television series and new media projects. LivePlanet has produced three Emmy-nominated seasons of *Project Greenlight*, the documentary series chronicling the making of an independent feature films by a first time writer and director. The three *Project Greenlight* films produced for Miramax/Dimension have been *Stolen Summer*, *The Battle of Shaker Heights*, and *Feast*. The latest LivePlanet project is *Running the Sahara*, a documentary about three men running across the Sahara Desert, which is directed by Academy Award winner James Moll.

Damon, who attended Harvard University, first gained acting experience at the American Repertory Theatre as well as other Boston-based theatre venues.



**James Moll, Director & Producer**

Emmy and Oscar® winning filmmaker James Moll is a director and producer of documentary films and series, having spent a majority of the last ten years working on non-fiction projects with Steven Spielberg.

Moll is preparing to direct his first non-documentary dramatic feature, *EMMETT TILL*, about the historic Mississippi lynching that fortified the civil rights movement of the 1950's. The film, which was developed with Mamie Till-Mobley (Emmett Till's mother) will be produced by Robert Teitel and George Tillman, Jr. ("Soul Food" "Barbershop").

Other upcoming projects include working with Tom Hanks and Steven Spielberg on *EPILOGUE OF THE PACIFIC*, an HBO documentary to accompany the upcoming sequel to the mini-series "Band of Brothers." Moll is also directing the feature documentary, *CRADLE TO CRADLE*, based upon the book of the same name by Architect William McDonough and Chemist Michael Braungart.

Most recently, Moll completed INHERITANCE, a feature documentary about the psychological legacy bequeathed by a prominent Nazi leader upon his daughter.

Moll received an Academy Award in 1999 for directing and editing THE LAST DAYS, a 90-minute feature documentary, filmed in five countries, chronicling the lives of five Hungarian Holocaust survivors.

For NBC, Moll directed and produced the primetime feature-length documentary PRICE FOR PEACE, hosted by Tom Brokaw. The late author Stephen Ambrose served as executive producer with Spielberg. The film focuses on America's involvement in the Pacific during WWII, and was released on DVD by DreamWorks as part of the "Saving Private Ryan" box set, "The World War II Collection."

For the 2004 Democratic National Convention, Moll produced and directed A REMARKABLE PROMISE, the John Kerry bio-film that introduced the presidential candidate. The previous year, Moll produced VOICES FROM THE LIST, a documentary about Oskar Schindler for the "Schindler's List" DVD.

Moll was the producer of BROKEN SILENCE, a series of five foreign-language documentaries. The five critically acclaimed films premiered on primetime television in Russia, Poland, Argentina, the Czech Republic and Hungary, as well as in the U.S. on Cinemax. Moll received a Christopher Award for this series.

Moll produced and directed THE FOUR CHAPLAINS, a WWII documentary for The Hallmark Channel about the heroic efforts of four Army chaplains aboard an ill-fated troop ship. For The History Channel, Moll directed BURMA BRIDGE BUSTERS, about a WWII Air Corps bomb squadron, as well as MASSACRE AT MYSTIC about a turning point between Native Americans and early European settlers.

SURVIVORS OF THE HOLOCAUST, a two-hour documentary produced by Moll for TBS and CNN International, was nominated for three Primetime Emmy Awards in 1997 (winning two of them), and also received the Peabody Award. Moll received the Edward R. Murrow Award for producing THE LOST CHILDREN OF BERLIN for A&E. For VH1's FAN CLUB series, Moll made a film about obsessive fans of singer Ricky Martin. Other television credits include directing two of the John Wells-produced ONE-MINUTE MOVIES about robots, as well as directing/producing various film packages for the PRIMETIME EMMY AWARDS, and THE WORLD STUNT AWARDS, among others. In 2001, Moll served as an editor and supervising producer on THE UNFINISHED JOURNEY, directed by Spielberg as a millennium special for the White House New Year's telecast.

In addition to his work as a filmmaker, Moll established and operated THE SHOAH FOUNDATION with Steven Spielberg for the purpose of videotaping Holocaust survivor testimonies around the world. The Foundation videotaped over 50,000 testimonies, in 57 countries. Moll also produced the interactive CD-ROM, SURVIVORS, narrated by Leonardo DiCaprio and Winona Ryder.

