

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.
00:00:07	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>Um, so, a reminder that we are remote recording. I’m in my bedroom, very hot, um, and you might hear Chicken screaming. Chicken is my cat, if you do not know. Um, the audio is going to sound a little different than our studio’s, everything else is the same, except for today, our guest is writer-director Emily Hagins.</p>
00:00:41	Emily Hagins	Guest	Hi, April, thank you for having me.
00:00:42	April	Host	<p>For those of you who are unfamiliar with Emily’s work, please let me give you an introduction. Emily began her filmmaking career in Texas, when she was twelve years old and saw an Australian horror film called <i>Undead</i> that inspired her to write and direct her first feature, the teen zombie film <i>Pathogen</i>, about a waterborne disease that turns a bunch of teens into zombies.</p> <p>That micro-budget indie, chronicled in the documentary <i>Zombie Girl: the Movie</i>, put her in the public eye as an up-and-coming wonderkind, and she’s followed it up with four more features, including teen vampire satire <i>My Sucky Teen Romance</i>, which premiered at South by Southwest 2011, from Dark Sky Films. Coming-of-age Halloween film <i>Grow Up, Tony Phillips</i>, uh, which premiered at South by Southwest 2013, and teen heist film <i>Coin Heist</i>, from 2017, a Netflix Original still available to watch on Netflix.</p> <p>She also wrote and directed the segment <i>Touch</i> in Chiller TV’s horror anthology <i>Chilling Visions: Five Senses of Fear</i> and the segment <i>Cold Open</i> in the horror-comedy anthology <i>Scare Package</i>, which is on Shutter right now.</p> <p>She recently completed the six-part teen drama digital series <i>Hold to Your Best Self</i>, which premiered South by Southwest 2018, and the teen horror short <i>First Kiss</i> for Snapchat’s VHS series, which had it’s digital premiere on Halloween 2018 and it’s the—theatrical premiere in the Midnight Shorts program at South by Southwest 2019.</p> <p>So, Emily, the movie that you chose to talk about today is <i>The Faculty</i>. Can you give us a little explanation on why this is one of your fave genre films?</p>
00:02:05	Emily	Guest	Yeah, I—and I watched the movie again last night for the millionth time, just to be prepared, and psyched up for this, and, um—

[April hums affirmatively.]

I—I watched it pretty early on in my interest in genre films, at—where I was still pretty scared of anything horror—remotely horror-related, still scared of even *Halloween*, even—*The Holiday*, you know, just, everything was still freaking me out at this time.

But I started to get a little bit of an interest in—in genre films, and, uh, wanting to kind of make my own genre film, uh, before I made my first feature, when I was pretty young. And, um, and *The Faculty* had this really great mixture—well, my parents showed it to me because of the Austin, Texas connection, and that’s where I grew up.

And it was a little too scary for me, but they were like, you know, “You’re interested in filmmaking, this was made in the area, you might be interested in seeing, you know, this—this movie that was filmed around here.”

And, um, it just had that right balance of kind of campiness and just genuine horror, and also really great teen characters with agency, and, uh, you know, they’re the ones saving the day. They don’t rely on the adults, and that’s—that’s kind of a theme that’s resonated with me and my career.

So I, uh—even watching it again last night, it just really felt like such an origin of my love of horror, and teen horror. Uh, and, um, yeah. I just think it’s a great movie! Still is.

00:03:26 April Host It’s a great one to revisit, too, I think. Um, I—I loved it when I was younger, um, when I was a teen. And I uh, didn’t know until, you know, fairly recently that it wasn’t as well-received as I thought it was. ‘Cause in my bubble, we all loved it.

00:03:40 Emily Guest I didn’t know—I didn’t know until last night, when I was Googling—I wanted to just, like, do some more research and stuff, and I was like, “People didn’t like this movie?” I didn’t even know, yeah.

00:03:52 April Host It doesn’t make any sense. And, you know, I’m—I’m very curious as to why, um, Robert Rodriguez did not do an audio commentary track for it, which—I’m—makes my job a lot harder, but it does make you wonder what the hell happened?

But, for those of you who haven’t seen *The Faculty*, today’s episode will give you some spoilers, but that shouldn’t stop you from listening before you watch. As always, my motto is that it’s not what happens, but how it happens that makes movies worth watching. Still, if you would like to pause and watch *The Faculty* first, this is your shot, and now let me introduce *The Faculty* with a quick synopsis.

00:04:22 Music Music "The Kids Aren't Alright" off the album *Americana* by The Offspring

00:04:23 April Host And now, let me introduce *The Faculty* with a quick synopsis.

Written by Kevin Williamson and directed by Robert Rodriguez for

release in 1998, *The Faculty* stars an ensemble cast of young stars, including Josh Hartnett as stoner Zeke, Clea DuVall as goth Stokely, Elijah Wood as nerd Casey, Jordana Brewster as popular girl Delilah, Shawn Hatosy as jock Stan, and Laura Harris as virginal new girl, Marybeth.

