

00:00:00	Music	Transition	“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	<p>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.</p> <p>And today, uh, you might already know, but we are recording remotely, because we’re social distancing. Uh, I’m recording from my bedroom, so I’ll warn you right now that, again, you may hear my cat Chicken screaming in the background, um, audio’s likely going to sound a little different from our studios, but everything else is the same. Beside my cat, there’s also a little birdie outside that you might hear, uh, usually it doesn’t cause me any problems, but now it sounds a little, uh, a little loud.</p> <p>And today, I’m very excited to have writer/producer/actor, pretty much everything slash, Felicia Day here with me as my guest. Hi, Felicia!</p>
00:00:56	Felicia Day	Guest	Hello! How are you? Thank you so much for having me, April.
00:00:59	April	Host	Yes! And, you know, Felicia’s got construction going on at her house, so, I’m really excited to hear some of that.
00:01:03	Felicia	Guest	I’m so sorry! This is the worst time! The worst time ever to ha—because I have a beautiful studio, but I had it torn down because I’m building on top of the studio, oh my gosh, and of course they were totally silent before we started recording.
			<i>[They both laugh.]</i>
00:01:16	April	Host	I’m excited because it’s like a <i>Cribz</i> episode with audio, where it’s just like, “Here, welcome to my home! This is what we’re doing.”
00:01:23	Felicia	Guest	Yeah, welcome to it! So, I mean, my plan is to build a soundproof—like, a studio where I can record and stream from a little bit better. But also, I have like, a guest room on top of so my dad can come visit, so. It’s just the worst timing ever.
			<i>[Felicia laughs.]</i>
00:01:36	April	Host	She’s a family woman. Um, for those of you who aren’t as familiar with Felicia’s work, where have you been? But also, please let me give an introduction.
			<i>[Chicken begins screaming mournfully in the distance.]</i>
			Um, Felicia is an Alabaman native who’s kind of a genius, who graduated with a degree in music and mathematics from U.T. Austin by the time that she was nineteen. Nineteen?

00:01:52 Felicia Guest Yeah, I graduated at 19. But I went at sixteen.

*[April exclaims.]*

Well, I was twenty, I turned twenty right after that, so it's really not that exciting.

00:02:00 April Host Sure sure sure. Well, that was fortunate that she graduated early, because she's had a busy career ahead of her in film and television. Some of her first roles happened to be in cult-classics including *Bring It On Again*, *Undeclared*, and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. But, ever industrious, she created and starred in a web-series of her own called *The Guild*, which ran from 2007 to 2013, exploring gaming subcultures before it was cool. And from that foray, she developed *Geek and Sundry*, a YouTube channel and production company for all things geek that garnered 2 million subscribers, and was ultimately sold to Legendary Entertainment in 2014.

Somewhere in there, Felicia found time to star in *Doctor Horrible's Sing-Along Blog*, and appeared in shows including *Dollhouse*, *Red*, *Eureka*, *Supernatural*, and *The Magicians*, among so many other series and podcasts. In 2017 she began starring as Kinga Forrester, a cheerful villain who forces some robots and a lowly worker named Joanna to watch terrible movies in the reboot of *Mystery Science Theater 3000*. Now, she's starring in a new Blumhouse *Into The Dark* film, Alejandro Bruges's *Pooka Lives!*, about a company trying to make their own Momo/Slenderman-esque scary internet sensation that becomes quickly too real and out of control.

So, that's Felicia in a nutshell. Um, but Felicia, the movie you chose to talk about today is *Gremlins*. Can you give us a little explanation on why this is one of your fave genre films?

00:03:18 Felicia Guest Well, um, I think this was one of the first films besides *E.T.* that I remember, so I guess my early childhood was um, filled with—my early childhood was filled with animatronic puppets?

*[Felicia laughs, April goes "Yeah!"]*

I think my mom, uh, she definitely exposed me to things a little bit above my—'cause I was probably about five or six when I watched this movie? So I think it's my first trauma, but also, my first love of, uh, of movies. Because it was just—I loved Gizmo so much. When Gizmo got in that little pink car, it was like, the most beautiful moment of my childhood. *[Laughs.]*

00:03:55 April Host We'll talk about that later, but that was a last minute decision to put Gizmo in that car.

00:04:00 Felicia Guest Was it really?

00:04:01 April Host Yeah.

00:04:02 Felicia Guest Oh, man, it was a—it was a stroke of genius. Because Gizmo kinda just rides around in a backpack, kinda like a child, you know, like, as children, we are very unempowered. You know, as kids we kind of just go wherever an adult comes, and then he had that moment at

the end, of like, “I’m doing it!”

