

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 know, today I’m going to remind you again that we are remote recording now. So I’m in my bedroom, and you may hear Chicken screaming, or the wild parrot screaming. But we also have a, uh, we’ve got <u>two</u> guests actually today, which is wonderful. Because I’m very excited to have writer, director, actor Alice Lowe here, um, calling in from London. Correct, is that where you’re at right now?</p>
00:00:48	Alice Lowe	Guest	Yes, I am. I’m in south London.
00:00:51	April	Host	<p>Yeah, and we also have Alice’s baby, Sadie joining us!</p> <p><i>[Alice laughs.]</i></p> <p>So you might hear some murmurings and mumblings over there.</p>
00:01:00	Alice	Guest	Yeah, I like to have a baby just to you know, shake things up. The chaos factor introduced.
00:01:07	April	Host	<i>[Laughing]</i> A big conversation piece.
00:01:08	Alice	Guest	<p>Um, the last time I spoke to you I had a baby. It was a different one, but um, yeah. I just always seem to have a baby at some point.</p> <p><i>[Laughs.]</i></p>
00:01:17	April	Host	<p>I feel like, yeah, thank you for always bringing your baby when you talk with me. I appreciate it.</p> <p><i>[Both laugh.]</i></p>
00:01:23	Alice	Guest	I would feel naked without one, you know. I just have to have a sidekick basically to kind of take the heat off me. I don’t have to be as entertaining. I can just hand over to my little second in command.
00:01:35	April	Host	<p>Oh yeah, just point at them. Oh wow, that’s a focal, that’s a centerpiece for everything.</p> <p>Um, so for those of you who need a refresher on Alice’s career, please let me give that to you now. Um, Alice began her career in the U.K. in experimental theater and shows, leading to her casting in early roles on cult shows like <i>The Mighty Boosh</i>, and as premonition-sensitive Liz Asher in <i>Garth Marenghi’s Darkplace</i>. Hers is a familiar face in U.K. comedy and drama series. A scene stealer in shows including <i>The IT Crowd</i>, <i>Snuff Box</i>, <i>Man to Man</i></p>

with *Dean Learner*, *Pulling*, *Skins*, *Sherlock*, and so many more.

She starred in *Paddington* and *Hot Fuzz*, but often, it's more of her cult work that's earned her die hard fans, like that of the film *Sightseers*, directed by Ben Wheatley, about a wildly inept couple who go on holiday and become bonded and emboldened by their burgeoning serial killer abilities, which Alice also co-wrote with Steve Oram, her co-star.

Four years later, Alice took over directing duties herself, with her directorial horror debut, *Prevenge*, about a very pregnant woman being instructed by the voice of the fetus in her belly to kill the people who she perceives to have wronged her. The film was bought by Shutter for U.S. release after a successful festival run, and she went into development then with her next feature, *Timestalker*, for which I hope that we get an update on today, 'cause I have been wondering about that.

But in the meantime, Alice can be found in a lot of things. Uh, in the film *Sometimes Always Never* with Bill Nighy. *The Days of Bagnold Summer* with Monica Dolan, and *Eternal Beauty* with Sally Hawkins. And I think that there is also another one, um, uh, *Dark Encounters*?

00:03:17 Alice Guest Oh yes. Yes.

00:03:18 Crosstalk Crosstalk **April:** Yeah, 'cause I think that one just came to streaming.

**Alice:** Yes, *Dark Encounter*, which is on—yeah, it's on Amazon Prime at the moment

**April:** Yes.

**Alice:** In the U.K. anyway.

**April:** Um, so that one's—

**Alice:** I knew there was one I'd forgotten.

*[Both laugh.]*

00:03:30 April Host I'm glad that I'm keeping tabs in your career, Alice.

00:03:33 Alice Guest Yeah, thank you. Thank you for doing that.

00:03:35 April Host Um, she's also reportedly working on a Delia Derbyshire biopic chronically the life of the pioneering electronic music artist, which I hope that we also get to hear about.

So, Alice, the movie that you chose to talk about today is *The Company of Wolves*. Can you give us a little explanation on why this is one of your fave genre films?

00:03:55 Alice Guest Um, I saw this film when i was very young. I saw it on channel four, which would be you know, your hunting ground for the weird films on a Friday night. If you were a nerdy teenager like me, you would be sort of looking in the newspaper and circling which weird films were gonna be on, on channel four, and one of those was *Company*

*of Wolves*. Um, I don't think I really knew anything about Neil Jordan or um—you know, I did know about Angela Carter, because I was studying her at school as part of my English.

Uh, and um, I don't know. For me, it sort of belongs in the fantasy bracket of like, *Labyrinth* and films that I watched that were very much about me becoming an adult, becoming a woman, you know? It was like, those films, they sort of spoke to me in a way that I thought a lot of other films didn't. And they weren't—and films that were maybe sort of slightly um, underestimated at the time, but now as an adult I look back on them and go, "Wow, there was something really powerful being tapped into about uh, teenage girls."

00:05:12 April Host It's funny, when Neil Jordan finally watched the cut in the theater the first time he said, "Oh, oh no, I guess I made a movie where the target audience is only girls and dogs."

*[Both laugh uproariously.]*

But it works, you know? Um, for those of you who haven't seen *The Company of Wolves*, today's episode will obviously give you some spoilers, but that shouldn't stop you from listening before you watch. Especially with this movie, 'cause it's hard to describe with any kind of specificity. 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 *The Company of Wolves* first, this is your shot.

