

00:00:00	Music	Music	“Switchblade Comb” by Mobius VanChocStraw. A jaunty, jazzy tune reminiscent of the opening theme of a movie. Music continues at a lower volume as April introduces herself and her guest, and then it fades out.
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. Perhaps one that’s influenced their own work in some small way. And today, I’m very excited to have writer-director Alexandra McGuinness here. Hi!
00:00:27	Alexandra McGuinness	Guest	Hi, April! Thanks for having me.
00:00:29	April	Host	For those of you who are less familiar with her work, please let me give you an introduction to Alexandra McGuinness. Alexandra is a writer and director, born in Dublin, Ireland. She graduated from the London Film School in 2010. Her debut film—feature film, <i>Lotus Eaters</i> , about a group of young Londoners getting lost in a world of drugs, parties, and sex, and frivolity, premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival in 2011. The film later showed at Mill Valley Film Festival, London Film Festival, and Galway Film Festival, among others, before being released theatrically by Path, Curzon, and Phase 4. She’s since directed commercials, short films, and music videos. Variety also named her a director to watch and she created, wrote, and directed the 2016 web series, <i>Riders</i> for Super Deluxe.
			Now, Alexandra’s second feature, <i>She’s Missing</i> , stars Eiza González, Lucy Fry, and Josh Hartnett. The film is about a rodeo queen who goes missing and her best friend who embarks on a search across the desert, uncovering secrets and violence along the way. Vertical released the film December 20 th of last year, and now she’s moved on to a script called <i>Lucia</i> (<i>loo-see-uh</i>)—or <i>Lucia</i> (<i>loo-chee-uh</i>)? Which one?
00:01:34	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	Alexandra: <i>Lucia</i> (<i>loo-chee-uh</i>).
00:01:35	April	Host	April: <i>Lucia</i> . Based on the life of James Joyce’s daughter, produced by Savage Films. And then I’m assuming that we can probably see your last feature someplace?
00:01:45	Alexandra	Guest	<i>She’s Missing</i> is at streaming... Amazon, Apple, Vudu.
00:01:49	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	Alexandra: Everywhere that you can kind of stream films and...
			April: Okay. Wonderful. And we’ll give people a reminder later on, too.
00:01:54	April	Host	But, Alexandra, the movie that you chose to talk about today is called <i>Bunny Lake is Missing</i> —a personal favorite of mine, too. Can you give us a little explanation on why this one’s one of your fave genre films?
00:02:04	Alexandra	Guest	I saw this movie probably... 10, 15 years ago. I think, at the time, it wasn’t available to see and I probably... illegally downloaded it.
00:02:18	April	Host	[<i>Makes a long, extended shushing sound.</i>]
00:02:20	Alexandra	Guest	[<i>Giggles.</i>] But you—I mean, they can’t even do that anymore, ‘cause of the...

[*April laughs.*]

But—and I was looking at Otto Preminger’s—like a lot of his films. And I love this film. It’s really unusual. I mean, I think it was probably very modern for its time. It has wonderful performances, but also kind of these tangents that I think are really interesting. It sometimes goes into these moments of horror, but... and it’s a bit of a—it’s like a kind of high-budget B movie, as well. And I think that I noticed the parallels to my movie, *She’s Missing*, after the fact.

[April lets out a surprised, “Oooh!”]

00:03:12	April	Host	Not when I was making it. Yeah. So, I kind of recalled it again. Yeah, sometimes those things just kind of stick with you, in your brain, and you’re not really sure where some of your inspiration is coming from, but...
00:03:20	Alexandra	Guest	Yeah, I’m sure. I’m sure it was in the—in my unconscious.
00:03:23	April	Host	It’s somewhere.

[Alexandra laughs.]

For those of you who haven’t seen *Bunny Lake is Missing*, today’s episode will give you some spoilers. But that shouldn’t stop you from listening before you watch. My motto, as always, is that it’s not what happens, but how it happens that makes a movie worth watching. And still, if you would like to watch it now, take your chance.

[Music fades in.]

00:03:40	Music	Music	Theme from <i>Bunny Lake is Missing</i> , by Saul Bass.
00:03:41	April	Host	Alright, now you’re back. Alright. Let’s introduce <i>Bunny Lake is Missing</i> . Written by Penelope Mortimer and John Mortimer and directed by Otto Preminger, <i>Bunny Lake is Missing</i> stars Carol Lynley—RIP, who just passed last year—

[Alexandra agrees.]

—as Ann Lake, an American who’s just arrived in London. While her house is being unpacked, she goes to the Little People’s Garden School to pick up her five-year-old daughter, Bunny. But Bunny is mysteriously disappeared.

00:04:05	Clip	Clip	Nurse: How old is she?
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Ann Lake: She’s a four.

Teacher: Oh, well then, the fours have all gone home ages ago. Except those that stay ‘til dinner.

Ann: Will you all please stop saying that! The fours are not all on their way home! Mine isn’t and she isn’t at dinner, either! We looked!

