

00:00:00	Music	Music	"Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw. A jaunty, jazzy tune reminiscent of the opening theme of a movie that plays for several moments, then slowly fades out under dialogue.
00:00:07	April Wolfe	Host	Welcome to <i>Switchblade Sisters</i> , where women get together to slice and dice our favorite action and genre films. I'm April Wolfe. Every week, I invite a new female filmmaker on. A writer, director, actor, or producer, and we talk—in depth—about one of their fave genre films and, you know, maybe one that influenced their own work. It has some kind of similarities. And, today, I'm really excited to have writer/director Jessica Hausner with me. Hi, Jessica!
00:00:29	Jessica Hausner	Guest	Hi!
			<i>[Music fades out.]</i>
00:00:31	April	Host	For those of you who aren't as familiar with Jessica's work, please let me give you an introduction. Jessica was born in Vienna, Austria in 1972. She studied directing at the Film Academy of Vienna, where she made the award-winning short films <i>Flora</i> and <i>Interview</i> . And in 1999, she formed the production company, Coop99, with Barbara Albert, Antonín Svoboda, and Martin Gestalt. In 2001, her debut feature film, <i>Lovely Rita</i> , premiered at the Cannes Film Festival and Un Certain Regard. The film is a skewering of bourgeois mundanity, told through the eyes of bored teen girl whose tiny rebellions culminate in an ultimate tragedy.
			Jessica returned to Un Certain Regard with her second feature, <i>Hotel</i> , in 2004—this time dipping her toe into genre. <i>Hotel</i> is a psychological thriller following a young woman who accepts a job at a luxury resort deep in the Alps, only to find her predecessor disappeared without explanation. As the woman spends more and more time in this secluded place, her psyche slowly unravels.
			In 2009, Jessica's third feature, <i>Lourdes</i> —about a bittersweet miracle cure—was selected in competition at Venice Film Festival, where it was awarded the prestige prize. Then <i>Amour Fou</i> , a historical fiction on the life of writer Heinrich von Kleist, became Hausner's third film to be presented in Un Certain Regard, where it premiered in 2014.
			Now, she's back with <i>Little Joe</i> —a sci-fi story about a plant developed to make humans happy, but who also possibility develops its own sinister intentions. Starring Emily Beecham and Ben Whishaw, <i>Little Joe</i> also marks Jessica's English language debut. So that's a big thing! And this movie is coming out soon, correct?
00:02:14	Jessica	Guest	Yes.
00:02:15	April	Host	Now, Jessica, the movie that you chose to talk about today, that we're gonna dissect, is called <i>The Visit</i> , by M. Night Shyamalan. I was wondering, can you give me a little explanation about how you came upon this film and, you know, what you thought about it? Why you selected it, today.
			<i>[April agrees several times as Jessica talks.]</i>
00:02:29	Jessica	Guest	Um, well, I came upon this film because someone recommended it. With <i>Little Joe</i> , I've been to some fantasy film festivals and that was really interesting, because I love genre film a lot. Especially horror films. But also, sci-fi films. And so, someone recommended me to

see that film, because I've seen several films of that director. But I hadn't seen this one. So, truth is, I started to watch it, but after—*[chuckling]* I don't know—45 minutes? I became quite afraid.

*[April laughs.]*

Or maybe I watched one hour.

*[The sound of a glass clinking rings out.]*

00:03:08	April	Host	And I have to admit, I didn't dare to continue watching it. You missed some of the—! Okay, well, here's the deal. I'm gonna spoil it for you, right now. Because, for those of you haven't see <i>The Visit</i> , today's episode will give you some spoilers. But that shouldn't stop you from listening before you watch. My motto is always is that it's not what happens, but <u>how</u> it happens that makes a movie worth watching. Still, if you would like to pause and watch <i>The Visit</i> first, this is your chance.
00:03:27	Music	Music	"18 Morceaux, Op. 72: No. 2. Berceuse" by Nadia Reisenberg And Clara Rockmore plays. It's a haunting piano piece accompanied by wavering, soprano vocals.
00:03:28	April	Host	And now that you're back, let me introduce <i>The Visit</i> with a short synopsis.
			Written and directed M. Night Shyamalan, <i>The Visit</i> stars Kathryn Hahn as a mother sending her two children, Becca and Tyler—played by Olivia DeYoung and Ed Oxenbould—for a visit to meet their grandparents. She reveals she hasn't spoken to her parents in years after marrying her high school teacher, which was a big no-no. Becca brings a camera, intending to make a documentary about the trip. They meet Nana and Pop Pop at the train station, who bring them to an isolated farmhouse where they're told to be in bed by 9:30 and to never, ever go in the basement.
00:04:01	Clip	Clip	<i>[Music ends.]</i> <b>Pop Pop:</b> You guys are good kids. It's gonna be a great week. By the way, there's mold in the basement. <i>[Whispering.]</i> We don't want you guys to get sick.
00:04:08	April	Host	They're a little weird, but the kids expected that. But that night, Becca goes downstairs after curfew and finds Nana vomiting everywhere, on everything. Freaked out, she confronts Pop Pop about it, and he says she's just got the flu.
00:04:21	Clip	Clip	<b>Pop Pop:</b> Grandmother's fine. <i>[Beat.]</i> She had a little bit of a stomach flu, last night... Must have been a 24-hour thing.
00:04:35	April	Host	<b>Becca:</b> I knew it was something like that. Later, Tyler goes into Pop Pop's shed and finds a bunch of dirty adult diapers. Becca begins interviewing Nana, for her documentary. But Nana freaks out and begins shaking and she doesn't quite understand why.
00:04:47	Clip	Clip	<b>Nana:</b> <u>No more</u> questions about Loretta Jameson!

