

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, recording in my home office, with my special guest appearances from my cat, Chicken, probably, and potentially the wild parrots next door.</p> <p>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 has influenced their own work in some small way.</p> <p>Today, I’m very excited to have a repeat guest, um, this is writer, director, actor Brea Grant. Hi!</p>
00:00:39	Brea Grant	Guest	Hi! Thanks for having me on as a repeat guest, I was really excited when I got the invite.
00:00:44	April	Host	I was just like, you know, it’s been a while, you’ve done a lot of stuff, we might as well have her back on.

[Brea laughs.]

You know, uh, people loved the *Basket Case* episode, and if—you know, if you guys haven’t listened to that yet definitely go back to—to listen to *Basket Case*. And, um, it’s nice when, you know, we’ve got someone who’s got kind of uh—uh—uh, a depth of knowledge about horror to come and pick maybe lesser-known classics.

Um, so, for those of you who are not as familiar with Brea’s work, uh, please let me give another introduction.

Um, so, Brea Grant is a native Texan who earned a degree in American Studies before venturing into acting. Early in her career, she appeared in, uh, *Friday Night Lights*, before heading west to LA for roles on shows such as *Heroes* and *Dexter*. Then she stepped behind the screen, co-writing and directing and starring in the film *Best Friends Forever*. That film follows a tense friendship brought to its knees on a road trip when a nuclear disaster approaches.

From there, Brea became a producer-actor on the Emmy-nominated Netflix series *Eastsiders*, but you can see her in a bunch of films, too, like *Beyond the Gate*, *All The Creatures Were Stirring*, *After Midnight*, and many more.

But the new ones to look out for are *Lucky* and *12 Hour Shift*, both official selections of South by Southwest and Fantasia Film Festival this year. *Lucky*, written by and starring Brea, is a pitch-black comedy—er, horror satire about a woman terrorized by a stalker, and nobody seems to care.

Though Brea doesn't act in *12 Hour Shift*, really, she did write and direct this tight and bloody horror about a junkie nurse just trying to sell body parts on the black market when her life blows up on one epic shift.

She'll also star in upcoming films *Happily*, *The Stylist*, and *Night Sky*. On top of that, Brea is also the co-host of the Maximum Fun podcast *Reading Glasses*.

Um, so, a lot of things going on, and you just told me you went to Bulgaria and got a haircut.

00:02:36 Brea Guest

I got a—

[Both laugh.]

To get a haircut in quarantine, you have to fly to Bulgaria.

00:02:44 April Host

No, no, no, she was working on a TV show.

[Brea affirms.]

Um, so, there's always—your IMDB list is forever expanding.

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

00:03:00 Brea Guest

Yeah, well, when y'all reached out I was trying to think of one—because the last one I chose, I feel like was so silly, I was like, "what is a little bit mo—one with a—that's a little bit more serious," although—I mean, I do think it is very quirky and funny, as well, but, um—

00:03:19 April Host

Oh, there's a silliness to it.

00:03:20 Brea Guest

Yeah, there's definitely a silliness to it. Um, but—I hadn't seen it in a few years, until I rewatched it—but, um, the star of *M*—of *May* is Angela Bettis, who is the star of *12 Hour Shift*, which I wrote and directed, and will be out in October. Um, and it was a movie that really inspired me. I—I think around the time when I saw it, it was that ti—it was a time in my life where I realized there was such a thing as independent movies.

[April affirms.]

Like, I wasn't aware that that was a thing before I saw it. It was like, that, um, *But I'm a Cheerleader*, uh, *Thirteen*—there are a couple of other, like, little independent movies that my friends and I saw. And I was like, "Wait, you can make movies that are weird like this?"

Like I had no idea, and it kind of like, blew my mind, and it's kind of always stuck with me. And working with Angela was just such a dream, and so I thought—I just wanted to give this a little more love, you know?

00:04:14 April Host

Can I say that I almost see your film, *12 Hour Shift*, as like a

spiritual sequel to *May*?

[Brea gasps.]

Because, essentially, there is a woman collecting body parts—

[Both laugh.]

00:04:28 Brea Guest You're not wrong! And I am very honored you said that. Um, I also think—well, it's funny, cause in *May*, Angela has this like, really big shift in her character, right?

[April affirms several times.]

Like the character of *May* goes from this like, quirky, like, unsure-of-herself woman to this very self-assured kind of m—woman on a mission, to get these body parts. *[Laughs.]* And that's kind of who she is a little bit in *12 Hour Shift*, in some ways. The second character in—in *May*.

00:04:22 April Host Yeah, so it's like a re-visiting of the themes with a—a little bit more maturity from her and her character.

[Brea affirms.]

I—you know, like, I like to think that this is *May* down the road. Um, but, for those of you who haven't seen *May*, today's episode will give you some spoilers, but that shouldn't stop you from listening before you watch. As always, the motto is it's not what happens but how it happens that makes a movie worth watching. Still, if you would like to pause and watch *May* first, this is your shot.

00:05:21 Music Music "Frox" by Alien Tempo Experiment 13

00:05:22 April Host And now that you're back, let me introduce *May* with a quick synopsis.

Written and directed by Lucky McKee for release in 2002, *May* stars Angela Bettis as a maladjusted veterinarian assistant trying to make friends and explore her sexuality. But we don't meet *May* as an adult yet.

First, we get some backstory with a young *May* with a lazy eye, ridiculed by her peers. Her mother presents her with a doll named Suzie encased in glass, and tells her that if she can't find a friend, she should make one.

00:05:49 Clip Clip *[Music plays in the background.]*

Mama Canady: Her name is Suzie. Suzie was the first doll I ever made. She was my best friend, and now she'll be yours.

