

The Tim Ferriss Show Transcripts

Episode 150: Morgan Spurlock

Show notes and links at tim.blog/podcast

Tim Ferriss: Hello, boys and girls. This is Tim Ferriss, and welcome to another episode of the Tim Ferriss Show where, each episode, it is my job to deconstruct world class performers, to tease out the habits, routines, favorite books, cereals, whatever it might be that you can test and apply in your own life. And this episode is an interview you've been asking for since before I started the podcast, Morgan Spurlock. He would also have been on my top 10 dream list when I was drafting up potential guests for this podcast in the very beginning. Morgan Spurlock@morganspurlock on Twitter is an Oscar nominated documentary film maker based in New York, which is where we did this interview in his office.

He is a prolific writer, director, producer, and human guinea pig. His first film, which many of you will know, Super Size Me, premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2004 winning best directing honors. The film went on to win the Writers' Guild of America Best Documentary Screen Play as well as garner an Academy Award nomination for best feature documentary.

Since then, he has directed, produced, and distributed a ton, multiple film, TV, and digital projects, including some that I love, arguably, even more than Super Size me. And I enjoyed that movie a ton, including the CNN series Morgan Spurlock, Inside Man, the FX series 30 days, and the films Where in the World is Osama Bin Laden, Confessions of a Super Hero, Freakonomics, The Greatest Movie Ever Sold, which we talk about quite a bit in this podcast, and many, many others. Morgan's latest project is a tech start up called Clect.com.

Check it out. Clect, like collect, Clect.com, which is a community for high spending collectors with a one stop marketplace where people can browse, sell, and buy collectibles of any type imaginable. And for a nerd like me, this is just heaven. Star Wars, Smurfs, comics, a Millennium Falcon made from motorcycle parts is one actual real example. If you go to the website, you can see that. Imagine Comicon meets Pinterest and eBay with a lot more thrown into the mix.

And as someone who owns 10,000 poly bagged, cardboard backed comic books at home, yes, I am a dork, in this episode, we cover a ton. And I wanted to ask Morgan many of these questions for years. We talk about how Morgan got his biggest breaks and, in some cases, made his own luck. We talk about tips for aspiring creators and film makers, how to get people to care about important issues. That is a very tough needle to thread. Favorite books, documentaries, movies, etc., Morgan's thoughts on the future of media and storytelling, and much, much, more. Before I recorded this episode, I threw up on Facebook and Twitter a request for questions for Morgan.

And there were two links that popped up a couple of times that I wanted to address because it underscores a scientific literacy problem that I want to highlight. So everyone listening, if you haven't read *Bad Science* by Ben Goldacre or the *Appendices*, which are an excerpt from that in the *Four Hour Body*, you should read these because a number of folks asked why are there particular articles that have trouble replicating the results that Morgan had in *Super Size me*.

And the first one, which is related to a teacher who lost 61 pounds using caloric restriction but with junk food losing weight does not apply. It is, fundamentally, completely a different protocol so that you can just dismiss out of hand. And then, the second one was related to a study by Fredrik Nystrom in Sweden. And the article that was most often cited was actually preliminary data. And the preliminary data, as it turns out, just like with split testing, ended up getting flipped, in a lot of ways, when it got to the final results, which I tracked down. And, ultimately, the results are as follows, and this is from skylartanner.com.

But it is a reprint, effectively. Others suffered almost as much as Spurlock with one volunteer taking barely two weeks to reach the maximum 15 percent weight gain allowed by the ethics committee that approved the study. And it goes on to say that these results are highly individualized.

And this was a study that allowed exercise. And I should highlight that is not what Morgan did. So again, you need to be, basically, scientifically literate to assess when the media spins studies to serve their own interests in the form of a headline very often. So I feel very comfortable with *Super Size Me*, at this point. And there are some people who said it's impossible to eat 5,000 calories a day. I would beg to differ. You can eat a lot more than that on a daily basis. You can read the *Four Hour Body* for more on that.

With all of that said, please enjoy my wide ranging conversation with Morgan Spurlock.

Morgan, welcome to the show.

Morgan Spurlock: Thank you. I'm stoked to be here.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah. I'm really excited to be in your offices finally. I know we've had a couple of lunches, a couple of dinners over time. And it's nice to see the operation. And we were talking just before we started recording at breakfast, and you said, "I don't usually have breakfast. But if it's a breakfast meeting, I can't be the guy sitting there kind of judging the other person." Do you get that a lot after Super Size Me or your various experiences?

Morgan Spurlock: What happens, more than anything, whenever I'm at a restaurant, people will walk by, and they'll look at what I'm eating. And sometimes, they'll comment. And so they'll look at what I'm eating. And sometimes, they'll see what's on my plate. And then, other times, they'll walk by and be like better than McDonald's, right? And I'm like it's been 12 years. I'm married to that forever.

Tim Ferriss: It's your thing, yeah.

Morgan Spurlock: It's my thing. I'm okay with that.

Tim Ferriss: I was at the Russian baths yesterday here just about to pull off the underwear, and there were two fans who walked up, and they're like hey, trying to get four hours worth of sauna in fifteen minutes? And I was like yeah, I kind of deserve that. I'll be the four hour guy indefinitely. When somebody asks you what do you do, how do you answer that?

Morgan Spurlock: I say I'm a storyteller. That's what I am. I'm a professional storyteller.

Tim Ferriss: Where did that first start in terms of being bitten by the bug? Was there a particular experience or mentor who steered you in that direction?

Morgan Spurlock: Yeah.

I mean, my mom was probably the biggest one. When I look back as a kid, I loved comic books. I started drawing and writing my own comic books when I was really young just in a notebook like this. I would make squares, draw the blocks in, draw all the

characters, tell all the stories. And that was when I was like maybe 8 or 9 years old. My mom was really encouraging of that. So I think she was probably the first one. And then, at the same time, it was the '70s. So parents took you to see things you should never take kids to see in movie theaters. We didn't wear helmets on bikes. We didn't wear seatbelts in cars.

You packed 10 kids into the back of the Cutlass and took them to baseball practice. So my parents would take me to see movies like Jaws, The Exorcist, things you would never take your kid to see today. It's just wrong on so many levels. So they would take me to see these movies. But these were the movies that made me want to make movies. I loved horror films. So the movie Scanners, when that guy's head exploded in Scanners that was the moment where I said I have to do that, whatever that is.

Tim Ferriss: Now, what was it about the head explosion?

Was it just the shock value, the ability to grab someone's attention?

Morgan Spurlock: And just the way that it looked because, when I was a kid, I, originally, wanted to be Rick Baker. I wanted to be Tom Savini. When I saw American Werewolf in London, it blew my mind.

Tim Ferriss: What a great movie.

Morgan Spurlock: Yeah, it's a great movie. And what the effects did then, and these were all practical effects from his hand growing to his snout growing. There was no CGI. It was all things that somebody made and created and figured out how to do. So that was kind of the bug that I had first. It was kind of wanting to be on that side of it. And then, once I learned you could actually go to college and learn how to make movies and direct movies and produce movies, I said that's the path I want to go on.

Tim Ferriss: So you attended film school.

Morgan Spurlock: I went to film school first. I tried to get into USC's film school, and I applied. I got into their broadcast journalism school. This was like in 1989. And so I said I'll go to USC. I'll go there because, if you're going to make movies, you got to go to California. You got to go to Hollywood. And I grew up in West Virginia. And so Hollywood was a million miles away.

Tim Ferriss: Good wrestling state.

Morgan Spurlock: Good wrestling state. Great state for wrestling, especially when they're not family members. But I went to Hollywood because I said this is where I have to be.

And so every semester, I would apply to film school at USC. And every semester, I would get rejected from film school at USC. I applied five times. I still have all of the rejection letters. I kept them all. And so finally, the fifth time, I said I can't keep putting all of my eggs in this USC basket. And I was so stupid at the time. I wouldn't apply to UCLA just out of principle, which is so dumb when you think about it because UCLA is in such a better part of town. It's such a more beautiful campus.

