

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>Today, you know, you may know that we are social distancing, so remote recording of course. Um, Chicken’s in the other room, so you might not hear her screaming. Um, the wild parrots are out, though. You may hear that flock passing by.</p> <p>Um, so sound is a little bit different in the studio than uh, it usually is. Everything else is pretty much the same, except for today, our guest is different. Our guest is writer-director Karen Maine. Hi, Karen!</p>
00:00:49	Karen Maine	Guest	Hi! Thanks for having me.
00:00:51	April	Host	Um, Karen, are you in Los Angeles right now, or are you elsewhere?
00:00:54	Karen	Guest	I am in Green Point, Brooklyn.
00:00:56	April	Host	You’re in Brooklyn. Uh, you guys have tornadoes or anything over there right now? You guys good?
00:01:01	Karen	Guest	Yeah, we’re good.
00:01:03	April	Host	<p><i>[Laughing]</i> Okay. Uh, for those of you who would like a uh, refresher on Karen and who she is, please let me give you an introduction.</p> <p>Karen has a dog named Albert Brooks. ... That’s it. That’s all we—</p> <p><i>[Karen laughs.]</i></p> <p>That’s all we—that’s all we got. That’s uh, no.</p>
00:01:17	Karen	Guest	That’s the only thing people need to know, yeah.
00:01:20	April	Host	<p><i>[Laughs]</i> Karen was raised as a nice Catholic school girl in Iowa. Eventually, she set her sights on New York, and she found herself studying creative nonfiction writing at The New School, where she wrote an essay about a religious retreat she was sent to as a child. Keep that detail in mind for later in the bio.</p> <p>There, uh, she also took a screenwriting course, but ended up self-teaching screenwriting through listening to directors interviewed about craft and process. In 2009, those skills were put to the test, when she wrote the short film <i>Obvious Child</i>.</p>

It would be five years before the feature version of this short, which she co-wrote with, uh, Gillian Robespierre to premiere. The film starred Jenny Slate as a young woman who has a one night stand and decides to get an abortion.

The success of *Obvious Child* led to her writing the feature script for *Yes, God, Yes*, based on that earlier essay that we talked about, about her being at een, discovering sexuality, and being sent to a religious retreat to suppress that sexuality, essentially.

But Karen then traveled backwards in time, and then she wrote and directed the story as a short film first, to get her directing legs. That was an immediate Vimeo staff pick, and received nearly three million views.

Then, *Yes, God, Yes*, the feature, starring Natalia Dyer, premiered at South By Southwest 2019, where it received the special jury prize, and was listed in both Deadline's and Hollywood Reporter's bests lists.

Now, *Yes, God, Yes* is available on pretty much all VOD platforms. Is that correct, Karen?

00:02:43 Karen Guest Yes, in the U.S., correct.

00:02:45 April Host *Yes, God, Yes*, in the U.S.

*[Karen chuckles.]*

Um, on all VOD platforms. So, Karen, the movie that you chose to talk about today was a little bit of a surprise. This is uh, this is one of my favorite ones, 'cause I watch it every single time it comes on cable.

00:03:00 Karen Guest Me—me too.

00:03:01 April Host I was just like, "Oh shit."

00:03:02 Karen Guest Yeah. Exactly the same.

00:03:03 April Host It is *Twister*. Uh, can you give us a little explanation on why this is one of your fave genre films?

00:03:09 Karen Guest Um, *Twister*, I think, has a special place in my heart specifically because—well, it came out in '96. I was 11, and I'm from Iowa, as you said, and uh, you know, Iowa is very well-known for its crazy weather. And um, you know, every summer growing up, and still today, my whole family still lives there, you know, it's sort of marked by various storms that come through, and the sirens going off, and having to go in the basement, and you know, there are vivid memories I have as a kid of like, those sirens going off, and my dad taking me down to the corner of the street first, before taking shelter, to see if we could see anything.

So when this film came out, it was really exciting. We felt like a bit of Hollywood was coming to us, and parts of it were even filmed in

Iowa, I believe, in and around the state. And yeah, my mom, I think, saw it—I should have asked her before I recorded this with you, but I know my mom saw it at least five times in the movie theater, if not more.

*[April laughs.]*

Um, so it's just like a family favorite, and really hits close to home. And I've always loved, you know, crazy weather and tornadoes, so it's—and I think it does a great job of that.

00:04:20 April Host Yeah, it's a perfect movie to watch for this time of year, I think, too.

For those of you who haven't seen *Twister*, today's episode will give you some spoilers, but that shouldn't stop you from listening before you watch. My motto, as always, 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 *Twister* first, uh, it's probably on TV right now, on one channel, so.

*[Karen laughs.]*

00:04:41 Music Music *Twister* score by Mark Mancina

00:04:43 April Host And now that you're back, let me introduce *Twister* with a quick synopsis, um, which does not do the movie justice. But we'll do it anyway.

Written by Michael Crichton and Anne-Marie Martin, and with so many other uncredited writers, and directed by Jan de Bont for release in 1996. *Twister* opens up in a flashback to 1969. A little tomboy girl named Jo Thornton hides from a tornado, and watches her father get carried off by it.

00:05:10 Clip Clip *[Man screaming over extremely loud wind.]*

**Mr. Thornton:** I can't hold it anymore!

00:05:13 April Host Okay. Flash forward to the present of 1996, Jo's a professional storm chaser, getting word that Tornado Alley is about to be lit up with some storms. That's when Jo's not-quite-ex husband, Bill Harding, shows up. He's clean-cut now, a TV weatherman who left storm chasing behind, and he wants to marry a reproductive therapist named Melissa, whom he's brought with him. But Jo needs to sign the divorce papers first.