**Becca:** *[Beat.]* Maybe I can ask—

**Nana:** *[Aggressively interrupting her.]* I don't wanna star in your movie!

00:04:54 April Host Later, a woman comes to the door saying Nana and Pop Pop helped her with counseling—their work—but Nana and Pop Pop quickly usher her to the back of the house, where she disappears. Becca and Tyler are unnerved. Tyler leaves the camera on, in the living room overnight—catching Nana wielding a knife and trying to break into their rooms. The kids call Mom to get them, but when Mom sees the footage, she reveals some terrible news: these people aren't her parents.

00:05:19 Clip Clip **Mom:** Those aren't your grandparents. *[Beat.]*

**Becca:** *[Subdued.]* What are you talking about, Mom?

**Mom:** *[Beat.]* Where are Nana and Pop Pop? *[Beat.]* You've been staying with those people the whole time?

00:05:36 April Host The kids are forced to play a tense game of Yahtzee and pretend they don't know anything, but Becca goes to the basement and finds two corpses of her real grandma and grandpa and some uniforms from a nearby mental hospital, where their grandparents worked. Becca's imprisoned in Nana's bedroom while the old woman is sundowning. Then Tyler gets nearly suffocated with a dirty adult diaper. Becca stabs Nana and escapes to the kitchen, where she attacks Pop Pop and Tyler finishes him off with the refrigerator door.

Mom and the cops show up. She's sad she never got to reconnect with them before they passed. The trio move on, traumatized but bonded.

So. It is a very scary movie, but also very funny. And I wanted to get into one thing, which might seem less evident, but writing for single locations—specifically because of budget—something M. Night Shyamalan said was, quote, “We can't leave the locations much, when we are making a smaller budgeted movie. And I found this farmhouse. I shot it in Pennsylvania, near where I live, and there was a farm that was going under foreclosure. And I asked: can I rent this room for you, for six months, before you put it on fire sale? I gave them the whole spiel about once I make a movie there, you can sell it for more and all of that stuff. And they said yes and that's where we filmed the movie.”

And so, Jessica, I wanted to talk to you about that idea of having to find a single location and really trying to craft a movie around what that is. In your experience of filmmaking, you know... were you ever put on the spot of trying to do that? Trying to fulfill these budget constraints?

00:07:12 Jessica Guest No. I normally don't focus on a location. I focus on an idea. And then I find the suitable location.

00:07:21 April Host What's your process for *Hotel*, I'm curious? Because, you know, that one you do have to have a kind of specific resort, you know?

00:07:29 Crosstalk Crosstalk **April:** Where you do it.

**Jessica:** Yes, but I created the place in my head, so when I was writing the story, I sort of invented my ideal hotel.

*[April agrees several times as Jessica talks.]*

00:07:37 Jessica Guest And then, when the story was there—when I had written the scenario, I started to look for that location. So, we actually split up the hotel into different hotels that were—that were where we shot, and... this was because not one single hotel could offer all the needs of the script. So, we built, basically, our hotel—our ideal hotel—in the film.

00:08:06 April Host You built your ideal hotel in the film.

00:08:08 Jessica Guest Yeah, well, by combining different locations.

00:08:10 April Host Yeah, yeah, yeah. I mean, was that something that you've done for most of your films?

00:08:15 Jessica Guest *[April agrees several times as Jessica talks.]*  
Yes. Absolutely. I never really start from a really existing place. Maybe except *Lourdes*. *Lourdes* was one film where the location really had played a great role, in the film. But, otherwise, it's more um... an invented place. And then, afterwards, I try to find it in reality.

00:08:38 April Host Yeah. So it's a kind of combination of the two, is—I feel is, like, what you're telling me: that you create it in your mind, you build it, but then you kind of continue crafting the story around what you've found.

00:08:49 Jessica Guest No. I don't change the story accordingly to what I find. I look as long until I find the location that suits the story.

00:08:58 April Host So, you are an extremely precise director. *[Chuckles.]*

00:09:01 Jessica Guest Yes.

00:09:04 April Host *[They laugh.]*  
I think it's funny. I mean, this movie, I feel like—I, hopefully, you can appreciate what M. Night Shyamalan is doing, here, which it seems to be exact opposite of what you're doing. Because for instance, he lived in this house that he got that, you know, he lived there for three months rewriting.

