

00:00:00	Music	Transition	<p>“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.</p>
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, and I am in my bedroom. Chicken is asleep, so she’s probably not gonna start screeching at us. You might hear some birds. The audio is likely going to sound a little different from our studio’s, but everything else is the same.</p> <p>Except for today, our great guest, who we’ve got—for some reason we keep getting all these wonderful people out of Australia. Director Shannon Murphy.</p>
00:00:52	Shannon Murphy	Guest	Hi!
00:00:53	April	Host	<p>Um, so Shannon, for those of our listeners who are less familiar with your work, please let me give an introduction.</p> <p>Shannon is an award-winning theater and TV director, who graduated from the Australian Film and Television School in 2013. Her graduating short film, <i>Kharisma</i>, has screened at festivals, including Cannes and Tiff, and was nominated for an AACTA award. Shortly thereafter, she won a Sydney Theater Award for the Australian premiere of <i>My Name is Rachel Corrie</i>.</p> <p>Most recently, Shannon has directed a number of episodes on Australian hit series, including <i>Rake</i>, <i>Love Child</i>, <i>Offspring</i>, and <i>Sisters</i>. Shannon was nominated for an Australian directors guild award for her role as the sole director of of the C—sorry, the SBS four-part mini-series, <i>On The Ropes</i>.</p> <p>Her first feature film, <i>Babyteeth</i>, which we’ll be talking about quite a bit on this episode, is produced by Jan Chapman, with Essie Davis and Ben Mendelsohn starring. Premiered in main competition at the Venice Film Festival in 2019, and is one of the—ugh, god, this stat just kills me every single time I hear it. <i>[Laughs]</i> And is one of two female directed films in competition. And Toby Wallace was awarded the Marcello Mastroianni Award—that’s close enough—for best young actor or actors. He’s phenomenal in this film.</p> <p>It was then presented in competition at the BFI London Film Festival. The film was sold in a bidding war to IFC in the U.S. and Picturehouse in the U.K. She is currently working on <i>Killing Eve</i> for BBC America, Sid Gentle, and was named in Variety as one of ten directors to watch in 2020.</p>

			So this is a big year for you.
00:02:28	Shannon	Guest	Yeah. That's for sure. Yes.
			<i>[Both laugh.]</i>
			It is, you know, and now you know, with the added pandemic, it's just gotten bigger. I think it's the most sort of operatic year I've ever had.
00:02:41	April	Host	Um, so Shannon, the movie that you chose to talk about today is <i>Spring Breakers</i> , and I was hoping you could give us a little explanation on why this is one of your fave genre films.
00:02:51	Shannon	Guest	I was um, at AFFTS, the film school in Australia, when this came out in 2013, and I'd always really been into Harmony Korine's films and found them so bold and um, you know, he doesn't waste your time. There's always something incredibly interesting going on in what he's saying and how he's shooting it, and I just know that I'm gonna walk out surprised and impressed.
			And so when I went to see <i>Spring Breakers</i> it just came at a perfect time in my learning. I was studying alternative cinema, and we had to write an essay on a film that we were interested in. And after I watched <i>Spring Breakers</i> , that's what I picked, because I really think um, a lot of the way he uses music and color and editing in this film is something that still inspires me today. And um, you know, he's pushing the idea of the American dream in a way that is uh, you know, very theatrical in a sense, but feels more true and honest in its telling than a lot of things that have done the same.
00:04:03	April	Host	Um, for those of you who haven't seen <i>Spring Breakers</i> though, today's episode will obviously give you some spoilers, but it shouldn't stop you from listening before you watch. As always, my motto is that it's not what happens, but <u>how</u> it happens that makes a movie worth watching. Still, if you would like to pause and watch <i>Spring Breakers</i> first, it's on Canopy and you can go ahead and do that.
00:04:22	Music	Music	"Scary Monsters And Nice Sprites" by Skrillex
00:04:23	April	Host	And now that you're back, let me introduce <i>Spring Breakers</i> with a quick synopsis.
			Written and directed by Harmony Korine, <i>Spring Breakers</i> tells the story of four college friends, Brit, Candy, Cotty, and Faith. Faith, as her name implies, goes to religious youth group meetings.
00:04:40	Clip	Clip	Youth Pastor: Are you crazy for Jesus? Kids in chorus: Amen. Amen. Youth Pastor: Are you jacked up on Jesus? I am. I am.
00:04:48	April	Host	While the other three party. They decide they have to get to Florida for spring break, and then to get there, they rob a restaurant with

hammers and guns.