00:04:18	April	Host	A woman remembers Ann but doesn’t remember seeing Bunny. So, the school questions her as though she’s lying until Ann’s brother, Steven—played by Keir Dullea—arrives. Steven searches through the schoolhouse and finds Ada Ford, upstairs: an old
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			woman who collects the children's nightmares on her tape recorder to write a book.
00:04:37	Clip	Clip	Ada Ford: I'm writing a book, you know, on children's fantasies. Would you like a cigarette? Ann: No, thank you.
00:04:46	April	Host	Ada: I have all their little nightmares on my tape machine. Things start getting weird. They call in Superintendent Newhouse, played by Laurence Olivier, and they go back to the Lake house to inspect. At the house, all of Bunny's things are suddenly gone. Ann doesn't understand, but Newhouse thinks Bunny maybe never existed at all. Newhouse takes Ann to a pub to get a sense if she's got her wits about her or not. He tries to question her.
00:05:08	Clip	Clip	Music: A guitar strums softly in the background. Superintendent Newhouse: I just want to find one simple thing. One small, simple proof. Steven Lake: Proof of what?
00:05:17	April	Host	Newhouse: That Bunny Lake exists. But Ann protests, though her wits are certainly crumbling under the weight of some brandy. On the way home—actually, at home—she's, like, visiting her brother in the bath [<i>laughing</i>] when she remembers—as you do—she—when she remembers she's got a ticket for the doll shop where she took Bunny's doll to be repaired.
00:05:35	Clip	Clip	Ann: If the ticket and the doll is real, then they'll have to believe that Bunny is real.
00:05:39	April	Host	Proof! She runs to the doll shop to retrieve the doll, but when she shows it to Steven, he knocks her out and burns the doll, then rushes her to the hospital, telling the staff that she's been hallucinating that she has a daughter.
00:05:51	Clip	Clip	[<i>The murmur of voices in the background.</i>] Steven: She kept going on and on about an imaginary child she thought was lost or something. Perhaps I ought to consult a psychiatrist.
00:05:59	April	Host	Meanwhile, Newhouse is investigating the shipping receipt that has the passenger manifest on it, to see if Bunny existed. And, oh no! He's actually found something interesting. Ann escapes from the hospital and hurries home to find Steven burying all of Bunny's things and pulling her from the trunk of his car. Steven feels his relationship with Ann has become estranged, because Bunny has come between them.
00:06:19	Clip	Clip	Music: Ominous music. Steven: You did wrong, Annie. [<i>Beat.</i>] You forgot about me. [<i>Beat.</i>] All you could think of was that boy. That dirty, rotten boy. That was wrong, wasn't it? Ann: Yes, Steven. It was very wrong.

			Steven: And then you let her grow inside you. You didn't have to do that. But you did. And now we can't be together, anymore. She's always there, between us.
00:06:48	April	Host	Ann begins to play childhood games with Steven to distract him. At one point, she tries to hide Bunny in the solarium only to find that Steven is locked inside with her. It seems she can't win, until she asks her to push him on the swings.
00:07:01	Clip	Clip	<i>[The squeak of metal.]</i>
00:07:08	April	Host	Ann: Stevie, come here! I want to go high, Stevie, and I can't go high without you. Come here! He indulges her long enough for Newhouse to arrive and arrest Steven, having lied to Newhouse about the shipping receipt to cover up his crimes. So! It's a movie that definitely shows its hand faster than most mysteries do, I think. But—I mean, we'll get into this. The—I should mention that, because the research is limited for interviews from Preminger or from Carol Lynley or Keir Dullea, they—it's—I did have to use a lot of information from the commentary Blu-ray, the US version.
			The UK version actually has some more interviews on it, with Carol Lynley and some other folks, but I don't have a UK version! Or an all-regions player. Sooo, any kind of quotes that you hear, just assume that they're coming from a combination of Julie Kirgo, Lem Dobbs, and Nick Redmond, if I don't specify otherwise.
00:08:11	Alexandra	Guest	So, one thing that we should bring up, first, because it's the first thing that we see, is the credit sequences. Yeah, the credits by Saul Bass—who, I think did—I mean, I know he did <i>Anatomy of a Murder</i> and probably quite a few other—
00:08:19	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	April: Yeah, longtime collaborators.
			Alexandra: Other Preminger movies. Yeah.
00:08:22	Alexandra	Guest	<i>[April agrees several times as Alexandra talks.]</i> And they have, like, a little doll that's—that gets cut out and it's, like, the last image of the film that you see, as well. And there—that same—they're, I mean—they're kind of classic Saul Bass kind of font and kind of rotoscope... title sequence. And it's great.
00:08:43	April	Host	<i>[Alexandra agrees several times as April continues.]</i> Yeah, and that—and there's a hand peeling away, like—like, construction paper to peel away the—or reveal the names of the cast and it's... something that we should always comment on, when it comes to Saul Bass, is that he's creating his own kind of film within a film with his credit sequences. Like, this is a short film in itself. And it actually, if you're paying attention, essentially kind of reveals the whole plot of the film.
00:09:27	Alexandra	Guest	'Cause you have kind of a man's hand who's doing these childlike things, like pulling away and he's also, kind of, destroying things at the same time. And you're like, "Oh! I see this credit sequence and it makes perfect sense, now that I know what this—you know—the caper is about." And then it goes back to, like, right at the end of the movie as well. So, yeah.

