

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 as you may know, a reminder, we are remote recording now. That means that I’m in my bedroom, facing a woman who is suntanning in her bathing suit while gardening. And you may hear my cat. The audio is going to be a little different from our studios, and in fact our guest today actually has some cats and kids that you might hear, too.</p> <p>Today, I’m very excited to have writer-director Kestrin Pantera here with me. Hi!</p>
00:00:52	Kestrin	Guest	Hi.
00:00:54	April	Host	And Kestrin’s in her own home, obviously. And how’s it going over there, Kestrin?
00:00:58	Kestrin	Guest	You know, we’re rolling pretty deep on cats. We’re five cats deep. That was a real uh, increase from our one cat in early March.
00:01:07	April	Host	<p><i>[Laughing]</i> Well, you know, sometimes you need more than one cat during a pandemic. For those of you who are not familiar with Kestrin’s career, please let me give you an introduction.</p> <p>Kestrin didn’t start off her career as a writer-director or actor. For a long time, she actually studied classical music, playing the cello, and then she got swallowed up into the rock scene in Los Angeles, where she played in numerous bands and traveled around the world playing shows. But even before that, she was living Taipei, Taiwan, where she became fluent in Mandarin and performed voiceovers for 100+ companies in the U.S. and Southeast Asia.</p> <p>When she finally went for it and moved into film and television, she started off acting in front of the camera and also writing and directing shorts, which helped her find her footing as a commercial director for Wired, Technicolor, Johnson & Johnson, Be The Match, Google, Coca-Cola, GE, Starwood, Intel, Best Buy, HBO, Starbucks, and Stoli. <i>[April pauses and takes a deep breath after rattling off the list of brands very rapidly.]</i></p> <p>But in 2014, she debuted her first feature, <i>Let’s Ruin It With Babies</i>, which was hailed by the <i>Los Angeles Times</i> as “honest, convincing, and just plain adorable.” Her new feature film, <i>Mother’s Little Helpers</i>, world premiered at South By Southwest 2019. Early reviews laud the film as a “wonderful, big chill-esque dramedy with big-screen chemistry from the ground up,” and the <i>New York Times</i></p>

called Kestrin “a force.”

The film tells the story of a burnt-out flower child of the 70s who discovers she has weeks to live, which prompts a reluctant and hilarious reunion between her and her millennial children. And *Mother’s Little Helpers* is uh, coming out soon, is that correct?

00:02:37 Kestrin Guest Yeah. Just in time for Mother’s Day. It turns out that the—the personal story I told about a bunch of adult children trapped in their childhood home with their boomer parent um, has become in fact, the national nightmare that we’re living right now. So, um, couldn’t have predicted that, but it’s coming out on iTunes May 5th, and it’s available right now for preorder, but Mother’s Day weekend is when it’s really gonna kick into full swing. So, we’re stoked.

00:03:07 April Host Yeah. Um, great timing. Worse timing, great timing, all timing. Uh, Kestrin, the movie that you chose to talk about today is *Galaxy Quest*. Uh, a cult favorite. Can you give us a little explanation on why this one is one of your fave genre films?

00:03:25 Kestrin Guest Oh, yeah. Growing up, my primary means of bonding with my dad was watching *Star Trek*, and then uh, *Star Wars* of course, the *Star Wars* trilogy. And then when *TNG* came out, we went full Picard. And so, that’s kind of one of my happiest childhood memories is watching sci-fi television with my dad. And of course, we saw all the *TNG* movies that came out in the theaters, with the whales in the aquarium in San Francisco. I’m a huge fan.

00:03:55 April Host That’s great. Um, I’m more of a *DS9* girl—

[Kestrin responds excitedly.]

—than a *TNG* girl, but I do appreciate the T—I’m actually wearing my Quark shirt right now. *[Through laughter]* I didn’t realize I was wearing that.

Anyway, um, For those of you who haven’t seen *Galaxy Quest*, today’s episode will 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, it’s your shot. I think it’s on Amazon Prime and a few other places right now.

00:04:29 Music Music "The Classic TV Theme" off the album *Galaxy Quest: Music From the Motion Picture* by David Newman

00:04:30 April Host And now that you’re back, let me introduce *Galaxy Quest*.

Written by Robert Gordon and David Howard and directed by Dean Parisot, *Galaxy Quest* stars Tim Allen as Jason Nesmith, Sigourney Weaver as Gwen DeMarco, Alan Rickman as Alexander Dane, Tony Shalhoub as Fred Kwan, Sam Rockwell as Guy Fleegman, and Daryl Mitchell as Tommy Webber, all of them castmates on a canceled 1980s *Star Trek*-like TV show.

