

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH
CEO, FILMMAKER, PRODUCER, DIRECTOR, AND COSTUME DESIGNER
SCILLA ANDREEN

June 2, 2020

Host: Bryan Smith

Bryan Smith:

Thank you for being on the podcast.

Scilla Andreen:

Oh, thanks for having me, Bryan.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah, so we're here in your office, in Seattle, on a beautiful body of water. What lake is this?

Scilla Andreen:

Lake Washington.

Bryan Smith:

Lake Washington. And we're here with photographer Sarah Shannon. We are doing social distancing the best we can, in the middle of this pandemic, and hopefully toward the end of the pandemic. We're here to talk about your career, and why don't you just start off by telling us what IndieFlix is, because we're in the headquarters, apparently, of IndieFlix.

Scilla Andreen:

Yeah, the global headquarters, and isn't it an amazing-

Bryan Smith:

Oh my gosh,

Scilla Andreen:

-space?

Bryan Smith:

It is gorgeous here. Yeah, I mean, just so the listeners can understand what we're looking at. We're on Lake Washington and we are overlooking the Lake and a dock and it's hard to describe. I'll put pictures on the website, but it's so beautiful. This location, I can't imagine a more inspiring, peaceful, meditative location to have like a film company.

Scilla Andreen:

And that's a perfect segue because it is inspiring and healing. And I will say there have been many hills and valleys growing IndieFlix as a global streaming service, and now a screening

distribution service with offline community events. But the highs and the lows and the, whether it's when the world economy is in the toilet, or a pandemic, or a strike, or whatever is going on in the world. It's really nice to be able to look out at mother nature, to look at Mount Rainier, to look at Lake Washington, and it calms me and it keeps me pretty much focused on what I need to do. So I don't get caught up- If I think if I were in a cubicle, I probably would have, I don't know...

Bryan Smith:

Yeah.

Scilla Andreen:

I wouldn't have made it I don't think. So, IndieFlix is a global subscription-based streaming service and screening distribution service. Basically, think of it as two pieces- which, actually, think of it now, we've evolved. We're really like three legs of the stool. The three legs of the stool are: we have a streaming subscription service, we have a big offline community booking service of social impact films, and then we have- we also create original content now. And that's new and we're going to be creating a lot more original content. And, so the stuff that goes out into the schools, and corporations, and screens for existing communities is kind of our version of a theatrical. And the global streaming service is what you can watch, aAnd we have like 5,300 titles, shorts, features, documentaries, web series of content for a purpose.

Bryan Smith:

So, is it a fair comparison to say that IndieFlix is the equivalent of Netflix but just on an independent, sort of an indie film, educational film slant?

Scilla Andreen:

Yeah. I mean, put it this way. Up until about two years ago, we were sort of the Netflix of independent film. But two years ago I actually, we had over 12,000 titles, and I pretty much sloughed off about 7,000 plus titles, because I really wanted to be content for a purpose; movies that matter. And course all movies matter, right? Like for, depending on the reason why the filmmaker made it and for the audience, even horror has a reason for being, right?

Bryan Smith:

Yeah.

Scilla Andreen:

But I really wanted to focus on content that opened up conversations, made us more aware of things on a social level, created conversation. I wanted something where people would watch and then want to talk about it, or it reflected something that's going on in the world to maybe make someone feel not so alone. And so, I decided to pivot to focus on that. There's no point in trying to compete with Netflix, Hulu, Amazon, HBO, Disney+, Apple TV. All of those, it's like I love all of those, I'm a subscriber, I watch all my favorite shows on different places. So, I basically turned the brand around about two years ago to be content for independent thinkers.

Bryan Smith:
Okay.

Scilla Andreen:

And so that helped me open it up to be, not just Indies, but also edutainment focused content, social impact, social justice, branded content, experimental content, content from film schools that focused on climate change or you know. To me it had more focus.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah. It's interesting because it seems like as a lay person who's not in the industry, if I had 7,000 titles in my library to let that go, seems like it would be really hard for me to do.

Scilla Andreen:

It was really, really hard. And I think a lot of people thought I'd lost it, and- Because, you know, for so many years it was kind of an arms race with title count, especially with worldwide rights, which was really hard to get. We fought really hard and worked really hard to get those titles on our platform, and I was, you know, managing and working with the team to keep all of those filmmakers happy, which is always- Which can be really challenging, because you know, they put their content up on different platforms and they're like, "Where's the money? Like, show me the money." But you know, you have to be out there promoting it. You have to- and you're in the- There's just, it's, the market is saturated.

Bryan Smith:
Yeah.

Scilla Andreen:

And so then they're like, "Where's my money? It's been on your platform." It's like, "Have you been marketing it?" -"Well, have you?" And it's like, well, we have 12,000 titles, it's hard for us to market your movie. You know, our model was based on you marketing your movie. And I think that kind of is a rule of thumb for any platform, including Netflix and Hulu and Amazon. Even though you go up on those platforms, you still need to promote your content for people to know where to find it.

Bryan Smith:

That's interesting. It sounds like then just having the titles, that that in and of itself is, it's great, but then there's a burden that comes with that, or responsibility that you have to weigh the pros and the cons of having that additional content out there. And also, I think I noticed in one of your social media posts and Instagram posts in the background, there was a -not that I'm stalking you on social media-

Scilla Andreen:
{laughs}.

Bryan Smith:

-but one of your most recent posts, you had a Seth Godin book. And I listened to Seth Godin, his akimbo podcast, and he talks about this concept of the smallest viable audience that you should be seeking to obtain and retain, you know, your smallest viable audience. Which is sort of counterintuitive for someone who wants to be out there and be seen and be heard, and you have this platform. But the counterintuitive part for me is: you're narrowing the scope of what your mission is. Which, I think takes a lot of wisdom to do and discipline, because otherwise if you just go in like a, you know, I just want to be everything to everybody, you're going to be nothing to everybody.

Scilla Andreen:

No, that's exactly right. You know, when I sloughed off those titles, when I had to let filmmakers know that because of the new mandate that I had implemented of content for a purpose and wanting to sort of occupy this edutainment space. A lot of them were really upset with me. They were like, "F you, you're like abandoning the indie filmmaker." And it's just like, look, if I don't make a change, also we won't be here, because I can't come out there and present ourselves as your source for independent film when we don't have the latest films from Sundance and Cannes and Toronto and Telluride. Because Amazon, Netflix, and Hulu are paying \$8-10 million dollars for those films. And the general public, well they love going to film festivals, and they like seeing the films in the festival. They don't particularly want to stream them. They want to go there for the festival experience.

Scilla Andreen:

And if there's one thing I've learned is, I've learned about the human condition in being a CEO. That is the number one thing I've learned. Filmmakers are, you know, I just thought, hh my gosh, I so naively thought I'm going to hang a shingle, start IndieFlix with my producing partner Carlo, who actually stepped back six months after we've started it because he's like, "I'm a theater guy. I can't see the audience, this isn't for me." The filmmakers were like, "I don't know, I don't want to put my content online." That's how long we've been around. We were DVD on demand in the early days.

Bryan Smith:

Oh wow.

Scilla Andreen:

And then we've evolved, you know, download, download, own progressive download streaming, you know, movie club. We've done, we've done a lot of different iterations of getting audiences to come in and to watch content. But it's really hard to compete with the big guys. And since we've made this move, it's been game changing. I mean it's, people know who we are, they know what to expect. The content that gets submitted is amazing. And we're still working on getting- cleaning up the library to be even more focused on content for a purpose and what that really means.