Born in Allentown, Pennsylvania, Moll was raised in Los Angeles and earned a degree from USC Film School. Before graduation, Moll worked in feature film development for producer Lauren Shuler Donner at Walt Disney Studios. He then became assistant to, and then director of development for, renowned French writer/director Francis Veber ("La Cage Aux Folles," "The Dinner Game"). The following year brought Moll to Universal where he was associate producer on OUT ON A LIMB, starring Matthew Broderick.

Moll later established Allentown Productions, a film/video company, for which he wrote, produced and directed dozens of promotional, educational, and industrial films. Today, Allentown Productions is developing feature documentary/series and specials for television, as well as feature film projects. Moll is a member of the DGA, the Television Academy, the Motion Picture Academy and serves on the Executive Committee of the Documentary Branch of the Motion Picture Academy.

### **Larry Tanz, Producer**

Larry Tanz joined LivePlanet during its startup phase in late summer 2000. Tanz oversees all of LivePlanet's business activities and helps lead the strategy and vision of the company. Over the past year, he has served as Producer on the Emmy-nominated series "Project Greenlight" for Bravo, Executive Producer on the feature film "First Descent" for Universal, Executive Producer on the series "The Entertainer" for E! Entertainment Television and Co-Producer on the feature film "Feast" for Dimension. Currently, he serves as Executive Producer/Producer of "Fan Club: Reality Baseball" for MSN, "Phone Tag" for Amp'd Mobile, "Caddy for Life" for ABC, "Running the Sahara" and many more.

Prior to joining LivePlanet, Tanz served as Director of Strategy and Operations at AOL Time Warner, where he was a founder of Netscape Netbusiness, a major new business initiative for AOL. He co-authored the business plan and spearheaded production and operations. Before joining AOLTW he was a Senior Associate at Mercer Management Consulting, where he helped Fortune 100 clients develop and implement new products and strategies. Engagements ranged from Internet to retail, and included over a year on the ground working with clients in Southeast Asia.

Larry holds an MBA from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, a Masters Degree in Behavioral Psychology from Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, and a B.A. from Harvard College.

### **Marc Joubert, Producer**

Marc Joubert joined LivePlanet in September 2000 to combine his passion for the entertainment industry with his interest in developing strategic partnerships and corporate alliances. Marc originates and oversees corporate sales and client relations.

Since starting at LivePlanet, Joubert has served as Producer on the Emmy-nominated series "Project Greenlight" for HBO and Bravo, Co-Producer on the feature films "First Descent" for Universal and "Feast" for Dimension, and Associate Producer on feature film "The Battle of Shaker Heights" for Miramax Films. Most recently, he served as Executive Producer on "Fan Club: Reality Baseball" for MSN. He is now in active development and production as Executive Producer on "Phone Tag" for Amp'd Mobile, as a Producer on "Caddy for Life" for ABC and on "Running the Sahara," a major motion picture that started production in October 2006.

Prior to joining LivePlanet, Joubert was the Director of Sales, Midwest region, for Ciber Consulting, a firm specializing in the implementation of ERP systems for various fortune 500 companies. During his time with Ciber he managed the J.D. Edwards and Lawson Software Partnerships. His clients ranged from Baxter Healthcare to Cooper Tire. Before Ciber, Marc spent several years in Los Angeles struggling as an actor and writer. During this time he also appeared in several commercials and co-created an educational sports television show for teens called "SportsBeat."

Marc has his B.A. from Lake Forest College in Lake Forest, IL where he also played hockey.



## **Keith Quinn, Producer**

As Senior Vice President of Development & Production, Quinn develops and produces LivePlanet's entertainment properties from a business and creative standpoint. He initially joined LivePlanet as a member of the original management team in the company's late start-up phase in the summer of 2000, serving in that capacity through the first two years of the company which saw the launch of *Project Greenlight* (HBO), *The Runner* (ABC) and *Push, Nevada* (ABC) among other properties. He rejoined the company in 2005 and since then his credits include Executive Producer/Producer roles on *Fan Club: Reality Baseball* (MSN), *Phone Tag* (Amp'd Mobile), the feature *Running the Sahara*, *The Big House* (NBC), *Caddy For Life* (ABC) and other projects currently in development for Television, Film, Online and Wireless.

