

## Shmanners 217: Drive Ins

Published July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020

[Listen on TheMcElroy.family](#)

**Travis:** [singing] Let's all go to the podcast! Let's all go to the podcast!  
Let's all go to the podcast, because it is Shmanners!

[theme music plays]

**Travis:** Hello, internet! I'm your husband host, Travis McElroy.

**Teresa:** And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy.

**Travis:** And you're listening to Shmanners!

**Teresa:** It's extraordinary etiquette...

**Travis:** ... for ordinary occasions. Hello, my dove.

**Teresa:** Hello, dear.

**Travis:** How are you?

**Teresa:** Doing okay. Y'know, good times. Bad times.

**Travis:** Good times, great country.

**Teresa:** We have the times.

**Travis:** 103.3, WTCR.

**Teresa:** What?

**Travis:** Sorry, that was the radio station that my dad worked for for a long time. And their like, uh, promo call spot was, "Good times, great country."

103.3, WTCR.” And so, it’s hard for me to hear ‘good times’ without finishing the rest of it.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Oh.

**Travis:** Great country.

**Teresa:** Well... that’s not a super awesome tagline.

**Travis:** What? Well, I mean... sure. I mean, as taglines go, it’s fine, I guess.

**Teresa:** It’s fine, I guess.

**Travis:** So we’re talking about... speaking of my dad, we’re talking about drive-ins.

**Teresa:** Does your dad like a good drive-in?

**Travis:** Well, here’s the thing...

**Teresa:** Hm.

**Travis:** My family, there was a drive-in in Huntington, on Route 60, that we went to many times. I remember—I think I vaguely recall seeing Aladdin there, as part of like, a double feature of something.

**Teresa:** Wow!

**Travis:** But, the real... [laughs] Uh, the real, cemented-in-my-mind drive-in memory is, one year, a local TV station did, for Halloween, a like, horror movie marathon.

**Teresa:** Oh!

**Travis:** And the framework of it was... like, at the haunted drive-in. And my dad hosted it in like, scary make up and stuff, and like... I—so I watched it

with my friends on Halloween, and I want to say I was like, 10 or 11. And that was the first time I saw Nightmare on Elm Street 3.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** Which I was... far too young to watch.

**Teresa:** Ohh.

**Travis:** But here's the thing – I'll tell you this now – I'm 36. I think I'm still far too young to watch it.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Uh, and it—it scarred me in many ways, and led to me being terrified that Freddy was gonna come, pull the sheets off my bed, and turn me into a puppet. Was not wild about that. So whenever I think about drive-ins, that's—that—

**Teresa:** Uh-huh.

**Travis:** Okay. It's torn between that, and the memory of like... we always had minivans growing up, 'cause y'know, there were three of us. And I also remember like, putting blankets on top of the van, right? And being a little kid, and sitting up on top of the van, like, wrapped up to watch...

**Teresa:** Oh, wow!

**Travis:** ... the movie. 'Cause basically, there are—this is one of those things now where, I can't recall which one our drive-in had. But there were two kinds of options that I've seen, uh, as options for listening to the movie at the drive-in. Option one is like, speakers by the parking spots you can pull into that then you like, take off a little hook and put in your car.

**Teresa:** Yes. That's what I've seen in the movies.

**Travis:** Uh, or also, you can tune to a radio station, and it is kind of like a very, like, localized radio station that then broadcasts the movie's sound through your car speakers.

**Teresa:** Oh!

**Travis:** Uh, so I can't remember which one it was.

**Teresa:** Hm.

**Travis:** But here's what I recall, of drive-through experience, as far as like, functionality goes. That you would pull in, park somewhere, and... then there was like, a main building that had like, the projector in it, and also like, the concessions area.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** But here's what I cannot recall. Unless there was some unfortunate teenager diligently checking your car, why weren't you just bringing in concessions from the outside? They must've been checking it, right?