Bryan Smith:
Yeah.

Scilla Andreen:

We have classics on there and people are like, "How's that content for a purpose?" It's like we have a decent sized footprint abroad and they love the classics, and they think it's good for you. It's pretty innocent content. And so we've left that up there. So you know, the transition is always tough, especially when you have so many, so much content and so many filmmakers. And it was really controversial. People were really, really, as I said, really angry and now they've gotten over it. Thankfully, there are hundreds of streaming platforms out there that they can go on. So, not being on IndieFlix is not going to hurt them.

Bryan Smith:
Right.

Scilla Andreen:
Right?

Bryan Smith:
Yeah. And I would imagine that there are tons of filmmakers who want to get into filmmaking. And maybe edutainment, is that what you call it?

Scilla Andreen:
Uh-huh.

Bryan Smith:
Edutainment is a way to do that. It's, it's an opening that's maybe a little more accessible for them, but the problem that they probably have seen historically is, how do you make money from that? How do you monetize a 30 minute documentary when you don't have access to studio executives? Netflix, you know, made for Netflix projects, and your company provides an answer to that or a solution because the content there, it sounds like it's going out to schools and schools are subscribing and are using this to teach their students about really current, important subjects.

Bryan Smith:
Yeah. Schools are utilizing the content on the site to teach, or to just have conversation. But then we also have the whole other side of the business, which is where we book films into schools. That screen, you know, like an assembly or an evening screening, or in a boardroom of a corporation, and they might sell tickets or they might- and they'll have, you know, anywhere from like, you know, 20 people to 1800 or 2000 people, and then they might screen it in every single classroom. So, 3000 kids will watch it plus their parents on an evening screening during the course of a week.

Bryan Smith:

So how does that work from a subscription standpoint? Is the school able to subscribe under a certain type of subscription where they can just play it to all of their students without worrying about the cost per student? Or do you actually charge per student or per classroom or what is the monetization-

Scilla Andreen:

It's a license fee.

Bryan Smith:

Okay.

Scilla Andreen:

It's outside of the subscription service, which is \$4.99 a month or \$39 a year. You know, when you are using what we call the distribution lab, it's a completely separate license and it's for completely separate content. So, the content that we take out into schools is kind of like newer content. So, It is not available on the streaming service. And sometimes people get frustrated by that. They're like, "Well why can't I just like subscribe and watch Angst, or Like or, The Upstanders, or Finding Kind, or Empowerment Project on IndieFlix.

Scilla Andreen:

And it's because there is no conversation. So the whole point of having these, you know, school screenings, basically, is that then you have a conversation and when an existing community witnesses each other watching a film, whether it's about anxiety and depression or it's about empowerment, equality, bullying, social media addiction, then you establish that community as a safe place to talk about it. And you start sharing information and resources, and then it starts to evolve and you actually have an impact with your film. Well, the film is just a tool to open up the conversation.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah.

Scilla Andreen:

And when you have it on the streaming service, not that many people are going to watch it or they might watch it, but then there's no one to have conversation with. And so it doesn't have sort of that therapeutic effect or impact.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah.

Scilla Andreen:

And if we were to have any of these films down at the, you know, AMC or Lincoln theaters, no one's going to go down there and watch a movie about mental health. We can certainly put it up

on PBS and all the PBS Watchers, we'll watch it. There's still no conversation that's being had. So having these old fashioned, face-to-face, human being- Before COVID-19 and social distancing, we gathered auditoriums, and we watched concerts, and we watched movies, and we got together. And the schools were- it was an amazing venue to bring community together.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah, that's what I noticed about watching Angst, and Like, and Upstanders- watching them alone is great. I mean, 'cause they're very well done, high production value, important, very current. But without that conversation, it isn't having the impact probably that it was meant to have.

Scilla Andreen:

No, and didn't you want to talk to somebody?

Bryan Smith:

Yeah. And I had, I had a family member that I wanted to talk to about angst and it's, it is a perfect segue I think into difficult subjects.

Scilla Andreen:

Yeah. It's modeling it for you, how to have that conversation. You know, when you tell a kid, "Well, just speak up." They're like, "What do I say?"

Bryan Smith:

Yeah.

Scilla Andreen:

Right? Or, this is my favorite, I was told this growing up: follow your passion. I'm like, well, I like to watch TV. I like to ride my bike. I like, like what does that mean follow your passion? Or here's another good one: just be you.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah.

Scilla Andreen:

Ooh. If I were me and someone knew how I was feeling right now, they would never hire me, or they would know- You know, like, they wouldn't want to be my friend because I don't feel good right now. So, how do we, you know, how do we break that down? I think movies are really good at that, 'cause it kind of, you can model it and then you can feel it. And when both are happening, that's something you can remember and act on.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah, and it was neat to see the students, or young people, brought into to be subjects in these films, because they are experiencing the same things that our kids are experiencing, but they're

articulating them in a very vulnerable way, and so there, I think, our kids when they see them are going to be like, "Okay, so there's other people out there who are feeling what I'm feeling, but they're saying it at least." And then you have the adults like in the movie or the film *Angst* who are acknowledging their insensitivity or their lack of understanding and empathy for the situation. Because if you don't have anxiety, for instance, talking about *Angst* -and I've been very lucky, to have... I mean, everybody has anxiety to a certain degree, but the diagnosable anxiety that stops you in your tracks.

Scilla Andreen:
The disorder.

Bryan Smith:
Basically. Yeah, the DSM anxiety. If you don't have that level of anxiety, there's no way for you to really understand what they're going through. And then the danger of that dynamic is that the person who doesn't have anxiety, usually the adult who is judging the child, is going to be imposing expectations on them that are just not realistic. Which creates havoc in a family. So, that was nice to see played out. Another thing I like about those films is they come in under an hour. Now, when I'm looking at any type of content online, I'm looking at: what is the commitment here?

Scilla Andreen:
Yeah. Well, 'cause that's your investment is your time.

Bryan Smith:
Right.

Scilla Andreen:
I'm the same if someone says, "Oh, can you watch this real quick? It's only 16 minutes." I'm like, "Oh my God, that's a quarter of an hour." You know, like how do I carve that- I mean, right now I'm kind of crazy busy, but- So that feels long to me.

Bryan Smith:
Yeah.

Scilla Andreen:
I'll watch something that's like... Three minutes I can do. But when you start to get into seven and eight minutes, that's, that's a bigger chunk of time.

Bryan Smith:
Yeah.

Scilla Andreen:
Isn't that awful?

Bryan Smith:

It is awful, yeah. Put my kids every morning, you know, they have to show me all of the TikToks that they've gathered from the night before and it's, it's like, "Okay, I need to sit down and I need to look at these TikToks...."

Scilla Andreen:

But they're kind of fun, aren't they?

Bryan Smith:

TikToks are- I have to admit...

Scilla Andreen:

At least they're entertaining.

Bryan Smith:

I have to admit, the ones they pick out are really worth watching.

Scilla Andreen:

Yeah, they're cute.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah. It's interesting how our, how our culture has- is shifting in these various directions toward very specific types of content-

Scilla Andreen:

Yeah.

Bryan Smith:

-delivered in this way.

Scilla Andreen:

I'm curious how long TikTok will last.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah. Well, Vine, I don't know what happened with Vine, but Vine was kind of a similar-

Scilla Andreen:

Loved vine...

Bryan Smith:

-type of thing, I don't know.

Scilla Andreen:
Maybe too early for its time.

Bryan Smith:
Yeah, but now, but then you've got the security concerns with TikTok, 'cause it's a Chinese company.