And he said, quote, “We had this incredible situation where I had the actual house where we were shooting, through preproduction. So, I would go with the actors where we would go in the rooms, on the stairs, in the kitchen, and I would say: Yeah, come around there. And I would be there with the cinematographer. There were a lot of times where I went to the house and—by myself—and just sit there and think of the shots. And it was different, because I could really plan it out and think it through like: this is where we want to tilt here, this is where it would be off camera. So, I would take copious notes on all of it. So, it's how I like to make movies, but the challenge was to make it look spontaneous.”

Now, that was his process. And I think that his process changes throughout—from film to film—but in this one, you know, he wanted to be a little bit more contained, because it's a low budget. And So, he was writing the script and also writing all of the cinematography directions. The—his directing notes, as he's writing the script, because he's in the space.

And I was wondering, when you get in the space with your actors, what's your process like?

*[April agrees several times as Jessica speaks.]*

00:10:22 Jessica Guest Um, well I pretty much plan everything in advance. I draw a storyboard. And, in the storyboard, for me it's very important to create a certain rhythm of images. So, the time that passes, throughout a scene, is actually what is very important when I draw a storyboard.

And also, the decision of what is in—on and what is off. Because some of the scenes that I shoot are only partly to be seen. Some of the action takes place... off the frame. So, you don't see it, you just hear it. I think this creates a certain suspense, which I appreciate a lot. And it also triggers your own fantasy, when you watch the film.

Maybe I would like to say something about what you... added about the ending of *The Visit*. Because it's very interesting that, now that you *[laughing]* spoiled the story and you told me what's it—how it ends like.

*[April laughs.]*

I really have to say, I stopped the film in the right moment.

*[April barks a startled laugh.]*

Because *[laughs]* that is what was really open, to me. I thought, "What is the answer to all those strange things happening?" So—and I have to admit, this happens to me in a lot of genre films. The first half is very interesting, very often. Because you have all those questions. You think, "What is this going to be about? Why is the grandmother behaving so strangely? What are those diapers about?" But then when you give me the answer, I find it... extremely simple. This is not really, I don't know. This is not *[laughing]* enlightening my experience of life, at all! And that's probably why I chose, with my film *Little Joe*, to not give you those answers. *Little Joe*, for example, is a sort of crazy genre film that does not have that ending where you have all those psychological or sociological or whichever answers that are, mostly, disappointing. Aren't they? Yeah. I am curious, you know, you're talking a little bit about emotional turns, too. I'm... I think—I'd like to know your thoughts on a movie or a director, like M. Night Shyamalan, who is extremely—he's on the surface with his—with his emotions, right? Like he's got these family films and very often there are these things that, kind of, tug at your heartstrings. And he knows that that's what he's doing. And I was curious about your thoughts on that. Because, I see—in your films—a kind of reservedness of emotion.

And I was wondering if that is something that cloys that, in you, or is this something that you admire?

*[April agrees intermittently as Jessica talks.]*

00:12:25 April Host I think the films that I do trigger a different level of emotion. Umm, I hope I can *[laughs]* explain this in English very well, but um—I think there is a sort of immediate or superficial emotion. For example, you see a boy which is—who is run over by a bus. *[Gasps.]* Oh no! That's terrible.

00:13:12 Jessica Guest *[April chuckles.]*

That's—this is an immediate, very strong, but it's immediate and I would say slightly superficial emotion. Superficial is mean. Maybe it's not superficial. But I am trying to find emotions that have got to do with a certain understanding of human condition. So, if you understand that the boy who was just run over—he has a mother who asked him to go and buy her a package of cigarettes, because she's addicted to smoking—then this is a different level of emotion. You suddenly understand the tragic, uh... dependency on a mother and a son and a mother who loses her child. That's a different thing.

And I think this is what I'm trying to say in my films. I go for a level of emotion that reflects on who we are. Like, what is our life about. *[Chuckles.]* What is our position in life and what is our aim in life? And I do think that, in Shyamalan's films, this is reached sometimes. I think *The Village* was one of his best films, where he sort of reached a certain level of deeper emotion. Because it reflected upon how society works. Which means, by lies. *[Laughs.]*

But I think some of his other films stay, more or less, in that superficial level. And now that you told me the ending of *The Visit*, I assume that this is the case for *The Visit*, as well.

00:15:10 April Host

Well, I do think—so, M. Night Shyamalan said, quote—when he was talking about building to emotional turns—said, quote, “It's respect. The audience is saying: if you make something too emotional, too soft, right off the bat, I'm not with you, because that's my life experience. Now, if I acknowledge their well-deserved cynicism of the world and I can come in with that voice and say: I'm with you. And then we, together, turn and find something emotional, they'll go there. And they want to. The simplest version is you have not earned the right to go to that emotional place, yet. That's respect.”

And, you know, like you, I think sometimes he reaches it. Sometimes he doesn't. But I think he's trying to get that process there.

00:15:49 Crosstalk Crosstalk

**April:** I can see him trying to do that, with *The Visit*.

**Jessica:** Yeah, I see that too.

**April:** Yeah.

**Jessica:** You should write that down.

**April:** Because there is, you know, like the—like a mother who's got two kids and she was never able to reconcile with her parents. And, you know, that type of thing. It's just that the mother character...

