

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.
00:00:08	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 you may already know, but here is a reminder that we are doing remote recording now, uh, since we’re all social distancing. I’m recording from my bedroom. You may hear my husband doing dishes in the background, which I hope won’t happen.</p> <p><i>[Mitra laughs.]</i></p> <p>Um, and the audio is likely going to sound a little different from our studio’s, but everything else is exactly the same, except for our guest. Because today I’m very excited to have comedian, writer, actor Mitra Jouhari here. Hi!</p>
00:00:48	Mitra	Guest	Hello!
00:00:50	April	Host	Recording from your bedroom, living room? What’s your room of choice?
00:00:53	Mitra	Guest	I’m recording from my bedroom, yeah. It’s actually—I was scared that it was gonna be a Zoom call, because it is in such an embarrassing state.
			<i>[April agrees.]</i>
			And I was very relieved to see that there was no camera element to this one.
00:01:07	April	Host	<p>We are merciful here if anything at Maximum Fun. Um, for those of you who are less familiar with Mitra’s work, please let me give you an introduction.</p> <p>Mitra is an LA based comedian, writer, and performer. She’s appeared in Judd Apatow and Kumail Nanjiani’s feature, <i>The Big Sick</i>, on Comedy Central’s <i>Broad City</i>, and can be seen in the upcoming season of TBS’s <i>Search Party</i>, which I’m eagerly awaiting.</p> <p>Um, she regularly hosts and produces the live show <i>It’s A Guy Thing</i> with Catherine Cohen and Patti Harrison. Mitra was previously the digital producer of <i>Full Frontal with Samantha Bee</i> on TBS, and her staff writer credits include <i>The President Show</i> at Comedy Central, <i>Miracle Workers</i> on TBS, <i>High Maintenance</i> on HBO and <i>Pod Save America</i> on HBO. Mitra was recently an executive story editor on season 5 of Netflix’s <i>Big Mouth</i> as well.</p>

Now, Mitra has co-created and stars in the Quarter Hour series *Three Busy Debras*, a surreal story about three deranged housewives named Debra in the affluent suburban town of Lemoncurd, Connecticut. And the show is produced by Amy Poehler for Adult Swim.

So Mitra, the movie that you chose to talk about today is, you know, one that has flown under the radar for so many people, and it is *Earth Girls Are Easy*.

[Both laugh.]

Can you give us a little explanation on uh, why this one is one of your fave genre films?

00:02:27 Mitra Guest So I—I—*Earth Girls Are Easy* is a movie that I um, I had been told that I would love for a really, really long time and then for whatever reason just didn't end up watching it, and uh, I really love—across the board, I think I just, I love a movie that like, doesn't take it too seriously that it's a movie, kind of, is the best way I feel like I can describe it. I like a movie or a TV show where things can just happen if it feels like the most fun thing to do, and this definitely feels like a great example of that.

It seems like a movie where they just um, they wanted—if they wanted to do something, it kind of just went in the movie. I really—I so enjoy the experience of watching this movie for the first time, because like, when that uh, [Singing] “Cause I'm a blonde, ya ya ya” song happens, I was like, my jaw dropped. I was like, “Wait, what's—” and it was so deep into the movie, and I was like, “What's happening?”

[Both laugh uproariously.]

How do they do this? But it was so inspiring, because it was like, oh yeah, I guess you kind of can just what you want. You can make your thing. And it really felt like that, it felt so specific and fun.

00:03:41 April Host We're definitely gonna get into how they did that and why they did that. For those of you who haven't seen *Earth Girls Are Easy*, today's episode will obviously give you some spoilers, but that shouldn't stop you from listening before you watch. As always, my motto is that it's not what happens, but how it happens that makes a movie worth watching. Still, if you would like to pause and watch first, this is your shot. It's on Hulu right now.

00:04:01 Music Music “Earth Girls Are Easy” off the album *Earth Girls Are Easy* by The N

00:04:05 April Host Now let's introduce *Earth Girls Are Easy*.

Written by Julie Brown, Charlie Coffey, and Terrence E. McNally, not the other Terrence McNally, uh, and directed by Julien Temple for release in 1988. *Earth Girls Are Easy* stars Geena Davis as Valerie Gale, a manicurist whose boyfriend, Ted, is just not that into her. So her stylist friend, Candy Pink, played by Julie Brown, gives her a makeover, hoping to tempt her guy into giving her some