- 00:04:57 Clip Clip **Cotty:** Act like you're in a movie or something. You can't be scared of shit. You have to be hard. Don't be scared of anything. Let's just get this fucking money and go on spring break, y'all.
- 00:05:14 April Host They get to St. Petersburg, and then start drinking and partying to excess. But very shortly afterwards, the cops come and bust them in a hotel room for drugs. Fortunately, or unfortunately for them, a local rapper named Alien bails them out—
- 00:05:30 Clip Clip **Brit:** Why are you here?
- Alien:** I saw y'all on the air. You look like nice people. Thought maybe I'd bail you out. Everyone could use a little bailing out once in awhile.
- Faith:** Why?
- Alien:** Why not?
- 00:05:48 April Host —and brings them to a club and his home to drink and play with his guns, as one does.
- 00:05:54 Clip Clip **Alien:** This is my fucking dream, y'all! All this shit. Look at my shit. I got—I got shorts, every fucking color. I got designer t-shirts.
- [Girls are heard giggling.]*
- I got gold bullets. Mother fucking vampires.
- 00:06:10 April Host Faith becomes uncomfortable and tries to convince her friends to leave, but is unsuccessful.
- 00:06:15 Clip Clip **Faith:** This is not what we came here for. We came here to have fun, and we came here to like, party.
- Speaker 1:** This is fun.
- [Mixed voices of dissent.]*
- Faith:** It is not. This is not what it was supposed to be. It's not fair to me, because this is not what I signed up for, and I'm very uncomfortable.
- 00:06:29 April Host Faith then takes off on a bus home, and everyone else goes to a strip club, where Alien's nemesis, Big Arch, hangs out. Big Arch tells Alien to stop selling drugs in his part of town—
- 00:06:40 Clip Clip **Alien:** Whatchu want me to do? Stay in your shadow all of my life?
- Archie:** I want you buy a fucking surfboard, go back in the middle of the ocean, and disappear. Go back doing what white boys do, like robbing spring breakers.
- 00:06:50 April Host —but Alien's out for himself. Then later on, at Alien's house, Brit and Candy engage in a violent fantasy by sticking the barrels of guns in Alien's mouth and objectifying him.

00:07:00	Clip	Clip	<p>Candy: We have everything we need right here.</p> <p>Brit: We don't need you, Alien.</p> <p>Candy: What if we just used you to come here?</p> <p>Brit: What if we just—</p> <p>Candy: In five second, we just shoot you.</p> <p>Brit: Blow your brains out.</p> <p>Candy: And you're dead. You're gone.</p> <p>Brit: You're dead.</p> <p>Candy: We have all your stuff.</p>
00:07:18	April	Host	<p>They state they could kill him right there, but he ultimately chooses to go along with the fantasy. Alien takes the women to do a series of robberies after that, but Big Arch and his guys run into them, and they shoot Cotty. Cotty realizes she needs to get out, but Brit and Candy stay behind to have sex with Alien and then go on one last big heist to Big Arch's place. They kill everyone, including Alien, then drive back home in Alien's convertible, saying in a voiceover phone call to their parents that they've finally figured out who they really are.</p>
00:07:49	Clip	Clip	<p>Candy: I think we found ourselves here. We finally got to see some other parts of the world. We saw some beautiful things here. Things we'll never forget.</p>
00:08:01	April	Host	<p>As I usually say, this is a synopsis that you can't really encapsulate what's happening in this movie just by what happened. It's a, you know, fairly oversimplified version of this. But um, one of the things that I wanted to talk about is the fact that you have these very well known like, child actors who are starring in this. And you know, first off we should say that the parents of these young actors are probably, I think, younger than Harmony Korine. <i>[Laughs.]</i> Like, Selena Gomez's mother is younger than Harmony Korine and grew up on his films. And um, it was her mother who got her interested in the script.</p> <p>And she said, quote, "I was interested in why my mom really loved the script, and then we watched all of his movies together, and I watched a couple of his interview, and I just got extremely excited. I thought this was a great way to throw me into a huge acting—sorry, acting camp basically. It was going to be a low budget indie, and Harmony was going to give us opportunities to improv, and he let us play. That's really refreshing and rare, and it was an actor's dream in a way to start off like that." End quote.</p> <p>Um, so for you, I'm curious about casting and whether or not you keep in mind how people, or actors specifically, are perceived already in the public before you're even looking at them for a piece.</p>