00:04:18	April	Host	For those of you who haven’t seen <i>Gremlins</i> , um, today’s episode should give you some spoilers, but shouldn’t stop you from listening before you watch. This is a movie from 1984, come on. But my motto is, “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>Gremlins</i> first, this is your shot.
00:04:33	Music	Music	“End Title / The Gremlin rag” off the album <i>Gremlins</i> by Jerry Goldsmith
00:04:35	April	Host	And now that you’re back, let me introduce <i>Gremlins</i> . Written by Chris Columbus and directed by Joe Dante for release in 1984, <i>Gremlins</i> stars Zack Galligan as Billy Peltzer, a nice young guy who works in a bank, loves his dog, pines for his coworker Kate—
00:04:48	Clip	Clip	<i>[Romantic music underscores the conversation.]</i>  <b>Billy:</b> ‘Cause, I mean, I was just wondering, um, if you’re not doing anything this Thursday night, maybe you’d like to, uh, go out on a date? <i>[Stammering]</i> With me?  <b>Kate:</b> I’d love to.  <b>Billy:</b> Oh, yeah? Well that’s great!
00:05:04	April	Host	—and tolerates his naive inventor dad, Randall. One day, Randall moseys into a Chinatown antique store looking for a Christmas present for Billy. The owner refuses to sell a cuddly little creature called Mogwai to Randall, but Mr. Wing’s grandson sells it to him, and gives him three rules.
00:05:20	Clip	Clip	<b>Grandson:</b> Keep him out of the light, he hates bright light. Especially sunlight. It’ll kill him. And keep him away from water, don’t get him wet. But the most important rule, the rule you can never forget, no matter how much he cries, no matter how much he begs, never, <u>never</u> feed him after midnight.
00:05:39	April	Host	Kind of confusing rules as a grownup, you’re like, “What...what?”  <i>[Felicia laughs.]</i>  Billy gets the pet, and names him Gizmo. His buddy Pete comes over, and almost immediately spills water on Gizmo, and five new Mogwai’s bubble and spring from his back, including one mischievous one called Stripe, with a mohawk.
00:05:54	Clip	Clip	<b>Billy:</b> You know, it’s funny, the new ones aren’t like Gizmo. The one with the stripe seems to be the leader.
00:05:59	April	Host	I love Stripe.
00:06:00	Felicia	Guest	Stripe was the best.
00:06:01	April	Host	Yeah, so good! Billy lets his old science teacher experiment on a Mogwai, and back at home. Stripe tricks Billy into feeding them after midnight by changing his clocks. The Mogwai’s form cocoons, and

hatch into these ugly, lizard-like gremlins. They torture Gizmo, try to kill Billy's mom, and meanwhile, one kills the science teacher.

Then, all the Gremlins get killed but Spike, who pops into a pool, and creates a bunch more gremlins. These gremlins wreak havoc on the town, killing a bunch of people, including Ms. Dagle, a surly lady who threatened to kill Billy's dog. The police don't believe Billy.

00:06:34 Clip

Clip

**Officer 1:** Gremlins, huh? Little monsters?

**Billy:** Right.

**Officer 1:** Hundreds of them.

**Billy:** Well, I'm not sure, maybe thousands!

**Officer 1:** Wow.

*[The policemen laugh.]*

**Billy:** Look, I know it sounds crazy, I know it does, but in a matter of hours, this town is gonna be turned into a major disaster area, now you have got to warn people!

**Officer 1:** I think this kid is drunk.

**Officer 2:** No, but you are, eh?

00:06:54 April

Host

The gremlins take over the town, a bunch end up at the bar where Kate works at night. They get drunk and rowdy, but she escapes by using the flash of a camera. Billy, Kate, and Gizmo find all the gremlins in a movie theater, and blow it up. But Stripe has escaped. They chase him into a department store, and Gizmo saves the day by exposing Stripe to sunlight. Mr. Wing retrieves Gizmo, but Gizmo and Billy hope to be reunited someday, when Billy's ready.

00:07:18 Clip

Clip

*[Sentimental music swells in the background during the scene.]*

**Gizmo:** Bye, Billy.

**Mr. Wing:** Perhaps someday, you may be ready. Until then, Mogwai will be waiting.

00:07:33 April

Host

Okay. So, that is *Gremlins*, you know, as much as I can explain it. But I—you know, I wanted to go back into the fact that this is—this actually was Joe Dante's big hit. It was not even *The Helling*, and *The Helling* is an amazing movie.

But, Joe Dante said, "I was down to my last few bucks before i got the *Gremlins* job. I directed *The Helling*, which had done well, but the company had gone out of business before they could even pay me. When Stephen Spielberg arrived, I was convinced he's sent it to the wrong address."

So, I like thinking that the fact that like, Joe Dante, who we consider a legend, was like, down to his last few dollars, and gremlins was

going to get him—you know, like, maybe paying his grocery bills for the month.

00:08:21 Felicia Guest

*[She stammers for a second.]*

There are a lot of good stories like that, I think, Hillary Swank is my favorite, where she lost her health insurance, but won an Oscar, you know? For uh, for the boxing movies. So—

*[April affirms.]*

Yeah, but you know, it was interesting, because I watched this movie on Amazon Prime for free, you know, because I have Prime? And it has all these little factoids on the side, which are actually really fun. And one of the little factoids was that Stephen Spielberg considered Tim Burton for this. But the fact that he had never done a feature-length thing ruled him out, and I kept watching the movie thinking, “Oh, wow, how would this be different if it was Tim Burton? It would be a little bit creepier.”

*[Felicia laughs, April affirms.]*

00:08:59 April Host

But there’s also certain impulses that I think that Joe Dante and, um, Tim Burton share. Which is, you know, sometimes, like, this kind of exploration of an older, kind of nuclear family unit, and kind of deconstructing that, you know? Kind of taking the sheen off of it.

00:09:16 Felicia Guest

Yeah! You know, when I was watching this movie, I was like, always struck between the difference that they—just, the way that they’re shot is so much slower. The first 17 minutes, I was just, “Wow, this is really taking a long time.”

*[April laughs.]*

And then the pace of storytelling really picks up, There are so many more wide-shots, like, really, the lack of close-ups is almost jarring when you watch an 80’s movie? Because everything’s done in mediums and wides, and it’s so odd because I’m watching it, and I’m thinking, like, “God, we should really be in a close up on her face when she turns to him, but we don’t even see half her face!” I’m like, “Is this fine? Why don’t we shoot movies like this?”

But, at the same time, also, the characters are so strangely broad? You know, they’re very, almost like comic—the old woman is just, like, a farce character, she’s not a real character. And then, somehow, this kid, the lead kid is over 18, because he works at a bank, right?

*[April affirms.]*

But then he has, like, a 12 year old best friend? Who’s... Why? What is going on? It’s very odd!

