

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 uh, you may already know, we are reminding you now that we are recording remotely. Um, so I’m in my bedroom, cat’s sleeping behind me, might wake up, might be birds, might be leaf blowers. Audio’s gonna sound just a little bit different from our studio’s, but you know, everything else is gonna be the same.</p> <p>Except for today, our guest is uh, someone I’m <u>very</u> excited to have. I’ve been a big fan for a long time. We have writer-director Catherine Hardwicke here with us. Hi!</p>
00:00:52	Catherine Hardwicke	Guest	Hey, how’s it going? <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:00:54	April	Host	You know. <i>[Sighs]</i> As okay as it can be. What do we say to that, anymore? What do we say? It’s just uh... angry, sad, uh, I don’t know. I don’t know.
00:01:07	Catherine	Guest	Frustrated, trying to figure out how to be part of the change.
00:01:11	April	Host	<p>Yeah. Catherine just came back from a march herself. Um, so let me give a quick intro for those of you who just need a refresher on Catherine’s career and maybe want to know where she got her start, because Catherine holds a bachelor of architecture from UT Austin. I did not know that about you. Um, but she did graduate work in animation at UCLA Film School.</p> <p>After school, she worked as a production designer on films directed by Richard Linklaer, David O. Russell, Cameron Crowe, and Lisa Cholodenko. But her first film as a director was the critically acclaimed <i>Thirteen</i>, which won numerous awards, including the director’s award at Sundance, along with Golden Globe animations for Holly Hunter and Evan Rachel Wood, an Academy Award nomination for Holly Hunter, and an independent spirit award for Nikki Reed.</p> <p>Um, Catherine has since then become best known as the director of <i>Twilight</i>, which launched the Blockbuster franchise which <u>everyone</u> knows, the <i>Twilight</i> saga, and earned nearly 400 million dollars at the global box office.</p> <p>Her current project, <i>Don’t Look Deeper</i>, stars Don Cheadle, Emily Mortimer, and Helena Howard. It follows a young woman who’s fighting a looming feeling that there is just something fundamentally different about her, and she’s right. But the revelation of what she is</p>

and where she comes from sets in motion a series of events that suddenly put her entire life in jeopardy.

So *Don't Look Deeper* is going to be released in 15 ten-minute-long episodes on Quibi, bubble first, so everyone should be downloading that app. And when is that coming out, though?

- 00:02:44 Catherine Guest Well, we were coming out June 8th and then because of you know, the new crisis, we are moving—they're figuring out a new date. Probably in a couple weeks, yeah.
- 00:02:56 April Host Okay. So, we'll just keep an eye out for it, 'cause lots of favorites in this episode—er, in this series, so it was very exciting.
- Um, Catherine, the movie that you chose to talk about today is *Gattaca*. And I was wondering, could you give us a little explanation on why this is one of your fave genre films?
- 00:03:15 Catherine Guest Well, I love the movie *Gattaca*. I had only really seen it you know, when it first came out in the 90s. Then when we were doing this project, *Don't Look Deeper*, you know, it's set in the near future, like 15 minutes in the future, and there are a lot of things that are grounded in the show I just did, *Don't Look Deeper*, but they're just little tweaks to the future. All of them feel believable. So, I looked back to *Gattaca*. Oh, I always remembered some really striking, beautiful images in that, the feeling and the mood. So, you know, that was maybe an inspiration in a way, in some ways, for *Don't Look Deeper*.
- 00:03:56 April Host I can definitely see that, and knowing that you have a degree in architecture makes sense, which I'm gonna bring up later on.
- But for those of you who haven't seen *Gattaca*, today's episode will give you some spoilers, obviously, 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 *Gattaca* first, this is your shot.
- 00:04:19 Music Music "The Morrow" by Michael Nyman
- 00:04:20 April Host And now that you're back, let me introduce *Gattaca* with a quick synopsis to remind you what happens.
- Written and directed by Andrew Niccol for release in 1997, *Gattaca* stars Ethan Hawke as Vincent Freeman, a man who was conceived without genetic manipulation, who is considered an, quote, "in-valid" in this future eugenics world. Meaning he's relegated to a life of menial labor.
- 00:04:43 Clip Clip **Vincent:** I'll never understand what possessed my mother to put her fate in God's hands rather than those of her local geneticist.
- [Baby cries.]*
- Ten fingers, ten toes. That's all that used to matter. Not now. Now, only seconds old, the exact time and cause of my death was

already known.