			action.
00:04:31	Clip	Clip	<p>Candy Pink: Valerie, Ted is obviously a victim of PMS.</p> <p>Valerie: What?</p> <p>Candy Pink: Premarital stress!</p> <p>Valerie: Oh. Well, what'll snap him out of it?</p> <p>Candy Pink: A new woman.</p> <p>Valerie: Thanks.</p> <p>Candy Pink: Wait, that's it! We'll make <u>you</u> a new woman!</p>
00:04:47	April	Host	Valerie goes blonde and wears a sexy getup, but when Ted gets home expecting Valerie to be gone and at a conference, he's got a lady with him, and he's exposed as a cheater.
00:04:56	Clip	Clip	<p>Valerie: You brought a girl home to have sex?</p> <p>Ted: Well, you weren't supposed to be here, Val.</p> <p>Valerie: You were gonna have sex without <u>me</u>?</p> <p>Ted: Well, no! Of course not.</p>
00:05:04	April	Host	<p>Valerie kicks him out and destroys all his stuff while reminiscing of the times they had together.</p> <p>Meanwhile, three aliens, Mac, Wiploc, and Zeebo, played by Jeff Goldblum, Jim Carrey, and Damon Wayans, respectively, are wandering around space just hornt all the way up. They get a broadcast of a bunch of sexy human women, realize it's coming from Earth, and make a beeline detour to check out that planet.</p> <p>And the first Earth girl they meet is Valerie, whom they catch tanning by the pool before they crash land into it. At first, Valerie is freaked out and pissed she's <u>also</u> getting abducted by aliens after her break-up.</p>
00:05:38	Clip	Clip	Valerie: Oh, if things weren't bad enough, now I've been abducted by a UFO.
00:05:42	April	Host	But then she starts to grow fond of the fuzzy guys as they start to soak up American pop culture. They can't take off for their home planet until the pool is drained, so Valerie gets Woody, played by Michael McKean—who is one of my favorite characters in the movie—to drain it for her.
00:05:57	Clip	Clip	<p>Valerie: So how long is this going to take?</p> <p>Woody: Uh, about a day.</p>
00:06:01	April	Host	To hide them in plain sight, Valerie gets Candy to give them a makeover—lots of makeovers in this—revealing that they are, in

			fact, hot dudes. Mac, the hottest of all.
00:06:10	Clip	Clip	<i>[Gameshow music plays.]</i>
			Candy Pink: Okay, behind door number three, this is the ultimate.
00:06:18	April	Host	They take them out on the town and they pick up some chicks, but Mac's got his eyes on Val, and they make some crazy hot alien love. Whiplop—okay, let me say that again.
			<i>[Mitra laughs.]</i>
			<u>Wiploc</u> and Zeebo accidentally rob a gas station, steal a car, and crash the car into the Randy's Donuts sign. Mac and Valerie scheme their way into getting arrested to find Wiploc and Zeebo, which brings them to the emergency room, where Ted, the doctor, is examining them and finding out they have two hearts.
00:06:44	Clip	Clip	Ted: It's amazing, you each have two heartbeats.
00:06:49	April	Host	Ted and Valerie get back together for some reason after Ted gets tricked into thinking that these guys are just in a band or whatever, echoes, he's hearing things. Um, and so Valerie and Ted are like, "We're gonna get married," which makes Mac really sad. But Valerie calls after him that it is Mac she really loves.
00:07:08	Clip	Clip	Valerie: I have to tell you something! I love you! Take me with you!
			Mac: <i>[Inaudible.]</i>
			Valerie: Anyplace!
			Mac: I am Mister Right?
			Valerie: Yes! Yes!
00:07:21	April	Host	And she jumps into his space ship, but not before Candy wants to serve them all margaritas.
00:07:25	Clip	Clip	Candy Pink: Wait you guys, you can't leave without margaritas!
00:07:28	April	Host	That's the movie.
			<i>[Both laugh.]</i>
			It was incredibly difficult to write the synopsis of this. It's just like, "Oh my god, there's <u>more</u> that keeps happening."
00:07:37	Mitra	Guest	I was like, <u>so</u> relieved that <u>you</u> explain the—it's a movie that—
			<i>[April laughs uproariously.]</i>
			—it's so hard to explain what happens. Like, there's no succinct way to be like, "Yeah, so <i>Earth Girls Are Easy</i> is about blah blah blah." It's like, no matter what, it's like, "Oh yeah, and then it's like, there's a song on the beach, and then like they have to drain the pool, but also they're aliens, but also they're horny, but also they're learning English."

[She breaks off, laughing.]

No one said no at any point in the process of this movie being made, creatively, it feels like.