00:09:30 April Host Yeah! Exactly. That's—I mean, is that something... I think, with indie filmmakers, it's not something where you can hire, usually, a Saul Bass. You know? To do your credit sequence or, you know, sometimes you can't indulge yourself in that way. And I'm wondering, do you think about this when you're—when you're putting together a film?

00:09:50 Alexandra Guest *[April agrees several times as Alexandra talks.]*
Yeah, I mean when I was in film school, I went to a pretty old-fashioned film school that—at the time—was run by Mike Leigh, in London and we used to do all our titles in that way. And I even, I mean, my mind has gone blank about what the machine is actually called that you do it on. But, um—but yeah. So, we would do them in camera and we would, kind of, create these, like, cardboard things to do our titles with. And so, I think the reference was always the, like, Saul Bass title sequences that we would look at when we were doing that.

I mean, now adays, it's just—you know, I mean it's a... I mean, any title sequence I've done, I think, has been digital. But, yeah. I mean, I—we, for my movie, *She's Missing*, we shot footage particularly for the title sequence. And it's the only footage in the movie that's, like—it's shot on 35mm and it's—well, a mixture of 35 and 16—and it's from a rodeo. And we shot it before anything else that was shot, with the rest of the film. And it has this, kind of, Americana quality and the original title for my film was *Highway*—which, kind of, speaks to the kind of thesis of the film. And it was—it was renamed *She's Missing* during the, kind of, marketing and that sort of thing. So, in a way, like, the thing that I was upset about that because it didn't work so well with the title sequence, because it was designed in a way to have the title, *Highway*, appear and you have roads and rodeo queens and, you know, all of this kind of, like, American dream kind of—American nightmare stuff. And then you have the title and I would've done it differently, in a way. I'm—I've grown to really like the title.

00:11:49 April Host I mean, it's definitely evocative of *Bunny Lake is Missing*, too.

00:11:51 Alexandra Guest *[April agrees several times as Alexandra talks.]*
Yeah! And in a way, like, that's how I learned to love it, by thinking of that movie and sort of going, "Okay, well—you know, it does *[laughing]* what it says on the tin, in a way."

[April laughs.]

But, yeah. So, the title sequence, I'm... I think it's like—it was written into the script for my movie and I think it's—it is really nice if, either in the first scene, or in the title sequence, you learn, like, if you're looking really hard, what is gonna happen through the movie and it gives it that kind of thumbprint.

00:12:27 April Host I'm curious, too, 'cause you are from Dublin and you grew up where—in Ireland or in...

00:12:37 Alexandra Guest I grew up in Ireland. I grew up in the countryside, just south of Dublin, in the Wicklow Mountains.

00:12:45 April Host 'Cause I find that—I find it fascinating. There's one thing that—there's a writer, Brad Stevens, who was writing about the movies that were made in the mid-'60s in London, at this time, and he

said—you know—this movie is a part of the cycle of films made by foreign directors in London. Including, there's like *Blow-Up*, *Repulsion*, *Fahrenheit 451*. "It's fascinating to see how many foreign directors regarded mid-'60s London as an appropriate setting for stories about individuals whose perceptions of reality have become unreliable." Losey with *Servant* and *Accident*. Richard Lester's Beatles films. Furie's *Jpcress File*. Aldrich's *Killing of Sister George*. The list goes on and on, but people came from other places specifically to go to London to tell a story about disconnect and, kind of, losing one's sense of reality.

And so, in that sense—like, London, okay that's a story you can tell, there. You, coming from Dublin, being raised overseas and then—you know, now living here in Los Angeles, you come to the American west and you tell a story about—you know—identity and losing themself and that kind of thing.

So, I'm curious about what that means in the larger scheme of things.

00:14:00	Alexandra	Guest	<p><i>[April agrees several times as Alexandra speaks.]</i> I think that's really interesting. Yeah, I mean, I think it's because—you know—London, at that point in the '60s, was so iconic and, you know, people were coming from all over the world to go there. And I think—and America has that as well, in a way, and I think there's a tradition of European directors making those movies in America, specifically in the American west landscape, as well. I think there is—there is, like, it's—it's not so much about identity, but it is about finding yourself in a landscape or loneliness and searching and, you know—there's films like <i>Paris, Texas</i>, <i>Zabriskie Point</i>... you know. I mean, more recent films—not so much in the west, but like <i>We Need to Talk About Kevin</i>, like, I think these movies made by European directors, in America, as well that there is—and I think, I hope, that <i>She's Missing</i>—like, sort of, you know—fits into a tradition of that, because it's not—these movies and <i>She's Missing</i> are not set in—they're not entirely set in a reality or in a real America. They're in an idea of that.</p>
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Because, I think, when you come to America—I mean, when I moved to California, right when I was writing this script, and I started going out to the desert and that kind of thing, it really was—I had never seen anything like it. And I think that when you get filmmakers and they see that, it—they wanna make a movie about it and the desert and all that kind of thing is so inspiring, in a way. Because it seems like another planet.