They spend their days mostly doing cons, with Jason being the only one who loves them, because he thrives on the attention of being

			the captain.
00:05:05	Clip	Clip	<p>Jason: Never give up...</p> <p>Crowd: <i>[In unison]</i> Never surrender!</p> <p>Jason: Damn the resonance cannons, full speed ahead. Huh?</p> <p><i>[Crowd cheers.]</i></p>
00:05:15	April	Host	One day, some aliens called Thermians ask Jason for some assistance. He thinks it's a photo op, and these guys are just dressed in costume for the con.
00:05:22	Clip	Clip	<p>Mathesar: I must speak to you, it's a matter of supreme importance. We are Thermians, from the Klaatu Nebula, and we need your help your.</p> <p>Jason: Is this about that gig tomorrow? Just hammer out the details with my agent, and make sure there's a limo at my house. Last time I did one of these gigs, they shoved me in the back of a Toyota.</p>
00:05:40	April	Host	They pick him up, and take him to his spaceship the next day, a recreation of the one on the show, and Jason performs as the captain, telling them to attack General Sarris.
00:05:49	Clip	Clip	<p>Jason: Okie dokie, okie dokie. Uh, let's fire blue particle cannons full—red particle cannons full. Gannet magnets, fire them left and right, and let 'em run. All chutes! And while you're at, why don't you toss that at 'em, killer? That should take care of old lobster head, shouldn't it?</p>
00:06:05	April	Host	There's a temporary victory and Jason's return to Earth, at which point he realizes what he just experienced is real. But the Thermians are still in trouble, and this time, they bring the whole crew up to their ship. The Thermians got the transmission of the TV show and thought it was historical document, and built up their entire world to mirror what they saw on TV.
00:06:26	Clip	Clip	<p>Mathesar: Since we first received transmission of your historical documents, we have studied every facet of your missions and strategies.</p> <p>Tommy: You've been watching the show?</p> <p>Jason: Lieutenant. Historical documents.</p> <p>Tommy: Historical documents from out here?</p> <p>Mathesar: Yes. The past hundred years, our society has fallen into disarray. Our goals, our values have become shattered, but since the transmission, we have modeled every aspect of our society from your example, and it has saved us.</p>
00:06:54	April	Host	Everyone from the crew is freaked out, and General Sarris is suddenly attacking. They take a hit in power, and have to seek out a power source, but Sarris uses the ship and forces Jason to confess

to the Thermians that the TV show wasn't real.

00:07:08 Clip Clip

Jason: We... uh... we pretended. We lied.

00:07:18 April Host

Sarris activates self destruct timer on the ship and takes off, but Jason rallies the crew to save the aliens by communicating with a Galaxy Quest superfan back on earth named Brandon, whose got intimate knowledge of the ship.

00:07:30 Clip Clip

Jason: Brandon, I remember you, from the convention, right? You asked all those little technical questions about the ship, and I was a little short with you.

Brandon: Yes, yes. I know commander, and uh, I actually want to— just wanted to tell you that I thought a lot about what you said.

Jason: It's okay, now listen—

Brandon: But I want you to know that I'm not a complete brain case, okay? I understand completely that it's just a TV show.

[Brandon's voice fades and becomes tinny, coming through a receiver.]

I know there's no beryllium sphere or digital conveyor, no ship...

Jason: *[Speaking urgently over Brandon]* Hold it. Wait a minute. Stop, stop for a second! Stop! Wait. It's all real.

Brandon: Oh my god, I knew it. I knew it! I knew it!

00:08:05 April Host

Jason and Gwen are successfully led to the core to shut down the self destruct sequence, and the others help the Thermians take back control so they can catchup with Sarris and attack. They think Sarris' ship is destroyed, but Sarris escapes and kills several crew members, at which time Jason uses a time warper and moves back 13 seconds, just enough time to disarm Sarris and save the crew.

The humans crash-land back on Earth, thanks to Brandon's assistance, and Jason kills Sarris in front of a con crowd, while the Thermians go on to be brave aliens in space. The end.

Um, so, I think, you know, there's a lot—we should probably talk a little bit about the fact that the casting is, I mean it's A-plus, first off. Um, and that's definitely, you know, due to not just the studio but the casting director, who was, you know, fighting for a lot of people. Debra Zane was the casting director.

For instance, Missi Pyle, she had a really great story about that, because they couldn't find a woman who could be Thermian in the same way that Enrico Colantoni and um, Rainn Wilson and Jed Rees were doing, because they had to be so over the top and strange, and women would come in and audition and not understand that. They wouldn't tell them. And it's not that they weren't capable of doing it, it's just that they didn't know.

And so, she said, quote, “Missi saw it and got it immediately, and then we came into the audition room and we taped her, and she was so great that when I sent the audition tape to Dean Parisot, the director, on her picture and resume I put a little post-it. I actually made a xerox copy of my Casting Society of America membership card, and I said, ‘If this is not Laliari, I will resign from the CSA.’” End quote.

00:09:50 Kestrin Guest

[Kestrin gasps and laughs. April begins laughing, too.]

I mean, Missi Pyle is one of my favorite actors. She is just—she’s such a strong character actor, and there’s so much empathy and honesty while she’s doing the most bonkers stuff.

[April affirms.]