*[April laughs.]*

00:10:15 April Host

Okay, so—a lot of that has to do with the fact that the script was re-

written. Chris Columbus had submitted one where Zack Galligan's character was supposed to be 13. And so he had an 11 year old friend. So it was already a little bit strange, he was gonna be a little bit of an outcast and have a younger friend. But it was hilarious to me that they kept the 11 year old friend. Um, so this is, like—

00:10:38 Felicia Guest

Corey Feldman just coming i for no reason, I was like, "Is he his brother? No? He's just a friend? What is going on?"

00:10:45 April Host

Yeah, so this is—So Joe Dante said, quote:

"When Stephen saw the script, he was noodling around with the idea of starting his own company. He wanted to get off the ground with a low budget horror movie, which is obviously why he chose me. Stephen had seen *Piranha*, and he'd seen *The Howling*. Chris wrote the script as a spec. It was sent around town as a writing sample. The lead kid was younger in the original script, about 13. Later his age was bumped up, though he retained almost all of his childlike aspects, and his best friend was still 11.

Chris stayed on for the whole picture, when we did reshoots on a little stage on La Brea. He was working on *Goonies* at the time. Steven and he would sit in the corner, and he would write. I wouldn't call Amblin at any time a factory, because they didn't make enough movies for that, but they did have a lot of things going on, and often going on simultaneously."

So, there's this kind of large, pervasive thought that we get, you know, something that you brought up earlier, that 80's kind of aesthetic, where there's almost a childlike-ness to all the characters, no matter their age. So it's almost like they are timeless. They don't exist in the space, they don't exist in reality. But they're, um, you know, they're kind of tugging at your heartstrings no matter what.

00:11:48 Felicia Guest

Yeah. It's almost like—especially even in the way they directed. I mean, I don't, like—I don't know a lot about the lead actor other than *Gremlins*, but—

*[April affirms.]*

He's really kind of a glass of water, like, there's really—they almost pick close-ups of his face not reacting. It's just so weird, the fact that he's not emoting. He's like, staring at something that should be—there should be a reaction there! And it's just kind of, like, "Okay." And so it's very odd, and those were all directorial choices, I'm sure the actor didn't not react! But you're right, it's very much, like, almost a passive participant, and this childlike sort of sensibility also, right?

*[April affirms.]*

Just like, the fact that the secondary characters are so broad, and um—even a modern sitcom would be like, "Oh, that old lady person who wants to put his dog to sleep, that's just like, not even real." But it's so odd, because that's how the films were. All the characters are completely unbelievable in their broadness. But then they're

murdering people! So it's just this weird dichotomy of tone. You're just like, "I don't know where to be right now!"

[She laughs.]

00:12:53 April Host Yeah. You know, before, you had mentioned stuff, too, about these kind of quirky characters, I wanna get a little further into that. Because Joe Dante said, "We tried to have eccentric, likeable characters. Like the father, an inventor. When we were casting the father, we had a lot of different actors come in. One of them was Pat Engle. He gave them a reading that was so heart-wrenching and moving, that I had to say to this great actor, 'I can't give you the part. This is too real.' He would have been brilliant in the movie, but it would have been a James Ague movie. Hoyt Axton was perfect, because he had all this folksy charm, and he was good with an ad lib. So casting is so important, just to find the right people for the parts, it's everything. That's the movie, that's what people are going to look at. They're not going to look at you, they're looking at the cast."

Um, and I think that that's a really interesting element of this film, where they could have had more serious actors, but they had to find the exact right tone of someone who connected with that material. And—

00:13:46 Felicia Guest Yeah, I think that kind of like, tone—I mean, I totally agree with you. And in watching *Gremlins*, you're just like, "I don't know who could have made this, but this is the only person who could have made it." And they made it—on every level of taste, it's consistent. And I think that, you know, I'm like, "Nobody would make this, nobody would do this now." But at the same time, it's brilliant and it's iconic and people are gonna watch it for 100 years. And the reason is that there's a vision there. It is a complete whole.

Like, for me, everything I do is done sensorially. I have a feeling about whether something is good or bad. I don't really use technical, cerebral, this is my outline and these are the act breaks and this is where the reverse will happen. I can't think like that. I have to just kind of feel my way through things and just kind of see if, oh, this feels right, oh, this feels like something that is exciting to me and it's new.

Um, and so when I see something like *Gremlins*, or you have like a creator like Joe Dante, who has a specific point of view. It's not for everybody, but he creates something that is of his vision. Um, that's really compelling, and that's where things pop. Not when you do something by committee, where it's clear that, okay, we cast this person because they have a deal here, or we shot here because, you know, we had—that's a little bit more convenient for us. You know, these are the actors, this is the kind of cinematographer we got that doesn't really mesh with the style.

You know, I think that's filmmaking. You want to create sort of this uh—what are those things called, when you put them all in a glass—a glass—a piece of glass, and it's self contained. What is that called? Like a biodome or something?

00:15:20 April Host Oh, like a terrarium?

00:15:22 Felicia Guest Yeah, a terrarium. So it's a completely enclosed terrarium. That's what every piece of art that's great is.

00:15:28 April Host Uh, and I think—I mean, you were talking about this before, but yeah, you having your own network allows you to create that terrarium when you're doing it. You know, like that seemed, you know, like you only got to say yes to yourself, or no to yourself.  
*[Laughs.]*

00:15:44 Felicia Guest No, absolutely. And, you know, that's the trade-off of just only having hundreds of thousands of dollars versus a million or above, right? But at the same time like, creating the brand of Geek and Sundry, which was my company, was a sensibility that I wanted every video that we did to be of that sensibility. So if you watched it, you'd know, oh, this is a Geek and Sundry thing. And I think we did that for awhile very successfully, in that the sensibility was um, it was very colorful, it was upbeat, it was quirky and celebrating weirdness, but in a fun, happy way. And it didn't try to be cool, because I literally can't be cool.  
  
*[Both laugh.]*

You know, I just can't. I just pitched another show, uh, the last show I pitched, which got pretty close to being sold, um, people were like, "Well, you know, this isn't gonna sell. We love this show." This is what I hear all the time. "We love this show. We don't know where to sell it, because it's not Disney enough for Disney, it's not edgy enough for another—for cable. So, can you add some sex and drug use?"