00:05:59 April Host Now we're with adult *May*, whose lazy eye gets corrected with some contact lenses and glasses. One day, *May* meets Adam, played by Jeremy Sisto, a hunky mechanic and horror filmmaker. She's wildly naive, but he's kind of into it, and she's really into his beautiful hands.

00:06:13	Clip	Clip	May Dove Canady: I like every part of him. Especially his hands. They're beautiful.
00:06:21	April	Host	May's flirty coworker Polly, played by Anna Faris, then points her affections towards May. Surprise, Polly gives May a cat, and May's like, "Okay, sure."
00:06:31	Clip	Clip	<i>[Music plays and dogs bark in the background.]</i> Polly: Oh, come on, Loopy will keep you company when you're all alone. Besides, she'll remind you of me. May: Okay. Polly: Ah! Wonderful.
00:06:44	April	Host	Adam shows May one of his shorts, depicting a lusty couple engaging in cannibalism, and May is so inexperienced, she gets inspiration from it, and bites Adam's lip. He bleeds all over her, freaks out, and leaves.
00:06:56	Clip	Clip	Adam: I'll see you around. May: But it's just like your movie. Adam: May, this is weird. May: You like weird. Adam: Not that weird.
00:07:09	April	Host	May yells at Suzie, blaming her for her problems. Then, she starts volunteering with some blind children. Hey, might as well give back.
00:07:10	Clip	Clip	May: I, um, saw some kids playing in the park, and I was wondering if I could volunteer to help watch them. Buckle: Well, what kind of kids were they? Retarded, deaf, crippled, dumb? May: They were blind. Buckle: So you want to work at the daycare center. May: Would it be the same kids? Buckle: What's the difference? You only like a certain type of blind kids?
00:07:37	April	Host	She gives in to Polly's advances eventually, when Adam ghosts her. But then, when she seeks solace in Polly, Polly is already with another woman, Ambrosia.
00:07:46	Clip	Clip	Polly: Oh, May, look, I can kick her out if you really want me to. You know you're my main mama.
00:07:53	April	Host	May just wants one person she can own emotionally, god damn it. And when even the cat shuns her, May throws an ashtray at it and

kills it. Then, Suzie really starts talking to May.

00:08:05 Clip Clip

May: Shut up!

00:08:06 April Host

The next day, May brings Suzie in to talk to the blind children, but her favorite difficult student, Petey, gets too grabby and breaks the case and the doll. And then all the blind children crawl through the glass, and it's bloody, and bad. This is a big psychotic break for her and potentially for some of these children.

Uh, the next day she meets a young punk who she takes home and kills, to harvest parts of his body. She is going to make her own friend, and she's gonna need more parts. So, she gets dolled-up for Halloween and visits Polly. She's gotta get that beautiful head of hers.

She kills Polly, then kills Ambrosia for those beautiful gams.

00:08:43 Clip Clip

May: You have really beautiful legs.

Ambrosia: I thought they were gams.

00:08:48 April Host

Then she takes off to Adam's and gets those beautiful hands. *[Laughs.]* At home, she's constructed a human doll from the parts, but she freaks when she realizes the doll can't see her.

00:08:59 Clip Clip

May: Can't see me!

00:09:00 April Host

So she carves out her own eye, gives it to the doll, and then lies down beside it. And, miraculously, it comes to life and strokes May's hair. May finally made a friend. Okay!

00:09:14 Brea Guest

That was a good synopsis. *[Laughs.]* That was good!

00:09:17 April Host

So that's *May*. Um, so I want to talk about some of the things that, um, Lucky was doing in this. Um, I listened to the commentary. If you have not listened to the commentaries of *May*, they are incredible and confusing, and—

[Both laugh.]

Because everyone's kind of talking all at once, and there's—there's two different versions. The first one has, uh, Lucky McKee, Bret Roberts, Steve Yedlin, who shot it, um, Anglea Bettis, and then, um, the actress who played Ambrosia.

The second one has uh, a craft ser—quote-unquote “craft services” guy that, like, it's clearly someone not in craft services, or it's just like, potentially Lucky McKee with cla-with a different voice? I can't tell. And then also Rian Johnson, who was one of the—one of the many editors who worked on this.

So there was two different commentary tracks. Um, highly recommend them. They're—they're very informative about how things happened. But, uh, let—let's go into some of the techniques he's using.

So, one of the problems that you get with film is when you have, like, a flashback, is that, you know, you kind of have to decide how much to give away. How much is too much, how much is too much leading, you know, like, are people gonna like, uh, get the lightbulb on the second that you, you know, say something.

But with this movie, you're just like, okay, well, she gives the doll, and she's like, "You need to make a friend." So there's enough kind of, like, seed planted that later on you might be able to—to figure it out. And I—I should preface this, the quotes that I am going to say are mostly kind of combinations of all four of those people that—that, um, are on that commentary. So it's not just Lucky McKee. It's—it's a bunch of people.

Um, but—they said, quote: "We cut about thirty different versions of the childhood sequence, and most of these were much longer than this. We cut out an entire sequence where May shoots this bird with a BB gun and takes it home, cuts its wings off, glues them to Suzie's case, and tries to make her fly. It seemed a little extraneous, and gave away the rest of what was going to happen in the film, so we ended up chopping it." End quote.

Um, and you know, that's probably something that you have to grapple with, is like, how much to frontload your film with.

00:11:26 Brea Guest Yeah, that's interesting, and I think that was a good move for them to cut that, because it does give away the movie. You know what's interesting? I am not a huge fan of flashbacks, and I feel like it is a note that sometimes you get. I know that you feel that like, as a writer, people will be like, "What if you did a flashback to like, explain this thing?"

[April affirms.]