Scilla Andreen:
The kids don't care about that.

Bryan Smith:
No, they don't.

Scilla Andreen:
They don't. Just like when I was telling them that Snapchat may not necessarily delete your snaps, and they were like, "Oh, okay."

Bryan Smith:
Yeah.

Scilla Andreen:
Like, no, they were sorta like, "Oh... Oh, okay. I'll just keep doing it."

Bryan Smith:
So, are you in a place right now where, in your career, you know that narrative films are not where you're going and probably will not end up in the next 10 years or you, are you thinking about narrative films in your future?

Scilla Andreen:
Totally. I mean, I come from the narrative world, it's where I started.

Bryan Smith:
That's right. Yeah, it was the television...

Scilla Andreen:
...features and then television. I did The Wonder Years, and Party of Five, and Dawson's Creek. I was the costume designer. And so I grew up in episodic television, and I also did feature films. I was a Warner Brothers and Sony girl. So to be so heavily immersed in the doc world is newer for me, but I love it. I mean, it's definitely a place I'll stay, but I long to get back to my roots. So I very much plan to create narrative content as well. However you can best tell a story is what I want to tell.

Bryan Smith:

Hmm.

Scilla Andreen:

And what I want to support and other people's content.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah. When I was at Sundance this year, I was on the red carpet a few times asking actors about television versus film, and I got the same answer every time. I'm usually, the question was like, "What do you prefer, television versus film? And everyone said the same thing, "I don't care. There is no difference for me."

Scilla Andreen:

Yeah.

Bryan Smith:

"It's all about the story. If I'm able to tell a story, that's where I am."

Scilla Andreen:

Well, what I love about television is that you get to know your characters and you get to stay with them. Whereas a movie is a one off.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah.

Scilla Andreen:

And unless there's sequels, you don't get to see them again. So, you know, do I want to make episodic television about homelessness, empowerment, quality, bullying, resilience, connection, community? Yeah.

Bryan Smith:

Uh-huh.

Scilla Andreen:

If that can come through and inspire people to be their best selves or to pushed out of their comfort zone to be kinder to someone else, because it's reflected in some entertaining of content I'm in.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah, that's what I've noticed about television as well and starting with, for me anyway, the television series that was the game changer was The Sopranos, where you have these character arcs that last an entire season, or an entire series, seven or eight seasons, and that type of storytelling where it's slow, it's methodical, and you really get invested in those characters. That's why I think, for me, television is where it's at.

Scilla Andreen:

Television is where it's at, but I will tell you that there's a, like I go up to the sort of 70,000 foot level, because I want to be a platform that just, you know, it's oversimplifying, but that does good in the world. I want to have content that people can go, we have more titles than Netflix does right now. So, it isn't about size, it isn't about volume of titles. It's about, you know, sure there's probably a tipping point of content, a number of titles you have to have in order to be, you know, refreshing and it's enough for masses to come and watch.

Scilla Andreen:

But what I also really want is for, you know, when I was thinking about this the other night, people who watch Netflix or streaming services, I think are generally probably a little bit healthier than people who watch TV, and are bombarded with all the pharmaceutical ads that we get every other ad. You know, it's like, there is either some condition or disorder that is going on that you might have. So, there's a pill you can take.

Bryan Smith:

Right.

Scilla Andreen:

And I'm just thinking, you don't see any of that on streaming service.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah.

Scilla Andreen:

So, you're not being programmed like, they call it programming for a reason, right? You're not being programmed with all this stuff that makes you feel like- I mean, I've watched this one with a woman who's going like this and there's a little wind up thing on her back. I'm like, "That's me. Maybe I have that 'cause I'm so tired." And then you realize I'm just tired. Maybe just a day off would be good. Or a walk in the park or, you know, some sleep.

Bryan Smith:

Well, I think it's important too, to be intentional about how you spend your time, and what you watch. And that's what's nice about Netflix, and Hulu, and IndieFlix, where you go in, and there is a certain, at least a certain degree of intentionality to what you're doing. And you're being inundated with like, "Hey, what about this? And based upon your interests, you may like this." That's great. But yeah the network television experience, for me, I have not been part of the network television culture for 10 years probably.

Scilla Andreen:

Oh, you were an early cord cutter?

Bryan Smith:

Yeah, I haven't been doing that.

Scilla Andreen:

See, I have it all, because I feel like I have to have it all, so that I understand what's going on- is I can comment on the landscape, but it is, I mean- I will say since COVID-19 hit the ads have never been better. You know how the super bowl- Do you watch the super bowl ads at least?

Bryan Smith:

Yeah.

Scilla Andreen:

Right, so we still all watch those.

Bryan Smith:

Oh, sure.

Scilla Andreen:

Because they're entertainment in themselves. Right? The ads right now are just people being people, and they're taking from zoom, and Skype and, you know, all the ways that people are connecting.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah.

Scilla Andreen:

And making, telling, shaping those stories, and having these ads. And they're so- They make you feel, it's about people, it's about transparency, it's about caring. And that brand is associating themselves with caring, and you know, I just feel like, wow, what a great opportunity. I hope that it stays that way. Sure, entertain us too, like, we need that too. But I love the shift and it's not about, 'I'm going to sell you something.'.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah.

Scilla Andreen:

Right.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah. Well, and that's- It's interesting, I talked to an advertising -I never thought on this podcast that I would interview someone from the advertising world. But one of my good friends from high school, his older brother is like the superstar in the ad world, and he has an office in London, in Seattle; his name's Jim Haven. And if you're interested look at jimhaven.com, at his website; the

portfolio is amazing. But his commercials are like, when you refer to his work as a commercial, you almost feel like you're insulting him. He doesn't take it personally at all. He'll call it a commercial, but these are not commercials. These are stories-

Scilla Andreen:

Yeah.

Bryan Smith:

-that are being told and they're intimate, they're personal, they're real, they're authentic, and they're engaging. And that's the type of storytelling anybody likes to see, whether it's in a commercial, or a television series, or a movie.

Scilla Andreen:

Well, and that's just it. I mean, I think even when BMW a long time ago did some sort of campaign and it got Guy Richie, the director,, and a couple of other hot directors to do these little spots for BMW and have kind of a story and a super high action production value; super polished and slick. We were all like, "Oh my God, that's so great because they're crossing over, and..." But the thing is, is like you said, all we want to do is tell our stories and it doesn't matter what the running time is, and it doesn't, it doesn't matter if it's a feature, or TV, or a documentary, or whatever it is. Even if it's just on your phone, right? On an Instagram...

Bryan Smith:

Yep.

Scilla Andreen:

TV thing, or IGTV. Tell your story, tell it well and be engaging. Now everybody can tell their stories. Look at TikTok, it's awesome. I love it.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah.

Scilla Andreen:

The gatekeepers are like, it's becoming a little bit blended there.

Bryan Smith:

It really is. And sometimes you'll see YouTube stars that's like there, that's there CV, that's their resume. I'm a YouTube star, but now I'm on television, or in a movie. And same thing with TikTok and Vine stars. I think people got their start in Vine- there are people that got their start in Vine.

Scilla Andreen:

Yeah.

Bryan Smith:

And now they're in the acting world, or in the entertainment world in some way. I think commercials are often treated unfairly by artists, because there's a lot of artistry in commercial work and a lot of great storytelling in commercials.

Scilla Andreen:

Oh, yeah. And it's selling.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah, that's true.

Scilla Andreen:

They know the psychological things to hit, too.