- 00:05:03 April Host All the valids, however, get to sit high and mighty, nobody questioning if they are, in fact, more qualified for what they're doing. So Vincent's younger brother, Anton, is actually a valid. When they're kids, the two play chicken and swim out to the ocean pretty regularly. Vincent loses every time, except for the last time. And, he has to save Anton from drowning.
- 00:05:24 Clip Clip *[Sound of waves lapping.]*
- Vincent:** It was the one moment in our lives that my brother was not as strong as he believed, and I was not as weak. It was the moment that made everything else possible.
- 00:05:33 April Host It's that incident that makes Vincent feel like he has to leave home. So, years later, one day Vincent gets the opportunity to take the place of a man named Jerome Marrow, who's the top notch human valid who, nonetheless, became paralyzed from the waist down.
- Through an elaborate scheme, Vincent uses Jerome's urine, hair, blood, and skins samples to pose as him and get a job at *Gattaca* to become a navigator for a mission to Titan. In return, Jerome gets a portion of Vincent's salary, so they can live life well together.
- All is going fine, until there's a murder at *Gattaca*. Then a foreign eyelash—Vincent's—is found in the office, and police assume an invalid has committed the murder.
- 00:06:17 Clip Clip **Anton:** The eyelash? What do you know about it?
- Detective Hugo:** It's an unregistered in-valid. There was a janitor here until a few years back, when he disappeared out of sight.
- Anton:** So the specimen could have been here since then.
- Detective Hugo:** Well, take a look at the floor, so I don't think anything lays around here for very long.
- 00:06:32 April Host 'Cause it's too much of a coincidence. Irene Cassini, played by Uma Thurman, tries to investigate, but Vincent falls in love with her and she falls in love with him. She's genetically modified, a valid, but still has a heart issue that would prevent her from joining the Titan mission.
- 00:06:47 Clip Clip **Vincent:** What about you, Irene? You're an engineer just like the rest of us.
- Irene:** Not quite like the rest of you. An acceptable likelihood of heart failure. I think that's what the manual says. The only ship I'll take in space is around the sun in a satellite right here.
- Vincent:** Well, if there's anything wrong with you, I can't see it from where I'm standing.
- 00:07:09 April Host That's one thing that kind of connects Vincent to her. Jerome is found to also have his failings. He became paralyzed after trying to

kill himself, after coming in second at a swim meet. Pretty heavy.

Vincent again and again narrowly avoids detection, until finally it's revealed that the mission director killed the guy who made uh—to make sure the mission would go on as he wished.

00:07:30	Clip	Clip	<p><b>Anton:</b> So the in-valid had nothing to do with this?</p> <p><b>Detective Hugo:</b> No. Our friend here acted alone. This mission meant everything to him, didn't it?</p>
00:07:38	April	Host	<p>Vincent finds that it was actually his brother, Anton, now an investigator, who closed the case. The two meet and engage in a game of chicken again.</p>
00:07:46	Clip	Clip	<p><b>Vincent:</b> In case you hadn't noticed, I don't need any rescuing. But you did once. Well, you've got all the answers. How do you explain that?</p> <p><b>Anton:</b> You didn't beat me that day. I beat myself.</p> <p><b>Vincent:</b> Who you trying to convince?</p> <p><b>Anton:</b> You want me to prove it to you?</p> <p><b>Vincent:</b> It's not important, Anton. It's forgotten.</p> <p><b>Anton:</b> I'll prove it to you. <i>[Yelling]</i> You want me to prove it to you? I'll prove it to you!</p>
00:08:17	April	Host	<p>Swimming out as far as they can at night, again, Vincent must rescue Anton. They have a reconciliation of sorts. On the day Vincent is to go to Titan, Jerome says he's stored all the DNA Vincent will need to keep living as a valid.</p>
00:08:31	Clip	Clip	<p><b>Jerome:</b> I have your samples ready.</p> <p><b>Vincent:</b> I don't need any samples where I'm going.</p> <p><i>[Door squeaks open.]</i></p> <p><b>Jerome:</b> You might when you get back.</p> <p><i>[Door squeaks shut.]</i></p> <p>Everything you need to last you two lifetimes.</p> <p><b>Vincent:</b> Why have you done all this?</p> <p><b>Jerome:</b> So Jerome will always be here when you need him.</p>
00:08:58	April	Host	<p>But Vincent realizes too late that he actually doesn't have any DNA on him to get through the final check onto the shuttle. However, the doctor who's been testing him reveals that he knows who Vincent is, and that Vincent gives him hope for his own son to achieve his dreams.</p>

