

POWER
ENVIRONMENTALISTThe
Green
Goddess

As president of the Environmental Media Association, Debbie Levin leads Hollywood's elite on an eco-minded charge to save our planet.

BY EVAN FOWLER

DEBBIE LEVIN is quickly becoming Hollywood's queen of green. In less than a decade, the president of the Environmental Media Association (EMA) has built an eco-friendly army of industry A-listers. "We believe there's no more natural spokesperson for a sustainable lifestyle than the entertainment industry," she says. But with all eyes on the City of Angels, the environmental empress bears the burden of setting the ultimate example. "As a concerned citizen I recycled, read labels, and was keenly aware of energy and water conservation," she says. "But the label 'environmentalist' wasn't something I had thought of." With no outline for saving the planet, she had to make do with a passion for Mother Earth and a little happenstance.

After graduating from USC film school and raising two children, Levin returned to the workplace in TV development. One fateful day she was invited to the ninth annual EMA Awards. "I was fascinated by the logic and power of EMA's mission and immediately felt a connection to the change it could effect," she recalls. Seated next to her childhood idol and EMA cofounder, Norman Lear, she began bombarding him with questions. "Why isn't EMA doing this? And can EMA do that?" she jokes. One very successful lunch later she was appointed president.

Backed by an abundance of celebrity support, EMA stands at the forefront of environmental awareness. "No one is required to support the environment," she explains. "The celebrities who want to work with us have a genuine passion to do so." (Some of those who've come on board are Cameron Diaz, Edward Norton, Amy Smart, and Julia Louis-Dreyfus.) And through groundbreaking programs such as

the EMA Green Seal Award, Levin has created a network of environmental advocates from all areas of the entertainment industry.

"The idea at the time was that EMA's mission should be to educate the public on environmental issues through entertainment," she explains. "But we began to realize that if we didn't look behind the camera as well, we weren't fully supporting that mission."

What began as a way to acknowledge film and television projects that incorporated green initiatives into their production practices quickly became a checklist of expectations. "It was a fine line between offering our information and demanding adherence to our EMA Green Seal guidelines," she explains. "We created what we felt was doable with extensive resources for the filmmakers." Fast-forward to 2008, and as Levin

says, "Bam! Green is everywhere, and people are listening."

With the highly anticipated launch of a huge "e-waste" recycling campaign, Levin is calling attention to the mountains of electronic waste we're now producing. "Who would ever have thought that recycling electronic waste would be a hot issue?" she asks. "But then, who would have imagined the amount of electronics there are in our lives and how quickly they're cast off and replaced?"

Busy rolling out the green carpet for the 18th annual EMA Awards on November 13, Levin is a force to be reckoned with. "The logic of a sustainable lifestyle is undeniable," she asserts. "And suddenly, like the rest of the corporate world, Hollywood understands that it's not only good for the planet, but good business to be green."

