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| 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 a reminder that we are remote recording now, so that means that I’m in my bedroom. It’s very hot. My cat is very mad. The trash comes by quite a bit. So I’m gonna warn you that you might hear some of that, but the audio is likely going to sound, you know, not as bad as I’m making it out to be. <i>[Laughing]</i> Casey’s a professional. He’s gonna make this sound great.</p> <p>You may have heard this little voice, coming from Venice, California, and her microphone. This is a flashback from the past. I’m gonna give a little intro in the fact that this guest was the first person who ever recorded the show, despite the fact that it’s not the first episode that we aired. She was our first guest <u>ever</u>.</p> <p>Um, and so I want to re-introduce this blast from the past, writer-director Issa López. Hi, Issa!</p> |
| 00:01:13 | Issa López  | Guest      | Hi April, how are you? It’s such a happy moment, you know, after the entire world changed on us, and many things happened, to come back and say hi again.   |
| 00:01:26 | April       | Host       | <p>Yeah. You know, sometimes we need a little bit of normalcy, and having Issa back in our lives is a little bit of normalcy. Um, and I can also hear the birds chirping from Issa’s beautiful home in Venice, California.</p> <p><i>[Both laugh.]</i></p>  |
| 00:01:41 | Issa        | Guest      | I’m really glad it sounds beautiful.  |
| 00:01:45 | April       | Host       | <p>The ones that sound gross, we’re gonna get to those soon. Um, so for those of you who need a refresher on Issa’s history of filmmaking, please let me give that to you.</p> <p>Issa has penned eleven features, many of which, when released, became box office hits in Mexican cinema, and in 2007 received the National Novel Award granted by Mexico’s Institute of Fine Arts. She has directed four of her scripts. <i>Efectos Secundarios</i>, and that’s 2006 from Warner Brothers. <i>Casi Divas</i>, which is Sony 2008. <i>Tigers Are Not Afraid</i>, which you guys probably watched on Shutter if you’re in the U.S. And <i>Todo Mal</i>, which is 2018, her release there.</p> <p>Um, she’s been a producer on four features penned by her, through her production outfit, Peligrosa. In September, 2017, again, <i>Tigers</i></p>   |

*Are Not Afraid* premiered at Fantastic Fest and won the best horror director award. *Tigers*, if you remember, is a dark fairy tale about the ghosts that haunt the children that survive Mexico's drug war, which is one of the reasons why she picked *Pan's Labyrinth* the last time she was on the show.

The film opened in Canada and the U.S. for a commercial run in 2019 as part of the Toronto Film Festival, to rave reviews, scoring a certified fresh 97% on Rotten Tomatoes. And I think you got like, a little trophy for that, did you not?

00:03:00 Issa Guest I did, and I love it!

00:03:02 April Host *[Laughing]* And it has garnered a total of 55 awards at film festivals around the world. Won three Diosasa—is it Dios—ugh. Diosas?

00:03:11 Issa Guest Diosas.

00:03:13 April Host Diosas de Plata, including best director and best picture. Was nominated for ten Ariel awards, winning two, the Mexican Oscar equivalent, and has received the enthusiasm and support of such genre legends as Stephen King, Neil Gaiman, and Guillermo del Toro, who is currently producing a film for Lopéz that—I'm assuming she can't talk about it yet publicly.

00:03:34 Issa Guest I can talk a little. I thought—I thought I couldn't and then uh, Guillermo himself took it away and has started chatting about it, so—

00:03:43 Crosstalk Crosstalk **April:** Oh really?

**Issa:** —I'm like okay. We can say some things, yeah.

**April:** Follow his lead.

**Issa:** So, I will.

**April:** What can you—

**Issa:** In everything, yeah, I do.

00:03:51 April Host Can you describe that in the vaguest terms, the one that you're doing with Guillermo?

00:03:57 Issa Guest Yes. It's um, it's a western. It's a werewolf western, and uh, it's such an incredible opportunity for me because it goes into a genre that I've always loved, which is westerns. Not usually a female director territory, which is changing, like most of cinema, beautifully. But it also is an opportunity to delve and jump into a really, really male universe, and male conflict, which is the beast and the monster we carry inside of us. And um—but from a female perspective. Um, and I think it's so much fun. It's very dark, it's incredibly violent. I remember the second draft—

00:04:44 April Host Oh, you don't say, Issa.

*[Both laugh.]*

00:04:47 Issa Guest Can you believe it? Can you believe it is?

And uh, and I delivered the second draft to Guillermo just as the lockdown was started. So I'm waiting on my notes.

