

00:00:00	Music	Transition	“Switchblade Comb” by Mobius VanChocStraw. A jaunty, jazzy tune reminiscent of the opening theme of a movie. Music continues at a lower volume as April introduces herself and her guest, and then it fades out.
00:00:08	April Wolfe	Host	<p>Welcome to <i>Switchblade Sisters</i>, where women get together to slice and dice our favorite action and genre films. I’m April Wolfe. Every week, I invite a new female filmmaker on. A writer, director, actor, or producer, and we talk—in depth—about one of their fave genre films. Perhaps one that’s influenced their own work in some small way.</p> <p>And, uh, as you may already know, reminder we are remote recording. So, um, I’m in my bedroom, and, um, Casey is in a room somewhere, with fans, I hope. Uh, my AC’s turned off for your pleasure. Um, the audio’s likely gonna sound a little bit different from the studio’s. Everything else is the same, except for our guest today.</p> <p>We’ve got the wonderful, wonderful, wonderful actor Rachel True. Hi, Rachel!</p>
00:00:51	Rachel True	Guest	Hi! Thank you so much for inviting me on, I really appreciate it.
00:00:55	April	Host	<p>Thank you for coming on.</p> <p>Um, for—for those of you who just want a refresher on Rachel’s career, maybe a “this is your life” of her life, please let me give her an introduction.</p> <p>Rachel is a New York native who grew up to graduate from New York Un—New York University, is that correct? New York University?</p>
00:01:11	Rachel	Guest	That is.
00:01:12	April	Host	Oooh, what’d you study there?
00:01:13	Rachel	Guest	That is correct. Um, well, you know, uh, the reports of my graduation may—may or may not be exaggerated.
			<i>[Both laugh.]</i>
			I was there for a couple of years. I, uh, studied journalism, actually, in the very beginning. I was very interested in writing, and I still am.
			<i>[April affirms.]</i>
			At that point, I knew I wanted to be an actor, but I thought, “No, I need a practical—practical, do something practical!” So I studied journalism for a couple years, and—
00:01:37	April	Host	<i>[Guffaws]</i> Journalism!
00:01:38	Rachel	Guest	<i>[Laughing]</i> I know, I know!

00:01:42 April Host So, after NYU, after studying acting, Rachel, uh, began auditioning for a television series, where she ultimately landed her first kind of big visible role, on, uh, the episode—two episodes of *The Cosby Show* in 1991.

[Rachel laughs.]

And it became clear she'd be able to make a viable career on camera. So, I believe that's when she picked up and moved to Los Angeles, which I think we're gonna talk a little bit about in this episode, too. That's when she made the rounds on all the major shows. We're talking, uh, *90210*, *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, *Hanging With Mr. Cooper*, *Thea*, *Getting By*, *Dream On*, and so many others.

00:02:13 Rachel Guest [Laughing] I did!

00:02:14 April Host You did a whole lot.

00:02:15 Rachel Guest I had a recurring on *Dream On*, which I loved. That was one of my first gigs out here, and that was an interesting show to me, because of the way it was edited. So I was delighted. And also, Richard Roundtree played my grandfather on that. And I was just in shock and awe of Shaft the entire time we were shooting.

00:02:31 April Host I love it! So, okay, but then TV, but then she worked into film, because in 1993, Rachel took a different direction and got a role in the cult comedy feature, *CB4*. Uh, a classic. After that, she was cast in a few TV movies, but when she appeared in the 1995 film *Embrace of the Vampire*, it showed her to be a natural for horror.

[Rachel laughs.]

So, in 1996 she got her breakout role playing Rochelle in *The Craft*, a story of four frenemy witches who come into power they have no business wielding.

Okay so, from there, Rachel shined in roles in the films like uh, *Nowhere*, *Half Baked*, *The Big Split*, *New Best Friend*, *The Perfect Holiday*, so many more. On television though, you were seeing her in, *Once Again—Once and Again*, *The Drew Carey Show*, *Half & Half*, *Being Mary Jane*, *Better Things*, etc., etc.

And in 2018, you also saw her as herself in the Shutter documentary *Horror Noire*, a really wonderful look at the history of Black horror. Um—

00:03:31 Rachel Guest Oh, thank you for mentioning that—that film, because, uh, it is such a great sort of dissertation on the parallel between Black peoples' lives and horror movies, and—and the parallels in between. And it opens with *Birth of a Nation*, by the way.

[April affirms.]

So, we're not just talking straight horror. We're talking horror horror.

00:03:50 April Host Oh, yeah. Big fan of one of the producers, Ashlee Blackwell, who,

uh, ran *Graveyard Shift Sisters* for a long time, and she's a—she's a—we're a big fan of her, at the show. Um, coming up, however, Rachel, you have a couple movies waiting for release, including *Assault on VA-33*, and I know *Agnes*, because I know Mickey Reece. Um, and, uh, you play—

00:04:09 Rachel Guest

What a small world! No way.

00:04:10 April Host

I know! I actually—I just wrote a film for him. So, you play a nun with secrets in this. And I'm very excited, because I—I've actually heard about the cut, and uh, and I know that you're great. So, um—she also has an upcoming *True Heart Intuitive Tarot Deck* coming out, in October.

00:04:28 Rachel Guest

Oh, *True Heart Intuitive Tarot*, and I've—I—I sent them my bio, and spelled that wrong. That's on me. It's *True Heart Intuitive Tarot*. Yeah, it's a book I wrote, and, um, sold to Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, which is a big major publisher. Which I was excited about, because it's a niche thing, you know?

[April affirms.]

And I didn't know if any major publishers would be interested in it. And basically it is a—a tarot book, um, and a lot of people, especially my people, which would be—I mean, I'm mixed, uh, half-Black Jew, but like, my people are Black, and generally te—tend to say things like, "I don't know about tarot, it's the devil." And I'm like, no, no, no, it's paper cards.