00:05:47 Music Music "The MesSadie/Main Theme" off the album *The Company of Wolves (Original Soundtrack)* by George Fenton

00:05:49 April Host And now that you're back, let me introduce *The Company of Wolves*.

Based on the book *The Bloody Chamber* by Angela Carter, co-written by Carter and Neil Jordan and directed by Jordan for release in 1984. *The Company of Wolves* stars Sarah Patterson as Rosaleen, a young girl napping and dreaming intensely in her family's country estate. We travel into her dreams, which transports Rosaleen's family to the 18th century.

*[Sound of typewriter.]*

There, Rosaleen's sister, Alice—an Alice, which is nice. I forgot that that character was named Alice—is killed by wolves, and Rosaleen is sent to live with her grandmother, played by Angela Lansbury.

00:06:23 Clip Clip **Granny:** Shall I take her home with me tonight? Her mother's in no fit state to look after her.

**Father:** If only you would.

**Granny:** Come, lit—

**Rosaleen:** I want to stay with mummy.

**Father:** Mummy's not well. Just for tonight.

			<b>Granny:</b> Come, child. Come with me.
00:06:34	April	Host	Granny loves to tell cautionary tales, and specifically warns Rosaleen—
00:06:39	Clip	Clip	<b>Granny:</b> Never stray from the path. Never eat a windfall apple. And never trust a man whose eyebrows meet.
00:06:45	April	Host	—after recounting the story of a woman who marries a werewolf, who she’s then forced to behead years later. Rosaleen’s given a red shawl, and returned to her village. There, a boy will not stop pestering her for a date.
00:06:58	Clip	Clip	<b>Amorous Boy:</b> I thought maybe you’d take a walk with me in the woods, on Sunday after the service. Just a little walk, Rosaleen.
			<b>Rosaleen:</b> Why should I?
			<b>Amorous Boy:</b> I thought maybe you’d want to.
00:07:09	April	Host	Soon after, the two of them walk in the forest and come across slaughtered cattle. So the village goes out to hunt the wolves who presumably killed the cattle, and Rosaleen’s father comes back with what appears to be a human hand.
00:07:21	Clip	Clip	<b>Father:</b> When I cut it with a knife it was a full paw, I swear. A grizzled, giant wolf. And then before my very eyes...
			<i>[Rosaleen gasps.]</i>
			<b>Rosaleen:</b> Whose is it, daddy? Is it someone you knew?
			<b>Father:</b> What do I know whose hand it is? All I know is what I see.
00:07:40	April	Host	The wolves transformed into humans when shot. So, Rosaleen then tells a story about a woman who was impregnated by a nobleman and dumped, who goes to his wedding and turns all his guests into dogs.
00:07:51	Clip	Clip	<b>Witch Women:</b> The wolves in the forest are more decent.
00:07:55	April	Host	Later, Rosaleen embarks on a trip to Granny’s house, where she encounters a man whose brows meet in the middle. Oh no! They toy with one another, and the man challenges her to get to her grandmother’s house before he can.
00:08:06	Clip	Clip	<b>Huntsman:</b> I’ll make a bet with you. I bet you anything you like that I get to your granny’s house before you do.
00:08:12	April	Host	He arrives first. Granny tries to fight him, but he transforms into a wolf and kills her. When Rosaleen arrives, he’s in his human form, and she shoots him, transforming him again to a sad wolf. She tells the wolf a story of a she-wolf who is nursed back to health by a kindly priest, but who still must return to her world through the town well.
00:08:31	Clip	Clip	<b>Rosaleen:</b> But she was just a girl after all, who’d strayed from the

path in the forest and remembered what she had found there.

- 00:08:40 April Host Soon the villagers arrive, expecting to kill a wolf, but instead they find that Rosaleen herself is a wolf, too.
- 00:08:46 Clip Clip **Amorous Boy:** *[Shouting]* Rosaleen!
- 00:08:49 April Host She and her Huntsman wolf boyfriend escape into the forest and join a pack, and then suddenly, the pack intrudes into reality, breaking through Rosaleen's windows in the real world outside of her dream, awaking her from her peaceful slumber and her innocence.
- 00:09:05 Clip Clip **Rosaleen:** Little girls, this seems to say, never stop upon your way, never trust a stranger friend, no one knows how it will end. As you're pretty, so be wise, wolves may lurk in every guise. Now as then 'tis simple truth, sweetest tongue has sharpest tooth.
- 00:09:40 April Host It is a really hard movie to sum up, and that's also one of the appeals of it, that it is unlike many other films. It's a story within a story. We'll talk about some of the influences that they had in making this, but obviously it's all based on Angela Carter's um, short stories in her book. But, they had an unlikely collaboration. Like, they didn't really know each other before they met at a conference in Dublin, and that's where everything kind of started going with Neil Jordan.

So, Jordan said, quote: "Angela Carter was in Dublin for the James Joyce celebration, and she'd written a 30 page radio play and showed it to me to see if it could be made into a movie. I said it was too short, but if we can come up with a structure where someone is telling a story with a story, Chinese box structure, maybe I could get all of her short stories in this collection. That was the plan.