- 00:09:27 Shannon Guest Yeah, definitely. I often think, for me, the goal is to—and similar I guess to *Spring Breakers*—is to take characters and actors that we think are a particular type of performer and surprise the audience to show something that we haven't seen of theirs before. For example, with *Babyteeth*, in Australia Ben's very well known for um, doing comedic work, but overseas in America he's often a villain or the black sheep of the family. And so I wanted the opportunity to show his comedic side again, and also that he's such a beautiful father character.
- And the same with Eliza. You know, like in *Sharp Objects* and *Little Women* she's very different, and I knew that she had this real sort of punk vibe to her that we could channel for *Babyteeth*. And then you know, we—Toby was—it was—that was more about a character that you know, we can often judge in society. He's a polysubstance drug abuser, and I wanted to make sure that we really could understand where his behavior was coming from, and also to not judge him for that, and to feel his generosity towards Milla more than anything else.
- 00:10:47 April Host Yeah. And um, you know, we should say *Babyteeth* does involve a um, a teenage love affair, but in a very uh, in very strange circumstances. Because you have a girl who does have a terminal disease, and she wants to live life to its fullest, and that's when she um, seeks out Toby's character, who is um, both chaos and comfort to her. And the same to her family. *[Laughs.]*
- 00:11:15 Shannon Guest Yeah. And actually that's a theme that's similar in both films in a sense that it's young people saying that I want something more than this. That's something that the girls say a lot in *Spring Breakers*, and you know, that—I get it.
- They're bored and uninspired in this college town, and disenchanted by the education system. And you know, I love that shot where they're staring into the sea of laptops which are glowing on their faces, like they're plants being forced to grow in an unnatural sort of hydroponic environment. And I think Korine's really making a statement about education is not where you learn about life, the same way he's mocking the institute of religion and sort of talking about temptation a lot.
- And yet these girls in the story, they're completely owning their violence and their own rage and sexuality, and that's something that I really loved seeing as well. They're not victims in this in any way. Um, they're playing that character, Alien, just as much as he's playing them.
- 00:12:19 April Host Yes. There's a tense—tenseness in your stomach. If you're like, uh, well if you're anyone who's watching this and you're like, "How is this gonna go?"
- [April laughs, and Shannon affirms.]*
- Just like a kind of thankfulness of like, oh, it's not how I thought.
- 00:12:38 Shannon Guest No, yeah. They have the power, and that amazing sequence where

um, they're doing that ballet to Britney Spears, um, is such an iconic kind of image for the film.

00:12:47	Music	Transition	"Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.
00:12:53	April	Host	<p>Um, uh, we're gonna take a quick break. When we come back, we'll be talking a little bit more about <i>Spring Breakers</i> and also <i>Babyteeth</i>.</p> <p>[<i>Music fades.</i>]</p>
00:13:05	Promo	Promo	<p>Music: Faint, suspenseful violin music in background.</p> <p>Justin McElroy: We're the hosts of <i>My Brother, My Brother and Me</i>, and now—nearly ten years into our podcast—the secret can be revealed. All the clues are in place. And the world's greatest treasure hunt can now begin.</p> <p>Griffin McElroy: Embedded in each episode of <i>My Brother, My Brother and Me</i> is a micro-clue that will lead you to 14 precious gemstones, all around this big, beautiful blue world of ours.</p> <p>Travis McElroy: So start combing through the episodes—eh, let's say—starting at episode 101 on.</p> <p>Griffin: Yeah, the early episodes are pretty problematic, so there's <u>no</u> clues in those episodes.</p> <p>Travis: No. No, not at all.</p> <p>Griffin: The better ones—the good ones? Clues ahoy.</p> <p>Justin McElroy: Listen to every episode repeatedly in sequence. Laugh if you must, but mainly, get all the great clues. <i>My Brother, My Brother and Me</i>: it's an advice show, kind of, but a treasure hunt, mainly. Anywhere you find podcasts or treasure maps, <i>My Brother, My Brother and Me</i>—the hunt is on!</p>
00:13:57	Music	Transition	"Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.
00:14:04	April	Host	<p>Welcome back to <i>Switchblade Sisters</i>. I'm April Wolfe, and I'm joined today by Shannon Murphy, and we're talking about <i>Spring Breakers</i>.</p> <p>Okay, um, so in the break, I think Shannon brought up something that was really interesting, talking about the perception of this film from this point versus when it came out in 2013. And you know, the—how we are viewing his visuals and his male gaze. And you had said something interesting where—and I think what you're trying to say is that it's sometimes so over the top that it becomes acceptable in a sense, because it feels parodic, as opposed to sincere. Is that what you're trying to say?</p>
00:14:45	Shannon	Guest	<p>Totally. Um, yeah, he's definitely um, because especially when Alien comes in to their lives, it feels like the performance style really ups a notch, and it does become quite operatic in a way. So no matter sort of what he's, you know, the kind of voodoo spells in a</p>