00:09:12	Clip	Clip	<b>Lamar:</b> Unfortunately, my son's not all that they promised. But then, who knows what he could do?
00:09:20	April	Host	While Vincent shoots into space, Jerome, sadly, sets himself on fire on Earth. And, the end.
			<p>I would love to begin specifically by maybe talking about architecture, because it was very, very important in this movie. Um, and in fact, the um, the locations manager had a hell of a time finding all of the things that they wanted and needed. So, they said, quote, "To this day, it's the only movie I was scouting for an angle or a curve or the side of a building. The Great Western Forum was used for the DNA testing center. All we used was the outside colonnade, which curves and has the ticket window. But we needed to have that curve." End quote.</p> <p>So you have these locations managers who are like, you know, this is 20 years later when they were doing this interview, and they were like, "This was the most difficult project that we worked on, to try to find these places that had these very specific architectural pieces in them."</p> <p>And I feel like I can see that in this movie. Especially noticing it, you know, where people are in the story, and how their emotions are reflected. And I was hoping that you could talk about that kind of thing of finding locations and also finding locations that are extremely particular to a moment or a scene in a film. Like, what kind of lengths would you go to find the perfect location?</p>
00:10:56	Catherine	Guest	<p>Well, it's so interesting that you say that, because like, <i>Gattaca</i> has a lot of beaut—I mean, it's so striking. That's what you can remember like, 20 years later, oh my god, it was amazing. And it has, in a way, static shots and will compose like this beautiful—I think, wouldn't you say, pretty much there, there will be this beautiful shot which gets that great curve in there. So I see what they mean that you could ask—that location manager says, if I had—if they could find one striking angle, it could work, maybe didn't need to be a reverse or anything. And in some films that doesn't work, because we are doing more 360 shots, we might be doing action, we have more movement.</p> <p>So I think my shooting style, for example, is a bit more camera movement, so it wouldn't be about the one static, poetic, amazing shot. You know, like that. So that's fascinating that they were really trying to create this retro futuristic look instead of you know, and also I would assume a limited budget, you might know more about the budget than me.</p>
00:12:08	April	Host	Yeah, 15 million, I think, was the original budget. I think it got bumped up to 20 just in terms of having to finish the film, but it was between 15 and 20, so.
00:12:17	Catherine	Guest	Right, so that's a case where you don't have the money on a huge, you know, futuristic sci fi movie to build giant, gorgeous sets that have like, spectacular lighting, you know, like all white, glowing sets. You have to think what—and that's kind of what we had to do, too,

we had to think, what can we use? How can we create a future that's only the near distant figure—you know, in our case it's supposed to be 15 minutes into the future—that still felt a little bit worn, like, used, and wasn't slid but was more realistic and grounded in a way.

So, we kind of used the same concept in a way that they did. I mean, they used Marin County Civic Center, I believe designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, which was designed way back, earlier than what, the 60s I guess. So we used—our futuristic—one of our futuristic buildings was designed in the late 70s. It was an art center, you know, in Pasadena, which is a beautiful, modern building, which is a sleek bridge across a gulley or a canyon. And it's classic architecture because it was beautiful at the time it was built and it's still just classic, but it's not like super—it's not cutting edge 2020 architecture, so it had that kind of retro future.

And we also, in our case we used—I think they might have too—well, we used some case study houses, from you know, 50s modern case study houses, and then redecorated them in a different way than you normally see those houses decorated.

00:13:59 April Host

Yeah. Um, I—I think another part of the locations here, too, is um, so the production design of this movie, *Gattaca*, is you know, phenomenal, because it's both kind of like simple and sleek but pretty complex in the way that it's materialized. Um, and we have this quote about the production design.

They said, quote, “Jan's team—” and Jan is the production designer. “Jan's team did a number of sketches of the interiors we'd build on a sound stage and match to the exteriors. For the *Gattaca* computer room, we shot the interior in west Los Angeles in a warehouse. The main computer hall was also the entrance to *Gattaca*, the liftoff port, and was the training room. It was used many ways and we had to schedule that very carefully to give the art department time to change it over.” End quote.

So, I mean, that's—that's a different kind of stress, of like, knowing—obviously you're gonna have a complete production schedule of when things have to go. But when it's really tight, one location has to be redressed and again and again, it seems like you—and they really, really redressed it—it seems like there's an extra pressure there, specifically on your art department, to kind of like, meet those needs of the budget. They did quite well in *Gattaca* but it's also a lot.

00:15:20 Catherine Guest

Well, having been a production designer on a lot of movies, on the first probably five or six movies I production designed, people would say that same concept. “Okay, why don't you, you know, reuse this space, we'll reuse the walls, we're gonna redress it.” And so I'd be like, “Okay, that sounds great, I love that, recycling.”

And then the actor for set number two would get another job, an suddenly we'd have to move like, the second setup to tomorrow, and then that actor would have to go away, and we'd have to go back to the same set, and go back to the other one and go back to

the other one like three different times. Finally I start—and it didn't always work out very well.

So finally I said, look, I don't want to do that anymore. Let me find any way, any other way. Because I can't control the actors if they get sick, or their scheduling or anything. So I said, "Is there any other way we can stage this besides having to redress the sets? Let's do it." And I would always just like, rack my brains to find new ways to lower the cost so that I didn't have to do that anymore. 'Cause it's very stressful, yeah.