From 2003 to 2005, Quinn founded his own company, Black Lamp Inc, working for entertainment clients (including LivePlanet, Showtime, Actual Reality Pictures and Mark Burnett Productions) as a producer, development executive, and writer, as well as a marketing and business development consultant specializing in branded entertainment. This led to a full-time position in Business Development with Mark Burnett Productions, where he worked across Mark Burnett's slate of properties including *The Apprentice*, *Rock Star: INXS*, *The Apprentice: Martha Stewart*, and *The Contender*, as well as in finding new opportunities for the business in branded entertainment, internet and wireless content.

Prior to LivePlanet, Quinn worked as a corporate strategy executive for global marketing communications conglomerate WPP Group; he was stationed with senior management at operating companies such as Ogilvy & Mather and Blanc & Otus, to execute client work, agency management & strategy, and WPP-wide initiatives, specializing in entertainment and media and hi-tech clients, as well as youth marketing, branding and consumer insight. Quinn's additional experience includes business development for PBS, working in entertainment publicity for the agency that launched the House of Blues and three years as a 12th grade English teacher at St. Mark's School in Massachusetts. He is also an author and screenwriter.

Quinn holds an MBA from Kellogg at Northwestern University, and an A.B. from Harvard College, where he was on the Board of Editors of *The Harvard Lampoon*.

## **Rick Eldridge, Producer**

Rick Eldridge is President and CEO of the Film Foundry. With over 30 years in the entertainment business as a musician, producer and entrepreneur, Eldridge knows how to make projects happen. Whether it is sound design, sports programming, film, animated series, broadcast video or feature length movies, Eldridge has been involved in every facet of the business.

His creative vision has led to numerous projects including "The Ultimate Gift," a feature film based on the book of the same name by Jim Stovall, which has sold over a million copies. The story sends trust fund baby Jason Stevens on an improbable journey of discovery, having to answer the ultimate question: "What is the relationship between wealth and happiness?" Featuring James Garner, Brian Dennehy, Abigail Breslin, Bill Cobbs and Lee Meriwether it was released in 2007. Additional projects include "Bobby Jones-Stroke of Genius," the 2004 feature film about the life and times of legendary golfer Bobby Jones starring Jim Caviezel; "Hermie & Friends," an animated video series for children featuring the voices of Don Knotts and Tim Conway and "A Father's Heart," hosted by Fox Broadcaster James Brown.

Over his career, Eldridge has won numerous prestigious awards including twenty Telly Awards, six Communicator Awards, one New York Festivals World Metal Award and one U.S. International and Film and Video Festival Award. In the fall of 2004, the film "Bobby Jones-Stroke of Genius" won a Heartland Film Festival Truly Moving Picture award and was nominated for the Best Sports Film by the ESPY Awards. In 2006, "The Ultimate Gift" received the Crystal Heart Award and the Truly Moving Picture award from the Heartland Film Festival.

After many years of working in various production roles on the back lot of both Disney and Universal Studios, Eldridge returned to his hometown of Charlotte, NC. He is currently President and CEO of the Film Foundry, a multifaceted film and video post production company making itself at home in Charlotte's South End. Eldridge continues to work with national corporate clients, sports clients and on film projects. The Film Foundry has film finishing capability, digital audio and video production facilities, an animation department as well as Film Foundry Releasing. The facility houses full service studios with multiple companies working under one umbrella to take a project from concept and production to finishing, marketing, sales, and finally, distribution. It has some of the nation's most advanced digital finishing and color correction technology housed in a specially fit 24,000 square foot space.

Eldridge is actively involved as a member of the Charlotte Regional Partnership, the Executive Officer and Trustee Board for Brevard College and the Heartland Film Festival Board of Advisors. He is also a founding member of the Compass Arts Film Academy, a film school in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Eldridge has been awarded the International *Who's Who* of Entrepreneurs and is active in helping to develop the film industry in the South, especially North Carolina.

### **Jim Van Eerden, Executive Producer**

Jim Van Eerden is Co-founder and Managing Director of The Helixx Group, LLC, an Indianapolis-based company engaged in providing agency and merchant banking services to high-impact business and social entrepreneurs. He provides direction to the firm's investment and alliance activities, and is Chairman of the firm's media investing group (known as Independent Producers Alliance, or "IPA"). He has served as executive producer for several award-winning film projects, including the FOX release, "The Ultimate Gift." Van Eerden has served as an advisor to the World Cup Organizing Committee (1991-1994) and to the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games (1996). He currently serves on the Board of Governors for Opportunity International and is Co-Chairman of the Wilberforce Bicentennial Committee, commemorating the bicentennial of the abolition of the global slave trade.