- 00:08:12 April Host It's so good, and I feel like—okay, here's something. Julie Brown, this was kind of like, her—her little baby that she had been making. Because she came out with her album that had the song "Earth Girls Are Easy" on it, and, you know, it was very weird how this happened.
- Apparently she said, "The album was out, and I got a call from Warner Bros. And they said, 'These songs are so theatrical, you know, they have these stories. Do you have any movie ideas?' So I pitched them *Earth Girls* and they bought it in the room, which never happens. And they were like, 'You can be the star of it.'
- "You can't tell anyone that that's how to get into show business, though. But it was my sense of humor, me that I put out there. You have to make stuff. You have to put your point of view out there. Nobody's going to be writing 'Homecoming Queen's Got a Gun' for you."
- I think that that is insane that it's how this movie got started.
- 00:09:03 Mitra Guest It's—I mean—but like, it simultaneously makes no sense, but then it makes perfect sense, because it's like I feel like you either buy it in the room or never at all. Like, because, if she didn't—if it wasn't just like, the broadest explanation of this movie like, as soon as you try to explain what's happening in this movie, you feel insane. So, might as—I feel like you'd have to just take it on the most vague amount of information possible.
- 00:09:31 April Host Oh yeah. But she also wouldn't have been able to sell it without the song is the thing, too. You know, like having this album that kind of exemplifies, and I think, you know, can you imagine pitching something that is this strange without any kind of accompanying visual references, you know, from her music videos or from anything else. She was already kind of selling her style in these like, small bits, which I think is a really interesting thing for the 1980s. Because to me it kind of mirrors what we're seeing now with shorter pieces being developed, so you can get an idea of like, what an artist's vision is before they maybe make a feature.
- 00:10:11 Mitra Guest I definitely relate to that. I mean, it's so much apart of like—I mean, *Three Busy Debras* is kind of a version of that, where we had these shorts that we had on YouTube and a play and all that, and we definitely had a very specific thing that we were doing that adult people, first Amy Poehler and then people at Adult Swim became aware of. And that—I mean, if we didn't have these highly specific things—we needed to be able to point to like, "Yeah, this is exactly the tone of the show. It already exists, we've been working on it for years."

00:10:40 April Host Yeah, 'cause otherwise you're just in a room saying like, "Okay, so there's three women and they're all named Debra."

[Both begin laughing continuously.]

00:10:45 Mitra Guest Yeah, I think they definitely would not have taken us at our word, I would say.

00:10:53 April Host So I—I think that, you know, Julie Brown is—I think she, you know, she was a genius of her time, and still is quite smart. And she was talking a lot about the fact that even though *Earth Girls* is out there, she still had what she thought would be kind of a grounding story of it.

And she said, "With *Earth Girls*, the idea in my head was always *The Wizard of Oz*. Dorothy is in this place of longing and she doesn't know what it is. That's what Geena's character is going through. She's at a level of dissatisfaction, and then this alien comes along and suddenly she's willing to leave the planet with him."

So, even though she's out there, she's still making these, you know, when she was in the room pitching, she's just like, "I know that this sounds nuts, but truly, this is just *The Wizard of Oz* in a different way." And, you know, that's one of the reasons—a way that she was trying to get people into it, and try to sell it in the room. And I'm curious if you remember how to do that yourself.

00:11:50 Mitra Guest Well, definitely. I mean, again, with *Debras*, just because I'm so in the thick of it and it's so much of my life, and I think with so many of the—with *Big Mouth* too, with these really heightened shows where really, really crazy, not relatable stuff happens, it's important to have a conversation about what we're really talking about or what the important, emotional thing is.

We definitely have those conversations in *Debras*, where it's like, it's such a wacky thing, but at the end of the day it's three women who are unhappy with their lives and don't really like themselves. And uh, I hope this isn't too controversial, but I think people can probably relate to that.

[Both laugh.]

Um, but I—I certainly can. And these women just doing crazy things out of a place of pain, so you have that really dark sort of kernel informing a very, very silly, often dumb, big, heightened thing. Which, I think, happens with a lot of different comedy shows, where you see something that would never happen—and, you know, movies and other things in general.

But I think seeing something very heightened, you can access that and allow yourself to go to those places when you know why. Like, there's a part of your gut that understands why a person is doing what they're doing.

00:13:12 April Host Yeah, 'cause I mean, it can be the most absurd concept in the

world, but as long as there's some kind of like, grounding piece to it, I think everyone can kind of relate, you know?

- 00:13:23 Mitra Guest Yeah, when things start to feel unwieldy with us when we write the show, it's often just because we've lost sight of whatever the emotional thing is. So we have to sort of backtrack and force ourselves to have some self control and go back to the important, emotional thing. 'Cause if we lose track of that, then people, I think, watching the show would feel very lost.
- 00:13:45 April Host Well, I mean, talking about tropes, this movie—
[Mitra bursts into uproarious laughter.]
—is very much, much about tropes, you know? It's very much about kind of embracing um, these older things in film and television, but also poking fun at them lightly. And specifically, you know, we're talking about these kind of loving references to the 1950s. You know, they're using the scope format, these really saturated colors that are emulating all the really beautiful range that you had in technicolor, back in like, all the beach movies.