**Jessica:** Yeah, but it's a pretext.

**April:** Mm-hm.

**Jessica:** In his film, it's a pretext. It's not what the film is really about.

**April:** I think—

**Jessica:** What it's really about—it is try to make you scream and cry.

00:16:13 April Host What do you think was the thing that really, kind of, scared you about it?

00:16:18 Jessica Guest *[April agrees several times as Jessica speaks.]*  
Well. I am very much afraid of witches. All stories about witches scare me a lot. And this grandmother that—she behaved as if she was part of some cult. Um... but I had recently seen *Hereditary*. So, maybe I was sort of—expected that there would be some revelation of a cult, going on in that house. This I would find very disturbing.

00:16:46 April Host I would say, also, that it was a little bit of a misdirection. If you—um, on his part—which I think was successful. If you look at the costuming of her, she does have a kind of, you know, like older witchiness to her. And, you know, that's—it's, you know, kind of guiding you in a direction. And that's not what this actress's hair looks like, at all, in real life. You know. But, he chose to go with a kind of, like, longer, unkempt... you know, white hairdo, for her. And these, you know, kind of hippier clothes, I would say. And I can see that as a possibility, that someone would think that there was something witchy going on with her.

00:17:25 Jessica Guest But also, when you say the final solution is that they have killed the grandparents and they are from a mental home, that is quite politically incorrect. *[Laughs.]* I mean, um. I don't even want to say political incorrect, it's philosophical incorrect.

*[April laughs.]*

It's human incorrect. Why would crazy people be violent and kill other people? That's a very *[laughs]*, I don't know—old fashioned point of view, don't you think?

00:17:52 April Host *[Jessica agrees intermittently as April talks.]*  
Well, it's a—and it's—that's a great point that you bring up, though, too. Because M. Night Shyamalan—I think he idolizes these directors of a certain time. And these directors of a certain time really didn't have to think about those things, you know? It was just kind of there in the cultural consciousness that, yes, this would be how something would happen. And so, I think sometimes he gets away with some of that stuff because he is kind of emulating some of these directors from the 1970's or 1980's.

Do you feel like, when you're—you know, if you're emulating a director—well, first off: do you have directors that you emulate, in your life?

00:18:30 Jessica Guest *[April gives several agreements and acknowledgements as Jessica talks.]*  
I emulate *[laughs]* a director called Maya Deren. She's a experimental filmmaker in New York, in the 1940's. And her experimental films are really amazing. I think she's very creative, concerning editing and creating very spooky uh... surrealist films. They are really like nightmares. For example, *Meshes of the Afternoon*. You have that lady in a black veil, and she walks stairs up and down, and there's a knife and it's really a spooky film. And

the music is the same composer who composed the music for my film, *Little Joe*. Teiji Ito. He's a Japanese composer. And I think his film is also very... I don't know. Sinister. *[Laughs.]* Dark. But also, erotic music.

*["Switchblade Comb" begins to fade in.]*

00:19:25	April	Host	It's really special. We're gonna take a quick break. When we come back, we're gonna be talking a little bit about the process of working with actors, onset. And a little bit about cinematography choices. But we'll be right back.
00:19:38	Music	Music	"Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw plays.
00:19:44	Promo	Promo	<b>Music:</b> Dramatic, movie trailer–esque music.

*[The hosts use very "announcer" voices in this promo.]*

**Mark Gagliardi:** We interrupt the podcast you're listening to to tell you about another podcast! That's right: [We Got This with Mark and Hal](#).

**Hal Lublin:** That's correct, Mark! This is Hal. We do the hard work for you! Settling all of the meaningless arguments you have with your friends.

**Mark:** So, tune in every week on the Maximum Fun network for *We Got This with Mark and Hal*, and all your questions will be asked... and answered.

**Hal:** You're welcome!

*[Music reaches an apex and quiets down.]*

**Mark:** Alright. That's enough of that.

00:20:13	Music	Music	<b>Chorus:</b> <i>[Singing]</i> <i>We Got This!</i>
00:20:19	April	Host	"Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw plays. Welcome back to <i>Switchblade Sisters</i> . I'm April Wolfe and I'm joined today by Jessica Hausner, in New York. And we're talking about M. Night Shyamalan's, <i>The Visit</i> .

So, I wanted to get into the precision of M. Night Shyamalan's dialogue that he—he does with all of his movies, but for this particular one, he said, quote, "There was no adlibbing, dialogue-wise. I don't mind anybody suggesting things, but it has to earn itself its way in. Generally speaking, there is so much demand, on the actors, they are not thinking about being writers, at all. Like, hey that's not where the character's coming from. And we give them a million suggestions and they are trying to have it. And if they add handles or hedges like: um, uh, this, or something. I'm like, get rid of those handles. They are just crutches. Get rid of that. Go right into the line."

Okay. So, that's the way that he was thinking about it. And especially as he's working with younger actors, you know. He's trying to make sure that they're reading the dialogue exactly as it is.



And I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about that in your films—whether or not you’ve had to, kind of, train actors out of, you know, adlibbing or if they’re already great at just taking the dialogue at face value.

