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INTERVIEW WITH ACTRESS & PRODUCER VANESSA SILVA

# interview with actress and producer vanessa silva

Vanessa Silva is a Producer, Director, Writer and Actor based in Southern California. She received her degree in Marketing and Advertising after attending university in NY and England for film. Eventually, her background became Creative Direction which includes film, video, sound, graphic design, management, marketing, advertising and training which has helped dramatically in where she is now as a creator. Currently, she and Heather Hentila are the showrunners, writers and directors of the upcoming pilot, "Probable Cause" - in which they also star.

***indieactivity:*** Why and how did you get into filmmaking and screenwriting?

***Vanessa:*** I've always been incredibly passionate about creating in general - whether it was film, television, art, writing or anything else that allows my creativity to wander. It's an incredible thing when you meet other people with similar passions that are so driven to just create. In 2014, after years in management and marketing, I couldn't let go of the drive to pursue a career in film and television, so, I went to a regional performance academy and was lucky enough to meet the group that would eventually become



the Footlights. The Footlights are a group of female creators that are dedicated to enhancing equal opportunities in the industry by creating a working, hands-on experience for our artists and those who want to collaborate with us and make something great!

***ia:*** I get all kinds of requests from filmmakers,

**but the most prominent question I often get is 'How does an indie filmmaker distribute his/her project'?**

**V:** We usually self-distribute the majority of our work and have done so on both social media and streaming services like YouTube and Amazon. It allows for complete control of how and when your work gets seen and is great for being accessible for collaboration with other artists.

On a different route, with the pilot episode of PROBABLE CAUSE, we will begin the shopping process once the final product is complete. We've been lucky enough to meet such amazing and generous artists that have been through what we are about to embark on so while we're not completely in the dark, it will definitely be a new adventure.

**ia: Indie filmmaking is a model based on zero-budgeting or small budgets. How do I get my film in theatres with such a budget?**

**V:** As part of your marketing budget, allot an amount to self-premiere at a local theater and involve your local community. You'd be surprised how many people support local artists and just want to see something that was either created within their community or made by someone they know.

Also, put aside an amount for film festivals that, if selected, exhibit to a general public. Not only attend those festivals to interact with your audience, fellow creators and distributors, but sit and watch the film with them and gauge reactions, timing, cadence, atmosphere and take notes. And don't do it just once, submit to a variety of festivals. Not only will your work get seen, but you will have a gauge across a wide range of audiences.

**ia: How can filmmakers finance their projects?**

**V:** There are such great resources nowadays with crowdfunding sites. There's obviously the traditional Kickstarter and IndieGogo, but now Seed & Spark has been such a prominent force in funding independent projects. You just have to be willing to put in the work because it's almost like a part-time marketing job. A lot is done through emails and social media and you have to constantly interact with your supporters and future supporters because they are not only backing your project, they are backing you and that is a tremendous honor and responsibility.

**ia: What films/shows have you written?**

**V:** Most of my writing and co-writing work, from The Alibi (2014) to The Test (2016), are short films. Our latest project, PROBABLE CAUSE, and its dark web-series prequel, PROBABLE CAUSE: ULTIMA CENA, are both episodic series, which feels like a whole new ballgame. We collaborated with indie filmmaker Dylan Baumgartner for the prequel, and I wrote the pilot episode of PROBABLE CAUSE with Heather [Hentila] as contributor. It's incredibly fascinating to see the differences in the writing process from film to series but it's also a fun change.

**ia: What kind of films have you been a part of?**

**V:** I've been fortunate enough to be able to work with, not only our production group but have also collaborated with, other incredibly talented and emerging creators. We've made thrillers,





BTS of "Probable Cause: Ultima Cena" - photography by Cassie Anderson



Photography by Dylan Baumgartner

## **"collaboration is so completely necessary for growth"**

comedies, dramas and anything in between, from our first short "The Alibi" to our International Top 24 film "Wayward" - made for the 24 Hour Film Festival with En La Sangre Productions. I've also worked on different genres and mediums as an actor, from comedies to horrors and shorts to features. All of which, has been a completely amazing ride!