Tim Ferriss: So you just adopted the rivalry as your own?

Morgan Spurlock: Already. I was a Trojan through and through. I was like I'm not going to go to UCLA. I'm not going to even apply to their film school. So I applied to NYU, and I got into NYU. And so I moved to New York. And New York is so much better for me as a person. I think it suits my personality much more not to mention my skin tone because I'm spectacularly pale.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, we're both on the pale end of the spectrum. How did it fit your personality?

Morgan Spurlock: I grew up in a place and in a family and in a culture where you mean what you say and you say what you mean. And that's kind of how I was brought up. And I think that New York is very much a city that says what it says and means what it says and will tell you to your face.

It will stab you right in the chest and tell you you suck and here is why. And this is what we don't like about you and what you do. Whereas in Los Angeles, it's the inverse.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, it is the inverse. In LA, I should say New York rather, if it's about money, you'd know how to interact with someone. And if they're blunt, it might be abrasive, but at least it saves you time.

Morgan Spurlock: And you know where you stand. I know from minute one where I stand with somebody in New York City. Whereas in LA, you talk to somebody, and the whole time they're talking to you, they're looking over your shoulder to see who more important or more interesting might be coming into the room.

Tim Ferriss: That's so disconcerting. My first few trips to LA, I was like what is happening right now?

Morgan Spurlock: Is somebody else here? What about me? I'm here. I'm here.

Tim Ferriss: The experience in film school, what were the important lessons that you learned in film school?

Morgan Spurlock: Well, the cool thing was that they didn't want you – when I was at film school there, is it taught you to hustle. The thing about NYU is you had to raise your own money for your movies.

You had to find, by hook or by crook, any way to make the film. So that was so realistic. It was a much more independent mindset I think of preparing you for life after film school. Whereas at USC, if you were in film school there, they paid for your movies, and they own your movies. So basically, USC pays for your films, and then, they own the films after.

Tim Ferriss: Wow, I had no idea.

Morgan Spurlock: Yeah. Because it's kind of part of their legacy. People who go through the directing program, we pay for the films. But now, we own Ron Howard's movie, his student film forever. So I think, for me, it prepared me much more for what was coming next, which was the hustle, what you have to do when you get out.

Tim Ferriss: What was your first, in your mind, major project after film school?

Morgan Spurlock: What was my first major project after film school?

Tim Ferriss: And by major, I mean in your own mind.

Morgan Spurlock: Well, there's an interesting thing that happened to me after film school. So I got a job. My first job was being a PA on The Professional, the [inaudible] film.

Tim Ferriss: That's a pretty sweet gig.

Morgan Spurlock: It was a pretty sweet gig. And so here I was. I was 22, 23 years old, and it was awesome. It was so exciting to be on this movie and kind of see him. And so I was kind of schlepping, being a PA for the next two to three years working on any movie I could get on. So I was a PA on that movie. And then, I worked on Woody Allen's Bullets over Broadway, and Barb A. Schroeder's Kiss of Death. And so it was on Kiss of Death where I got offered a job. I

got a friend of mine a job, a girl named Sarah Casper who I went to film school with. She produced my senior thesis film. It was one of those things where you get out of film school; you finish your senior thesis film.

And you're like now; I'm going to send this out to film festivals. This is going to win all kinds of awards. Hollywood is going to come calling. I'm going to get my big movie. And then, none of that happens. Nothing happens. And you convince yourself that I'm going to finish this thing. And everything is going to change. And I'm going to get these big movie deals. And, of course, none of that happens. And probably to 0.00001 percent that happens to. Everybody else, it doesn't. And so I got out. That didn't happen, so I was just hustling through and kind of inching my way up the ladder of production.

And I got a friend of mine a job on this movie in the Casting Department. She was working for a woman named Tracy Mormaribel who, to this day, I look at as one of my mentors because she changed my life completely by what happened next. Sarah was casting for this job for someone to be the spokesperson for Sony Electronics. She goes, "So yeah, I can send anybody in for this. You should go audition for this job." And I was like, "I don't have an agent." And she goes, "I can send anyone. It doesn't matter." And so, I went downtown to pick up film from set one day, dropped it off at Technicolor.

On my way back to the office, I ran an audition for this thing. And two weeks later, I found out I got the job. And so everybody in the office was like, oh, my God, that's great. Congratulations. Here's a bag. See you later. Everybody was so happy I was leaving. They were like good, get out. Peace out. Get out of this movie. And so for the next 2.5 years, I traveled around the country working for Sony as like this carnival barker on stage. So they went to trade shows. They went to sporting events. They went to colleges.

You name it. And they were one of the sponsors of the Bud Light Pro Beach Volleyball League.

Tim Ferriss: So it's sort of like Ron Popeil origins like selling Sony from the stage?

Morgan Spurlock: It was this giant tour truck that, when I first went on the road with it, it was all about Sony auto sound. Sony had launched this big car stereo division. So it was all about getting – and I didn't have to know anything about the product. I just had to get people to come

over. And so I would just like, on this stage, say come on over. Check this out. Blah, blah, blah. And people would come up and tour the truck and look at everything. And then, the next year, it became Sony Play Station. And then, the next year, it became Sony Vio when they launched their computers. And while I'm on the road with them, my boss, at the time, a guy named David Lax said we need to make a video about this tour and what we're doing.

Who should we have do that? And I said, "You should have me do that." I said, "I went to film school. Let me make that." And so I made this film for them about this. And then, I made a bigger film for Sony about mini disk. And then, I made a bigger film about something else for them. And then, my biggest project that I ever did with them was their CES at the Consumer Electronics Show in 1990 –

Tim Ferriss: It's like Burning Man for nerds.

Morgan Spurlock: Totally. It's like Burning Man for nerds is exactly what it is. It's super nerd prom. And so I made kind of their CES experience movie where you went into this theater, and they spent millions of dollars on it. And it was like the biggest thing I'd ever done. So the biggest thing I did out of film school, the first biggest, gigantic thing I did, was that. And so it was so off track of where I thought my career was going to be going or what I thought I'd be doing. But little did I know that all of those things that I was doing were, ultimately, putting me on a path for where I am now.

Tim Ferriss: So this is sort of a theme that recurs a lot in these interviews with say, for instance, Jamie Foxx where these things that were seemingly unrelated to his end destination prepared him perfectly for it. And I was going to ask you a little later in our conversation about how you build rapport with people. But let's dig into it right now. So if I watch say Inside Man, [inaudible] or 30 Days, I'm consistently impressed with how you get people to embrace you from different worlds and accept you and trust you. How did you develop that?

Morgan Spurlock: Or have you always been hardwired for that?
I think the biggest thing you have to do is you just have to listen. The minute you start listening, it's amazing how people will talk to you and how people will embrace you. We live in a culture where we don't listen to begin with. I think that's one. And I think we also live in a culture, and we live in a world where a lot of people aren't honest with each other and just don't kind of openly have conversations with you and talk about things that are hard to talk

about, talk about things that may be difficult or hurtful or potentially hurtful.

And I think that, if you come into those types of moments I think wanting to understand and wanting to understand where somebody else is coming from, it doesn't have to be confrontational. It doesn't have to be ugly. You can have a really honest, above board conversation that is meaningful. And so for me, I think that's the biggest thing is I think the best thing I do sometimes is shut up and listen.

Tim Ferriss: So if you had, let's just say, you went back to NYU, and you were giving a guest lecture to would be documentarians.

And somebody came up to you, and they said, "You know what? I just had this incredible opportunity. I'm actually going out this weekend to interview 10 people for my film for the first time. I've never done this before. How do I get them to open up?" What would you say to them?

Morgan Spurlock: I would say, first, talk about things that they care about. Get them to talk about things that are meaningful to them in the beginning, things that they like, things that they love. You don't want to go right in to like what's it like to have cancer. You don't want that to be the first question out. You want to work up to this because you want to have – it's relationship. You're building a relationship with someone over the course of a conversation. And you want to have them trust you. And part of what you also want to do in that conversation is offer up things that are similar and kind of where they're coming from or experiences you've had that that kind of put them in a comparative level.