00:05:39 Clip Clip **Jo:** They're signed and ready.

**Bill:** Good, good. Let's see them.

**Jo:** Do you need them right this second?

**Bill:** Well, it'd be nice.

**Jo:** Jesus. What's the urgent urgency, you act like you're getting married.

			<b>Bill:</b> I am.
00:05:49	April	Host	Bill realizes that Jo actually built their dream, DOROTHY, a machine that will release a bunch of balls into the air to revolutionize tornado data.
00:05:57	Clip	Clip	<b>Bill:</b> You see Melissa, it's like this. These sensors go up the funnel and radio back information about the internal structure. Wind velocities, flow, asymmetries. We could learn more in 30 seconds than we have in the past 30 years. Get a profile of a tornado for the first time.
			<b>Melissa:</b> And what will that do?
			<b>Bill:</b> If we knew how a tornado really worked, we could design an advance warning system.
00:06:18	April	Host	But, the issue is that you've got to drive it straight into a tornado. Not easy. A tornado pops up, and Jo and her team of misfits takes off, so Bill and Melissa have to chase them down so that she can sign the papers.
			That's when Bill runs into Dr. Jonas Miller, his old rival, who shows off his blatant DOROTHY knockoff.
00:06:36	Clip	Clip	<i>[Sounds of a fight breaking out.]</i>
			<b>Bill:</b> You stole my design, you son of a bitch!
			<b>Jonas:</b> Calm down! What the hell are you talking about?
			<b>Bill:</b> DOROTHY. You took her, you damn thief!
00:06:43	April	Host	Competition forces Bill back into the storms, as he vows to help Jo release DOROTHY before Miller can release his. On the first try, Jo's truck and DOROTHY are both destroyed. Melissa joins on the next and is absolutely terrified.
00:06:57	Clip	Clip	<i>[Sounds of high winds and a truck creaking wildly.]</i>
			<b>Melissa:</b> You people are all crazy, do you know that?
00:07:00	April	Host	The team takes a break at Jo's aunt's house, where they eat and goof around, and Jo realizes, oh no, she's falling in love with Bill again.
			The next tornado try is a stressful one as well. They think the tornado was a dud, but it's actually huge and right over them. It destroys DOROTHY too.
			Bill confesses his love for Jo, and Melissa overhears on the radio, very unfortunately.
00:07:22	Clip	Clip	<b>Bill:</b> Killing yourself won't bring your dad back! I'm sorry he died, but it was a long time ago. You gotta move on. Stop living in the past and look at what you got right in front of you.

**Jo:** What are you saying?

**Bill:** Me, Jo!

00:07:39 April Host The team takes shelter in a motel, only to be ousted when a new F5 comes their way. Many are injured, vehicles lost. The tornado gets Aunt Meg's house, too, but she survives.

00:07:50 Clip Clip **Jo:** You're going to the hospital.

**Meg:** Okay, I'll go—

**Speaker 1:** It's okay. Good dog.

**Meg:** —but I'm gonna drive myself.

**Robert:** Honey, your car is in a tree around the corner.

00:07:57 April Host It brings up a lot of emotions for Jo, but also a solution. While another DOROTHY gets destroyed, Jonas and his partner are killed by the tornado. Jo and Bill realize there's only one thing to do. Drive Bill's truck right into the eye and jump out before they're sucked into it. They do it, and it works! But celebrating is cut short when the tornado takes a turn for them.

00:08:20 Clip Clip **Haynes:** Hey guys, it's about to shift northeast.

**Dustin:** Bill! I think you guys should get out of there! You copy?

**Robert:** Bill! Jo! Do you copy?

00:08:30 April Host And everyone seeks shelter. They can see inside of the tornado from their hiding. It's thrilling, but scary, just as Jo and Bill's blossoming new love.

*[Karen giggles.]*

That's the end. *[Laughs.]*

00:08:41 Karen Guest Yay! That was—that was riveting. That was almost like watching the film again. Bravo!

00:08:45 April Host Ugh, god, thank you. I spent so much time on that.

*[Both laugh.]*

Um, so there are a few kind of big pieces about how this movie was made that I think were kind of hitting the news. One of the things was the fact that Helen Hunt was not like a big, major star at that point. She was on a TV show and she came from theater. She was in New York. So, she wasn't like a Hollywood LA actor whatsoever. Um, and in fact, she did not want to do the movie at first. It was just like, "Mm, I'm not sure."

She said, quote, "I remember that I didn't think that I wanted to do it. Which is crazy, because I've never been the lead in a big, fancy movie before. But I guess I just didn't know what I could really

contribute acting-wise. Then I got on a lunch break from *Mad About You*. And they said, "They want you to have lunch with Steven Spielberg and Jan de Bont," and I just, like, wandered into the fancy Amblin offices with the fancy catered lunch and was like, "I'll do it!" It didn't take much to convince me." End quote.

Um, and I think uh, I'm curious. You come from New York, and I know there's a Hollywood in uh, kind of infection in New York in some ways, but I do think it's a slightly different culture when it comes to filmmaking, and that kind of thing. Um, I mean, can we talk about this—this idea of kind of like, coming into Hollywood, and the things like—the kind of fancy things that suddenly convince you, like, "Should I—" or tempts you. You know, it's almost like the devil.

00:10:16 Karen Guest Yeah. I mean, I—I've gone—I wish I had more experience in fancy Hollywood. I feel like I've made, you know, some independent films and done some stuff for the BBC in the U.K. Uh, but I've not—I've not fully experienced the fancy like, aspects of Hollywood yet. Um, I'm very much looking forward to the day when Spielberg interrupts my—my lunch to have a meeting with me.

