

## Q&A with Ivan Botha about directorial debut *Stroomop*

By  Daniel Derksen

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Actor, writer, and producer Ivan Botha is well known for his work in the box-office hits *Pad na jou Hart* and *Vir Altyd*. *Pad na jou Hart* was crowned as Film of the Year 2014 and he also received the Tempo award for Actor of the Year for his lead roles in both these movies. Alongside Donnalee Roberts, Botha is responsible for co-writing, co-producing, and marketing these films.

He is the co-owner of the production house 17 FILMS that specialises in the development, production, and marketing of quality, value-based films. 17 FILMS was also responsible for the marketing of the successful film, *Ballade vir 'n Enkeling*.



After almost 10 years in the film industry, he is ready to make his debut as a director in 2018. His directorial debut film *Stroomop* will be released in August 2018.

Botha received his national diploma in drama from the Technical University of Tshwane where he specialised in directing and scriptwriting. Since then he's appeared in well-known television series, including *7de Laan*, *Villa Rosa*, and *Getroud met Rugby*. His film credits include *Hond se Dinges*, *Superhelde*, *Roepman*, *Verraaiers*, as well as the *Bakgat* franchise. His passion was born on stage where he had roles in *Dis Ek, Anna* (2006), *Hel op Hemel en Aarde* (2011), *Ben, Babsie en Familie* (2013) and *Beurkrag* (2016/2017).

Botha directed *Stroomop* from a screenplay crafted by himself, Roberts, and Sean Robert Daniels. The film, the Afrikaans title translates to upstream in English, follows the lives of five very unique, very diverse women who are all trying to keep their heads above water while drowning under the weight of the definition of being perfect.

I spoke to Botha about the inspirational women in his life, filming in water, and collaborative writing.

■ ***Why have you decided to make your debut as a director with *Stroomop*?***

The fact that the story and characters are well rounded and filled with twists and turns attracted me to the story. It's an honour to be a part of a film celebrating women.

■ ***What inspired the screenplay?***

We wanted to tell a story where women are the heroes of their own story, a film about self-discovery, self-acceptance, forgiveness, and healing.

■ ***You co-wrote the screenplay with your frequent creative collaborator Donnalee Roberts and Sean Robert Daniels. Tell me about the collaboration?***

It was awesome to collaborate, writing is often a lonely process. Each of us has unique strengths when it comes to writing and I believe each of our individual skills complemented the story.



■ ***Do you find it easier to write a screenplay by yourself or with collaborators you trust? Tell me about this?***

Donnalee and I have been writing together for six years, I would not have it any other way. Writing together works well for us, it allows for an immediate second opinion, and double the creativeness.

■ ***Stroomop is a film where the women save themselves, is this something you could easily relate to as a writer and director?***

Yes, the people who have inspired me the most in my life happen to be women, my mom, daughter, and Donnalee. Strong women who swim *Stroomop* daily and are the heroes of their own journey.

■ ***Tell me about the process from page to screen, what were the obstacles and how did you overcome it?***

The logistical elements regarding filming on water were our biggest challenge, in the writing process we did not allow anything to hold us back. We did a lot of test shoots on water to make sure we were prepared for the day. The reality of stunts and resets is a slow process, we had to plan well and give enough time to execute the script well.

■ ***How much has the industry changed since *Vir Altyd*?***

I see more and more filmmakers around me, more genres being explored, more daring stories being told. It is an exciting time to be in the industry.

■ ***How do you see the future for screenwriters in South Africa?***

It would be ideal to have more time in development, it is something we need to seriously focus on as producers, to allow more time and money for the story is essential. I also believe that writers should start to collaborate more, co-writing is the norm when it comes to international productions.

■ ***What advice would you give writers to get their work produced?***

Story story story. Make sure your story or even script/treatment is in a well-developed place before you approach a producer, be clear regarding why this story needs to be told and for who the story is.



■ ***It must have been an exciting and inspiring experience making your debut with a film that features the top talent in South Africa? How much did they contribute to the process?***

My cast and crew were and are world-class, I could not have asked for better. As mentioned with regard to the writing, filmmaking is a team effort. It takes a village.

■ ***What do you expect audiences to get from Stroomop?***

I hope people walk out having lost themselves on the journey with the characters, that they could identify with the characters and that they walk out changed.

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## ABOUT DANIEL DERCKSEN

Daniel Dercksen has been a contributor for Lifestyle since 2012. As the driving force behind the successful independent training initiative The Writing Studio and a published film and theatre journalist of 40 years, teaching workshops in creative writing, playwriting and screenwriting throughout South Africa and internationally the past 22 years. Visit [www.writingstudio.co.za](http://www.writingstudio.co.za)

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