00:05:03 Crosstalk Crosstalk **April:** So did you start the lockdown for us? Were you what—

**Issa:** It was me. It was me.

**April:** It's like a monkey's paw.

**Issa:** I did it so he could be—

**April:** Yeah.

00:05:09 Issa Guest Completely, so I could get the attention of the producer. That's right. As soon as he reads, we're done.

00:05:16 April Host Oh, thank god.

00:05:17 Issa Guest Just, you know, call him.

00:05:19 April Host Right, great.

Um, speaking of male worlds and kind of infiltrating them, we're about to infiltrate a fairly male universe. Because Issa, the movie you chose to talk about today is *Blade Runner*, the original. Can you give us a little explanation on why it's one of your fave genre films?

00:05:33 Issa Guest Well, I watched it um, I think I probably watched it around 1985 in a movie theater. Before it completely—I was in Mexico, and uh, before it completely became the cult animal that it was. When it was getting there. And um, and I wasn't prepared. I watched it basically because I was madly, madly in love with Harrison Ford, I think like any boy or girl around, we were all in love with him.

And um, and I was obsessed with *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and I was expecting an adventure. And it is, but it's a very different kind of adventure, and it's incredibly dark, and it goes into the territory of questioning the nature of God, of fate, of death. And uh, and that was what stayed with me, way, way after watching it, how genre movies, sci-fi in this case, could tackle the most central conflicts of human existence, and it marked me forever.

00:06:52 April Host Mm-hm. And you know, it was a very different kind of role for Harrison Ford at the time, and we will get into that and that kind of choice to do that.

Um, but of course, for those of you who haven't seen *Blade Runner*, 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 *Blade Runner*, this is your shot.

00:07:16 Music Music "Blade Runner - End Titles" off the album *Blade Runner: Music From the Original Soundtrack* by Vangelis

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| 00:07:17 | April | Host | <p>And now that you're back, let me introduce <i>Blade Runner</i>.</p> <p>Written by Hampton Fancher and David Peoples, <i>Blade Runner</i> stars Harrison Ford as ex-cop Rick Deckard. One night, Deckard's picked up by officer Gaff, played by Edward James Olmos. Deckard's old boss shows him a video of a blade runner officer administering something called a Voight-Kampff test to a replicant, Leon, as a means to assess his humanity.</p>   |
| 00:07:40 | Clip  | Clip | <p><b>Holden:</b> You're in a desert walking along in the sand, when all of a sudden—</p> <p><b>Leon:</b> Is this the test now?</p> <p><b>Holden:</b> Yes. You're in a desert walking along the sand, when all of a sudden you look down—</p> <p><b>Leon:</b> What one?</p> <p><b>Holden:</b> What?</p> <p><b>Leon:</b> What desert?</p> <p><b>Holden:</b> Doesn't make any difference what desert. It's completely hypothetical.</p> <p><b>Leon:</b> Then how come I'd be there?</p> <p><b>Holden:</b> Maybe you're fed up. Maybe you want to be by yourself. Who knows?</p> |
| 00:07:57 | April | Host | <p>But the replicant immediately shoots the officer on the second question. The police want Decker to act as a bounty hunter and kill Leon, and three other replicants: Roy Batty, Pris, and Zhora, who are on Earth illegally.</p>   |
| 00:08:10 | Clip  | Clip | <p><b>Deckard:</b> I don't work here anymore. Give it to Holden. He's good.</p> <p><b>Bryant:</b> I did. He can breathe okay, as long as nobody unplugs him. He's not good enough. Not good as you. I need you, Deck. This is a bad one. The worst yet. I need the old blade runner. I need your magic.</p>   |
| 00:08:32 | April | Host | <p>Deckard shows up to the estate of the man who created the replicants to do some reconnaissance. The man's name is Eldon Tyrell, of Tyrell Corp, and he wants to see if the Voight-Kampff test will work on a nexus six model.</p> <p>Tyrell says he wants to see the test fail first, and offers Deckard his assistant, Rachael, played by Sean Young. It's a very long, tricky test, but Deckard decides correctly that Rachael is actually a replicant who believes she is human.</p>  |
| 00:08:57 | Clip  | Clip | <p><b>Deckard:</b> She's a replicant, isn't she?</p> <p><b>Dr. Eldon Tyrell:</b> I'm impressed. How many questions does it usually take to spot one?</p>  |

**Deckard:** I don't get it, Tyrell.

**Dr. Eldon Tyrell:** How many questions?

**Deckard:** Twenty, thirty, cross-referenced.

**Dr. Eldon Tyrell:** Took more than a hundred for Rachael, didn't it? She doesn't know.

**Deckard:** She's beginning to suspect, I think.

**Dr. Eldon Tyrell:** Suspect? How can it not know what it is?

00:09:19 April Host Tyrell explains she's a new model who's been fed a bunch of false memories. Deckard then finds Leon's hotel room and searches it, finding photos there that lead him to his next clue. He returns home to find Rachael professing her humanity, showing him pictures of her past.

