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Sitting Down With Adventurer Sebastian Copeland

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Sebastian Copeland, Adventurer and Justin Howard, Columnist

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In today's modern world there aren't many real adventurers still left, I mean individuals who put life and limb on the line purely to expand the borders of human understanding and to fill a deep inner need to experience all that nature has to offer. Sebastian Copeland is one of those individuals.

Chances are good you have seen his commercial photography in ads for Old Spice, Disney, and Nintendo in almost every major glossy magazine you can think of. His celebrity portraits credits include his famous cousin Orlando Bloom, Elijah Wood and Sandra Bullock, all of which have graced the pages of Vanity Fair and Vogue.

All that being said it was a pleasure to sit down with Sebastian and talk to him about what is like being an extreme outdoors adventurer and environmental activist who has lead expeditions the globe over to photograph and film the environment, all to bring awareness to it's plight.

Sitting Down With Adventurer Sebastian Copeland

JTH - What got you involved with Global Green in the first place?

SC – I met Matt Petersen in late 1999 and the concept of climate change really resonated with me. It made sense. I had already been involved in supporting anti clear cutting campaigns and the anthropogenic footprint tied to exponential demographic growth was something that greatly concerned me then. It still does, even more so today. Global Green's core philosophy is a program of actionable change, and positive development. By investing in sustainability programs with schools and low income housing, the aim is to effectuate change while improving lives.

JTH – As a modern day adventurer what does the green movement mean to you?

SC – The green movement is a misnomer. What we need is a market transformation towards a sustainable economy. That is not green: it is the natural progression of a maturing society. The question is whether or not we have evolved to that state of maturity. The jury is out on the issue, but one thing is certain: if we do not solve the question of industrial development tied to social, environmental and geopolitical degradation, we may never have the chance to reach that stage of maturity as a people. The consensus is that this is an "all hands on deck" in the history of our development. It would seem that, for the most part, we are still asleep at the wheel.

JTH – I have noticed you like to show people the pictures of your frost bitten toes. What lessons did your experiences on the Ice teach you?

SC – Shackleton said that man is not welcomed in Antarctica. That is an understatement! Beautiful and pristine though the ice is, it is a punishing environment that commands humble respect. The frostbites photos are more for the theatrical aftermath; but while immersed on the ice as was for 82 days on my last trip, the drama is quite real. That said, one never underestimates what privilege it is to explore areas of the planet that have simply never been seen by any beings! High on the Antarctica plateau, things have remained more or less constant for the last 3 million years. Long stretches of my trip had never seen a human footprint. Antarctica is remote and inhospitable to human life, but the ice is in fact vulnerable to activities conducted thousand of miles away. In that sense, it is important to recognize that the ice is as fragile as we are.

JTH – To explore the environment, in some senses you literally invade that environment. How do you balance that with your 'green' philosophy?

SC – It is true that to explore, you have to invade an environment. We did so while landing on the moon, and again while visiting the bottom of the ocean. It won't stop there! Exploration has not historically been kind to the environments visited, and generally resulted in piles of human waste--trash and otherwise. Even the stratosphere is littered with waste circling the planet in orbit, a potential future risk to our ability to exit the terrestrial atmosphere! Luckily, sustainable standards for polar travel have been refined and today, the human footprint resulting from exploration tend to be minimized. To put it in perspective, Antarctica is 14 million square kilometers. The small number of missions exploring its interior leave a very small footprint, proportionately.

JTH – California in it's efforts to balance the state budget is closing many of its best parks. Do you think this will effect the next generations concept of 'greenness'?

SC – The closing of state parks is a tragic failure on the part of both politicians and the electorate. Over the last century, America developed an inspiring cultural relationship with its remarkable landscape. In California, starting with Yosemite, conservation prevented the parceling of one of the nation's most arresting parks. The Sierra Club, with Ansel Adams and other visionaries accounts for the protection of some extraordinary stretches of the American heritage. They belong to our cultural equity. Investing in their maintenance and protecting them from privatization is a responsibility we owe our children. To fail them is to rob them of the cultural, historical and environmental heritage our parents and grandparents sought for us. A connection to the land is a vital part of our well being and internal balance. If we do not place a commensurate value on that connection, I fear that the threat of an industrial and urban takeover could be prophetic, leading to further disregard of the hand that feeds us.

For more information on Sebastian Copeland, visit <http://sebastiancopelandadventures.com/>.

For more 'Made in LA,' visit <http://madeinla.newsvine.com/>.

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