way that he's casting over them with all his repeated lyrics, um, they—they aren't fully enchanted by him. Like, they do go along with him, but I do feel like they still always have their own power, and the ability to kill him as quickly as he could kill them.

And I think um, yeah, post-sort of the Me Too conversation, I was really happy that the film still stood up as a powerful film for female protagonists, actually.

- 00:15:36 April Host Do you—I think um, for me, I'm—I'm curious about what you're saying of an operatic thing, because I think that there's a melodrama at play here, that you know, we're not supposed to take things necessarily always at face value. Um, there's you know, there's reality and then there's unreality working against each other here.
- 00:16:00 Shannon Guest Yeah, I think it's that heightened level of design. Like when you think about Alien's bedroom and the bed and all the weapons up on the wall, and the—the “look at all my shit” speech, and all of that is—it's almost greater than melodrama for me. That's why I call it operatic, because everything is so large. Like even the fact that there's music like the entire—I think it's the entire way through the film really. Um, yeah, it's the performance style, because I guess melodrama could almost seem... twee in some way, but it's like it—it just—it's almost like it's on steroids, you know?
- 00:16:43 April Host The interesting thing that I was looking at when I was watching this movie, and then after, having watched *Babyteeth* too, is I can see a micro-cinematic experience happening in both of those. Like there's a certain kind of compartmentalization that's happening, in your movie and his, in terms of each scene is its own little kind of movie. And time is moving pretty quickly for your film as well.
- Um, you know, like there's—like you hit an encapsulated moment here, like here's a dinner scene, and then time speeds up, and then here's this, and then here's this. And so it feels like it's a succession of micro-cinematic moments that are—that I can see compounding to this revelational ending. I was wondering if you could talk about that kind of thing.
- 00:17:29 Shannon Guest Yeah, I mean I think both films definitely incorporate sort of bricked in techniques. I mean, with *Spring Breakers*, there's flashbacks and flash forwards and flagging what's to come or subverting um, intrigue, you know, having intrigue for our expectations. But with *Babyteeth*, what we did was we used titles, and those titles are sometimes saying what's to come, but sometimes they're also Milla's sort of inside voice, and other times toward the end of the film they become sort of more poetic and emotional.
- And what both techniques do is that they get you to stop focusing on time, and they allow it to become more fluid and to move in a way that keeps you in character, I think, and in the heart of the story, rather than worrying so much about—it's interesting he calls it linear narrative, because it's—
- 00:18:32 April Host I mean, it's definitely for him. Everything is gonna be relative for what he thinks, right?

00:18:37 Shannon Guest *[Laughing]* Yeah. 'Cause for him, it's a linear film, but I think for other people it might not quite be. But—and also just that idea of um, you know, cutting out music quite abruptly, whereas instead he just sort of blasts it quite loudly and then pulls it back out. But um, it's a very strong sound mix, and that's something that I also work very hard on in my own work, is just keeping all those really sort of textured noises, so that you feel very much like you're in—sort of in a documentary, no matter how theatrical the world might be that you're watching.

00:19:18 April Host When you're g—I'm curious, because when you're going over cuts of uh, you know, TV shows, like let's say *Killing Eve*—which music is a huge fucking part of that show and its identity, specifically licensing music. When you guys are going over those, you know, like the final cuts when you're in post, what—what is your attitude about scoring, about licensed music. You know, do you have a big hand in deciding like, where these music cues can go? Like, what kind of control do you have over that type of thing when you're working with TV?

00:19:54 Shannon Guest Yeah, look, you know, it's a good question. You have a lot of control, I think. Mainly because I work with an editor a lot called Steve Evans, and he and I have very strong feelings about music. And so we really push hard to keep the tracks that we have chosen. And we're smart, you know, we do balance budgets and know how all that works with licensing music.