- 00:16:26 April Host I mean, that's—because well, what if they have to do—like, what if they missed something, and you have to redress it for the thing that you already shot? I mean, that seems like it would be a nightmare.
- 00:16:37 Catherine Guest I mean, I was on a show where we did have to go back a few times, back and forth, and it was just kind of like, okay this is not my favorite plan anymore. But you know, we always have a lot of pressure in the art department. Because let's say the Marin County Civic Center, let's say you know, you make a deal with the county and so we're gonna come in and we can dress it but we only get six hours or twelve hours, and we're paying by the hour. So you know, the production wants to spend the least about of time there.
- So you have to come in, the art department has to be like an army. Like, we have to know, set director, we have seven set dressers, the you know, six of these people, three electricians, trucks are gonna roll in. I mean, it is literally like a cool army operation to maximize setting it up and then striking it and restoring it back how it was. So, art departments are like miracle workers.
- 00:17:33 April Host I mean, at that point that must've given you also the confidence to be like, "Oh, I could probably direct, too." *[Laughs.]*
- 00:17:42 Catherine Guest Well, I got to work with so many—exactly, so many very smart, you know, directors that I admire, and I would see you know, some things that were maybe difficult that they did, but you know, or maybe I wouldn't want to follow that lead, but I would learn every you know, I would just be like a sponge, observing every technique that they use, how to get a different performance out of the actors.
- You know, Cameron Crowe's famous for um, playing a different piece of music if he wants to change the mood for the actors. David O. Russell is, you know, he's got all—his energy and his passion is right there, and he's right in the middle of it, and really revs everybody up. Richard Linklaer is much more laid back and just plants the seeds and gives a suggestion and then walks away and lets it grow in the actor's mind.
- So I saw all these different methods, it was really cool. Like, when to use that technique, when to use that technique, when to use that one.
- 00:18:36 Music Transition "Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.
- 00:18:39 April Host Yeah. Then you don't have to be any one type of director, you just get what you want.

Uh, we're gonna take a break. When we come back, we'll talk a little bit more *Gattaca* and also just Catherine's long, industrious career. We'll be right back

[*Music fades.*]

00:18:55 Promo

Promo

[*Science fiction-y beeps and whirls reminiscent of a tricorder.*]

**Music:** Jaunty electronic music.

**Ben:** Well, Adam, we're still putting out *The Greatest Discovery* podcast while we wait for season two.

**Adam:** What are we doing with these episodes?

**Ben:** We've uh, talked to a whole bunch of interesting people, like the Wall Street Journal's Ben Fritz, and [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org)'s own Danielle Radford. We're kind of using this time to find ways to entertain ourselves and you, while we wait for the next season.

**Adam:** So catch yourself up with *Star Trek: Discovery* and join us Tuesday on *The Greatest Discovery* on [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) or wherever you get your podcasts.

[*Computer beeps.*]

00:19:28 Music

Transition

"Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.

00:19:34 April

Host

Welcome back to *Switchblade Sisters*. I'm April Wolfe, and I'm joined today by Catherine Hardwicke, who is over on the other side of town but it feels like she's right here with me and my cat, and we're talking about *Gattaca*.

So something that you said before the break is a great segue for me to talk about different styles of directing, because Ethan Hawke had actually just worked with Richard Linklaer the project before *Gattaca*, and so he had a little bit of adjusting to go with that.

And he said, quote, "Andrew wants to shoot buildings all day. He can if he wants. He's the director. He's very meticulous and it was difficult for me. The movie I did right before was *Before Sunset*, where anything went. Linklaer would say, 'Okay, let's get you and Julie on the train and just be.' With Andrew, the writing is so specific and so good that it warrants doing it the right way. The truth of the matter is that if you believe what you're working on has value, beyond self glorification, it makes it really easy." End quote.

So, it's interesting that you had brought up Linklaer and the way that he works. I mean, that's—he's kind of famous for that. But it was—it was hard for Ethan Hawke to come right off of that movie, to go into a completely different style. And if you hear interviews of him—'cause this is from an interview that happened like, right after they shot it, and like, right before the movie was coming out.

You have interviews with him now, he's just like, "Actually, that was

just like, a great experience. Like it was really frustrating for me at the time, because I was so used to just like, fly by the seat of my pants and I couldn't figure out why he was setting up these shots for so fucking long." But you know, in hindsight, he was just like, "That was amazing. I'm so happy that I did that right after Linklaer."

I'm curious about when you get a star in your movie, an actor who just came off of a movie who has worked very differently or had a very different process or might even be in a different state of mind, you know, how you can you know, get them into your mode of working.

00:21:35 Catherine Guest

What I think is interesting is usually when you're a director and you first you know, meet an actor that might be in your film, or you're hoping you guys are gonna get along, you immediately—I try to be sure in that, even if I get an hour on Zoom with them or you know, however you're gonna meet with the person in person, I go ahead and say you know, honestly some of the ways that I like to work. Don't just try to make it a happy meeting. Go ahead and say, "Here are the things that—these things are usually important to me. Does that work for you? How do you like to work?" Try to have a really—as meaningful a conversation as you can.

For example, in a lot of cases I've found it's very useful for many kinds of scenes, movies to have a rehearsal period with the actors. Like um, *Thirteen*, you know, Holly Hunter and Evan Rachel Wood are supposed to be mother and daughter, and Brady Corbet, and you're supposed to believe that this is a family, that they have all their little—*[She makes a creaky sound with her mouth.]*

So it was important that that bond happen. They didn't just show up on the day, and just be like, "Hey, you know, I'm supposed to be your mother. Have I ever even touched your hair?" So they actually spent time living in the house, you know, they spent the night in the house before with all—and they took showers in the house. They cooked in the kitchen. All those things that I like to do to prepare an actor added to the detail, the level of detail that made it feel really real. Like, those people really lived in that house, and they really had their little—*[She makes the sound again]* things that you have with your family.