And I think that, then, you kind of build up and build up. And then, you can start chipping away at the information you really want. But you need to take the time to build that relationship, I think.

Tim Ferriss: The providing of –

Morgan Spurlock: See, that's me ruining the podcast right there with my –

Tim Ferriss: That's okay. This is AudioVerite. The advice you just gave –

Morgan Spurlock: I'm that guy in the movie theater everybody hates. I am that guy.

Tim Ferriss: The advice you just gave about, I'm paraphrasing here, but being vulnerable yourself to elicit vulnerability is also something that

was underscored for me by a guy named Neil Strauss who is an author but wrote for *Rolling Stone* and *New York Times*, did a lot of interviews. And it's incredible how that gear shifts the entire dynamic. Why Warrior Poets?

Morgan Spurlock: Why Warrior Poets?

Tim Ferriss: That's the name of your company.

Morgan Spurlock: Yes, that's the name of my company. And it came a few years ago by, I'll give credit where credit is due, there was a former assistant at the Gersch Agency who is now a full agent, a guy name Sean Barclay who, right after Super Size Me, I went out to LA to have – it's like when you go out, and they have the meetings. It's like we want you to meet all of these people.

Tim Ferriss: The death star meetings with like 30 people.

Morgan Spurlock: And so I'm being driven all around town meeting with all of the studios, meeting with all of the folks.

And so as I'm being driven around by then assistant Sean Barclay, we're just talking about what I want to do, what are we going to do next. And by that point, we had already sold 30 Days. 30 Days was already going to be the thing we did after Super Size Me. And we were talking about kind of the path that I want to be on and the stories I want to tell and what's important to me. And then, I said I'm starting a new company. I need a new name because my old company, I'll have a quick aside, my first company was a web company. So we started off in 2000 with a web company.

The idea, as the bubble was exploding, was I wanted to create a content company where we would create programming online and then springboard it off to film or television. So we created a company called the Interactive Consortium, terrible name. But it had interactive in the title, so it must have been something. And it was a consortium of talented people that came together to tell stories. So there was logic, in my mind, but the name was terrible. But we called ourselves the Con for short because we called ourselves the Consortium. And it was the Con. If you look at Super Size Me at the beginning, it says the Con, that's the title at the beginning, which I thought was a great name for a company.

Not when you're trying to name company. It's not a good name for a company. When you're chasing financiers, you don't want to be called the Con.

Tim Ferriss: JD Salinger and Associates. JT Marlow and Associates.

Morgan Spurlock: So that was the previous name of the company. I said I want to start a new company. And so he said, “What about Warrior Poets?” And I said, as a big Braveheart fan and as a Scotsman, I said, “Why? Because I’m Scottish and because of Braveheart?” And he goes, “Warrior Poets has nothing to do with Braveheart. That is a phrase that was stolen by Mel Gibson for the movie.” He goes, “Warrior Poets were around throughout history. These were people who were poets or who were musicians or who were people who entertained the masses with their wit and their writings and their music.

But when time came to fight for what they believed in, they would lay down their instruments and pick up swords or pick up whatever they had, or spears, to go fight for what they believed in, to fight for their country.”

And I said, “That’s exactly what we are. We are warrior poets. Yes, that’s the name.” And so that’s where it came from.

Tim Ferriss: And how do you choose your projects? Or to be more specific, how did you decide to do 30 Days after Super Size Me? Because, bam, suddenly, the iron is hot.

Morgan Spurlock: Yeah. And so we got the idea for 30 Days before Super Size Me was even finished. So we were in posts on the movie. I decided we must submitted the movie to Sundance. So we hadn’t even gotten into Sundance yet. We just submitted the film. And I said we should have a test screening of the movie just so we see what’s happening because that’s what you did. You had test screenings. The studios all did it. We should do what they do. To be successful, we should do that. So we got clipboards because clipboards make you look 30 percent more official. And we stood outside of the Angelica right up the street on the corner of Houston and Broadway.

And we said, “Excuse me,” as people were coming out of the movies, we were like, “Would you like to come to the test screening of a new, independent documentary?” And people were like, “Oh, yes, I would. That would be great.” And so we signed up like 50 people who came over to the Gold Crest Screening Room on the west side.

And it was myself and my two editors, Julie, Bob, and Stella went over to the screening. And the 50 people watched the movie. And then, after the film, this one woman – we came down front, and we

said, “Does anybody have any questions or anything?” And this one woman said, “I just want to say thank you. Thank you for making this movie and showing the world finally how terrible these corporations are. That they’re screwing us, and they’re killing us.” And then, a guy on the other side of the room was like, “Hold on. What movie did you watch? Are you out of your mind? That’s not what this movie is about at all.”

And so they start you’re crazy, you’re crazy. So they’re yelling at one another. And I just lean over to my editors, and I’m like this is awesome. This is amazing. This is going to be huge. This is incredible. But it elicited like this awesome, visceral reaction in people. It really struck a chord. So the next day, when we were back in the edit room, I said, “How do we do that every day? How do we do that every week? How do we transition this into something?” And the film was fast. I got the idea for the film on Thanksgiving of 2002.

And a year and a day later, the day after Thanksgiving 2003, I got the phone call that we got into Sundance. So it was fast.

Tim Ferriss: Wow, that’s really fast.

Morgan Spurlock: For a doc, it’s super fast. From idea to delivery in the film festival –

Tim Ferriss: What happened on Thanksgiving that triggered this idea?

Morgan Spurlock: I was sitting on my mom’s couch in a spectacular tryptophan haze when a news story came on about these two girls that were suing McDonald’s. And so these girls said we’re fat, we’re sick. And it’s your fault. And I was like, come on, that’s crazy. You’re going to sue somebody for selling you food that you bought that you ate and then blame them for it. How can you do that? And then a spokesperson for McDonald’s came on and said, “You can’t link our food to these girls being sick. You can’t link our food to these girls being obese. Our food is healthy. It’s nutritious. It’s good for you.” I was like I don’t know if you can say that either.

And I said because if it’s that good for me, then shouldn’t I be able to eat it for 30 days straight with no side effects? And I was like that’s it. So that was the moment. And then, a year later, we got into the festival. And so as we were in the edit, I said how do we do that on a regular basis. And we said let’s make it a series.

Let's make it a series where – and the original idea was it was going to be me in every episode kind of putting myself into these situations at which point, my girlfriend said you're not going to have a girlfriend very long because, basically, then, I'm gone for six months at a time when we do six episodes of that show. But as soon as the movie exploded at Sundance, and we sold it, I was on a plane to LA. And we pitched that show and sold it to FX the next week. So it was a week after Sundance, we had already sold that. So the movie wasn't even in theaters, and we had set up that show.

Tim Ferriss: And in 30 Days, were there any particular shows or proposals that you weren't able to make, whether with that or Inside Man? Was there anything that got vetoed?

Morgan Spurlock: The only thing that ever got vetoed is when we were doing the immigration episode –

Tim Ferriss: Great episode, by the way.

Morgan Spurlock: Thanks. I'm really proud of that show. And for me, the best episodes of that show are the shows that I'm not in. I understand why everybody is like the ones that you're in are the best. But, for me, that's not the best because the best proof of that show is people who have to defend their beliefs. And when somebody has to get in there, and, basically, to people that disagree with them or contradict them to say here is what I believe and why.

And to have the courage to continue to 1) have those beliefs be questions, and also be opened to kind of seeing the world in a different way takes a tremendous amount of courage. So I think I love those episodes. But the immigration episode, when we first came up with that, I wanted to go across the border and have a coyote bring me over. I said I want to go to Mexico, and I want to come over with a bunch of illegal immigrants who are, basically, sneaking into the country with a coyote and show how it's done. And big FX lawyers said no.