Bryan Smith:

Uh, huh. Yeah, sometimes- Well, I know if I'm crying during a commercial, it's like this is a pretty powerful stuff to make me cry in like, 30 seconds or a minute. As I get older, it's just easier and easier to do.

Scilla Andreen:

Yeah.

Bryan Smith:

I cry more than my wife does, I'm sure. So, how did you find Hollywood? I looked at your background, and you started at NYU and then you found your way to television and film in Hollywood. And you were down in Los Angeles for quite some time. Tell us how that happened.

Scilla Andreen:

So, I was at NYU studying political science, because I wanted to be a litigator. I love the law. In fact it's funny during COVID-19, like when I can't sleep, I watch old Perry Mason episodes, relive my childhood. But I fell in love with the director while attending NYU and I ended up dropping out, and working on commercials and industrials with him, and made a lot of money. And that was really great for a starving student, and I never went back.

Scilla Andreen:

I then went to see my mom who had moved to LA, and she used to be an actress, so she was down there and she'd been started a little casting company. And I ended up getting on a little independent film there that I did the costuming and styling out of the trunk of my car, and then kind of went on to another movie, and another movie. And then I got The Wonder Years-

Bryan Smith:

Oh, iconic.

Scilla Andreen:

And worked with some of the best actors, writers, directors, and producers in the business. And just kind of, you know, went to different shows working with my tribe, and we all kind of grew up in the business together. And then I was doing my first sitcom called What I Like About You, with Amanda Bynes and Jenny Garth and Leslie Grossman. And I dunno, I just, I was... I was wrapping up that show and I was working on a big Disney pilot with an actress that I won't name, who was from a huge show. And she had me running around looking for this \$150 thong.

Bryan Smith:

{laughing} Oh no...

Scilla Andreen:

And she was playing a- just a suburban mom who wore jeans and a sweatshirt.

Bryan Smith:

Sorry, because you were a costume designer in that business?

Scilla Andreen:

And I said, you actually don't, but I would produce and direct short films and feature films during my hiatus.

Bryan Smith:

Okay.

Scilla Andreen:

Because I just love making movies.

Bryan Smith:

Alright, was it Miranda Cosgrove? Tell me.

Scilla Andreen:

No, I'm not going to tell you...

Bryan Smith:

Or- Okay. {Laughs}.

Scilla Andreen:

'Cause I ended up being, you know, like she was tough and in fact I was hired to do the job, because I was known working really well. I worked really well with difficult people, kids, and animals. And so I was like, okay. And I was driving in Beverly Hills, I had already tried to find this \$150 thong, the company did not exist anymore. I'd offered to build it. She wanted that brand, that thong to wear under her jeans, which by the way, she never took her jeans off like it was- There was never, ever, it was just for her to have.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah.

Scilla Andreen:

And I couldn't find it. And I was driving in Beverly Hills and the light, you know, the sun was shining in my eyes, and I was turning and I almost hit a pedestrian who slammed their hands down on my hood and said, "Watch, where you're going." And I just stopped and I looked and I'm like, what am I doing? Like, what am I doing with my life? I almost killed somebody, I'm chasing \$150 phantom thong, that I already know for a fact doesn't exist anymore because the company shut down, like, a year ago in France. And so I was like, I have more to offer in life than this. There's got to be more that can offer. And that's when I started looking at something else that I can do in film where I could contribute. And I knew the power of film in my own life, having seen movies that changed my life. And still to this day are, you know, I watch a little scene from them to bring me back to my- they're my beacon. So, started IndieFlix with my good friend Carlo, and the rest is history.

Bryan Smith:

Well what a cinematic moment that is, where they slam their hands on your hood, and they tell you something that's almost prophetic. You know, like watch where you're going and what they mean at the moment is literally, "Watch where you're going, don't hit me." But you're interpreting it as sort of this cosmic message.

Scilla Andreen:

Yeah.

Bryan Smith:

Really watch where you're going.

Scilla Andreen:

Yeah.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah. That's a cool story.

Scilla Andreen:

Yeah, it was the, it was the pivotal moment for me. And then I dreamt about the name IndieFlix, I dreamt that I was in New York. I was at some fabulous apartment with like floor to ceiling windows. I always dreamed like a filmmaker. And I was sitting down on this sort of like beautiful leather pillowy thing on the floor next to this fireplace, looking out, I think it was at central park South, 'cause I could see all of central park. And I hear someone say, "Oh, have you met Sheila? She has a company called IndieFlix." And they go, "Oh my God, I love IndieFlix." And so I stand up out of frame and talk to whoever it is. And I woke up and I went to, in those days I

think it was network solutions or something, and I put it in and it was available, and it was expensive, but I bought it.

Scilla Andreen:

And then I went to work at Warner Brothers and I said, "I have the name of my company, it's called IndieFlix." And they were like, "Oh, I've heard of you." And I said, "No, you couldn't have heard of me, 'cause I just bought it and we don't exist." They're like, "Yeah, you're the Netflix of independent film." And I was like- this was when they were doing DVD.

Bryan Smith:

Oh my gosh.

Scilla Andreen:

And so I was like, "Oh, they've already heard of us." And then people were saying, "You can't do that, Netflix will sue you". And so I said, "Well, if I'm going to get sued, I better get sued right now." So, I emailed Reed Hastings who sent back- he goes, "No, I think it's great. Good luck."

Bryan Smith:

Yeah, no trademark infringement there.

Scilla Andreen:

Right. So, and I still will send him things occasionally and he'll respond and say, "I like it." I made a commercial once called, Keeping My Netflix, and I got my friends, and my family, and my neighbors, and everyone who worked for IndieFlix.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah.

Scilla Andreen:

And... cleared out my living room, and filmed this little ad called, I'm Keeping My Netflix. And everyone's like, "Keeping my Netflix, give me my Netflix." And then they said, "But I'm adding IndieFlix because, and then all the reasons why to add IndieFlix."

Bryan Smith:

Oh, that's brilliant. Because you can't fight that type of momentum. So why not just hop on that wave?

Scilla Andreen:

Right. And why would you, I wouldn't want to give up that flex. Are you kidding? And I sent that to Reed and he's like, "Oh, cute. I like it."

Bryan Smith:

That's great. Well, let's go back to The Wonder Years, because that's one of the first television series that I remember from.... it was my late teens, I think. But really falling in love with characters like you, just...

Scilla Andreen:
Winnie Cooper?

Bryan Smith:
Yeah, Winnie... Oh, what's the main character's name?

Scilla Andreen:
Kevin Arnold; Fred Savage.

Bryan Smith:
Fred Savage's character, yeah. But these are characters that you're just so rooting for. And the period part of it too, I think was pretty unique. I don't think that had been done in television up to that point.

Scilla Andreen:
Well, I mean, there was like Happy Days and stuff like that.

Bryan Smith:
Well, that's true, but not in this dramatic way that I had ever seen. I'd seen it in sitcoms. But I was- I loved those characters, I loved the series. Did you, at the time, know how special it was?

Scilla Andreen:
Yes.

Bryan Smith:
When you were doing the costume design?

Scilla Andreen:
A hundred percent. I actually did not do the pilot, I came on first episode. I saw the pilot, they aired it after Superbowl Sunday. And I've watched it and I just- something... It's like Cupid shot an arrow through my whole being. Like I just got- I became obsessed, and I had to work on that show. And I tracked down where they were shooting, and I went down there and I said, "Can I work here?" And they were like, "No, and we're not hiring." And I kept saying, "I'll do anything, I will sweep floors, I will do anything." And they were like, "No." And I kept going back, and going back, and like the fourth, or fifth time I went back. And I'd bring cookies, And I'd be like- anything, I was shameless. And I'm not that way, actually. This was out of character for me.