"Then I went to London, sat in her house every day. She'd go off and write, and we finished it in about two weeks. It was really Angela's conception that underneath the seemingly calm surface of fairy tales is a seething mass of emotions needing to be expressed. They were designed to make young girls afraid of their own sexuality, and to never trust a man whose eyebrows meet in the middle, Angela's best line." End quote.

So *[Laughs]* they—you know, Angela Carter is not a screenwriter. That wasn't her thing. She was really just like, you know, very unpolished, 30 page radio play that was like, "here's the structure, this is the dialogue, this is the story." But Jordan was able to work with her and to make it into an actual feature, and I think that that's an interesting collaboration where you have one person who's more experienced, who's helping the other kind of uh, find a path through screenwriting.

- 00:11:21 Alice Guest Yeah, I mean it's really interesting, because I've been looking a lot at Angela Carter, because I think she's had a bit of a revival of interest, and I do find myself going, "How would you turn this into a film?" You know, about her work. And it's really hard, because it's—

*[Sadie makes one singular, distraught wail.]*

—it's so um—just Sadie interjecting there. She agrees with me.

00:11:43 April Host

*[Imitating baby]* It's so hard!

00:11:44 Alice Guest

It's so hard, yeah. It's so um, impressionistic, what she writes, and it's sort of—it does strike a chord with you, but what you actually remember about it afterwards, it's like trying to tell someone a dream. Like, yeah, let me tell you about this story. You're sort of—the narrative seems to take second place to actually the mood it gives you. And that's why I actually think *Company of Wolves* is really successful, because um, you know, I think it was good to see it as a teenager, where I had very little critical faculties basically. I just watched it and went, you know, went to school the next day going, "And then there's a bit where his face grows and he's a wolf, and then there's a bit where you know, that she finds a baby inside an egg in a tree." And you know, it's—it's much more impressionistic. It's kind of like a mood board of a film. You know, there's all these sort of little stories, and glimpses of imagery—

*[Sadie coughs twice. Aww!]*

—that really work. Um, and I actually think that's a really successful way to convey Angela Carter, because I don't know how else you would do it, and I have looked at a few of her other books, and I think people—

*[Sadie sneezes.]*

—have probably tried to do it and not really succeeded, 'cause it's so difficult to capture. Um, and it is something very primal. There's something that it's tapping into that you don't quite understand yourself. Um, but it's compelling. Like, I love reading her books, but when I sort of think about trying to turn them into a screenplay or something, I'm just like, how would you do it? I don't know. 'Cause they don't have a—

00:13:14 April Host

Yeah, you have to turn off your linear brain.

00:13:16 Alice Guest

Yeah. Exactly. Um, they don't have that kind of structure. They don't have that sort of, yeah, very linear structure. So I think actually what he did was a really, really clever job of it. It really worked. Um, I do think, you know, I think I would love to do something with *The Bloody Chamber* as well. Like, just you know, short form narratives um, would be amazing.

00:13:45 April Host

I mean, there's still so much there. That's the thing is like, even with all of the things that they put into this movie, there's still quite a few stories left to tell from *The Bloody Chamber* itself, even.

Um, when you—when you're writing things, 'cause I want to get back into this kind of like, dreamlike state of this and you know, symbolism. 'Cause if you look at *Prevenge*, your first movie, um, as director, that—there is a kind of primalism in that. And I'm thinking about primal images and the way that we can kind of like, play with them as writers or directors, where it's almost like a shortcut, wherein it's like, you feel this. You know, like we feel a certain way

about a baby, we feel a certain way about a pregnant person, because it's a primal uh, image or something.

And I was wondering, you know, even like in the end of *Prevenge*, you know, there's like a you know, a skeleton motif of like, the make-up that you're adorning, or you know, like a red dress. And I was wondering you know, if you like, had any comment on utilizing that in your writing. 'Cause I know that you're also just a big horror fan.

00:14:50 Alice

Guest

Um, I am. I am a big horror fan, but I also studied classics.

*[Poor little Sadie coughs again multiple times.]*

But I also studied classics, so I studied a few of the kind of ancient Greek plays, which deal with a lot of—sorry—which deal with a lot of human emotions, which you kind of go, “Wow, these human emotions are 2,000 years old at least, you know, they still have resonance.”

That was the thing with *Prevenge*, you know, the idea of revenge, and female revenge, and that going back thousands of years to you know, plays like *Medea* or whatever. Um, and I—yeah, to me, I just—I think the things that are gonna stand the rest of time are the things that really tap into those kind of deep seated fears about you know, there are things that make us human I guess.

And you know, there will be contemporary stuff in there as well. There was contemporary stuff in *Prevenge* in the sense of like, how we see mothers now, and um, what our hypocrisies are about the way we treat parenthood or motherhood. So, I always mix it in with whatever sort of feels really um—you know, striking a chord with me. Like in terms of what concerns people or what issues are sort of—people are grappling with in today's society. But I also think, you know, when you're dealing with issues that are kind of, you know, as fairy tales really.

I think horror is fairy tales. I often think this, that um, they're just really, really old stories that have stood the test of time, because they strike a chord. They strike a really primal chord. Um, and that's why they've survived, those stories. And I'm really—I'm not into kind of like—I don't mind it when Angela Carter does it, but I really don't like it when I read a fairy tale to my four year old, and you know, Little Red Riding Hood doesn't get eaten or whatever.