And I'm always like, "No! No flashbacks! No voice-overs!" Like, I'm very fussy about it. But I feel like this movie does a really good job, and you do sort of need it, to know that she's gonna go darker than just like, your average nineties quirky girl. Early 2000s quirky girl.

00:12:02 April Host Yeah, it's not gonna be like, she's all that, you know? She's not gonna get her eyes corrected, and all of a sudden—

00:12:04 Brea Guest Right, right, she's not gonna look down at her hair—

[Both laugh.]

And then go to the dance with like, the perfect guy. No, she's really weird. She's actually like—she's—she's more than weird. She's a—she's—she's a sociopath. Like, she has some actual issues.

00:12:17 April Host She's—yeah. Deeply disturbed.

00:12:19 Brea Guest Yes. And um, and I think—what—now—I think if I saw this now in a script, I'd be like, "Oh, that's a little—that's been done." But it's because of movies like this, they'll be like, overbearing parents or the parents that kind of say the wrong thing, or don't really care

about her. And I feel like it was a really good explanation for where she ended up.

00:12:38 April

Host

Um, so, going in with kind of frontloading things, something that ended up happening was, um, they got this movie into Sundance, and at that point in time they had to do a lot of reshoots. And one of the things that they had to reshoot is, um—'cause in the structure of the story, we—we have the short flashback, and then we go into, um, you know, the—the present day of May being you know, like, a young twenty-something.

And she kind of does a monologue here, and that was all a reshoot. Um, because they realized that—they actually had to get—like, they had—the whole back, from the childhood thing, from the metaphor stuff. But then they had to get more explicit with just kind of saying what the story was about. And it kept being like, a push-and-pull, I think, from—from how much they had to give away.

Because they said, quote: “Most of the stuff from the beginning is—is reshoots, all done after we got into Sundance. There was a monologue, written on the fly. Sometimes two minutes before shooting we would do that. All this may seem a little overstated on repeat viewing, but it makes it very clear off the bat what the story is about, which we always had a problem with.” End quote.

Um, and I think that that's like, an interesting thing of—there have been some scripts that I've worked on, where I know that, like, I'm trying to be all fancy and tricky about like, what something is. And then someone will give a note that's just like, “Oh, she could just say that that's what it is.”

[Brea affirms.]

And be like—all of a sudden you get to cut out twenty fucking pages, 'cause you're like—

00:14:04 Brea

Guest

What? Yeah, like—you're just like, right, right, she literally just tells you. It's so weird that we're talking about this, 'cause I keep having flashes to *The Stylist*, which is this movie that is premiering at Fantastic Fest that I did earlier this year, that Jill Six directed.

[April affirms.]

Um, and um, there—there is a real—that is a very spiritual sequel, cause *The Stylist* has a lot of the—the main girl, who is played by Najarra Townsend, um, is—has a lot of May qualities, and it was something I know they thought about a lot in that script, is should they have flashbacks, should they say more at the top, but instead they just have her like, kill someone right away, and that ki—so then you're like, “oh, we get it, we know who this lady is,” like—but you kind of do need that in the first minute—few minutes, especially these days. I think you have to explain everything to people kind of early, or else no one's going to keep watching the movie. *[Laughs.]*

00:14:56 April

Host

It's such a bummer! It is!

[Brea affirms.]

I mean, sometimes it can make it easier, but it is such a bummer. When you were working on, um, *Lucky*, I'm very curious, because that actually, I think, is—follows those same rules. Where like, you really set out beforehand that like, this is not a world that—that most people are familiar with, Like it's—it's a—it's a cartoonish version of our world. Um, did you always arrive at that tone right in the beginning of the movie?

00:15:26 Brea Guest Yeah, actually. So, the thing I would do when pitching *Lucky* is, I would tell people about the scene where they explain everything, which is about ten-fifteen minutes in, is that the guy shows up at the house, and uh, this—this was literally my pitch for it, is I would be like, “This woman wakes up, and there’s a guy, like a stalker in her house, or coming to her house. And her husband gets out of bed, and he’s like, ‘Yeah, of course he’s here. That’s the guy who comes to try to kill us every night. Get out of bed, we have to go fight for our lives now.’”

[April affirms.]

And that was always my pitch, ‘cause people either understood it from that point, or they didn’t understand it. And I was like this—this is the movie. It’s very weird, and here’s the explanation.

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

00:16:04 April Host Um, we’re gonna take a quick break. When we come back, we’re gonna talk a bit more about *May*, and also *Lucky*, and *12 Hour Shift*, and all these other things that Brea is doing. We’ll be right back.

[Music fades out.]

00:16:18 April Promo Hey, there. Wanted to take a moment to uh, give a little recommendation. Friend of the network and Max Fun pin designer, Megan Lynn Kott, has a new book coming out. It’s called *Unfamiliar Familiars: Extraordinary Animal Companions For The Modern Witch*.

Unfamiliar Familiars is a fun encyclopedic guide to finding and caring for your unconventional magical animal. So, uh, I’m sure you guys are wondering, but I took the test. There’s a lot of brackets involved, and very, very highly scientific uh, thing that Megan Lynn Kott has designed, so you can find your familiar.

Mine is an axolotl, because of course I get along with fire signs. Uh, I love leos. I’m also cold blooded. But, you know, if you get this book, you can also take your own quiz here and find out who your familiar is.

It’s a great gift for uh, a lot of your single friends, I’m gonna say, too. Um, it’s available wherever books are sold, but if you order through ChronicleBooks.com, Maximum Fun listeners will get 30% off with the promo code familiars through December.

So, find out more about the book and take a fun quiz determining who your familiar is today at ChronicleBooks.com/familiar.

00:17:30 Music Transition

“Switchblade Comb” by Mobius VanChocStraw.

00:17:37 Promo Promo

Music: Upbeat, cheerful music plays in the background.