00:15:48	April	Host	<p><i>[Music begins to fade in.]</i> We're gonna take a quick break. When we come back, we're gonna talk a little bit about some of the things that you brought up—including the kind of idea that they're all in cages, and that Preminger's style of frame within a frame. So, we'll take a quick break and we'll come right back.</p>
00:16:03	Music	Music	"Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.
00:16:08	Promo	Promo	<i>[Computer beeping.]</i>

Music: Light, inspirational music plays.

Jean-Luc Picard: Nearly two decades ago, Commander Data sacrificed his life for me...

[The clip continues in the background, inaudible under the dialogue.]

Ben Harrison: *The Greatest Discovery* is also about *Star Trek: Picard*.

Adam Prancia: Jesse Thorn won't let us stay on the network unless we do all the *Star Trek* series.

[Ben chuckles.]

Adam: And so, here we are, doing a show about maybe our favorite *Star Trek* character of all time.

Ben: If you're excited to watch the new *Star Trek: Picard* series and you'd like some veteran *Star Trek* podcasters to watch it along with, we're your guys! Sorry you're stuck with us.

Speaker 1: The hell are you doing out here, Picard? Saving the galaxy?

[The clip continues in the background.]

Adam: So, subscribe to *The Greatest Discovery*. You can find it anywhere you find podcasts.

Ben: Or at MaximumFun.org.

Speaker 2: *[Screaming, distant.]* Jean-Luc Picaard!

[The beep of a communicator.]

00:16:52 Music Music
00:16:59 April Host

"Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.
Welcome back to *Switchblade Sisters*. I'm April Wolfe, and I'm joined today by Alexandra McGuinness, and we're talking about *Bunny Lake is Missing*.

So, you had mentioned *The Zombies*. You brought that up, and I wanted to make sure that we said that the—that was the very first promotional tie-in. It was the very first, like, the most prominent one, too, of movie music promotionals. And Preminger, apparently, raised more money for the movie than he ever could have, by making this deal with *The Zombies*.

And Julie Corrigan et al said he "thought it would make the movie more with it, more swinging. They get top billing on the movie posters as though they're one of the stars. There are three *Zombie* songs. All are okay, but they don't use 'She's Not There'." *[Laughs as Alexandra begins to speak.]*

00:17:44 Alexandra Guest
00:17:47 April Host
00:17:50 Alexandra Guest

[Laughing.] Yeah! I didn't think about that, yeah.
I thought that was fascinating, in terms of—I mean...
I suppose they were trying to promote their new single.

00:17:53 April Host *[They laugh.]*
00:17:54 Alexandra Guest Yeah, exactly!
00:17:57 April Host I didn't realize that it was a promotional tie-in. But... yeah.
Yeah! It—but, apparently, I mean like, they got top billing!

[Alexandra agrees.]

Which was something that I was unaware of... you know, one would assume that The Zombies sharing top billing with, like, Laurence Olivier would maybe not *[laughs]* be normal! But...

00:18:15 Alexandra Guest *[April agrees several times as April speaks.]*
Yeah. I mean, I remember seeing this and thinking it was really cool whenever I saw this movie, first. And my first film had—I think it was almost, maybe, from this movie, but it had these live performances of bands in—that, the scene—the movie is set over, like, a series of four or five parties. And at, kind of, every party there was a band, and everyone would dance, and they would just, like—there would be these scenes—we found these, like, four or five bands that were in London, at the time. And we would kind of just stop what was going on in the storytelling of the movie to have these bands play. And they would play to track. And it was really fun to shoot, 'cause everyone would just kind of—we'd have a few cameras and they would...

So, I mean, I always liked the fact that there was, like, this long band playing on the *[laughing]* TV in a pub in this movie.

[April laughs.]

00:19:17 April Host I thought it, like, really added to the atmosphere of it and that kind of thing.
Preminger, as far as I know—I don't think that he worked, ever, with the same composer. He was always working with different composers and perhaps that's something that you're feeling, too—where there's something new or exciting about working with sound in a different way, with someone new.

00:19:33 Alexandra Guest *[April agrees several times as Alexandra speaks.]*
Yeah, I mean it's one of my favorite parts of the process of making a film, is the music and especially the sound design. Where you're just creating this whole sonic world for the film, as well. And, like, you know—with this film, I worked with a composer and also a sound designer and we did all the post-production in Ireland, because of the funding. And... the sound designer, you know, he gave each of the characters—Lucy Fry, Eiza González—like, sound cues that you—are kind of imperceptible but, you know, whenever Jane is there, there's a kind of jangling or, like, there's—like, she has jewelry or stuff in her pockets or that kind of thing.