In the first moments of the movie, we meet Bebe Neuwirth's Principal Drake, who informs the teachers that the budget is low, and music, art, all that stuff is gonna be cut. But football gets everything that they want.

00:05:01	Clip	Clip	<b>Principal Valerie Drake:</b> This is a football town, let me remind you. And yes, the team will get new jerseys, and new knee pads, and new jockstraps, and anything else they want in the name of education, because that is what the school board wants. Because that is what the parents in this town want. I'm sorry.
00:05:16	April	Host	<p>Then, Coach Willis, played by Robert Patrick, stabs her in the hand with a pencil, and the teachers eerily hunt her down and kill her.</p> <p>The next day, it's a regular high school day, with Zeke selling his homemade drugs, Casey getting his nuts knocked into the flagpole, Stan questioning if football is good for him, etcetera. And Principal Drake is there, and seems to be fine.</p> <p>Casey goes out to the football field and finds a strange, slug-like creature. He brings it to a science teacher, who says it's a kind of parasite.</p>
00:05:45	Clip	Clip	<b>Prof. Edward Furlong:</b> I don't recognize this surface tissue at all. Casey, I don't want to blow smoke up your butt here, but I think you found a new species.
00:05:51	April	Host	<p>Casey and Delilah, in interest of the news business, hide out in the teacher's lounge to try to get a story. But they instead find a teacher's dead body, and Coach Willis forcing a parasite creature into the school's nurse ear.</p> <p>Um, they call the police, but a strangely confident and smug and very alive Principal Drake says they're just making it up to get attention.</p>
00:06:13	Clip	Clip	<b>Principal Valerie Drake:</b> I can see how it all got out of hand. <i>[Through laughter]</i> It's a pretty bizarre series of events.
00:06:18	April	Host	The next day, Casey comes up with a theory that an alien species is taking over the school.
00:06:24	Clip	Clip	<b>Casey:</b> We think aliens are taking over our school. <b>Stan:</b> <i>[Laughing]</i> What? Come on. <b>Casey:</b> Look, you saw what Brummel did in the shower. <b>Delilah:</b> I saw a dead body in the closet. <b>Stokely:</b> They've been calling students into the office all day. The

students with the most influence on them, including the new team captain.

**Delilah:** Looks like you picked the right week to quit football.

**Stan:** You think aliens have infested our school?

**Delilah:** That would explain their weird behavior, wouldn't it?

**Stan:** Give me a fucking break.

00:06:51	April	Host	Everyone laughs at him, until the science teacher suddenly gets very aggressive. Zeke cuts off the teacher's fingers, which keep moving, and then Zeke stabs the teacher with a pen full of his designer drug and kills him. The drug, apparently, really dehydrates people.
			All the teens take Zeke's drug to prove they're human, but Delilah doesn't pass, and destroys Zeke's lab before escaping.
00:07:14	Clip	Clip	<b>Delilah:</b> There's nowhere to go. Nowhere to hide. We're everywhere.
00:07:19	April	Host	Stokely says there's probably an alien Queen that needs to be killed, and they think it's Principal Drake.
00:07:24	Clip	Clip	<b>Casey:</b> We kill the Queen. We can get them all back.
00:07:26	April	Host	But when they kill her, nothing happens. Meanwhile, the football team is infecting opposing players with the parasite. Stan gets turned by Coach Willis. Zeke gets accosted by his hot alien teacher. And Stokely gets the surprise of a lifetime when Marybeth reveals herself to be the alien Queen.
00:07:43	Clip	Clip	<b>Marybeth:</b> You know, in my world, Casey, there were limitless oceans as far as the eye could see. Beautiful home, 'til it started to dry up. So I escaped. Came here. I met you. All of you. All of you were different from the others. You were lost and lonely, just like me. And I thought that maybe I could give you a taste of my world. A world without anger, without fear, without attitude. Where the underachiever goes home at night to parents who care. The jock can be smart. The ugly duckling beautiful. Class wuss doesn't have to live in terror.
00:08:24	April	Host	Stokely gets infected, and Casey and Zeke go head to head with Marybeth, whom Casey lures behind the bleachers, then crushes with uh, I don't know. I don't remember, it's like, some kind of thing. He just crushes her. And then he injects her with the drugs. A month later, everything is back to normal, with the teens paired up romantically, having saved the world from an alien invasion. But it's maybe not as happy ending as you think.

And that's the end. Okay. So, this is a Kevin Williamson film, is how it was billed. It was not billed as a Robert Rodriguez film, as an Elijah Wood film, Josh Hartnett film, these were not stars. So it was Kevin Williamson who was very much the lead of this, and that was because of the success of *Scream*.

Um, and—for him though, he was so excited that Robert Rodriguez was going to be doing his script, because, you know, he'd already worked with Wes Craven, and he just kind of appreciated these directors who bring new things to it.