And I'm like, "I don't—that's not my style, man. I don't want teenagers having sex and doing drugs. Can we talk about body image?" "No, nobody wants that."

So I'm like, I don't know what to do for you except just do my own stuff.

00:16:58 Music Transition "Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.

00:16:59 April Host Yeah. Just make it sexy. Uh, we're gonna take a quick break. When we come back, we'll get a little bit further into some process stuff from both Spielberg and from Joe Dante. We'll be right back.  
  
*[Music fades.]*

00:17:13 Promo Promo **Music:** Guitar strums as singer counts out "One, two, one two three four." Up-tempo guitar and harmonica music plays in the background.

**Justin McElroy:** Hi, everybody! My name is Justin McElroy.

**Dr. Sydnee McElroy:** I'm Sydnee McElroy!

**Justin:** We're both doctors, and—



**Sydnee:** Nope. Just me.

**Justin:** Okay, well Sydnee's a doctor and I'm a medical enthusiast.

**Sydnee:** Okay.

**Justin:** And we created *Sawbones*, a marital tour of misguided medicine!

**Sydnee:** Every week I dig through the annals of medical history to bring you the wildest, grossest—sometimes dumbest—tales of ways we've tried to treat people throughout history!

**Justin:** Eh, lately we do a lot of modern fake medicine. 'Cause everything's a disaster. But it's slightly less of a disaster every Friday, right here on MaximumFun.org, as we bring you *Sawbones: A Marital Tour of Misguided Medicine*. And remember:

**Sydnee:** Don't drill a hole in your head.

[*Music ends.*]

00:17:53 Music Transition "Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.

00:18:00 April Host Welcome back to *Switchblade Sisters*. I'm April Wolfe, and I'm joined today with uh, Felicia Day from her uh, studio that she's remodeling, and we're talking about *Gremlins*.

So, something that I was really, really loving is there's a quote that Joe Dante thought about realism. Because people kept asking him, you know, like, what about realism? And there's um, one point where in an interview, someone was like, "It's winter out, but you can't see the condensation of their breath." And he was like, "Ugh."

And his response was, "We shot it in the middle of summer, so there was no way we were going to be able to fake something like seeing that character's breath condense in cold air. Today if you wanted to spend the money on CGI, you could actually make it look real, but that's still pretty expensive. In *Gremlins*, the unreality is actually what counts. I was adamant that it not look realistic. That it look like what we remembered from old movies. It's what the Zuckers did on *Airplane*. They tried to make the movie look old fashioned by the clothing and the props. The photographers in *Airplane* had old flashbulb cameras, too. I intended *Gremlins* to be kind of timeless. You can't just take this rubber thing out in the city streets and hit it with this light. This movie had to be stylised." End quote.

I thought that that was um, just a really smart way of approaching this, because you do have to make it believable that these things exist in this world, but how do you make it believable by making it like, a stylised realism that exists but doesn't exist.

00:19:26 Felicia Guest I mean, a hundred percent. And I can—I mean, I don't know. You could tell with the way the camera moved very slowly and not very fast, you know, like there was aesthetic. And also just shooting

from, you know, in wides and mediums. It's not like movies in the 80s never had close-ups, so it was sort of like that 1940s aesthetic where you can't move the camera up close in.

You can't do a lot of—it was more of a stage presentation. And there's almost an impression you get when you're watching it of, "I'm watching sort of a holiday play" in a sense, until you get to the murder—until you get to the murder sections. So all the dialogue up front, the first 17 minutes, feels slow, because it is shot in a way that's very like, *It's a Wonderful Life* or whatever. It's actually really interesting, because I did notice that.

- 00:20:11 April Host One of the things that Joe Dante has brought up recently though is the fact that, you know, apparently this was right before Disney—god, who took over? The big head honcho for Disney. I can't remember who it was. But he was that kind of—
- 00:20:25 Felicia Guest Oh, uh, Michael Eisner? Eisner?
- 00:20:26 April Host Yeah. When he came in and kind of cleaned up house and like, really kind of corporatized a lot of things. So Joe Dante was able to get the rights to show that clip to *It's a Wonderful Life* and these other movies because it was right before Eisner had come in and essentially kind of like, said no, we're not doing this. You don't get to lend it out.

Um, and so he said, "The people who hold the rights to the clips make it expensive and difficult, because they really don't want to be bothered. So that's one thing. And also *Snow White*. And *Snow White* and Disney may be a special case, but in general movie literacy has plummeted. When you and I were growing up, our casual acquaintances with old movies and movie stars in the world of the 30s and 40s could be renewed all the time. Everything was there to be sampled. Every time you turned on the TV, there was an old movie." End quote.

And so I think that that's a really interesting thing, too, where you can talk to people, like young people who are into something like *Stranger Things*. They'll be like yeah. But they might not actually know where the references are coming from. You know, they might not have the literacy to know that.

- 00:21:26 Felicia Guest Yeah, absolutely. I mean, you know, we're uh—I recently was, you know, I've been really into Greek mythology and other kind of um, ancient kind of like, Bronze Age history, which has really fascinated me. And, you know, the roots—the roots of a lot of our culture and a lot of our storytelling are way back there, but we only know seven iterations, you know, seven iter—so we're kind of eating, you know, we're looking at sort of the sediment piled on top of each other, and we kind of lose the roots of it, right?

So, um, you know, the funny thing is I was homeschooled, and so I didn't really have contemporaries or any kids around me ever. So it wasn't as if when I went to school, everyone was like, "Did you see the latest, you know, uh, Disney channel show?" I never watched any of that. I watched um, you know, 1930s detective movies.