But um, for example with my—episode five of *Killing Eve*, which is when Villanelle returns home to Russia. We knew that that ep needed to sound quite different to the rest of the series, and David Holmes—he's the composer for *Killing Eve*. He's amazing, and he was really on board with that. So that ep had much more sourced music than, I think, potentially any other episode has had, um, and it had to have a really unusual vibe that was both sort of nostalgic and in some ways um, really pulling at Villanelle's heartstrings, but still having that subversive sort of comedic tone that that show has.

Um, and so, you know, we got some music that was Europop, you know, famous sort of tracks, and sort of mixed that with old um, actually this beautiful American trumpet piece we used, and sort of a bit of a *Little House on the Prairie* vibe as a kind of joke comment there. But um, we were playing with a lot of things.

And then with *Babyteeth* it's like we needed what—a lot of different musical worlds. There's a classic musical world that her mother is so in love with and has brought her daughter up to love, and then there's the world music world of Gidon, the music teacher who is teaching her life lessons that she can't learn at home. And then there's just you know, the soundtrack of Milla and Moses, and what they're into and what's um, fueling their night out and their love for one another.

It's always about picking tracks too that don't, for me, give everybody a memory of their own life. I do like to find original pieces that are less easy for all of us to jump onto. Having said that, like in *Spring Breakers* when they used the Britney Spears track, because

we have never even considered seeing that song played with those images, then that becomes—that almost becomes the um, the only way now that you can ever see that song in your mind, I find.

00:22:22	Music	Music	"Everytime" by Britney Spears, performed by James Franco, Ashley Benson, Vanessa Hudgens, and Rachel Korine <i>Everytime I try to fly I fall without my wings I feel so small I guess I need you, baby</i> <i>And every time I see You in my dreams I see your face It's haunting me...</i>
00:22:44	Shannon	Guest	So unless you're really gonna do something incredible like that, I think what's the point of using sort of too famous a song, in a way.
00:22:51	April	Host	Yeah. It's funny. When—when Korine was asked about getting the license to these songs, he said, quote, "I actually try not to pay attention to that kind of stuff. I put it in my request and they just tell me yes or no, and if they say no, I just push and say, 'We gotta get it.' Then they say no again, and I keep pushing until it's either impossible to get or we get it." End quote. So it's this kind of—I don't think he's—at this point I don't think he's looking at the money. Like, he's not keeping his eye on the budget. He's got other people who are looking at that, so he can kind of be like, the thorn in people's side and be like, "Make it work, make it work." But if you are a director who's still got your eye on the budget and you're producing, and you're like, "Okay, I know what this is, I know how to accommodate," I think it's like you're maybe almost so aware that you don't even want to push, does that happen?
00:23:42	Shannon	Guest	No, I've never not pushed, to be honest. Like, I'm aware of the budget so that then I can know when I can push and really fight for the things that I want. Um, yeah, no, I would never back down on something as important as you know, having that song in there. And you know, often people do say no and then you just have to find another avenue. There's a song in <i>Babyteeth</i> that we got told no about, and then I stalked all the original musicians online and then found ways to get to them, and then had our writer go down to the school where one of the recordings first happened and like, harass the staff here until we kind of got an answer. And then we could re-record it, and we did, and it's in the film.
00:24:29	April	Host	Oh, wow. That's great. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:24:32	Shannon	Guest	You've just got to be—you've just got to be obsessive.
00:24:36	April	Host	I like that you were able to re-record it though, because even if you can't get the rights to that production, you can get the rights

otherwise. If you need that melody, if you need that song, you can find another way to put it into your movie.

00:24:48 Shannon Guest Totally, and I think most directors are you know, pretty crazy like that. Like I'm—that play that you mentioned in my bio, *My Name Is Rachel Corrie*, I got rejected for directing that and um, they said, oh we're not gonna give you the rights. I had just graduated drama school. But, at 3am I just wrote this rant to the people who had the rights, saying how dare you not give them to me, you know, who do you think you are, this story's so important, why would you not give them to me, blah blah blah. I just went off, I didn't even spellcheck it, and I just sent it, and I was like, "Oh, I feel better."