[Rachel laughs and April affirms.]

With images on them, from the Bible, I might add! Like, you know, Tower of Babel. And it—

00:05:11 April Host

It's all the same big world of spiritualism, I think.

00:05:14 Rachel Guest

Absolutely! And for me it is simply a way to get in touch with your higher self, your intuition, using the cards. Or, um, you know, God, if you're super religious, which I am not.

But if you are, it's just a way to get in touch with the knowledge inside yourself, because your vis-visceral reaction to a card is going to be completely different than mine. And your visceral reaction to a card is going to vary depending on your mood day to day.

So it's basically, "Here, I'm going to give you a little thing." It's basically—I use, uh, tarot cards as cognitive therapy in a box. Just shrink in a box, to be a hundred percent honest. It is a great way to fr—it is—shrink yourself so you don't drive your partner or your friends insane.

00:05:56 April Host

Well, I mean—so, here's the thing. All the stuff that you're talking about, with—with tarot, and, you know, spiritualism, and—and, like, essentially like a philosophical approach to life that you—that you have, and that you've shown to have, and also the 90s, really plays into the movie that you talked—that you've selected to talk about today. So, can you tell us about the movie that you've talked

about—or that you chose to talk about, which is *Orlando*.

00:06:21	Rachel	Guest	<p>Well, yeah. Okay, so I moved to Los Angeles in the early 90s, in '92, and this, uh, mo—Sally Potter's <i>Orlando</i> came out in '92. And this holds a super special place in my life.</p> <p>But before I jump into it, I've gotta say, I really struggled with the movie to pick. Because I was really torn between Julie Dash's <i>Daughters of the Dust</i>, which, I am lucky enough to work with Miss Dash, and she is amazing. <i>Daughters of the Dust</i> is a 90s movie, this beautiful, this lyrical, this poetry on screen, about the uh—uh, Southern women, Geechee islands.</p> <p>Um, but, I decided to go with <i>Orlando</i> and Sally Potter because I'm a Northern girl, you know? My family is Northern, and even when I was a little kid—I was in foster care from zero to four. And I was in foster care, looking in New York Times in—in the real estate section, on a Sunday, going, "Did you guys know you can buy an island? Did—did you know? You could buy a castle! You could buy a castle, you guys!" And, you know, nobody cared.</p> <p>Uh, and then I went to live with my parents, um, at—at age four. But I was just always just fascinated with history, historical things, uh, you know, castles, and—and all of that lore. And maybe that comes from being an East Coast Northern girl, right? Where there's more of a, uh, hook into Europe, let's say, than if you were in Texas.</p> <p><i>[April affirms.]</i></p> <p>Um, I really think—I thought about this, that when I wake up in the morning, you know, when I first wake up, and I'm becoming conscious, and—and—and waking up I r—I think first I'm a sentient being, right? I'm just a brain or a thing or a consciousness or a soul waking up. And then I kind of feel my womanness, probably because I have giant boobs, but uh, I feel that I—that I'm a woman. And then I feel wh—uh, what it means to be a Black person in America. Like, that it—because that's all a part of me.</p> <p>But I don't wake up going, "I am Black." I do wake up going, "I am—I am a woman. I am a conscious thing." And that reminded me so much of <i>Orlando</i> that I had to go. Because that's part of the theme of <i>Orlando</i>, in a sense, is someone who travels through—through time and gender. Uh, and it feels, in a very witty, sly way.</p>
00:08:38	April	Host	<p>Um, but for those of you who haven't seen <i>Orlando</i>, today's episode will you—give you some spoilers, but that shouldn't stop you from listening before you watch. As always, my motto is that it's not <u>what</u> happens, but <u>how</u> it happens that makes a movie worth watching. Still, if you would like to pause and watch <i>Orlando</i> first, this is your shot.</p>
00:08:51	Music	Music	<p>"Coming" by Jimmy Somerville</p>
00:08:53	April	Host	<p>And now let me introduce <i>Orlando</i>.</p> <p>Based on a novel by Virginia Woolf and written and directed by</p>

Sally Potter for release in 1992, *Orlando* stars Tilda Swinton as a beautiful young nobleman in Elizabethan England. He is unblemished and proud, and Queen Elizabeth pays him a very special visit that could secure the future for himself and his heirs. She promises him a large tract of land and money, with one stipulation.

00:09:19	Clip	Clip	Queen Elizabeth: Do not fade. Do not wither. Do not grow old.
00:09:27	April	Host	And you know what? It turns out that's not what's hard. <i>[Rachel laughs.]</i> With his land and money, he receives some Cossack guests, and falls hard for a beautiful Cossack woman. He—he kisses her, and tells her they are to be married. He thinks everything is going to be perfect, at which point she says that it doesn't work like that.
00:09:43	Clip	Clip	<i>[Wild howls in the background.]</i> Orlando: You're mine! Princess Sasha: Why? Orlando: Because I adore you.
00:09:50	April	Host	Just because he desires her doesn't mean he owns her. <u>Sigh</u> . He loses his love, and his backup lady, too. The nobleman Orlando then resides in his castle lounging about and dabbling in the arts for a couple of centuries. At which point he tries to hang out with a fancy poet, only the poet is kind of an asshole, and doesn't like Orlando's poems.
00:10:09	Clip	Clip	<i>[Squeaking and sloshing water can be heard as he speaks.]</i> Publisher: Try as he might, this gracious, noble lord, fool lifts his pen. He thinks he then can write. He cannot, for who can pen when he is bored? The mind of leisure only can be trite.
00:10:32	April	Host	It sours him on that venture, but a new future comes to him when a gentry requests that Orlando become an ambassador for the throne to the Ottoman Empire in Constantinople.
00:10:40	Clip	Clip	King William of Orange: I believe they have an interest in horticulture. I'd like you to bring them some tulips.
00:10:52	April	Host	Which he sees as a mysterious, exotic place. Actually, all the British did, at this point. <i>[Rachel laughs.]</i> There's not much trust between him and the head man of the Empire, but eventually Orlando wins his respect and friendship. They get drunk and extole on the virtues of being men.
00:11:06	Clip	Clip	<i>[Crickets chirp.]</i>