### **Larry Meistrich, Chairman & Founder of NEHST Studios**

In 1990, at the age of 24, Larry Meistrich, with just \$7,000, founded The Shooting Gallery (TSG). In his triple role as Founder, Chairman of the Board and Executive Officer of TSG, Meistrich was a hands-on producer and an integral part of the production of roughly 100 films, commercials and music videos, including the Academy Award-winning "Sling Blade" and the Academy Award-nominated "You Can Count on Me." Meistrich made industry history when Thornton's "Sling Blade" was purchased by Miramax for a price that broke all previous sale records in independent film.

Meistrich's other well-known films include Cannes winner "Henry Fool," Clive Owen's breakout film "Croupier," and "Belly." His pictures have won the gamut of international awards including Oscars®, Golden Globes, SAG Awards, DGA Awards and the top five category awards at Cannes, Sundance and Berlin. Actors and directors Meistrich has produced include Al Pacino, Laurence Fishburne, Spike Lee and Billy Bob Thornton.

Meistrich was also the founder and CEO of Film Movement, a groundbreaking DVD-of-the-month club that releases films in theaters and on DVD at the same time. By creating a new distribution model, Meistrich provided audiences everywhere access to award-winning films that usually only play in select markets like Los Angeles and New York. He received the 1998 Crain's Small Business Award and the 1999 Ernst and Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award in New York. He received "The Maverick Award" at the 10th Annual Choltrudis Society Awards in Boston. He currently serves on the board of the New York Production Council. He graduated Johns Hopkins University with a B.A.

## PRODUCTION COMPANIES

**LivePlanet** develops and produces entertainment properties for traditional as well as digital media distribution platforms, with a focus on leveraging technology and integrating brands to tell compelling stories. LivePlanet currently has projects in active stages of production and development in film, television, broadband and mobile distribution platforms, working with partners ranging from Microsoft, Amp'd Mobile and Yahoo! to The Walt Disney Company, Viacom and NBC Universal. Recent projects include the feature film *First Descent* (Universal), wireless game *PhoneTag* (Amp'd Mobile), the three-time Emmy-nominated *Project Greenlight* (HBO/Bravo, Miramax), *Fan Club: Reality Baseball* (MSN Originals), and *Race to E3* (MTV and Xbox Live). The company is based in Los Angeles, CA.

### Allentown Productions

Based at Universal Studios in Los Angeles, since 1993, Allentown Productions is a company that specializes in non-fiction film. The company's principal, James Moll, was born in Allentown, Pennsylvania – hence, the name of the company. His work as a documentary director/producer has earned numerous awards including the Academy Award™, two Emmy Awards, the Peabody Award, Edward R. Murrow Award, Cable Ace, and the Christopher, among others. Allentown Productions has worked closely with Executive Producer Steven Spielberg for the past ten years on both feature documentary films and non-fiction series, and has also created documentary films for NBC, HBO, The History Channel, and Hallmark, among others.

**NEHST Studios** is a diversified film production, financing and distribution company headed up by Chairman and Founder Larry Meistrich, producer of *Sling Blade* and *You Can Count on Me*, and founder of indie film studio Shooting Gallery and entrepreneur, CEO Ari Friedman. One of NEHST's goals is to remove entertainment industry barriers and open up the pitching and development process to anyone with a great idea. The company, which launched at the 2007 Cannes Film Festival, is currently developing a number of projects. For more information on NEHST Studios, please go to <http://www.nehst.com>.

**H2O Africa** is the charitable component of Running the Sahara: a clean water initiative with the mission to create widespread public awareness of the water crisis in Africa and gather support for integrated sustainable clean water programs in critical areas. Often, these programs will complement or include other activity such as education, infrastructure development, and health care.

The money raised by H2O Africa will fund activities of leading charitable organizations and NGO's that have experience and current programs on the ground in Africa. As the Running the Sahara Expedition crosses Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Libya, and Egypt, it will identify key areas of need for clean water programs and H2O Africa will turn to its group of charitable partners to address those areas of need. Oversight of H2O Africa programs and initiatives will mainly come through progress-based grant agreements. The ONE Campaign is a key advisor to H2O Africa in the selection of charitable partners.