So grounded in reality. I love her. I mean, that was a great—she nailed it.

00:10:10 April Host

Did you ever have a thing, you know, in the same kind of sense where you’re trying to find the correct tone and um, like the only way that you can kind of show the actors the tone is to actually show them either another actor’s audition tape or uh, another piece of a film, just so they understand what you’re trying to go for?

00:10:32 Kestrin Guest

Um, I think tonally, usually I know the people who I cast before doing it, so you know, there were some like, early on auditions where I felt like it was really hard getting the tone right. But I wrote for actors, so it’s always been a really organic—like I think a lot of the hitches, and you know, I’m excited to have these problems, because I would like to direct something sci-fi in the realm of *Galaxy Quest*. I would love like, Picard, you know? I’m so excited as soon as we get *Mother’s Little Helpers* out to just go full Picard. *[Laughs.]*

But um, so you know, these are situations that I’m really looking forward to having, you know, more creative conversation and debates over.

But for my experience, it has been so smooth and so effortless. The casting has really been easy for me. I just have a conversation, usually it comes down to me going out to coffee with someone, and talking story. And by the end of it, they’re—we are crystal clear.

And they are very—I mean, those sort of—are we—is the—do we have the same tone? That’s never even been a question, because we’re so like, mind-melded, to stay in the *[Through laughter]* Vulcan terminology. Like, I try to approach every project with a really deep mind-meld before we shoot.

00:12:02 April Host

[Chuckling] Yes. Um, mind-meld. Sorry.

I wanted to talk a little bit about Tim Allen. He said—I mean, Tim Allen, I think everyone was aware, and Tim Allen himself especially, was aware that he wasn’t really an actor. You know, he wasn’t Alan Rickman. So there was like, a lot of friction on set, in between that.

And there's that moment where he has to tell Mathesar that he is not the person that he thinks he is, and according to Allen, quote, "Steven Spielberg was on the set for one day, the day when I had to apologize to Enrico's character, Mathesar. He's being killed, and I have to admit I'm all bullshit. Now, I come out of the comedy world. This kind of stuff doesn't come easy to me. I didn't see him. He was at the director's camp, but he came by and said, 'That was really good.' It wasn't like he was ass-kissing. Why would Steven Spielberg have to do that with me? But he said something very professional, and I was like, 'Woah.'" End quote.

Um, and apparently when he was done doing that take and Spielberg was on set, um, Tim—Tim Allen had said, "I don't feel comfortable with the feelings that I'm feeling right now." And so he excused himself to his trailer. And then Alan Rickman turned to the director and said, "I believe he's just experienced his first acting."
[Laughs.]

- 00:13:29 Kestrin Guest I honestly think that what he was saying in that monologue while he was admitting that he was a fraud, that he didn't know what he was doing, that he wasn't actually good at this, like, having to say those words in front of Spielberg and Alan Rickman was probably the most truthful moment he'd ever gone through as a person. Like, and you know, I think all acting, if it's not personal, it's meaningless. And I really took that as a great monologue and a great performance, because it was so honest and truthful.
- 00:14:04 April Host Yeah. And I think that, I mean, that's a fun breakthrough. I'm sure that felt really good for everyone on set, where you know, he's tearing up, everyone's tearing up, and you're like, oh, okay. Like, we know this guy can do comedy, he's been doing comedy, but he really—he pulled off like, the scene that you need to have work. Like, it had to fly, or there would be no emotional resonance with the rest of the story. And I'm curious about that kind of victory on set, and how that feels, when you—when you really nail the emotional take that you know everything is going to hinge on.
- 00:14:39 Kestrin Guest I mean, it's terrifying. First, I want to speak to that from my own personal experience, but I also want to really just have a moment with the fact that Alan Rickman had tension with Tim Allen on set about fine acting versus low brow acting, which is what their characters were fighting over the entire time. Like, was Rickman acting or was that just Rickman being Rickman the whole time? I thought he was just being like, pissy because he was drawing off the experience of Patrick Stewart—Sir Patrick Stewart—playing Jean Luc Picard on kind of a low brow sci-fi show, and really putting his um, acting prowess to work. But what I'm hearing from you is that he was really just pissed off at Allen the whole time, and maybe he was drawing from a very deep, personal well as well. That is so fascinating to me.
- 00:15:35 April Host Yeah, even the director and the producers didn't know if Alan Rickman was in character or if this was just stuff that he was saying. Like, they couldn't parse it the entire film shoot.
- 00:15:45 Kestrin Guest That is so amazing. I just—all like—just, I love Alan Rickman so much. All of his work has been—like, his whole career was so—I'm

reading *Harry Potter* out loud to my kids right now, and I just think of—I just think and cry about Alan Rickman on a nightly basis, because we're on book five and we've got a couple more to go. Um, but that just—that story just lights up my heart and soul, knowing that he just really hated Tim Allen.