00:09:34 Clip Clip **Rachael:** You think I'm a replicant, don't you?  
*[A glass clinks, followed by slurping and the sound of footsteps.]*  
Look. It's me with my mother.

00:09:46 April Host And then Deckard tells her they were manufactured. All just a bunch of stuff, gobbledy-gook that Tyrell put in her brain and gave her.

00:09:52 Clip Clip **Deckard:** Implants. Those aren't your memories. They're somebody else's. They're Tyrell's nieces.

00:09:59 April Host None of it's real. Meanwhile, the replicants find an engineer named J.F. Sebastian and begin manipulating him so he will work on them.

00:10:06 Clip Clip **Roy Batty:** Will you help us?

**J. F. Sebastian:** I can't.

**Pris:** We need you, Sebastian. You're our best and only friend.

00:10:14 April Host Deckard tracks Zhora down and kills her, then gets the order to kill Rachael, too. But Leon shows up, and almost kills Deckard, before Rachael kills Leon, saving Deckard. Deckard and Rachael become romantic then.

Meanwhile, Roy gets Sebastian to get him into Tyrell's house, where Roy requests more time from his maker—

00:10:33 Clip Clip **Dr. Eldon Tyrell:** What seems to be the problem?

**Roy Batty:** Death.

**Dr. Eldon Tyrell:** Death? Well, I'm afraid that's a little out of my jurisdiction, you—

**Roy Batty:** I want more life, father.

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| 00:10:47 | April | Host  | —before killing him and then killing Sebastian. Deckard tracks Pris down to Sebastian’s home and kills her after a struggle, then Deckard and Roy fight on the rooftops in the rain, with Roy even saving Deckard’s life once, before delivering a moving monologue and succumbing to his expiration date.  |
| 00:11:03 | Clip  | Clip  | <i>[Sound of heavy rain.]</i><br><br><b>Roy Batty:</b> All those moments will be lost in time, like tears in rain. Time to die.   |
| 00:11:22 | April | Host  | Gaff shows up and makes a comment about Rachael. Deckard returns home to find her still sleeping in his bed. Gaff leaves Deckard a little parting gift on his doorstep, a little origami unicorn, invoking a unicorn Deckard dreamt of once. Deckard and Rachael get the hell out of Los Angeles and, you know, try to live a life as runaway replicants.<br><br>Um, so the version that I’m talking about, obviously, I think is the director’s cut. I get them mixed up, like which information is which.   |
| 00:11:57 | Issa  | Guest | It is, it is confusing, right? Um, uh, the movie was released originally—and correct me here if I’m wrong—but uh, the studio, after seeing the cut, decided to add a voiceover from Harrison Ford, which in the version I saw and the world saw for many years.<br><br><i>[April confirms.]</i><br><br>And then they added a happy ending, a very clearly happy ending with a greenest green, a little strange, and it does feel like an add on. And Ridley Scott was never happy about that, and as the movie became the cult monster it’s become, he—and he became Ridley Scott in full—he could have the collateral enough to get one of the first director’s cuts that we saw, now it’s everywhere, right? But uh, but back then it was <i>Apocalypse Now</i> , I think was the first I remember, and then we saw this one.<br><br>So he took out the whole um, voiceover, and took out this added ending, happy ending, and put back the unicorn dream, which was not in the original. Those are the difference. So that is definitely the director’s cut. |
| 00:13:18 | April | Host  | I mean, that was—it definitely complicated the narrative, having that unicorn dream, because that means that—it does confirm that he is a replicant and, you know, I think the studio, even the writer Fancher were happier with it being um, you know, either unsaid or that he’s not a replicant, and uh—because it might have been too sad. But I find that interesting that just a couple of sequences actually changed the entire meaning of the film. <i>[Laughs.]</i> But uh—  |
| 00:13:50 | Issa  | Guest | It’s amazing. It’s amazing. That’s what happens. When you recut a movie, you can discover what you were actually trying to say, and you didn’t know. It’s really interesting.   |
| 00:14:01 | April | Host  | I think, okay, so I want to talk a little bit about this. We are clearly talking about the story, we are not even talking about the special effects, but when this movie came out it was the special effects that   |

were the big story for a lot of people. And people kept asking Ridley Scott, you know, after he had done *Alien 2*, you know, he had pioneered so many things, you know, what was—what was the pressure to come up with something that was amazing and futuristic?