### **ia: Talk to us about your concept on collaboration.**

**V:** I believe that collaboration is so completely necessary for growth. Having different viewpoints, ideas and being able to bounce them around and watch them take shape organically is an amazing thing to be a part of. Initially it can

be difficult to lower your guard, especially on a concept that you've had for a while and almost feel stuck to, but it's liberating opening the concept to other people because they often come up with new and exciting ways to view the project. And together, you can shape it in to something tangible, exciting and fun.

### **ia: How do you find the process of filmmaking as an indie filmmaker?**

**V:** It's definitely a lot of work, because often times you find that each person does the job of ten, which can seem daunting but it's also an amazing way to learn and grow. It's also a great way to judge your strengths and weaknesses. Coming from a marketing and project background, I find that meticulous planning with your core production group can save so many headaches in the long run. You have to allow yourself time for errors and hiccups along the way as well. But the first and most



One of the sets of "Probable Cause: Ultima Cena" (2017)

on. It has evolved into this amazing community of creators who believe in it whole heartedly and we couldn't be more humbled by the support they give, and the support we get from friends, family and fans.

The evolution of PROBABLE CAUSE started with the 5-part web-series prequel "Ultima Cena", where we collaborated with our awesome DP Chris McMillan, co-writer Dylan Baumgartner and an amazing and talented cast and crew, such as our 1st AD Cassie Anderson. The cast and crew worked tirelessly on the project and we couldn't be more grateful or blown away by the end-product - which was a darker look into the world of PROBABLE CAUSE and is currently streaming!

Pre-production for the pilot episode of the main series began immediately after the final draft of the script was ready in April. The core production team - Heather [Hentila], Alex [Flores], our 1st AD, and I - secured our two wickedly talented DPs Lance Trezona and David Apodaca shortly after and it snowballed with casting, table reads, tone meetings and various rehearsals at Hollywood South Studios, which included dialogue, blocking and fight choreography. We also trained with former marine, Frankie Abatto, on tactical approaches like how to clear a room or approach a building, and trained with Stuart Wilson, who is a fight choreographer and stunt performer. He's been in films like Red, Looper, Jack Reacher etc. and is an incredible resource for actors. We just had our final pre-production meeting last week and begin principal photography for the pilot on Saturday [June 9th]!

### **ia: What about marketing for PROBABLE CAUSE?**

**V:** Marketing plays a huge factor in fan base and is incredibly difficult with a new project and limited time or resources. We have a website at [ProbableCauseSeries.com](http://ProbableCauseSeries.com) for an in-depth behind the scenes look, and we are going to utilize

important part of the process is to surround yourself with people that are as driven and passionate about the project and the industry as you are. We've been incredibly lucky with that.

### **ia: Describe your current project and take us through pre-production because we know you're about to head into production.**

**V:** Our current project is the pilot episode of "Probable Cause." PROBABLE CAUSE is a series about the elite officers of the Metro PD Violent Crimes Unit as they journey through the high-stakes trials, triumphs and tribulations of their personal and professional lives. The series centers around Detectives Alex Hudson and Lindsay Davis who stop at nothing to bring criminals to justice, but when their worlds get turned upside down by startling revelations, they fight to keep their partnership and lives from unraveling.

PROBABLE CAUSE was created in 2014 by Heather Hentila and I. Initially, we were bouncing ideas of character types we'd like portray and the show started to take shape. Originally, it was supposed to be an ultra-low budget 6-episode web-series - under 8 minutes an episode. There were no more than about 8 characters, one camera set up... super easy. Today, PROBABLE CAUSE is a 45-minute episodic series that has a main cast of 15 recurring characters, several guest stars, 2 DPs, Steadicam, fight choreography and so on and so

social media a lot - which we have accounts across the board at [@probablecausetv](#). We plan on going live across the platforms to give our growing audience a sneak peak behind the scenes, as well as do "takeovers." That's when a principal cast member, takes over a social media account for one day and the fans get to go on a day-in-the-life ride with them. It's both engaging and super fun. We have some other tricks up our sleeves but you have to stay tuned to find out!