[April laughs.]

Um, but—but yeah. No, I was talking to my friend the other day about, you know, when you join the GGA, you get—you get to be flown business everywhere no matter what. And I was like, "That sounds awesome." Um, so hopefully that will be in my very near future.

But yeah, New York, I had never actually made anything here despite living here. I've shot in London, and we shot *Yes, God, Yes* in, um—outside Atlanta. I mean, I guess—I guess *Obvious Child* was made in New York, but I wasn't the director on that, so I wasn't super involved on the day to day for that. But I suppose I've done a lot of writing in New York, but that, as we know, is not glamorous by any means.

00:11:24 April Host I mean, I—it feels glamorous. I mean, it's definitely depicted quite a bit in TV.

00:11:30 Karen Guest I mean, yeah. Writing, for me, is like not showering for twelve hours, not having a proper meal, just sitting in a room getting really—like, your back gets sore. Or being on the couch and then you're like, "Why does my neck hurt? Oh yeah, 'cause I wrote for twelve hours on the couch, just looking straight at my lap."

Um, so yeah, not—it's definitely not glamorous, the way I do it, that's for sure.

00:11:54 April Host I like thinking about Helen Hunt back in that time, when she was just like, on like a—a hit, kind of almost sleeper sitcom, and then people are just like, "Hey, do you want to do a movie with the guy who did *Speed*?" [Laughs] It's like, what?

00:12:05 Karen Guest Yeah. Oh my god, *Speed*. That's a whole nother amazing film. But um—which, I think I watched that recently, and it's aged in the best way. I wouldn't say it's aged well, but it's just—it's aged in the best

way. I recommend everyone watching *Speed* again.

But Helen Hunt is so amazing in this movie, and her wardrobe is killer. She looks so cool, but beyond that is her hair is amazing. That like, 90s blowout that she's got is, I mean, incredible. And when she gets it wet in the shower at her aunt's house in the middle, I'm always so upset, 'cause I'm like, "Don't ruin that great hair day!" But then she comes back out and it just looks exactly the same.

00:12:45 April Host It's another great hair day. But it's also like, artfully styled. There's something that I find really interesting about styling people for not beauty. Um, and—for not traditional beauty. 'Cause that's something that kind of hits on me when I watch bigger action movies, even when my suspension of disbelief is there, where um, you know, they've been through like, the worst things, but they wake up and they've still got full eye makeup on.

*[Karen affirms.]*

And you know, sometimes that's an actor who is maybe a little bit insecure and doesn't want to look um, not perfect on screen. And sometimes that's just like, wanting people to be beautiful.

But, as Helen Hunt said, quote, "I was thoughtfully deglamorized by a team of experts who dripped me with mud. I liked that, though. It reminded me of my school uniform days, when you just throw on khakis and roll around in the mud. I think you need it to see this woman's instincts to crawl through the mud, not to step over it." End quote.

Um—

00:13:37 Karen Guest Totally.

00:13:38 April Host I'd love to talk about styling, and styling for people who seem regular. Because I don't know who did hair and makeup on this movie, but it is good for men and women all across the board. Like, Philip Seymour Hoffman's style—

00:13:52 Karen Guest Yeah, Dusty.

*[April sighs deeply.]*

It's so good.

00:13:54 April Host It's so good. It's so perfect. But you know—

00:13:57 Karen Guest Even down to the props of like, when he's sharing the drink with Melissa when she first shows up, and they're drinking from like, curly, twisty straws, and talking about the suck zone. Like, that subtle detail is just so good. It—yeah, he's amazing.

00:14:12 April Host Yeah. The characters are amazing. But they are very well drawn on the screen, I think m because of the kind of visual enhancements, these details. But it is a very different art, I think, to do non-glamor makeup, to do non-glamor styling, and to try to study how real

people look.

Your film is definitely—it's Midwestern, and it's Midwestern of a particular time, and trying to kind of replicate regular kids. Um, I—I am curious how you can go about doing that, you know, like, what—reference photos, things like that, or is it just like um, you know, trusting your people?

00:14:53 Karen Guest Yeah. I mean, it's a bit of both, for sure. It's so funny to bring up like, reference photos, because you know, we were in production on *Yes, God, Yes* in early 2018, and I honestly can't remember a single thing. I know that—I just like—this COVID like, time with lockdown and like, memory. It's just like, all just so completely fucked.

*[April affirms and laughs.]*

But I—I know that I really was conscious of like, making Natalia Dyer, who plays the lead, look natural. I mean, obviously like, she's in high school, and those girls do wear makeup, but she's also on this retreat. And also like, you know, I remember having to talk with the makeup department and being like, "We—you know,, we need her to have the skin of you know, an adolescent. So not great skin."

And I don't even know like, day to day, it just looked so good. I didn't know if it was just Natalia's natural skin, like, breaking out from doing lots of TV and wearing makeup and getting it off and on and all that kind of thing. Or, if it was the makeup department putting it on, because it looked so good.

Um, and that's like, something you just don't want to question. You're just like, "It looks great. Let's keep doing this, let's go." Um, but yeah, like a main goal for my film was just making it not just visually but also tonally very like, grounded and realistic and natural. Um, and that was definitely needed too, with like, you know, color, tone, palette, um, you know, very like, Earthy, kind of natural tones. If there was any color, it was a bit like, muted.