And I woke up the next morning, and they were like, "Rachel Corrie, it's a true story, you know, her parents have looked at this email and they'd be delighted to give you the rights." So at the end of the day you just like—there are really good reasons to push back, you know? So I think it's important. Sometimes it's—you know, no doesn't mean no.

[Both laugh.]

00:25:35 Music Transition "Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.

00:25:44 April Host Alright, with that, we're gonna take another quick break. We'll be right back.

[Music fades.]

00:25:52 Promo Promo *[Cheering crowd.]*

Danielle Radford: Mmmacho man, to the top rope!

[Thump!]

Danielle: The flying elbow! The cover!

[Crowd cheering swells.]

Speaker 2: *[Distant; impact on each word]* One! Two! Three!

[Ding-ding-ding!]

Danielle:: We've got a new champion!

Music: Excited, sweeping music.

Lindsey Kelk: We're here with Macho Man Randy Savage after his big win to become the new world champion! What are you gonna do now, Mach?!

Hal Lublin: *[Randy Savage impression]* I'm gonna go listen to the newest episode of the [Tights and Fights](#) podcast, oh yeah!

Lindsey: Tell us more about this podcast!

Hal: *[Continuing impression]* It's the podcast of power, too sweet to be sour! Funky like a monkey! Woke discussions, man! And jokes about wrestlers' fashion choices, myself excluded! Yeahh!

Lindsey: I can't wait to listen!

Hal: *[Continuing impression]* Neither can I! You can find it Saturdays on Maximum Fun! Oh yeahhh! Dig it!

[Music fades out.]

00:26:38 Music Transition "Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.

00:26:45 April Host Welcome back to *Switchblade Sisters*. I'm April Wolfe, and I'm joined today, from Australia, by Shannon Murphy, and we're talking about *Spring Breakers*.

So um, we mentioned this a little bit earlier, but the way that he was working on this movie was full of improvisation. So I wanted to bring up a quote about that, and this is from Selena Gomez.

She said, quote, "It's safe to say that sixty percent was definitely figured out, and was what Harmony envisioned and wanted. For the rest, we were thrown in real situations. It was every day that it would happen, though. Harmony would find something, a light post or a gas station or a convenience store, and he'd walk in and ask, 'Can we film here?' And they'd say okay, and then we'd walk in and he'd say, 'The lights are great, so maybe sing a song or just say nothing and look at each other really intensely.'" End quote.

I think pretty much uh, all—all four of those actors, um, were saying that one of the things that they appreciated about this particular shoot, and about his method of improvisation and kind of seat-of-your-pants types of things is that got them out of their heads, because they were actors who, as child actors, were very into their heads of like, how they're appearing, how they should um, make a face to look cute, or to appeal to like, a certain audience. And you know, just very aware of who they are in the world and thinking about that constantly.

And so one of the things that Selena Gomez said was, quote, "I was definitely one of those actors where I was just critiquing every single thing I did and making sure I had every line down pat, so Harmony just really wanted to throw that all away. He never wanted me to be in my mind. That's what I definitely appreciate. It allowed me to go to these places that I didn't really think I could go to, not just saying the bad thing, but more the emotional scenes that I had to give myself to in a bikini and in that way. And then having James Franco's character come was just really frightening, so if anything, I've just learned to not be in my head as much. To just take it as it goes, and to just be in the surroundings and work off of that." End quote.

For you, even when you're not doing improvisation with actors and you're working off a very secure script, um, I mean you still have to manage to get people out of their heads. I mean, even

professionals sometimes, like people who have just been doing this for years and years and years. So, you know, how do you do that?

00:29:05 Shannon Guest

Well I don't improvise off script, but I improvise physical moments and private moments for characters, and there's still, I think, a huge amount of improvisation that happens um, even if you're not just doing it with dialogue. And every actor's so different, but there are a lot that do get in their heads, and I think the way to get them out of it is um, you know, always assuring them that what they're doing is enough and they can pull back. And sometimes it's about having those really tough conversations with them on set.

Like, there was a scene in *Babyteeth* where Moses' son, at night, comes back into Milla's bedroom and um, you know, Toby's so directable, but he was getting—he was getting trapped, and I think it was 'cause maybe he had an idea of how it was gonna play out. It was a very long scene as well. And he was just falling into sort of a bit of a pattern, which is not something that ever happens for him, and so I knew he must be trapped in his head.