**ia:** What are your future goals?

**V:** In terms of short term goal, I'd love to work with Shondaland. Shonda Rhimes is someone I've

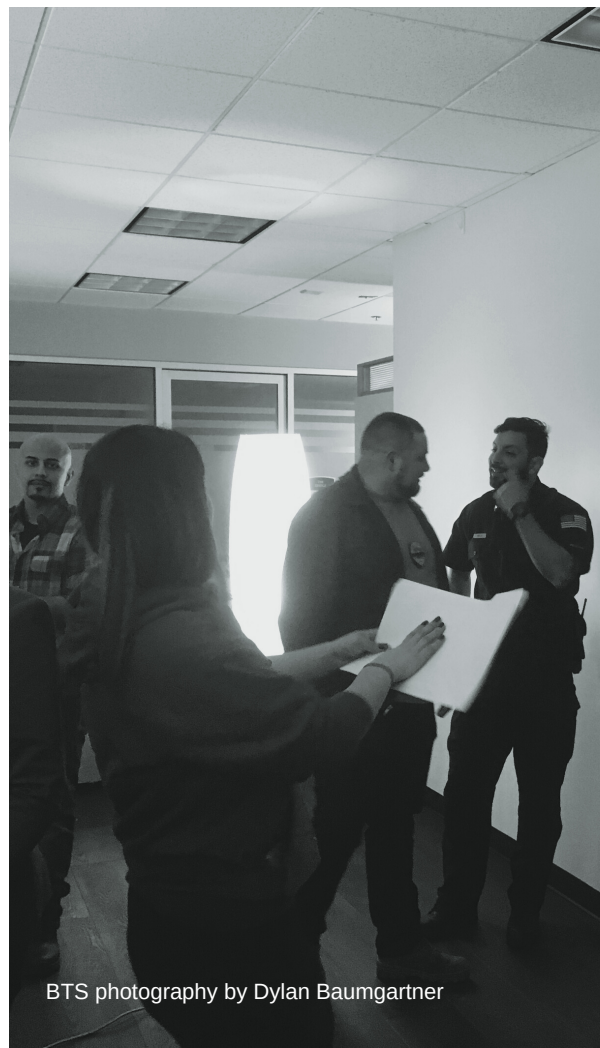
***"Surround yourself with people that are as driven and passionate about the project and the industry as you are"***

looked up to for a while as a creator. She writes strong female leads and the reason being is that the alternative is to write weak ones... and she doesn't know any. Her characters have incredible depth and are people you genuinely care about. She explores the intricacies of relationships and does so in a real way which is also a lot of fun to watch.

The ultimate goal is to fully sustain myself and my family by doing what I love. By having a strong community of inclusive filmmakers/TV-makers. Right now, with the Footlights, we're dedicated to enhancing equal opportunities in the industry, however it's on a small scale. But it starts somewhere and is already growing. I'd love to see it grow into something where we no longer have to worry about fighting for equal opportunities and it just is - all the while continuing to make something great with passion at the forefront. And, at the end of the day, I just want to be a part of that. - ia



Production Still from "Probable Cause: Ultima Cena"



BTS photography by Dylan Baumgartner



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THE SHOWRUNNERS OF THE SERIES "PROBABLE CAUSE" ARE CLIMBING TO THE TOP

When showrunners Vanessa Silva (right) and Heather Hentila (left) pitched each other ideas for a short, ultra low-budget series, they initially never envisioned the scale that their show, "Probable Cause", would eventually grow to be.

From the sets to wardrobe to fight choreography, Silva and Hentila have taken the police drama from a quick, streaming 6-episode online show to a 45-minute, 10 episode primetime-ready television series.

With their uncompromising vision, they not only created the world of "Probable Cause", they also produce, write and star in the series. Breaking gender stereotypes, they bring a fresh female perspective to a traditionally male dominated world and are taking no prisoners - well, unless you're a suspect.

**PROBABLE CAUSE BEGINS FILMING JUNE 2018**