The World Health Organization estimates that lack of safe drinking water kills almost 4,500 children per day, mostly under the age of five. WaterAid estimates roughly 20% of the world's population – nearly 1.1 billion people – lack access to clean drinking water.

H2O Africa and Running the Sahara mark the launch of a unique collaboration between the recently announced Independent Producers Alliance ("IPA"), LivePlanet and Allentown Productions. H2O Africa is a fund of Renaissance Charitable Foundation, Inc.

## NEHST STUDIOS ANNOUNCES RELEASE OF "RUNNING THE SAHARA"

*Academy Award Winning Filmmakers Follow Ground Breaking  
Quest of Three Ultra-Runners to Run Across Africa's Sahara  
Desert;*

*Film Narrated and Executive Produced by Matt Damon and  
Directed by James Moll*

**New York, NY (February 27, 2008)** – *Running the Sahara*, the film acquired by NEHST Studios, is set to be released in early summer. The feature documentary, directed and produced by Academy Award™ winner James Moll and narrated and executive produced by Academy Award™ winner Matt Damon, chronicles the attempt of three ultra-marathoners to run across Africa's Sahara Desert.

"When I heard about what the runners were planning to attempt, I was blown away and determined to be a part of it," said Matt Damon.

The Expedition begins at the Atlantic coast in Senegal, with a goal to reach the Red Sea in Egypt, running through Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Libya, and Egypt -- essentially two marathons per day, for more than eighty days, without a day off.

The film focuses on the three runners: Charlie Engle from Charlotte, NC, Kevin Lin from Taipei, Taiwan, and Ray Zahab from Ontario, Canada, accompanied by a support team consisting of an MD, a physical therapist, and a logistics leader.

The film's setting is the Sahara desert, a beautiful, yet harsh environment where temperatures range from 140 degrees Fahrenheit to below freezing, and sandstorms send winds miles into the air at speeds that can tear human flesh.

"This was the most challenging production I've ever done," says director Moll. "We could make another whole documentary just about the filmmaking itself."

*Running the Sahara* is a character-driven film that delves into the life-changing experiences of the three runners as they encounter diverse African cultures and tackle tremendous physical and emotional obstacles.

"Ray, Kevin and I wanted to try something that had never been done before," said runner and Expedition leader Charlie Engle. "We knew we'd battle extreme elements. What we didn't anticipate was the human obstacles, like our group dynamics, and the people we would encounter along the way."

The film's score, produced by Hans Zimmer and composed by Heitor Pereira, features performances by musicians from Senegal, Mali and Egypt, as well as the internationally renowned Africa Children's Choir. Featured songs include music by Pearl Jam, U2, and a new recording by Wyclef Jean.

NEHST's Chairman & Founder Larry Meistrich says, "This film truly inspired me on a personal level, and it's a perfect fit for NEHST Studios as we continue our commitment to high-quality theatrical films that can also be made available through alternative means of distribution and marketing."

The documentary production and the expedition were supported by the United Nations as well as Toyota, Champion, Gatorade and Magellan, all of whom provided key supplies and resources.

A non-profit component has also emerged. The producers and Matt Damon created H2O Africa, a foundation formed to address the need for safe water in Africa. According to Damon, "Our work in Africa on the film inspired us to launch the H2O Africa Foundation, which has raised over four million dollars for safe water programs in the Sahara."

NEHST Studios is a diversified film production, financing and distribution company that integrates the most powerful trends in entertainment and technology. NEHST Studios is headed up by industry veteran Larry Meistrich – producer of *Sling Blade* and *You Can Count on Me* and founder of indie film studio Shooting Gallery.

*Running the Sahara* is produced by Marc Joubert, Keith Quinn, Larry Tanz James Moll, and Rick Eldridge; and executive produced by Jim Van Eerden and Matt Damon. It's a LivePlanet and Allentown Production, presented by Independent Producers Alliance with financing support from the Stanford Financial Group.

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### **About NEHST Studios**

NEHST Studios is a diversified film production, financing and distribution company headed up by Chairman and Founder Larry Meistrich producer of *Sling Blade* and *You Can Count on Me* and founder of indie film studio Shooting Gallery and entrepreneur, CEO Ari Friedman. One of NEHST's goals is to remove entertainment industry barriers and open up the pitching and development process to anyone with a great idea. The company, which launched at the 2007 Cannes Film Festival, is currently developing NUMBER? projects.