And you've got the use of like, Julie Brown using—the name of the beauty parlor is Curl Up and Die. Um, and they've got like a cuticle convention called the Nail Expo, and there's just all of this like, really wonderful love for, you know, the glamor of that era, the kind of pop culture of it. And, you know, similar in a way that you get from someone like John Waters, who's throwing back to these different eras of film. But I truly love the way that they tap into the—just the kitsch of all of it, and recreate it, and—
- 00:15:05 Mitra Guest And it's so fun! I mean, but that's like, I mean, and you really feel the movie being made out of a place of love. Like, it's tapping into all this stuff, but you can tell that the people who are making it really love this stuff. You can't—you—I love—I mean, I think that's something that I really value in comedy is like, when there's parody or satire or references or anything like that.

I—this is something I try to do in my own work, too, where it's like, if I'm making fun of something—if I'm doing a parody or a reference or something like that—I often find that I'm having more fun when it's coming from a place of love. When I'm trying to like, take something down. It's a matter of personal preference, but my style, I think, often leans more into reverence and adoration in order to inform.

Like, with *Debras*, I—I love—I love the *Real Housewives*, I love the *Desperate Housewives*, I love all those like, portrayals and stories of opulence because they feel so foreign and like, a different planet to me. But I watch them and I'm obsessed with them, because these women do seem to live in a completely different universe, so I think just taking it a step further with *Debras* has been such a blast.
- 00:16:25 Music Transition “Switchblade Comb” by Mobius VanChocStraw.
- 00:16:26 April Host We're gonna take a quick break. When we come back, we're gonna talk a little bit more about the process. I'm very interested in casting and what it's like to star in the work that you actually wrote as well.

Um, so we'll be right back.

[*Music fades.*]

00:16:45 Promo

Promo

Music: Relaxing ukulele music.

Manolo Moreno: Hey, you've reached *Dr. Gameshow*. Leave your message after the beep.

[*Music stops.*]

[*Beep!*]

Sara: Hi. This is Sara, and I'd like to tell you about *Dr. Gameshow*. *Dr. Gameshow* is a band of geniuses, or nerds, or brilliant artists, or kids, or some combination of all of those who get together to make a show like no other that's family-friendly. It's an interactive call-in gameshow podcast.

When I found *Dr. Gameshow*, I found joy. I told my friends and family that if they weren't listening, they were wasting joy. I sent them the episodes that made me laugh until I cried, played it for them in the car. They laugh, too! Laugh their butts off. But they still don't listen on their own, so they're wasting joy. And I keep looking for someone to understand me. Maybe it's you! Give *Dr. Gameshow* a listen, and find joy.

[*Beep!*]

[*Music resumes.*]

Jo Firestone: Listen to [Dr. Gameshow](#) on Maximum Fun. New episodes every other Wednesday.

[*Music fades out.*]

00:17:37 Music

Transition

"Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.

00:17:43 April

Host

Welcome back to *Switchblade Sisters*. I'm April Wolfe, and I'm joined today by Mitra Jouhari, and we're talking about *Earth Girls Are Easy*.

Um, so, I want to go back a little bit to Julie Brown and the deal that she was getting when she, you know, sold this pitch in the room. She said, "I had approvals. I have to go along with stuff, but technically I had approvals. I was supposed to do Geena's part. When it got closer to the end, we attached Julien Temple as director, and then the budget got higher, and they gave this screen test that was completely bogus. And they did it to show me that I couldn't star in the movie.

"I knew it was happening. The make-up man had worked on *The Wizard of Oz*. He was ancient, and he fluffed my eyebrows and made me bleed. I went through this whole thing and they said, 'Look, you can't star in it. See this video.' And the contract said they couldn't make it without me. So they said, 'What do you want to

do?’ And I said, ‘I’ll rewrite the secondary part,’ which was supposed to be a gay man. I like my part now. When they wanted to bring Geena on, I had approval. They brought Geena and Jeff together.”

I feel like that would be so stressful, thinking about it. Of just being like, okay, well, I have to completely rewrite my script that I’ve been working on to try to give myself a part. And also are they thinking that I’m being selfish, because I won’t let them make it without me, I won’t, you know, get out of that contract? Or—but she, you know, she did it and I love her part. I love Candy. She’s wonderful.

Um, I feel like this has to be something that happens to a lot of writer-actors, writer-performers, because um, if you don’t have the right look, if you aren’t, you know, the kind of “leading lady”, no one’s gonna let you play that. I mean like, probably most famously in comedy there’s Tina Fey, who wasn’t allowed to be a performer, until she was. But I just imagine that it’s pretty constant.

00:19:37 Mitra Guest

Definitely. I mean, I think we’re so lucky that we wrote something so specific that it kind of—you know, we were never gonna be like, an NBC show. So there wasn’t really a concern with how—there wasn’t as much of a concern with how big a draw it would be, just because Adult Swim, beautifully, is like a smaller network than NBC, so more specific things can be made there by people who might not get to make things other places.