And then, I said come on. And then, FX said let's talk to the Fox lawyer. So then, they went to the next person above them.

Tim Ferriss: Now, the coyote being the term for someone who facilitates this.

Morgan Spurlock: That's right. So the coyotes are the guys who bring you across over the border illegally. And so then, I went to big Fox's attorney, and big Fox's attorney was like absolutely not. So that was the only thing that I really wanted to do for the show that we wouldn't

because they, basically, said if I did it against their will – because I said why don't we just do it?

We'll just go shoot it. And we could put it in the show. And they're like, if you do that, they, basically, threatened to cancel the show and take us off the air and not insure us. So I said, all right, we won't do that.

Tim Ferriss: And they're like if you hadn't asked us, we would have plausible deniability. But now, you've gone and screwed both of us.

Morgan Spurlock: Now, you've gone and brought it up, yeah. So now, I'm a real believer in that it's better than beg forgiveness than ask for permission these days.

Tim Ferriss: For someone who is unfamiliar with your work, if you had to choose two or three films or television episodes that you could make mandatory viewing for all Americans, what would they be?

Morgan Spurlock: Let's think. Super Size Me, I feel like everybody has seen it. So I'm stopped by people all the time who have seen that, which is still mind blowing to me. But I think in 30 Days, I love the prison episode of 30 Days. I think it is a great episode. People should watch, especially as we live in a country where we're still sending people to prison.

And we've turned prisons into profit. I think it's a great episode to watch, and it will make you so angry. So I think that's one. I love Greatest Movie Ever Sold. I think Greatest Movie Ever Sold and just the conceit of that film is spectacular. For people who haven't seen it, I'll just give you the quick rundown. It's a movie about product placement, marketing, and advertising where the whole film is paid for and made possible by product placement marketing and advertising.

Tim Ferriss: It's very meta.

Morgan Spurlock: It's spectacularly meta. It's so good. Mane and Tail, one of my favorite sponsors of all time, is the sponsor of that movie. For those of you who don't know what Mane and Tail is, Mane and Tail is a magical shampoo that is for both horses and people, which I also love. Because how many times have we all been there when we're in the shower with our horse, and we say why is there just not one shampoo for both of us? Why is that? I'll tell you a quick story, which is one of my favorite things when we were making that movie.

When I saw this, I found it, and you see in the film when I find this in a store. I had no idea this existed. And I find this product. And I'm like it is one of the greatest days of my life that I have found this product. And you read the label, and it gives you the instructions on the back of a bottle of Mane and Tail. It tells you how to use it to wash your horse. It's ridiculous. And so start calling Devon Catsa, Devon who is now a very good friend and he's the president of the company. So I'm calling him. I'm stalking him trying to get him to return my call to be in the movie, to be in the movie.

And finally, he calls me back. And he says, "So just tell me what is this movie about anyway." So I explain what the movie is. And he goes, "So how would you see us in the movie?" Because we don't pay to be in movies. We don't do that. So how would you see us? And I said, "Here is how it is. So picture this. So it's a close up on a bottle of Mane and Tail. And the camera slowly starts to pull back. And as the camera pulls back, you see me washing my little boy's hair. Then, the camera pulls back a little bit more, and then, you see me, and we're in a bathtub. And you see me washing my hair in the bathtub.

And then, the camera pulls back a little bit more, and it pulls back more, and then, you see me turn to my left, and I'm washing my Shetland pony." And then, the phone is silent for a minute. And then he goes, "That's the greatest integration I've ever heard in my life. That's amazing. That's fantastic. For a minute there, I thought you were going to do something weird with the product." And then he goes on to tell me because, apparently, he was in the Will Farrell moving Blades of Glory. So I said to Will, I said, "Listen, I just want to make sure you're not going to do anything like masturbate with it, are you?"

And I was like I love that that's where he draws the line of what's weird. So like Will Farrell masturbating with Mane and Tail in Blades of Glory would be weird. Me in the bathtub with a horse, totally fine.

Tim Ferriss: Oh, my God.

Morgan Spurlock: So back to the original thing. So there's that movie. Inside Man, there are so many episodes of Inside Man that I love. The Season 1 of Inside Man, we do an episode about elder care. And this is on Netflix.

All three seasons of Inside Man are on Netflix. All three seasons of 30 Days are on Netflix. Season 1 of Inside Man, we do an episode about elder care where I move in with my grandmother. And for me, it's one of the most raw, honest, and powerful things I've ever made.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, awesome. The marijuana episode, also, super strong.

Morgan Spurlock: Such a good show. And it's like that guy, Steve D'Angelo, and what they're doing up at Harborside Medical in Oakland is phenomenal because you go there, you have these visions of what dispensaries are going to be. And everybody thinks they're like dodgy and shady, and it's going to bring crime to the neighborhoods. And this place is beautiful. It looks like a health clinic. And they run it like a health clinic. They have health instructors who are there. They have reiki instructors. They have psychiatrists that you can meet with, not to mention all of the product you can buy there.

And it's run like a proper clinic. And it's phenomenal. That's how every clinic in America should be, every dispensary should be.

Tim Ferriss: When did you go, just because we're talking about health, I think it was Inside Man when you went to Thailand, Bumrungrad?

Morgan Spurlock: Yeah, Bumrungrad in Thailand.

Tim Ferriss: Which is an incredible facility.

Morgan Spurlock: It's phenomenal.

Tim Ferriss: Why or why not would you go to Bumrungrad for medical treatment yourself?

Morgan Spurlock: I would. I would go back. After being there, I had such a great experience. And depending on what I had to have done, if I had to have surgery that had real serious recuperation where I was going to be laid up for weeks, going there and having the surgery done and then, knowing that I'm going to be on a beach for like the next four weeks in a place that's going to cost me a fraction I think is worth it. And I've spoken to people who, since that episode, have gone there for medical procedures just because they saw that show, and they were like it's half of what it was going to cost me in the states or less. It's remarkable.

Tim Ferriss: Particularly, if you're doing an elective surgery or something that doesn't have – you're not having a brain tumor treated necessarily.

Morgan Spurlock: Or it might not be covered.

Tim Ferriss: Or it might not be covered, exactly. I went to Nicaragua at one point, this is when I was writing the Four Hour Body, and realized, wait a second, if I just do say my full panel of blood testing at what is considered sort of the highest end, and I don't necessarily recommend Nicaragua for everybody, but while I'm there on vacation, it will pay for my vacation, which was incredible. And not only that, but they did STAT, which is, for people who aren't familiar, you get your results back in 24 hours. So it's like literally turned around everything in the hospital in four or five hours, which is just phenomenal.

Morgan Spurlock: Well, that's what I loved when I was at Bumrungrad. You'd get a blood test. Everything was in one building. So you'd get a test done downstairs, and then, I'd go upstairs to see my next doctor. And whether it was an MRI or a blood test or other panels they were doing of your blood test, I'd get it done downstairs. And by the time I got upstairs, the doctor already had all of the results. Like in real time, they were getting the results done because they also processed the blood in the hospital. So it wasn't being sent out to a lab like they do here in the states. You didn't go down to what are those lab clinics you always end up going to that are all pop ups?

Tim Ferriss: Oh, Lab Corps.

Morgan Spurlock: Yeah. You go to like Lab Corps where it's like a guy in a basement with –

Tim Ferriss: You feel like you're going to a methadone clinic. It's rough.

Morgan Spurlock: It's so dodgy. But it's like everything in one place. And part of the reason they said why we can do it so cheaply is because everything is under one roof. We're not kind of third partying anything. And it's like I'm there, and I'm like why can't we just do more of that here? Why can't that just happen here?

Tim Ferriss: Medical tourism. I feel like I should – well, people can watch that episode.

Morgan Spurlock: Yeah. They can watch it. It's Season 3 of Inside Man.

Tim Ferriss: Bumrungrad.

Morgan Spurlock: Correct.

Tim Ferriss: And people will be very, very impressed.