Allie Goertz: Hi, I’m Allie Goertz!

Julia Prescott: And I’m Julia Prescott. And we host—

Both: —*Round Springfield!*

Allie: *Round Springfield* is a *Simpsons*-adjacent podcast where we talk to your favorite *Simpsons* writers, voice actors, and everyone who’s worked on the show to talk about shows that aren’t *The Simpsons*! So we’re gonna be talking to people like David X. Cohen, Yeardley Smith, Tim Long, about other projects they’ve worked on. Sometimes projects that didn’t go well?

Julia: Mmm!

Allie: Some failures.

Julia: Yeah?

Allie: Some rejections.

Julia: Some failed pilots. Some failed life events. *[Laughs.]*

Allie: Yeah! We just talk to all the failure of *The Simpsons*.

Julia: Yeah!

Allie: So if you really love your *Simpsons* trivia and want to get to know the people who worked on *The Simpsons* a little bit better? Come by *Round Springfield!*

Julia: Every-other week on MaximumFun.org, or wherever you get your podcasts!

[Music fades out.]

00:18:22 Music Transition

“Switchblade Comb” by Mobius VanChocStraw.

00:18:28 April Host

Welcome back to *Switchblade Sisters*. I’m April Wolfe and I’m joined today by Brea Grant, and we’re talking about *May*.

Um, so, you know, we were talking a little bit about those like low-budget tricks that you can use, and—in film—and one of the things that—that I thought was really interesting. We were talking, um, when Steve Yedlin was talking about the cinematography, um, in that commentary, was that they had little—little tricks to do movement, to have more move—movement within the frame without having to set up. For instance, tracks to do, like, long tracking shots or something.

Um, they said, quote: “First shot we shot was the nipple shot, when May’s walking down the street.” *[Laughs]* For those who haven’t seen it, she’s got pretty prominent nipples out when she’s walking down the street. Anyway. “And a couple of these shots are done with the sliders. Basically a plate that goes on top of the dolly head, and gives you about two feet that you can slide the camera from left to right without setting up the tracks. When I saw the dailies for this scene, I knew the movie would be great.” End quote.

Um, and I—I think that that’s a really, uh, lovely thing that I did not notice whatsoever when I was watching it the first time. And after the commentary, I was just like, actually, the camera is not moving that much, but I—but it’s moving enough to kind of give this dynamic energy that—that, uh, elevates it out of a kind of low-budget indie and into something that has kind of production value that we would say, quote-unquote.

Um, but that’s something that you’re always fighting. Like, you don’t have time to lay down tracks to do these things all the time.

00:19:54 Brea Guest

Right, and especially because they probably didn’t own that street they probably like, were shooting it, you know, and had to like, stop people from walking down the street, but couldn’t actually block off the street itself.

[April affirms.]

So yeah, that—that is a really efficient way. And—I mean, as an indie filmmaker, you always know you’re trying to like, do things like that.

Before, um, *12 Hour Shift*, um, I wanted a lot of movement in the movie because it’s so, like, active, and frenetic, and I wanted a lot of things happening. But we couldn’t afford a dolly, so my producers built a fake dolly for us to use when we’re walking down the hall, ‘cause we go back and forth down this hall so many times. Literally went to Home Depot, got a bunch of wheels, put it on a cart, and like, made it. Put a little cushion on there, for the DP to hold the camera.

Because we just knew we would need it so much, and it was such a good move. I mean, it doesn’t mean that it’s not like, completely steady, and there were problems with sound, because of the wheels, yes. But for us, it was—it was a lifesaver, for us.

00:20:52 April Host

I mean, no one’s gonna see that, behind the scene, unless you’ve got like a BTS photographer who’s just like, “Oh, this is what they were doing.”

[Brea affirms.]

Other than that, it’s just kind of movie magic, you know. Like, it’s just—if it’s—if it shows up on-screen it doesn’t matter how you were able to—to do it.

00:21:05 Brea Guest Totally, and I think also like, there is, like, you know, a bit of indie pride in like, being like, “No, we’re a little scrappy, and that’s okay.” Like, that’s—we know how much money we have, and that doesn’t bother us.

[April affirms.]

Like, we went into it knowing we couldn’t afford a dolly. That—that’s okay.

00:21:18 April Host Um, so one of the things that I know you wanted to talk about was, uh, the film within a film?

00:21:24 Brea Guest Oh my god, we must.

00:21:26 April Host And—*[Laughs]* Okay. Because Jeremy Sisto’s character is kind of like a burgeoning horror auteur, and he’s got this little film that he shows um, uh, May. And I don’t—I’m sorry, I don’t remember who actually made that film, but it wasn’t—it wasn’t Lucky and Steve Yedlin. It was someone else who came back and made that film, and they put it in.

[Brea affirms.]

Like they—they gave them instructions of like, what they wanted them to do, and then came back and they were like, “Oh, shit. Yeah, this is great.”

[Both laugh.]

00:21:55 Bre Guest Oh my god, yes. While watching that scene this time around—it’s been a long time, like, I—I definitely watched—haven’t watched this movie since I’ve become—have been a filmmaker. So it’s been over ten years since I’ve watched this movie.

[April affirms.]

And watching it, I just had this moment of mini-flashbacks to dates with horror directors, uh, and being at their houses and having to sit through their—their shitty short films. *[Laughs]* Um, and then, also, moments of like, “I’ve made people do this for me, watching my stuff.”

And then I was like, “Oh my god, this is like, so embarrassing.” But it ca—it comes from such a place where I was just like, oh, Lucky, Lucky kind of gets it. He gets it, right? Like, cause he’s—he’s obviously been in these situations where you have to watch someone’s short film.