			Orlando: To the manly virtues; loyalty, courage...
00:11:14	April	Host	Some time later, Orlando is called upon by his friend to take up arms and fight for Constantinople.
00:11:20	Clip	Clip	The Khan: Orlando, our enemies are at the city wall. Will you help?
			Orlando: You wish me to take arms?
			The Khan: Surely Orlando, you, an Englishman, are not afraid?
00:11:36	April	Host	He does so, and is almost killed, but he refuses to fight in the end. He doesn't wanna take up his duty. He wakes up from a long sleep of death and realizes he has become a woman, the Lady Orlando.
00:11:50	Clip	Clip	Speaker 1: Same person... no difference at all. Just a different sex.
00:12:00	April	Host	The Lady Orlando returns to her castle, and everyone takes her transformation in stride. Issues arise, however, when she is told a woman cannot legally own property.
00:12:09	Clip	Clip	First Official: You are legally dead, and therefore cannot hold any property whatsoever.
			Orlando: Oh. Fine.
			First Official: Two, you are now a female.
			Second Official: Which amounts to much of the same thing.
00:12:22	April	Host	A man who has admired her for many years when she was still a man says that he desires her and they are to be married. In a mirror of what the Cossack woman said to Orlando, she says, "It doesn't work that way."
00:12:33	Clip	Clip	Archduke Harry: I am England, and you are mine.
			Orlando: I see. On what grounds?
			Archduke Harry: That I adore you.
			Orlando: And this means that I belong to you?
			Archduke Harry: You are refusing me?
			Orlando: I am. I'm sorry.
00:12:53	April	Host	She meets a gentleman, and finds that she can be vulnerable with him, and the two make love, and she is seen and known for perhaps the first time in her very long life.
			We g—then get snapshots of time passing. Orlando has lived for around four centuries, and we catch up with her in the present day, when she has a son and is trying to publish a memoir. She is happy, and secure, and has grown so much over the years, even if she never, ever grew old. That's the end of <i>Orlando</i> . Um.
00:13:22	Rachel	Guest	<i>[Laughing]</i> I think another thing that I really loved about this film too

was the way Orlando lived their life is sort of how I think a lot of artists live. Like life is art, art is life, right?

[April affirms.]

So no matter what situation you're in, sort of Tilda Swinton's—sort of aloof, right? Watching it, experiencing it, yet sitting back and watching it, yet still accessible performance was astonishing to me.

00:13:50 April

Host

Well, I think that might have to do with the fact too that Sally Potter was very interested in making this character very, uh, innocent? And almost childlike?

[Rachel affirms.]

And she said, quote: "A child, before he or she gets very hurt in the world lives very much in the present, approaching each new situation as it is an extraordinary magical event. As we become adults, we forget that. We bring with us our past like a rock on our back. Like, 'Oh yeah, I've seen that before.' Not a fresh response.

"For an individual, when you give up your past, whether it's the accident of class background, or you're hurt as a child, that was the past, now is the present. People don't have to be determined by their past, that's what I mean. If you're really coming into the present, and life is really beginning, you can learn from the past but you don't have to bring it with you like a burden."

And that's what she was directing Tilda with, was this idea that she was, um, a burdenless person. She would come into a scene and be like. "Well, I'm meeting it for the first time. Let's see what happens." Um—

00:14:51 Rachel

Guest

Right? Which in—in that scene, where she—she looks in the mirror—and I'm paraphrasing, you probably have the exact backline—but it's like, she says, uh, it was formerly a he, "Now a female, same person, nothing different, just a different sex."

[April affirms.]

As if, uh, it is raining today. You know, just a—as a fact, not as something as in modern society, right? With all the rights things that are going on now, it would not be approached so innocently. So there were some things so super refreshing, I think.

In the early 90s when I went and saw this film, because I had not been living in LA for very long. I'm a New Yorker. I'm a diehard New Yorker. I couldn't drive, so I couldn't get anyone to go see *Orlando* with me, nobody wanted to. I took the bus from Hollywood to the West side just to see this film. And I remember being just awestruck by Tilda, because I hadn't seen her—in my memory, don't think I had seen her in anything before this, so I wasn't aware of her.

00:15:53 April

Host

No, most people weren't.

00:15:54 Rachel

Guest

But I became really aware of Tilda Swinton in 1992. And in fact, I

remember, all these years later, when I saw her in like, *The Beach*, I was like, “This is fine, but where is the stuff? Where? Where are her roles?”

[April affirms.]

So I was not at all surprised to see her take over, eventually.

00:16:13 April Host No, no, I—I have the—the same thoughts, too, but it—I mean, you’re right, that this is the first that, even though they had been—both Sally Potter and Tilda Swinton had been working for quite awhile individually, um—

[Rachel affirms.]

Tilda Swinton most famously with Derek Jarman in those collaborations and that’s how those two met, um, it—it—when this came to can, and it was really well-received, um, all of a sudden, um, Tilda Swinton became a—a face, you know. Sally Potter chose her own route, didn’t wanna be as commercial, but, um, you know they both became very viable in that sense.

00:16:43 Music Transition “Switchblade Comb” by Mobius VanChocStraw.

00:16:46 April Host And, um, we’re gonna take a quick break. When we come back, we’re gonna talk a little bit more about that. I’ve got a ton of notes on it. And, uh, we’ll also talk a lot more about Rachel True’s, uh, career and history as well. We’ll be right back.

00:17:01 Promo Promo **Music:** Cheerful, jazzy, old-timey music plays in background.