Um, so when you're on set, I feel like there's this point when you have an emotional moment where stuff feels really dangerous, and you're not sure where the story ends and where the truth or the personal begins. And that is when you know that it's on. And every scene, if it's working, has that moment of danger, and especially when you're dealing with actors with big emotions, and with big emotional arcs who are going through a lot.

I think that it always has that, like your Spidey sense, the hair on the back of your neck goes up, and everyone in the room feels, and you just feel the danger. And um, that's when it's good, and sometimes you just gotta pray for danger every time you go in to a set up. I think a lot of it just comes from casting phenomenal actors who know what they're doing and staying out of their way.

And I usually—I find that you buy a lot of loyalty and you buy a lot of commitment from actors when you let them just kind of do what they want the first take, and then you drill down and dial in through the next couple of takes into what you want. And um, people are more likely to go with you to greater and farther plains if you just give them a chance to do what they want to do and how they see it on the first take.

And you'll learn a lot. They might bring stuff you never thought of, and you're like, oh, you know what? You're a professional actor, you have thought about your arc more than I have thought about your arc. 'Cause you're a specialist, and I am a generalist of story, you know?

00:17:50	Music	Transition	"Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.
00:17:55	April	Host	Um, we're gonna take a quick break. When we come back, we'll get into some more <i>Galaxy Quest</i> . We'll be right back. <i>[Music fades.]</i>
00:18:07	Promo	Promo	Music: Tense sci-fi music. <i>[Speaker 1 narrates in voiceover intercut with dialogue from the show.]</i> Speaker 1: Strange planets, curious technology, and a fantastic vision of the distant future. Featuring Martin Starr. Martin Starr: So we're going on day 14. Shuttle still hasn't come. Speaker 1: Aparna Nancherla.

Aparna Nancherla: *[Cheerful and electronic]* The security system provides you with emotional security! You do the rest!

Speaker 1: Echo Kellum.

Echo Kellum: Can you disconnect me, or not?

Speaker 1: Hari Kondabolu.

Hari Kondabolu: I'm staying.

Speaker 1: From *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, Geoffrey McGivern.

Geoffrey McGivern: Could you play Cyndi Lauper's "Girls Just Want to Have Fun"?

Speaker 1: It's *The Outer Reach: Stories from Beyond*.

Speaker 2: Now available for free at MaximumFun.org, or anywhere you listen.

[Music fades out.]

00:18:51 Music Transition "Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.

00:18:58 April Host Welcome back to *Switchblade Sisters*. I'm April Wolfe, and I'm joined by Kestrin Pantera today to talk about *Galaxy Quest*.

Um, I brought up earlier, Spielberg was on set, and that actually brought up like, a whole host of very interesting things about *Galaxy Quest* and how it was shaped. And I think I had seen on—every once in awhile I see on like, social media the people that are like, "Spielberg isn't as good as people say he is." And I'm like, you guys, yeah he is. *[Through laughter]* What the fuck? He's very good.

Um, and when he came and looked at the footage and looked at the script and what everyone was doing, because this was a movie set up at Dreamworks, and this was, you know, this was Steven Spielberg. And so, he really had a hand in a lot of things that were going on.

And so, according to um, the producers, um, they said, quote, "Steven can come in, even with so many balls in the air himself, and look at what you're shooting or cutting and get right to the heart of the matter and say, 'Why not do this?'" End quote.

And it was one of those things where the kind of studio overlord, if you will, ended up being a real fantastic thing for them in shaping this movie. And um, and I think that, you know, when you're in the indie world, it's very different. You know, you have to be your own Spielberg.

And I'm wondering though, does that mean that you maybe still send it to people that you consider to be your Spielberg? Are there people in your life who can kind of cut to the heart of the matter and tell you like, this is where the heart of the story is?

- 00:20:36 Kestrin Guest Yeah, absolutely. I think you just build your brain trust. Like, you know, at Pixar they have a brain trust of all the smartest people that they know, and if you're an indie filmmaker, you just need to get the best people that you know whose input you respect and really trust, and that's who you show.
- Um, I have a process, if I'm working with a really rough cut, I need to talk to people who uh, are high empathy and also deep insight. So, if I'm not sure if something works or not, I pick um, the smartest and most empathetic people to look at it and I know that they're capable of seeing where it wants to go and what it wants to be.
- And, you know, especially when you're in an indie situation, a lot of stuff can get derailed or killed with like, the wrong feedback at the wrong time. But the right feedback at the right time can inject you with a momentum that, you know, continue your manic episode, which is what filmmaking is. So those people who can look at it and say, "This is what I'm getting right now, and here's where I'm confused. And what were you trying to say here? Oh, okay." That is really clear if you A-B-and-C. That adjustment. That was unclear, here's how to get more clear on that.
- And I think it's more—as opposed to like, a boss dad or corporate overlord coming in and saying, "I liked or didn't like it or here's where you can be more on point." It's more like a therapy session with a really, really, really good shrink, who asks you what it is that you want to accomplish, and then reflects back to you some tools that could help you attain that goal.
- 00:22:18 April Host Oh, that's nice. That's a good way to put it. Um, I think, you know, some of the things that I love that Spielberg added to *Galaxy Quest* are um, for instance, uh, Justin Long's character of Brandon.
- 00:22:33 Kestrin Guest Oh, he's so good! Justin, like little baby Justin Long, we love him so much.
- 00:22:38 April Host Yeah, and he was—I think it might have been his first feature. But he said, quote, "Someone told me that Spielberg's the reason that I'm in the movie. That they were going to cut my role down to almost nothing. But they said that it needed an element to connect to fans, a human element. This was according to, you know, the producers." End quote.
- Um, and I think that that's a really lovely sentiment of something that Spielberg has clearly honed over the years of understanding fan appeal. You can do—it's almost like, in his movies he does a little bit for him and a little bit for the fans, half—like, all the time. It's like fifty-fifty. Like, I can do this for me, but I'm gonna give you this.
- And that kind of relationship that he has with his audience is something that is translated very well and very easily both to the