And he said, quote, “It’s actually equal pressure to come up with a good script, and once you get the script you want to do and it happens to be in this genre, it’s a matter of interpretation. The pressure if the most interesting part of creating a film.” End quote.

And I thought that that was interesting, where he’s continue—in that interview, he continues talking about how hard it was just to do the script, and he was like thwarting any question about the special effects because he was just like, “I want to talk to you about the story.”

And you know, I think that that was—obviously the studios are gonna be like, “Oh, there’s amazing stuff in the special effects. You know, he creates this whole you know, new Los Angeles and it looks believable and amazing, especially for that time period. But he’s still focused on the story.

And I was hoping we could talk about that particular thing, where you can have the most amazing special effects, but if you don’t have a story, you’re still fucked.

00:15:25 Issa Guest

Oh my god. Particularly because I’m right now in the process of writing a next project, and uh, the—and I always will say to anybody who will listen to it, directing, any idiot can do it, I’m telling you. The trick is you have to surround yourself with incredibly talented people. That is the true talent of a director. If you find a genius production designer and a genius DP and the right visual effects person, and you cast a movie perfectly, you can stand back and let it happen pretty much. I’m telling you.

But—but writing the story right, that’s a completely different story. And that’s where the true sweat, blood, and tears for me is. And that’s where, if you don’t get that right, it doesn’t matter how good the rest of it is. It doesn’t matter how great and amazing the visual effects are. You’re going to end up with a bad movie.

I completely see Scott Ridley obsessing over the script. I can absolutely understand it.

00:16:38 April Host

I have to ask, in the mindset of, you know, like when you made *Tigers Are Not Afraid*, um, you know, I would say Mexican companies weren’t really doing the special effects that you guys were doing in that. Wasn’t it kind of like a team work effort to be like, okay we want to make this in Mexico and we want Mexican companies to do this, so we have to you know, figure out how to pull together and get it done.

But now you have, I would say, infinite more resources, just having a producer like Guillermo del Toro, and um, you know, I’m wondering if that changes your writing process, knowing what you

can and can't do now.

00:17:12 Issa Guest It's very interesting, because even though I am working with del Toro and the movie is set up at Searchlight, um, the budget constrictions are big. And it was a decision that del Toro and I made very early on, because a constricted budget buys you freedom. The bigger the movie, the more control the money people are going to have in the final decisions. Case in point, *Blade Runner*, where you cannot even get your own ending.

[April confirms.]

'Cause it's an expensive movie. It doesn't matter that you're a massively big, recognized director, as Scott was at that point, after *Alien*. Um, he still couldn't get away with his own ending. So in order to—to keep control, if you make it smaller, you can control better the universe. Now that's on one hand, if you want it. On the other hand, you're creating a complicated, big universe, and in our case it's period, and it's um, and it's visual effects. We have creatures that change and become and um, and how do you marry those two things?

The way I'm approaching it in writing right now, and we had a conversation about it, is—and it's on par with the way I have approached every project I've written—is write it without limits. You don't—nobody's budgeting your dreams when you write.

Then, when the story is there, when the characters are there, when everything works within the story, is when you have to sit down and roll up your sleeves and figure out how to do most of it, or the most vital parts of it without it looking cheesy. Because you're trying to put it in a constrained budget, but still keeping the spirit of what you're trying to say. And you're going to lose a lot, and you're going to become quite inventive on how to solve stuff.

00:19:18 Music Transition "Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.

00:19:19 April Host We're gonna take a quick break, and we'll be right back to talk a little bit more about *Blade Runner*.

[Music fades.]

00:19:31 Promo Promo **Music:** Classical orchestral music.

**John Hodgman:** Hey, everyone! It's I, John Hodgman of the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast.

**Elliott Kalan:** And I, Elliott Kalan of the *Flop House* podcast.

**John:** And we've made a whole new podcast! A 12-episode special miniseries called *I, Podius*. In which we recap, discuss, and explore the very famous 1976 BBC miniseries about Ancient Rome called *I, Claudius*! We've got incredible guests such as Gillian Jacobs, Paul F. Tompkins, as well as star of *I, Claudius* Sir Patrick Stewart! And his son! Non-Sir Daniel Stewart.

