

- NINA MOINI:** Before we scrolled through streaming services on our smart TVs, picking out a movie used to mean wandering the aisles of a video store, reading the backs of VHS tapes and DVDs, and arguing about what to watch. A new video rental store in Minneapolis is bringing that experience back at a time when some people are discovering physical media, like VHS, for the first time.
- Saturn Video is opening a permanent storefront this Saturday. And Sierra Parham is the founder of Saturn Video and joins us in the studio. Thanks for being with us, Sierra.
- SIERRA PARHAM:** Thanks for having me.
- NINA MOINI:** Congratulations. What a cool experience to bring back into people's lives. I understand you've been collecting movies on VHS and DVD for 16-ish years. Tell me about how you first got interested in that kind of media and how it turned into this idea for Saturn Video.
- SIERRA PARHAM:** Yeah. So I've always been really interested in movies. Through programs like the Step Up program in Minneapolis, I was like an intern at Intermediate Arts.
- NINA MOINI:** Cool.
- SIERRA PARHAM:** And that's where I first found out about foreign films, which is such a funny thing. But that's really what started my love of movies of there's such a diverse world out there.
- NINA MOINI:** Did you grow up with VHS and DVD? Are you old enough for that? I just wonder, what is it about that experience or what had you been told about that kind of experience?
- SIERRA PARHAM:** Yeah. I definitely grew up with VHS. It was kind of like the end of VHS when I was watching movies. But, yeah, I just really loved the medium. It's really janky, but it's so tangible.
- NINA MOINI:** Yeah.
- SIERRA PARHAM:** So, yeah, I grew up with Blockbuster.
- NINA MOINI:** Yep.
- SIERRA PARHAM:** I would always go there with my family. So I definitely want to give that experience to other people.
- NINA MOINI:** Yeah. And then the DVDs, the Blu-rays-- there was a whole journey here. What are you hearing, though, from people who come to the pop-ups that you've done? Or what are they looking for?
- SIERRA PARHAM:** Yeah. They're looking for stuff that they had in their childhood, that same experience, movies that they really loved during childhood. But also, I think a lot of people are very curious about other films that they haven't seen and have maybe heard of or not heard of. Yeah.
- NINA MOINI:** Yeah. And so this is like people who remember going to the video store in the '90s, the 2000s. What do you think people get from renting a physical copy of a movie?

SIERRA I feel like it's so much about taste. I think being able to be in a physical space, it really challenges people to think,
PARHAM: this looks interesting. Will it be interesting to watch? And that's how people start curating their taste, which I think is really important in these times of everything's an algorithm and that kind of stuff.

NINA MOINI: That's so true, right? You never know what you're being exposed to anymore based on what your algorithm is. And you don't know what you're missing out on. And I think, too, when you're streaming or scrolling through stuff, it's easy to just keep moving on, and moving on, and moving on. I think we've all been in situations like that. And then everybody's voting on what to watch.

But when you're at the store, you really have to make a commitment, right? Because you're going to drive there, you're going to have it with you, you're going to drive home. For people who really didn't grow up with an experience like that, for our younger friends, what do you want people to understand about the entire experience of just going to the movie store?

SIERRA Yeah. That is really-- I'm not too sure. I know a lot of young people are very interested in this. Yeah, I want them
PARHAM: to be very open about, I don't know how to use a VCR or I don't how to use a DVD player, and that's very likely considering so many young folk now were born in 2006 when this is slowly being phased out.

NINA MOINI: Mmhmm.

SIERRA So I hope that they are very curious about how these things work and what kind of films that they want to watch.
PARHAM: Yeah.

NINA MOINI: And you're making a point of highlighting films made by women, queer filmmakers, filmmakers of color. Can you tell me about what's in your collection right now?

SIERRA Yeah. It's kind of a lot.
PARHAM:

NINA MOINI: It's vast.

SIERRA It truly is. I just bought some new stuff from GKids, the "Love and Pop," and "Linda, Linda, Linda," which I only
PARHAM: just saw myself this year down in Rochester. And there's just this whole world of women filmmakers in different countries making really cool stuff.

Yeah. Otherwise, one really fun one was "Neptune Frost." I know it's some African country it came out of. And it is bizarre, but super duper cool.

NINA MOINI: Cool. So tell us just a little about how it works for people to come and rent items from the collection. There's a membership?

SIERRA Yes. We have a three-tier, kind of four-tier, membership. And it's \$10 up. That kind of goes according to how
PARHAM: many titles they're allowed to have at a time. Across the board, it's all unlimited swaps. And then we also have a tier for students, lower income folks. We want to be as accessible as possible.

NINA MOINI: Mmhmm.

SIERRA Yeah.
PARHAM:

NINA MOINI: Yeah, I was going to say those are '90s prices, for sure.

**SIERRA
PARHAM:** Yeah.

NINA MOINI: Taking us back to when you could have a membership to anything for \$10. That's amazing. Sierra, on a personal level, how proud are you of yourself for having this journey come to fruition-- from having these pop-ups and gauging that there's a need there, right, there's an interest there, there's nostalgia there-- and then taking it all the way to where you are now?

**SIERRA
PARHAM:** Yeah. It's something I'm still kind of like reckoning with.

NINA MOINI: Processing.

**SIERRA
PARHAM:** Definitely. Yeah. I didn't really do this to be the face of anything. But I definitely want to do whatever I can to help bring more film to people and inspire people. So this has been such an amazing journey. Yeah, I can't really say anything else.

NINA MOINI: Yeah. Most people aren't trying to be the face of anything, right? But you see a need, and you step up and make something happen. And that's amazing. That's like the doers in our community, which is amazing.

And then beyond renting movies, just lastly, you're planning some events. You're building a volunteer community around the store. What are you hoping in terms of events coming up?

**SIERRA
PARHAM:** Yeah. I want to do a lot more screenings. We have a screening coming up next weekend. It's sold out, but definitely want to do more of that, as well as build our volunteer group. I've been with volunteers for a couple weeks now, and it's just so heartwarming to see how we connect over this thing. And it's so easy to talk with each other. I definitely want to build more community like that.

NINA MOINI: Yeah. Just the excitement that people have. It's fun to be around people who are excited about something. Sierra, thank you so much for your time. Congratulations again. And thanks for coming by, *Minnesota Now*. We really appreciate your time.

**SIERRA
PARHAM:** Thank you so much.

NINA MOINI: Wishing you the best with everything. That was Sierra Parham, founder of Saturn Video.