*[April laughs.]*

I'm always like, “She does get eaten. This is the real world, kids.” You know? I mean, I love the end of *Company of Wolves*, I think that's great that she sort of, spoiler alert, you know, she becomes one of them, she runs off with the wolves. You're like, “Brilliant, yes.” You know? She's got the slightly overbearing parents, um.

But you know, when it comes to children, I'm sort of like, don't—don't they deserve to hear the proper version of these stories so that they can make the decisions about what's wrong or right about

it? Otherwise—aren't fairy tales sort of there to introduce you gently to the dangers of the world, and then for you—

- 00:17:35 April Host Yeah, but the difference between like, *Little Mermaid*, Disney version, and *Little Mermaid* the actual version, which is just like, horrifying.
- [Both laugh.]*
- 00:17:43 Alice Guest Yeah, I know. Um, yeah, and really sad. I mean, but actually, when I was a child, *The Little Mermaid* was actually one of my favorites. Like, I used to cry myself to sleep with *The Little Mermaid*, about how wonderfully tragic it was. And you know, the Disney film probably wouldn't have been the success that it was if they'd sort of killed her off and had her turn into foam at the end.
- But um—but when I read—I have read the original version to my daughter, and I just you know, that's the ending. Um, she quite likes it though. I mean, I have to say, I do think that you know, that's how children become robust about certain ideas, is when the truth isn't sort of totally hidden from them. That's how you introduce the idea to them for you know, in the future when their grandparent dies or something, that they've—they've heard about death in a safer space.
- 00:18:34 Music Transition “Switchblade Comb” by Mobius VanChocStraw.
- 00:18:37 April Host Yeah. Yeah, when their grandmother is attacked by a wolf in the forest, exactly.
- [Alice laughs.]*
- Uh, we're gonna take a quick break. When we come back, we'll talk a little bit more *The Company of Wolves* and also Alice's work. We'll be right back.
- [Music fades.]*
- 00:18:51 Promo Promo **Music:** Upbeat, cheerful music plays in the background.
- Allie Goertz:** Hi, I'm Allie Goertz!
- Julia Prescott:** And I'm Julia Prescott. And we host—
- Both:** —[Round Springfield!](#)
- Julia:** *Round Springfield* is a new *Simpsons* podcast that is *Simpsons-adjacent*—
- Allie:** Mm-hm.
- Julia:** —um, in its topic. We talk to *Simpsons* writers, directors, voiceover actors, you name it, about non-*Simpsons* things that they've done. Because, surprise! They're all extremely talented.



**Allie:** Absolutely. For example, David X. Cohen worked on *The Simpsons*, but then created a little show called *Futurama*!

**Julia:** Mm-hm!

**Allie:** That's our very first episode.

**Julia:** Yeah!

**Allie:** So tune in for stuff like that with Yeardley Smith, with Tim Long, with different writers and voice actors. It's gonna be so much fun, and we are every other week on [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) or wherever you get your podcasts!

*[Music fades out.]*

00:19:33 Music Transition "Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.

00:19:39 April Host Welcome back to *Switchblade Sisters*. I'm April Wolfe, and I'm joined today by Alice Lowe, and baby Sadie, and we're talking about *The Company of Wolves*.

*[Sadie fusses.]*

I love that she responds to me.

I wanted to get into something that was the reason why this movie was able to get money, was able to get funding, despite it being kind of strange and nonlinear, and this only being Neil Jordan's second feature as a director after *Angel*. And um, it was because it was unapology—unapologetically British at a time where people were actually looking for projects that felt like they were from the U.K.

So he said, quote: "It was all palace pictures. Steven Wooley saw it and just started a distribution company, and wanted to get into production. I think I had just been talking to Angela Carter about it, and he was the one who had financing to write the script. And after the script, the budget came pretty quickly. Nobody could put the script into any particular category, so people got really excited about it. And there was something very English about it, too. Things like *Powell and Pressburger* or *The Canterbury Tales*. Something pastoral that appealed to people that they missed." End quote.

And um, I think that there is something to not watering your movies down, not watering your stories down for a quote-unquote "global audience" and trying to appeal to maybe what you know best, whether it's stylistically or uh, narratively. And um, you know, that helped. If it had been more Americanized, I think it would have been much more of a horror film, uh, in the traditional sense. And Neil Jordan talks a lot about that in the way that the film was marketed in the U.S.

Um, but there was a great deal of excitement about it when it was being made. Everyone wanted to see what this young guy was doing that felt like it was an actual like, U.K. film. Like, this is

English. And um, I'm curious if that has ever been your experience, or if you know, you have ever felt like you are striving to reach an American audience specifically.

00:21:37 Alice

Guest

Oh. I was gonna say that, god, that would be my dream, if someone was saying to me, "We really want it to be really British."

*[Both laugh.]*

"We really want to export that as a thing." I mean, because I just often feel like I'm being pressured into making sure a project has uh, American appeal, or you know, international appeal. Not with something like *Sightseers*, 'cause that was like, low budget and I kind of think we—the trick for making that film work was knowing what it was and knowing what its strengths were. And I think it could've been a really bad film if we hadn't supported it being totally British, and that being its USP.

