

## ELI ROTH CALLS SEA WORLD "AUSCHWITZ FOR ORCAS"

Written by Chris Alexander  
Saturday, 20 March 2010 10:23

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Director, actor, producer and general genre film gadfly Eli Roth has gone from carving up innocents on- screen with his HOSTEL films and bashing Nazi's in Quentin Tarantino's INGLOURIOUS BASTERDS, to being an angry advocate for persecuted marine life. Fango just received a press release from the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) in which Roth voices his outrage at the recent violent death of a Sea World trainer at the hands (fins?) of a captive orca named Tilikum.

Stemming from Roth's recent Twitter campaign, in which he refers to Sea World as "Auschwitz for Orcas", the letter is addressed to the CEO of The Blackstone Group, the company that owns Sea World.

Below is that letter in its entirety:

Hamilton James

President and COO

The Blackstone Group

Dear Mr. James:

I am writing on behalf of my friends at People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). As you may know, PETA is the world's largest animal rights organization, with more than 2 million members and supporters around the world.

I feel that I speak for many people when I say that while I was deeply saddened and upset by

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the tragic death of SeaWorld trainer Dawn Brancheau, I was equally appalled and horrified by the conditions in which SeaWorld keeps its orcas (and other marine life) for the sole purpose of entertaining humans. As someone who works in the entertainment business, I can assure you that there are many humane alternatives available to introduce the public to orcas without having to hold them in captivity for a lifetime against their will. CGI technology, animatronics, and other state-of-the-art virtual reality exhibits could be used in place of the current live-animal shows to provide park visitors with an exciting, educational experience. In fact, showing visitors a more realistic version of what life is like for real marine mammals rather than displaying the captive animals' unnatural and repetitive behavior patterns—which are linked to their oppressive environment—is actually more educational, with no risk to human life. Having grown up in Massachusetts, I often went whale watching and cannot stress the impact on me of seeing whales in their natural environment, not cooped up in a tank performing mundane tricks.

The death of a SeaWorld trainer did not have to happen, and I urge you now to please take action so that it does not happen again. Would you please consider moving your captive orcas and other marine mammals to transitional coastal and wildlife sanctuaries now? Not only is it the humane thing to do, it may well also become, in the long run, the most cost-effective thing to do as public sentiment moves away from watching captive animals perform stunts for human amusement.

As you know, Keiko, the orca who starred in the 1993 movie *Free Willy*, was returned to his native waters in Iceland in September 1998 after many years of captivity in a facility in Mexico City. Keiko spent the last five years of his life in relative freedom, during which he swam from Iceland to Norway, successfully navigating more than 1,000 kilometers of open ocean. Tilikum deserves the same opportunity, and the wildlife experts who worked on Keiko's rehabilitation can and should be called upon to do the same for Tilikum. I have heard people say that Tilikum would die in the wild, but in truth many of us would rather see his life end in the freedom of the wild ocean, rather than spend the rest of his life trapped in a tank being forced to perform humiliating tasks.

Last month's incident, as you know, was not the first time that a trainer has been seized, thrown against the walls of the tank, and held underwater by a frustrated orca. It was far more horrific than anything I ever dreamed up in my horror films. All the violence and suffering in my films is pretend - no one is hurt, ever. Sadly, the same is not true at SeaWorld, which targets their entertainment at families and children. You are sending a far more dangerous message to kids, whose lives would be just as happy and fulfilled without seeing a large intelligent creature jump around to music for their entertainment, and would probably take a more active interest in protecting whales if they saw them out in the ocean where they belong.

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I very respectfully urge the Blackstone Group to immediately proceed with a plan to release the marine mammals at SeaWorld theme parks to sanctuaries that can provide them with a more natural environment.

On behalf of everyone who wants to see whales and dolphins living free in their ocean homes, I thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Eli Roth