Freddie Wong: Hey, you like movies? How about coming up with movie ideas over the course of an hour? ‘Cause that’s what we do every week on *Story Break*, a writers’ room podcast where three Hollywood professionals have an hour to come up with a pitch for a movie or TV show based off of totally zany prompts.

Will Campos: Like that time we reimagined *Star Wars* based on our phones’ autocomplete!

Will: Luke Skywalker is a family man and it’s *Star Wars* but it’s a good idea.

[Multiple people laugh.]

Matt Arnold: Okay. How about a time we wrote the story of a bunch of Disney Channel Original Movies based solely on the title and the poster?

Matt: Okay, Sarah Hyland is a 50-foot woman. Let’s just go with it, guys.

Freddie: Or the time we finally cracked the Adobe Photoshop Feature Film.

Matt: Stamp Tool is your Woody, and then the autofill—

Freddie: Ohhhh.

Matt: —Is the new Buzz Lightyear!

[Multiple people laugh.]

Freddie: Join us as we have a good time imagining all the movies Hollywood is *[accusatory voice]* too cowardly to make! *[Dramatic voice]* *Story Break* comes out every Thursday on Maximum Fun. *[Regular voice]* I don't know why I'm using this voice now.

[Music ends.]

00:17:46 Music Transition "Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.

00:17:52 April Host Welcome back to *Switchblade Sisters*. I'm April Wolfe, and I'm joined today by Rachel True, and we are talking about *Orlando*.

Um, so, you know, we were, uh, talking earlier about the look-to-camera, and you mentioned, you know, its effect on something like *Fleabag* and the way that it's really grounded, and I'd love to get into how they decided to do that as—as their method. Um, because—

00:18:15 Rachel Guest Because you would agree that that helps shorten up some of the monologues, right?

[April affirms emphatically.]

Now you don't need someone espousing, well, uh, you know, we call it len—length-height, in acting. It's like, "Okay, now I've gotta get to all the stuff that the audience needs to know. I am laying all this exposition dialogue." And they've done away with that in this film.

00:18:36 April Host Yes! Um, and I think, you know, for—for this movie, it was, um—Tilda had developed this as a method before she even started working with Sally Potter.

She said, quote: "The very first film I was in, *Carravaggio*, I remember asking Derek Jarman if I could look into camera, because I was negotiating this relationship with the camera at the time. I was not completely comfortable with being watched, so I wanted to make friends with the camera full-on. That also went into my performance work doing *Man to Man*. That's one of the reasons why it was the last piece of theatre that I ever did. I loved the relationship with the audience so much that I never had—that I've never been a great one for the fourth wall ever since." End quote.

Um, and I—

00:19:18 Rachel Guest Interesting! I didn't know that quote, and that makes total sense. And that's so crazy to me, that—that must've been a delicious relationship between the director and actor, and a lot of trust that the actor can bring this idea, right?

[April affirms.]

And the director taking in and saying, “Let’s try it.”

00:19:35 April

Host

Yes! And I have to say, like, she also said, quote—er, this is what Sally Potter was saying: “One of the things that Tilda has is an astonishing sense of comic timing. One of the things that characterizes our memories were the enormous reams of uncontrollable laughter that we could’ve—that we sparked by the particular kind of knowing glance she would give me.

“When you’ve been sh—shoulder-to-shoulder in the process and you’ve developed codes of understanding and nicknames—mine is Potato, for example—you go into slightly different areas where even a glance signifies incredible profecity. Not ev—not just about the project at hand, but all the processes you share. So Tilda ended up reading out loud to me, which is a rare thing, something like two hundred successive drafts. And when she could smell a turkey, that look would come.

[Rachel laughs.]

“So there’s a lot of direct looking in the process, at different stages. So I think it was there as a seed for the direct address.” End quote.

And I—I love that, where it’s just like, she started out with Derek Jarman, and was breaking the fourth wall, and then through reading two hundred successive drafts that Sally Potter had written, out loud, and kind of giving her her immediate feedback on things, um, then it kind of was born through that process.

Have you ever had anything like that, where you’ve gotten to read so, so many drafts of something early on?

00:20:48 Rachel

Guest

You know, as an actor, not so much. Because I’m generally brought in when it’s already like, “This is the version we’re kinda gonna—gonna work on.” Um, and one of the luxuries I always loved about film, especially back in the day, film was you got to ad-lib. You know, which was so disrespectful to the writer, in the end.

[April laughs.]

But I loved as an actor, to be able to just ad-lib around something, and create your own version of it. But, no, as far as filmmaking I have done that with writing. Um, and that is something I’ve always been passionate about, and didn’t know if I’d get the opportunity to do it. And with this book, I have, and hopefully I will—I’m working on other writing things, and scripts as well.

And it’s funny, the quote that you told reminds me of, um, I write with a friend of mine. I write on my own, and with a friend of mine, Alec Mapa. And one of the first things I wrote years and years ago, he read out loud for me, and I knew when it was hitting turkey-ville, because his voice would change, and he would look—he wouldn’t say, “This sucks, this part sucks.” He would—his voice would change, and I could tell by the vocal change that I’d hit dead space.

[Both laugh.]

So yes, I mean, as a writer, uh, having something read out loud and by someone else is super important. But I would love that luxury as an actor. Or would I be bored to death? I don't know. I think if the script was as fantastical and fabulous as *Orlando*, I would absolutely love it. If I had to do it around a sitcom, not so much.

00:22:15 April Host Ugh, I know. Yeah, I think it—it just depends, I mean—I—the actors that we've talked to, so any of them have kind of tried to take control of their careers, by either producing or writing. Because they—they're tired of maybe being brought in at the end of a process, and—

00:22:30 Rachel Guest Well, here's where I wanna jump in and say, that's a nice luxury. I would say most of my Black counterparts have not had that luxury, to be totally honest, you know?

