

## Paul King *Heartlands* project launch introduction De Balie, Amsterdam - 02/07/2007

Welcome to the Launch of Heartlands.

In this room there are fifty people from all backgrounds: teachers, corporate executives, Wildlife experts from the field, zookeepers, even some Lawyers. By the time we've delivered our project, fifty million people will have seen Heartlands. Minimum.

So. Who on Earth is Paul King?

I've been travelling most of my life. Now I live in Amsterdam. Kan ook redelijk NL spreken.

15 years ago I quit a very comfortable life style and enrolled at Film School. I wasn't quite sure why I put myself through this change – and risk – but had a strong feeling I needed to DO 'some-thing' with this mystery called Life.

Since then I've worked on film projects all over the world, filming for two years in the Serengeti with Hugo van Lawick – you may have heard about a film called the Leopard Son - to working in African slums filming Women dealing with abject poverty. I've worked with so many people, Kalahari Bushmen, Aboriginal artists, Captains of Industry and Politicians, even taxi drivers, all with a common need for a Healthy environment.

These experiences have gifted me with huge respect for the courage, strength and capability of the human race. People all over our world, be they rich or poor, educated or illiterate, know we need to find a way to develop and balance how we deal with nature. Ask anyone!

The inspiration for Heartlands came, in of all places – a toyshop. I was intrigued by a toy tiger in the window, and wandered in to leaf through a few children's books. I was very pleased to see people are still telling kids about the wonders of the natural world. On another level I was shocked how many of these stories are about creatures potentially on the edge of extinction. What a nightmare I thought. How could this be happening now, in the age of information, The age of international co-operation!? What can I do so these stories don't become myths? Heartlands is the culmination of a lifetime sensing a need for paradigm change.

Instead of standing here I would love to take you all, one by one, to meet the people I've met working in the field, people that have dedicated their lives to do everything they can to protect nature. I would love to take you to the Serengeti or the jungle of Kalimantan to see for yourself how wild animals live. Then you would see, just as I have, the compassion in a lionesses eyes as she rears her young, or the wisdom in an Orang-utan's expression as he ranges the forest.

What I **can** do is bring the animals stories home to you. As a film maker the only way I know how to take you there is through my work. Film is a powerful tool. I'm not a conservation or social development expert. Heartlands brings together people that **are**. We bridge the gap between experienced people that know the solutions, to you, who needs to know what you can do. Heartlands is about making a difference together.

The Chairman of the European association of Zoos recently told me that we do NOT need to save Nature because we have pity for the animals. We NEED to save nature for our own Survival. It's as Simple as that.

This is nothing new. We've known all this for decades, if not much longer.

This is where Heartlands comes in:

In my own 'Short' lifetime I've seen how, when there is a need and a clear mandate, humanity can adapt its practices on a global scale, Remember CFC's threatening the planets atmosphere? We phased them out in just a few short years. We did that!

Unleaded petrol? Mass steady distribution once we discovered there was a need to bring alternative fuel types onto the market. Once there are clear signals we respond. **We can do it!**

Hundred of years of research and observation by people from Charles Darwin to Aldus Huxley can pay off **now**.

Never before has humanity had such detailed knowledge as to how planetary systems work, and the consequences of ignoring natural balances.

Secondly, never before have we had such an incredible capacity to rapidly communicate that knowledge. Most encouraging is a huge wave of public support for ecological awareness. This is compelling new steps forward for industrial production, government policies and mandates of International bodies such as the United Nations. Ecology is on the political agenda! The 7<sup>th</sup> Millennium Development goal is to 'Ensure Environmental Sustainability'. Together these factors spell out a new practical hope, a one off opportunity to stimulate practical grass root Action. People need to know this! We need hope and tools. I certainly do! How about you?

Our times are very interesting indeed. We are facing a crucial turning point. WE ARE the last generation that can save the world. At the rate we are going – it'll be too late in less than fifty years. As a race we are poised at the precipice of the choice between Evolution or Extinction. Simple as that. I will do my utter best to make that choice be Evolution.

Heartlands sets out to put the pieces of the global ecological jigsaw puzzle together. Our goal is to inspire people with positive stories about what is being done, on all fronts, to find working balances between economic needs and the urgent realities of the natural world.

I say urgent because **ALL** of the species in Heartlands are threatened with extinction in the next 2 to 5 years. Yes – in our own life times we may loose Orangutan, Leopards and Tigers. Do you want to be a part of that? I can't imagine a world without them. Really.

I've kept Heartlands focused on animals on top of their own food chain. What they have in common is the fact that their existence is **needlessly** threatened by Man's intervention, and the fact that they are all crucial to the health of their own complex environments.

I once heard it said by a American Indian chief that 'when you loose the animals you loose the forest. When the forest is gone the People must move on.'

Alas there is nowhere left to go. We need to deal with these issues now, otherwise we loose the biggest opportunity faced by any generation: The chance to save ourselves by saving the beating heart of the Heartlands. The animal guardians of the forest can show us how to do just that.

As my colleague said, Pretty pictures are not enough. Heartlands is designed to go well beyond Television. Our mandate is to enable people to see the changing world for themselves, and respond to what they see by giving them Practical tools of change. Heartlands outreach program is designed as a guide for all. The link between social development and the health of the environment is fundamental. The outreach program will be distributed to schools, Universities and You!

This multi media platform will link you to who is doing what, and practical information how you can join in, as a consumer, a voter, a schoolchild, who ever you are.

I stand here for those that need help right now, the wild creatures and the many people that need us to stand up and make a difference.

Yes I know – changing life styles is a threat to our comfort zones, but lets face it, continuing to ignore global facts and the need for rapid evolution is even more threatening.

We need to embrace a new reality. Together we can make it work. Whatever you do in life, I invite you to join the Heartlands project!

Welcome to The Heartlands!