**Elliott:** Don't worry, Dan, you'll get there someday.

**John:** *I, Podius* is the name of the show! Every week from [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) for only 12 weeks. Get 'em at [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org), or wherever you get your podcasts.

*[Music fades out.]*

00:20:16 Music Transition "Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.

00:20:22 April Host Welcome back to *Switchblade Sisters*. I'm April Wolfe, and I'm joined today by Issa Lopéz, and we are talking about *Blade Runner*.

Um, I wanted to get into a little bit more about the writing process of this particular script. Because it's a fascinating, I think, means that it got to Ridley Scott, but David—er, sorry, Hampton Fancher was um, the one who was doing the primary work on it. And he was not a writer, he was an actor, and he hadn't directed anything yet.

But he said, quote, "I had been what you might call an underground filmmaker. I never got a chance to get anything that I had written and that I had wanted to direct off the ground. Over the years, I eventually learned that the way to do that was to do something that was commercially feasible. It was around 1975, and I decided to look for a property that had some kind of commercial feasibility.

"I'm not a science fiction fan, and I am ignorant of science fiction, but someone suggested that I read *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*. I saw in it a possibility. I didn't think of writing it or directing it. I just thought that if I got something that like, was like that going as a producer, it would put me into more familiar ground in front office Hollywood. So I decided to option the book." End quote.

00:21:33 April Host So, here you have a guy who desperately wants to be directing something, and he's finding that the way to get about it, to have someone let him do this, is to produce. And it wasn't his career goal necessarily to produce, he wanted to be directing eventually, but it was kind of you know, a strange kind of twisty path to get to that point.

And I think that that's—I mean it's an interesting thing because he ended up writing the script, you know? He didn't just produce it. It was, you know, in fact he wasn't able to get the rights. His friend, Brian Kelly, also a former actor, wanted to be a producer, and um, his friend Brian Kelly was able to secure the rights, because you know, Dick needed money apparently. And uh, then he couldn't seem to get any kind of meeting for anything going on.

And he said, quote, "Brian entreated me into doing, if not a screenplay, at least a treatment. I refused at first, but Barbara Hershey, the actress who knew about all of this, told me it was a perfect way to achieve what I was trying to do. If I believed that this was what I wanted to do and I wanted to make it happen, why didn't I write it? So I made a 50/50 deal with Brian and I started work on the first draft." End quote.

So, he didn't even want to write this movie. Can you imagine that? You're like, I don't know.

00:23:04 Issa

Guest

[*Laughing*] What I find interesting is that it's so hard to adapt a novel. It's very hard to adapt any IP and make it into an effective movie. Um, Philip Kindred's novel is particularly—well, all of his work is so strange, and I can—for me, the central concept, the central conflict in the novel is Deckard deciding if he's human or he's a replicant, which is not at the center of *Blade Runner*. *Blade Runner*, for me and what I read in it, is not as much about the nature of a man being good, as you just said. Which, it is there, you know.

It's so interesting to listen to what was it originally. Eventually what comes across to me is what makes us human, and the nature for example of memories, how memories can be false, but they still make us human. How we treasure them, and how, when we die, and not knowing when that's going to happen, but knowing that is inescapable. Uh, the last thing that we leave to someone else is memories. It's the nature of memory, the nature of what makes us who we are, and if we are able to share it or not.

There's this quote that I love from *Heart of Darkness*, the Conrad novel, at the beginning when the story is going to be told by Marlow, the narrator of the story. He says, "We live as we dream, alone." And I think *Blade Runner* is about that. It's about how impossible it is to share what experiences that make us, even when you were there with someone else. And they disappear when you disappear, which is the central conflict that gives us anxiety on everyday level. That's why the movie, I think, is so powerful.

00:25:19 April

Host

Um, I wanted to talk about getting fired from your own script. [*Laughs*] Because that's what Hampton Fancher went through. Um, because uh, he wasn't able to write. He just didn't want to write what Ridley Scott had in mind. He just—because he just didn't think that it could work.

And he said, quote, "On a dialectical level, when it came to those areas that I disagreed on and felt justified in disagreeing, I would usually win the argument and feel satisfied my point had been proven. But two or three weeks later, we would have the same argument all over again. He was just steadfastly hooked into wanting things that I wouldn't do. As pre-production began and things really had to be nailed down, it got really hairy. I wasn't hired writers—I wasn't a hired writer, I was a producer, so it wasn't as if Ridley could just say, 'Don't do this, and do that' and I would do it. I was also a producer.