And I just sometimes have to have a really hard word with them and really sort of point out what's not working. And it is—it's sort of tough, but he came straight back in and then just gave the performance that we used, because you know, I just told him, "No, that's not what this scene is, and you need to take out anything that you're thinking because it's not—it's not what I think is right for this moment." And he's brilliant, like he just went, "Okay, okay, okay." You know, and he just has to let it all go.

[April laughs.]

Yeah, he's just like, "Alright, alright, alright, okay." Um, and then he's like, "Get away from me." *[Laughs.]* You know, 'cause he needs his—you know, they need their space. It's, you know, and I completely respect that. I'm like yeah, and it's annoying to be told that, you know, that what you're doing isn't quite right, but that you know, that's what you're there for, and it's wonderful. And afterwards, he felt, too, you know? It was great.

But yeah, I think um, every actor you have to analyze pretty quickly and work out what they need, and how you're gonna then support that. You know, Eliza's super intellectual, too. She can get in her head. But you just—she can get herself out of it with enough sort of takes, whereas you know, someone like Ben doesn't.

00:31:22 April Host

Do they ever try to intellectualize the characters, or—

00:31:25 Shannon Guest

Um, yeah, it's more in the moments. You can see them thinking and probably what they're thinking about is quite right for the character, but it might not be totally connecting to what they're doing in that exact moment. It's so easy when they've got so much you know, crew and everything else going on in front of you to suddenly pop slightly out of yourself. And that's why I like to just keep rolling. I hate cutting too much so that they can keep going straight into another one, straight into another one. And to also give themselves an opportunity to do a real range of takes, so they don't just feel

trapped in my idea or their idea.

- 00:32:05 April Host Well, I mean, that also seems to kind of coincide with the theater background, if I'm correct. The ability to—I mean like, you're hitting your marks still, but you're you know, you're not trying to do the same thing every take.
- 00:32:19 Shannon Guest Completely, and I think even my theater work used to be really quite chaotic in its energy and I um, I love that. You know, I would say to my actors if I was coming in to watch it, as I do once a week, you know, I'd say, "Please let me see at least three things that I've never seen before from each of you, just so that I can be entertained." *[Laughs]* But you know, it's true. I want them to not get stuck, you know, it's really important for actors to also own their performances.
- 00:32:46 April Host I like that as a thing. Make me entertained now.
- [Both laugh.]*
- 00:32:51 Shannon Guest I remember, yeah, you know, Sarah Snook who's the brilliant actress in *Succession*, she's Australian, and she was in one of my first plays. And I remember saying that to her, and I came in and she uh, started doing some of the monologue in a hand stand, and I was like, "Not that different!" *[Laughs.]*
- But I loved it, and I thought, "Serves me right."
- 00:33:16 April Host *[Laughing]* Yeah. As we uh, kind of move on towards the end of this, I wanted to at least touch on the fact that this was—*Spring Breakers* was shot on different film formats. He was experimenting in format as well as form and everything else.
- So, he said, quote, "We were shooting everything on 35 millimeter film, and then I was experimenting with these Japanese novelty cameras called Powershovels." I have not heard of that. "And basically we'd just buy tons of them and make what were sort of like totems attached to the main camera, and they all switched on to different functions. So we were filming in black and white, and in sepia tones, and whatever you'd call a 1970s look, all simultaneously.
- "I wasn't sure how I could use the cameras, or if I could use them, in a way that wouldn't be annoying. So my assistant editor came up with this sort of composite morphing image shots, and started playing around with them on an avid, and then I thought they looked perfectly trippy like hallucinations, and I liked them for the drug sequences. They serve as almost hallucinatory punctuation and they look like melting film." End quote.
- Um, for him, I don't think—I don't think those cameras were particularly expensive, so it was an easy way for him to just say like, well, toss away, maybe this works and maybe this doesn't. But I do like the impulse to say, "I'm going to try it, and if it doesn't work, we can abandon it, but we will try it and then give this to an editor, Like what do you have? Like, could you make something would this, would it be meaningful?"