And it's just there and... and... I—and I'm trying to remember what Lucy's cues are, but there was some, like, kind of horse noises as well.

[April laughs.]

00:20:43 April Host Which he kind of added in for her. And I think that, you know, when—in the time when this movie was made, just, people spent so long working on sound and it's something that doesn't get enough attention put into it.
It was very, very much part of the art form in the same way that a lot of these directors actually avoided working with editors, at this time. Preminger was probably the most egregious abuser of not working with editors. Because he did everything, kind of, cutting and camera.

[Alexandra agrees.]

So, we should probably talk about Preminger's long takes. Here's a quote: "These famous long, extended takes where everything is done in one shot, where the camera pans with characters, that's Preminger. Two classic forms of filmmaking are montage—the story told through juxtaposition. I.e., editing. And then there's composition and framing, which Otto Preminger relied upon. The reason cinephiles love him so much, is that he told the story visually and completely in the frame. It didn't matter the story's lacked a little, unless they were just terrible and then you noticed it."

00:21:38 Alexandra Guest *[April agrees several times as Alexandra speaks.]*
Yeah, I mean that is right, I suppose.

[They laugh.]

It is—it's these kind of... I suppose, moving and panning with cranes and characters, kind of like—you know—heavily blocked in his—in his style. And, I mean, there's another example of this in one of his—I think the films of his that I really like are maybe the less popular ones. Like, I'm not such a big fan of *Man with the Golden Arm* and *Anatomy of a Murder*, but I really like this movie, *Bunny Lake*, and *Daisy Kenyon*, and *Laura*, and his version of *Bonjour Tristesse*—which stars—with Jean Seberg.

And it starts in black and white and then it—and then it goes to color, but it has this, kind of, wonderful scene through a party and she's, kind of, this beautiful, *[laughing]* depressed girl at a party, in Paris. And I think it follows her, like, out of a sports car and down a corridor and into a party and... and, yeah, I think—I mean, in my memory, especially in the opening of his films—it's these, kind of, long shots that don't cut. Maybe it is throughout, as well.

At the end of this movie, though, it gets quite cutty, though. There's like a scene where there's—they're—this weird brother and sister relationship that is central to the movie. The brother—Stevie—is pushing her on a swing and they're kind of yelling at each other, you know, "Higher!" and "Higher!" And that, as far as I can remember, is that there's, like, a lot of quick cutting around that time.

00:23:26 April Host *[Alexandra agrees several times as April speaks.]*
Yeah, that—I mean, that's when the narrative kind of breaks in the same way that the visual aesthetic breaks.

So, I think—you know—thematically, I thought that was really interesting. The cutting in those scenes, it was really—I think—evocative of even like Elia Kazan, who's—you know—does really amazing editing in some of his films where it's just, you know, very jarring, but tells this really dynamic story. And you kind of get the—that sense, towards the end. But most of it, yeah. It's just these long, fluid takes where power dynamics are revealed by one person walking, you know, closer to the camera—the other one fading into the background and maybe a person walking in front of a frame or walking in front of a window. And, you know, things—partitions separating people, even though they're in the same frame. And that—to me, I found very interesting.

So, Preminger, when he was interviewed about this film, he said that his “message, if there is one to be taken away, is that non-conformists—like an unmarried mother—cannot rely on law and order. If you're a nonconformist, bad things will happen to you and there will be nobody there to protect you.” Which is—I mean, it's interesting, because the film ultimately ends up, kind of, proving that point wrong. Because you have this very traditional and staid force with the Laurence Olivier, who's—as the comment track said—is the kind of fulcrum of sanity, in this. We're just, like, “We're just getting the facts, ma'am.” You know? That kind of thing.

But I find that interesting, where it's just—it is this—it is simultaneously what he wants to have as a comment of, like, this unmarried woman who didn't wanna be married and, you know, she's in this new place by herself. And she is trapped. It's like curiosity is the problem. Wanting to go off on your own, it's all a problem. And, yeah.

00:25:27 Alexandra Guest

[April agrees several times as Alexandra speaks.]

But she—what is I think interesting, as well, is that she comes up with this bizarre game that she plays with her brother, at the end, in order to stop him killing her daughter, I suppose. But I suppose she's ultimately saved by Laurence Olivier, but in a way that's sort of after the fact. Like, she's already come up with this way of stopping it.

00:26:52 April Host

So, um... I mean, I think, yeah. I mean, with my film as well, I mean, one of the ideas that I wanted to have going through the whole movie was that there's this woman on her own, in the desert. And when her friend goes missing, she's even more on her own and that, in a way, the landscape and the men around her and this kind of thing—like, every—she does run into all these sort of dangerous situations and these people who may seem like they're gonna help her, but they're not. And that was—that was certainly one of the feelings that I had when I came to America and I was on my own, was that you could just drop off and no one would notice or that kind of thing. Because—and maybe that was the feeling in London, at that time as well—that you could just get swallowed up. There's also the irony that no one really even listens to Ann, in this movie, until her brother showed up.