So, I mean, but I’ve definitely experienced that in other places. You know, people are looking for a specific look, they’re looking for a specific type of person. So that feeling that it’s like, kind of rigged, or that you’re not like, “Why did I waste my time?” I think is so prevalent for everyone.

I feel very lucky that my main thing that I have written for myself was—I never really worried that I wasn’t going to get to play the role of Debra, just because no one—no one could do it better than us, because we’ve just been doing it for so long. I mean, I’m, you know, it just wasn’t even a conversation, thankfully. Um, and I think largely that’s just because of the work of other creates who have fought to cast themselves as the part that they wrote for themselves, you know? So it just wasn’t as big of a deal when we were like, “We’ll be playing the Debras.” It was kind of like, “Yeah, of course. Who else would want to do this?”

[Both laugh.]

00:21:04 April Host

Well, you know, I think that something that like, Julie Brown is talking about in the earlier quote that I read, too, is just the fact that, like. If you make something that’s so you, you can’t actually be erased from it.

[Mitra affirms.]

Like, you may not be the lead, but you can’t be erased from it, you’re there. So it’s like a long term insurance.

00:21:24 Mitra Guest It is! I mean, I think that's part of the reason, however consciously or subconsciously, why I really gravitated towards writing first, rather than—I think there was a point where I felt like I was—kind of had the option to either really throw myself into writing, or really throw myself into acting, and that side of it. And acting felt so much more... just.

Sorry, writing felt so much more just, to me, because it's much harder to be like, "Oh, you know, we were looking for a blonde writer." There's just less reasons why you might not get a job. Obviously there's still—like, nothing's just a true meritocracy, but if you have a really funny, really specific voice and point of view, then you have a much greater chance of being elevated and hired, and all that kind of stuff. So, I think that's a huge factor for me, is just that I really wanna be able to know that if I work hard, and if I do a good job, that I will be rewarded for it in some way, so. And it feels more possible with writing, than with onscreen stuff.

00:22:27 April Host Um, like, speaking of onscreen stuff, though, I wanted to talk about actor processes, because these are some of my favorite stories that I get when I do the research on these movies. And um, one of my favorite things is Julie Brown's descriptions of how Jeff Goldblum was acting, and how he was like, kind of taking control of the set.

She said, "It was Jim Carrey and Damon Wayans' first movie, Jeff Goldblum was teaching acting at that point. Those two who hadn't work that much were listening to everything Jeff said. So we had this theory that you should distract yourself before the take. And sometimes he would just read from a book as loud as he could, so they would make as much noise as they could before the take, and Julian would yell action. And I just could not concentrate. They probably do not do that now at all, it was just not easy to work with them, even though I think they're all really talented."

End quote. But I'm just—

00:23:21 Mitra Guest That sounds fucking awful.

[She laughs.]

00:23:23 April Host Oh, God. Like, I'm sure it was all, like, good natured, everything is fine, but I just—you know, it's probably nicer like, Julie Brown said that, she like, had to go along with people, and you know, she technically had approvals—she wasn't quite sure when Jim Carrey came in, for instance, to audition, she had seen his stand up, and was just, like, "He's all over the place, I don't really understand it, he's just wild and kind of spazzy."

And then it turned out though, like when he did come in for the audition, she was like, "Oh, I get it, he's an alien. This works. This makes sense to me."

[They laugh.]

00:24:02 Mitra Guest I mean, that's beautiful. It goes both ways, where it's like, there are people that, with *Debras*, that we really had in mind, and we knew

we wanted to cast. We love Peter Smith, for example, who is in the second episode of *Three Busy Debras* as someone who is just such an exciting, talented performer, so we knew going in that we really wanted to write something for them.

And um, but then the other side of it is, you know, we were casting almost entirely Seattle locals, and none of us had ever been to Seattle before and we really didn't know anybody up there. So it was just going through these tapes, and if there was somebody who we thought was really amazing, it's like, is there a way that we can do more for them? Is there more for them to do? Is there a way where we can, in the same vein of like, seeing Jim Carrey and knowing, oh, that's an alien, like, is there somebody that we see.

Well, in our episode uh, episode 4, the character of Sandy's older sister, Barbara, is played by an actress named Carol Swarbrick, who is uh, much older than Sandy in real life. And we were originally looking for people who were around our age, because it just, naturally our minds went there. But she—when we got the tape for Carol, it was like the funniest audition that we had gotten, and she just completely embodied what we wanted. And it was like, oh, well, you know, if Sandy's older sister is 70, then she's 70, 'cause that's the best tape we got.

So, it was a very—see, going through that process for the first time on that scale was very eye opening.

00:25:42 April

Host

I wanted to talk about a person in the cast of *Earth Girls Are Easy* that is uh, really just a cameo, but is very important to Angelinos this year, Angelyne. She uh, she ends up in the movie, driving her pink car into the gas station where um, Wiploc and Zeebo crash into her before taking off and stealing the car, driving backwards.