Morgan Spurlock: It looks like a Four Seasons.

Tim Ferriss: Exactly. It's not what you would expect at all. One of the questions that came up quite a bit from my fans was how do you get people to care about important issues in an environment where there's such a deluge, such a barrage of noise. How do you accomplish that?

Tim Ferriss: Yeah.

That's a great question because that's like every day, we feel like are we doing anything that actually – are people paying attention? You hope that you make things that will make a difference or that people will listen to or will at least create some level of empathy and change of viewpoint for someone. And I think the hardest thing is 1) getting people just to watch. So I think once you get them to watch, I think that the way that I hope people get affected is because when we tell these stories, I get affected by them. Once you get immersed in them, and you know this better than anyone, is once you kind of get into these worlds and see it, it's a part of you forever.

That becomes a part of your life. And whether it's me going to a foreign country for medical tourism or me what I was doing in this past season where I'm just eliminating toxins from my house, all of these poisons and cleaning products and stuff that we use every day that we just don't even realize, I think that for me, it's taking people on this vicarious journey with me. And so long as I am open and honest with you, then you're willing to pay attention.

And I think that's a big one. A friend of mine, a few years ago, gave me some good advice where he said you can't be afraid to show your scars. That's who you are. And he said you have to continue to stay true to that. And I think that was some of the best advice I ever got.

Tim Ferriss: What would you consider some of your scars?

Morgan Spurlock: I think it's just being open and honest about your life. I think it's talking about the fact that I'm divorced, talking about the fact that

kind of what led to that and being open and honest about your life and the things you've experienced and not being afraid to talk about that. Your upbringing and how that affected you. I think the more you can have that honesty in those relationships that you build with people that creates a trust. And it creates a trust not only with the people who watch the show but with the people that you're talking to.

Tim Ferriss: If you are looking at a particular idea that you want to put forth in the world or explore, and it could be adapted to documentary format or television format.

What are the factors that lead you to choose one or the other?

Morgan Spurlock: You mean whether it's movie or TV?

Tim Ferriss: That's right.

Morgan Spurlock: I think it's can it sustain, 1) because there are some movies that are meant to be or some ideas that are meant to be movies. And you see this a lot of time when you watch documentaries. When 45 minutes in, you're like this should be done now. But everybody wants to make a feature movie like no, no, I'm going to make it a feature. And it's like no, this should have been about 40 minutes, 45 minutes, 50 minutes. But they end up making it 75, 80. And that last 30, you're just like it's trudging along and should have been over. So for us, we avoid that by never putting ourselves there.

And so we say there are things that are meant to be 90 minutes because they're big, big, deep explorations. But especially now, there are other ones you can take to TV, and I can have an even deeper exploration if I can do two to three episodes on it or four episodes on it that are hour long. And then, you can have a real deep dive into these topics. I think that so for us, that's why it's great. I love being a storyteller right now. I love being a content creator, being a film maker, director, whatever you want to call it because there are places now to tell all of these stories whether it's 90 minutes or 30 minutes or 20 minutes or 10 minutes or 3 minutes.

We made an amazing bunch of movies a few years ago called Focus Forward that GE paid for where we, basically, made these three minute short films that were all about innovators around the world, people who were doing incredible things. And each one of these movies were three minutes long. And they're powerful. They're so beautiful and inspiring. And now, they've been seen by

like 100 million people around the world because it's one of those where anybody will give you a round of boxing. Anybody will give you three minutes. And once you watch one, you'll watch, two, you'll watch three.

What we saw is if you made it through one, then you watched five. The average was five, which is awesome.

Tim Ferriss: So going back to the guest lecturer at NYU –

Morgan Spurlock: Yeah. They're going to be calling me soon now. They'll be saying, hey, we heard the podcast. And Tim is right. You should come do a guest lecture.

Tim Ferriss: Just incepting the administration at NYU. And so you have all of these bright eyed, bushy tailed students who are say fixated on the feature film documentary.

And they say I know you say that we could do these short things but really obsessed with this idea of doing a feature. What warnings or advice would you give them? And I just want to repeat one thing that you mentioned before we got started. We were looking at the audio equipment I have here, which is very simple. It's Zoom H6 with XLR cables that plug into –

Morgan Spurlock: Simple is good.

Tim Ferriss: SM58 sure mics. And we were talking about fancy, every time I try to get fancy, shit goes sideways.

Morgan Spurlock: Did they give this to you? I hope they gave that to you.

Tim Ferriss: No. Zoom, that one is on me. Next time, call me. And you said once you get fancy, fancy gets broken.

Morgan Spurlock: That's right.

Tim Ferriss: And it's just such a nice mantra, I think, to keep in mind. And that could really help someone. What warnings or advice would you give to aspiring documentary film makers.

Morgan Spurlock: I think the biggest thing is we try to overcomplicate things when you start making movies or even TV shows, whatever it is. You have these grandiose ideas of everything that you need and everything that has to be done.

And especially today, the You Tubification of content creation and content consumption has shifted our concept of what it means to make something good or palatable. We are infinitely more forgiving of stuff that looks dodgy for a good story. You can sacrifice quality for great story. So for me, it's all about the story. It doesn't matter. I'll watch shaky camera footage now. I'll watch somebody's shitty think on their phone so long as it's a great story and I'm engaged because we've gotten to the point now where we are past that. We're forgiving of all of that.

Tim Ferriss: It's true of audio, too.

Morgan Spurlock: Yeah. It's true of audio. So long as I can hear it, and it's not just – the whole time, I will still be forgiving of it. And I think that's what I tell young film makers all of the time is story first. It's all about the story. It's like everything else about what you want it to be or how long you want it to be, it should be as long as it needs to be, ultimately. But it's all about the story. And if you've gotten the beginning and middle and end, and you told your core in 40 minutes or 60 minutes, then, don't stretch it out because, now, you're just dressing up something that doesn't need it.

Tim Ferriss: If you wanted to give people examples or resources for masterful storytelling, are there any particular books, films, resources?

Morgan Spurlock: I mean, for me, the best resources are the movies themselves. I am such a movie freak for nonfiction movies. If you're watching nonfiction films like my favorite nonfiction film of all time, which kind of pushed me to seeing documentaries as like a viable outlet for my creativity as I got older was it was when I was in college. I saw the Joe Berlinger and Bruce Sinofsky film, Brother's Keeper.

Tim Ferriss: Brother's Keeper.

Morgan Spurlock: Which is one of the greatest films you'll ever watch. This is New York City, as you guys can hear. This is what happens in New York. We get a train going by. You can hear everything rumbling in the office.

Tim Ferriss: It sounds like an earthquake.

Morgan Spurlock: It's an earthquake. All of the glass is shaking. It will stop in a second. This is New York. So it's a film called Brother's Keeper. And I saw it in a movie theater because I heard everybody talking about it. And I said I was like I have to go see this film. And it was

the first time I think I probably ever paid to see a documentary in a movie theater.

And because I was in film school, so we were watching a lot of docs in school but never where I actually bought a ticket. And so I bought a ticket, went to see this film, and the film is so good. It's so dark and so creepy. And it's about these three brothers where one of them is accused. It's in Upstate New York, so it's like these three country brothers where one of them is accused of murdering another one. And as it goes on and the trial of this guy being brought up on murder charges that there was like incest. And it gets dark and weird and so good. But that's one of those films where there were so many levels of emotion you feel when you're watching that.

And it was so beautifully shot. And years later, when I got to meet Joe and Bruce, I gushed over them. I was like that movie changed my life. It is one of the greatest movies I've ever seen in my life. And to this day, I mean, I'm still such a fan. I'm a little fan boy. When I see somebody that I look up to, it's like I will go over and just like cover them with fan girlness.

Tim Ferriss: Who else falls in that –?

Morgan Spurlock: I mean, Errol Morris is a genius?

Tim Ferriss: What was that?