And he said, quote: "When I was watching the movie for the first time, I couldn't believe the energy Robert approached this with. It's different from a lot of his other stuff. It's true the camera's always moving, it's fast, a lot of the things he's known for, but he gave the camera a restlessness. You always feel like it's moving in an unnerving way, which is exactly the characters I created. He truly understood what I was trying to do with the voice of the kids, and he visually transposed that." End quote.

Which, I mean, maybe—I—I'm trying to figure out why Robert Rodriguez wouldn't want to be talking about this film all the time, considering that people are like, re-finding these movies from the 90s, um, but maybe it's because he—it wasn't specifically a him movie, you know? It was a Kevin Williamson movie.

00:10:03 Emily Guest Yeah, that's an interesting point. I was—I was kind of looking into that last night, and kind of how Kevin Williamson became the—the kind of visionary for the project, through Miramax in the wake of *Scream*. Cause I think it was a story created by some other writers, that—that, um, was taken by Miramax, yeah—and kind of revamped in Kevin Williamson's style. And Robert Rodriguez was coming off of—was it *Desperado*? Or *From Dusk Til Dawn*. These—these movies—

00:10:35 April Host *From Dusk Til Dawn*, yeah.

00:10:36 Emily Guest They kind of had this—this fun quality to them, and it just felt like, what a—what a perfect match at that time in both Robert Rodriguez's career and Kevin Williamson's career. I mean, in my mind. I haven't seen a single Kevin Williamson thing I've not just loved. I just—I love—I love, uh, I just watched *Dawson's Creek*.

*[April hums affirmatively.]*

And it—it's very new to me, the fresh, "Oh my gosh, this is amazing," but it is not new to anybody else. Um, I talk about it all the time.

*[April laughs.]*

People are like, "Emily, this is old, shut up," but, you know, um—

00:11:05 April Host Yeah, you're living in the past, Emily.

00:11:07 Emily Guest But I think that, um, yeah, it's interesting. I do wonder, you know, what—maybe, if there's—if it's Robert Rodriguez or the studio, I don't know.

00:11:16 April Host I think the thing that I'm—I'm really interested in is the fact that he was able to kind of, like, accommodate this other voice. That Rodriguez was able to—to take his own style, and adapt it to this

other person who was clearly the kind of like, dominant presence in this particular kind of storytelling that—that he was doing.

And, you know, I think that he and Quentin Tarantino, when they were working together, they have kind of like, a similar style, or at least they did, you know. It was probably very easy to transpose those words into image, um, but, I think that it's just kind of the sign of a versatile director that they can kind of take this other material, and—and make it work. What are—what are your thoughts on—that? Because you—you tend to write your own work, right? Like, you're generating most of your own work. Have you thought about taking on other projects that—that are maybe a challenge to your own visual style?

00:12:06 Emily Guest Oh, yeah. Definitely. I—I tend to write because I mostly see the writing as a blueprint for what I already have in my mind as a visual, um—I—I guess, sometimes, uh, especially in independent filmmaking you encounter people that don't really, um, read the actions in the script, they mostly read the dialogue?

*[April hums affirmatively.]*

And, so, um, I mostly just come up with a—with a plan for how I'm going to direct it and I—I don't really focus too much on the actions themselves, if I know it's something I'll be making because, um, I'm just like, "Well, no one's going to read that anyway."

Um, but I, uh, I appreciate reading a really good script, and I'm always, always open to directing someone else's work in a collaborative effort, cause collaboration is one of my favorite things about making movies to begin with. That's why I don't wanna just be a writer. I want to work with actors that bring characters to life, and cinematographers that bring a unique vision to the—to the story.

And um, and I guess the closest I've come with—with that is I made a movie for Netflix called *Coin Heist* that was based on, um, an existing work. A young adult novel. And I had to—I did write the screenplay for that, but it's based on—on some existing property. So that was a translation process from—from book to script to screen.

00:13:27 April Host Does that—do you think that that, like, um, expands your kind of visual vocabulary, being able to do that?

00:13:33 Emily Guest Yeah. I'd love to do it again. It was really interesting, because that property as well originated as a script that got turned into a book, that got turned into my script again, that got turned into a film. So, that particular property went through a whole kind of like, telephone game of what that story actually was.

And it was kind of interesting to me, because in a sense, it almost felt like nobody's story. I mean, like everyone kind of took their own approach with it, and in fact I never even got to read the very original iteration of this as the script. I only read the book version. And um, and then, you know, I wrote something based on that. But it kind of shows how an idea can be translated through several

different perspectives.

And I mostly, in my version of it, tried to focus on things that are important to me. Mostly teenagers having, you know, to—I kind of brought this up with *The Faculty*, but teenagers having agency in their own journeys and learning from their mistakes and consequences. And those are themes that really resonate with me, and so I kind of tried to lift that out of the story a little bit more, and focus on that with the performers.

And I guess the—that’s kind of going—deviating from the original question, but I would love to work with other people’s material more often, because I feel like, you know, if it is somebody’s original work, if you’re working with somebody’s, you know, novel that they—so, it’s it’s very personal to them. I would love to work on turning that into—into a screen adaptation.

