

# **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>.

### **LivePlanet, Inc.**

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 has projects in active stages of production and development in film, television, broadband and mobile distribution platforms. 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).

### **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, and The History Channel, among others. [www.AllentownProductions.com](http://www.AllentownProductions.com)

### **Independent Producers Alliance**

IPA champions the work of award-winning independent producers who make films that inspire people to good things. IPA is based in Charlotte, NC where it operates production and post-production facilities, as well as its administration and distribution service units. Other IPA feature films scheduled for release in the coming year include *The Ultimate Gift* and *The Perfect Game*.

### **H2O Africa**

H2O Africa has a mission to create widespread public awareness of the water crisis in Africa and gather support for integrated sustainable clean water programs in critical areas. Oversight of H2O Africa programs and initiatives will be through partnerships with major non-government organizations as well as progress-based grant agreements.

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