So that's something, and then in some cases you wouldn't want to rehearse two characters who are only meeting for the first time in the movie, and they aren't getting along. You wouldn't—maybe you don't want to, you want to save that rehearsal. So like, I think each project you do, you kind of try to talk to the actors, find out what's gonna work for them.

00:23:31 Catherine Guest

Like, I just worked with Don Cheadle, who's done, you know, 75 you know, everything and worked with so many different directors on his TV shows and he's a director and a writer, and a producer genius. So how can I make him feel good about the process, and let his voice be heard?

And he has great ideas for his character, of course, you know, so every chance you get as a direct to kind of bond and get in sync

with the actor. Oh, let's—I go to the wardrobe fitting with him. Yeah, let's talk about it. Yeah, let's make the clothes a little loose and we then care about clothes.

And I start learning more, when we're just selecting his glasses, I learn more when I hear what he's thinking about the glasses, about the character. Or I can throw in what I'm thinking. So, you know, you're trying to get in sync with the person any way you can. In other movies I've done, like *Lords of Dogtown*, and even *Twilight*, like *Lords of Dogtown* we had a skate camp and surf camp. In *Twilight* we had baseball camp. So whatever—

[April laughs.]

Anything you can think of that creates like, a cool bonding experience, it's relevant to show and helps you get in sync with the actors and feel what they're feeling, and see what are the cool things that that actor can do. Something fun with a baseball bat, you know. It's all this like, getting to the point where you feel comfortable and good about shooting.

00:24:57 April Host

The thing is, you're talking about rehearsals. They had about two weeks of rehearsals, for *Gattaca*. Ethan Hawke said, quote, "We did about two weeks of rehearsals. That's another great thing about a writer-director, is he can directly alter the script to fit the performance. If you cast Ernest Borgnine, you make it work for Ernest Borgnine." End quote.

Ernest Borgnine is in this movie, if people haven't seen it. [Laughs] He's great, he's wonderful.

00:25:21 Catherine Guest

Well, I think that's amazing, and that's something that I learned from working with Richard Linklaer too, because um, the projects I did, I would try to get the set ready the best I could so they could rehearse on the set if they wanted to get the blocking there. And I would see Richard you know, really listening, listening, you know, paying attention to what's working and what's not working.

And I've done that a lot, you know, we try to read the lines that are written in the script, but sometimes you're watching it and you're going, "This is boring," or "Nobody's being active enough," or somebody, you know, we didn't go deep enough. You know, if it's a painful scene, how come we stayed on the surface? Let's get in there more, you know, and feel and open it up.

So I love that, and I'm there with my computer all the time you know, how can we make it better? And then sometimes you just say, "Let's go ahead and improv it. Let's actually do inner—say your inner monologue out loud this time. Just everything that you're really feeling, just say it to the person even though it's gonna be a bit too on the nose, let me hear what you're feeling."

And then sometimes out of those exercises by stretching your muscles, your part, your soul, your emotions, you find stuff. "Yeah, that was really good, let's put that line in, let's try it."

00:26:42 April

Host

I want to talk about uh, something that we get into, or I find a lot in my research, is that a filmmaker says that budgetary concerns ended up being a blessing more than a curse. And you know, of course that's hindsight, so I'm sure people are able to say it better later on. But uh, when Niccol was talking about, he said—you know, asked about why there weren't big special effects for this, you know, sci fi movie. Everyone's like, "Oh, sci fi, of course, like special effects."

He said, quote, "It was budgetary. Our budget was 15 million, but in the end I came to really embrace the idea that we didn't have a lot of money. It was a great thing in the end. For instance, the DNA broker, played by Tony Shalhoub, he was going to walk in with a very, very hi-tech electronic notepad. I thought, 'This is going to be great.' Then the production people said, 'Well, we can't really afford that.' So I eventually just decided, 'Well, he can just go in with a folder of blood.' And it's far more visceral and beautiful in the end than if he had walked in with some kind of electric gizmo." End quote.

Um, and it's true. I mean, Tony Shalhoub is not in this movie for very long, but he has, you know, his like, little mechanical devices. He's not just like um, you know, trying to do like, an iPhone or something, which is just kind of like... ehh, it's boring. Or trying to do like, a *Quantum Leap* you know, like whatever the [Laughs] Ziggy kind of touchpad magic. He's just got a folder of blood.

00:28:11 Catherine

Guest

Which is amazing. And it's true, we all have to you know, we all—every director's eyes are bigger than their budgets of course, and we all dream of these great things, and we put up on our walls all of our images, and we want it to be this, and then reality hits. [Laughs] How—and that was certainly the case, because actually my boyfriend was also working on *Westworld 3* at the same time. I knew what they were doing. They're going to [inaudible], they're making flying cars. And I'm like, "Oh my god. We have no budget compared to that."