Um, but even then, it wasn't like people were gagging for a British horror film, you know? It—you know, I don't ever really hear that. And it's frustrating, 'cause I do think—I do believe in that thing of uh, the more specific something it is, the more universal it is in some ways. I mean, you know, who would've thought that a story about a wizard, a boy wizard in a, you know, British school would be this massive you know, this massive film franchise from the U.K. You know, with *Harry Potter* and stuff.

I just think I would love it if people said to me, you know, "We want it to be quintessentially British." Um more because I could just breathe a sigh of relief and do what I want, um, more than me then going, "Oh god, it's gotta be everything that's British." Um, I—I think it's fascinating that that was what was happening at that time, because um, I think it really works.

I think there's been like, fairytale reboots, hasn't there, like *Hansel and Gretel*, which I have to admit, I have not seen. But the American versions of them seem to be like, you know, they've turned it into *Lord of the Rings* or something. They think it's got to be like, "I have a crossbow! And I, I have a sword!" You know, it's like some sort of action film or something.

And you're like—it just—it's like the um, misconception about strong female characters, that they have to be strong rather than just being good female characters.

00:23:58 April

Host

And, in fact, let's—I mean, let's get into that, because you're talking about the—you know, Jordan was talking about the early days of channel four, and that was one of the reasons why, you know, this movie was kind of received with such a—a healthy welcome, is because like, oh, this is new, we, uh—like, we want new, interesting films.

Um, but he said that a lot of what they devised especially for production design and scope of this had to do with you know, like, going on low budget things and being like why can't we have what the Americans have, when they come over here? Why can't we

have these things? Why can't we have a big scope?

So he said, quote: "One of the biggest influences visually was the series of movies Roger Corman made, *The Tomb of Ligeia*, *The Pit and the Pendulum*, *Mask of the Red Death*, all made out of minimal resources, and all smoke, light, and mirrors. But the film that really influenced this is called *Saragossa Manuscript*, a Polish film of surrealistic text, and it also dealt with stories within stories. And, of course, *Powell and Pressburger* films influenced the narrative. But a lot of young British filmmakers in the early days of channel four were at Pinewood.

"George Lucas was doing *Star Wars* at the time, and one would get very pissed off and say, 'I would love to do those enormous sets.' Part of my feeling was, why does an independent movie have to be tiny? Why can't it have some visual ambition?" End quote.

And that was his operating principle when he went in with this, was like, "We have a small budget, but we need to think larger with that money. How can we be creative and find a world within that world?" And, um, and I really appreciate that, and uh, you know, we'll talk—we'll talk a little bit more about Anton first, and his production design, but he went on to do *Full Metal Jacket* right after, uh, this, and was very early in his career.

Only did a handful of movies before he tragically took his own life, um, but they were all—they all looked amazing. He was a very talented, talented production designer. Um, and, you know, like, let's talk about scope and, you know, the idea of trying to break out of just a small-looking movie, and trying to make it as large as possible.

00:25:57 Alice Guest I haven't really been able to step into an arena where I have a big budget, but, um, that's what I'm trying to do, with my next projects, and it really is that type of thinking, of like, "we're not making reality here, there are no rules, like, we can have giant mushrooms if we want to."

*[Alice laughs, and April affirms with a "yeah."]*

We can—you know, and it's so funny the way we've sort of straightjacketed ourselves a little bit, as filmmakers, especially in the U.K., and, you know, I do look to people like *Powell and Pressburger* because you kind of go, "That was the last time that there was proper visual creativity," that's what it feels like, of, like, people going "This is a visual form, it could be anything. It could be theatrical, it could be magical, it could be whatever."

Um, and I'm sure whenever I make a statement like that there's gonna be a load of people going, "That's not the last time someone did that, what about this person, and that's—this person?"

00:26:49 April Host "What about them?" Yeah.

00:26:52 Alice Guest Yeah. I'm sure there are other examples, but, to me, it sort of—

when—when you're talking to a head of department, like a production designer or something, you mention like, oh, you know, "I want someone to be able to climb through the set and then they go into this," or, "I want—I want there to be hands coming out the walls." You see people's eyes light up; it's not that they don't have the creativity to do that, it's not—it's just that they're not usually permitted to be that creative or that imaginative.

*[April hums in affirmation.]*

And I don't know how that situation has worked out, really.

00:27:23 April

Host

Well, I mean, I think that you're tapping into something that Neil Jordan is—was also talking about, was the fact that he was running—he was still coming up against people who didn't want that creativity. Um, not with the producers, just with—with crew.

Production design was all in. Anton first was—and, you know, I can say some quotes, but he was very interested in exploring the German expressionist side of filmmaking, and, you know, um, trying—trying to push those limits, whereas the crew was constantly pushing back and it made this actually pretty difficult.

He said, quote: "The difficulty of making this film was working with these old, hard, beaten British crews, who'd done *James Bond* and just come off *Star Wars*, and are used to totally understandable elements. And there's a sequence at the end where I wanted to construct a crane shot that went from spring to summer to fall to winter, and we had all these lighting changes. There used to be all these jokes, and "are we in winter now?" is at the twelfth of August in this little section-governor.

"When you're making a film, it's terribly subjective and independent, and it doesn't have any known shape. It can be quite difficult doing it with the rude old film crews in London." End quote.

00:28:32 Alice

Guest

*[Laughs]* It's funny, 'cause I did a commercial recently where we did a lot of back projection, and at one point there was a scary moment, and I was like, "Can we play around with these lights? Can we just change the lights as we're shooting?"