And I guess *May* gives the reaction that we’re really all looking for, where she’s just like, not sure, and then she—at the end, she’s basically like, “Brilliant. It’s brilliant.”

[April laughs.]

Like, she loved it so much that she wants to have sex with him and

try to bite off his fingers. *[Laughs.]*

00:22:54 April Host Um, I want to move on to the actor who can nail a monologue in a single take. Because that, apparently, was Angela Bettis on this set.

There is a scene where the two of them, May and um, Jeremy Sisto's character, are sitting on the bench, and she's kind of talking to him, doing this kind of monologue. And—and he's just sitting there listening to him in the—uh, listening to her in the park. And, um, apparently they only did two takes, and it was both, uh—uh, perfect. Both takes. Because the one take was a wide, you know, you get that wide, and then there's a beautiful close-up of, uh, Angela Bettis. And so she did, uh, one of each of those, nailed both of them, and that's what they used to cut.

[Brea affirms.]

They didn't have time. They didn't do anything else, but, like, they—they needed her to nail it, and—which is, you know, amazing, because you know, a lot of those lines, I think they were—they said that they kept kind of rewriting until like, the day. So she was just constantly getting like, new pages of—of what she had to do.

Um, and I was curious if you could talk about that from both an actor's perspective and a director's perspective.

00:24:07 Brea Guest Yeah. Well, I will say like, nothing about that surprises me, having worked with her, because she comes in very, very prepared. But you can also throw anything at her, and she can handle it. It is—she is—I cannot overstate how wonderful she is to work with. Like, watching her and all the subtlety she has, and all the, um—she just—she just has like—she's so good at what she does. And she has such specificity with everything she does, and um, I—that doesn't surprise me at all.

And then—and on *12 Hour Shift*, we would always do an improv take on every setup. And she was also great at that, which is this crazy thing. It's unfortunate for her, because it means she gets less takes than everybody else. 'Cause I'm like, well you nailed it on the first one, so I don't know what to tell you.

But, um, it's amazing, as a director, because she comes in just like, giving you everything you could possibly want. Um, yeah, monologues are hard. Um, I have this monologue in *After Midnight*. Did you see *After Midnight*? Have you seen—yeah. I had—

00:25:07 April Host Yeah, it's on Amazon Prime for people who want to watch it.

00:25:09 Brea Guest Oh, is it? Okay, cool. Um, uh, I had this monologue in *After Midnight* that's—I think it's a non—it doesn't cut, and it's like twelve or thirteen minutes or something like that. And, um, I did not nail that on the first take.

[Both laugh.]

I, uh—I did—we did about eleven takes. I did get it most of the way

through every time, but it was more like, I wasn't happy with my performance most of the time. And, um—or they weren't happy, or something didn't work.

Um, and so we would do it again and again. And so we just, this whole night, we would do this twelve ho—twelve minute take over and over again, or something like that. Jeremy's gonna be mad that I can't remember the exact number of minutes. Um—

[April laughs and affirms multiple times while Brea is speaking.]

But it's hard, because you know, when you start acting, th—that's actually what you do, is you do—you learn a lot of monologues, and you do these monologues in class. And that's a horrible idea, because you rarely actually ever do them in actual filmmaking, at all.

Like, you don't do monologues, people don't often write monologues for actors in films, 'cause they're—they can be boring, and easily screwed up. Um, and, a lot of times, as you know, I'm sure, you end up cutting some of them. Like, someone has a really long speech, and then you cut like halfway through cause they're like, "Ugh, this movie's not flowing well enough."

Um, but then—so you work out how to like, do a monologue in beginning acting, and then by the time you get to set and actually get to do one, you've kind of forgotten all about how to do it. But the thing they always tell you is to pretend like you're talking to someone, and they're like, responding, and you're keeping on going and stuff. Which kind of works. But, honestly, it's just a skill-set that I feel like you learn from years of doing crap.

00:26:48 April

Host

I—you know, there's something that was really interesting that—that Lucky was saying in the commentary about working with her, and how to kind of arrive at this persona and this performance. And I—I—it kind of speaks into what you're saying.

Um, but he said, quote: "When we started out rehearsing for the part, me and Angel, she was doing so much stuff with her face. She'd create a moment out of every single worl—word. The big solution was to tell her to do absolutely nothing, and then build up from there. I couldn't figure out how to work with all the stuff she was doing, so I had her performing like a robot for a while, and we layered in the character from there. An amazing experience." End quote.

Um, so, I think, you know, he was a somewhat inexperienced director coming up with an actor who's—who's doing a lot.

[Brea affirms.]

It's just like, you want something? I'm going to give you everything. And, um, and I think that's an interesting way to kind of build up a character, is just to say, like, "okay, um, as an actor, I love what you're—you're doing, and like, let's set all that aside, and let's see what pieces we can use and what pieces we don't need." But he's

right, her face is amazing. He—she is making a moment out of every single word.

00:27:59 Brea

Guest

Yes. And a lot of the moment, she—she does all this stuff that—it is very funny, in the—in *May*, where I'm like, "That was definitely, like, not written into the script." She's just like, her reaction, or her moment when someone does something that she doesn't like, or when she's deciding something, it's all written on her face in a way that actually makes the movie more of a comedy to me.

[April affirms several times.]

Um, because she is—such a really—her timing is really good, and she's such a really funny person, um, that it totally plays for me. Yeah, all on her face.

I—I like that note from Lucky, though, that's interesting. And I've definitely done the same with actors that I've worked with, and, as an actress, had the same done to me.