00:15:02 Music Transition “Switchblade Comb” by Mobius VanChocStraw.

00:15:07 April Host So, we’re gonna take a quick break. When we come back, we’ll talk more, uh, *The Faculty* and more of Emily’s history of—of amazing work. We’ll be right back.

*[Music ends.]*

00:15:20 Promo Promo **Music: Gentle, upbeat piano music.**

**Helen Hong:** Hey, J. Keith.

**J. Keith van Straaten:** Hey, Helen! Hey, you’ve got another true/false quiz for me?

**Helen:** Yep! Our trivia podcast *Go Fact Yourself* used to be in front a live audience.

**J. Keith:** True! Turns out that’s not so safe anymore.

**Helen:** Correct! Next. Unfortunately this means we can no longer record the show.

**J. Keith:** False! The show still comes out every first and third Friday of the month.

**Helen:** Correct! Finally, we still have great celebrity guests answering trivia about things they love on every episode of *Go Fact Yourself*.

**J. Keith:** Definitely true.

**Helen:** And for bonus points, name some of them.

**J. Keith:** Recently we’ve had, uh, Ophira Eisenberg plus tons of surprise experts like Yeardley Smith and Suzanne Somers.

**Helen:** Perfect score!

**J. Keith:** Woohoo!

**Helen:** You can hear *Go Fact Yourself* every first and third Friday of the month, with all the great guests and trivia that we've always had. And if you don't listen, you can go fact yourself!

**J. Keith:** That's the name of our podcast!

**Helen:** Correct!

**J. Keith:** Woohoo!

[*Music finishes.*]

00:16:09 Music Transition "Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.

00:16:16 April Host Welcome back to *Switchblade Sisters*. I'm April Wolfe, and I'm joined today by Emily Hagins, and we are talking about *The Faculty*.

So, um, something that uh, you know, Emily, you may have been noticing in your revisit of so much media from the 90s, is this really ever-present cynicism that is in so much of the work. But particularly genre film of that time, particularly genre film that was trying to appeal to teens or younger audiences. And um, this is something that Kevin Williamson was very purposefully doing in his work, because he kind of understood a very key thing that I think a lot of people had missed when it came to teens in the 90s.

He said, quote: "When you're telling a scary story in this day and age, you can;t tell a story in 1998 and not comment on things in a cynical fashion. We live in a cynical time. It's also hard to get an audience to believe something unless you let them laugh at it. So trying to get someone to believe in something they've seen a hundred times before is very hard, unless you give them the ability to go, 'Wink wink, we're laughing,' because we know this is a movie. We know we're making fun of this. The situation is ironic. And maybe, if you can fool them with the humor, you can build to a place that can actually scare them." End quote.

And, I mean case in point, *Scream* is the big one. But I think he's also doing it here. He was doing it even with his movie *Teaching Mrs. Tingle*, which he directed himself, he was doing it in *Dawson's Creek*. There's a—there's an irony in those unknowing, and an understanding that the teen characters are actually smart. They're not just kind of dumb, silly 1980s like, "Let's go see what's in the closet" kind of thing. They have a different intelligence in them that is reflected on the screen.

And um, I was wondering about, you know, what do you think of cynicism? What do you think about like, having to try to scare people? Like, is it possible to still scare people in a genuine way, without kind of lulling them into this false sense of security, or...?

00:18:16 Emily Guest That's a really interesting point, 'cause I was just reading an article about *The Faculty* and cynicism last night, and it was pointing out things that I had never noticed before. And I read it before I watched

the movie last night, and it—and I was able to kind of pick up on these things that I wasn't noticing, including the uh, ending, which I guess I'd never noticed the obvious uh, cynicism in what was intended with the very final images, and what Elijah Wood says, and what happens with the flagpole.

And um, and it—*[Laughing]* I have to say, it went over my head when I was 12 years old.

00:18:56 April Host Oh, really?

00:18:57 Emily Guest But now—yeah.

*[Both laugh.]*

Of course, now it's um, you know, I'm like, "How did I never see this?" But um, I think that uh, you know, that's interesting. Generally in my writing and in my philosophy in horror, I don't—I don't know if I could write anything cynical. I don't think I view things in a cynical way. So, I'm not sure if that's something that I could bring to the table with my horror.

Kind of tend to say, I want to see light character—not light necessarily, but hopeful, optimistic, something—something light to hold onto in our protagonists. Make their way through a dark world, through some dark situations around them, and see how that gets challenged and shaped through the dark circumstances.

Um, and that's mostly the view I take when I write horror, but I really like that quote about cynicism, and kind of, you know, getting—kind of weaseling your way into someone's minds and what they think they know, and subverting it with a cynical perspective. And it kinda—I think *The Faculty* does that very well, in ways that I never noticed on a million rewatches, until doing some thorough research last night.

00:20:08 April Host Well, it's an interesting thing in terms of general aesthetics, too, because it is a very 90s aesthetic that we're talking about, that cynicism. That's like, specifically from the 90s, and doesn't always apply elsewhere. I mean, I think a lot of people made a big deal about the fact that millennials became a kind of generation of positivity, of like, all good vibes essentially.

