

Global streaming platform IndieFlix puts Angst in the spotlight

"I use film because it's the most powerful medium on the planet," Andreen says

Global online SVOD platform IndieFlix has an eye on anxiety in Hong Kong this month as part of a global mission to use the power of film to inspire people to change the world.

The latest activity centres around new film *Angst: Breaking the Stigma Around Anxiety*, produced by Scilla Andreen and Karin Gornick. The documentary, released for community screenings on 25 September, shares first-hand stories of kids and teens and focuses on solutions and hope around a common condition.

"So many people struggle with anxiety and have trouble talking about it. We want to change that," Andreen says.

"We felt it was important to make a movie that could raise awareness, to open up the conversation and provide hope," she adds.

Andreen, a producer/director and Emmy-nominated costume designer, hopes to reach more than three million people around the world at 25,000 community/school screenings, venues with built in communities she calls "micro-cinemas".

The community angle is critical. "These films need to be seen in a group... You don't change the world one VOD title at a time," Andreen says.

Andreen, in Asia for the Hong Kong Mental Health Conference this past weekend, is the poster producer for socially conscious content that is, first and foremost, entertaining.

Through the non-profit IndieFlix Foundation, the platform has backed projects such as *Finding Kind* (girl-against-girl bullying/exploring universal truths about the pressures of being a girl), award-winning *Screenagers* (empowering kids to navigate the digital/social media world) and *The Empowerment Project* (female empowerment).

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Olympic athlete Michael Phelps in *Angst: Breaking the Stigma Around Anxiety*

Courtesy Angst documentary and All Mohnsenian



Scilla Andreen

The Hong Kong conference session, "Anxiety isn't Cool but Talking about it is", mirrors the soul of *Angst: Breaking the Stigma Around Anxiety*.

Like the Asian families she begged without success to participate in *Angst*, Andreen, who is part Chinese (her grandmother was from Guangdong), was dragged into the topic.

"At first I said no way, I'm not touching it," she says. Her family agreed. "They wanted to know why people would talk about such things," she says.

And then the friend who was championing the project committed suicide. "That stopped me in my tracks... I pride myself on being empathetic and being able to read people... I missed that completely".

And it changed her mind. Once the decision was made, Andreen says she "couldn't get the movie out fast enough". From not knowing where to begin, she found a smooth path in, a determination to "normalise the conversation", and an entertaining, safe way to tell the story.

"I firmly believe we will be saving lives," she says.

All IndieFlix titles are curated around making a positive difference to the world.

The proposition for filmmakers is equally clear. Andreen says she wants "filmmakers to say, 'Yeah I'm on IndieFlix' and it means they care about people, creating conversations and inspiring action," she says.

Her path to IndieFlix, which she set up with 36 titles in October 2005, was via Hollywood backlots (including costume design for *Party of Five*), years on the festival circuit, and a system she found left producers with little financial reward for their efforts.

"99% of the time filmmakers don't make money but they feel lucky to be out there," she says. IndieFlix created a system that shares revenue with producers based on minutes watched.

The privately funded global platform, which started out as a DVD on-demand service, migrated to its current subscription/membership model in 2015, with 5,000 indie shorts, features, docs and series from about 85 countries. Monthly membership is US\$4.99 (US\$39.99 a year).

October 2017 was a tech turning point, Andreen says. Twelve years in, she decided to outsource the tech platform and prioritise original IndieFlix content.

"Original socially conscious content is our sweet spot, content that can change the world in a good way".