theme of this movie, *Galaxy Quest*, because it's all about fandom, and then secondarily to the structure of the film. And, you know, what is the creative part that they get to do for themselves, and what they're doing for their fan or their audience.

00:23:43 Kestrin Guest

It's so exciting to imagine just being in the shoes of, you know, you're making *Galaxy Quest*, and that you have Spielberg as this resource to reflect upon. And I think it would take a little bit of mind ninja work not to look him in the face and receive feedback and be like, "You made *E.T.*, dude." Like, you know? Like, the heart center and the story of *E.T.* is just a perfect movie, and he gets structure, and he gets sci-fi so well. And what my sense is, and I've never worked with him but, but I got a way kind of from watching *Galaxy Quest* is the heart is so front and center—the heart and love are really center in *Galaxy Quest*.

And I feel like that's something that Spielberg brings to projects as well. Like, there's the fandom, and the commercial aspect, but the heart-centered storytelling. And I think that expanding Justin Long's character was such a thoughtful way to connect to an audience, and you know, as we said earlier, that it ends with a celebration of sci-fi, and of *Star Trek*, and of fandom.

00:24:51 April Host

Hmm. Um, you know, I—before—okay, we brought up a few things, and we can talk about Sigourney Weaver first. Um, let's say that Sigourney Weaver, she was—really wasn't suppose to be cast in this movie, because they didn't want to see anyone who had been in a sci-fi property before, and she had obviously very famously been in sci-fi properties. Multiple of them.

And um, the thing is that she fought for this role, which I find fascinating, because she is an actor of a certain kind of caliber and stardom, and yet she was fighting for this because she wanted to have something that felt personal to her. And she said that this was a role that actually felt personal to her, because she could have been on this path of a Gwen DeMarco, of you know, feeling insecure and getting stuck in the one role that you were known for. Like, what if she never did anything after *Alien*, you know? What if that's it?

And so she fought for it and she also fought for her big tits and she fought for her blonde wig, because she wanted to like, be that person and exorcise those demons in a comic way. And—and I think that that is such a fun thing, that she, you know, she made that role. It could have fallen flat, but she's such a phenomenal actress.

00:26:17 Kestrin Guest

It's also this radical act of feminism that Ripley, who shaves her head in *Alien*, plays this uh, ditzy blonde counterpart to an oafish leader who is clearly the least talented and least intelligent of everyone and is sort of the love interest in the supporting role to this, you know, doofy dude. And—but when Ripley does it, and when Sigourney Weaver does it, it's this subversive commentary on patriarchy and society.

And it's so fascinating to me that when Sigourney Weaver decides to wear a push-up bra and put on a blonde wig and repeat the

words that a man says to a computer and then repeat that a computer says back to a man, it isn't this like, bimbo-y statement on how women are lesser than men. It's like a statement on what dumbasses—*[She breaks off, laughing]* This trope, like how stupid this trope is. And like, it's just an act of brilliance.

00:27:22 April

Host

Um, and I think obviously that wasn't what they were going for, but this is something that happened, you know, throughout the making of this movie is they started to understand the depth of their story slowly, bit by bit by bit. It wasn't just all on the page, although like, Robert Gordon did an amazing job and a lot of things were there. But as things started to fall together, everything just go ta little bit deeper, a little bit deeper. And I appreciate that, that they didn't just stick with what they had. That they were really interested in finding the story in the story that they had.

Um, and another example of that is Tony Shalhoub. And so, I'm gonna say this quote: "Initially I went in to audition for Guy Fleegman, but then they cast Sam Rockwell, offered—and then offered me the part of the Asian guy. I said, 'I'm not going to play an Asian guy. But I'll play a guy that plays an Asian, how about that?' So my part as written, we basically had to throw it all out, because it doesn't work with me in there. We couldn't figure out how to make that work, so Dean said, 'Look, we'll invent a new character as we go along.'