Like, there's a great sweater Natalia wears in one scene—it's actually a sweatshirt—um, but it's this like, light purple color, and I just loved it, because I felt like that was just sort of the right color for like, early aughts, late 90s. Um, that like, pastel-y purple color.

00:16:49 Music Transition "Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.

00:16:50 Karen Guest But yeah, I mean, generally keeping her grounded.

00:16:54 April Host Yeah. We're gonna take a quick break, and when we come back, we'll talk more uh, more *Twister*, more of Karen Maine's career and *Yes, God, Yes*. We'll be right back.

*[Music fades.]*

00:17:07 Promo Promo **Music:** Guitar strums as singer counts out "One, two, one two three four." Up-tempo guitar and harmonica music plays in the background.



**Justin McElroy:** Hi, everybody! My name is Justin McElroy.

**Dr. Sydnee McElroy:** I'm Sydnee McElroy!

**Justin:** We're both doctors, and—

**Sydnee:** Nope. Just me.

**Justin:** Okay, well Sydnee's a doctor and I'm a medical enthusiast.

**Sydnee:** Okay.

**Justin:** And we created *Sawbones*, a marital tour of misguided medicine!

**Sydnee:** Every week I dig through the annals of medical history to bring you the wildest, grossest—sometimes dumbest—tales of ways we've tried to treat people throughout history!

**Justin:** Eh, lately we do a lot of modern fake medicine. 'Cause everything's a disaster. But it's slightly less of a disaster every Friday, right here on [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org), as we bring you *Sawbones: A Marital Tour of Misguided Medicine*. And remember:

**Sydnee:** Don't drill a hole in your head.

*[Music ends.]*

00:17:48 Music Transition "Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.

00:17:54 April Host Welcome back to *Switchblade Sisters*. I'm April Wolfe, and I'm joined today by Karen Maine, and we're talking *Twister*.

Um, so, to kind of back up into some things that we were talking about before. There is a realism and a groundedness to *Twister* that you had mentioned. Um, and that comes out, you know, in a few different ways, but I think stylistically to how the cameras are operated.

Um, he was—Jan de Pont—Jan de Bont was pushing for realism as much as possible. He wanted things to um, uh, look like a documentary. That was his—his main goal was making it look as though it's a documentary, having like, almost like, a gritty, shaky, kind of swing-y-ness to the camera that feels malleable to the moment.

Um, but, in terms of all the things you were saying, you know, debris being thrown at them, I think a lot of people know from the articles that came out when that time, uh—back in 1996, that so much of that was real, and it was just enhanced by really amazing CGI from ILM.

So, Helen Hunt said, quote, "You'd get through five days of the hail machine, throwing actual bits of hail at you, and you'd go, 'Woof, that's done. Tomorrow must be easier.'" And then the shards of candy glass, fake glass, would be thrown at you on the floor of

some garage. And then there'd be a jet engine. I don't remember the easy part of the shoot. And then we'd have a scene inside, but it was 110 degrees. It was rigorous. And Jan de Bont, there's a reason his movies look so cool, which is what you want in a filmmaker, it really is." End quote.

Um, and of course, you know, that's 24 years on, where she's had some time to mellow out from having things thrown at her face and being temporarily blinded, which is something that happened on set, too, but—

00:19:37 Karen Guest I read about that! Yeah, they had their like, corneas burned by some light.

*[April laughs.]*

Jesus Christ.

00:19:44 April Host But you know, I think um, she is still grappling with whether or not it was a great experience. I think that in the kind of sum total of it, I think that she can recognize that whatever sacrifices were made, like, committed something really wonderful to the screen that people enjoyed for so many decades after, but—

00:20:04 Karen Guest Yeah. It paid off, but it seems like a horrible—it seems like it was horrible.

00:20:09 April Host Yes. Each story seems horrible.

00:20:12 Karen Guest Yeah, like they really got put through the wringer. You know, it reminded me—like, I read a little bit about it as well, but I didn't read quite as much as you did. But I remember a bit where she was talking about, I think in the end scene or the last tornado. Um, she is jumping out of the car, and I think at one point it said she got hit in the head by like, the door of the car. Um, so it immediately made me think of that horrible video of um, from *Kill Bill*, of Uma Thurman kind of getting in that accident, and how horrible that was.

And I do think it brings up a point. You know, it was interesting, you said that quote was, you know, 24 years later, but you know, what—what women were made to go through for directors, for the sake of the film. And I do think there's a line you probably, you know, as a director probably wouldn't cross with my actors. Like, you want it to feel real, and granted, I haven't done an action film. So, I have, you know, I haven't haven't the opportunity to confront this personally.

But you know, I think a director's responsibility, first and foremost, is probably to keep his actors or her actors safe from harm, and to make sure that the set feels uh, safe and like they can come to you if they feel uncomfortable.

I mean, that was one of the big things with Natalia. You know, that, in terms of sex in film, my film isn't very graphic, but it still required her to, you know, fake masturbate in several scenes, and you know, wanted her—you know, there's camera people around, there's a lot of men around. You know, if she ever felt unsafe, to let me know.

And I think you know, if your actors—granted, I'm sure there's something there. Like, if your actors don't feel comfortable, and they're not supposed to feel comfortable character-wise, that might help. But I think, you know, I think if you're a good director, you can make actors feel comfortable on set and still get good performances out of them.

00:22:17 April Host I mean, that's the thing. Like, we hope, right? Like, that's the—like, we hope that we don't have to fall back on some kind of like, trick, because—

00:22:26 Karen Guest But it happens. Cameron Crowe—there's this really great podcast that I'm gonna not remember the name of right now, but they recently like, interviewed all of the cast and crew and, um—of *Almost Famous*. And Cameron Crowe says that to get young Patrick Fugit to cry, um, or have like, a more emotional scene—and they shot it sequentially, so this is the scene where Penny Lane overdoses.