For more information on NEHST Studios, please go to <http://www.nehst.com>.

# Men's Journal

February 2008

Profile By Dan Halpern

## *THE MAN WHO RUNS THE WORLD*

***Charlie Engle ran across Africa, NEXT UP: America. But he doesn't live to run. He runs so he won't destroy himself.***

Charlie Engle lives at the end of a cul-de-sac outside of Greensboro, North Carolina, with a Volkswagen in the garage and a Chevy in the driveway. He has an ex-wife, two sons, and a girlfriend. He goes hiking with his family in Yosemite every year, isn't entirely sure if there is or isn't a God, and is the sort of person who makes friends on airplane flights. All in all, he seems to be a pretty reasonable guy. What he likes to do best is run. And run. He likes to go farther and faster than he, or anyone else, thinks he can. Which is why, in late 2006, this reasonable-seeming 45-year-old family man started running at one end of the Sahara Desert and didn't stop until he got to the other.

If most Americans can name even one ultradistance runner, it's probably Dean Karnazes, the master of publicity whose most famous stunt was to run 50 marathons in 50 states in 50 days. But Engle's Sahara feat was the equivalent of nearly two marathons per day for more than 100 days straight, across some of the most forbidding terrain on the planet. This spring, as an encore, he plans to run across America faster than anyone ever has. And still almost nobody knows who he is. Yet. A film about the Sahara run, produced by Matt Damon, is being released in April. Engle has already been on the *Tonight Show*, and now Oprah has come calling.

What Engle has is a darker, more complex story than Karnazes's feel-good message of healthy living and you-can-do-it fitness. "Hi, I'm Charlie Engle," he says on a video posted to his website, talking to the camera in full stride, "and I'm into pain."

Two decades ago it was a different sort of pain. Engle was an ordinary working guy with a wife, a small business offering paintless auto dent repair, and an addiction to cocaine. He'd follow hailstorms across the country, making money fixing the damage, then blow it on drugs. But he was still functioning.

Then he found himself in Denver, taking a bag from a stranger he'd met on a street corner. Inside were five little rocks. Engle had discovered crack. "Five days later I'm peeking under the door, totally out of my mind, haven't showered or changed, my car's been stolen, I'm in the middle of Denver at this motel room I've rented just for the drugs, with no idea what I'm doing, and way beyond caring." Over the next two years he would spend days on end in run-down crack houses all over the country.

Engle had been a runner in high school, and actually picked it up again in the midst of his addiction, but that was no solution. At one point, over a period of 45 days, he ran three marathons, averaging a very respectable three hours each time — with drug binges in between. "I ran Boston," he says. "Two days later I'm drunk in a motel room with a crack pipe."



He'd always resisted the AA route — "Every time they said the phrase 'higher power,' I just heard 'God,' and that bugged the shit out of me" — but in July 1992, after the birth of his first son, he tried again. "That day was not that much different than a hundred times before," he says, except this time it worked.

Four years later he discovered how much he needed some sort of suffering in his life. Engle was in Australia, still chasing hail in the dent business, when he went to run a 10-K near Brisbane. When he arrived, however, he discovered that he'd misread the flyer and that the race was in fact 100 kilometers. "It was a three-loop course, very hilly, and I figure, what the hell, I'll make it a training run. I'll do one loop and quit," he says. He did the first loop and looked back; he was in 10th place out of maybe 100 runners. He was sore, his feet hurt, but, he thought, Why not try the second loop? And the third? He had come to run a six-mile race and ended up winning his first ultramarathon.

That same year he saw Mark Burnett's *Eco-Challenge* adventure race on TV, and thought, I gotta try that. He went to adventure-racing school in San Francisco, and from that point on he did every major race, including the next Raid Gauloises, three straight Eco-Challenges, and his first major ultramarathons— epic competitive sufferfests — often finishing in the top few runners.

Which raises an obvious question: Has he simply switched addictions? "I haven't," Engle says. "I don't spend every moment planning to run, the way I spent every moment planning to binge." On the other hand, he adds, "I have nowhere else to put this energy. I hate to think of myself as obsessive. It's a negative word, *obsessive*. It's horrible to be driven to destruction despite the obvious signs that it's a bad idea. But I need to keep pushing until I find out what the limit is."