"It's a tribute to the other actors that they were open to us changing my lines every day. Usually when you come to work, people want to know what's going to happen. I thought the guy should always be eating, for instance. He should never go anywhere without his little stash of food, because when you're an actor, you never know when your next meal is. The prop people were just giving me little stuff from craft services and if I didn't like it, I'd go find my own." End quote.

I mean, what's your experience like working with these actors who feel—who feel like they can, you know, make a rounded character, or feel like they can take chances, even after you've been shooting the character for awhile?

00:29:11 Kestrin

Guest

I mean, I think it's the most exciting and fun part of the process, when you have a specialist and someone who's really thought about it, you'll get pushback. I mean, ultimately I'm editor-director, so I'm always thinking about how it's gonna cut together and piece together in the end. You know, if someone wants to do a take, and do something that I don't know if it will necessarily cut together in the end, it builds trust and enthusiasm, and generates momentum and safety and kind of, room for exploration, and creating room for danger to happen.

You know, especially on an indie set, we're pretty good about time and finishing on time and finishing, you know, early, so it's not gonna kill my—it's not gonna kill my day to give them a take that will earn, you know, lifelong trust, and garner like, legendary performances perhaps later on in the shoot. And ultimately, I don't need to tell people that like, I'm not gonna use that take. I don't

need to rub it in their face. I just don't. Quietly don't use the take.

And I think the trust to like—I can be out there—I can be like, authoritarian god in the editing room, but I find that I get better performances on set if I'm a little bit more equitable and generous and collaborative.

00:30:27 April Host So you have to be two different people, like separate those sides of yourself in a sense.

00:30:31 Kestrin Guest Oh for sure. I mean, the big secret is that you get to decide which take to use in the end, so you are god. You get to do it. It's fine. So like, let them riff a little longer, or take it a different direction, and ultimately you—if it's—you guide them back to the center, like the skeleton of the story.

00:30:49 Music Transition "Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.

00:30:50 April Host So, we are gonna take another quick break. When we come back, we'll get a little further into some fun character things, some fun director things. And we'll be right back.

[Music fades.]

00:31:05 Promo Promo **Music:** Strumming acoustic guitar.

Announcer: Hey! Thanks for coming.

Three voices overlapping: Thank you. Thank you. Thanks.

Announcer: These are real podcast listeners, not actors! We took the identifying marks off this podcast. Just... tell me your impressions.

Speaker 1: It's really sexy.

Speaker 2: My first thought is, like, Radiolab?

Speaker 3: Definitely something popular.

Speaker 1: Yeah. Really popular. A hit show.

Speaker 2: But funny, too. Like, does Tina Fey have a podcast?

Speaker 3: *[Stifling laughter]* Or the Marx Brothers?

Speaker 2: Yeah, is this podcast Radiolab, but hosted by the Marx Brothers?

Speaker 1: And sexy? Like *Chaude*? It reminds me of *Chaude*.

Speaker 3: Exactly. *[Stifling laughter.]* And they're all riding in a BMW?

Announcer: Close! But not quite. Take a look behind these panels!

[Sound of metal doors lifting.]

All three listeners: *[Gasp!]*

Announcer: And then watch this rocket blast off into space!

[Sound effect of rocket taking off.]

Speaker 1: Whoa!

Speaker 2: Oooh!

[Timer dings.]

Announcer: And—there’s the pies we made you!

[Listeners make excited noises.]

Announcer: Now. Let’s show you the podcast!

[Whooshing noise.]

All three listeners: Ooooooh.

Speaker 2: Wow! It was *Jordan, Jesse, Go!*

Speaker 1: *Jordan, Jesse, Go!?*

Announcer: Hold on!

[Sounds of metal things falling and clanging. Listeners make concerned noises.]

Speaker 3: Oh my goodness.

Announcer: That...was 514 JD Power & Associates Podcasting Awards!

Speaker 2: That was really scary.

Speaker 1: But...compelling!

Speaker 3: I guess I should definitely subscribe to *Jordan, Jesse, Go!*.

Announcer: Um...yeah. I’d say so.

New announcer: *Jordan, Jesse, Go!*: a real podcast!

[Guitar music fades out.]

00:32:28	Music	Transition	“Switchblade Comb” by Mobius VanChocStraw.
00:32:34	April	Host	Welcome back to <i>Switchblade Sisters</i> . I’m April Wofle, and I’m joined today by Kestrin Pantera, and we’re talking about <i>Galaxy Quest</i> .

Um, so you know, you were talking about earlier, the idea of you know, giving people time to do the takes that they want, and trying to be this equitable director. And uh, Parisot, I think, he was everyone's favorite. He was very good at that. But he was also really good at kind of identifying who needed more time, who needed less time. And apparently, Justin Long did not need much time at all.

And um, he said, quote, "Justin was so good that we ended up finishing his stuff a little ahead of schedule. I had had a big altercation with the line producer. They wanted to drop the garbage bag scene. We were running out of time, so I reluctantly agreed to not shoot it. And then when we shot the day, I ran outside quickly and I ended up getting it in two takes." End quote.