00:21:34 Jessica Host *[April agrees several times as Jessica speaks.]*  
Well, it depends on the actor. I think some actors are... working with the dialogue in a very precise way, so they don’t add those little sounds. And others have a very different approach. I remember, for example, working with Emily Beecham. She was—she’s the lead actress in my film—and she was, when we rehearsed a scene, she was adding all those little words, or she was saying the phrase three times instead of *[laughing]* one time. Or repeating half of the phrase and then the rest of the phrase.

So, that was quite disturbing. And then she said to me, “Don’t worry. When we shoot, I will *[laughing]* say the phrase the way it is.”

*[April laughs.]*

00:22:39 April Host  
Um. And she really did! So, that was just her way to, I don’t know, to... set her mind on the scene and to get into a certain acting. And it was a bit stressful, for me, but after a while I understood what she was doing.  
Were there times, in your career, where you’ve felt that adlibbing—you know, making things up on the fly, having the actors add lines—added something to the project?

00:22:50 Jessica Guest *[April agrees intermittently as Jessica talks.]*  
*[Interrupting decisively.]* No. Never.

*[April laughs.]*

No, really. It’s—I mean, it depends, probably, on what sort of dialogues you write, but the way I work, the dialogues have a certain musical rhythm. They’re like the song—the text of a song? So, it’s—and so, I work on them to make them sound as they sound. Also, like the way the words are put together, it has a certain rhythm.

*[The sound of a glass clinking.]*

00:23:29 April Host  
Some of the words, for example, are deliberately repeated. So, it’s very precise and it’s meant to be like that. So, there’s no use in adding something. It’s...

00:23:33 Crosstalk Crosstalk  
Do you feel your actors generally know that that’s how it’s going to work, when they come in?

**Jessica:** No.

**April:** That this is what they’re going to do?

**Jessica:** Not always.

**April:** *[Chuckles.]*

**Jessica:** Not always.

00:23:38 Jessica Guest *[April agrees several times as Jessica speaks.]*  
And some actors, because my directing is very... like, everything is very much planned in advance. So, it's like a choreography. They don't—the actors... move in—within the frame like in a ballet. And some actors like it, some don't. And that's why some actors try to add lines or offer some other movements. And then I'm always very polite. I say, "Thank you for your idea, but no thank you."  
00:24:07 April Host Apparently, you are much more polite than M. Night Shyamalan, who would be very irate if anyone made up lines or had the hedges. He would just yell and be like, "No! You are not allowed to do that!"  
00:24:21 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Jessica:** *[Amused.]* Oooh.

**April:** And, uh—*[laughing]* from beyond the camera. But, I mean, that's just—your directing style is maybe more...

**Jessica:** Reasonable.

**April:** *[Laughs.]* Reasonable!

00:24:36 April Host **Jessica:** Well, you shouldn't yell at your actors, should you? Probably not. But I think that maybe he developed an interesting relationship with them. He says—and this is something that I think that you'll probably have something to say to, because you do have some younger actors that you've been working with in your career, and especially in *Little Joe*. You have a few younger actors. And he was saying that he was working with child actors. He is definitely, kind of, using these parents that they have as part of his process.

*[Jessica hums an acknowledgment.]*

He said, quote, "I need them to be really, really smart—" the child actors—"because we are going to talk like directors and actors. We are going to get very deep in complexity and call you on it every time you do something that doesn't defend your character. I go: you are not defending your character, because you sounded like an ass right now. Is that what you wanted to say about him or her, right now? You weren't respecting him or her.

"And then the other thing I require is the families to be healthy, positive families. Literally, they are my codirectors with the kids. Sometimes there is a moment where I don't have the vocabulary to speak to the kids. Sometimes I just don't get there. So, I need someone who is a master of their vocabulary to do it."

So, that's what his process was. 'Cause I think he was getting kind of frustrated with the children, sometimes. Where he just couldn't get to them. And so, he would need to let the parents step in and try to interpret best, for their children. And I was wondering, for you, working with your young actors—what is your process?

00:26:08 Jessica Guest *[Starting to laugh.]* M-my process is different. I have to admit, this does not sound very—very nice, what you're saying.

00:26:14 April Host *[Laughing.]* O-oh no.

*[April agrees intermittently as Jessica talks.]*

00:26:15 Jessica Guest Or what he says. My experience is actually that I spent a lot of time with the casting, so I... try to find a child that I can work with and that is very fit for the role. And this takes a while.

But then I've had a lot of, like—I've—several times, I've had children in my films. And if I find the child that I can work with and that is really... very good for the role, then, actually, it's sometimes much more easy than with adult actors. I have the feeling that a child is still much closer to playing—playing around. Playing a role. That is what children do. They—that is their job, sort of. *[Laughs.]*

They are actors. They play around, the whole time, and they play to—they imitate adults. They imitate everything and they play around trying out new styles. So, children do it all the time. Acting. And I think, if you have the right connection to a child and you find the child that you can connect with, it's super easy.