[April laughs.]

So um, I would just be like, uhh, you know, anxiety attack. But then what I realized is, and I think what was beautiful about *Gattaca*, it was the near, you know, near future, and so you saw the rocket ship, you know, he had the visual effect of the rocket ship taking off, one, two, three, I'm not sure how many times. We had things like that too, where it was in the back. You have a shot that's all real images like he had in the movie, and then you have one element that you add that just takes it into the future.

So we had the same thing like you know, we had um, solar balloons flying over the high school. You know, we had a glowing car, a chaser, solar panels on a car or on a backpack. Just simple little things that we could afford as a visual effect, and they just—maybe they're more subliminal, but it just helps you feel like it's in the future. The whole thing did not have space ships landing and everything, but you had these little touches of kind of set extensions, or you know, you could call it, or CGI, yeah.

00:29:49	April	Host	<p>One thing I thought was really interesting, too, was how um, using a bit of sound, a sound effect or some kind of sound design, actually um, alters the perception of an object and gives it more production value. And I mean this in terms of, quote, “Cassini’s character, we used a citron convertible, one of only 11,000 that exist in the world, but we added the sound effect of an electric motor as opposed to a gas motor.” End quote.</p> <p>So you have like, regular cars on the road, but there’s—the sound effect makes it seem that there’s like, there’s a different kind of car. Like it’s a you know, a production designed car, or something.</p>
00:30:31	Catherine	Guest	<p>I think that when you’re in the editing room—I mean, I have a beautiful sound designer, Frank Gaeta, he’s worked with me since even you know, <i>Thirteen</i> and <i>Twilight</i> and other movies. And so I think that that’s something amazing. You—like you say, it changes your perception of a whole scene, just the sound design. So when we’re in the editing room, you know, a lot of editors have gotten quite good at sound design, temporary sound design, and then of course their designer elevates it.</p> <p>So—but when you’re in the editing room, it’s true. When you’re watching a scene and the sound does not feel right, I can’t even watch the scene. Nobody can see that scene until we fix the sound, you know? Because it does throw you off. You know, if you heard my, you know, iPad dropping on the table and it sounded spongy or whatever, you just—it just feels wrong, you know? But how can it be better than just accurate, how can it take it to the next level, is what you’re saying.</p> <p>You know, sometimes those experiments that you try, where you take a sound, that unexpected sound, that can elevate it into a whole other world.</p>
00:31:39	April	Host	<p>I mean, in terms of like, trying to describe that sound though, that also seems kind of difficult a task.</p>
00:31:45	Catherine	Guest	<p>When I was doing the movie <i>Thirteen</i>, you know, one of the first scenes, Evan Rachel Wood, Nikki Reed, they’re hitting each other, and they’re sniffing and getting high. And Evan says, “I can feel my brain cells popping.” And I said to the composer, Mark Mothersbaugh, to get this big, huge wonderful composer, the lead singer of Devo, he’s done a lot of things in Wes Anderson movies. To get him to do my little, tiny movie for no money, I said, “Do you think you could create a sound in your music that sounds like brain cells popping?” “Okay.” He was hooked. He took the job because of that.</p> <p><i>[Both laugh.]</i></p>
00:32:22	Music	Transition	<p>“Switchblade Comb” by Mobius VanChocStraw.</p>
00:32:23	April	Host	<p>I love that! We’re gonna take another quick break. When we come back, we’ll get a little bit more into <i>Gattaca</i>, and then also I’ve got some uh, fun details to kind of press Catherine on, again and again for more stories. So we’ll be right back.</p>

[Music fades.]

00:32:43 Promo Promo

**Music:** Upbeat, fun music.

**Lisa Hanawalt:** Hey, if you like your podcasts to be focused and well-researched, and your podcast hosts to be uncharismatic, unhorny strangers who have no interest in horses, then this is not the podcast for you.

**Emily Heller:** Yeah, and what's your deal?

[Lisa laughs.]

I'm Emily.

**Lisa:** I'm Lisa.

**Emily:** Our show's called *Baby Geniuses!*

**Lisa:** And its hosts are horny adult idiots. We discover weird Wikipedia pages every episode.

**Emily:** We discuss institutional misogyny!

**Lisa:** We ask each other the dumbest questions, and our listeners won't stop sending us pictures of their butts.

**Emily:** We haven't asked them to stop! But they also aren't stopping.

**Lisa:** Join us on *Baby Geniuses*.

**Emily:** Every other week on [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org).

[Music ends.]

00:33:19 Music Transition

"Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.

00:33:25 April Host

Welcome back to *Switchblade Sisters*. I'm April Wolfe, and I'm joined today by Catherine Hardwicke, and we're talking about *Gattaca*.