*[April laughs.]*

I was in love with Humphrey Bogart and Cary Grant, and I wanted to be uh, a dame in sort of a screwball comedy. So, that was really my aesthetic, and you know, that was a sort of like, more childlike um, attitude a lot of the times in those movies, especially after the code went through, right? And so I think that's where a lot of my comedy and my sensibility comes from, and I think a lot of these filmmakers in the 70s, when they got the shot to do like, a low budget, kind of out of the studio system movie, it was kind of the same equivalent of any period where the door gets opened a little bit and some weird stuff can happen.

Like right now, in the next couple years we're gonna see a lot of live streaming, um, and live things that are out of the box, because the door's open right now. Um, I guarantee you in three years, most live content will be owned by the corporations, just like webseries happened, just like podcasting has happened. But there's a window where some stuff can get through and some people can find careers doing this stuff that is a little off, and hopefully they can keep doing that instead of getting co-opted into the system.

00:23:20 April Host

I also want to bring up the fact that when you're doing *Mystery Science Theater*, um, that—

*[Felicia affirms.]*

—that character that you've developed, that kind of character, is certainly a throwback to a kind of 30s-40s kind of fast talking like, um, you know, just a fun dame kind of thing.

00:23:41 Felicia Guest

Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. You know, and that's Joel's sensibility too, like developing that character. You know, that was kind of, um, just aesthetically—he's a very aesthetic person, you know, visual. So her whole getup and the way her hair is and stuff like that, it was really easy to have that rapport.

Especially with Patton Oswalt, who is kind of an actor who could have lived during any era, you know? He has this sort of universal quality to him, that he could be from the 30s, he could be from the 80s. And not a lot of people can do that, right? Like, a lot of people are totally contemporary, you know? You don't buy them in a period setting at all. It's just the aesthetics of them. And some people are more universal. And I've been in a lot of period pieces because my face does look like something a little bit old fashioned in a way, which I love.

00:24:25 April Host

Yeah, you can time travel. Yeah. *[Laughs.]*

00:24:26 Felicia Guest

Exactly! Thank you! Yeah, maybe 100 years. I wouldn't want to time travel, because women really had it crappy pretty much every other year, so.

*[April affirms and they both laugh.]*

A lot of the references are older references. Like some of the times, I was watching old ones to prepare for writing for the show. And like, I loved the show so much as a kid, because it was adult, but they had a kid-like sensibility, right? And um, half the references I didn't even get now, and I certainly didn't get them when I was a kid. But the fact that that was that sense of fun and the robots, and he would read letters from kids at the end, even though he was an adult, it really makes you feel like, um, you know, you're just another person. You can be an adult. It sort of suspends the whole age thing.

And I guess like, when you're watching *Gremlins*, it's not that creepy that the 20 year old kid has an 11 year old friend. But then when you just back up, you're like, "Why is Corey Feldman there?"

*[Both laugh again.]*

00:25:28 April Host No, I mean, I think that like, this *Gremlins* and that show and that tone, I think that they carry a lot of similarities. There's a love of movies there, and there's also a light ribbing of movies there, and, you know, like Joe Dante was saying, where it's just like, he's been accused of making the movie as well as its own *Mad* magazine parody. You know, like that's—like, simultaneously, where it's just like, you can have that affection and also satirize it.

Um, but I definitely see that. And it's also something uh, Joe Dante doing *Trailers from Hell* and trying to install an appreciation of film that came before that I really appreciate.

00:26:06 Felicia Guest Yeah, it's sort of a gentle—I mean, even though there's murder in it, you know—

00:26:09 April Host I know, it's a gentle murder.

00:26:10 Felicia Guest —there's a gentleness and a kindness about it. It really is, and it's fun and it's cartoony and so you don't have to take it so seriously that someone really got murdered. It's almost like a wink to the camera, like, "Well, it's just an actor" in a sense.

And I really respond to that, and that aesthetic is, again, not—I personally think the quarantine will get us back to that sort of sensibility, because nobody really wants to be genuinely—and it's kind of like *Pooka Lives!*, the movie that I did. It's very self aware, it's very cartoony, nobody is really super scared with anything. You could get startled, but it's a dude in a rabbit suit almost, right?

So we're all just having fun, and everyone's quippy and funny, and it has a tone that I love so much that *Buffy*—like *Buffy* and a little bit of *Supernatural* are of an era and have not been cool for awhile, um, but I think will make a comeback, because we all just want to have fun with each other.

00:27:05 April Host Well, I like that that—like, did they just kind of uh, did Alejandro just like, call you up and be like, "Look, this is exactly your style and tone"? Like, what—*[Laughs.]*

00:27:12 Felicia Guest Yeah. Yeah yeah, no. I mean, well, the reason why I got into the

movie was my producing partner, Ryan Copple, wrote the script. So, he was like, "I sold a movie and I want you to do it. I wrote you a part." And I read it, I was like, "Well, you've known me for ten years. You clearly wrote the exact part I need."

So I was like, on, and you know, actually most of the cast were people we know—we knew that we would put up for roles, like Malcolm and Jonah, um, Gavin, Wil Wheaton, Rachel Bloom. Those are all people, you know, I called personally, and was like, hey, either audition or would you be willing to do this for me and the movie, for us?

And uh, you know, Alejandro was so excited. We all had all these dream lists and thank goodness we got this ensemble together, and Alejandro is a great—he has a really Sam Raimi aesthetic. Which is, again, that sort of like, over the top, tongue-in-cheek sensibility. And so he um, the way that he cast the characters together and emphasized to us as actors, hey, what's gonna really carry this movie is the relationship between you guys. So we would always like, make extra efforts to be, you know, not be in our trailers. We're like, hanging out and going to drinks afterward.

And I can't say, you know, like it made such a big difference. Like, we're still on a text chain together. We really appreciate each other as people, and that doesn't happen often. And I think that the tone and the script, but also the director, um, Alejandro's work with us really made a difference in, I think, elevating that relationship between all of us.