I—for example, with *Little Joe*—I had this young boy, Kit Connor, who played Joe. A thirteen-year-old boy, or twelve. And I talked to him very seriously and he understood everything about his role, about the psychology, about the technical aspect of a scene. Like, when I needed him to look slightly more to the right. And he didn't do it at all in a technical way, but very subtle and very much within his role. So, he was really a pleasure to work with. And I think he also acted, um... in a very convincing way. So, I enjoy working with children, but it takes time to find the right ones.

00:28:09 April Host Mm-hm. Yeah. Absolutely. I think M. Night Shyamalan, too—when he was casting for this, to find these two young actors—he went to Australia. He'd cast all over the world.

*[Jessica hums an acknowledgement.]*

00:28:29 Jessica Guest But, apparently, these two actors from Australia were the two that seemed to possess a maturity, but still a kind of childlike-ness. Um. Were they—were they siblings?

00:28:31 Crosstalk Crosstalk **April:** No, they weren't!

**Jessica:** Okay.

**April:** No. Yeah. It's—they just happened to both be in Australia.

**Jessica:** Mm-hm.

**April:** And to both be stage actors.

**Jessica:** Oh, really?

**April:** They came from the stage. Yeah.

**Jessica:** They're really good. I mean, I love those children, in the film. They're brilliant.

00:28:45 April Host **April:** Yeah!  
I think, you know—he was talking about his use of stage actors, that I thought was really interesting, because he said that you had to kind of start with people who already have a kind of comfort level,

with themselves. And who are able to do what stage actors do, which is go... onstage and do—one, two shows a day. And give sometimes a different performance for every show and commit to that different performance, for every show. Because M. Night Shyamalan actually is—he doesn't get coverage on his actors, much. He goes in with very, very long shots. And so, he's expecting the actor to do a lot of heavy lifting.

*[Jessica agrees.]*

Because he's not gonna be able to, kind of, cut back and forth between the characters, in the edit.

How do you work with editing and with that type of actor? Are you looking for different performances in different takes? Are you looking for more of a, you know, making sure that they hit it every time or get to the—kind of—perfect performance? How do you define that?

00:29:55 Jessica Host

*[April agrees several times as Jessica speaks.]*

Well, I do have long shots, as well. So, I don't shoot any coverage. But it's also very European-style. In Europe, you don't do that. I mean, you just go for *[laughs]*—for the take that you want. You don't shoot whatever. But... apart from that, the style that I create is—I have to say—very different. But I appreciated this very much, in *The Visit*. Because I think the children are acting very—like it's nearly hyperrealism. *[Chuckles.]* It's a sort of forced realism, there. So, like they are so talkative and they're so witty and they are so intelligent and arty. So—but I liked it. I enjoyed it. The way those children were so special and so enlightened.

But in my films, there is a different style. I think, in my films, it is not about showing this individual, original side of human beings. What I do, in my films, is much more—I show how much individuals are also influenced by their surroundings. So, the characters in my films—children or adults, no matter—they behave as if, like—we feel how much they are suppressed by the rules of the society they live in. So, sometimes they are very polite, for example. Or very quiet. Or what you mentioned in the beginning—you said something that, I don't know, the emotions were a bit distant, right? You know, don't know exactly what you said—because, the reason is because I show—I focus on that side of our human existence, where we do not exactly express what we would like to express. We don't exactly say what we think. But on the contrary, we pretend a little bit and we say the things that people want us to say. And that we were taught to say. And feelings that we were taught to have.

So, it's a bit different. I—the characters in my films are a bit like robots *[laughs]* in that sense.

00:32:00 April Guest

*[Music begins to fade in.]*

*[Laughs.]* We're gonna take another quick break. When we come back, we're gonna get a little bit more into some of the editing stuff that we brought up. 'Cause I love to talk about the editing process, when you've got longer takes. And then also, a little bit more about some music and some other things. We'll be right back.

00:32:17 00:32:22	Music Promo	Music Promo	<p>“Switchblade Comb” by Mobius VanChocStraw plays.  <b>Music:</b> Upbeat rock plays in the background.</p> <p><b>Announcer:</b> <i>Dead Pilots Society</i> brings you exclusive readings of comedy pilots that were never made, featuring actors like Patton Oswalt—</p> <p><b>Patton Oswalt:</b> So, the vampire from the future sleeps in the dude’s studio during the day, and they hunt monsters at night. It’s Blade meets The Odd Couple!</p> <p><i>[Audience laughs]</i></p> <p><b>Announcer:</b> —Adam Scott and Jane Levy—</p> <p><b>Jane Levy:</b> Come on, Cory. She’s too serious, too business-y. She doesn’t know the hokey-pokey.</p> <p><b>Adam Scott:</b> Well, she’ll learn what it’s all about.</p> <p><i>[Audience laughs.]</i></p> <p><b>Announcer:</b> —Busy Philipps and Dave Koechner.</p> <p><b>Dave Koechner:</b> Maybe this is family.</p> <p><b>Busy Philipps:</b> My Uncle Tal, who showed his wiener to Cinderella at Disneyland, is family. Do you want him staying with us?</p> <p><i>[Light audience laughter.]</i></p> <p><b>Dave:</b> He did stay with us, for three months.</p> <p><b>Busy:</b> And he was a delight!</p> <p><i>[Audience laughs harder.]</i></p> <p><b>Announcer:</b> A new pilot every month, only on <i>Dead Pilots Society</i> from Maximum Fun.</p>
00:33:12 00:33:18	Music April	Music Host	<p>“Switchblade Comb” by Mobius VanChocStraw plays.  Welcome back to <i>Switchblade Sisters</i>. I’m April Wolfe and I’m joined today by Jessica Hausner and we’re talking about <i>The Visit</i>.</p> <p>Okay, so we did talk a little bit about editing and having the longer takes. And I’m curious about that and what happens in the editing room, while you’re there. And you have, you know, done this very long take and you’re going to, kind of, put it together in the sequence. Do you ever feel the need to cut those up? Do you ever regret doing a long take? What are you getting out of that, in the edit room?</p>
00:33:54	Jessica	Guest	<p><i>[April agrees several times as Jessica speaks.]</i>  Well, since I... draw that storyboard, before we go to the shooting, I know already very well how much time I will need for each scene. So, normally, I shouldn’t be surprised <i>[laughing]</i> in the editing room.</p>