[Alexandra agrees.]

So, her brother's taken away, like, she's—even though her daughter is safe, she's even more alone and less in control without him.

00:27:11 Alexandra Guest

[April agrees several times as Alexandra talks.]

I mean, it's interesting though, 'cause at a certain point—I mean, he always seems weird, the brother.

[They laugh.]

Like, he seems—like, psychotic in a way, at the beginning. But he's—*[stammering]* you know, it—and at a certain point, he, like, goes just completely crazy and—but it seems like she's expecting this, you know? Like, she knows that he has this in him and she knows exactly what to do when... his, kind of, plans are revealed and it's revealed that he has her daughter in the trunk of his car... which—I mean, I watched this with my husband the other day, again, and he didn't know what was going on. Like, at a certain—

[April laughs loudly.]

He was really surprised when *[chuckling]* Bunny was in the trunk of the car! I mean, I thought that it was kind of easy to see that that was coming, or—you know—that they were really, kind of, laying it on a bit thick, with the kind of creepiness of the brother. But he was like, "Oh my god!" *[Laughs.]* And then—and he didn't—he was convinced, during—kind of—the second act of the movie, that Bunny didn't exist.

00:28:21 April Host

[Music begins to fade in.]

We're gonna take another quick break. When we come back, I would like to get a little bit more into Keir Dullea's performance.

[Alexandra agrees.]

Because I think that we can hit on a few things about why it might work for some people, why it gives it away, why it hides it, all that kind of stuff. So, we'll do that and that's also, kind of, talking about the idea of working with inexperienced actors.

[Alexandra hums in acknowledgment.]

00:28:49 Music Music
00:28:55 Promo Promo

Because he was an inexperienced actor, as was Carol Lynley, at that time. So, we're gonna take a quick break. We'll be right back. "Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.

[Radio interference followed by laidback music with a snare drumbeat. A phone rings as the DJ speaks.]

Radio DJ: Welcome back to *Fireside Chat* on KMAX. With me in-studio to take your calls is the dopest duo on the West Coast, Oliver Wang and Morgan Rhodes.

[Click.]

Go ahead, caller.

Caller: Hey. Uh, I'm looking for a music podcast that's insightful and thoughtful, but like, also helps me discover artists and albums that I've never heard of.

Morgan Rhodes: Yeah, man. Sounds like you need to listen to *Heat Rocks*. Every week, myself—and I'm Morgan Rhodes—and my co-host here, Oliver Wang, talk to influential guests about a canonical album that has changed their lives.

Oliver Wang: Guests like Moby, Open Mike Eagle, talk about albums by Prince, Joni Mitchell, and so much more.

Caller: Yooo! What's that show called again?

Morgan: *Heat Rocks*. Deep dives into hot records.

Oliver: Every Thursday on Maximum Fun.

00:29:40 Music Music
00:29:46 April Host

[*Music suddenly gives way to static and a dial tone.*]

"Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.

Welcome back to *Switchblade Sisters*. I'm April Wolfe, and I'm joined today by Alexandra McGuinness and we're talking about *Bunny Lake is Missing*.

[*Music fades out.*]

So, before we left, we talked about Keir Dullea and how it might not have worked for you—for you, but did work for your husband, the misdirection of him. But I would love to talk about the fact that Keir had been in a movie called *David and Lisa*, previously to this. And he is a kind of psychotic character in *David and Lisa*. And he is remarkably similar to his character, here. And for a lot of people who were watching the movie, at the time, who had seen *David and Lisa*, it was a tip-off immediately. Because they're like, "Oh, here comes that guy who's acting the same way. He's obviously gonna have a psychotic break. Like, that's gonna be him."

And so, Preminger had actually seen *David and Lisa* and—you know—[*stammering*] he could obviously play this part, so he brought him on. But something about the context of him starring in this movie so close after this other, kind of, big break for him just already tipped off the audience and they had a hard time believing him as a normal person. So, they assumed—you know—they already got it.

00:30:59 Alexandra Guest

I mean, he gets away with the amount of affection that he has to give his sister, in a way. And it's only a few scenes in, where you start thinking, "He just kisses his sister an awful lot!" [*Laughs.*]

00:31:12 April Host

Yeah! 'Cause, like, you have to—kind of—back it up and be like, "Wait, are they married?" 'Cause I—for, you know, like the first couple of times that I watched it, I kept forgetting that—

00:31:19 Alexandra Guest

[*Interrupting.*] Yeah! It's a reveal that they're brother and sister, yeah!

00:31:21 April Host

Exactly, yeah! So—I mean, it certainly—I mean, Preminger is pushing on those taboos, as he was wont to do.

[Alexandra agrees.]

00:31:36 Alexandra Guest Was definitely pushing on those and Keir is kind of the right strange personality to potentially pull that off.
Yeah, and I mean, Carol Lynley... she looks like a kind of victim, as well, in that kind of way that women were cast, at that certain point. So.