[April affirms.]

I knew quite—when I was coming up, I knew quite a few young twenty-three year old white girls who had a good deal, and got to produce, but I knew nobody Black who had that kind of deal going.

So I'm glad things are changing now, if that makes any sense. You know? Because, to bring it back to *Orlando*, probably why I was drawn to that, because I'm a young Black actor, I know all I can audition for. I can't ever audition for the girl in the pretty dress, you know? I'm auditioning for the servant to the girl in the pretty dress. If I'm lucky.

But in a movie like *Orlando*, I don't even know. Did they even have any Black people? You know what I mean? It's—we—I was—I knew how limited space and time was for me simply because of my skin color. And I was never resentful of my skin color, it's beautiful, um, I was resentful of the society.

00:23:31 April Host You know, I wanna bring up something that, um, that Potter said, that, um, she was bristling when people were calling this a feminist film. And—and she had a—she had a good reason for it. And I—I wanted to bring this up to get your thoughts on.

She said, um, "I have come to the conclusion that I can't use that term in my work. Not because of disavowal, but because it has become a trigger word that stops people's thinking. You literally see people's eyes glaze over with exhaustion when the word flashes into the conversation. So I never use the term except among intimate friends, for whom it has a very different meaning.

"I also think that the word feminism doesn't imply enough in terms of solidarity with other liberation struggles. I'm firmly committed to the notion that no one group can be freed until all are freed. The female struggle implies Black struggle, it implies struggle with an—anti-semitism, it implies all the other possible struggles. But I am not interested in making didactic political statements with my films." End quote. Um.

00:24:25 Rachel Guest Well, I love that she had that awareness, you know, in that statement. Because—especially for me, I’m a Gen X-age woman, right? So I’m coming up in New York City at the time of um, uh, feminism, and women’s movement, and tennis!

[April chuckles.]

Women’s tennis was really big in the 70s, and the feminist movement. But it was something I, like Orlando, was watching. Watching, and observing. I’ve always been a bit of an observer. Uh, as a kid I would watch sometimes, rather than engage, which was probably why I became an actor. But like Orlando, I’m watching this from the outside because—I didn’t understand this as a kid, what my outsideness was, I just knew I felt outsiders. Now as an adult, I understand it’s because, oh, it’s a very white feminist movement, in the 70s. So it makes sense I felt outside of it.

And now, by the 90s, that feminist movement, the words had been distorted as they are today to mean something terrible. Like, I remember a few years ago, before all this, you know, Me Too and everything came up, and women were like, “I’m not a feminist!” As if it were something terrible. Uh, it was so assaulting to my Gen X ears, you know? Uh, because I thought just being a feminist meant equal rights, right? Just wanna get—I wanna get—I wanna get paid and valued the same as a man, period.

Um, so seeing this character go through that, and, um—and also uh, de—dealing with being a man and then a woman, and having her ideas now shot down because she’s a woman, or her poetry cannot be good, or whatever, is a lot of what we all experience, as women.

00:25:57 April Host Yeah, the—I—I think, um, there’s the thing that I—that I really love is just the really subtle thing, of, um, how, when he’s a man, he’s asking that Cossack woman like, “Oh, you must marry me.” And, um, and she’s like, “No!” And then with like—with like, no trace of irony or anything, then she as a woman says the same thing to this man, who’s just like, “Who—who else will have you?” And she’s like, “Oh, no.”

[Both laugh, and then Rachel affirms.]

But this also speaks to something too, that I’m curious about, because, um, she—Sally Potter had gotten this advice about, um, you know, having kind of mirrored themes but never saying anything more than once in a film.

She said, quote: “I look at cinema as intimately connected to time. It’s bound by time. An hour and a half or whatever. In *Orlando*, everything moves forward in time. It never goes back, even though there are repeated dramatic elements, such as rain falling, a symmetrical echo. I was working on the advice of Michael Powell, ‘You only have to say things once.’ It’s a risky feeling, but I found it exciting. You have to find the one clear way to say something, and then let it go forever.” And—

00:27:10 Rachel Guest It's trusting your audience, first of all, to get—and trusting yourself, that within this one action that I did, people will get what I'm talking about. Instead of, you know, being so obvious, because I—listen, I've been stuck at home, like a lot of people, and I've watched a lot of movies and television. And, you know, there's nothing "save the cat" about *Orlando*.

[Both laugh.]

There just isn't! And I'm not knocking—actually I'm not even gonna knock save the cat, right? Because they're—that's a formula, for script writing. And, you have a—

00:27:38 April Host Also, it works in the movie *Keanu* very well.

00:27:42 Rachel Guest That's what I'm saying! It works in—it works in plenty of movies exceedingly well, save the cat.

[April affirms.]

It actually comes from, um, I think it comes from *Alien*. Uh, it—it like, at the beginning of the movie you see a character you don't really know if they're bad or good. So, you have them do something, like Ripley saves the cat, in *Alien*, and you know she's a good person. So, save the cat is a formula.

Anyway, um, there's nothing like that going on in this, and I think that is what's interesting to me, because now we have become a very formulaic way of doing things. And I'm—an—and I'm sort of hoping that we move back to almost a 90's aesthetic in film where we do trust our audience is smart enough to catch the idea, because film should be expedient.

00:28:23 April Host There's—I mean, I—I think also that's—that's something that you're getting into. Of like, being the writer and the director allows for a lot of um, uh, uh, interpretation, that—that only you can get. The reading between the lines, that I think, is, um, you know, when you have a kind of Hollywood system setup, where someone's writing screenplays for other people to direct. And I think sometimes you can get the right communication, and other times there's just like, overcommunication, and, um—

00:28:50 Rachel Guest Well, the subtlety gets lost.

[April hums affirmatively.]