- |          |         |       |   |
|----------|---------|-------|---|
| 00:28:42 | April   | Host  | Yeah. I think um, you know, that's something also uh, coming back to <i>Gremlins</i> , uh, these—these actors actually had been working together. Zach Galligan was already auditioning a bunch with um, with Phoebe Cates for other roles.   |
| 00:29:00 | Felicia | Guest | Oh really? I love her so much! I used to think she was just literally the most beautiful—like her and Olivia Hussey, you know, they had that sort of otherworldly, dark hair, like Snow White aesthetic.  |
| 00:29:11 | April   | Host  | Oh god, yeah. It's uh, she's—I think that she's one of the most underrated actors from that time, because she kept getting pigeonholed because she was just so beautiful. She <u>is</u> so beautiful. Um, and that's, you know.   |
| 00:29:23 | Felicia | Guest | But she's very good, and you know, there's a certain style. I don't know if it's specifically for this, but I think it is, and just in—there's a different kind of style of acting they have. It's less um, forced. It's very much more uh, internal in a way, and in almost less engaging with the audience. It's more objective in a way. I don't know how to describe it. That chemistry really saw the movie through. In fact, I feel like she was really the anchor of the movie, you know, performance-wise. When she was in the bar, I was like, "This is amaz—this is my favorite sequence." <i>[Laughs.]</i> |
| 00:29:55 | April   | Host  | That scene is so good! That scene is so good. And actually, I think um, they ended up cutting out more scenes that were in that for the theatrical release, and Joe Dante was kind of sad, because there's just so much good stuff there. But that—   |

00:30:10	Felicia	Guest	Oh yeah. That's interesting.
00:30:11	Music	Transition	"Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.
00:30:12	April	Host	With that in mind, I'm gonna take a quick break, and then we'll come back and we'll actually talk a little bit about that bar scene and a little bit about Phoebe Cates' process. We'll be right back.
			<i>[Music fades.]</i>
00:30:24	Promo	Promo	<i>[Dramatic Star Wars-esque music playing in the background.]</i> <b>Speaker 1:</b> <i>[In dramatic movie narrator voice]</i> You wept as we crafted the tragic tale of <i>Jar-Jar: A Star Wars Story</i> . <b>Speaker 2:</b> Do you mean, like, he <u>forgives</u> Darth Vader— <b>Speaker 3:</b> <i>[Laughs.]</i> <b>Speaker 2:</b> "Mesa still love you, Ani!" <b>Speakers 3 &amp; 4:</b> <i>[Laughs boisterously.]</i> <b>Speaker 1:</b> You gasped out loud at the shocking twists of <i>Face/Off 2: Faces Wild</i> . <b>Speaker 5:</b> <i>[Dramatically]</i> He takes his kid's face. <b>Speaker 6:</b> ... What? <i>[Laughs.]</i> <b>Speaker 1:</b> Now, we're writing an entire screenplay week by week on <i>Story Break Season 2: Heaven Heist</i> . <i>[Music climaxes, then ceases. Is replaced by mellow synth jazz.]</i> <b>Freddie Wong:</b> Hey, folks. Freddie Wong here with some exciting news about <i>Story Break</i> , the writers' room podcast where three Hollywood professionals have one hour to spin cinematic gold! We're shaking up our format by turning <i>Heaven Heist</i> —one of our favorite ideas we've ever come up with on the show—into a full screenplay. <b>Speaker:</b> <i>Heaven Heist</i> is an action-comedy about a crew of misfit gangsters robbing the Celestial Bank of Heaven. Think of <i>Coco</i> means <i>Point Break</i> . <b>Freddie:</b> Join us as we write this crazy movie scene-by-scene and get an inside look at the screenwriting process on our podcast, <i>Story Break</i> , every Thursday on <a href="http://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> . <i>[Music ceases.]</i>
00:31:14	Music	Transition	"Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.
00:31:19	April	Host	Welcome back to <i>Switchblade Sisters</i> . I'm April Wolfe, and I'm joined today with uh, Felicia Day, over in her studio, far away across the sea.

00:31:26 Felicia Guest I think they're on lunch. I think they're on lunch. No more banging. I apologize.

00:31:28 April Host No apologies. I love it, 'cause it's just like—

00:31:35 Felicia Guest It's real, guys. *[Laughs.]*

00:31:37 April Host It's real! It's real. We're going for realism here. We're talking about *Gremlins*, and I really, really want to talk about uh, Phoebe Cates' really wonderful story about her father dying in this movie.

00:31:51 Felicia Guest Oh, my god! Oh, yes! It was so crazy! When I watched that, I was like, kudos to this woman for carrying this off.

00:31:57 April Host Yeah, 'cause there's like a great story behind that. Because, okay, her character is like, she doesn't like Christmas, and just like at the end of the movie she reveals that her dad dressed as Santa Claus and got caught in the chimney and died there. So, that's why she doesn't like Christmas.

But she said—er, Joe Dante said, “The tone of the movie is summed up in that speech. She's telling a story that's completely ridiculous. However, if it actually happened to you, it would be horrible. It's like the guy falling on a banana peel. It's funny if you're across the street, but not funny if you break your back. I like the complexity of it. Originally it wasn't even her character who told that story, it was a guy who owned a McDonald's. At the McDonald's, the Gremlins would come in and eat the people but not the food.

“When that character in that bit disappeared, I said to Chris, ‘I hate to lose that character and that speech. Let's give it to Phoebe character—Phoebe's character, Kate’, because she doesn't have much stuff going on except being the heroin, and this gives her a secret. The audience has to find out what it is. She doesn't like Christmas. Well, why not? And now we find out why, and that's a better character arc for her, and she did it beautifully. I remember we came back from the screening of rushes that day and the editor turned to me and said, ‘That's never gonna be in the picture.’” End quote.