And I think that that's a lovely thing, where he didn't push Justin to go faster, but they kind of had this idea, like this kind of you know, this unspoken, you know like, if we finish this, that means we get to shoot the thing that we really want to. And that scene, which I'll remind people, is um, it's like in the middle of a dramatic thing, and they need Brandon's character to guide them to the core to save them. But uh, Brandon's still a teenager, and he has to take out the trash. And so they're trying to get ahold of him, but he's outside, you know, putting the trash in the trash cans, and it's a nice little sight gag.

The thing that I think is really cool is just that he's this teenager, and Dean Parisot knows that this sight gag is gonna be a great crowd pleaser, because you've just got like this building, building tension, and he's breaking it up. And I think that that's great instincts, but it's so wonderful when an actor is so good that they nail every take, and all of the sudden you have extra time at the end of the day, which is so rare. I mean, how—how often does that happen?

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| 00:34:42 | Kestrin | Guest | Um, I mean, I think it happens. I think if you're smart about the way that you build your schedule and you pad in two days, two empty days at the end, then you always finish early, right? Like, you're inevitably gonna go over, and you know, that's just the way I shoot. But I usually shoot pretty fast, and pretty short, and have actors who are really good. But I always kind of insist on more takes than most people are used to. I mean, we usually do five, and I know most people you know, some do more, some do less. But we usually settle around five takes, and we usually cross-shoot. I mean, at least on like, a teeny tiny indie movie, it's just better for editing, and just time, right, than like, re-lighting everywhere you go. |
| 00:35:27 | April | Host | Does that mean, are you lighting for like, 360 or 180, or like what do you— |
| 00:35:31 | Kestrin | Guest | Yeah. We usually do lighting for 180. |
| 00:35:34 | April | Host | Okay. Wow. |
| 00:35:35 | Kestrin | Guest | I mean—yeah, yeah it's usually about 180. But you know, our DP on uh, <i>Mother's Little Helpers</i> , and I directed another series with her, which was—we've really enjoyed working together, but she's shot stuff for Netflix. She's shot stuff for WB. So, she's definitely a |

studio experienced director, but um, she's super agile, and we were able to just, you know, find ways to work with natural light. And you know, she's not the first DP to be really good at working with natural light, and it super helps if you just find someone whose aesthetic you like.

And it really serves an agenda for wrapping early or finishing on time or being able to add scenes. We added so many scenes when we shot *Mother's Little Helpers*. So, that anecdote about him getting that Justin Long taking out the trash shot, like, fills me with like a, "Fuck yeah!" Like, "Fuck you line producer!" Like, it seems so goofy, like the line producer like—I think putting together a really agile team that will give it to you straight, like, I think that we should set an expectation that would be a bonus if you can get it.

But there shouldn't be any fights, it should be baked into the ethos of the team where you're gonna be flexible and where you're gonna have your stretch days and be aligned on that goal.

- 00:36:52 April Host Well, speaking about the edit, Robert Gordon had some things to say about the edit. Because this was, you know, a PG movie.
- So he said, quote, "There's talk about the so-called R-rated version of the film. When I originally wrote it, I wasn't thinking about a family film, just what I wanted to see. So when the ship lands in the convention hall in the original draft, it decapitates a bunch of people. There was also stuff we shot where Sigourney tries to seduce some of the aliens. It was cut, and that's why her shirt is ripped at the end. Also, the worst dubbed F-bomb ever. Good for Dean for never shooting coverage on that." End quote. *[Laughs.]*
- 00:37:29 Kestrin Guest That's fascinating because when I was watching the ship crash into the comic-con convention hall, I was fearing for the people's safety and was shocked that they made that choice, and was glad that nobody actually died. Because the movie gets—it's so emotionally real in a lot of areas for being a satire, and a broad comedy in many senses, but I was really worried about them. And I'm glad that no one got it.
- 00:37:58 April Host Do you feel like you've ever had an experience where you um, like really, really reshaped a story when you were in the edit?
- 00:38:05 Kestrin Guest Oh, yeah, I mean, I feel like with the last one, with *Mother's Little Helpers*, we could have cut that to be a broad comedy. And we could have cut it to be a very, very, very tragic drama. And um, with the tone that we were going for, I think our essence was um, there's nothing so bad that you can't laugh about it, and there's nothing so good that you can't forget that we're completely fucked. And I think we settled into that zone, but there were definitely versions where we strayed.

[She stammers.]

A short that I directed a long time ago that we ended up just killing was like—it was like, "Was this a broad comedy, or is this an indie tragedy?" And it was like, we covered so many—we covered in so

many ways, but didn't cover it enough in the right ways, that it was just a total shitshow, so. Yeah, I learned from that, and that was one of the most instrumental lessons. It was—I'm really glad that that happened on that short, and that it happened early, because I learned so much from it moving forward. And one thing that is really fun when you tinker in your edit, that I think *Galaxy Quest* did really well was their music.