Um, he went up to him between takes, and he was like, “You know, we're almost done. Shooting's almost over. You're probably never gonna see any of these people ever again.” Um, you know, to like, work him up. And that, I think, is a little less horrible than, you know, than getting you know, glass and tree branches and whatnot thrown at you.

*[April affirms.]*

But, you know. It's just funny. It's funny to think about that, and like, where the line is. I think especially today, you know, you need to be extra careful how you're running your set.

00:23:17 April Host Yes, yes. You know, earlier I had mentioned that Jan de Bont was uh, primarily a cinematographer, and um, it was kind of a big thing for him to move out of that and into a different role. And it's not always possible for people who start off in one particular facet of the industry to move into something else, if that's their passion. Um, for him, I think this kind of move and doing *Twister* as his follow-up to *Speed* and trying to like, top—one up everything, was kind of him proving himself, and like proving himself over the directors that he had actually worked with.

He said, quote, “It didn't really bother me, but it did make a difference when others took credit every time. Especially when Richard Donner, for example, left the action scenes for *Lethal Weapon 3* to me, because I simply better screen such um, complicated sequences. Then he could bring that. I think very visually. Every frame is in my head before the camera starts to rotate. This is why I can work very economically. Important when budgets are soaring because of all the costly stunts.” End quote.

Um, so it was just like—

00:24:21 Karen Guest I know the shoot went over by several weeks, yeah.

00:24:25 April Host Exactly, yeah. It went over—

00:24:27 Karen Guest I was just talking mad shit about Jan de Bont. Um.

00:24:31 April Host But also, part of that wasn't necessarily his fault, and I should give credit to that, because there was a point where they got there and there were supposed to be tornadoes, there were supposed to be dark skies. But it was blue skies all around, which then doubled the work capacity that ILM would have to do. And they had to do a lot of work to light that, because you had to—I mean, this is where the burning of the retinas comes in, because they have to overlight the actors, so that when they bring it down in post in the color and the background that you can still see them.

Did you get to do any kind of like, CGI stuff? Like, um, enhancement in post or anything on uh, *Yes, God, Yes?*

00:25:08 Karen Guest Yeah. I mean, we didn't do too much CGI. We just did what was practical in terms of um, like some—like music change. We had to like, change music. We had to like, change lyrics that were captured on camera. Um, so that was—we did a reshoot. We had to like, recreate the background, because we shot in fall. Or I guess we shot in early winter. And then it looked light, and when we did the reshoot, it was summer.

Just simple like, green screen stuff like that, but nothing—nothing too—nothing like *Twister* by any means. Two very different films, despite, I'd say, the setting and uh, perhaps some of the—some of the makeup and wardrobe. [*Laughing*] Very different films.

00:25:49 April Host There's also a weirdly religious aspect to this movie though, I would say.

00:25:56 Karen Guest To *Twister*?

00:25:57 April Host Yeah.

00:25:58 Karen Guest Like—further explain, please. What do you mean?

00:25:59 April Host It's like, in the subtext of the thing. And I was thinking of that in terms of like, the song. Like, I should say the story about the song, because there is an original song that Van Halen performed for this that is pretty hilarious in how—and you know, speaking of changing lyrics and things.

This is a really funny story, because Eddie Van Halen said, quote: "Alex had called up the director, Jan De Bont, to ask him how closely he wanted the lyrics of the song that became 'Humans Being' to be related to the movie's context. De Bont said, 'Oh, please don't write about tornadoes. I don't want this to be a narrative for the movie.' So we put him in contact with Sam—" and this is Sammy Hagar, "—who called me and said, 'I had a great conversation with De Bont and everything is cool.'

"Then, maybe two seconds after I got off the phone with Sammy, De Bont was like, 'Uh, Sammy is a little strange. I kept telling him that he shouldn't write any lyrics about tornadoes, but he still kept insisting that I fax him tornado-related technical jargon. Does Sammy just want to learn about twisters for his own personal

reasons?’ I said, ‘Beats the hell out of me.’

“And so what does Sammy come back with? ‘Sky is turning black, knuckles turning white, headed for the hot zone.’ It was total tornado stuff! Not only did Alex tell him not to do that, but the director of the fucking movie told him, ‘Do not write about tornadoes.’” End quote.

00:27:15 Karen Guest *[Laughing]* Oh my god! I had no idea. Is that—that song’s not in the movie anywhere, is it?

00:27:22 April Host It’s—it’s like, in the end credits, but the thing that they did come up with—

00:27:25 Karen Guest Oh, that’s the end credits song!

00:27:27 April Host Yeah. The thing they—

00:27:28 Karen Guest ‘Cause there’s like, some heavy electric guitar in that. I felt like it came out of nowhere. We were—I watched it with my husband. He was like, “What—what is this?”

00:27:40 April Host I gotta—I’m gonna read you the lyrics of the “Humans Being” too, ‘cause what they came up with was very religious. He said, “There is just enough Christ in me to make me feel almost guilty. Is that why God made us breed, to make us see we’re humans being?” *[Laughs.]*

00:27:57 Karen Guest What?

00:27:58 April Host Then it’s like, “Some low-life, flathead scum infects, the sickness in his eyes reflects, you wonder why your life is screaming.” *[Laughing]* There’s some weird—

00:28:08 Karen Guest This is the same lyrics that had the white knuckles, sky turning dark?

00:28:12 April Host Yes!