Um, when I was on *Heroes*, um, a DP actually took me aside at one point, and he had recorded me, and he was like, "I'm just gonna show you something. Your face is this big on the screen. Your face takes up all of the screen. You don't have to move. We see everything." And I was like, "Oh, okay." *[Laughs.]*

And it, like, changed my acting. And it was just this DP that like—you know? It wasn't even his place to probably tell me that information, but it was so helpful. And I have said the same thing to actors any time I direct and I'm like, "Oh, you're doing a lot, but you know what? We can see everything, the camera loves to pick stuff up. So don't worry about it. And if you're not doing enough, I will definitely tell you."

00:29:19 April

Host

Um, so I'm gonna go to the other side of things, we should talk about Jeremy Sisto for a second, because, uh, I think it's interesting.

[Brea affirms.]

Something that they point out in the, um, in the commentary is that he's playing essentially what would be normally the girlfriend part, in the movie.

Um, they said, quote: "That was the first time Angela and Jeremy had acted together. It was me and them upstairs, and me videotaping them together, and we did a couple of scenes. I was so blown away by Angie that I may not have given Jeremy the proper attention. His character is about reaction. He's playing the girlfriend part in this movie, the part women usually audition for, and it was harder to find the right guy for that part. Maybe some ego involved. He didn't have an ego. He let her do her thing, which is important to let the audience fall in love with her. He just reacted off of her."

And, uh, that gives me more appreciation for Jeremy Sisto, who I already love. I—he's like, such a charismatic person onscreen.

00:30:13 Brea Guest Yeah. That's really interesting, and not something I'd ever thought of. Although, he does, like—we do kind of know some stuff about him. My—my note for people, when I'm reading their scripts and I feel like there is a “girlfriend-y” character, I'm always like, “What is her job? Does she have a job? ‘Cause if you can name her job, then she's not a girlfriend character.”

Just because I feel like I've played so many characters on screen that, it's not clear how I make money, how I got anywhere. Like, it's just like, what is she doing here? Am I—what is—like, I—clearly I'm there just in service of the characters. I won't name what movie, but there is a movie that I'm in.

Maybe I said this last time I was on your show. But, um, I'm with the two main guys in the movie, and we're walking from o—from one room to another room, I am suddenly gone. My character actually disappears, and the two guys keep walking and talking. It's never explained where I go, and no one has ever brought it up to me.

[Both laugh.]

‘Cause I was such a throwaway character, it just like, didn't matter. It's very funny.

00:31:13 April Host Holy shit. Um, that's a—that's wild. But that is essentially, I think, what a lot of women have to get used to if they wanna act.

[Both laugh uproariously.]

00:31:20 Music Transition “Switchblade Comb” by Mobius VanChocStraw.

00:31:25 April Host We are gonna take a quick break. When we come back we'll get a little bit further into *May*, and uh, Brea's work. We'll be right back.

[Music fades out.]

00:31:37 Promo Promo **Music:** Mellow synth piano plays in background.

Brea Grant: Readers have a lot of problems.

Mallory O'Meara: How do you juggle your holds at the library?

Brea: How do you decide what to read next?

Mallory: What do you do when you find out an author you love is a huge trash baby?

Brea: I'm Brea Grant.

Mallory: And I'm Mallory O'Meara.

Brae: And we're the hosts of *Reading Glasses*.

Mallory: We're here to solve all your reader problems, and along the way, help you figure out—

Brea: —your reader wheelhouse—

Mallory: —which are the things that will absolutely make you pick up a book. Our listener favorites tend to be magic and woman on a journey.

Brea: And also birds for some reason?

Mallory: Your reader doghouse.

Brea: Yeah, that's the things that will make you avoid a book.

Mallory: Ugh. Love triangles stress me out so much.

Brea: *Reading Glasses*. Every thursday on MaximumFun.org.

[Music ends.]

00:32:17 Music Transition "Switchblade Comb" by Mobius VanChocStraw.

00:32:24 April Host Welcome back to *Switchblade Sisters*. I'm April Wolfe, joined today by Brea Grant, and we are talking about *May*.

The editing process for this film, um, seemed very arduous. It was a lot of stuff that they had to do, um, like the reshoots. And of course that is that way for any film, but I think for this one, it seemed like Lucky was still trying to develop his own style, and what he wanted to do.

[Brea affirms.]

And so like, finding that voice in the post-production maybe was part of that. Um, you know, uh, one of the things that they changed that was really drastic that Rian Johnson had a—a pretty heavy hand in was, um, was the—the murder scenes.

Um, so, when Blank the—the—the punk, when he gets murdered there's um, a lot of, um, kind of, uh, frictious, fractured editing, um, a lot of kind of jumping back and forth in—in time and place. And it—and it just—it kind of gives a—a feeling of—of losing control, of being out of place and out of time.

And instead they—they kind of had—just had it be like a really straightforward thing, and yet it—it just wasn't working. It didn't—it didn't give them the kind of psychological effect that they wanted at first. And then when they—when they did that, they had to change Adam's death.

Um, he said, quote: "We did this after editing the film together. Originally, you didn't see Adam's death, but we decided to do the same thing with Blank's death, jumping back in time. And we did a patchwork of a bunch of songs established throughout the film, much like what—what May does making her doll." End quote.

So then it changed the way they had to reshoot how Adam was—was killed, um, and to have it on-screen, and to be more, um, you

know, a—a part of it, just like what they did with, uh, with Blank's, um, death.

And I love the—the thing that they did with the music, too, that they did a patchwork of music, with everything kind of culminating together. It's a—it's a patchwork process. You see patchwork in costumes, you see patchwork in production design, you s—you hear patchwork in the music.

00:34:21 Brea Guest I love that story, because I always get into the post, and if it isn't working, I'm like, "I failed. I'm a failed filmmaker. I should quit. I hate my life."