In 2004 Engle started thinking about the very outer limits. He'd met ultrarunners Ray Zahab and Kevin Lin at the Jungle Marathon, in Brazil; a month later, after Zahab had run a 207-mile race in Niger, Africa, he called Engle and said, "Dude, I've got this crazy idea. I wonder if anybody's run across the whole desert." No one had, which intrigued Engle. He had quit the dent business and found his way onto the crew of *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*, thanks to some footage he shot on one of his own races for *48 Hours*, which had led to a job as a cameraman and producer. He mentioned the idea to a friend in television, Tim Beggy, who immediately saw the possibilities and introduced him to James Moll, the Oscar-winning documentarian.

"I thought the concept was insane," Moll says, "and I wanted to follow them. I wanted to know what drives elite athletes, these people who have a goal at all costs." The first time Moll met Zahab, he asked jokingly, "What happens if in the middle of this you can't take it anymore and you want to quit?" Zahab's reply: "There's no quitting."

They started in Senegal, on the Atlantic Ocean, on November 2, 2006, and for more than a week nobody thought the three runners would make it. The first day they managed only 22 miles, and Engle woke up the next morning feeling sore and tired. "We weren't adapting," he says. "Kevin and Ray both had serious stomach problems, and Kevin had some major muscular issues. We were falling apart." But in Mauritania, 10 or 11 days into the expedition, they started to feel more comfortable. "It was like someone flipped a switch," says Engle. "We began to get into a rhythm." From that day forward Engle, Zahab, and Lin averaged about 40 miles a day across six countries, accompanied by a doctor, massage therapist, local Tuareg guides, various fixers, and an entire film crew.

Over the 111 days the runners would drink more than 3,000 liters of Gatorade, wear out scores of running shoes, and discover that their west-east route meant they'd be facing headwinds almost the entire way. In Niger's Tenere Desert they nearly ran out of water; Engle had a single bottle to drink over a full day's 50-mile run. They ran on dirt, through ankle-deep sand, in 125-degree

temperatures, through a monster sandstorm that didn't let up for three weeks. They were assailed by locusts, scorpions, and poisonous sidewinder snakes, cornered by wild boars, and chased by warthogs.

"They were running in the heat of the day, and I made them stop running from 11 am to 4 pm," says team physician Jeff Peterson, a sports medicine doctor in Stanford. "That was the first time Charlie and I butted heads. Which happened a lot on the trip. He always wanted to just keep going. Eventually, the way that Charlie countered was to say, 'Fine, we'll get up at four in the morning, and we'll run until 12, start again at three, and run until nine.'"

Engle's relentless drive both kept the team going and pissed almost everyone off. Lin called him "the monster." Says Engle: "We were trying to run 50 miles a day, but also trying not to kill each other."

They ran the final 48 hours without sleeping, past the pyramids at Giza and across Cairo to the mouth of the Suez Canal — 150 miles, just on guts. Zahab veered off the course at one point to follow a hallucinated trail. "We were like soldiers in a death march," he says. When they reached the Red Sea the three runners dipped their hands in the water, just as they had 111 days earlier in the Atlantic.

*Running the Sahara*, the film documenting the adventure, narrated by Damon, is coming out April 27. (Proceeds will benefit H2O Africa, a nonprofit co-founded by Engle to build wells and call attention to the need for new water sources on the continent.) Engle has several proposed TV projects in the works, including one that would combine adventure travel with addiction treatment programs, and another about what he sees as the coming international wars over water. "Charlie just makes shit happen," Zahab says simply. "That's who he is."

As if the Sahara run weren't enough, Engle is looking to go even farther and harder, starting with his attempt to break the 46-day speed record for running across the United States. He plans to start April 27, to coincide with the *Sahara* movie release. He and his running partner Marshall Ulrich will have to average 68 miles a day. He also wants to climb Everest and then run all the way down to sea level, across India to Calcutta. Both runs sound as though they could be episodes in an adventure reality series idea he's hatched with Beggy, in which Engle would get himself "killed" every week, like Kenny on *South Park*.

Does Engle like the idea of getting killed every week?

Beggy laughs. "Oh, yeah."