00:28:14 Karen Guest I feel—feels like they just mashed two different songs together.

00:28:17 April Host But you had—you had to change lyrics and a song for your film as well, right?

00:28:22 Karen Guest Yeah, well music’s really, really, expensive.

00:28:25 April Host Yes, it is.

00:28:26 Karen Guest And um, we obviously like, wanted to have some music from the era, and we did get some, but we had a lot more initially that we just couldn’t afford at the end of the day. So we had to replace a lot of it, and the one we replaced was, um, it was Boyz—no, it was TLC, “Unpretty.”

Um, and it was the song that plays sort of in—in background, but also one of the characters gives a speech at the retreat, and she uses that song as a way to like, express their feelings. So, it was “Unpretty”, and we—it was too expensive and really not worth it. So we saved our money for like, “Candy” by Mandy Moore, and Peter

Gabriel's "In Your Eyes". Um, and *[inaudible]*.

So, um, but so, I ended up—what I did was I wrote lyrics for a new song, and a friend of ours wrote the song and brought his friend to sing it. Um, so we had to, yeah, rewrite the CGI lyrics on the paper that was passed out. I'm good at writing lyrics, but definitely not—not music, that's for sure.

00:29:30	April	Host	Yeah, but now you're a lyricist. It's great.
00:29:33	Karen	Guest	Yeah, that's like, my favorite credit on IMDB. Like, writer on the song "My Empty Heart". It makes me very happy.
00:29:37	Music	Transition	"Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.
00:29:38	April	Host	Aww. Uh, we're gonna take another break. When we come back, we'll talk more <i>Twister</i> and Karen Maine's <i>Yes, God, Yes</i> . We'll be right back.
			<i>[Music ends.]</i>
00:29:50	Promo	Promo	<b>Music:</b> Fun, jaunty, upbeat music. <b>Renee Colvert:</b> Hi! I'm Renee Colvert. <b>Alexis Preston:</b> I'm Alexis Preston! <b>Renee:</b> And we're the hosts of the smash hit podcast <i>Can I Pet Your Dog?</i> Now, Alexis. <b>Alexis:</b> Yes. <b>Renee:</b> We got big news. <b>Alexis:</b> Uh-oh! <b>Renee:</b> Since last we did a promo, our dogs have become famous. <b>Alexis:</b> World-famous! <b>Renee:</b> World—like, stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame! Second big news. <b>Alexis:</b> Mm-hm? <b>Renee:</b> The reviews are in. <b>Alexis:</b> Mm-hm? <b>Renee:</b> Take yourself to Apple Podcasts, you know what you're gonna hear? We're happy! <b>Alexis:</b> It's true! <b>Renee:</b> We're a delight! A great distraction from the world! <b>Alexis:</b> I like that part a lot.

**Renee:** So if that's what you guys are looking for...

**Alexis:** Mm-hm.

**Renee:** You gotta check out our show! But what else can they expect?

**Alexis:** We've got dog tech, dog news, celebrities with their dogs. All dog things!

**Renee:** All the dog things. So if that interests you, well, get yourself on over to [Maximum Fun](#) every Tuesday!

*[Music ends.]*

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

00:30:36 April Host Welcome back to *Switchblade Sisters*. I'm April Wolfe, and I'm joined today by Karen Maine, and we're talking *Twister*.

Um, so despite all the trash talk that you might have about Jan de Bont, who, I still adore his work. He, you know, had a, still, a really great respect for what actors did and what they brought to things. And for instance, you know, like, part of his process was really listening to actors, if they thought that something was wrong about their characters.

Um, Helen hunt feels like she was really able to contribute to the development of her character. And I think, obviously, we can see that as being really important, because you know, we connect to her. I still love her as a heroine in this film many years on.

But she said, quote: "There were a lot of writers who had their hands on the script, so I can't say exactly who did what, because I don't know. But I know that there was a draft that I saw where the women were sort of catty with each other, and I didn't at that point know that I had a feminist agenda. Which, I do. I just knew it wouldn't be fun to watch, and I didn't want to play it. The technical term would be 'yucky'. I just raised my hand and said, 'There's a better way.' And nobody said, 'No, you have to.' Jan hires good, smart actors, and trusts us quite a bit to speak up about that part of it." End quote,

Um, and you know, that is, I think, a sign of a good director who's just like, "Well, if that doesn't feel true to you, then how can we make this more truthful?"

00:32:07 Karen Guest Totally. I love when actors do that. I think that's a really important part of the process. You either have to get them there from how it's written in the script, or you have to find something new that you're both comfortable with completely. Um, I'm so happy she did that, 'cause I was just thinking about that when you were reading that quote, like the relationship with Melissa. They really don't talk very often. There's that one scene in the diner, and the Shania Twain song is playing. But it's very like, subtle and un-catty in every way,

and I actually think Melissa's an amazing character and she acts the shit out of it. She's so good.

00:32:40 April Host And she you know, Jami Gertz, also because she is a very beautiful woman, was sometimes typecast earlier in her career as just like, the beautiful, hot lady. We talked about her a little bit in *The Lost Boys*, 'cause that's one of her earlier film roles, and um, that was in a time where people were just like, "I want to cast her because I want to make out with her. Like, she is hot."

Um, and still a beautiful woman, but here she plays like, this kind of very neurotic and sweet character, and still has one of the most iconic lines, where she's like, "We got cows."