**Teresa:** I—I don't know.

**Travis:** Because there was also a whole thing of, basically, I believe you paid by the person that came in, and not by the vehicle. So that's why you often see in movies, too, the reference to like, putting people in the trunk and sneaking people in that way. So that you wouldn't have to pay for them.

Anyways, all of this is so outdated, I guarantee.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** There's like, a bunch of 14-year-olds listening to this like, "What are they talking about?"

**Teresa:** Well, I mean, my only experience with drive-ins is, uh, is the movies. The '50s, the '60s, y'know, that iconic scene in Grease.

**Travis:** Yeah. It's referenced a lot. I think that there is a thing of like, it was referenced a lot in '80s movies, set in the '50s.

**Teresa:** '50s. Right. Because a lot of those movies that I've seen are commentaries on the movies of the '50s, like Grease is.

**Travis:** Right. Well, and there's also the scene in, uh, Back to the Future... 3? Three, where they're in the '50s, and he's trying to get back to the past to get Doc Brown. And like, they're at the drive-in, and he's like, "But when I crashed into that wall..." And it's like, "Well, that wall won't be there when you go through."

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** Um... yeah, it's weird that it was like—there's a lot of that, and I think it has to do... this has nothing to do with etiquette, by the way. But I think what you see a lot is like, movies that are looking back at a time period, will reference things that they think are iconic there, that maybe younger audiences watching won't necessarily understand.

But people who are like, "I would love to watch a movie about the '80s!" would totally get now.

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** Now like, if our... y'know, like, here it is, 2020, so I imagine there's lots of movies people are writing that are like, set in the '90s. Where it's like, I can imagine like, 18 year olds being like, "Whaaat are they talking about?" And me being like, "Yeah, this was everywhere! This was totally everywhere!"

**Teresa:** [laughing]

**Travis:** But I am curious of like, how popular were drive-ins, actually? What is—I imagine the history of drive-ins isn't like, the some things we've talked about where it's like, "In ancient Egypt..."

**Teresa:** [laughs] No.

**Travis:** "They projected on the side of the pyramids!"

**Teresa:** You are correct. A couple things are needed for drive-ins. Um, one is a car. Right? And the other one is movie, uh, technology. So I don't think as—

**Travis:** Yes. You couldn't like, hold up, what, ten types in front of a bright enough candle and project it onto a big wall?

**Teresa:** Probably not.

**Travis:** Not like that.

**Teresa:** Um, but how old do you think they are?

**Travis:** Uh, I am going to say 1912.

**Teresa:** So close! Great job, by the way!

**Travis:** Well, I cheated a little bit.

**Teresa:** [gasps] Whaaat? Did you read the copy?

**Travis:** No, no, I didn't read the copy.

**Teresa:** Oh. Okay.

**Travis:** I have been listening to a podcast called The Abandoned Carousel that's all about amusement parks, and like, abandoned amusement parks. And they talked about one that was, I believe, called Royal Land, that was started by a guy who like, built a bunch of like, drive-ins, and that's how he made his money.

**Teresa:** Oh, okay.

**Travis:** So they talked about drive-ins, and... what I—well, we'll get to it. But...

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** Okay, so I'm guessing around then?

**Teresa:** So, the first recorded drive-in pops up on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1915, in New Mexico.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** It was a partial drive-in, which seated about 700 people in an auditorium, but also had automobile entrances, and space for like, about 40 cars to fit on theater grounds.

**Travis:** What a weird combina—to have one or the other makes sense to me. The combination of both is weird. Is that common? Were there drive-ins that you could go sit at?

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Okay. Okay.

**Teresa:** Obviously, there were. This is one.

**Travis:** Okay. It's just weird. It's just—I—but that does make sense, too, because in 1915, you'd have to think that like, one, cars were not... mainstream the way they are now. Like, so, for a long time—

**Teresa:** Well, there definitely weren't as many of them, that's for sure.

**Travis:** Well, but also, there wasn't the necessity for them. 'Cause this is another thing that I learned from that podcast, right? Is that one of the

reasons that drive-ins kind of took off is – and I might be stepping on your toes, and I apologize if I am, but I'm excited that I know something – and it's that, when... at the time, most people lived in city centers, or in like, towns, right?