And that was a thing that has been appealing to people of a certain age, um, you know, for a long time, is like, a little bit less cynicism and a little bit more kind of, activity or earnestness. And earnestness is, you know, a big thing that I think I saw within most genres, that it kind of made a comeback, and cynicism died out.

And now I think that we might be in the new cynicism, uh, meets earnestness generation, where we're trying to pound those two together and see if they can potentially work. *[Laughs.]*

00:21:06 Emily Guest Yeah, definitely. I think that, uh, especially with how technology has shaped, has shaped us, and shaped young people now. and especially when writing for young people now, there's a lot of, um—I

just feel like the way information is processed, uh, as someone who grew up with Facebook, you know? It's just really, strange, you know, you just grew up getting text messages over phone calls, and it just changes the way you process the world around you.

And, um, it's very, it's very odd and now, you know, when you can really, really tell. I mean, I think you could always tell, but you can really, really tell when a middle aged white guy is writing young women for TV or film, because they absolutely did not grow up in the environment, especially in the age of technology. But uh, I mean, everyone had technology, but I'm just speaking to social media and kind of text messages, and I just feel like that really kind of shapes your brain.

And even, you know, since I graduated high school in 2011, the kids now, I do not—I do not understand, I don't know what TikTok is, I don't know what, um, what uh, what else they're doing. I did something for Snapchat, I told them I don't really know what Snapchat is. They were okay.

Still, we made a—we made a good agreement there, but it's still—I don't feel as connected even now, uh and I'm not thirty yet, you know? And I just feel like things are rapidly changing in how young people are growing up and perceiving the world.

And the moral of the story is that I don't think old white guys should be writing that, especially for young female protagonists.

00:22:49 April Host Yeah, I mean, Kevin Williamson at that time was like definitely a, you know, anomalous figure of earning this right to capture teen voices, and uh, but he—he was a rarity I think.

00:23:03 Emily Guest Right, right.

00:23:04 April Host But I want to go back into something that was also a part of that quote, and it has to do with humor. We've talked about this a lot in the show. This comes up quite a bit. A lot of people need to kind of put humor next to horror, humor next to sci-fi, to um, feel comfortable with it, to make it feel comfortable to be afraid. But it has to be a certain kind of humor.

And the way that Kevin Williamson said was uh, quote: "Humor is so important. Along as it's true humor, situational humor and character humor, and not just campy devertive humor." End quote.

So, I think he was kind of thinking about timeless humor, things that, um, don't rely on a certain kind of pop culture or like reference. Or something like that that was—just has nothing to do with the character, but is just like a buzz of like, "Oh yeah, here's an in joke for the time, here's some camp, this is fun, make fun of this."

So, I like the fact that he's like, he's all about like, not making fun of the characters, but having the characters make fun of each other. It's a weird fine line that he's—that he's riding.

00:24:17 Emily Guest Yeah I'm definitely a big believer in that philosophy, in comedy and

horror, comedy in general. It's my favorite genre to work in. I felt really lucky to get to, uh, do a segment of *Scare Package*, that just came out on Shutter, because it was an opportunity to work on that, uh, genre blend.

And it's also just hard to convince people that it always works, because horror and comedy are both a little subjective and, um, it sometimes can be a little more comedy horror. But I really think since both genres have a set up and punchline kind of quality to telling a good scare or a good joke, I think that they really do work really well together.

[April affirms.]

And um, I—I think that the, um—I just really think that the comedy that people remember, that really sticks with our hearts, is something that resonates on a character level. Or like, the perfect unfolding of a situation, like you can almost see it, you know, coming. You can see how the joke might unfold. Or it's just like, perfectly tied into the situation.

I can rarely think of a joke I've seen in a Hollywood, uh, comedy movie that's something that's just funny in the moment, that really sticks with me. Maybe it's like a chuckle then, but it's not.

I think, tying comedy to the characters and the situation and the pilot is the preferential way to go, to just make a good movie, to tell a good story, to have a good character arc. And um, that's really my philosophy working in comedy or horror comedy.

00:25:58 April

Host

I'd love to go a little bit into casting for this film. Because *The Faculty*, despite the fact that they said they had no names for the cast, has a ton of fucking names. It is like, from the adults being like, Bebe Neuwirth, Jon Stewart, Salma Hayek. Like, the list goes on and on and on.

And then the teen cast is like, those people are all still bankable stars, and this is before—I think Elijah Wood was the biggest name, and that was because, you know, he had been like, a child actor. But this is like, pre-*Lord of the Rings*, and his kind of like, ultra fame. This is him still kind of working off of like his earlier, like *North* and *The Good Son* and that kind of thing. Um, so it was apparently a really, really arduous task pulling this task together.