Their score was so authentic to the *Star Trek* soundtrack, and they mined these emotional moments, where I'm like, crying, because like this weird alien is like, dying in Tim Allen's arms, and Alan Rickman's like, weird—you know, like, snail head prosthetic had arms. But it was very tear-jerky and heartfelt, and it had all of these epic moments, and I think if they had changed the music in those moments, it would still be *Galaxy Quest*. But it was such a cool third dimension that they added in the edit of like, depth of satire.

- 00:39:58 April Host Yeah. It was really sweet. And I just love watching Alan Rickman play his kind of curmudgeonly signature role in that. But he—when he leans down, and like, says that “I grab Thor’s hammer” to this dying alien, it’s a really moving, really touching scene. *[Laughs.]*
- 00:40:20 Kestrin Guest I mean, he’s acting his face off, with a weird alien melty shower cap like, popping off of his gourd, you know, to a guy with like, Caesar bangs and an alien costume. And you’re crying, ‘cause he’s so great of an actor. It’s an amazing moment.
- 00:40:36 April Host And I do wonder, I mean, that’s the thing obviously when Alan Rickman died, there was a huge contingent of *Harry Potter* fans who were very, very sad. But I think that also led to a kind of resurrection and even higher cult status of this film, of people rediscovering it or discovering it for the first time, um, because of him and because of his performance, and how he elevates this movie.
- And um, you know, it’s an interesting thing that this has become so famous to the point where there’s now a fan documentary of it on Amazon.
- 00:41:11 Kestrin Guest Of *Galaxy Quest*?
- 00:41:12 April Host Yeah. Mm-hm. It’s called—
- 00:41:14 Kestrin Guest Oh, wow.
- 00:41:15 April Host —it’s called *Surrender*. So there’s an entire documentary about this movie now, and the fandom around it. And you know, it’s such a strange parallel that um, now this other movie, so both *Harry Potter* and *Galaxy Quest* become kind of his iconic roles that he had, despite the fact that he, you know, was in all of these other very kind of high-brow um, uh pieces, and was on the stage. But this is his legacy, kind of paralleling what’s happening in the story yet again. *[Laughs.]*
- 00:41:47 Kestrin Guest Yeah. Yeah, and I’m sure he loves it. I mean, I wonder how much of him like, actually does harness some bitter, or did harness a bitter, Shakespearean you know, resentment toward the role. Or I wonder

how much he was doing it for the paycheck, or for the irony.

00:42:04 April Host I think he was a little bit bitter about always being the villain, but the thing is that he was just quite good at it. Um, and at the very least, you know, being in *Harry Potter* and getting to play the villain, he got to play a more nuanced portrait of what a villain is, and maybe not a villain. Maybe more of an antihero.

00:42:21 Kestrin Guest Well, not to totally spoil *Harry Potter*, but maybe, just maybe in the end, if you get all the way to the end, Snape—I mean, Alan did eventually get what maybe was his true calling to be the true protagonist.

00:42:36 April Host Well, now we uh, we come to the end of the Alan Rickman podcast.

[Kestrin laughs uproariously.]

Kestrin, it's been really great to speak with you. And um, a reminder for people who want to see *Mother's Little Helpers*, um, how can they see it?

00:42:51 Kestrin Guest Well, it is available on iTunes. It goes live May 5th, so it is going to be ready to rock n roll for Mother's Day weekend, on iTunes, Amazon, on demand, everywhere.

00:43:04 April Host Great. Um, so wonderful to speak with you. Thank you for coming on the show.

00:43:06 Kestrin Guest Thank you so much. This has been a blast.

00:43:07 Music Transition "Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.

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

Uh, we're obviously starting to do something a little bit different at the end of every episode. From now on, I'm giving a staff pick, some recommendation of a film by a woman that you can watch right now in your own home. And I'm going to be doing a sci-fi pick to try to keep it thematically together, and it's maybe less of a sci-fi, maybe like, possible reality. Because the one I'm recommending today is Mimi Leder's 1998 film, *Deep Impact*.

Um, that one is obviously is—or was overshadowed by Michael Bay's movie at the same time, *Armageddon*, which I believe had a Criterion release. Um, but *Deep Impact* was the one that I liked quite a bit more. It felt more human, and it felt more cohesive, and it felt like it was a movie that was talking about kind of global impact—uh, word choice intended—and about what happens when the world is coming to an end. And it also felt like it had like, a sweetness to it, like a bittersweetness to it.

But I ended up really liking it as a disaster film when I re-watched it again, and so I highly recommend maybe revisit it. Give it another chance. It's just an old school disaster movie. It gives you all the great stuff that you want when a comet is about to hit Earth.

So, that's it for us. 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.]

00:44:59	Clip	Clip	Mathesar: We are Thermians from the Klaatu Nebula and we need your help.
00:45:04	Speaker 1	Promo	MaximumFun.org .
00:45:06	Speaker 2	Promo	Comedy and culture.
00:45:07	Speaker 3	Promo	Artist owned—
00:45:08	Speaker 4	Promo	—Audience supported.