Scilla Andreen:

But I was, I just had never had a show that I wanted to be a part of so badly. And the designer at the time was standing in the hallway when I came in and she said, "Well, I can use you, you can sort hangers for me, and clean up the wardrobe room." And I said, "Great!" And so I did that, and I did it so fast, she thought it was gonna take me like, I dunno, a couple of weeks. She wanted me to organize every single article of clothing with racks, and racks of clothes- of sixties clothing. And so I organized, and tagged, and sized everything in like three or four days. And so then she gave me more things to do, and I ended up becoming her assistant.

Scilla Andreen:

And then she got fired. So, they brought in someone else, and I started training her and getting her ready, whatever, and she didn't like it. So, she left and they said, "We're going to find someone else. We're going to need you to train them too." And I said, "Just give it to me." And they said, "Well, no, because we need someone who's lived in that time period." And I said, "Are you kidding me? How do you think they made Ben-Hur?" And you know, like, so the old movies or even like Sci-Fi, you know, like Star Wars. I mean, you can't have lived in a time period to be able to costume designer, or art design, or set design anything. So they were like, "But you're so young. Cause I was early twenties."

Bryan Smith:

Yeah.

Scilla Andreen:

And I said, "I got this, look, I've carried two other designers, I can do this." So they did, and then I said, "Just give me a couple episodes if you're not happy, I'll train someone else." And so I took over the show, and then my producer called, oh, well I don't know at some point, and said, "Oh, congratulations on your Emmy." And I didn't even know what an Emmy was. It's like, what is an Emmy for costume design?

Bryan Smith:

It's only the best award ever for television.

Scilla Andreen:

But I didn't win, Beauty and the Beast won.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah.

Scilla Andreen:

But it was fun being nominated and, you know, going to the show and everything.

Bryan Smith:

Was that your first, like, awards experience-

Scilla Andreen:
Yeah.

Bryan Smith:
-where you're at- there on the red carpet and, yeah. That must be cool.

Scilla Andreen:
Yeah, that whole thing. That was a whole 'nother night where I didn't know that my husband got carsick. So, we're- ABC and New World had sent a limo, and we got in the car and I'm like, "This is so exciting. And he's like throwing up, because he has to be driving, otherwise he gets car sick. So, he ended up sitting up front with the driver and I sat in the back and- Oh, it was a whole thing. {laughs}.

Bryan Smith:
So, what kind of relationships did you develop in that television series that resulted in other opportunities?

Scilla Andreen:
Oh, I mean all my shows. Because I- they all, you know, people would break away from a show and go to different shows, and sometimes it was almost like a tug of war. No, come do mine, no come to mine... And so that's how I then went on to Party of Five, and I did the pilot of Dawson's Creek- I did not go and do the whole series, I did the first... couple episodes and got a local crew trained up there, and then handed off the show. I didn't want to move to North Carolina.

Bryan Smith:
Yeah.

Scilla Andreen:
And then Smallville- I went up, and actually that was more like a, kind of a come in and -not fix- but there were some issues. And so I was sort of the person to go in and sort of set the boat-right this ship. And then well, so then when it came down to the- I did another show called Jack and Jill, which was really fun with Amanda Peet, and Justin Kirk, and Ivan Sergey, and Sarah Paulson.

Bryan Smith:
Sarah Paulson's amazing.

Scilla Andreen:
She's unbelievable. And Sarah Paulson and Amanda Peet are just the best of friends, and they were just a hoot to work with. And that was a great show to work on, it was so fun. Then I- When I- Before I went onto my first sitcom, with Amanda Bynes and Jenny Garth, I got offered Six Feet Under.

Bryan Smith:
Oh...

Scilla Andreen:
And I was just like, "Yes, this is so good." And my kids were like, "Please do Amanda Bynes!" 'Cause she was like the Miley Cyrus at the time.

Bryan Smith:
Uh-huh.

Scilla Andreen:
And I was just like, "I'm not going to do a sitcom. I'm a, you know, episodic girl."

Bryan Smith:
Yeah.

Scilla Andreen:
I ended up somehow accepting that one and my whole crew was -who comes with me everywhere I go- they're like, "Do it, say calm! We won't work 18 hour days, we'll have a much easier schedule." And so I said, "Okay fine." And I did a sitcom and I didn't realize you have a life. It's the only show you can do in the industry where you actually can have a life.

Bryan Smith:
Right.

Scilla Andreen:
Because you only shoot, you know, two days.

Bryan Smith:
Um-hmm.

Scilla Andreen:
And you get a hiatus.

Bryan Smith:
Yeah.

Scilla Andreen:
So, it was really fun, but it was hard to turn that down.

Bryan Smith:
Oh my gosh, yeah. And then to look at where that show went, I mean that's like one of the first HBO series that really kind of was a game changer, I think.

Scilla Andreen:

Yeah.

Bryan Smith:

Like one of The Sopranos types of series. But, like we do in life, when you look back on crossroads, if you had taken that path as opposed to...

Scilla Andreen:

I wouldn't have started IndieFlix.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah, yeah. You wouldn't be where you are today.

Scilla Andreen:

It opened up my life to be able to come up with something else to do.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah.

Scilla Andreen:

I never- I don't think there are any- People don't always love when I say this, especially in my family, but they're all accustomed to it now. I think that every time something is challenging or hard, that means that the opportunity is even greater.

Bryan Smith:

Um-hmm.

Scilla Andreen:

And that every single thing that happens in your life, it's happening for a really good reason. Not just a reason, but a really good reason. You can choose to take away just a reason, or no reason, but I choose to think that everything is happening for a really great reason. We have to pay attention. You have to be present.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah. Well, yeah, I've heard that sentiment before. It's like nothing worthwhile comes easy.

Scilla Andreen:

I don't like that saying. {laughs}

Bryan Smith:

Well, it's... Nothing...Nothing that has ever been worthwhile, for me, has ever come easy. Except for my kids, that was pretty easy, you know?

Scilla Andreen:
See?

Bryan Smith:
Having kids... {laughs}.

Scilla Andreen:
You've already just blown that out of the water. I don't believe that one. The whole no pain, no gain... Like, why do I have to go through pain to gain? That is really negative programming. I don't like that. You know what, I think it's better to say: sometimes there's pain.

Bryan Smith:
Yeah.

Scilla Andreen:
And you can still gain.

Bryan Smith:
You can push through it and still get there.

Scilla Andreen:
If we can turn the dials and change the way we view things, right? That -oh- this one really killed me in the early days, was that, you know... What was it, one of the greatest characteristics- oh, patience, right? You've gotta have patience. It's like, why? I could be waiting forever. Can I just go after something? Why do I have to be patient?

Bryan Smith:
Right.

Scilla Andreen:
That's like saying, wait.

Bryan Smith:
Well my, when I first- You know, you wanted to be a litigator before you became a filmmaker, and I actually am a litigator, so...

Scilla Andreen:
{laughs}.

Bryan Smith:
That's my day job, I'm a trial lawyer.

Scilla Andreen:

Oh my gosh.

Bryan Smith:

I think, you know, I think you chose the right path. Yeah, definitely. But you know, my boss when he first hired me was saying, "You need to pay your dues. This is all about paying your dues. You need to be the first one here, the last one to leave. You need to work Saturdays. I don't even care what you're doing on Saturdays. As long as I drive by and I see your car is here..." And I bought into that bullshit.