So, the idea is basically that I know, in advance, how long that scene takes and if it's longer than in the script—or maybe even shorter or is it a slow scene or a fast scene—so, this rhythm of the whole film's already created in advance, when I draw the storyboard.

So, if everything goes fine, normally in the editing room, I edit the film the way I had scripted it or had—I had designed it. But, of course, not every scene turn out—turns out to be exactly as I thought it would be. So, of course there are some scenes that have to be changed. Sometimes, I edit them shorter or I change their place. I put them somewhere else, in the film. Or I wipe them out completely.

So, this is happening, of course. And it's always a question of the rhythm. It's like in a music piece. I have had films where the editing was more complicated than other films. For example, with *Little Joe*, you have a film that is very much about perception. So, we did have takes during the shooting where the actors were acting out this, sort of, "I have been changed by the plant" more obviously and other takes where they acted it out less obviously. And this was done because I thought, during the editing, I will have to have some choice. And during the test screenings, also.

So, we had version of the edit where the audience thought, "Yes! Of course! The plant is changing people!" And other edits where they thought, "No, nothing changes at all." And so, yes. For example, with *Little Joe*, that was also a sort of process to find the right balance between giving the audience the answer or giving the right hint in the right moment. But then, also, leaving it open to a certain—yeah. Personal interpretation.

00:36:05 April Host

You know, and he—you know—Shyamalan did the same thing, where he had the actors deliver multiple different kinds of takes that would have fit for different genres.

00:36:15 Crosstalk Crosstalk

**April:** If it was more humorous.

**Jessica:** Yeah.

**April:** Or if they were scared in one scene.

**Jessica:** Yeah, that's interesting.

**April:** You know, because like we were saying, it's a long take. You can't cut between things; you just only have the different performance to choose from.

00:36:26 April Host

You also said something about, you know, having people guess—despite what Shyamalan [*laughs*] does in some of his movies, where he gives you all of the answers, he is actually a fan of something being incomplete. He said, of *The Visit*, "It's a contained movie and I love contained movies. The posters on my wall are *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, *Diabolique*, *Twelve Angry Men*. It's part of a deep aesthetic philosophy that I have that the film needs to be incomplete, in some way. Is she good? Is she evil? There's passive entertainment and it's all over the place, but an incompleteness contributes—just a little bit—to every great movie."

00:37:06 Jessica Guest Which, I think he's trying to reach that, here. But...  
 00:37:11 April Host Yeah. Yes, and he does, if you don't watch the last 20 minutes.  
 I could—yeah.

*[Jessica chuckles.]*

I could say that, yeah. Definitely. You're not quite sure, because you start kind of thinking like, "Oh, well, this is why their mother didn't want to be anywhere near the grandparents."

00:37:20 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Jessica:** Yes! Sure.

**April:** Yeah

**Jessica:** A lot of things going on. For example, you mentioned the film *Get Out*.

**April:** Mm-hm.

**Jessica:** I love that film a lot, but it has the same problem. In the last 15 minutes, you get this crazy brain surgery answers. Which—  
*[laughing]* I find that very... yeah... um, not necessary. How to say that? The film could be left on a much more interesting level if I don't close that bottle so randomly. I don't really understand why a lot of directors do that.

**April:** Well!

00:37:57 April Host **Jessica:** I don't know where that comes from.  
 This is actually something that I can—that I can speak to—is that, in the US, when you are working through the studio system, there is a kind of... it's an onus. It's a, kind of, goal put on directors that they have to close up a film.

*[Jessica hums an acknowledgment.]*

They have to give a reason. And it's something that's been happening for the past, you know, like 10, 20 years that—to really try to get movie-goers into theaters, they want to make movies feel more complete. But then what we have is, you know, movies that are almost too complete. They're too round. And...

00:38:35 Jessica Guest Yeah. Because you can give an ambiguous answer.

*[April agrees.]*

00:38:43 April Host I mean, it can be completed but still seen from at least two sides. Yeah. But you know, like that's something that we have an issue with in, you know, some test screenings where people do want that completeness to go to the theater. But I think that might be a difference, also, in the abilities of European filmmakers to, kind of, follow their own path and to have a different sensibility in the types of films that they release.