I mean, the thing we love—or I love—about *Orlando* is the subtlety, right? And wit, and all of that. And a lot of that gets bludgeoned out of scripts because we wanna reach the—where's the money? It's all about making money, you know? And when we're talking about an indie film, back in the 90s, yes of course that's about making money, but it's definitely a little more art, you know? There was a little—a little more art, what kind of art are we creating?

Uh, because, you know, when you think about the 90s, the beginning of Sundance, all of that, like, art—art houses, art films.

That's why when I moved to LA, I could not under—I kept saying, "Where is the center? Where is the downtown, with the art house, and the coffee shops?" And there weren't any, it was strip malls.

00:29:30 April Host Yeah. And if you were in the know, you knew about like, LA Rebellion, and all those folks who were coming out of that. But like, you—if you weren't around like, it was like, "Oh, well, you had to graduate from UCLA."

00:29:3* Music Transition "Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.

00:29:40 April Guest Um, we're gonna take another quick break. Uh, when we come back, uh, when we come back—well, first off I wanna say that both Rachel True and I do enjoy money, um, and then—

[Both laugh.]

Secondly, we're gonna take a quick break. We'll be right back to talk about more *Orlando*.

00:29:56 Promo Promo **Ben Harrison:** Alright, Adam. Uh, Maximum Fun wants us to record like a promo to tell people that they should listen to *The Greatest Generation*. You wanna do that?

Adam Pranica: No! I am tired of all the extra work. I just wanna talk about *Star Trek* with my friend.

Ben: I—I think it—it would be good to, like, try to get some new listeners by appealing to the audiences of other shows? Like, this—this will only take a minute or two. It could be good for us!

Adam: We sit down for an hour every week and talk about a *Star Trek* episode and make a bunch of idiotic fart jokes about it. It's embarrassing. If it got out that we made this show, I think it would make us unemployable.

Ben: Adam—I have bad news for you. We have tens of thousands of listeners at MaximumFun.org.

Adam: Oh, my god. I think I'm gonna throw up.

[Sound of office telephone plays quietly in background.]

Ben: *The Greatest Generation!* A *Star Trek* podcast by a couple of guys who are a little bit embarrassed to have a *Star Trek* podcast. Every Monday on MaximumFun.org.

Adam: I'm really gonna be sick.

00:30:44 Music Transition "Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.

00:30:49 April Host Welcome back to *Switchblade Sisters*. I'm April Wolfe, and I'm joined today by Rachel True. We're talking *Orlando*.

Um, you know, something that you had said earlier kind of caught my attention, um, and that is how you were talking about going into a room, and people kind of only seeing you as one thing. Just like,

okay, here's a Black woman. Like, here's a young Black woman, here's a young Black girl. And—and I think a lot of actors are always fighting against that kind of first impression that people get, and, like, what they think they can, um, play in those roles. But of course, if you're a person of color, I think that it's an even smaller box that you're put in.

And, um—and I think with Tilda Swinton and this movie, they did a lot of um, experimentation early on to convince people, especially the money people, that she could play both a man and a woman, and then it wouldn't be just a big fucking joke.

Um, Tilda Swinton said, you know, early on, she said, quote: "We realized we had an idea of how I might look. That's all we had. We hired a couple of costumes, a female and a male costume, and we did a photo shoot, and we took it to cam, and all the while having a real laugh and building up enormous debts. We didn't know what we were doing, but we were still interested, and we were being fed by the idea of this book, so we kept building on this very simple thing, the look, and my look." End quote.

And so, like, before anything, before they even had a script, they did a photo shoot with Tilda Swinton in these costumes, and said, like, "She could do this. Like, here is the person."

00:32:17 Rachel Guest

Well, because, the thing is, people—again, need to realize that the money people in film are exactly that. Money people. They graduated from Wharton, not UFC Film, you know? They are business people so yeah, I—and sometimes I think they are frustrated artists, but that's another story.

Um, but yes, I think sometimes they need a visual. They need to see this person in this costume, and then they go, "Oh, okay." But unless you show that visual, in that thing, there is no "okay." That is how it rolls.

Like, even, again, in the 90s, around it a little, to my own career, with like, *The Craft*, and I've told this before, but that was for white girls. Hands down. And, you know, I had to really fight to get an audition for it, um, and—uh, you know, even then it was a struggle, it was a struggle to get these people to see I could do this. An—an—I speak the same patois as your white girls. You know?

In fact, when I moved to LA, it was so bludgeoned into me that I had to learn, uh, a hood accent, um, because I was only going up on just hood stuff. I remember I went and auditioned for uh—uh, *Clueless*, and I was like, "I'm going to CPK." And they were like, "No." And I was like, "Oh, fuck, I—I have to switch back to me, Rachel True."

00:33:42 April Host

[*Laughing*] Oh, no!

00:33:43 Rachel Guest

I was so confused, and I like, kind of blew that. That wasn't my part, anyway, but I blew that audition because I couldn't—I think I'd just come from a hood girl audition. You know, when I was sort of ripe for that kind of thing. You know, I wanted people to know there were

middle class people, Black people, roaming around who were not the Cosbys.

Um, uh, meaning their parents were doctor—rich people, that are ostensibly rich. Um, they were middle class, you know? Working class, whatever, who—who spoke the same, ‘cause we all grew up the same.

So, I know, with *The Craft*, when—when I fought my way in there, the character was originally bulimic, and then they switched it up, uh, once they hired me, and added in the racism thing. Which I think is stronger, to be honest, because when I think about that character and the racism she puts up with, like, I’m still dealing with it today.

In fact, moreso today than I was then, because I was young enough to have my blinders on then, and go, “None of that matters! So what? So what, I can’t get read for this, or so what—or so what if I get paid half as much or a quarter of as much as the other actors on this film, for the same job. So what?”

And I’m just—now, I understand why people become angry Black ladies. I don’t know if that’s what I can say. I do.