Scilla Andreen:

Yeah... but I think there's some truth to having experience under your belt.

Bryan Smith:

No, that's true. As long as the paying your dues part, is...

Scilla Andreen:

He was just getting some extra work out of you for nothing.

Bryan Smith:

Right. {laughs} But as long as, when you're paying your dues, you're doing meaningful work and you're putting in your 10,000 hours, your Malcolm Gladwell's 10,000 hours. And I think that's fine. I think that's a good paradigm.

Scilla Andreen:

You're also showing, you're proving you're a team player.

Bryan Smith:

Right, yeah. Because I think the work ethic -and this is, I don't want to offend Sarah who is part of this generation- but the younger generations, they're not buying into first one to work, last one to leave, working weekends no matter what.... They're more into, yeah, I'll work hard, but I'm not going to just do it for show. So, their values are different than I think the older generations are. And we're trying to accommodate that. But I think that's a good thing for our culture, that they're basically saying, "I'm not going to be part of this bullshit anymore."

Scilla Andreen:

You know, can I tell you that I work with a lot of millennials, a lot of women, a lot of millennials... My mother works with me she's, you know, pushing 80. And so we kind of run the gamut of age ranges and diversity. The millennials have taught me so much. I think it is the reason I'm still in business, because they're not, as- some of my friends say, "Oh, they're so entitled." I'm like, "Actually they have really great ideas and they're not afraid to share them." You know? So many people are afraid to share ideas and they sit on them, because they don't want to be judged, or look like they don't know what they're doing.

Scilla Andreen:

Millennials, I mean, think about young women who are going into the workforce, who have grown up with all this conversation about #metoo, and #timesup, and they're just like... They're walking in and, you know what, they better be entitled to think that I am allowed to have equal pay, and I have equal opportunity. I love that they're going in with that attitude with respect, with dignity. You know, they're not stupid. They can read people, they can read stuff on this stuff really easily. I mean, it's- And they can move, they're super, super smart and fast. The millennials that work with me, they're in before me sometimes. They're responding to me on the weekends, because their phone is in their hand a lot, so they're like, "Oh, I'll just take care of that now." So, they are probably what makes IndieFlix great.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah. And so they're working outside of regular office hours, because that's just, they're tuned in anyway.

Scilla Andreen:

Yeah.

Bryan Smith:

On their phone.

Scilla Andreen:

And maybe I just hired the right people, you know?

Bryan Smith:

Yeah.

Scilla Andreen:

They're not sitting there playing on Facebook. That's what you do when you're 13 and 14, that's not what you do when you're 19 and 20, they're over that. They're already over it. They're like- They're not, you know sure, they might do a few Snapchats, but they're not doing all the other stuff. Like, they're actually working, and they research really fast and they can throw something together, and they've got all these apps to make little commercials. And you're like, "How'd you do that?" And you're like, "Oh, there's this app. You just push that in. You're done in 30 seconds." You're like, "Wow. Like, unbelievable."

Bryan Smith:

Yeah. I think they're teaching us a lot, perhaps even more than we're teaching them. But it might be a slight overstatement, but they are, they're valuable. And I think they're underappreciated.

Scilla Andreen:

Yeah.

Bryan Smith:

And I think they're unfairly maligned...

Scilla Andreen:

Yeah.

Bryan Smith:

...For this. I mean, even the term "millennial," like if you say: is that a negative or a positive connotation? Most people are gonna say, "Ugh, millennials..."

Scilla Andreen:

Yeah,

Bryan Smith:

"They don't get it." Or, "They feel entitled."

Bryan Smith:

The entitlement culture, yeah. But I'm glad that you're seeing it like that.

Scilla Andreen:

But they're also coming into like having the checks, I mean, the credit cards, and they're paying for things. And they care about transparency. They care about brands that care about people, they care about our planet, they care about future. And so, they are going to hold society accountable.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah. And do you find that there, I'm not sure how to ask this question, but do you find that there's a certain sense of unattainability that they have when it comes to the wealth that was available from- in the 80s, and 90s, and 2000s, that does not seem to be, from their perspective, attainable anymore? I mean, they're not even fooling themselves, so that they-

Scilla Andreen:

I don't think they want it. I think-

Bryan Smith:

Yeah they...

Scilla Andreen:

I don't think that that's important to them. I think what's important to them is experiential. I think they, with the, you know, Airbnb -even though I know that's going to go through a rough comeback- but just the home sharing economy, the car sharing economy, the fact that you can work remote. That you can like experience the world and cultures and people, and create family

and home in many places around the world, and feel connected. I think is a rich life. Not having a bunch of stuff that you have to continually figure out how to pay for.

Bryan Smith:
They're redefining...

Scilla Andreen:
Wealth and affluence. And, I mean, think about people who just have the big fat house and a whole bunch of cars and stuff, and that's it. And then you think about the person who's traveling the world, knows some fabulous people, have had amazing experiences doing multiple things. I think kids are going to have, what, four or five careers of which, like, two or three haven't even been created yet. So, what's the one skill set they should have to be able to fulfill those other jobs? And I've always thought it should be storytelling. Communication.

Bryan Smith:
Mmmm, Yeah.

Scilla Andreen:
Whatever form, whether it's through coding, whether it's through film, whether it's through music, whether it's through writing. No matter AI, you know, VR, whatever it is. How do we communicate feeling, and story, and something that connects us. Something that makes us feel like we belong.

Bryan Smith:
Hmm. That's profound. Yeah. Storytelling is, ironically, I think storytelling is one of the things that has fallen to the wayside in education, and with the arts. And I was talking about Company Seven, I don't know if you remember an arts company from grade school called Company Seven. Do you remember that?

Scilla Andreen:
No, no.

Bryan Smith:
They would go into schools, and they would paint, and do charades, and drama, and all kinds of arts things.

Bryan Smith:
But I had that in grade school. I don't remember my kids having those types of experiences. And it seems like every generation the arts gets cut even further.

Scilla Andreen:
Yeah.

Bryan Smith:

And so the, you know, how do you learn how to tell stories or even what a, what a story is? And you know, it's one thing to like be assigned to read a Shakespeare play in high school, which everybody kind of grinds through and...

Scilla Andreen:

Yeah.

Bryan Smith:

You know, but to actually be a part of a storytelling curriculum would be really cool to see in our schools.

Scilla Andreen:

Yeah. And hello marketing, like which ties right into storytelling, right?

Bryan Smith:

Yeah.

Scilla Andreen:

Why are people not learning marketing? I just feel like- Even when I talk to filmmakers, I'm like, "Okay, you gotta market your film." They're like, "I don't know how to do that." I'm like, "You know how to make a movie, you know how to tell a story. You can market. You don't need to know SEO, and all that other stuff like that. That's different. That's, that's sort of the technical stuff. But to learn how to market your movie: Why should people watch it? Why did you make it? Who did you make it for? Identify your audience, break it down. Where does that audience live? What do they like? What do they eat? What do they care about? Infiltrate that, you know, like pitch your story to those people, speak their language. And you know, it's like, "What? No, I'm just a filmmaker." It's like you've got the tools, you've got the skill set already. You just now have to apply it, and it takes a little effort.

Bryan Smith:

Now, we know that you did not go through film school. You dropped out of your political science program, and kind of found your path in a unique way' very organically it sounds like. But what do you- like, if an 18-year-old high school senior comes to you and says, "Hey, I want to be a storyteller and I think I want to do this through film." Would you advise film school as a path?

