

Ripples of Change

Braam Malherbe & the DOT Earth Challenge

Text: Julie Graham
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World-renowned adventurer, TV presenter, motivational speaker, author and extreme conservationist, Braam Malherbe, is the kind of guy who has passion that knows no bounds – especially when it comes to conservation.



/ AUTHOR of the bestseller, *The Great Run*, an inspiring account of his 4,218 km journey along the Great Wall of China with fellow adventurer, David Grier, as well as his own personal journey, hardships and achievements, Malherbe's idea that nothing is impossible if you have big dreams is not just something he *thinks*. Instead, it's something he *lives* on a daily basis. He has run the entire coastline from Namibia to Mozambique (3,278 km) for Operation Smile, raced 768 km over 24 days to the South Pole with race partner, Peter van Kets, and has even bigger adventures in store for 2016 and 2017. All of which he hopes will inspire others to become more empowered and to start making active changes in the conservation of the Earth.

I meet Malherbe at a coffee shop in Cape Town to talk about his next big adventure, the DOT Earth Challenge, which is scheduled to start in 2017 and which will be a 15-month circumnavigation of the globe – again with Peter van Kets – following

the Tropic of Capricorn, using only non-motorised means. That's right: They will be running, walking and rowing around the world. This will, undoubtedly, be Malherbe's most difficult challenge to date, but the two adventurers are more determined than ever, and want to use the journey as a way to raise awareness about the huge environmental challenges currently facing our planet.

"We, as adults, have committed the single greatest crime against humanity by almost exhausting the resources of a finite earth. We have seriously compromised our children's future. The DOT Earth Challenge aims to put this right," explains Malherbe. DOT, which stands for Do One Thing, is aimed at encouraging people, globally, to take part in healing our planet by the simple act of doing one thing to protect our precious resources. "DOT is, essentially, many small things creating a ripple effect," he says. "It's a numbers game with, hopefully, great results."

Malherbe is extremely passionate about

the Earth and, whereas some people may get sullen and feel hopeless about the current state of our planet, he speaks ardently and excitedly about the very real tools we have to facilitate healing. "If you think of one of the most pressing issues facing humanity's survival and, indeed, the survival of all species, it is climate change," he says. By launching DOT as a social media app for smartphones, Malherbe hopes to reach people on a global scale and to get them thinking about what they can do to help preserve the planet. "Twenty years ago, you had no real way of reaching a million people quickly. Today, you can reach a billion in just one click! This means that, in our planet's stressful time, we, the perpetrators of that stress, can turn things around more rapidly than we ever believed possible." The app, which he hopes to launch in September this year, is one of the many ways Malherbe hopes to reach others and get them working on a simple "pay-it-forward" method of doing things to help



mitigate climate change.

As a teaser to the DOT Earth Challenge in 2017, Malherbe and Van Kets plan on embarking on a massive South African sporting accomplishment, and a world first: A totally unassisted row from Cape Town to Rio de Janeiro, covering 6,700 km. They plan to complete this in just three months, and to raise awareness about the importance of conservation in the process through the DOT App. "Pete and I do not succeed in our mission by simply reaching Rio. We succeed if we all pull together to fix the mess we have made. Our goal is to have someone Doing One Thing (DOT) for the Earth for every stroke we pull. That's around 2.3 million DOTs," he explains.

But how does one prepare to face the open ocean and the very real possibilities of storms and huge swells? Van Kets, a master sailor, is no stranger to the ocean and its immense power. Malherbe is currently undergoing an intensive sailing course in Langebaan in the Western Cape and, through a series of sea trials with Van Kets

and intense training on his rowing machine at home, he plans to be ready for the challenge by December. Their carbon fibre boat is completely self-sufficient and has a de-salinator to turn salt water into fresh water for drinking. The front of the boat has a small capsule for one person to sleep in whilst the other rows. Malherbe explains to me that they will never stop rowing and, for three months, the two of them will work in two-hour cycles: two hours sleeping, two hours rowing.

As part of the challenge is to highlight the plight of marine life and the oceans, I ask whether they intend on eating fish on the journey. "According to top marine biologists, the oceans will be fish-free as early as 2048. We're going to try and do the whole trip without eating fish. There are unfortunately problems with flying fish because they are surface feeders, so they chase their food to the surface and they come out of the water to catch their food. Sometimes, if there is a boat in the way, they can go smack on the deck and then they're dead. If that happens, we're

not going to waste the fish. But we're not intending on eating fish if we can help it," says Malherbe. Instead, their diet for three months will consist of powdered and dehydrated food – something Van Kets and Malherbe are both very familiar with from previous expeditions.