00:34:48 Shannon Guest Yeah, and like, I don't use this word often, but that's why I think in many ways he's a genius, because he is a true risk taker. And that is something that people often say they are but they don't really do that. And he is willing to fail, and I really liked that mix of um, those different styles of the film, especially that one you're talking about, the kind of melting one when the twins are um, throwing that party, and you can see everyone start—it sort of almost goes into animation, and they start sort of—their faces start sliding away. And I thought, I said to myself, "What is that? That looks amazing."
Um—

00:35:31 April Host And it's these dumb Japanese cameras! *[Laughs.]*

00:35:37 Shannon Guest And um, I think that's what's cool. Like you know, I think that's why everybody would want to jump on making a project with him, because you don't know what you're gonna get, and you're not you know, going in thinking, okay, it's gonna be this kind of project. And so it keeps everyone pushing themselves to be the most interesting artist that they can be, and I think that's the always the most thriving environment working.

00:36:03 April Host Does that inspire you in any way? Like, if you had—if you had the chance to feel like you could fail in that way, where you could take chances?

00:36:11 Shannon Guest Oh, totally. I mean, I think like that with all my work, really. Um, I don't mind—yeah, I'm not afraid of failure, because I know it's such an important part of um, you know, trying something new. And I do say to all my heads of department whenever we get together at the beginning of a process, please, let's all come to the table with something that we've never done before, that we want to experiment with in this project.

Um, and so yeah, we do that, and we try to incorporate it then into our sort of rules of the style of work we're wanting to make. And we do a retreat at the beginning of our process where it's just us. We go off and stay in some house in the middle of nowhere, and we eat and drink and watch movies and look at photography books and just sort of jam for two or three days, and then are all in sympatico about what we're doing. So that when things start getting really tricky on set or start falling apart or who knows, um, we can all remind each other what we were talking about on that weekend and what we're aiming for.

00:37:19 April Host Maybe like one note taker who's just like, "There's a reason why we're doing this, if you forgot."
[Both laugh.]

00:37:25 Shannon Guest Completely. Yeah. And it's great, it's really liberating, because you know, we then just say, "Oh, remember that thing we talked about that we wanted to experiment with?" And we go, "Yeah, let's do that." And so, you know, we always find a time for those things. We never uh, let—let the project run away with us without having given us a go.

00:37:44 April Host I'm so happy that you were able to come and talk to us today about

both *Spring Breakers* and your movie, *Babyteeth*. And I was hoping you could tell people how they can see *Babyteeth*.

- 00:37:53 Shannon Guest Um, well *Babyteeth* is coming out in the U.S. on June 19th through IFC, and then it'll be in Australia on July 23rd through Universal Pictures.
- 00:38:06 April Host Yes. So, I think in the U.S. you guys can check some drive-in theaters, and then also some—you can rent it on VOD, so, um, check it out there. Uh, it's a nice—it's a nice companion if you guys were listening to Essie Davis' episode as well. Um, because you've probably been wondering what was the other movie that we were talking about, too. It's coming out now!
- Uh, okay. Thank you so much for coming on and I hope that you have a lovely time in Australia right now. *[Laughs.]*
- 00:38:37 Shannon Guest Thanks. Yeah, and I hope America gets better soon.
- 00:38:41 April Host Hey, thank you.
- 00:38:42 Music Transition "Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.
- 00:38:44 April Host And thank you for listening to *Switchblade Sisters*. Um, as you know, if you've been listening lately, we've started recommending a new female-directed film for all of you outside of the movie that we're talking about that day. Um, and you know, I'm trying to keep it thematically linked. Um, but again, we are highlighting all great work of women filmmakers, and this episode I would really love to recommend Lynne Ramsay's *You Were Never Really Here*.
- It's a movie—a quiet, strangely quiet of a poem of a violent film, starring Joaquin Phoenix, that did not get its credit or box office due. And it is so wonderful, and Lynne Ramsay handles violence and compassion and empathy in these really strange ways. She has to juggle all of them, but it's also, in the same way that we're talking about Harmony Korine's film being experimental and full of sound and sonic deviances, so is *You Were Never Really Here*. Lynne Ramsay is by far one of my favorite filmmakers for the whole kind of global view, the way that she thinks about film, and this is just, I think, a masterpiece of that.
- So, if you want to let us know what you think of the show, you can tweet at us @SwitchbladePod or email us at SwitchbladeSisters@maximumfun.org.
- 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.
- [Music fades.]*
- 00:40:28 Clip Clip **Cotty:** You can't be scared of shit. You have to be hard.

00:40:33	Speaker 1	Promo	MaximumFun.org .
00:40:35	Speaker 2	Promo	Comedy and culture.
00:40:36	Speaker 3	Promo	Artist owned—
00:40:37	Speaker 4	Promo	—Audience supported.