Scilla Andreen:

You know, the best thing about film school is that you get to create your tribe; a network, you start building a network. And I think that that's what the, all industries are kind of based on that, right? Like how you get a job, and how you move up, and who your people are. But I think in film in particular, because in the early days, most people didn't go to film school. They just showed up in Hollywood, and they were waiting tables and either going to be trying to be an actor, producer, grip, electric, whatever it is until I got on something. And then once you get on that

first thing, you start to go onto something else, and then something else, and all of a sudden you've got a resume. And suddenly you get calls, and you're not sure, and you're in the union, and whatever.

Scilla Andreen:

Or you get on a series. Series are the best, I did three series. So you ran for seven years, so you can do other things in between. If you want to know, like, The history of film- you don't need to go to film school to learn how to operate equipment. You can learn that. Go be a PA, make little films. Nowadays you can make a movie with this. It's not the equipment, it's your ability to tell a story. So, some people, I think film school is great. Other people, I don't think it's necessary. I think learning on the fly and in the moment, I think is really powerful. And you are oftentimes paid to do it, even if it's just crap pay for your whole life, you know, for that period of time.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah.

Scilla Andreen:

But you're building your network, and from there it's easier to get to the next thing, which makes it easier to get to the next thing. And if you want to direct, you know, go be an assistant to a director, be a production assistant. Learn how it all happens. Be on set, be in the editing room. If you want to be a producer, be a producer's assistant. Work as a production assistant. Put your fingers in everything, and go the path where you're going to be at the beginning, the middle, and the end, but you're not sitting in the editing room. Because I think producers path and directors path have different paths, and then they start to blend over on the other side.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah. And that's their film school.

Scilla Andreen:

Yeah.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah, just doing it.

Scilla Andreen:

And you're being paid to do it and you're getting trusted, and you're building a network, and you're in it. And I think it's always important to be writing. Write a poem, write a lyric, write a tagline. Write. Practice writing. The beautiful thing is that kids are writing. Whether it's a tweet, a Facebook post, an Instagram post, a Snapchat... And they're putting images to it, and now they're putting video to it, and they're adding animation, and they're putting titles and music, and I mean, they're creating on the fly like this. It's like no brainer for them. Right?

Bryan Smith:

Yeah. Writing that I think is another- if I was going to give advice to young people would be, you know, write well or communicate well.

Scilla Andreen:

Yeah.

Bryan Smith:

That really is part of the storytelling. I mean, if you're going to be a good storyteller, you have to be able to write.

Scilla Andreen:

Yes.

Bryan Smith:

And you have to...

Scilla Andreen:

You have to be able to write for anything, I think. Unless, I mean sure, bagging groceries, you don't need to know how to write. But wouldn't it be nice if, when you go home after bragging groceries, you can like at least right about your day in a journal or something like that. It's another way to express ourselves. I also think, no matter what we do in life, we have to continue to nurture connection with ourselves in order to continue to thrive, and to keep our mental health in balance. And I think actually film school is probably really good for people who kind of want to take the path of, "Oh, I don't want to just go out and make stuff. Right? I actually want to know who I am as a filmmaker, who I am as a storyteller, and I want to learn by looking at other people really in depth from people who are super knowledgeable and I want to take that path." So, I think it just depends on who you are.

Bryan Smith:

If you need that structure.

Scilla Andreen:

Yeah.

Bryan Smith:

And you've got the cash.

Scilla Andreen:

You've got the cash, and you've got the time, and you've got the patience.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah.

Scilla Andreen:

I find a lot of kids are like, "I want to be a filmmaker. What do I do right now? How do I do that?" And I do always say, "You should probably move to Hollywood, 'cause it really helps to be down there." I think we think, as much as I would like to promote Seattle is the place you should come, the reality is, is that making movies and being in the film industry is not all that glamorous. And it's a lot of work, and a lot of long hours, and I think it's really important that kids know that. That People know that.

Bryan Smith:

They experience that, yeah.

Scilla Andreen:

Yeah.

Bryan Smith:

And you were there for 26 years, right?

Scilla Andreen:

Yeah. Long time. And I have been in, I mean my god, I've been in dirty, muddy ponds with snakes that they had put in for a low-budget Italian feature, where I'm sitting there and it's three in the morning, and I'm so tired. We're working six day weeks and it's just, it's just not glamorous.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah. Well that's certainly paying your dues.

Scilla Andreen:

Oh yeah, I've done it all.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah. Good advice. I like getting practical advice from the people I talked to on the podcast, because I think that's why people, my listeners, listen is they're looking for the how-tos. And being in Los Angeles, I've heard that from other guests as well, it helps. It's not everything, but it definitely helps to be there for networking, and also getting a sense for how unglamorous it is, it sounds like.

Scilla Andreen:

You know, film festivals, I highly recommend everyone go to film festivals, because it's not like going to the movies. You go to the movies with a community of people that actually want to talk about what you just watched. And oftentimes the filmmakers there, and I mean this COVID-19 thing is I love how everyone is sort of like quickly segwaying to online screenings, and chatting Q&A's and stuff, but it isn't the same.

Bryan Smith:

No.

Scilla Andreen:

But it's- Hey, it's great for now.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah. That's one of the reasons I go to Sundances as often as I can, is being in that audience and listening to the Q&A's, or participating in the Q&A's. There's no other way to do that, to connect with filmmakers like that. And even if you don't ask any questions, you're just like absorbing and watching it. These are human beings that are part of this creative process and it's a very humanizing experience, I think. Because it's not- I mean, they're there in their regular clothes, they're not glamorous usually. And so you see them in a very human way, and they're talking about their creative process and it's hard work. They've usually been at this for years by the time they hit the stage. And so you see what goes into it.

Scilla Andreen:

Yeah.

Bryan Smith:

And I love that part of it. And also when you do see the stars, too, you see that they're just regular people, you know? You get to hear their perspective on, you know, why they chose to do this independent film. And they're storytellers too.

Scilla Andreen:

Well, and you can also chat them up, you know, just seeing them around the festival too or just anybody. Like, you can talk film with people. In fact, it's funny when I got -I've been to Sundance, I don't know, 17 years or something- and I always seem to meet the people I'm supposed to meet in line for the bathroom. Like, it's just, it's a mixing of everyone. There's no levels, so much. I mean, I would- Actually, I should take that back, 'cause when they had the gifting suites and they were like everywhere, and you could only get in if you were on a list, and then they give you these big bags of stuff that everybody, of course we all want that stuff, we all want to be on that list.

Scilla Andreen:

That kind of segregated people a little bit, 'cause they'd go into these gifting suites where you could like get your makeup done, get your hair done, get a little massage, get this goodie bag, whatever, try some stuff on for free... And then that would take their whole afternoon. So, they weren't out in the restaurants, they weren't out on the streets. When Sundance kind of put the kibosh on that, suddenly they were out in droves, and they were out in the restaurants, and they were out on the streets, and you could bump into people and take photos with them, and talk to them about their art. And they were so grateful to be able to talk to people.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah. That's the coolest part about Sundance, for me, is how accessible it is just to be up close with people that we mythologize mostly.

Scilla Andreen:

Yeah.

Bryan Smith:

But they're not mythological figures. They're just regular people. I just hope that the festival circuit is able to stay viable after this COVID situation. That would be really sad. I know South by Southwest went online this year, and...

Scilla Andreen:

How was that? Do you know?

Bryan Smith:

I have not participated in it yet, but I'm going to try to connect with some filmmakers through that festival.

Scilla Andreen:

And SIFF canceled.

Bryan Smith:

SIFF canceled. And you're a big part of SIFF, aren't you?