Um, but, as Julie Brown said, "The reason she's in the movie is Julien Temple came from England and saw her on billboards everywhere. The fact he was so interested, I was like, 'Ugh, this is so stupid.' But, now I get it. She was an LA icon, and that's what she's all about. I didn't write her in, but I'm glad she's in it now."

And I think that that's something where she was from the valley, right? So Julie Brown is from the valley, she's like, this has been a part of her blood is like, "Yeah, Angelyne, the fucking billboards, I've seen them." Um, but she needed an outsider, this Julien Temple guy, to come in and be like, "You don't see how weird this is?"

[Both laugh. Mitra affirms, saying "totally".]

"Maybe we should put her in and like, see what happens?" And she's like, "What, why would you do that?" But I think that like, at first you're like, okay, why would some British guy come over and direct this movie about valley girls? But there is, I think, something valuable about having like, an outsider kind of give notes to you, of um—examining your culture and being like, "Do you not see that this is weird?"

00:27:17 Mitra

Guest

And just like, no—like, pointing out what you take for granted that

makes your—the world that you’ve built special. Like, it’s always interesting to see what, yeah, what people latch onto, and what people identify with. Because it’s not always the thing you expect. I mean, I think that’s one of the most exciting thing about doing comedies. It’s kind of—you’re just—obviously, by the time you’re making a movie, it’s been through a bunch of drafts and all that kind of stuff, but at its core you really don’t know if anything is going to work.

So it’s really, really exciting to see what does, and it’s—the coolest—a very cool part of the process is just seeing what you didn’t think was gonna be big for people but is big for people. Something like that, I mean, it’s—yeah, having somebody be like, “Yeah, this woman who is on billboards, that’s crazy.” It’s like, oh yeah. I think that happens so often in comedy where its like, the way you turn your head and look at the camera might be so funny, and you just have no idea, because you—it’s your face. You see it all the time. But somebody sees something that makes you realize that it is funny, so.

00:28:27	April	Host	Oh yeah, and I mean, I think that’s also Julien Temple, I think, maybe suggested the Randy’s Donuts sign, too. Just like, you know, it’s an LA icon, but there are so many people like in middle America or anywhere around the world who are just like, “Woah, that’s a giant donut. What the fuck is that doing there?” <i>[Both laugh.]</i>
00:28:47	Mitra	Guest	Yes! We have this big um, there’s this thing near where I’m—I’m from around Cincinnati, and there is this <u>huge</u> statue of Jesus that actually got a lot of publicity because it got struck by lightning and destroyed. <i>[Laughs]</i> But um, it’s called Touchdown Jesus. That’s what we all call it, and it’s something that is just such a part of my life, but then when it made national news for getting struck by lightning and people were like, “Wait, why did they have this in the first place?” I was like, “Oh yeah, I guess not every town has Touchdown Jesus.” <i>[Both laugh uproariously.]</i>
00:29:23	April	Host	Back home we have one of those Big Boy statues and it has chains all over it because he’s been stolen so much that it like, looks like he’s imprisoned. It’s like, oh god.
00:29:34	Music	Transition	“Switchblade Comb” by Mobius VanChocStraw.
00:29:35	April	Host	Anyway, we’re gonna take a quick break again. When we come back, we’ll talk a little bit more about <i>Earth Girls Are Easy</i> and also, you know, just the glory of writing really dumb characters. Uh, so we’ll be right back. <i>[Music fades.]</i>
00:29:50	Promo	Promo	Music: “War” by Norman Whitfield and Barrett Strong with lead vocals by Edwin Starr plays in the background.

John Roderick: *Friendly Fire* is a podcast about war movies, but it's so much more than that.

Adam Pranica: It's history!

Speaker 1 (Film clip): Was just supposed to be another assignment.

Ben Harrison: It's comedy.

Speaker 2 (Film clip): Under no circumstances are you to engage the enemy.

Adam: It's... cinema studies.

Murdock (*Rambo: First Blood Part II*): That's a hell of a combination.

John: So, subscribe and download *Friendly Fire* on your podcatcher of choice.

Ben: Or at MaximumFun.org.

Adam: And also, come see us at San Francisco Sketchfest on January 16th.

Ben: You can get tickets at SFsketchfest.com.

Speaker 3 (Film clip): *[A strained whisper]* Mission... accomplished.

[Music fades out.]