[April laughs and affirms.]

Because now, I’m cranky about it. Now I’m like, “Fuck off. Stop offering me a quarter of what everyone else gets paid for the same bullshit.” You know? Etcetera, etcetera. So I try to walk that line, between not becoming too bitter and crabby as I get older, um—

00:35:14	April	Host	But still voicing it.
00:35:16	Rachel	Guest	Right, but I’m still voicing it. And I’ve been very vocal about that kind of stuff online. And I’m never not surprised by the people who don’t understand, necessarily what I’m talking about. Like, I’ve had fellow actors say, “Well, you’re not invited to that signing convention because you’re not as famous as the other girls.” And it’s like, fuck you.
00:35:34	April	Host	Famous to who? Like, what are you talking about? Like, what—
00:35:37	Rachel	Guest	They’re talking about the other actors. I mean, listen—
99:35:38	April	Host	I know, but like what is there—
00:35:38	Rachel	Guest	Some of my cast—some of my own cast thinks this, and I’m like, it’s not about that as these things. At these things. Trust me, it’s not about who’s famous or the twelfth Jason, from 1984, wouldn’t be at that table over there.

[April affirms.]

It is simply about who is in the movie. And when I come to these conventions, and there’s no one Black here, this is what I’m fighting for. And, again, I’m pretty vocal about this stuff online, and it’s not just completely self-serving.

Like, when I mouth off about give me billing for *The Craft* if you're going to put a picture of the four of us up, it is for me, but it is also for the future generations. Because when I was a kid, and I would see a movie, and it was like the Black person, who didn't have a name, and never had a credit, and never became a known actor, or marginally known, because we never talked about them, and we didn't credit them.

Or, for example, in a textbook if I—as a kid, growing up, you see a picture of a dancing woman. That's what the statue is called, "Dancing Woman." Let me tell you something, back in history, that woman had a name! She had a name at a certain point, and history lost that name. I'm—in—in the way that, you know, devaluing women.

Uh, so I'm fighting for this because I know that there's a young actress who's in her twenties right now, who's gonna go through the same thing I did, when I was younger, and she's gonna end up—and if I fight for the billing now, maybe she won't have to be excluded from the press that would help her become more known, like I—like I was, so.

00:37:00 April Host

I wanna get back into the acting performance, and—and how you've been directed in your career, because, you know, like you've—you've worked with a lot of different directors. And I wanted to talk about Sally Potter, and her way of approaching, um, directing actors in this film. Because it is extremely philosophical, and I can't imagine that it works for every actor. But I'm—I'm curious how it resonates with you.

She said, quote—and this is like, uh, talking about directing the love-making scene after, um, Orlando has become a—a woman. She says, "For Orlando, it is like looking into a mirror of a possible future. The real question is not only whether she is a woman needing a man or a man needing a man, it is a—also about the meetings of ideologies. England's feeling of destiny, arising out of it's past. America's through free will, of a dream of its future. And in their embrace is the bittersweet theme of possession, but behind these layers of implication is the simple question—what is love? It is two members of the human race, meeting each other. That is how the scene was directed, through the eyes." End quote.

So basically she's saying like—the question was just like, "How did you wri—direct that scene?" And then Sally Potter's answer is just like, "I told them a bunch of philosophical things!"

[Both laugh.]

"I said, through the eyes!" It's like, what?

00:38:14 Rachel Guest

I kind of get that, for a love scene, though. I mean, cause like a love scene is a love scene is a love scene when you're shooting it, you know?

So I sort of understand that philosophical approach to that sort of thing. Um, but no, that wouldn't work, I mean, for every actor and for

every time. I've had certain directors who are philosophical like that, and hands-off. I feel like Julie Dash is a little philosophical, speaking of *Daughters of the Dust*.

Um, but then, you know, again, when I worked on a sitcom, I literally—it was so crazy, cause the director would say, “Okay, now indicate the door.” Oh my god, as an actor you die inside because you were taught never to indicate. Indicate means being obvious, and instead of showing it with your eyes or words you are literally going, “The door!”

Um, so, it was, you know, a challenge for me to t—you know how I thought of sitcom work, commedia dell'arte. I went, “it's just—it's just comedy. But big.” You know?

[April affirms.]

And—because it is an art form to itself, and I actually really enjoy sitcom acting, to be honest. Once I understood it, once I was like, “Don't freak out that you're breaking every rule you were taught in acting class.”

Um, so, you know, everybody's style is different. I know with, um, with Andy Fleming, on *The Craft*, he didn't do that—he directed for sure. But, like, I remember his direction the night before the test was, “Rachel, just don't drool, and you'll get the part.” And I was like, “Ugh, how do I not drool tomorrow?”

[Both laugh.]

00:39:42 April Host Now you're making me want to drool. I can't stop!

00:39:45 Rachel Guest Yeah! I mean, and basically he was saying, “Dude, just do your thing.” Actually, Andy gave me great direction. He said—he said “Rachel, you're—you're a little like me—” meaning him, “—insofar as you don't actually need to act that much. It's all right there. So stop trying to layer, just be truthful.” I was like, “Oh, yeah, that's true.” Just listen!

[April hums affirmatively.]

Just be truthful. Listen, and receive, you know, instead of most of us new actors, when we're new, we sit there, and we're anticipating our line! I speak now!

So, uh, you know, I was very grateful, for his, um, for—for his direction, because what he was saying was, “You're telling the story on your face,” you know? Um, you don't need to do all this other acting. Um, you know, like—like one would on a soap opera, I suppose.

00:40:33 April Host Um, see, I mean, like that's the—like, the difference too. I mean, like, something you were talking about, like just in general the difference between like, TV and film. Um, I mean, just the idea that a director would get the time to get to know their actor. Um, Sally Potter has a great quote with that, because she is very actor-

focused, and in fact she is—or, she was an actor herself, was in—um, I think the movie's called *The Tango Lesson*, if I can remember correctly.