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** And it wasn't until post World War II that people started moving out to the suburbs. At which point, cars became a necessity instead of just a luxury. Because you would have to get to places to go shopping, to go do things, to go to restaurants. Everything wasn't in walking distance the way it was in like, the 1915s. The 1910s.

**Teresa:** Exactly. So, um, another milestone happens in 1921, um, when there is a drive-in opened in Texas, where he had to get a permit from the city to project movies downtown, right? So you would park the cars bumper to bumper, and you can watch a silent film from the comfort of your automobile.

**Travis:** That must've been a lot easier to figure out, drive-ins, when it was silent.

**Teresa:** Yeah, I think so.

**Travis:** And it was just like, "We don't have to worry about people get..." When they started adding sound to movies, drive-ins were probably like, "Well, what do we—ugh! What are we supposed to do with this?! Ugh!"

**Teresa:** [laughs] Well, so, before that, it was kind of—it wasn't really... I would say it was definitely a novelty, but it was more like a pop-up kind of thing for a lot of these drive-ins. Um, and it was like a man with a projector type thing, uh, charging people to sit in their cars. But in 1933, the very first patented drive-in was opened in New Jersey by Richard Hollingshead.

**Travis:** Okay.



**Teresa:** Um, he thought that many of the movie seats, like, the theater seats of the day, were uncomfortable.

**Travis:** Wildly uncomfortable. If you have never been in like, an old auditorium, and I, having done theater a lot in my life, and now, touring places and doing a lot of old Vaudeville theaters, thank god a lot of them have like, updated and are wonderful and totally comfortable to sit in. But every so often, you will see like, the old seats sitting around, and they're just kind of wooden, like, slabs that have a little bit of curve to them, so that like, there is a place where your butt would settle into them.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** And the backs are pretty much straight, like, y'know, like, wood. There's like, very little padding to them. They were designed for... y'know, function over, uh, comfort most of the time.

**Teresa:** Right. So what started as kind of a mini-drive-in for him and his mother, where he could be comfortable, quickly blossomed into, uh, a 400-slot theater with a 40 by 50 foot screen. And interestingly, not only was the comfort part of the selling point, it was also, he advertised the whole family is welcome, regardless of how noisy the children are!

**Travis:** See, okay. We'll get into this more. We'll keep talking about it. There are many added benefits, I think, to this idea. To the drive-in as a whole. Um, and I'm not gonna get into it now, but this is one, right? The ability to like, now, I have a three-and-a-half-year—well, we have. I'm not... [laughs]

I have, and Teresa has, a three-and-a-half-year-old, and like, a six-month-old, right? And the idea of like, right now, taking the six-month-old, even, to the theater is like, out of the question. The three-and-a-half, Bebe, can sometimes sit through a movie. She has seen a couple movies in theaters and done well. Frozen 2 was more or less great. Toy Story 4, more or less great.

But there's lots of questions that come up. There's lots of talking. And the idea of being able to put our whole family in the car, let Bebe ask questions, let Baby Dot make baby noises, and not worry about interrupting the experience of others? Is a *huge* benefit!

**Teresa:** Right. And uh, I'm not gonna lie. It feels a lot safer to me in the current, uh, climate.

**Travis:** This is—this is benefit number two. You're in your own individual pod. Right?

**Teresa:** Yes. Um, and it—especially, I mean... if you... well, we'll talk about this. But if you bring your own food, the only reason that you would have to leave the car would be to use any restroom facilities.