Robert Rodriguez said, quote: "I never thought I could juggle that many characters. Speaking parts alone, casting took forever. It took longer to cast than to shoot. It took months. It's an ensemble group, and once you've cast one person, you'll change your mind who you want for the other parts because of who—who you want to work together, not just for the students but for the teachers as well." And that's the End quote..

And I think you can kind of see it, because there were so many different kind of pairings that needed to work and needed to kind of like, vibe off one another. And uh, apparently they came up with the best case scenario, but still it was apparently taking much longer to

cast than it was to shoot.

00:27:37 Emily Guest

Yeah, I think that really paid off in the, um, the performances, you know? They're great, you know, every person, I think, shines in what they're trying to do.

And, you know, knowing the kind of twists of the film, and just how intentional the dialogue is, how much foreshadowing goes on in the first act of the movie, and um, just how subtle every perf— I mean it's not a subtle movie at times, you know. But, it—the performers are willing, are able to work with, um, I guess that balance of being able to, you know—it's, some people that may not be human anymore giving a subtle look at times, you know.

Or, you know, but the dialogue could be a little—maybe on the page could read a little bit heightened, but they ground it really well. And I think it's that combination of that really skilled writing and, um, these really great actors. Even the young actors, you know, um, just really making it—the—the chemistry work, and really investing your heart into what happens to them.

00:28:48 April Host

You know, it's an interesting thing too, because the audition process involved going in, taping for Rodriguez, again and again. They had multiple callbacks. All of them had multiple callbacks, because they had to keep kind of moving pieces around essentially. So you would think that it would be, you know, these people come and know exactly who their characters are when they get to set, but because of all these rearranging pieces, they were still kind of figuring it out as they went along. And Robert Rodriguez called it the kind of like, half knowing.

He said, quote: "When an actor comes to me or a crew member and he goes, 'I'm not sure if I know how to play this part,' I say, 'That's beautiful, because the other half is gonna show up when you're here.' They say knowing is half the battle. I think the most important part is the other part: not knowing what's going to happen, but you trust that it will be there. When you put the brush to the canvas, it's going to know where to go, and the further you're out the way of it, it'll just happen." End quote.

Um, and for him, I think that it was nice to have these younger actors a little bit destabilised by the casting process, to be like, kind of fully in these awkward teen years, and kind of finding the magic in the moment, um which is, you know, half terrifying half exhilarating.

00:30:25 Emily Guest

And that's very true to the teen experience, because you're really flying by the seat of your pants as a teenager. You don't know what you're doing.

*[April affirms.]*

And, um, I think that's—I think that's why I really gravitate towards young characters in storytelling. 'Cause I just think that time in your life where you don't know what you're doing, and—and you don't know who you are, um, it's kind of, uh—just a really interesting

headspace to occupy.

And—and to just get those really authentic moments, I think you do have to be uh, you know, unsure of yourself, um, as a performer, which must be really difficult. I can't, again, I cannot imagine acting, let alone being in that position. Especially in those self-conscious teen years.

But uh, it's really—I just—everyone just really brings it in the movie. There's no, in my opinion, no bad actors. Uh the first person that comes to mind when I say that is Usher. I just love that Usher is in *The Faculty*. I think he's great, but everybody, Usher included.

00:31:07	April	Host	I mean, that was the funny thing. Yeah, yeah, the marketing of that film was like, Usher—it looked like Usher was the star of the movie. He was not.
			We're gonna take a quick break when we come back we'll talk more The Faculty and a bunch of emily's movies, we'll be right back
00:31:23	Promo	Promo	<b>Music:</b> Upbeat, sci-fi sounding music plays. <b>Dan McCoy:</b> Hey! I'm Dan McCoy. <b>Stuart Wellington:</b> I'm Stuart Wellington. <b>Elliott Kalan:</b> And I'm Elliott Kalan. Together, we are <i>The Flop House</i> . <b>Dan:</b> A podcast where we watch a bad movie and then talk about it! <b>Elliott:</b> Movies like— <i>Space Hobos! Into the Outer Reaches of the Unknown and the Things That we Don't Know: The Movie</i> , and also— <i>Who's That Grandma?</i> <b>Stuart:</b> <i>Zazzle-Zippers! Breakdown 2</i> and <i>Backhanded Compliment</i> . <b>Dan:</b> <i>Elvis is a Policeman!</i> <b>Elliott:</b> <i>Baby Crocodile and the Happy Twins!</i> <b>Dan:</b> <i>Leftover Potatoes?</i> <b>Stuart:</b> <i>Station Wagon 3</i> . <b>Elliott:</b> <i>Herbie Goes to Hell</i> . <b>Dan:</b> New episodes available every other Saturday! <b>Elliott:</b> Available at <a href="http://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> or wherever you get your podcasts. <b>Dan, Elliott, and Stuart:</b> <i>[In unison]</i> Bye!!!
00:32:15	Music	Transition	"Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.

00:32:21 April Host Welcome back to *Switchblade Sisters*. I'm April Wolfe, and were joined today by Emily Hagins, and were talking *The Faculty*.