Uh, my first movie I edited for eight months, 'cause I decided that it was trash, and I kept re-editing, and redoing it. It's—I was—I was insane about it. I just, like, had so much trouble getting it to where I needed to be and it made me feel like—post makes me feel like a failure. *[Laughs]* 'Cause the whole time, I'm like, "Oh my gosh, did I completely screw this up?" But then you realize, once you find an editor that really can do something, or can have a different vision, that you didn't screw it up.

[April affirms.]

You can just make kind of a different thing out of it. So it's nice to hear that he went through that, and the editors, to make his awesome movie.

00:35:00 April Host So, uh, something we should talk about are the—the cats, in this movie.

[Brea agrees.]

Many of them are dead. Uh, this is maybe one of my favorite parts of the commentary, and the whole time I was just like, is this story true? I can't tell if this is true.

But they said, quote: "The dead cats came from *Mr. Deeds*. On a movie with an actual budget, they'll get the cat they're going to use, and then make the fake version of it. With ours, we had the fake one first, and we had to find cats to match one of six options. The fake cat had some weird zany smile on its face, so we actually had to smash it and put blood all over it." End quote.

00:35:37 Brea Guest *[Laughing uproariously]* Wait, *Mr. Deeds*, the Adam Sandler movie? Is that *Mr. Deeds*?

00:35:43 April Host *[Laughs.]* Yeah! That's why, the whole time, I was just like—I mean, like, it's totally possible that this came from, like, the *Mr. Deeds* set. Like, I'm not—I'm not saying it's not, I'm just saying it—

00:35:50 Brea Guest Wow, that is crazy. But, also, good indie filmmaking move. Like, do—do it that way, yeah.

00:35:56 April Host I mean—and the cat was the production designer's cat. The—the live one. So they had that taken care of. They shot—they shot a bunch of stuff in—in their own homes, and then in a building

downtown that they got for free. We'll talk about that later on. But, when it comes to kind of blood, and gore, and fake parts, and things, th—like, *12 Hour Shift* has some stuff.

00:36:18 Brea Guest We've bl—yeah, we have some stuff. *[Laughs]* I'm gonna—we definitely have some stuff.

00:36:22 April Host I mean, how d—it can get expensive! How do you, you know, decide what you're gonna show, how do you get that kind of stuff? Can you borrow it? Like, what do you—

[Both laugh.]

00:36:29 Brea Guest No, yeah. Well, one way you save money is that you don't have a special effects person. That's what we did. Uh, 'cause we—we—low budget movie, like we kind of had to just do it all ourselves. Um, but we had a makeup artist who, you know, could do some gore effects. And um, my production designer, she—the one thing we did, um, make sure we could get was the, uh, was the organs. There's, you know, because they're—it's all about stealing organs, and taking people's organs.

[April affirms.]

So those are, like, fake organs, but the actual ones, they would be like, in there. Because we knew if those looked fake, the movie wouldn't work. So she was really specific about finding those. But everything else is kind of just done with uh, you know, fake blood effects and squirts.

There's, you know, definitely moments where we were blowing through straws and, you know, squirting blood in there and blowing through straws at people. Uh, my producer did that one day, so I—yeah, I mean, you know, you kinda do it the—the best way you—you know how, in that moment.

00:37:30 April Host *[Laughs]* I mean, yeah, I get it. That's the—uh, god, blood. I mean, that's—that's everyone's favorite part of playing on a set, though, I think, so, there's that.

00:37:41 Brea Guest You—these days it's not that expensive, too. You can buy good fake blood for not crazy amounts, so it's something you can buy quite a bit of and make sure you're covered.

00:37:50 April Host Uh, like I said, the—uh, Lucky ended up getting that location where the vet's office is, um, it's a—it's a free building. It's the building that's adjacent, downtown Los Angeles, to the Bank of America. Over by, um, uh, like—like a block away from, uh, from Walt Disney Concert Hall.

[Brea affirms.]

Uh, like, and, um, it is—it—I don't know if it's still empty, I don't know if they put anything in there. But at the time, you know, it was just, like, owned by the city, and they were able to get in there, um, for free. And then they kind of like—like it had walls, and so they just kind of built an office into it, and it was theirs to use, for

anything.

So they ended up using it for a few things, 'cause, um, it was free. And the movie might not have gotten made if they didn't have like, all these free locations, 'cause that's a huge part of the budget sometimes. Um, but I thought that that was wonderful. Like, they couldn't find an office, so they ended up making one.

00:38:43 Brea Guest Yeah, that's great. And, like, kudos to their production designer, because that must've been such a lot of work to dress it, to make it look like an office. 'Cause it really does! Like, they have files, and, you know, and all this stuff that makes you feel like it's an office.

But I do wonder, also, it's like what you said earlier, where they knew they were only gonna shoot these one directions, so they made sure that those walls were full of files, and those walls had the computers, and—and whatever on them.

[April affirms.]

Yeah. Wow.

00:39:08 April Host She said, um, the production designer said that she ran around collecting files from every other room that was in this building to try to fill it.

[Both laugh.]

00:39:18 Brea Guest I'm familiar with this. *[Laughs]* Yeah.

00:39:20 April Host Yeah. But, you know, there's some—something that's—it's tough, when you—when you write to a location that you don't have yet, you can kind of write yourself into a trap. Because, you know, for instance, you're in a hospital. Like, you need a hospital. Did you get your hospital first? Did you, like—I mean, like, you're writing something that has to have a hospital.

00:39:42 Brea Guest No, yeah, yeah, I thought this movie would never get made, for that reason. It was—it was, um, definitely a—a big choice, 'cause it's—ninety-five percent of the movie takes place within this hospital. Um, no. My producers read the script. They wanted to make it, and one of the reasons they thought they could make it is because one of their dads, um, knew that a hospital in Arkansas, where he lived, was about to redo a floor, and it was completely empty.