Morgan Spurlock: Errol Morris. Errol Morris, that guy – here's the thing about it. If you go to Errol Morris's website, Errol Morris is such a craftsman.

Tim Ferriss: Can you describe who he is? I apologize, I'm totally blanking.

Morgan Spurlock: So Errol Morris did the Fog of War.

Tim Ferriss: Okay, which I still haven't seen.

Morgan Spurlock: Errol Morris did the Thin Blue Line. Years ago, Errol Morris was one of the guys who started putting real dramatic, produced recreations in movies. When he did Thin Blue Line, people attacked the film. And this is crazy to think about back when he made this in 1980 something, they were like this isn't a documentary. It's like you got actors in there doing things. You got stuff that you staged. You staged things in a movie. That's not a documentary. And when you look at that, the movie is gorgeous. But it set the tone. And it, basically, changed what we think of

what a documentary could be. And so the same thing happened years later.

I remember when I was on a panel with Al Maysles, and Al Maysles, this was right when Super Size Me came out when Al Maysles told me, he goes, “What you do isn’t documentary.” He goes, “You don’t make documentaries.”

And, again, it was like there was a transformational moment of I think what people’s interpretation of what a doc could be was.

Tim Ferriss: Why did he say that?

Morgan Spurlock: Because he saw it being like from a first person standpoint, he didn’t see me telling a first person story as being a documentary. Same thing. He didn’t think Michael Moore made documentaries. And so that was kind of his idea. But Errol Morris, back to this amazing craftsman, his stuff is so beautiful. And if you go to his website like how Errol Morris really pays the bills is he makes commercials because it’s not like we’re going out buying boats making documentaries. Let’s be honest. We don’t have a fleet of Ferraris outside. You make these movies because you believe in them and what they represent.

But if you go to his website, and I think it’s errolmorris.com, I’m not sure, if you go there, it has all of these commercials that he’s made and just experiments that he does with the cameras, which is awesome. And you see how he will take somebody’s crazy commercial money and do something he’s never done. And then, once he tries that, he starts to apply those tricks and transplants them to his movies.

Tim Ferriss: That’s cool.

Morgan Spurlock: It’s so cool to see. But it’s like he is a talent. I have made respect for him. And then, there’s somebody like Steve James who I think Steve James is just a great storyteller. Steve James did Hoop Dreams. He did Stevie. He did Life Itself. Apart from Steve James just being an epic human being, he’s a magnificent human, like I say all of the time, when I grow up, I want to be Steve James because he is just a great individual who treats people well, will return anybody’s phone call, talks to anyone, is the last guy to leave when students are asking him questions. I really admire that.

And so there are things like that that I take from people. But he’s also a great film maker. He really believes in what he does. And so

I think when you look at his films, and he's one of those guys who make movies over years. He'll make a movie for like five, seven, eight years. And that type of dedication I really look up to.

Tim Ferriss: That's a huge commitment.

Morgan Spurlock: That's right.

Tim Ferriss: And on the point of films, do you still – why still make films?

And the reason I ask is when we were talking about formats and say the future of media, I think about this quite a lot. There are people who say can create very, very popular blogs and then get courted by the big publishers in New York City and publish books. And the book still, to this day, for whatever reason, occupies a unique part of mind space in human beings. It just carries a level of gravitas that is not associated with the internet, quite wrongly I think. But people can become sort of part of the cultural zeitgeist and have a real impact with books in a way that is very difficult with something that is viewed as ephemeral online.

Morgan Spurlock: Yes.

Tim Ferriss: Do documentaries still have that, maybe it's just what I perceive, but that difference compared to say TV, or am I making that up?

Morgan Spurlock: No. I mean, I think that's what's happened though now is there have been a couple of things that have happened. One, on the heels of HBO and Netflix and Showtime and especially Netflix where more people, I think, have seen the things I've made on Netflix than anywhere else, which I think is fantastic, I think that they have created a larger audience for documentaries than ever before.

And I think that type of hunger is what's also starting to drive this push into smarter, nonfiction television both from a Netflix standpoint and from a television standpoint because what happened in television is there were all of these people, all of these networks, and it started with like FX. So first, it was HBO who raised the bar for scripted television and started making scripted television beyond what any of us thought was possible for TV. They just started crushing it. And so then, other people said we should be creating that level of television.

When I was working with FX back in the day, John Landgraph, brilliant guy, one of the smartest TV people you'll ever meet in your life, said we want to be HBO for commercial television, and

that's what he created. He was the champion that made that and raised that bar for FX. And then, Showtime did. And now, if you look across the spectrum of TV, every network has at least one amazing show. USA has Mr. Robot, spectacular. You go down the line; everybody has got one big fiction show. But nobody had smart nonfiction.

Everybody kind of left that down here. It was lowest common denominator. So while the rising tide lifted all of the ships for fiction, it didn't happen for nonfiction. And now, people are realizing, as they're abandoning ship with all these crappy TV shows that we're missing the boat. There are higher expectations from our audience. And now, they're starting to push that as HBO did with the Jinx. And, again, HBO leading the charge –

Tim Ferriss: The Jinx was great.

Morgan Spurlock: It was fantastic. They said let's show people that you can make smarter nonfiction.

Tim Ferriss: Talk about dark.

Morgan Spurlock: Dark, so dark. And so then, there was that. There was Making a Murder on Netflix. And now, everybody is like oh, people want to see smart nonfiction. We should be doing that, which is great for us. It's great for people like Alex Gibney.

Tim Ferriss: Who is that?

Morgan Spurlock: Alex Gibney who did Enron Smartest Guys in the Room. He did the Scientology movie, Going Clear.

Tim Ferriss: Oh, God, another creepy one.

Morgan Spurlock: He's a great person you should talk to on the podcast. He's an amazing film maker and, again, somebody I really look up to because I think he's incredibly cerebral, very smart.

Tim Ferriss: The amount of data crunching and just review required to make Going Clear was so evident in the making of the film.

Morgan Spurlock: And he is a deep researcher. And I think he's fantastic. But it's one of those things for people like us who have been kind of living in the space and making this type of content for a long time, it's fantastic because, now, it just opens up and broadens the spectrum. So for me, I feel like there's still a place to make movies. And

then, now, there are more places to make smarter TV, which I think is really exciting.

Tim Ferriss: What do you think you will be, if you had to speculate, what do you think you'll be creating in three, five, or ten years, whichever you want to choose?

Morgan Spurlock: We're about to start doing some really awesome VR projects. That will be this year. We're going to be doing some incredible stuff. We've held back. I didn't want to kind of jump in early, as everybody else is kind of jumping on this VR bandwagon. And we've been smart about what we've been navigating through and the projects that we want to make. And so that's going to be something that's going to be real. And I think that VR has the ability to become an empathy machine.

I think it has the ability to put you in places and experiences things and feelings in a way you never have before. So that's super exciting for me as somebody who believes that you can actually start to chip away and make the world a better place with entertainment. I think movies and TV shows have a profound impact on our belief system. And I think that there's just something we can do there. So for me, I think that's where we'll be. In five years, it probably won't be exactly five, maybe closer to ten, but there's going to be one pipe that delivers everything.

There's going to be one pipe where I watch everything whether it's on my TV at home, on my tablet, on my phone, it will be everywhere. There's going to be one pipe that feeds everything. And that's going to be an exciting time for a couple of reasons because, now, anything I want to see is suddenly going to be right at my fingertips wherever. Whenever, wherever, I'll be able to watch anything. Awesome. But simultaneously, you're going to be to the point of still, back to the You Tubification of our viewing habits, where how do you now bring eyeballs? How do you let people know it's there?

And I think that's the next step. There were three stages of real shifts in entertainment that I think were big.

And the first one really helped me because it made Super Size Me possible. And there was like this democratization of production, democratization of cinema where, suddenly, anyone with a camera and a computer and a good idea could make a movie. That was huge. So now, suddenly, everybody had access to the tools. You could put in the sweat equity. You could make something really

cheaply and easily and get it out for the world to see. Next, was kind of this democratization of distribution where now, I didn't need to have Sony or Paramount put out a movie in a movie theater. I could put it online.