00:30:16	Music	Transition	"Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.
00:30:22	April	Host	Welcome back to <i>Switchblade Sisters</i> . I'm April Wolfe, and I'm joined today by Mitra Jouhari, and we're talking about <i>Earth Girls Are Easy</i> . Um, one of the things that I love about this movie is that all the characters are dumb. Without exception, they are complete dumbbells, the three aliens included. Uh, Ted is like, maybe not a dumbbell, but he's also a dumbbell in a different way.
00:30:44	Mitra	Guest	He's emotionally dumb. <i>[April affirms.]</i> Definitely, definitely, <u>definitely</u> dumb, just in a different way, which is so beautiful. The diversity of dumb represented on screen in <i>Earth Girls Are Easy</i> is iconic. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:30:56	April	Host	I love it. I love it so much. And, you know, as many people, I think, were pointing out at the time, there's no villains in this movie, either. It's like, everyone is kind of given like, this kind of amount of like, delight and affection of like, who they are in the archetype that

they're playing. So even though Ted is like, you know, he comes home with like, this girl and is cheating on Val, he's not really a villain. He's just so stupid.

00:31:22 Mitra Guest Everybody sort of expects the best of everybody in the movie and the only real shock and betrayal is when people like—yeah, people not acting perfectly, which is—like, there's no cynicism, which I really love. Everyone—everyone sees the best in each other and the only real heartbreak is when it's like, slightly different from what beautiful thing the characters expect from each other.

00:31:46 April Host You know, I mean, I think that something like this is—it's a movie that will probably go in and out of fashion, because, as you say, its kind of lack of cynicism. Because there are certain periods of time where comedy is just all cynicism, you know, it's just like maybe mean or cynicism pervasively, and then—I feel like, however, we're almost in this period of time where it's okay to be both. To be like, the anti-cynic and to be otherwise.

Like, I keep thinking about *Detroiters* and just—

[Mitra responds emphatically multiple times.]

—the idea of these two friends who just want to encourage each other so deeply, you know? And how refreshing it felt when I saw that, I was just like, “Oh shit, there's so much kind of positivity in this.”

00:32:29 Mitra Guest The whole reason I moved to New York to do comedy in the first place was 'cause I wanted to work in political late-night comedy. That was my life's dream and—

00:32:40 April Host And you did it, so.

00:32:41 Mitra Guest I did it! So it's all over.

[Both laugh.]

Um, but it—I understand people feeling exhausted by it, because— or just the discourse in general, just because there's such, you know, there's the 24 hour news cycle, there's Twitter, there's a bunch of late night shows. And I still love that world, but I definitely relate more to escapism right now.

And wanting, I think, that's why I really gravitate towards things like *Detroiters* that feel silly and loving but also just like, deranged. And *I Think You Should Leave* and *Garth Marenghi's Darkplace* and *Earth Girls Are Easy*.

All of those types of things where you can really just be in this very specific world that is as close or as far away from the real world as the creator wants to make it, but you just don't have to think about anything for a little bit. You can just feel these char—these often very dumb characters who love each other so much fuck up over and over and over again, and everything is kind of okay at the end.

I really value that, and I think that's why I was so excited to talk

about this movie. Because it is really the kind of—especially just being quarantined in my house, it's like, I certainly don't have the bandwidth personally right now to sit and watch an hour long drama or something, but I can always watch something like *Earth Girls Are Easy*.

00:34:09 April

Host

Oh my god. I—and one of the reason I'm gonna say that you could probably watch this movie is because, for me, every time I have seen it, I have seen something different. I have noticed something that I did not notice before, and I would love to talk about some of the details of this, just even in the production design and how that kind of makes the comedy just like, sing.

Um, because there's so much in the detail, including, for instance, we were talking about Ted. Ted has like, a little bumper sticker on the back of his car, and he's a George Bush supporter, right? And you're like, "Oh, I get it. I get him. Okay."

And then there's also like, this motif of like, hands, and the fact that Valerie is really into her job. She's not just like, kind of a manicurist. She's like, "No, I live for hands." She opens up her drawer once, like a night stand, and there's actually a little hand in it. Like, a little like—like a little plastic hand or something. And I was just like, "Wait, what?"

[Both laugh.]

Do you have any, like, fun moments where you were working with someone in the art department, or they just kind of got what you guys were doing and kind of brought out the best in the scene, or gave you a great visual gag?

00:35:26 Mitra

Guest

Yes, we had an amazing, amazing art department, and our show is so silly-cartoony, and is incredibly prop heavy, and really, really dependent on having a great art department. And ours' just, like, blew it out of the park. And there was this one moment in the third episode, our sleepover episode, where I—in the script, I turned to the other two women in the show, Sandy Honig and Alyssa Stonoha are the other two Debras.

And I—in the script, it just says that I'm like, trying to get them to open up to me throughout the episode, in sort of a sleepover format, and I turned to them and I'm like, "Now let's play security questions!" And it was supposed to be just like, a line, no prop added to it or anything? And I just asked them security questions like you would get on a computer to get to know them better?