So, something that I really wanted to get into is the fact that when I think of the 90s and filmmaking and stylistic choices, I do think of Robert Rodriguez. Even today, I think that he holds true on very specific stylistic choices, and he almost waits until they come back around into style, because they're like, kind of hip now, or they are different.

And one of those things was something that was kind of like, adorably out of fashion by the time it was used in 1998, and that was the introduction of characters with a freeze frame and the characters name flashing on the screen as a title card.

*[Emily affirms gleefully.]*

Um, and it's like, it's such a, um, it's such a shortcut in filmmaking and— and I think that the economy of that of just, "Here's the character's name, remember who this is" is lovely.

And it is, like I said, very economical, because you have so many fucking characters to deal with that it's just like, it's so nice to the audience to just be like, "This is who it is, moving on."

And it also sets up a kind of kitchiness to it, a tone of uh, silliness in a sense. That like, "Hey, this sci fi story might give you a little bit of the creeps, but it will also be endearing to you."

00:33:53 Emily Guest Yes, yeah. I think—I think maybe that's a good example of, uh, that the movie is endearing. Like, there's nothing about it that's trying to be ironic, I feel like, or um, I don't know. I don't know the word. Just like, it's not really trying to—it kind of has B-movie elements, but it's not trying to make fun of horror, like, say that horror is stupid, or something like that. Not that kind of B-movie.

But like, it has, um, campiness to it that is genuine, and I think that, um, the title sequence is a good example of that. When I think of that tactic, I think of *The Faculty*, because—and the font is just so burnt into my brain in the red, you know, letters—and I just think it is great for an ensemble. Especially a teen ensemble, um, 'cause there's a lot of like, little background players that are kind of talking. Like the couple arguing in the—that's just all kind of going on during that opening credit sequence.

But um, I think—I think that, uh, yeah there's just something like—it's just earnest through and through, from every decision. Even—even ones that are a little wacky, like that opening cred—I just love it. I love it. You said it and it made me smile. Yeah, it's great.

00:35:09 April Host *[Laughs]* There's almost something that I notice about this too, that Robert Rodriguez almost approaches the big set pieces as their own kind of distinct short films in a sense.

Like, if I think about the opening, um, of the teachers attacking the principal, um, it's an encapsulating thing. It could exist unto itself

and have its own kind of visual sense and visual style, and then you go into this kind of um, these character introductions and it has its own kind of sense of style. And then going on and on, and each one and each one almost each one almost feels like it was inspired by a different sci-fi movie of the past or a different movie of the past, you know?

00:35:50 Emily

Guest

Yeah, yeah, it's—I feel like, too, the amount of um, just the visual choices being made for each scene, it kind of shows something that I wish there was more of now, I guess. *[Laughs]* I feel like there's a lot of like—like, TV is really cinematic these days, and movies are more like TV.

Like, it's kind of, it's kind of this thing visually, I guess, where, uh—just especially when it comes to things like camera moves and colour pallets. I just feel like, um, I would just like to see more cinematic choices like just the way the opening of *The Faculty*— just saying everything should be *The Faculty*, but—

*[April laughs.]*

But. you know, just how different the opening is from, you know, that—I mean, the very opening with the principal. Yeah, you're right. You're exactly right. It's a completely different visual style.

That part scared the daylights out of me when I was a kid. That was the part, the opening with the principal getting stabbed in the hand, because it's darker. It's, um, it doesn't have this kind of youthful energy to that sequence. It's just kind of straight up scary to me. It was.

And, um, and then you start to meet the kids, and it becomes a little bit more like fun and goofy at times. And as the situation gets more scary, it's a little less goofy, but I just—yeah, I just want to see more, uh, I guess horror. Teen horror now that has that, those visual tactics in it.

00:37:19 April

Host

Yeah, just a thoughtfulness to those things.

I wanted to talk about working with a budget after not working with one for a very long time, and um—because this is a movie where everyone came in, and it—it was a well oiled machine. Robert Rodriguez had worked with this crew for a very long time, and um, you know, his now ex-wife, Elizabeth Avellán, was the producer on it.

And uh, it—it felt like a family apparently, and everyone was like specifically doing one job, as opposed to, you know—like, a lot of people who had worked on independent films who had started working on this film said that they were happy that they only had to do one job. The one job, as opposed to doing everything all at once, you know, like, grip is also filling in as, uh, like craft table.

And what Laura Harris, who played Marybeth, said is, quote: “It was the first non-independent movie I’d ever worked on, so the feeling of money, you know, the catering, it was a little less frenzied.

Everyone really stayed within the confines of their job. Everything was fulfilled, like on an independent film, everyone's doing a bunch of jobs at once, and this was like, there's a person to do every single little thing. It added to the ease of working with Robert Rodriguez, to the flow. It just flowed very easily. There were no problems, just the attitude on the set of grace and ease." End quote.

And um, I think it's really interesting. Like, when I hear about movies that have big budgets, you know, a lot of big budgets and things seem like they're a mess. It's just like, "Oh no, you don't have the right person, you know, steering the ship."