And then, you know, before we go I'd like to get into cinematography, real quick. Because the cinematography for *The Visit* is actually quite different from what Shyamalan was doing in

his other films. Which, you know, A) had bigger budgets and B) were trying to be a little slicker, in the studio sense.

But he said, quote, “I actually used the cinematographer Maryse Alberti, who shot *The Wrestler* for Darren Aronofsky. It was actually Darren who recommended her and lucky enough, she was available, and she wanted to do it. The kind of intimacy of the camerawork was from her as an operator of how to portray, when you are holding handheld, how not to make it feel handheld. Don’t make it feel handheld and try to make it beautiful.”

So, they are taking—so they’re taking care to turn and hold all of those things together, with the handheld sensibility. So, he wanted to shoot handheld, because there is a—I think there’s versatility to that—it’s sometimes easier. You can, kind of, move around the room and...

00:40:05 Jessica Guest  
00:40:08 April Host

And it’s in the story, no? The girl is doing that documentary. Exactly. Yeah. So, he’s kind of mirroring the documentary—

*[Jessica agrees.]*

00:40:16 Jessica Guest

—form as he’s shooting things, himself. Yeah. Yeah, it’s clear—I mean, you always have to find a specific style for each film, I think. And it has to convey what you want to convey. *[Laughs.]* And this—I liked the cinematography in *The Visit*, very much. I think it is not over-explicit, but in a very easy and elegant way, it does have that feeling of the—of the documentary camera, of the girl.

*[April agrees.]*

I think they even used two cameras. She has one and her brother has one. That’s how they manage to be onscreen. Because, I think, in a very large part of the film, you really see what they film. And if only the girl would film, you would never see her. So, they have two cameras. I think that it’s a very good trick or a good idea to be able to show both children. I find...

00:41:10 April Host  
00:41:11 Jessica Guest  
00:41:14 April Host

Yeah, he’s got the—great tricks. Yeah, I think that—and that works really well. And for you—I mean, for *Little Joe*, you have a camera that is, very often, locked off. Or it is very slow moving. Yes, well, in my film... it opens with that surveillance camera. So, that already gives you an idea what this *[chuckles]* cinematography wants.

*[April agrees.]*

The camerawork, in *Little Joe*, is pretty much about the camera being a character of his own. The camera is not following the actors. Sometimes what the actors are doing is off-frame. So, the camera follows his own—or its own—rule, its own rhythm. Its own way. So, the cinematographer I worked with, Martin Gschlacht, on all my films—the other day, he told me that when he comes from another shooting and then he works with me, on one of my films, he always needs one day to change this.



*[They laugh.]*

Because, normally, his job is to follow the action and to—sort of—follow the actor, what he’s doing. And in my film, he shouldn’t do that. In my film, he—if the camera approaches two actors because they talk to each other and you want to know more, then at some moments, even though they still talk, the camera continues to move and moves past them.

*[April laughs.]*

And suddenly they are in the off and you have that feeling, “Oh! Did I miss something?”

*[Jessica agrees several times as April talks.]*

00:42:38 April Host *[Laughs.]* You’re telling him to not follow any of the rules that he was supposed to follow before.

Um, Jessica, we have to wrap up. But I wanna thank you so much for coming on the show and talking about *Little Joe* and also talking about *The Visit*. And, again, people can see *Little Joe* in theaters early December, correct?

00:42:55 Jessica Guest Yes. I think December 3<sup>rd</sup>. I’m not 100% sure.

00:42:59 April Host Okay. So, keep an eye out for it. And it will probably come to a theater near you. And if not, I hope that it will come to rental, on-demand streaming. Is that right?

*[“Switchblade Comb” begins to fade in.]*

00:43:09 Jessica Guest Yes. Absolutely. Yeah.

00:43:11 April Host Okay, wonderful. Thank you so much! Have a great time in New York.

00:43:13 Jessica Guest Thank you, too.

00:43:14 April Host Thank you for listening to *Switchblade Sisters*! If you like what you’re hearing, please leave us a five-star review on Apple Podcasts. If you do, we’ll read it on air! If you want to let us know what you think of the show, you can tweet at us [@SwitchbladePod](https://twitter.com/SwitchbladePod) or email us at [SwitchbladeSisters@maximumfun.org](mailto:SwitchbladeSisters@maximumfun.org). Please check out our Facebook group. That’s [Facebook.com/groups/switchbladesisters](https://www.facebook.com/groups/switchbladesisters). Our producer is Casey O’Brien. Our senior producer is Laura Swisher. And this is a production of [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org).

00:43:38 Music Music “Switchblade Comb” by Mobius VanChocStraw plays and comes to an end.

00:43:42 Clip Clip **Nana:** I don’t wanna star in your movie!

00:43:44 Music Music A cheerful guitar chord.

00:43:45 Speaker 1 Guest [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org).

00:43:47 Speaker 2 Guest Comedy and culture.

00:43:48 Speaker 3 Guest Artist owned—

00:43:50 Speaker 4 Guest —audience supported.