"Finally I said, because it was Ridley's film in the end, 'If you're going to do that, you're going to have to get someone else to do it, because I won't.' I really didn't think he would do it, because the time was too short. We came up with what I thought, and what many people think was a very wonderful script, and has all those things that I wanted, but they did get somebody else and it turned out to be David Peoples, just about two weeks before shooting started." End quote. Um. [*Laughs.*]

00:26:40 Issa Guest That happens so often.

*[April confirms.]*

It has happened to me, and here's the irony. I've been fired from writing a script that I am going to direct. Get that. That a story that I started, I generated, I nurtured, and then at some point go like, "I don't think that you are getting the story. We're gonna bring someone else. But we will get it back to you, because you're the director."

*[Both laugh.]*

That, for me, is—it's incredible, you know? All the, you know, after a long period of writing, I've seen it all. I've seen my first—the first script that I wrote that got into production um, I wrote—I don't know, maybe twelve drafts of it over the course of three years, and then when the director was on board, the amount of changes and the reasons for those changes.

I can't even—I still, I think, I wake up in the night with nightmares. And uh, and in the middle of shooting it, she called a couple of writer friends of hers to write scenes on the sly, and showed up at the set ready to shoot them, and the producer stopped her and called me. It was such a mess. I did learn—

00:28:07 April Host *[Aghast] What?*

00:28:08 Issa Guest Yeah, no, no, it was insane. And at the end, when the movie was finished and I had to step back and away from that mess, um, I was just a writer. I—she made a cut and showed it, and it was a mess. And so she left the movie, and they called me, the writer, to cut it and make sense of it. It's insane. Uh, but what I learned very early on is I—I'm not supposed to watch the movies that I've written and didn't direct.

*[April laughs.]*

I don't do it. I don't do it. And um, and at some point in my career I could afford the luxury of not having to sell a script on a daily basis, but right now, I don't know how long it's going to last. The way this business works, one day everybody takes a call from you, and the next day nobody remembers your name. And you just drop everything and go make your own movie, and recycle the entire experience.

But um, I don't have to sell scripts for someone else to direct as is right now. That said, what has happened is I've written a couple of scripts for me to direct, that along the way, getting to this weird universe of, "Well, what do you want this movie to become?" It's not what I want for it, so I'm going to step back.

Sometimes the scripts don't die, and they keep bouncing around, and eventually find another director. And so I don't think I'm done experiencing movies being directed by someone else. I think I'm still waiting, and I know it happens, of course it happens, that amazing

directors find the script. I can't wait for that experience, you know? But uh, but it's so complicated.

00:30:08 Music Transition "Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.

00:30:10 April Host Um, we're gonna take another quick break. When we come back we'll get into some more Harrison Ford stuff, and definitely into some more Ridley Scott anecdotes. But uh, there's so much good stuff to dig into, that we'll have tons to talk about. We'll be right back.

*[Music fades.]*

00:30:26 Promo Promo **Music:** light, mid-tempo rock.

**Jesse Thorn:** Hey, MaxFunsters! It's Jesse Thorn. This week on my public radio interview show *Bullseye*, I'm talking with Tina Fey and Robert Carlock about creating *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*, *30 Rock*, and also just kind of...why they're the best at everything. *[Laughs.]*

**Tina Fey:** There was a window of time when we—we'd just go to awards things and pick up our prizes and party with the people from *Mad Men*.

**Jesse:** You can find *Bullseye* at [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) or wherever you listen to podcasts. Just search for "*Bullseye* with Jesse Thorn."

*[Music finishes; cheers in background.]*

00:31:02 Music Transition "Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.

00:31:09 April Host Welcome back to *Switchblade Sisters*. I'm April Wolfe, and I'm joined today by Issa Lopéz, and we're talking about *Blade Runner*.

I wanted to talk about earlier, you know, you had said that you were in love with Harrison Ford, and that's a reason why you saw it. A lot of people—

00:31:21 Issa Guest Still am. I still am.

00:31:23 April Host Yes, yes.

*[Issa laughs.]*

Um, a lot of people were kind of disappointed with this character, because as you said, it's much darker. And Ridley Scott said, quote, "I hadn't seen *Raiders of the Lost Ark* when I first talked to Harrison about the role. I said, 'I've got this great idea. We're going to do this Marlow-ish character, Bogart and that sort of thing.' And he said, 'Just done it, can't do it.' And I said, 'Hell.' And then I next said, 'What I want is this sort of unshaven individual.' And he said, 'Can't do that, I've just done it.' So we suddenly changed gear completely, and went through this rather frightening process of cutting all his hair off. It was a brave thing for him to do." End quote.