*[April affirms, followed by laughter.]*

And that was blowing people's minds, that they—that I wanted to change the lighting setting. I think it is coming from theatre, basically, where you're like, well, this is the trick that I would have up my sleeve to scare people or run footmen or manipulate the audience, is changing the lighting setting, but, like, for some reason, that, in a film setting, it—it blows people's minds. They're like, "I don't know, it takes us forty-five minutes to change the lighting, or whatever."

Anyway. I shouldn't say that. They—they were a really good team, and actually, my DOP is not that bad at all. He's game for anything, but, um, yeah, I can understand that, that it's career people going "what? We don't—we're not usually asked to do that."

Like, um, but if you get the right crew they're actually excited about it. They're like, "Oh, okay! Yeah, I can do that! Let's see what happens." And, um, yeah, it—I think it's so interesting hearing about it from—from that time, that that was still perva—pervasive. And I think, the thing is, when you've got no budget, why not go for those things?

And that's what I often say to my producers, I'm like, we can't compete with Hollywood, we don't have the budget, the only way that this effect is gonna work is if we think about it in a completely lateral way, um, and—and go. It's not reality, you know, we haven't got—a—a, you know, thousands of extras. We're gonna go, this room's empty, there isn't anyone there. We're gonna make that work.

00:30:13 Music Transition

"Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.

00:30:18 April Host

*[Laughs]* We're gonna take a quick break. We'll be right back and we'll talk a little more *Company of Wolves* and also Alice's projects. We'll be right back.

*[Music fades.]*

00:30:25 Promo Promo

*[A quick, energetic drumroll.]*

**Music:** Exciting techno music plays.

**Jarrett Hill:** Hey, I'm Jarrett Hill, co-host of the brand-new Maximum Fun podcast, *FANTI!*

**Tre'vell Anderson:** And I'm Tre'vell Anderson. I'm the other, more fabulous co-host, and the reason you really should be tuning in!

**Jarrett:** I feel the nausea rising.

**Tre'vell:** To be *FANTI* is to be a big fan of something, but also have some challenging or "anti" feelings toward it.

**Jarrett:** Kind of like Kanye.

**Tre'vell:** We're all fans of Kanye. He's a musical genius, but, like, you know...

**Jarrett:** He thinks slavery's a choice.

**Tre'vell:** Or, like, *The Real Housewives of Atlanta*. Like, I love the drama, but do I wanna see black women fighting each other on screen? *[Singing.]* Hell to the naaaaw. To the naw-naw-naaaw.

**Jarrett:** We're tackling all of those complex and complicated conversations about the people, places, and things that we love.

**Tre'vell:** Even though they may not love us back.

**Jarrett:** *FANTI!* Maximum Fun! Podcast!

**Tre'vell:** Yeah!

*[Music fades out.]*

00:31:17 Music Transition “Switchblade Comb” by Mobius VanChocStraw.

00:31:23 April Host Welcome back to *Switchblade Sisters*, I’m April Wolfe, and I’m joined today by Alice Lowe, and a sleeping Sadie so we’ll be very quiet. Probably not—she actually, we’re putting her to sleep over here.

*[Alice laughs.]*

Um, but hopefully not putting you all to sleep!

I wanted to get into some acting process stuff, because, as I said before, um, you know, there were a lot of non-actors with actors in this, um, you know, Angela Lansbury was the, obviously I think like the kind of, um, centerpoint of like, acting experience. But, you know, she was often acting opposite non-actors in this, um, and that was, you know, his choice, Jordan’s choice, to have that friction of, like, spontaneity versus practice.

Um, and he said, quote: “What happens when you have non-actors and people who’ve never done it, they do things once and can’t repeat them. But when they do it that one time, it’s perfect. Professional actors get kind of annoyed because they have to act opposite this unreputable, spontaneous element. It makes it kind of difficult to prepare their next moves, and I think they also envy the fresh aesthetic.” End quote.

So it was kind of enormously frustrating, for instance, for Angela Lansbury, to be like, “Okay, alright, alright, ready to do this again?”

*[Both laugh.]*

00:32:39 Alice Guest “I’ve gotta roll with the punches here.” I get—it sounds very like he’s talking about them as if they’re animals or children.

*[April affirms.]*

Which, actually, that’s—that’s the thing, when you’re acting with animals, is like, oh my God, they just did an amazing take, so that’s—that’s gonna be the take we use. Regardless of what I did, you know, we have to use that take. And that’s frustrating as well, ‘cause also, you know that everyone’s gonna go, “The dog’s so amazing! It’s so cute!”

*[April laughs.]*

And you’re like, “Yeah, what about me? What about me? I did a good take.” Like, and you know that all eyes—

00:33:07 April Host You’re like—you’re like, weeping in-character.

00:33:10 Alice Guest Yes, exactly! And all eyes are on the dog, you know, it’s like, “Ah!

So unfair!”

Um, but yeah, I—I can understand what he means. I mean, um, I haven’t really used non-actors. I have used—um, for me it’s like, god, I don’t need that—I don’t need that to be a variable as well, you know?

*[Both laugh.]*

When I’m filming some low-budget, guerilla filmmaking, on the streets of Cardiff for something, and it’s Halloween night and everyone’s drunk and stuff. I’m like, I need the actors to be able to, you know, perform amazingly under whatever constraints, and that kind of does mean they have to be actors.