And Erin O. Kay, one of the people who worked on the show, made it a board game actually called Security Questions, And just showed up with this prop. And it's so funny, and it looks like a very, sort of like, 1950's kind of old-timey—it's just so—it really elevated it, and seeing the actual board game was such a smart idea, and made the joke work so much better, and it really, really made me laugh.

And there was so much stuff like that with them. I mean, any time we were like, "Um, we're looking for sort of, like, sort of a silly

slogan,” they went off, and they were just unbelievable. Turned a hospital lobby into a police station. They could really do anything. But it was constant surprises with them, and them wowing us with their ideas.

00:37:11 April Host Oh, I love that. Um, I would love to get into one of my favorite scenes, one that you had mentioned earlier, and it’s the music video that pops up for “I’m Blonde”.

[They laugh.]

Like, in the middle of nothing. Julie Brown is just like on the beach all of a sudden.

00:37:29 Music Music “Cause I’m A Blonde” off the album *Earth Girls Are Easy* by Julie Brown

*Because I'm blonde I don't have to think
I talk like a baby and I never pay for drinks
Don't have to worry about getting a man
If I keep this blonde, and I keep these tan*

*'Cause I'm a blonde
Yeah, yeah, yeah
'Cause I'm a blonde
Yeah, yeah, yeah*

*I see people working
It just makes me giggle
'Cause I don't have to work
I just have to jiggle*

*'Cause I'm blonde
B-L-O-N-D
'Cause I'm a blonde
Don't you wish you were me*

00:37:57 April Host And, um, it’s just kind of crammed in, and it’s a huge produced musical that’s happening with dance numbers, and everything. And um, as a person who—a critic who really loved that, I can’t remember what the critic’s name was. But he was talking about the fact that some people were saying that—were like, “Why would you do that? Why would you just, like—it doesn’t have any reason to be there.”

And for him, he was talking about how that is actually Julie Brown’s best scene, because it is crammed in in the exact same way that any of those beach party movies would cram in a song just because they knew they had to get a musical number in. And so it was just like, it’s got a reason to be there, because it’s also mimicking these older movies.

But it’s also one of the funniest things they have. Just the fact that she shows up and she’s blonde all of a sudden, and she’s like, “Because I’m blonde, I don’t have to think, I talk like a baby, and I never pay for drinks!” And it is enduring.

00:39:01 Mitra Guest Yes! And I mean, with anything like that, where it's like, "Why?" It's like, why not. It's so fun! I mean, this idea that a movie has to be a certain way, or things are supposed to happen at a certain time, it's like, first of all, it is referential in its placement, but also, even if it wasn't, it's so fucking fun. And it's so funny. And why not? Especially in a movie like this, where anything can happen, why not just do anything?

[April affirms.]

It's so joyful. It's like, I mean imagining this movie without that song, it would still be a really fun movie. But for me, it took it from a crazy ride to just something really special for me. I don't know, that song really did something for me. It's inspiring to see someone just go for it.

00:39:56 April Host Oh, god. I love this movie, and thank you for having me re-watch it. Thank you so much for joining us on the show, and how can people watch *Three Busy Debras*?

00:40:04 Mitra Guest Yes! So, *Three Busy Debras* is airing on Adult Swim. It's on Sundays at midnight, so late Sunday night going into Monday morning. Uh, and it's also available on Hulu. And for the next few weeks after this comes out, the first episode is also available to watch for free on AdultSwim.com, and then you can find me online @tweetrajouhari on Twitter, so it's tweet, r-a-j-o-u-r-i, so that's the best place to find me.

00:40:34 April Host Wonderful. Thank you again so much for coming on the show.

00:40:37 Mitra Guest Thank you, what a blast!

00:40:39 April Host And thank you all for listening to *Switchblade Sisters*.

As you know, we started doing something a little different at the end of each episode. Uh, from now on I'm getting a staff pick recommendation for a film directed by a woman. And I know people have some time on their hands, and I wanted to direct you to some really wonderful things to watch. And this is all about highlighting the great work of female filmmakers. So, here we go.

Today's, in keeping with our theme a little bit, of like a kind of sci-fi comedy around that time in the 1980's, I got Susan Seidelman's *Making Mr. Right*, starring Ann Magnuson and John Malkovich as both a scientist and an android.

It is fun and mad-cap, and totally Susan Seidelman. I really love her work so please check it out.

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.

Please check out our Facebook group. That's Facebook.com/groups/switchbladesisters.

Our producer is Casey O'Brien. Our senior producer is Laura

Swisher, and this is a production of MaximumFun.org.

[Music fades.]

00:41:53	Clip	Clip	Valerie: If things weren't bad enough, now I've been abducted by a UFO!
00:41:57	Speaker 1	Promo	MaximumFun.org .
00:41:59	Speaker 2	Promo	Comedy and culture.
00:42:00	Speaker 3	Promo	Artist owned—
00:42:01	Speaker 4	Promo	—Audience supported.