Now, anybody in the world could have access to my content via You Tube or via Vimeo. But now, how do you get people to see it? That's the problem. So it's out there, but it's invisible. Now, comes the next big step, which will be huge as the pipelines converge, which is almost like this democratization of curation, democratization of marketing, how do now we point people towards what matters? And that's where it's going to be influencers. It's going to be people like you. It's going to be people like me who people trust. And those voices are going to be even more resonant as we move forward because people are going to trust in them with even more, I think, importance.

Tim Ferriss: Here, here. Yeah, I agree. I was a VR skeptic until I had a demo with the HTC Vive with running valve software in Seattle where I was fully kitted out and in maybe a 20 x 20 foot space.

Morgan Spurlock: Where you can walk around and the walls come up?

Tim Ferriss: Yeah. Oh, my God. And what struck me as someone who, for long time listeners of this podcast know, I may or may not have dabbled in various types of plant medicine or other molecules, the time distortion that I experienced in that immersive VR, which is still Model T by comparison looking towards what's going to exist three years from now. I thought I was in for five or six minutes. And I was in for almost 25 minutes. And that's when I was like, okay, there is something really fundamental going on.

And you said this empathy machine; just like the simulacrum and the ability to elicit emotion is so far beyond anything coming from a flat screen. It was just mind blowing.

Morgan Spurlock: Yeah. No, I was just at Google this past week and meeting with their VR guys and seeing some of the stuff they're working on. And it's like you're in the matrix. Suddenly, it's the closest thing I could imagine to suddenly being Neo and taking the pill and being thrust into the machine that I could. And what's coming is incredibly exciting. And as a content creator and a storyteller, it just makes you realize we've barely begun to scratch the surface of what's possible. As you said, it's a Model T. It is so early, and that excites me. We've always been a very early adopter of technology.

We've always tried to be a little head of the curve and what we use, the tools we use to tell stories. And so for me, I think this is going to be incredible.

Tim Ferriss: Which film makers out there do you feel are pushing the envelope in terms of technology or innovations in the space?

Because I know, for instance, James Cameron –

Morgan Spurlock: James Cameron is phenomenal. I mean, James Cameron, you've got to think, invented the camera that he used on the last movie. It was him and his partner created the pace camera and camera to use on Avatar. They changed the whole box that made that movie. He invented the technology that created the chrome cop in Terminator 2 because everybody was like we can't do this. And he's like I'll fund it myself.

Tim Ferriss: And what's so cool about that –

Morgan Spurlock: And so he created Light Storm to, basically, do that technology.

Tim Ferriss: Correct me if I'm wrong because you would be the person to correct me that The Abyss, which I enjoyed but was not, I understand, a commercial success is where he honed that technology that later enabled him to use it in Terminator 2.

Morgan Spurlock: That's exactly right.

Tim Ferriss: Which is such an awesome story.

Morgan Spurlock: And it was out of that where he got the idea of what could happen with this other character and what it could be. And he poured all of his own money into making that a reality, which I love. I mean, I am a real believer that you should always bet on yourself first.

And pre when we made Super Size Me, I remember because this was right when we sold our show to MTV, the first show we created online from the Interactive Consortium when we had that company, here's the Con. So the first show we created under the Con was a show called I Bet You Will. And so we sold that show to CBS and then to MTV and then, 9/11 happened. So we had proof of concept. We proved that we could create programming online and springboard it off. So we created the first show to really go from the web to television as a series, sold it to MTV, then, 9/11 happened. Everything stopped.

Production just came to a standstill in New York City. So we had no money. I was evicted from my apartment. I was sleeping in a hammock in my office. So every morning, I would get up and go to the gym around the corner, the New York Sports Club to shower and work out. I was in great shape because I didn't have a choice. And then, I would come back to my office. And I still had people coming to work. And to make sure that they could pay their rent and pay their bills, I took out credit cards. And so I was, basically, paying their rent with credit cards. I was paying their bills with credit cards.

I was paying credit cards with credit cards. And I amassed about a quarter of a million dollars in credit card debt in about a year.

Tim Ferriss: Wow.

Morgan Spurlock: And so but I still had an office, and I still had a business. And I was like I'm still betting on us. And so that's when MTV green lit the series, and we did 53 episodes of that show. And during that time, I paid off \$50,000.00 worth of that debt. And then, when they canceled it, I had another \$50,000.00 in the bank. And I was like I could either pour this \$50,000.00 into that bottomless pit of debt, or we could make a movie because we owned all of the equipment. Again, it was the same thing. We had the cameras. We had the computers. Let's make a film. And that film was Super Size Me. And it changed everything.

Tim Ferriss: Wow.

Morgan Spurlock: So that's why James Cameron is one of those people that I really look at and admire because he will always bet on him, and he'll always bet on his ability. If you haven't read the *New Yorker* article about James Cameron when he was making Avatar, not only is he a genius, but he also is a bit of a bully and says some terrible things to people who work for him. They're some of the greatest lines that you'll ever hear him say to human beings, which there's a guy who is rigging lights. And he says to the guy, "Watching you light is like watching a monkey fuck a football."

And he yells to another guy, he's like, "Hiring you was like firing two good men."

Tim Ferriss: Ouch.

Morgan Spurlock: Some of the lines are phenomenal. But here's the thing. It's like, I mean, part of me is he may be saying this, and I worked with a guy

years ago, a guy named Gene Licht who ran a printing shop back when I was in college. And I worked for Gene through a friend of mine at NYU who worked there and ran the print shop. And so I would go to this print shop, and Gene was one of those guys who would, basically, yell and scream at the top of his lungs and say terrible, insulting things that I thought it was spectacularly funny and really entertaining.

And so for me, but I also think he did it in jest to be funny, even though he was mean about it, but he was also saying it in jest to also make other people laugh, which I feel like James Cameron is doing the same thing. So Gene, rest in peace, he was a phenomenal guy.

Tim Ferriss: James, this is a quick side note, I remember –

Morgan Spurlock: Has he done the podcast?

Tim Ferriss: He hasn't. I would love to do it with him. I met him once. I went on a Zero Gravity like Zero G flight where the pay load was ridiculous.

We're really fortunate the plane didn't go down because it was like Elon Musk, James Cameron, you go down the list, it was nuts. And I had a chance to get some Avatar swag because it was; obviously, I paid for the flight and brought a reader along, actually, who won some type of competition I'd thrown. And we all got t-shirts that had been given to the staff and the crew working on Avatar. And this shirt was great. This shirt said, and I might be getting this slightly wrong, but it was in huge font right across the chest, and it said, "Hope is not a strategy. Luck is not a factor. Failure is not an option - James Cameron."

And I was like, wow. It's like setting the tone for production. And I wore that shirt when I was writing the Four Hour Body, which just about killed me literally and kind of figuratively.

But what an experience. And it's like is there anybody you know who is that exacting and forward thinking who isn't brutal in some respects?

Morgan Spurlock: No. Because part of me feels like you have to be so steadfast in your belief because if you don't drink the Kool Aid, nobody drinks

the Kool Aid. I mean, it's got to be who is the other person that's probably in that same type of state? Like Kanye? Is Kanye there? And Kanye is probably on even a different level than James Cameron but comparable, I think, in kind of a mega maniacal way. But I think you have to believe in you first. Toray is a great writer/commentator; he told me the story where he went to Kanye's house once. And so he's in Kanye's house, and inside Kanye's house, there's a big, giant poster of Kanye right inside the living room.

And so Toray said to him, he goes, "Kanye, why do you have a giant picture of you on the wall?"

And he goes, "Well, I got to cheer for me before anyone else can cheer for me. And I was like there is some fantastic logic. And that's, actually, a good response.

Tim Ferriss: I don't know if I can stomach the grief I would get for putting a huge Tim Ferriss –

Morgan Spurlock: Poster of yourself?