*[Both laugh.]*

00:32:03 Crosstalk Crosstalk **April:** Um, so—

**Issa:** Yeah, yeah—

**April:** —I found that—

**Issa:** —it's sad.

**April:** —fascinating, yeah.

00:32:05 Issa Guest He's very well-shaven in the movie, though. *[Laughs]* But uh, the thing is, you know what's interesting about the movie experience regarding movie stars, what a real movie star is—and Harrison definitely is one—is that on one side you're seeing when they're doing a proper job, the director and the actor, um, you're seeing this new character, hopefully, that you have never seen before.

But on the other hand, Indiana's the same person, so the reactions and the gestures are familiar. So you are seeing Deckard, who has his own mannerisms and his own rhythms—especially rhythms I think—but you're seeing Indy in so many moments. The way that he receives a punch, and Ford is very good at that, at receiving a punch. Um, and he—he is confused after a shock, and the way that he delivers a bard is very much Indiana Jones.

So, that becomes uh, a strange, blended thing where it is—it is Han Solo but it is Indiana Jones but it is Deckard.

00:33:28 April Host I mean, going along with that too though is the thing where Ridley Scott had to promise him that he was gonna make him a different character, but at the same time he had to protect the fact that people were going to see this movie because they expected a quote-unquote "Harrison Ford character". And he—he had to kind of navigate that world of making sure, like you say, that the Indiana Jonesness comes out, that the, you know, like the Han Soloness comes out occasionally, and not kind of turn the viewers off.

He said, quote—this is in the original cut—quote, "There was a bit more sexuality between Rachael and Deckard. It got a bit rough, actually, and I needed Deckard to be sympathetic. Harrison Ford was playing a character opposite to what people expected from him. Also the hero or antihero finally gets his butt kicked by the so-called bad guy who turns out not to be a bad guy. That's what's interesting about the movie, right? Otherwise it's all down to bad guys and good guys, which is really boring." End quote.

So, there was actually—and I know in the break you were talking about the fact that things got kind of rough between Rachael and Deckard, when they become quote-unquote "romantic." And um, and it was actually even more of that, to the point where people really lost sympathy for this character and would have lost sympathy for a kind of Harrison Ford character. So that had to be a really difficult thing to navigate.

00:34:52 Issa Guest I completely agree, and I can see the reference. I mean, it is a modern noir by all means. The ultimate modern noir, it was possibly.

But you can see the influence on that. The funny thing is, I interrupted a binge I'm doing of noir films, the Criterion channel has this Columbia collection.

[April affirms.]

Which is amazing. And I—right before starting it, I watched *Sunset Boulevard*, which is not part of the collection, because that's a Paramount. But then from there, I went to *Gilda*, and to *The Lady of Shanghai*. And these are movies that I've seen a number of times, but I'm watching them again. And then I go, well, *Cabaret*, which is different, but this is still the same era. And then I watched *Blade Runner*.

And uh, what amazes me is the terribly complicated relationship that these male characters, and filmmakers, and writers have with the female figure. And, how scary women are, and they're incredibly powerful. Be it *Sunset Boulevard*, be it *Gilda*, especially. Be it the replicants in this movie, they're scary, killing monsters, gorgeous ones. Or they subdue, and they become this soft lady, that after a couple of good slaps, decides that yeah, she loves you.

And um, and this is a cinema that informed us, and informed how we write female figures. Um, as much as I love the movie, and I love it, uh, it did shock me, yesterday. Because I just didn't remember the roughness of that quote-unquote "love scene," I don't know if it's a love scene. He tells her, violently, to tell him she wants him. It's very, very violent.

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| 00:37:10 | April | Host  | Yeah, it's disturbing.   |
| 00:37:12 | Issa  | Guest | Yeah, it is. To the one female character that is not trying to eat you alive, basically.   |
| 00:37:18 | April | Host  | Um, before we go, I wanted to ask you a question about this. Because Ridley Scott said, quote, "For some bizarre reason, we never noticed that somebody's thumb was in the bottom left hand corner of a shot. The phone booth had an automatic door, and I couldn't de-automate it. And I was getting really beaten up, because we were up against the gun, so I just shot. And there was a bloody thumb in the frame. It's little mistakes like that, that you're tempted to leave in. It's a signature that says, 'Yes, it is fiction, it is moviemaking.'" End quote. And, talking about— |
| 00:37:50 | Issa  | Guest | I never saw any thumb! [Laughs.]   |
| 00:37:53 | April | Host  | It's funny, I mean like, people who love to kind of obsess about film mistakes, I will never quite understand. Because I like the fact that sometimes you can see the humanity in it. And you know, speaking of what is human, or what is shiny and perfect. I like sometimes when it's a little bit strange.  |