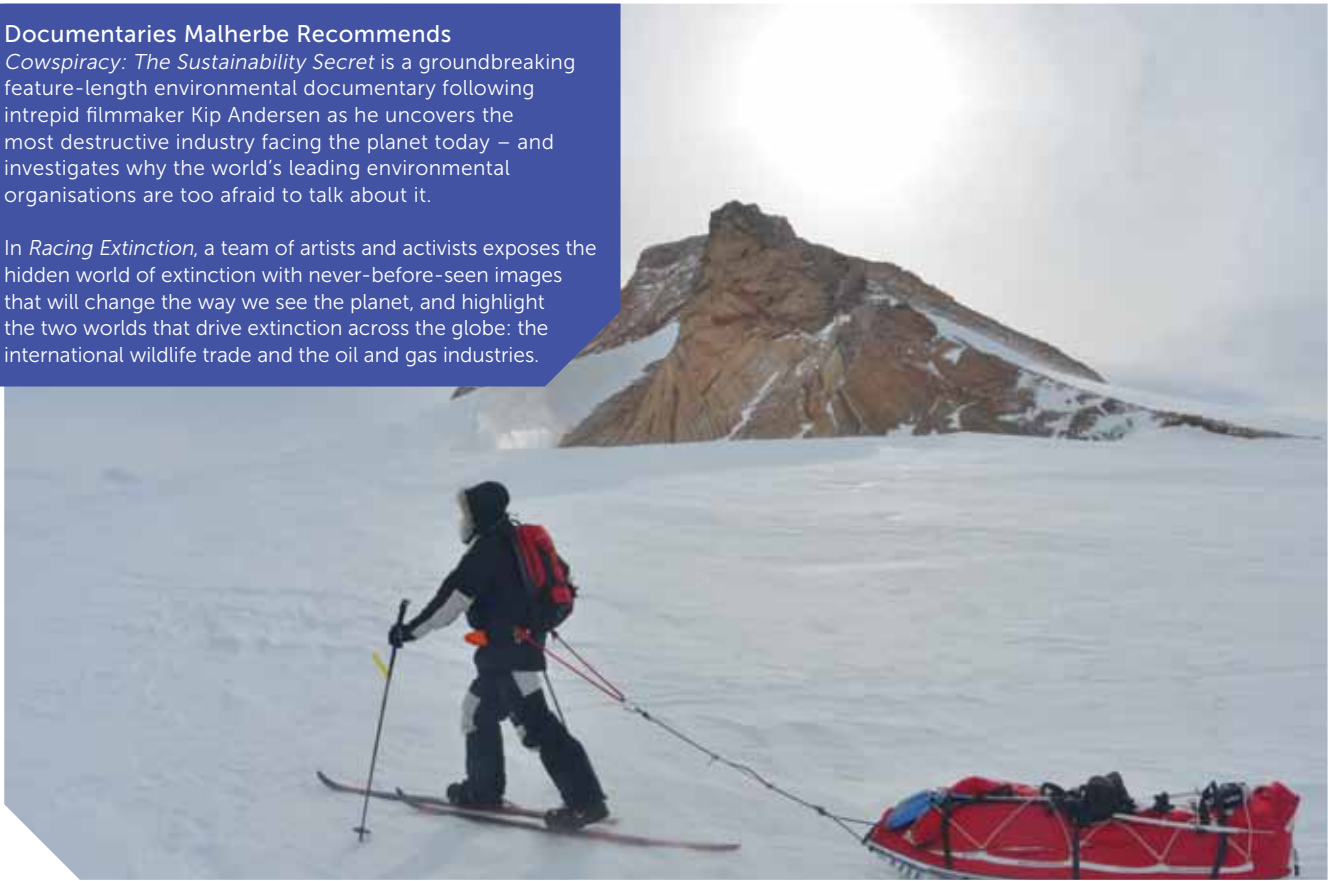
The voyage is scheduled to begin on 26th December 2016, at the start of the internationally renowned Cape to Rio Yacht Race, and Malherbe plans to grab the world's media attention right from the start. With over 500 million viewers around the world, I would say the two will most certainly be off to a good start! "By the time we embark on the DOT Earth Challenge in 2017, we want to reach about a billion people. That's about a seventh of the world's population. Can you just imagine the changes that can be made?"

Malherbe's infectious energy and unwavering drive and desire to change the world and protect the environment are extraordinary and, after just one hour in his company, I am inspired, like never before, to do the same. To start Doing One Thing. /

Documentaries Malherbe Recommends

Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret is a groundbreaking feature-length environmental documentary following intrepid filmmaker Kip Andersen as he uncovers the most destructive industry facing the planet today – and investigates why the world's leading environmental organisations are too afraid to talk about it.

In *Racing Extinction*, a team of artists and activists exposes the hidden world of extinction with never-before-seen images that will change the way we see the planet, and highlight the two worlds that drive extinction across the globe: the international wildlife trade and the oil and gas industries.



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