So, um, you know, we talked about some other practical things that Andrew Niccol was doing for this film, but we haven't gotten into the opening sequence, which was uh, something that um, the—the director needed. Like, Niccol—it was the last thing that they were gonna try to figure out how to shoot. But it was something that he and Chris Watts, the FX supervisor, had to—had to nail and perfect sometime by the end of the shoot, because it was like, the last thing on this list.

So Chris Watts said, quote, "Andrew had this idea for a great opening sequence, and there was no money to shoot it at the beginning of the movie, so we figured out how to do this thing together. The skin flakes and hair strands are plastic models created by the visual effects department.

“We settled on a more traditional, high speed camera approach, building gigantic miniatures—bigatures—of all the objects and shooting all those on a stage that was supposed to look like a really close up view of the makeup table that he’s using. Basically, turned on the photosonics high speed camera, and shot them dropping out of the sky at 360 frames per second. Burned up a lot of film. The hairs were also bigatures, four or five feet long, and we dropped a bunch of those cables just on the floor.” End quote.

So if you guys remember from the opening sequence, essentially we’re seeing all of these skin fragments, hairs falling off, the things that they have to kind of like, shave off every day to—to stay hidden and to keep this charade going. But because they couldn’t figure out a way to do anything that would actually show it like, so microscopic—because they are microscopic. You can’t do that—like, all of the hairs and plastic fingernails and everything, they’re all like, four, five feet long. *[Laughs.]*

They’re huge. I love bigatures so much. I love models so much. I love the creative ways that people try to problem solve all of these things. And um, for that, I was just like, this is—this is one of those great stories that I enjoy about movies.

I mean, how do you navigate what you want to do, animated CGI vs practical, this very old school way that um, that even you yourself had kind of come up in with filmmaking?

00:35:55 Catherine Guest

I mean, I think that now, you know, like we’re still, even on *Don’t Look Deeper*, we went to um, Tony Gardner’s Alterian studios, shot, and actually did some of the you know, real prosthetics on the uh, on the arm, and like, when we reveal what’s underneath Helena’s skin. So we did like, he showed us all the different methods he could do for that, that we could work practically. We had practical applications for the um, for visible robots, and then we—but we worked together with the CGI company, Engine Room, to figure out how far should we take it, what made sense to do practically and then how could they enhance it, you know?

So we really did a combination, and integrated you know, a fusion of both old school and new school techniques.

00:36:51 April Host

Um, I mean, going further into um, that kind of practical idea of having the—the props and physical things on set, the props woman, the art director, she was very excited about working on this movie.

Because, quote, she said, “When I first heard about the project, I was working on a movie with Danny Devito,” who um, also produced this movie, “and he said, ‘You’re gonna love this movie. It’s all about props. There are all these great props. Urine and semen and blood.’ I was like, ‘Oh, goodie!’ But every prop was a challenge. All of them would be under great scrutiny. So we made things like a glass vacuum cleaner so we could actually see all that stuff.” End quote.

Um, and yeah, *[Laughing]* she had to make a lot of urine, she had to

make a lot of blood samples. Like, all those little castle things that he puts on his fingertips that he fills up with blood from a syringe, the syringes, every little thing. Like, there's so much to do with props, and that's not something that I was really thinking about while I was watching this. But yeah, if the props sucked, I would notice.

I'm curious for you, if you've got a prop, or you know, a specific piece of a production design that you know is going to be in um, you know, seen in great detail in a close up, something like that, are you telling your art department like, "Look, this needs to be extremely clean, good," you know like, are—how are you conveying that to them?

00:38:24 Catherine Guest

We can not see a drop of hot glue dripping off the back. Yeah. I think what we have is we have like show and tells, that are kind of regularly scheduled with the props department. So like, the very first show and tell during prep, you might see the sketches, or you might—the ideas or magazine photos or something, you know, prototype version. But by the second or third show and tell, you know, I've got to be able—the director's got to be able to hold it. If it zips, unzip it, shake it out, watch every detail and look at it.

So we're really talking very closely with the prop master and the creator to understand, and then we're showing them, you know, filming, it's gonna be this close. You know, when you're holding it, it's not just like you see a photo of these key props. You are holding it in your hand. You're making sure you can actually hit that button and the thing comes out. You know, whatever the function is supposed to be, does it work every time, does it work?

00:39:25 April Host

Something that I wanted to get into as we're kind of wrapping up has to do with um, the—*[Sighing]* the things that you maybe wish that you had kept.

So this movie, all about eugenics and the dangers therein, and um, you know, like needing and wanting a kind of human variety and wanting to preserve that. And so there were big ideas that Andrew Niccol was playing with, and he was you know, kind of frightened by science and where it was heading. And um, the end sequence that they had um, they had to—they nixed it. They decided they didn't need it.

But, they said, quote, "The ending sequence we removed was the genetic hall of fame of sorts. Um, it talked about all the people who wouldn't have been born if this society had gone with eugenics. Lincoln, Van Gogh, Emily Dickenson, Einstein, JFK. People who had profound effect on history, and if they didn't have their genetic issue, they'd never have been born. Uh, we decided to cut it out because the movie itself made the point, and we didn't want to hit the audience over the head. But over the years, we've all regretted making that decision."