So, you know, he ultimately removed the thumb, and all the other mistakes. But he was tempted to leave it in, and I kinda wish that he had. Like, you have all this power with digital filmmaking now, to polish everything, to make it so perfect. And yet, there's something I miss about the kind of grime of it, you know, sometimes there's a

hair in the gate, you know? *[Laughs.]*

- 00:38:35 Issa Guest Well, my father used to tell me a story, and I don't know if it's true. As many of the stories that my dad told me.
- [April laughs.]*
- Um, which was that Michelangelo—and I'd rather, at this point in my life, leave them like that—Michelangelo, when he made Moses, and he finished it, he stepped back and looked at it, and found that it was too perfect. And so he had the mallet in his hand, and he came to it, and he hit it on a toe, breaking a little bit of the toe. To then make it perfect.
- And I don't know if that shit is true, man, but I wish it was. Because there's such a thing as too perfect. And I think the movie completely understands, there's so much sublime beauty that is covered in grime, and, you know. Ripped stockings, imperfect hair, that would be perfect to have stayed that way, particularly in *Blade Runner*, I think.
- 00:39:50 April Host Well, Issa, I wanna thank you so much for joining us again on the show, you're our only repeat guest, and I'm happy it was you to kick us off, and remind everyone what it is to be human. And um, people can watch your movie *Tigers Are Not Afraid* on Shutter still, and they can find your other films on VOD right now, right?
- 00:40:12 Issa Guest It is true! And part of the reason we're talking today is that, *Tigers* got a treatment that none of my other moves did so far, and it's such joy that they made this physical release of it. DVD and a still book. And they put—they let me put everything I could think of! And I had so much. So, said the signs, casting calls with the kids, and you can see the distance, how they looked at the beginning, and where we got in the movie with them.
- 00:40:46 April Host Oh, fun!
- 00:40:47 Issa Guest Um, we have that, we have a 45 minute long feature of how we made the movie. And the kids, they have their interviews, and it's so much fun. And there's an hour long Q&A with Guillermo Del Toro in Toronto. A lot of great, great stuff in that.
- 00:41:07 April Host Fantastic. You know, physical media. Physical media is great. I love it, so if you can, please pick up a copy of *Tigers Are Not Afraid*, and you can get all the bonus information, and bonus extras. And uh, thank you so much, Issa.
- 00:41:22 Issa Guest My pleasure, as always! We'll do it again, uh, with the next movie, for sure!
- 00:41:26 April Host And thank you for listening to *Switchblade Sisters*. Obviously, we've started doing something a little different. At the end of each episode, I'm giving a staff pick recommendation of a film directed by a woman. And I know people have a little bit of time on their hands, and you know, you're looking for ways to feel human again. And this show is all about highlighting the great work of female filmmakers, so here you go.

Uh, today's is hopefully thematically connected. In fact, it is. It is Kathryn Bigelow's *Strange Days*. For some reason this one just keeps getting left off of Kathryn Bigelow's full career. People just kinda don't think about it as much, because you know, *Point Break* is obviously amazing. *Near Dark* as we talked about before, with Karyn Kusama is amazing, but *Strange Days* is... so strange.

It is so informed by the time period. It came out in 1995. 1992 was just a huge, huge time for—it felt like, sometimes, the world was ending. Because this is a movie that's talking about abuse of power, it's talking about rape, it's talking about surveillance, and it's talking about racism. And you know, this was a time after the LA riots and the really, really terrible Rodney King verdict, and where Los Angeles was just on fire.

And so this is such a really wonderful movie with a really fantastic performance from Angela Bassett, who you know, should have been in an easy action star after this, and you know, I'm hoping that she still has those days in her, where she can do that. But please give *Strange Days* a shot, and check that out.

And after that, you know, 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.]*

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| 00:43:42 | Clip      | Clip  | <b>Deckard:</b> I don't work here anymore.           |
| 00:43:44 | Speaker 1 | Promo | <a href="http://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> . |
| 00:43:46 | Speaker 2 | Promo | Comedy and culture.                                  |
| 00:43:47 | Speaker 3 | Promo | Artist owned—  |
| 00:43:48 | Speaker 4 | Promo | —Audience supported.                                 |