*[Both start laughing uproariously.]*

00:33:10 Felicia Guest Well, I will tell you, um, I did a movie—when I was watching this, this is what I thought of, and I don't normally think about myself when I'm watching movies. But this one, it was—I had to rewind this monologue, because I was like, “Is this really happening?”

*[April laughs continually at Felicia's story.]*

And I'm like, “How is everybody off-screen not laughing at the writing?” And so, I did a movie called uh, *Mystery Woman*, which was Kelly Martin. You know, it was like a wheel of Hallmark movies, and she was directing. She's amazing. And so, I played a tormented, groom—like, horse-grooming psychic—

*[April responds gleefully.]*

—who had been killed, you know, like she was—and so there was this whole monologue where i’m relaying this trauma that happened to me. I can’t even remember it. It was just about being haunted by ghosts and my psychic abilities tormenting me. It was so badly written, but my cat had just died the day before, so I really—I was uh, bereft.

And so, it was an amazing piece of acting in my opinion, and I could not wait to share it with my agents for my reel. And they watched it and they were like, “You’re awesome in this. We can not put this in a reel. This is the worst writing I’ve ever heard.”

And when I saw this Phoebe Cates thing I was like, “This is the equivalent. How is she delivering this with a straight face?” I was like, “She deserves an Oscar for this.”

00:34:30 April Host

That’s what I’m saying. Like, I think that she is, you know, as Joe Dante clearly believes too, is like she’s kind of this unsung, you know, rescuer of this very strange picture. She like, gives it her all, and she’s completely focused on giving a very genuine speech, even though Joe Dante knows that he’s almost parodying that as he’s doing it. It’s a really, really fine like to walk, but I think—

00:34:58 Felicia Guest

It’s so hard! And we were talking about that with *Pooka Lives!* Actually, because it is sort of um, a farce in a sense. Like, it’s a comedy, but it’s not a parody. It’s not like *Scream* or like, you know, one of the Wayans Brothers—

*[April affirms.]*

It’s not that. It’s this other thing that’s not—it’s so hard to pull off, and it requires, I think, a purity of soul. You can’t be cynical, you can’t be um, you know, jaded. You can’t be a cool dude. You have to have that sort of like, “We are having fun” aesthetic, and that’s—it’s just so hard to nail, and it’s not commercial in a sense. Although, when I think it gets made—when it gets made, people love it. It’s just not the cool thing to develop in Hollywood.

And for a moment, because of Stephen Speilberg really, that tone reached—and Lucas—like, that tone reached the audience, and basically drove entertainment. It should have, but yet we’ve forgotten that lesson. I’m hoping that the sort of collective trauma that we’ve been through, um, sort of has a resurgence in that light, playful, “Let’s be hopeful and together” kind of attitude.

00:36:06 April Host

Let me do some little Gizmo stuff, because I told you at the beginning of the show that there was a lot of last minute changes with Gizmo. Um, so this is Joe Dante speaking. He said, “The original script was more gruesome. At that point in the script, Gizmo turned Stripe, the bad gremlin, but Stephen liked Gizmo so much—”

*[Felicia gasps in disbelief.]*

Yeah. “Stephen liked Gizmo so much that about three or four weeks before shooting, he decided that Gizmo should not turn into a bad gremlin. Instead, Gizmo should be the hero’s friend and he should



stick around for the entire movie. We were flabbergasted. We had no idea how to make this little bucket of bolts appealing and realistic enough to be able to hold the screen for the entire picture. But it was a brilliant idea, which I think makes the picture remembered today. Not to turn him into a monster, but to have him carried around in the backpack of the hero, Billy, like in a boy and a dog movie.”

Isn't that like—

- 00:36:54 Felicia Guest A hundred percent. That was so bril—like, that really held the movie together. Because I think if it had just—as a kid, I watched it when I was 5 or 6 years old, and I would never have remembered this movie if half the movie, most of the movie, was bad guys. I remember it because of Gizmo. That's the on—that is—that and *E.T.*, that's—I don't remember anything about *E.T.* I haven't seen it in forever, right? But I remember *E.T.* and I was concerned about his hand being on fire. that's—I can vividly remember that as a kid. And I remember Gizmo, and the way that he—and that's Howie Mandel doing the voice of Gizmo, which is crazy. I was like, “Really?”
- 00:37:32 April Host And apparently he didn't really have to modulate much at all from um, the baby voice that he was already doing when he was doing acts. So, Joe Dante was just like, yeah sure, Howie Mandel, let's do it, you know?
- 00:37:43 Felicia Guest It makes me—how do you get that job? *[Laughs.]*
- 00:37:46 April Host *[Whispering]* I know. *[Normal voice]* Like, you just got to practice a baby voice in the mirror, Felicia. You've been going on the wrong career path.
- [Felicia imitates a small, high-pitched gremlin voice.]*
- Oh my god. And you know, I want to get into the thing that you also brought up. The thing that you loved, which is when Gizmo saves the day. And this is where we'll kind of wrap up, because this also wraps into the privileges of working with Spielberg.
- Joe Dante said, “One of the great thing when you work for Stephen Speilberg, aside from him keeping the studio off your back, is that you get to finish you movie completely before you show it to the public. Instead of taking out a beat-up work print with a temp score and lots of splices, you presented a finished movie at the preview. We did a little more fine tuning after the preview. That's what a preview is for, after all. We shortened the movie by six or seven minutes. We also beefed up the role of Gizmo, the little fuzzy critter, so that in the final picture, at the end of the picture, he saves the day, not the nominal hero, Zach Galligan, who was very miffed when he saw the finished movie, because he no longer hold the shade up and killed the gremlins.”
- 00:38:40 Felicia Guest Wow! Wow, he got upstaged by an animatronic. Wow, he was mad? That's so hilarious.
- 00:38:48 April Host He apparently like, he came to be okay with it, but he was just like,

“What the fuck? I was supposed to be the hero of this movie.”