00:33:09 Clip Clip *[Strong winds blow.]*

**Jo:** Cows...

**Melissa:** I gotta go, Julia. We got cows.

00:33:13 April Host *[Karen laughs.]*

And she's, you know, like she has this kind of like, curiosity about her. She's just like, trying to understand and trying to keep up. And she doesn't strike me as like um, you know, like I would say like, maybe like a Kathleen Turner like, *Romancing The Stone* kind of person. You know, where she's like, in high heels and can't deal with it and just whining like, "Why?"

*[Karen affirms.]*

Going back also to something that you said about like, Bill Paxton and Helen Hunt. It's just like, Bill Paxton doesn't get as much emotional work to do in this movie, and so I think that's maybe, you know, why his character is a little bit boring. 'Cause Bill Paxton is just like, so fucking amazing. 'Cause the one scene where, you know, it does kind of break into that is the place where the both of them decided it was like, their favorite scene to shoot, because it was just them acting and they didn't have to do any stunts.

And Helen Hunt said, quote: "Bill and I had a big scene where he says, 'Is that what you think, that the tornado came after you?' You know that one. It was a beautiful spot. Unlike any other place we worked. Deep, green trees and hills, which I didn't see a lot of while we were there, and I thought the scene was really well-written. And Bill was a fantastic actor. We got to really—everybody appreciated everybody's work. You're trying to do the deepest, realest scene in an action movie, and that can be hard. But I remember enjoying that it was about the acting in that moment, and capturing that on film the way that Jan wanted to do it." End quote.

And um, amid all of these action setpieces, you still have to go back to like, the structure of the story, the characters. And they had to have at least one moment where they just connect, and I believe that's also when he kind of confesses his love for her as well.



00:34:47 Karen Guest I mean, it's a great scene, but the hill that it's shot on was one of the hills from this Iowa bicycle race called Ragbrai that my dad had just done, and it's like, one of the hardest hills to bike up.

*[April responds emphatically with "oh my god".]*

Um, and that's what he, like every time we watched it he would be like, "I biked up that!" Um, *[Laughing]* which is really funny. And I just can't separate that—

00:35:07 April Host "I also had an emotional breakdown!" *[Laughs.]*

00:35:09 Karen Guest *[Laughing]* Yeah. No, I'm sure he did. He lost like, feeling in his—in his fingertips from holding the handlebars for so long. I would never bike for that long ever. But, sorry. Very weird tangent. But this why I love—

00:35:22 April Host No, that's great.

00:35:23 Karen Guest —this film so much, because it has all these weird like, childhood memories for me. Um, but yeah, I do love that scene. Um, for some reason—again, and you're right, like Bill Paxton is amazing. I love Bill Paxton. But when he's like, "Me, Jo. Me." And it's not the performance, I just think—I just think parts of the script—like, you can tell that there were a lot of people involved in writing this, 'cause I feel like some of the dialogue, it feels a little hackneyed in some places.

And you know, there are bits where they're like, literally running, and Bill says, "Run for it!" I just don't think people actually talk like that. You'd just be like, "Go, go, go!" You know, you wouldn't say, "Run for it!" like a cartoon character. But yeah, the part where he, yeah, confesses his love feels a little bit like it comes out of nowhere for me. Um, but I think the performances hold it together enough.

And you know, at the end of the day, is—it is a disaster movie, and I think that is like, the best—it's one of the best for that reason. Because even knowing every single thing that's gonna happen, I still felt like, tense watching it the other day.

Um, and that's—and also, I have to say, the fact that they don't kill any animals is like, one of the best parts of this movie. Like, there are two dogs, and they both get rescued. They don't die. And the horses, you see them again at the end. Um, and as a child, and as an adult, I really appreciate that. I feel like when you see a dog in any kind of genre film, you're like, "Oh, fuck. Buckle up. That dog's not gonna make it."

00:36:54 April Host Yeah, I don't like that. I don't like it. And we presume that the cow landed safely a town over as well.

00:37:01 Karen Guest Right, right. Yeah, the cow. I don't care about the cow.

*[Both chuckle.]*

I'm such an asshole.

00:37:08 April Host Going back to your whole like uh, Bill having to say like, “Run, guys! Run!” I mean, it reminds me also of like, action movies, or like these big blockbusters where someone says like, “That’s what I’m talking about!” And you’re like, “No.”

*[Karen laughs.]*

But I—I do have to say, Kathleen Kennedy had told people, like when they were doing like, a look back at ILM and all the things that they had done over the years to revolutionize film.

She said, quote: “ILM did a proof-of-concept shot for Twister. The minute we took that shot into the studio and they saw it, they said, ‘Done. We want to make it.’ We didn’t even have a script yet!” End quote.

So it was greenlit without a script. Michael Crichton and Anne-Marie had come—and they were married at the time, those two—they had come in with like, essentially a very kind of slim concept of like, what this would be. And so they didn’t have anything, and you can, you know, you can kind of tell, the patchiness or the piecework of it.

00:38:11 Karen Guest Yeah. That makes sense.

00:38:13 April Host But it’s a—it’s a funny thing. Like, when you get to a point in your career, which Jan de Bont had, um, with ILM on his side, that all of a sudden you get greenlit for like, a multi-million dollar movie without a script. *[Laughs.]* And as a writer, I mean like, that’s kind of a, uh, I don’t know. You kind of wonder like, are you important? Do you even matter?

00:38:35 Karen Guest Right, right. Yeah. Totally. That—I mean, that fills me with so much dread, just the thought of that. Like, I know everybody has deadlines, but that’s like, a real significant deadline. And then you get casts attached and all that stuff, you have a date for shooting and all those things. It just starts—yeah. With the scripts, it just seems—it seems really terrifying for everyone.