You know, there's always regrets, I think. Well, not always. But there's sometimes regrets where you look back on something and you're like, "Man, I wish I could have kept that," or "I wish that—I

wish that maybe we had the money to finish the special effects on that so we could have kept that.”

Do you have any moments like that? Where you're like, "Oh, this would have been amazing," or "I made the wrong decision," or "This could have been so great."

00:41:00 Catherine Guest Well, it's fun, like in—in *Thirteen*, my first movie, there was um, in my workbook for it, my whole presentation, I had a whole sequence where the two thirteen year old girls were like—had fantasies about themselves being in movies and being in commercials and being fabulous, you know? And I never got to shoot it because of you know, that was way too expensive. And ultimately, I think the movie worked fantastic without it, you know, an nobody would ever know about that, or no one would miss it.

You were really with, you know, Evan Rachel Wood the whole time, the whole time, but I wanted to do it. I thought that would have added a whole other level about society and aspirations and false aspirations or whatever. And it—we could have created something amazing that would be you know, loved. But we never got to do it, so. You know, I had to kind of be like that, you know like, I can let it go and just you know, we don't have that extra hundred thousand dollars or whatever. And we just didn't have it.

00:42:06 April Host Is it hard to let it go though, or was it hard to let it go?

00:42:10 Catherine Guest It kind of is, you know. *Twilight*, I had a whole beautiful like, underwater sequence, and then I had a whole lot more ideas that I was gonna do snow and this and that. And then when the budget hammer came down, all that went, you know, by the wayside. It still worked without it, and we had to be creative and just poke at it.

Okay, David O. Russell, the movie *Three Kings*, I was production designer on that, and that stars George Clooney and Mark Wahlberg and Ice Cube, and it's a really cool movie. But he wanted to do the movie because he wanted to build this beautiful Mosque of Samarra that he'd seen a photo of it in Iraq. And so that was one reason why he wanted to do the movie. And I looked at that and went, "Well, how can I possibly afford to build this on any budget we have?"

I said, "Maybe I could build just like, the bottom half and then CGI the top." And then I couldn't even afford to build the bottom wall. Then finally what's in the movie is a poster. I got two hundred dollars permission from National Geographic to have a poster of it on one wall in a scene. *[Laughing]* And that's all that's left of his grand idea. The movie came out great, but there's one poster.

00:43:29 April Host Catherine, I want to thank you for coming on the show today and sharing all these wonderful stories about your career. I really appreciate it. It's a pleasure to speak with you. And again, um, your show is gonna be on Quibi, and we should all keep an eye out for it. Um, maybe by the time this episode airs it will be out.

00:43:51 Catherine Guest *Don't Look Deeper*. Don Cheadle, Emily Mortimer, and newcomer Helena Howard is amazing, so yeah.

00:43:58	April	Host	Wonderful. Thank you so much.
00:44:00	Catherine	Guest	Thank you. Fantastic research you did, by the way. Thanks.
00:44:02	Music	Transition	
00:44:05	April	Host	<p>Thank you for listening to <i>Switchblade Sisters</i>! We're going to start doing something a little different. You may have heard if you've been listening to episodes since we've been in quarantine, but I'm trying to give you guys a staff pick that kind of jives with the movies that we're talking about for every episode. But each one is going to be directed by a woman.</p> <p>Um, and so, the pick for today is a sci fi movie, and I am about to butcher this woman's name. Um, but she is Lithuanian and I am not familiar with pronunciations there. But it's Kristina Buozyte, maybe. Her movie, <i>Vanishing Waves</i>, which, if you have Shutter, it is available to stream there, and I think you can get a VOD other places.</p> <p>But it's a 2013 sci fi film that is a nonlinear nightmare trip through this world of um, sex and science magic, and the scientist connects his consciousness to that of a comatose woman and then engages in these sometimes thrilling and sometimes terrifying erotic romps through a dreamscape of their minds. Hard to describe, very interesting to watch. Maybe check it out. I love it when women get into sci fi.</p> <p>So, if you want to let us know what you think of the show, you can tweet at us @SwitchbladePod or email us at <a href="mailto:SwitchbladeSisters@maximumfun.org">SwitchbladeSisters@maximumfun.org</a>.</p> <p>Please check out our Facebook group. That's <a href="https://www.facebook.com/groups/switchbladesisters">Facebook.com/groups/switchbladesisters</a>.</p> <p>Our producer is Casey O'Brien. Our senior producer is Laura Swisher, and this is a production of <a href="http://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a>.</p> <p><i>[Music fades.]</i></p>
00:44:48	Clip	Clip	<b>Anton:</b> You want me to prove it to you? I'll prove it to you!
00:44:51	Speaker 1	Promo	<a href="http://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> .
00:44:53	Speaker 2	Promo	Comedy and culture.
00:44:54	Speaker 3	Promo	Artist owned—
00:44:55	Speaker 4	Promo	—Audience supported.