- 00:38:53 Felicia Guest “I was supposed to save this movie, and the little dude did.” But I was so happy about that, ‘cause I, you know, when I was watching the movie, I’m like, “Oh, Gizmo’s so cute.” And then he just rides around in a backpack for like 30 minutes, and I’m like, “Give Gizmo something to do!” And thank god he had that moment at the end, because I was literally—my childhood memory of him was more of a hero. And when he drove that little car, I was like, “There you are. There he is for me.”
- 00:39:17 April Host You know, it’s so weird, because like, the two characters who I came to love and that became really iconic to me, and not that I don’t love Billy and Zach Galligan’s performance of, you know, what he’s bringing to that. But, you know, Phoebe Cates and Gizmo, these two characters, ended up getting their story arcs after the fact. You know, like, Phoebe Cates—
- 00:39:37 Felicia Guest Oh yeah, it’s so interesting that they didn’t go in and—but you know, that makes it a more interesting, uh, that makes it a little more interesting, to be honest with you. Because it’s more—it’s not just a dude’s journey. Like, it has sort of that ensemble feel. And, I mean, Phoebe Cates emotionally as an actor, you connect with her more than Zach, and then Gizmo saving the day makes you—it’s just so crazy and so much better than a human saving it. If you’re gonna go in this crazy world with all these crazy animatronic creatures, like, don’t just sideline them all and give it to a dude. I love it.
- 00:40:10 April Host Yeah. They may not have known it when they were going in on the original script, right, but look, you know, like it’s a bunch of guys, they’re making a movie. They might not get it, right? They might assume it’s just like, okay, it’s just gonna be like the usual male hero. But they figured it out along the way, and that’s something that I appreciate.
- 00:40:23 Felicia Guest It’s great. It makes you—it actually makes me believe in last minute rewrites a little bit more, because you have to be flexible. I guess filmmaking, you know, being rigid is to your detriment, because you know, the collaborative nature of it, the ability to kind of follow you know,, your impulses.

And I think that’s something on web video that I loved, ‘cause we would just pick up a camera when we had a funny idea, and we’d just shoot it, right? And so there’s that sort of spontaneity that I think you can’t have. You know, I just finished developing a TV show that I was producing, and it’s probably not going forward, but it’s 18 months. You know, 18 months just of working out beat to beat, going back and forth all the time on something. It’s just like, I don’t even know where the fun—where do we start? Where was the fun, you know?

*[April laughs and affirms.]*

Um, I’d forgotten it, because we had taken so long. That creative spark is what I believe the internet does so well, and that’s what like, fuels me. That sort of like, “Oh my god, I have a great idea, let’s be on top of it and just share that impulse.” It’s more of an emotional

kind of thing, which kind of gets—it really—it’s hard to get that in a process of development. Obviously Spielberg was able to do that, because he could just be let go.

00:41:33 April Host That, see, I think, you know, that’s the thing. I don’t think you can overrate Spielberg, because if he’s bringing that kind of creativity as a boss. Like I guess what you want in these long development processes is just a good boss. Someone who’s there to help you, remind you why you were doing it.

Um, so I want to thank you so much for joining em today to talk about your career and all things *Gremlins*. And um, so people can be seeing *Pooka Lives!* on Hulu soon, correct?

00:42:03 Felicia Guest Uh, it’s on Hulu right now. You can watch it. Itw as out April 7th, so go ahead and watch it. It’s really, really fun, and uh, yeah. I’ve got other things I’m working on, writing wise. I didn’t mean to make it sound like I’m quitting Hollywood.

*[April laughs.]*

I just—I feel like—I really—I always do that, but the thing is, the last three weeks has just made me realize, believe in yourself, believe in what you want to do, and if they don’t—if it’s not sold, you can do it other ways. It’s not you. I guess it’s not—it’s not you, it’s them. And as a creator, it’s hard to sort of do that, like get back to your roots and belike, “Okay, what I want to say is fun. These stories I want to tell are great. And if they don’t wan them, it’s not personal. It’s just not right for them.”

00:42:43 Music Transition “Switchblade Comb” by Mobius VanChocStraw.

00:42:44 April Host Yeah, which is exactly Joe Dante’s thing.

00:42:48 Felicia Guest Exactly! You get a little refresh, and you get back in there like, “Hey man, you gotta love this, because it’s really wonderful. I believe in it.” So, anyway, thank you so much for having me on.

00:42:56 April Host Thank you, and uh, everyone check out *Pooka Lives!* and you can also just find Felicia on the internet, um, with her many, many, many projects, because she is just so extremely busy. So, check her out.

00:43:08 Felicia Guest Thank you!

00:43:09 April Host And thank you for listening to *Switchblade Sisters!*

We’re going to start doing a little something different, you may have noticed from our last episode. From now on, I’m going to be giving you a staff pick. A recommendation of a film directed by a woman. And I know people have a little bit of time on their hands and can’t really go out at night, so I wanted to recommend some movies for you guys to watch as you’re winding down and getting ready for bed. And this show is all about highlighting the great work of female filmmakers, after all. So, you know, let’s give a recommendation.

Today’s recommendation is a little something fun that hopefully matches up with *Gremlins*. It’s Jackie Kong’s *Blood Diner*. Um, a

very hilarious horror comedy that is over the top and wonderful, and has that wonderful 1980s aesthetic, too. Uh, you know, doesn't really care about realism, and you know what? Fuck realism.

So, if you want to let us know what you think of the show, you can tweet at us @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).

*[Music fades.]*

00:44:19	Clip	Clip	<b>Gizmo:</b> Bye, Billy.
00:44:22	Speaker 1	Promo	<a href="http://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> .
00:44:24	Speaker 2	Promo	Comedy and culture.
00:44:25	Speaker 3	Promo	Artist owned—
00:44:26	Speaker 4	Promo	—Audience supported.