00:31:45 April Host Mm-hm. You know, to go on—Keir was a little bit less experienced. Although, I should say that even though he looks quite young in this film, the portion of *2001: A Space Odyssey* that he was in, he filmed his part only a few months after this movie was released. So, it was actually quite short period of time. And as Alexandra and I were talking about, at the break, it's—it seems to be that there's an assumption that Kubrick had seen his role in this movie, which maybe gave him the part opposite HAL.

[They laugh.]

But I wanted to talk about inexperienced actors. The commentary track had said, "Olivier went to Preminger, at one point, and said, 'Dear boy, please don't scream at the children.' Which says as much about Olivier's attitude towards these two as Preminger's. They were young and inexperienced—blank slates. You can argue it works with this film. Was Preminger deliberately casting actors who were slightly inadequate to get an effect? Are they out of their league, because they're meant to be a weird, incestuous couple? Is she supposed to be as nuts as he is? And is that deliberate on the part of the filmmakers? With Preminger, you don't know if it's because it's purposeful or because he's being lazy."

[They laugh.]

00:33:03 Alexandra Guest So, I mean—how do you feel about working with inexperienced actors?
I really like it. My—on my first film, there was a lot of—it was a big cast. There was, kind of, 11 central characters and a lot of them, it was their first film. Some of them had gone to drama school and some of them didn't have any experience.

[April hums in acknowledgment.]

00:33:43 April Host And... that film, I like to work with at least, like—at least two cameras, in a way, so that you can, like, have one camera on each person if you're in a scene with two people. And then, sometimes, a third camera to pick up, like, details that are going on. Just like, cutaways.

00:33:45 Alexandra Guest I mean, that seems like a lot of work. *[Laughs.]*
It—*[chuckles.]* But! You do the scene, like, two or three times and you've done it.

00:33:49 Crosstalk Crosstalk **April:** And you're done! *[Laughs.]*

Alexandra: So, you have—you're gonna have all of the coverage.

[April agrees several times as Alexandra talks.]

00:33:52 Alexandra Guest But, I think it, like—it works well for inexperienced actors, because you can—you can capture their moments in—when you're getting

the coverage on the other person. And I like to talk to the actors, when I am working with them. Suggest other things for them to say. Kind of, I think—and with more inexperienced actors, that can be helpful, ‘cause you’re kind of—you’re there, helping them through the scene and that kind of thing.

I mean, on this film, everyone was pretty experienced, you know? It was—there was a—there’s a child, in the movie. Um... and...
[huffing out a breath of laughter] she was a total pro.

[They laugh.]

And, uh, that kind of thing. In fact, she kept—she kept giving out, to Josh Hartnett and saying, [whispering] “You don’t know your lines.”

[They cackle.]

00:34:49	April	Host	Which was... kind of—I think he found quite difficult. [Laughs.] It’s like, “Are you <u>serious</u> ?” He was in <i>Halloween H2O</i> ! Come on!
00:34:54	Alexandra	Guest	[April agrees several times as Alexandra speaks.] [Giggling.] She would—I do remember, she’d come up with, like, it was—she knows she’s like a six-year-old actress in New Mexico, and she’d come up with all this, like, business that she was gonna do in a scene with him that didn’t actually make it into the cut, but she was kind of banging stuff with a stapler and kind of drawing stuff and she was doing the same thing every take. But he found it really distracting and couldn’t [laughing] hack it. [April laughs.] And he kept, like, kind of—just like, stopping her doing it and those kinds of things. But... yeah. I mean I—it’s harder to work with real people, in America, because everyone—you know, I mean, it’s—SAG is great [laughs] and all that kind of thing, but it’s harder to, like, get people into the unions and get them to work. I think, in London when I was working before, like, if you saw someone on the street, you could kind of bring them in and they could be in the film.
00:35:53	April	Host	Yeah. That’s my person!
00:35:55	Alexandra	Guest	Yeah! [Laughs.]
00:35:57	April	Host	I wanted to talk a little bit about this movie being an adaptation and some of the writers. Because the writers—Penelope Mortimer was actually brought on first. Here’s the quote from story, “Penelope had no patience for the movies, but was original hired to write the script for this movie. Preminger tried for years to make this film. He first hired Ira Levin, who then became the author of <i>Rosemary’s Baby</i> , and also wrote <i>The Stepford Wives</i> . His script did not please Otto. Then he tried Dalton Trumbo. It wasn’t until Penelope came along that he felt he could make it. She came up with the crucial idea that it’s the brother. The brother is the villain of the piece. In the book, it was a former mistress of the school—a quote, unquote ‘menopausal maniac’.” So, it wasn’t until the story became about perverse sex, incest, that he felt he could make this movie. Which is very Preminger. [Laughs.]