And they just went up there and were like, "Can we shoot a movie on this floor of your hospital, before you redo it?" And they were like, "Oh, we're gonna redo it next month." And they were like, "can you wait a month? Because right now, it looks very nineties, and we would like to use it. This film is set in the nineties." And they were like, "We can wait a month."

'Cause it's like, small-town Arkansas, like, they're just nice people, and they wanna help out. So we ended up having the entire floor of a hospital, which is sort of the indie film dream, because we could have offices, we could have rooms for our actors.

[April affirms.]

They were all in like, hospital rooms, to themselves, and then we shot in the main—one of the main hallways, and then, um, in the—in like, in—in the waiting room and stuff like that. But, yeah, it was just—it—we got really lucky, but also, my producers were just great about finding this space. And I think if we hadn't found that space, I'm not sure if we would have been able to make—we wouldn't have been able to make the movie. 'Cause you couldn't dress it.

Dressing it was tough, though, we had to go and get a bunch of stuff from old offices. And then the hospital also ended up—happened to have a big building in the back, where they kept all their old nursing equipment, and they let us go and like, raid that and fill it up.

But it was hard to actually—to kind of fill up all of the space. Like, a lot of the stuff in the movie is reused, and like, moved from location to location. But, um, yeah, our production designer just did an amazing job, and our producers did an amazing job of finding the space, and then finding all this equipment on top of that.

00:41:29 April Host

One thing that, uh, I'll leave off, is something that, um, everyone who was on the commentary was really happy about the fact that Lucky McKee was a very hands-on director. Not just when the camera was rolling, but just after. After everything was wrapped.

Um, they said, quote: "The cigarette thing, just like I said, nobody was getting paid. They were doing this out of the kindness of their hearts and love of the project, and it makes a difference to have smokes when they get there. They have to get up at four in the morning to work on your movie. You should just do whatever little things you can do to know they're appreciated. I made a couple beer runs, too." End quote.

[Brea laughs.]

So every morning, he would go and get cigarettes, and have them, 'cause, you know, it's like—it's early 2000s. Everyone was still smoking. *[Laughs]* I was still smoking.

Um, and, uh, so he would just, like, go and have all of these cigarettes ready for people, and then afterwards would also, um, go and get beer, if—if necessary. But then, you know, production design and—and um, cinematography, they were saying, "Lucky showed up at wrap, he put away equipment, helped us all furn—helped us pull furniture out of locations." I don't think I've ever experienced that before with a director. And I think that makes a difference on a low-budget set.

00:42:40 Brea Guest

Yeah, it definitely does. And it helps you to bond, I think, a little bit, you know? If you're just all hanging out, and you see that the director is trying to do something a little—a little bit more, um—I will say on *12 Hour Shift*, David Arquette brought a donkey to set one day, and that really—people really were excited about that. *[Laughs]* That was a really big favor.

00:43:00	April	Host	That is—that is such a morale-booster. Just like, “O my god, here’s a donkey.”
00:43:0	Brea	Guest	It was <u>such</u> a morale-booster. Literally just for us to take photos with and hang out with. That was all it was there for. It was amazing. It was super amazing. And I will say this about, um, Angela, like, she’s a—she’s a—I don’t know if she’d be embarrassed if I say this—eh, no, she wouldn’t. But she, um, our last day—our last day of shooting <i>12 Hour Shift</i> , we wrapped, and then we had to wrap out the location, the whole night. And then I got on a plane the next morning, to go to Tribeca, cause <i>After Midnight</i> was premiering at Tribeca, that year, um—last year. <i>[April affirms.]</i> And, um, Angela stayed up all night with the crew and helped—helped everybody pack up the location. Which was this crazy thing where we were like, “Can we let the lead actress, like, help pack stuff up?” And she was like, “I really wanna help.” She was really close to the crew, and so she stayed and helped all night long. It was so amazing. I know.
00:43:51	April	Host	Oh my god. Wow. Okay. So, I mean, if you’ve got through this episode, and you don’t already love Angela Bettis— <i>[Brea affirms.]</i> Maybe check out Brea’s movie <i>12 Hour Shift</i> . And, uh, take a look. Can you—can you give us a rundown of uh, w—when and how we can see your movies?
00:44:07	Brea	Guest	Yeah. Um, you can see <i>12 Hour Shift</i> starting October 2nd on all VOD platforms, and then it is playing some theatres. It’s playing, um, I don’t know when this comes out but it’s playing in, uh, Los Angeles, uh—in Torrance, which is kind of Los Angeles, uh, on October first, at a drive-in. I think it’s playing other drive-ins in the United States but I don’t know where. Um, and then <i>Lucky</i> actually doesn’t come out til next year but it’s gonna be on Shudder, next year. And, um, also, i’ll just plug—I wrote a graphic novel, which is coming out October 4th, and it’s called <i>Mary</i> , if you would like to check that out. You can get it at every bookstore, everywhere, on the internet, but I like to suggest a place called BookShop.org , because they, um, you can order it online, but it—um, part of the money goes to your local bookstore.
00:44:52	Music	Transition	“Switchblade Comb” by Mobius VanChocStraw.
00:44:54	April	Host	Oh, that’s great! Thank you so much for coming on the show again! It’s great to have you back.
00:44:57	Brea	Guest	Thank you for having me! I feel like I learned so much this episode. It’s very—been very informative.
00:45:02	April	Host	And thank you for listening to <i>Switchblade Sisters</i> .

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

00:45:29	Clip	Clip	May: Shut up!
00:45:30	Music	Transition	A cheerful ukulele chord.
00:45:31	Speaker 1	Promo	MaximumFun.org .
00:45:33	Speaker 2	Promo	Comedy and culture.
00:45:34	Speaker 3	Promo	Artist owned—
00:45:35	Speaker 4	Promo	—Audience supported.