Because if you do have the money—I mean like, that's finally the luxury. Like that's the thing, like wow, everyone has to do their job and that's all that they have to do. Um, and you know, taking that stress away, that's what money should be able to do. *[Laughs.]*

00:39:21 Emily Guest

Yeah, exactly! And sometimes it adds more stress where it shouldn't. Um, but that's kind of what, I think, you dream of from making really independent films. It—just being able to pay people that you love to work with that are really talented and, and, dedicated.

You know, you just say, "Ah I want to be able to pay you more than what I'm paying you, or you know, put you in a nice hotel if we have to shoot at—"

Not—not, you know, just something that's not leaking from the ceiling, you know, not like the Ritz, or whatever. It doesn't have to be the nicest.

00:39:53 April Host

Yeah, not something where you are like, worried.

00:39:56 Emily Guest

Right, exactly, exactly. Just like, everybody, you know. So the money is used to show people, just everybody on your whole crew and team, how much you value them and their hard work. And um, you know, it's, uh, I don't know. That's always what I hope for, with the next film and the next film.

It's—I just wanna show people how much I love to collaborate with them, and how much, you know, we value having them on the team and what they bring to the project.

And that is a pitfall of independent filmmaking, because you might be working with someone a little long, or they might have to pick up an extra job, or the food might not be as good. And you still are trying to tell them "But I promise you, like, I love working with you. I would just write you a really nice thank you note this time," you know?

Uh, and it's, but, Robert Rodriguez really symbolised kind of moving from extremely independent filmmaking to working with studios in Austin where I grew up. And that was really influential to people like me, that um, you know, were growing up in—in Austin, and wanting to make movies. And to see how other people in the area were able to do that, um was really inspiring.

Especially when I—you know, I also loved *Spy Kids*. Separate conversation.

00:41:14 April Host

Great, great movie, yeah.

00:41:15 Emily Guest

I saw it a thousand times in the theatre. *[Laughs]*

But I just thought it was—I had like, got really far in some *Spy Kids* contests where I invented something, and I just thought, “This is the height of my career, and with the best movie ever made.”

*[April laughs.]*

And I was like, “This is amazing.” But then it lead into, “Oh, he made you know, *From Dusk Til Dawn*,” as I started getting interested in horror.

It's so interesting that he has this very, uh, diverse filmography, as someone who grew up as a kid interested in filmmaking leading into an interest in genre filmmaking, in Austin.

00:41:48 April Host

Oh yeah, well as we end this episode, I'm gonna end us on, uh, a lovely Robert Rodriguez quote to take us out.

He said, quote: “You always feel like you're still in high school. I used to make movies instead of papers in high school, and I'd get graded on them. It's the same thing with this movie. I turn in my movie project and wait for my report card from all the teachers. A-, B+, C-, thumbs up, thumbs down. It's kind of cool. It's like, you're forever a student in this life. I can't wait to see what I get on my report card.” End quote.

00:42:17 Emily Guest

That's cute!

00:42:18 April Host

*[Giggling]* So, it's a lovely, lovely sentiment. And uh, and I want to thank you so much for joining us today in uh, talking about *The Faculty* and all of your films in your career.

And, again, people can see—they can see *The Coin Heist* on Netflix, and where else can they see your work right now?

00:42:33 Emily Guest

Yeah, um, I have a short on Snapchat, which you have to watch on Snapchat, called *First Kiss*. And um, and then *Grow Up, Tony Phillips*, another one of my films, is out there on streaming platforms. And um, and that's—I think that's all I have available *[Laughs]* publicly right now. Oh, wait! *Scare Package* just came out on Shutter! Sorry, my bad.

*[Both laugh.]*

00:42:59 Music Transition

“Switchblade Comb” by Mobius VanChocStraw.

00:43:00 April Host

Yeah, so take a look at all those. Get familiar with Emily's work, and then you can watch *The Faculty*. And thank you again so much.

00:43:06 Emily Guest

Thank you. Thanks for having me.

00:43:08	April	Host	<p>And thank you for listening to <i>Switchblade Sisters</i>.</p> <p>If you want to let us know what you think of the show, you can tweet at us @SwitchbladePod or email us at <a href="mailto:SwitchbladeSisters@maximumfun.org">SwitchbladeSisters@maximumfun.org</a>.</p> <p>Please check out our Facebook group. That's <a href="https://Facebook.com/groups/switchbladesisters">Facebook.com/groups/switchbladesisters</a>.</p> <p>Our producer is Casey O'Brien. Our senior producer is Laura Swisher, and this is a production of <a href="http://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a>.</p> <p><i>[Music fades.]</i></p>
00:43:35	Clip	Clip	<b>Stan:</b> Give me a fucking break.
00:43:38	Speaker 1	Promo	<a href="http://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> .
00:43:40	Speaker 2	Promo	Comedy and culture.
00:43:41	Speaker 3	Promo	Artist owned—
00:43:42	Speaker 4	Promo	—Audience supported.