I can see like, when you’re on a set, and everything’s all set up, and you know, to—to them, they needed an element of chaos, perhaps, because everything was too controlled.

00:33:54 April Host Oh, sure. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

00:33:56 Alice Guest Because, you know, as you said, like—as I said, like, putting chickens into that environment instantly brings it to life.

*[April affirms.]*

And that’s the same as putting, like, a non-actor, maybe. ‘Cause the final wolf was a non-actor, isn’t he? The final werewolf that she meets—

00:34:09 April Host Yeah, Micha, I can remember his last name. He was a dancer, he was in the—the Royal Ballet, and they needed someone who specifically could move his back and shoulder muscles like an instrument.

So it would like—because they had me!—multiple shots where they needed him to like, pretend to transform, so they needed physicality over acting instincts, and they ended up just getting him, who has, like, you know, as a ballet artist, he’s already kind of practiced in front of audiences. And he, you know, like, kind of remembering things even if he’s not speaking lines, so.

00:34:43 Alice Guest Hm. I mean, some people I—I’m—I told my friend, so, me and my friend used to have sleepovers, and we used to watch *Company of Wolves* over and over and over again, on VHS.

And part of it, I think, was cause we fancied that guy. It was, like, not a great formative experience in terms of like, deciding what kind of man you wanna go for in your adult life, like, oh, you know, someone whose eyebrows join and they may sort of lure you into the woods or whatever. I don’t know if that was the original intention of the film, but definitely, it was an attraction.

And I said to my friend, “Oh, I’m gonna do this podcast about the film,” and she was so excited, by the way. And she was like, “Do you remember that guy? He was a really terrible actor.” And I was

like, “was he? Was he? I don’t know, actually.”

It was—certainly what he’s doing is really stylized, and I think actually adds to kind of the inhuman quality, the fact that he doesn’t have this kind of, you know, act is a good, um, simulating naturalism, even though it’s not natural.

And he isn’t, he’s doing something completely out there, strange. Um—

00:35:50 April Host Yeah. Jordan called it practiced three—practiced theatricality, because he had to do such, um, overt gestures when he’s on the stage in ballet to convey a story with just his hands or his arms.

But he was always moving his arms and kind of, like, positioning his body in these ways where he was, um, he was just very, like, over-the-top in these—in these accents that he was doing with hands and fingers and, yeah.

00:36:16 Alice Guest And he’s doing this twitching with his head, kind of creepy head-twitching thing.

*[April affirms.]*

Um, which is usually the head movement for, “I’m an alien! I don’t quite understand,” like Jeff Bridges and people like that do that kind of thing.

*[Both laugh.]*

It’s a bit of a trope, you know, but I like it. Um, yeah, I think—I think that it’s a bit like actually what, you know, David Lynch gets really strange performances. He often gets performers who other people have said—other people don’t tend to cast because they think of them as being bad actors!

*[April hums in affirmation.]*

He saw them and goes, “I like what they’re doing! The unrealism of what they’re doing.” And—and that, you put it in the right environment, again a very controlled environment that’s very artistically, aesthetically arranged, and it sort of works, you know, and, um, I like it. I think it’s great.

00:37:09 April Host Um, there’s one story I really wanted to get into, and that’s casting, um, Andy Warhol, because he was almost cast as the devil.

Niel Jordan said, quote: “We had to cast the devil and it was difficult. Initially, I thought a great devil would have been Andy Warhol. He was his most pallid at the time, most ex—most white, expressionless face with a shroud of hair. Producer Stephen Woolley sent the script to Andy, and went to him in New York, and he had just been shot by radical feminist Valerie Solanas, and he was terrified to take a plane because of it. He said he’d do it if we could film his sections in New York, which would have been impossible, so we came up with a better devil with Terence Stamp.”



End quote.

And, uh, there's a certain amount of things that stunt casting can do for you, and this would have been like a little bit of a stunt cast, of just like, "Oh, we've got Andy Warhol, he's the devil, and here's, like, a draw for it." You know? You know, cause his face was—his visage was very famous and familiar, uh, um, around the world with certain crowds.

And, um, and I think that there's a couple things, like, you're casting evil, which is hard, um, you know, like, how do you cast a "bad person" to like, exemplify that? And then also can—like, you can get a name? 'Cause, I'm thinking like in *Prevenge*, you've got a couple of guys who are like, pretty terrible. Um, and casting bad people is like, who do you cast? Do you cast the nicest person that you know to be evil? Like, who can embody evil, you know?

00:38:36 Alice Guest

*[Laughs]* Yeah, I think you probably do cast the nicest person that you know. I mean, I—I think that, um, yeah, if you cast someone who's alr—I mean, so much of filmmaking is about the tension, you know, it's like, oh, this is too—it's gone too far that way, that's—can put something the opposite in there to pull it back.

*[April hums affirmatively.]*

And that's true with, like, the score, with like, editing, like with so many aspects of it, like "we've pushed it too far, let's pull it back completely the other way." Um, 'cause, yeah, someone like Tom Davis, who plays the DJ in my film, and he's this pretty repellant character, but in real life he's so warm and cuddly and just the loveliest person, and so you're like, you know that the audience kinda love him anyway. And so they're not gonna go, "Oh god, ach—you know," I think sometimes in the history of cinema there are people who are too revolting in a role where they're supposed to be revolting.