Scilla Andreen:

I've been... There are years that I've been really big, whether I was a juror, or a sponsor, or a filmmaker. We had our film, my first feature film was at SIFF, but it overlaps with Cannes. So, I had to start kind of doing every other year. Cannes sort of became a sweet spot for me. I was one of the first female Americans to participate on a European panel, and for streaming services this was a long time ago. And so I have done quite a bit of stuff over there, as well. And so that was always an overlap. And then as I started to get into making *Angst* and *Like*, and getting involved with, you know, and showing them in sort of the international schools, and then kind of crossing over into other organizations. In Hong Kong and China, I was suddenly over there. I was at their first mental health summit in Schengen showing a rough cut of *Angst*.

Bryan Smith:

Oh wow.

Scilla Andreen:

At the second largest convention center in the country. And that was pretty trippy, but that was during... That wasn't during SIFF, that was during Sundance. That was the first time I missed Sundance.

Bryan Smith:

Oh.

Scilla Andreen:

And it felt really weird. Like, "Oh, something's wrong with this." But then I went over there and it's amazing. And then I'm sort of like, "How did I get here?" But movies are powerful. Movies can heal, movies bring us together. Movies, you know, I always think music and movies are the most powerful mediums on the planet. And, you know, when you can show a movie to 2000, or in some instances we'll hit a school and hit 13,000 students, like in two weeks. When we do that, suddenly it's like, "Wow, we've just reached a lot of people and had a lot of conversation really fast."

Bryan Smith:

Making an impact.

Scilla Andreen:

Yeah. And then we'd have all these materials we'd leave behind too, to keep the conversation going. And then we can measure our impact. So, we're actually seeing that we are having an impact.

Bryan Smith:

So, do you know if SIFF is going to be online this year, or are they just canceled completely?

Scilla Andreen:

No, I think they're completely canceled.

Bryan Smith:

Oh, oh that's so sad.

Scilla Andreen:

I know.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah. I just started getting into SIFF last year.

Scilla Andreen:

It's a long one, 25 days.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah, yeah. But it's, it seems to be the ,one of the more accessible festivals. You know, you can get tickets.

Scilla Andreen:

Yeah. I think what has always- because I go to Toronto, SIFF, Cannes, Sundance, and sometimes I'll go to some other smaller ones as well. But like Toronto, and Sundance, and Cannes are so... They, I mean, sure there's lots of other places you can go to watch things, but it's very close together. So, it's crowded, you feel people, it's not very COVID-19 friendly.

Bryan Smith:

No.

Scilla Andreen:

But it's community.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah.

Scilla Andreen:

And SIFF is more spread out, so SIFF might actually do well during COVID-19. Other than the theater experience. But still it's like, it's pretty much like, I mean- Seattle Center has it, but then it's at downtown Renton... Like it's spread out, because it's bringing the festival to the people, which I love. But you kind of, you know, the community feel is a little different.

Bryan Smith:

It is. I mean, I remember at Sundance- I'm mostly at Eccles theater when I'm at Sundance, which is the main, where the red carpet premiers are. And if you're a at Eccles, you do see, I mean you're in line with- I met Kenneth Turan, the Los Angeles Times film critic in line there.

Scilla Andreen:

Yeah.

Bryan Smith:

And you're just kind of like, "Wow, this is so cool." And it's very tight knit, literally tight knit, you're just in these really cramped lines, eating this-

Scilla Andreen:

Lots of kids...

Bryan Smith:

-Really bad food. I thought I was going to be eating a bunch of great food, and-

Scilla Andreen:

No, but the shuttle service is excellent.

Bryan Smith:

The shuttle service is great, yeah. The Ubers were a little bit outrageous.

Scilla Andreen:

Ridiculous.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah. What projects are you working on that might be coming out in the next few months that you're excited about?

Scilla Andreen:

So, I do have a new movie coming out too, actually. One I directed called, The Upstanders, which is about... It started off as being about bullying and cyber bullying. I was bullied as a kid, so it was one very close to my heart. And it ended up being more about resilience, and attention, and connection, and community, so that we can feel like we belong. 'Cause if we felt like we belonged and we mattered, we might not hurt each other so much.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah.

Scilla Andreen:

So that one took me down a very different path and I learned so much.

Bryan Smith:

I watched it, by the way. Excellent.

Scilla Andreen:

Oh, did you like it?

Bryan Smith:

It was great, powerful.

Scilla Andreen:

We're still working on it by the way. We're still doing the music and the- I still haven't quite 100% locked picture. But, and then I have another one that I executive produced called, Nevertheless. Which is about, kind of looking at sort of the layers behind #metoo, and #timesup, and addressing sexual harassment. And that one is fascinating. And I worked with the director, Sarah Moshman, who did a fabulous job of kind of- it's a really complex conversation to have. She did a great job of kind of boiling it down to consumable bites. You know, we're all in this and it's going to take all of us to make change, but there is a path forward and there's a lot of hope. So, I'm really proud of that film as well.

Scilla Andreen:

It's funny to be taking films out in the middle of a pandemic, because nobody, either they want dumbed down TV or feel good. And so, you know, to watch something about sexual harassment or cyber bullying, it's just kind of like, "Ooh, I don't know if I want to do that." But Angst and Like are definitely like brimming right now, because people are like, "Oh my God, we're like living on our devices every second of the day. How do we find balance?" Or with anxiety and angst, it's like, it's never been higher because of the pandemic. So, how can we help ourselves? How can we help our families, our colleagues and friends? So, those films are doing great, and we're doing the online community experience now. So, I've taken all of our offline experiences, so now we do live webinar screenings with Q&A's and all sorts of fun stuff. And we just started them and they're unbelievable. You still get that community, like, jolt of connection. That feeling in your heart and in your brain. I didn't know that that would work. I was like, "Oh, you know, we gotta do something." It's unbelievable. Like, the connection that's there and the enthusiasm when people are typing and talking, and it was really cool.

Bryan Smith:

Well, Nevertheless is the one that I was not able to watch. So, if I could ask Natalie for a renewed link on that, I'd love to see the screener, or participate in one of those live Q&A things.

Scilla Andreen:

Oh, would love that.

Bryan Smith:

Yeah.

Scilla Andreen:

We also, if anybody wants to learn about any of the films that are just available through the special screenings, as opposed to they're not on indieflix.com, because they're kind of- Think of it like they're doing their theatrical release, so they're held back to just playing theaters or communities. You can find it at indieflix.com/edu.

Bryan Smith:

Okay.

Scilla Andreen:

And those are all of our, sort of, social impact temporal films.

Bryan Smith:

So, where can people find you online in social media?

Scilla Andreen:

I'm IndieFlixCEO on everything.

Bryan Smith:
Okay.

Scilla Andreen:
Twitter, Instagram... Tiktok, we had a little issue, but that wasn't my go-to for us. I'm working on that one. And then Facebook. And, yeah, LinkedIn.

Bryan Smith:
And where are you most active on social media?

Scilla Andreen:
Probably Instagram, a little bit of Facebook, and I really love LinkedIn too. I love keeping up with everybody on a business front.

Bryan Smith:
Yeah, we just connected, thank you for accepting my request. Scilla, it was really fun talking to you. Thanks for making time...

Scilla Andreen:
Oh, thank you.

Bryan Smith:
...for me in your office, and your lovely lake view.

Scilla Andreen:
It's so nice to see another human being in person, but I'm not just like brushing by really fast.

Bryan Smith:
It was great talking to you, Scilla.

Scilla Andreen:
Thanks, Bryan.