00:38:55 April Host Yeah. I mean, for them it was more about like, um, showing a different visual style that you could do with an action film, which was um, they had handheld cameras that shoot. Which was something that they had never done with ILM or any other CGI before, where it’s like, it feels documentary, as I said before. That the handheld cameras, they were like, “Great. This is an awesome concept. We think you guys can pull it off. Just like, cast some people.”

Jan de Bont wanted to cast only unknowns, which was only something he had to fight for, as well. With an indie film, like, they really encourage you to get the biggest star that you can, because you need to have that draw. Yeah, like how are you going to—and also with young actors. You have a young character, um, so you know, you have to hopefully find someone who’s like 18, playing um, playing younger so that you can have them for a full day. But there’s not that many younger actors who have a name.

00:39:53 Karen Guest Yeah. There’s more. There’s more and more, I feel like, thanks to Netflix. Um, ‘cause they have a lot of like, young uh, young-skewing

titles. But yeah, Natalia, I mean, I didn't even know who she was. *Stranger Things* had just come out and I hadn't seen any of her work, and one of my producers suggested her. And so I like, quickly scrubbed through the first episode of *Stranger Things*, and was like, "Well, she's talented."

Um, but yeah, it was scary, because I think the role of Alice in my film is a really tricky one, because her conflict is largely internal. Um, and you know, I didn't want to just find a way to like—you know, I wanted to be able to still show it, as you do in the film medium, and not tell it.

So I needed an actor who was able to carry these—these solitary scenes, where it's just her and very little dialogue. You know, that requires a lot of talent and expressiveness, and Natalia, I have to say, like, can really mug it up.

I mean, that's a crass way of putting it, because it's very talented, but she's—she can sell emotion and feeling with just her facial expressions, which I think sounds impossible. I'm always such in awe of actors and how good they are at doing things with a camera right in their face.

00:41:16 April Host The funny thing is like, de Bont, with all of these things of um, you know, throwing stuff at actors, and you know, putting them in danger. He always said that the actors had the hardest job.

He said, quote: "You try to walk in front of a camera, open a door, and say two lines."

*[April laughs. Karen agrees.]*

And he said, "Get in an acting class, so you know what it's like."

00:41:40 Karen Guest Yeah, and I—I acted in *Obvious Child*, the short film, um, you know, 'cause that was more of like, a thing we did as friends. Jenny was in it, but Jenny was like, a friend of a friend. Like, it wasn't—you know, it was long before she was famous.

Um, and it's terrifying. I hated it. In fact, in one scene, it was like, at a bar, and I remember like, I was just drinking 'cause I was so scared. And I did an improv class, and I got there early and took shots of tequila in my car before I went in. Like, acting terrifies me.

Um, I did musical theater as a kid, and that's a little different, 'cause I feel like once you step on the stage it's just go, and the nerves kind of disappear because you're in the moment. But with like film, you know, they turn the camera off and then you have to do it again. It's—I—I—and I know that's a tiny bit of experience, but I think it really helps when you're directing to know what it feels like to be on the other side of the camera. I think that's very true.

00:42:38 April Host Like, the whole cast is stacked. And that's, I think, again, something. Like, de Bont fighting for someone like Philip Seymour Hoffman, who was not a star in any right whatsoever. He was still just doing smaller character actor roles. And all of, you know, like so

many people just of like, their careers taking off, and like, whether it was *Speed* or this or something else. Just like, he seems to like people, and he likes characters, and—and you know, we can give him that.

00:43:05	Karen	Guest	Cameron—Cameron from <i>Ferris Bueller's Day Off</i> is both in <i>Speed</i> and <i>Twister</i> .
00:43:10	April	Host	Oh, he's so good. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:43:12	Karen	Guest	He's so good. He's so good. I love him.
00:43:15	April	Host	Alright. So we've said positive things about Jan de Bont, so we can— <i>[Breaks off, laughing.]</i>
00:43:19	Karen	Guest	Yes, yes. I'm sorry. I love your films. I love your films so much. And I just wish you'd gone easier on Helen Hunt.
00:43:28	April	Host	Yes. Yes.
00:43:29	Karen	Guest	But I love your movies.
00:43:31	April	Host	<i>[Chuckling]</i> Karen, it was really great talking to you today. And again, <i>Yes, God, Yes</i> , people can see it on VOD on all platforms. Um, and you said that you filmed something in London. So something else is coming up next?
00:43:43	Karen	Guest	I did a pilot, and we're gonna do a full series based on the pilot at some point, as soon as we're able to, with COVID. And that is a—yeah, a comedy, half-hour comedy for BBC3 and HBO Max. Starring Rose Matafeo, who's a very funny New Zealand stand-up comic, who's written it and is starring in it.
00:44:01	Music	Transition	
00:44:02	April	Host	Wonderful. So, keep an eye out for that, and definitely go see <i>Yes, God, Yes</i> , and uh, you know, don't turn off <i>Twister</i> when you see it on TV.  Thank you so much for coming.
00:44:10	Karen	Guest	Thanks, April!
00:44:11	April	Host	And thank you for listening to <i>Switchblade Sisters</i> .  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> .  Please check out our Facebook group. That's <a href="https://www.facebook.com/groups/switchbladesisters">Facebook.com/groups/switchbladesisters</a> .  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> .  <i>[Music fades.]</i>
00:44:38	Clip	Clip	<b>Melissa:</b> I gotta go, Julia. We got cows.

00:44:41	Speaker 1	Promo	<a href="http://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> .
00:44:43	Speaker 2	Promo	Comedy and culture.
00:44:44	Speaker 3	Promo	Artist owned—
00:44:45	Speaker 4	Promo	—Audience supported.