So she's like v—very empathetic with actors, um, but she really works with each one individually, before, um, they even get on set.

She said, quote: "I absolutely love working with the performance of all kinds. I mean, love it. The relationship and forcefield of attention you can give to people, and watch them build something. I mean, these people are at the top of their tree, they're wonderful. And it's not like you've got to sort of help them along or something, but you can create conditions in which they can go to places that maybe they haven't been before. And it's all about building a relationship and a kind of trust so that people can surrender to the process. And I do that one-on-one. So I work, first of all, individually, with people before they even meet each other." End quote.

00:41:34 Rachel Guest What a luxury! First of all, this sounds like fantasy land to me, because that's such a luxurious process, to be able to work with a director. One, you've already booked the part, so the stress is off. You're not like, "Oh, I don't know what's happening," no. You're booked in, and now you have the time and luxury of getting inside the director's brain, and their vision. That rarely happens. Honestly, you're lucky if you get one read-through and a rehearsal and a half.

[April affirms.]

You know, some films, though—indie films though, we do rehearse more. I remember, like, with Gregg Araki, we rehearsed that, uh, those scenes, and then we shot it in like a day and a half, but we rehearsed it ahead of time.

00:42:07 April Host Well you know, indie filmmakers, definitely big on rehearsing, because you don't have much time on set, for sure.

00:42:11 Rachel Guest That—that's right, that's the difference. Where it's like, on a studio film, you know, you would shoot two pages a day, of a script. Two pages, a page and a half! But on an indie film, you're shooting eight to ten pages, so in a layman's speak, you're doing a lot more work. There's a lot more setups, a lot more stuff, time moves more fast, and on a—on a studio film you have a little more luxury to explore those moments. But that's always what drew me to film.

Like, the first thing I ever did was a film, *CB4*, which was a Chris Rock film, what actually moved me out here to Los—I booked the film, it shot here so I moved to Los Angeles. And, um, I—what I love about film, and not even—not even necessarily *CB4*—film is that it's broken up into beats. It's the way you shoot a film, is each little tiny beat.

So if you've had the luxury of working with the director, you know, and you've gone over each of the scenes you're gonna shoot, and you understand what each beat is about, you're really going to make the most of that with just a look, right?

[April affirms.]

We're not talking about chewing up the scenery. But with just a look, or a gesture, or the—what you infuse on that dialogue. Um, I would love the luxury of, you know, workshopping something with a director for weeks before you really get in there.

Because, for instance, I loved working on *Agnes*, but we shot um, the end scene first. Our very first scene up was the last scene that I would be in in the movie, and so of course, by the time we shot the film, I was like, "Aw, fuck, I would've played that different." A little different, but, you know what I mean? But I don't know. What can I do now? It's just—it's what happened.

00:43:33 April Host Ugh, yeah, I mean—ugh, yeah. It's—also, it's a bummer. Sometimes—we talk on the show sometimes about the movies that have the luxury of shooting in sequential order, and, wow.

00:43:46 Rachel Guest Oh my god, *Better Things*, the TV show, is shot in sequential order. That is the joy Pam Adlon has created, the most beautiful sandbox for herself and for actors to play in. And then shooting the episode that I did in chronological order, of course, it just built to a beautiful place. Which is also a rarity on television, because, uh, she will let you ad-lib. In fact, wants you to ad-lib around the scenes. Like, she'll do a scene with the dialogue written, and then you'll do takes with it, ad-libbing, and that's quite often what ends up in the show.

Another technique she has as a director that I thought was beautiful is we'd be sitting around, whole crew's ready to shoot. And we're just talking, talking about whatever, and she'll bring up the topic, like whatever, you know, the scene is about. And she'll go, "Okay, now we're gonna roll into this, cameras dialed, okay, anyway," and she's very quiet about it. "Okay, now go into the dialogue." It is so organic, I could cry. It was a beautiful experience.

00:44:41 April Host That's a—that's a lovely way for us to wrap it all up for today. Um, I wanna thank you so much, for coming on the show and sharing your passion for *Orlando*, which is a wonderful movie, and a wonderful choice.

And I wanna remind people that your book and your tarot card set. They are um, uh, they are available in October, but you can also go to Amazon right now and check them out, and maybe purchase them.

00:43:02 Rachel Guest You can pre-order it on the Amazon, I would so appreciate it if you did. Um, yeah, because it was a labor of love, you know? I'm really proud of my work on that book. Um, and I love the idea of something that is—helps me, I think, be a calmer, better person, and maybe can help other people.

00:45:19 April Host Yes. And, uh, keep an eye out for *Agnes*, and *Assault on VA-33*. Everything is—is in flux, I'm sure, with the pandemic, but keep an eye out for them. Rachel's working and she's working for you.

[Rachel laughs.]

And thank you so much.

00:45:33 Rachel Guest Thanks so much for having me on, I really appreciate it. It was so nice to talk about film!

00:45:38 April Host And thank you for listening to *Switchblade Sisters*.

If you want to let us know what you think of the show, you can tweet at us @SwitchbladePod or email us at SwitchbladeSisters@maximumfun.org.

Please check out our Facebook group. That's [Facebook.com/groups/switchbladesisters](https://www.facebook.com/groups/switchbladesisters).

Our producer is Casey O'Brien. Our senior producer is Laura Swisher, and this is a production of MaximumFun.org.

[Music fades.]

00:46:06 Clip Clip **Orlando:** To the manly virtues!

00:46:07 Music Transition A cheerful ukulele chord.

00:46:08 Speaker 1 Promo MaximumFun.org.

00:46:10 Speaker 2 Promo Comedy and culture.

00:46:12 Speaker 3 Promo Artist owned—

00:46:13 Speaker 4 Promo —Audience supported.