00:36:50	Alexandra	Guest	Yeah, I mean—it seems much less interesting to have it be the headmistress. I mean, I suppose it’s the woman who’s recording the children’s night—
00:36:58	April	Host	Yeah, Ada Ford, yeah.
00:36:59	Alexandra	Guest	Yeah. And then Penelope Mortimer got her husband involved, I suppose? Or...
00:37:04	April	Host	Yeah, yeah. The quote is... this is from Penelope Mortimer: “Even when I was back at my familiar desk, I couldn’t write the script. I’ve always been paralyzed by—when confronting fiction. Who are these people? How do they brush their teeth? I have no idea. Plots are consequences of behavior, and I have no idea how to impose one on characters I don’t know. John Mortimer, however, could do it with ease. Otto agreed to my suggestion we should collaborate, and we were summoned to Hawaii, where he was shooting the bombing of Pearl Harbor in <i>In Harm’s Way</i> . We hung about for three days in explosions that shook the hotel and smothered the palm trees in dust. And during a brief truce, Otto and John discussed the possibilities of losing a five-year-old in Hampstead. The whole thing had become so unreal that I went to sleep with my eyes open, waking with a start to murmur what I hoped were appropriate comments.”
			<i>[Alexandra laughs.]</i>
			So, John and Penelope—very fascinating couple. They were only married for a short while. John Mortimer had another wife named Penelope, before her, too.
00:38:05	Alexandra	Guest	Oh!
			<i>[Alexandra agrees several times as April continues.]</i>
00:38:06	April	Host	Very strange. But there is, you know, these characters who have, you know, missing pieces to them and John Mortimer often wrote characters who were missing. Something that wasn’t quite there. Absent parents, people that you never see or never meet, but there’s—but you’re always talking about them. And I found that really fascinating. It was just like, perhaps that was an unacknowledged obsession, for him. Even though this is a, kind of like, work for hire thing that you put yourself into. Even if it’s quote, unquote “not a personal film,” it becomes a personal film.
			And I’m wondering if you could, maybe, speak on that for a second—it’s just like, you do have to put a piece of yourself into it.
			<i>[April agrees several times as Alexandra speaks.]</i>
00:38:47	Alexandra	Guest	I think everything—I think people often get tied up when they’re talking about films that, like—with my first film, it was about this girl who comes to London, and he’s kind of lost in this world of parties. And when I premiered the film, everyone was like, “And this is about you!” <i>[Laughs.]</i>
			“This is,” you know, “You’re a young woman who lived in London,” and that kind of thing. And obviously, there is personal elements to the film, but it’s not—you know—it’s not like I’m—I made a biopic and it’s the same with this movie, but there’s, um... and I think—I think that happens especially with women. That they’re just like, “Well, every film is autobiographical.” And it <u>is</u> . But it’s not so literal.

But there was, you know... in this film, I think—you know, there are things that you don't even think are personal that become personal at a certain point during the making of a film. And it—and it might—it—like, I realized, when I was in the middle of making this film that... that it was—it was really about this type of friendship that girls have and that I had experienced, when I was younger, where you—where the friendship is the most important thing to you. And you're in this power struggle and you—you can't lose your friend, 'cause it's—'cause it's the—it's your life, when you're a teenager. Like, often—like—your best friend or that kind of thing. And it was sort of about that period of time in your life where maybe you have to leave that friendship and go and search for other things, in your life. And hopefully the friendship evolves. Or you make other friends.

And then, in this film, that doesn't happen. It's kind of like what happens if the friendship ends up, kind of, destroying you.

00:40:58 Crosstalk Crosstalk

April: Yeah, stalls out.

Alexandra: In a way. Yeah. But I didn't even realize that 'til I was shooting the film, that—that it was—

April: *[Exclaiming.]* "Oh nooo! This is about meee! Oh noooo!"
[Laughs.]

Alexandra: *[Laughing.]* That it was, like, about these sort of, like—you know, like, friendships I had when I was like 12, or something.

00:41:14 Alexandra Guest

April: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

I was like, "No." You know, when I started making it, I was like, "No, it's about this and this *[laughing]* and this," and then—and then you're like, "No, no, no, no, no. Okay. I have to, like, make sure I'm doing that," when you're telling it.

00:41:26 April Host

[Music fades in.]

Aw, man. I would love to hear an Otto Preminger tell us what parts of himself he put into this movie.

[Alexandra laughs.]

00:41:37 Alexandra Guest

So, that's it for our show today. Thank you so much for coming in and talking about this film, which I love.

00:41:38 April Host

Thank you, April.

And, people again, they can see *She's Missing* on VOD, iTunes, right? And...

00:41:44 Alexandra Guest

iTunes, Amazon, Vudu... all sorts of streaming places. It's available now.

00:41:49 April Host

Wonderful. Thank you so much for coming on.

00:41:51 Alexandra Guest

Thank you, April.

00:41:52 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. 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.

00:42:16 Music Music

"Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.

[The music ends.]

00:42:21 Clip Clip

Ada: I have all their little nightmares on my tape machine!

00:42:24 Sound Transition
Effect

A cheerful cord strum.

00:42:25 Speaker 1 Guest

MaximumFun.org.

00:42:27 Speaker 2 Guest

Comedy and culture.

00:42:28 Speaker 3 Guest

Artist owned—

00:42:29 Speaker 4 Guest

—audience supported.