*[April laughs.]*

And you actually just wanna switch it off. It's like, no! People have to have an element of charisma even if they're playing, like, the ugly person. It's like, they have to be—they have to be—they have to be charismatic in their own way.

00:39:45 April Host

On that side of things, too, you've also played a serial killer or two.

*[Alice laughs.]*

I'm—multiple serial killers, whether in your own film or *Sightseers* or something else.

00:39:54 Alice Guest

Yeah, it's an acting—

00:39:56 April Host

Where you're like, characters that you've written for yourself. I consider you quite nice. Um—

*[Both laugh.]*

00:40:01 Alice Guest Just quite, not very. Yeah.

Nice, nice enough. Um, yeah, I mean, yeah, I guess it's always a bit of an experiment for me, I'm like, how far can you push the audience to not like me, in a way. 'Cause in real life I'm sort of—quite smiley, and subservient, in some ways.

Like, I'd apologize to you for stepping on your foot, kind of thing. But yeah, I guess I was gonna say, about Terence Stump, he's so, um, pretty, in some ways, and so very softly-spoken in that, um, in that scene, which, I think is how it works.

He doesn't—there's no point where he turns and goes, "Ahahaha!" just as he drives off. I don't know if it would work with Andy Warhol, I think. 'Cause to me he's like, too big a cultural figure from another world, you know?

Like—would his hair be like—it'd be like, "Oh, it's Andy Warhol." You wouldn't be going, "Oh, it's the devil." You'd be like, "Oh, he's from the 1980s, or something", you know?

You—you wouldn't—too contemporary a sort of figure, or from the sixties, whatever. It's like, I'm not sure how that would work. But I—understand, again, it's like—let's just try it, and see what effect it has. It wouldn't ruin the film, but—I'm a big fan of Terence Stump, I have to say. So I was just pleased that he—oops, sorry—

00:41:17 April Host Yeah. And this was coming at the begging of his, like, career revival, as well, 'cause he had had like a slow bit, and then he got cast here and then kind of started a snowball of things for him, and um, there are so many great actors in this movie, there are so—like, because there's stories within stories, like, sometimes they'll show up, then they'll see their way out, but they're so—they have so much of an impact on the story, and why it's so wonderful, and um—I'm—wanna thank you so much for coming on the show, and talking about your work, and then also bringing this film into our listeners' consciousness because I think it's kind of fallen out of popularity, and I hope the people rediscover it because it would be nice to see movies like this existing more often.

00:42:02 Alice Guest It is like a 1980s Powell and Pressburger, that's how I think it should be.

*[April agrees by saying, "it is."]*

That's how it should be recast in order for people to take an interest and go back and have a look at it.

00:42:13 April Host Um, and, uh, for you, and your work, can you give a sort of reminder on how we can see things, uh, I know that—

00:42:23 Alice Guest Um, so I know that, um, the Bill Nighy film *Sometimes Almost Never* had just come out on a few platforms in the USA, I'm not sure which ones? I'm sure if you Google it, I'm sure it will turn up.

00:42:32 April Host Yeah. It's by—

00:42:34 Alice Guest And, um, *Dark Encounter* is available on Amazon Prime? I think at the moment? As is *Prevenge*, actually.

And the other films, um, *The Days of the Bagnold Summer* I'm not sure if that's had an American release, but it's just had a U.K. release.

00:42:55 April Host I think that's still to come, out here.

00:42:56 Alice Guest On various platforms, okay, yeah. Um, what was the other film? *Eternal Beauty* is not yet available to watch, but it will be coming out quite soon. Um, yeah. And I'm due—I was due to film my next film last year, and then I got pregnant, and then the film got postponed, and now we are hoping to film in September. Depending on the guidelines.

00:43:24 April Host COVID willing, yes. Okay.

00:43:25 Alice Guest What was I trying to say? Yes. So, it is my own personal *Don Quixote*, that film, it just keeps, sort of—you know, it's just like the film that I'm trying to get made when I'm ninety or something, but, um—

*[Both laugh.]*

Touch wood. Touch wood, we will be filming it really soon. Um, and it's exciting, it's a kind of reincarnation rom com that is quite dark.

00:43:49 April Host Yeah, I'm sure. I'm sure. I've seen *Prevenge*.

00:43:53 Alice Guest Yeah. And expect—symbolism will be threaded throughout. It will be a crazy mad cap. British visual treat.

00:44:00 April Host Wonderful. Well, thank you so much for coming on the show, and, uh—

00:44:04 Alice Guest Thanks so much for having me.

00:44:05 April Host And also goodnight to Sadie.

*[Both laugh.]*

00:44:08 Alice Guest Aw, Sadie's already out. She's gone. And, I'm going to follow suit and go to sleep soon as well.

00:44:13 Music Transition "Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.

00:44:15 April Host And thank you for listening to *Switchblade Sisters*.

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.]*

00:44:41	Clip	Clip	<b>Witch Women:</b> The wolves in the forest are more decent.
00:44:46	Speaker 1	Promo	<a href="http://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> .
00:44:48	Speaker 2	Promo	Comedy and culture.
00:44:49	Speaker 3	Promo	Artist owned—
00:44:50	Speaker 4	Promo	—Audience supported.