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, like Burt Reynolds centerfold. I don't know if you've ever seen White Chicks. Terry Cruz. I don't know if my friends would let me get away with that.

Morgan Spurlock: As you come into my office, there's posters of the films that I've made on the wall. So that's my Kanye moment there.

Tim Ferriss: You've got to cheer for yourself first.

Morgan Spurlock: That's right.

Tim Ferriss: I know we only have a few more minutes, so just a couple more questions. And then, hopefully, we'll do a Round 2 sometime. But I'm not going to go through all of my usual rapid fire questions. But one I would love to ask is what is the book that you have gifted most to other people?

Morgan Spurlock: Oh, I tell you what, I gave the *Bhagavad Gita* to a lot of people.

This was I guess it would have been right after my son was born, and then, right after I got divorced, somebody gave it to me. And I got a lot out of it. And, again, there have been multiple interpretations, multiple writings of it. But there was one in particular interpretation, I can't remember who the writer was, the

guy who basically did this translation, but I gave that book to a couple dozen people. They were like yeah, I'm having a hard time right now. I don't know what to do. And I was like you should read this book.

Tim Ferriss: This is one of these books that has come up so many times in my life that I have not yet read. So this might be the final –

Morgan Spurlock: I'm going to send you the translation that I read.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, I appreciate it. It's kind of like the *Tao Te Ching*. It's like I put it off. I didn't put it off. I just never took the step to read it for decades and decades. Cool. This is good. This is a nudge that I need. And we talked about technology earlier. You have a lot of irons in the fire. Would you like to tell people about what you're up to in the tech space?

Morgan Spurlock: Yeah. So this is a great thing. I was just out at Jason Calacanas's launch in San Francisco where we had a company that had been in his incubator/accelerator for the last four months called Clect. And this is a company that you can go to clect.com, or you can download the apps in the iTunes Store.

Tim Ferriss: Spelled as you would expect?

Morgan Spurlock: C-L-E-C-T.

Tim Ferriss: Got it.

Morgan Spurlock: So the whole genesis of this, and what it is, it's, basically, like a geek collectible marketplace, so anything that is geek, anything that you would imagine at Comicon that you love from Walking Dead to whatever, posters to action figures, whatever those geeky things you love. Vinyl, I collect a lot of vinyl caricatures made by pop artists. So anything no matter what it is, you can find it on Clect. And so I was being chased by – I was finishing a movie in London. And the founder of the company, this guy Steve Brumwell was chasing me, chasing me, chasing me. And he finally said – and I said what is it?

He goes, "You're the only person that's going to get this. You'll understand." And a couple of years ago, I made a movie with Stan Lee and Joss Whedon about Comicon. And then, two years before that, I made the Simpson's 20th Anniversary Special for Fox. So I'm a geek to my core. And so I said what is it? Show it to me. So he showed me this flip deck of what it was. And I was like I love

this. And so we sat down. We talked about the company. I came onboard as one of the founders early on, put money into the company. And it's one of those where I believe in this.

Of the I think it's \$18 billion a year that's spent on eBay, a third of that, \$6 billion is everything that lives within this geek space. So I think there's a great place to give people a better experience where you can actually have a geek to geek experience. So there's kind of a great social atmosphere to it. But then, there's also the ability to buy, to sell, to trade with fellow geeks and feel like you're actually getting something you love. So that's awesome.

Tim Ferriss: Do you have any particular favorite categories or items that you've seen on the site?

Morgan Spurlock: Oh, my gosh, there's so much fan art. There's so much stuff that people create on their own, which is awesome.

And so I love seeing the stuff that people draw on their own, posters they create. It's spectacular. So for me, I love seeing things like that. I love the people who have stuff that's still in the original packaging that's been on their shelves since 19 – so people have original Star Wars toys from like when you and I were kids. It's still in original packaging. And that is dedication.

Tim Ferriss: It's a lot of self control, too. When I was a little kid, I still have all of my original Star Wars toys. But like the heads are gnawed on. The hands always got chewed off because I was a little animal.

Morgan Spurlock: I have my original Darth Vader carry case that's in my kid's room that I wouldn't let him play with for years until last year when I knew he wouldn't totally junk all of the toys. So now, he can actually play with the action figures.

Tim Ferriss: So clect.com.

Morgan Spurlock: Correct. And so we just went through our kind of seed round. It's exciting. It's a cool thing. And having had my first start up, which I started 16 years ago and was going around and doing all of the angel meetings back then, for me, it was exciting to kind of be back in that space.

And it is a very similar hustle to raising money for movies. You're just talking to I think a lot smarter people. The people that live and breathe in that space are –

Tim Ferriss: Or people who pretend to be a lot smarter.

Morgan Spurlock: That's true. You meet a lot of them as well.

Tim Ferriss: Okay. Last question before we wrap for this Round 1 is if you could put a billboard anywhere with anything on it, not an advertisement, necessarily, for anything you're doing, what would you put on it?

Morgan Spurlock: I feel like, right now, it would have to be something Trump related right now. I would have to have something with his tiny little hands and remind people what that means when he gets to the White House. Do you want these little hands on the button? I feel like [inaudible].

Tim Ferriss: Do you want these puckered lips yelling at foreign dignitaries? Do you want these little hands on the button? Oh, please, God.

Morgan Spurlock: It's becoming for real right now.

Tim Ferriss: It's terrifying.

Morgan Spurlock: It's unbelievable, yeah.

I'm in awe. I'm speechless. I'm absolutely speechless.

Tim Ferriss: It takes a lot to make Morgan Spurlock speechless.

Morgan Spurlock: But I feel like I'm in the middle of a reality show. You're watching this, and it's like how is this actually happening? I don't understand how this is happening.

Tim Ferriss: Good golly, Miss Molly. Yes, these are scary, desperate, and surreal times that we live in.

Morgan Spurlock: Completely.

Tim Ferriss: Where can people find you online, learn more about you, say hello on social?

Morgan Spurlock: Yeah. On Facebook, which is just me, Morgan Spurlock. Then, on Twitter @morganspurlock. Instagram is @morganspurlocknyc. Snap Chat, you'll be able to track me down. I'm all over the social medias.

Tim Ferriss: All over the inter webs.

Morgan Spurlock: The inter webs.

Tim Ferriss: What is your primary?

Morgan Spurlock: I'm on Twitter all of the time because Twitter has become my news feed. Twitter is my AP.

Tim Ferriss: Exactly.

Morgan Spurlock: I'm on Twitter all day long. And it's just constant updates.

Tim Ferriss: I use it in the same way.

Morgan Spurlock: And I love that. It's like it is a constant news source. I'll check into other newspapers along the day. I'll check in with the *Times* or *Talking Points Memo* or the *New York Post* or whatever because the *New York Post* is spectacular, and you have to.

But I'm on Twitter all day long like eight, nine, twelve times.

Tim Ferriss: @morganspurlock.

Morgan Spurlock: @morganspurlock.

Tim Ferriss: And I'll give you, just since we're talking about tech, one tip that I found really useful, which is a service called Nuzzel made by a friend of mine, which effectively looks for patterns among the people you follow. And it will take say the top five stories that are being spread and pushed out by the people you already follow and create a digest for you.

Morgan Spurlock: That's smart.

Tim Ferriss: So it's a really, really cool service that I'm surprised Twitter didn't make itself, honestly.

Morgan Spurlock: So you're saying I should stop following Kim Kardashian if I'm going to sign up for something?

Tim Ferriss: Well, it depends on who else you're following, I guess. You might want to stop following all of the Kardashians.

Morgan Spurlock: That's right. Exactly.

Tim Ferriss: Well, this was great fun, really fun to hang out. And to be continued.

And to everybody listening, of course, show notes, links to everything that we discussed you will be able to find at fourhourworkweek.com/podcast. And Morgan, thanks so much for taking the time.

Morgan Spurlock: Great to see you, man. Thank you.

Tim Ferriss: Until next time, thanks, guys.