**Travis:** And that could be accomplished with a bucket! Y'know what I mean?

**Teresa:** Oh gross.

**Travis:** And then you don't leave the—no?

**Teresa:** Gross.

**Travis:** Or, you could like, Flintstones, like, cut a hole in the bottom of your car? Bada bing, bada boom?

**Teresa:** [laughs] Illegal.

**Travis:** Illegal?!

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** Aw, man.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Anyway. Uh, so, that one... that particular theater didn't last very long, but the idea was off and running, right? Um, so...

**Travis:** Well, and because it does seem, especially—this is a thing that you find a lot in pop culture, especially, but like, novelty being a huge selling point for something like this. Um, especially during this time. I mean, it's why I think you see, also, another reference in the '50s kind of movies is like, people wearing those 3D glasses that are like, blue and red.

**Teresa:** Right, yeah.

**Travis:** It's like, was it great? I don't know. Was it novel? For sure.

**Teresa:** And just like you mentioned, it really peaked after World War II when, y'know, you... you could have a family car, even if you didn't live within the city limits, right? And so, also, there was no more fuel rationing after the war. So, being in your car was something that people were ready and willing to do.

**Travis:** Well, and not only that... one of the biggest things was, at this point, this is where air conditioning started to become standard in cars.

**Teresa:** Mmm!

**Travis:** Right? So it became more and more comfortable to be in your car, um, and y'know... as opposed to, um, y'know, sitting there with the windows down, un-air-conditions, trying to enjoy a movie.

**Teresa:** Well, also... do recall that movies had to be shown at night. So it probably wasn't super hot.

**Travis:** Well, that's—that, I would say, is one of the big downsides to the drive-in theater, is that it can only operate after dark.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** We're gonna talk more about drive-in theaters, but first... a thank you note for our sponsors!

[theme music plays]

**Travis:** I want to tell you... about... DoorDash!

**Teresa:** Woo-hoo! I love DoorDash!

**Travis:** DoorSlow, you ask? No no!

**Teresa:** No no!

**Travis:** DoorDash! You can continue supporting restaurants in your community safely. There are thousands of restaurants open for delivery on DoorDash that need your patronage now more than ever. Support your favorite restaurants at DoorDash.

Can I tell you, everyone at home, a little thing that happened?

**Teresa:** What happened?

**Travis:** Our air conditioning broke.

**Teresa:** [gasps] Yes it did.

**Travis:** It was hot!

**Teresa:** So hot!

**Travis:** Hot, folks! And y'know what we didn't want to do?

**Teresa:** Cook! [laughs]

**Travis:** Turn on the oven or fire in any way! So we popped open that DoorDash app, and we got ourselves some dinner, and it was easy! You just

open that app, choose what you want to eat, and your food will be left safely outside your door with the new contactless delivery drop off setting.

Many of your favorite local restaurants are still open for delivery! Just open that app, select your favorite local restaurant, and your food will be left at your door! Right now, our listeners can get five dollars off with their first order of \$15 or more, and zero delivery fees for their first month, when you download the DoorDash app and enter code 'Shmanners.'

That's five dollars off your first order and zero delivery fees for a month when you download the DoorDash app in the app store and enter code 'Shmanners.' Don't forget – that's code 'Shmanners' for five dollars off your first order with DoorDash.

Teresa... I want to tell you one more thing.

**Teresa:** Okay. Lay it on me.

**Travis:** It's four letters.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** And a funny sounding word.

**Teresa:** Uhh... poop.

**Travis:** That—okay.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** A much different direction than I was going with.

**Teresa:** Okay. [laughing] Okay, okay.

**Travis:** Hey, folks? Before we get any further – do *not* brush your teeth with poop.

**Teresa:** [laughing]

**Travis:** Brush your teeth with Quip!

**Teresa:** With Quip! [laughs]

**Travis:** Yes! Hey, listen, y'know, sometimes... now, where it's like, "I don't have to go to work. I'm not gonna go see my friends. I'm not gonna go out in public." It can be easy for your daily routine to kind of slide a little bit. And maybe you haven't been as good about your oral hygiene, because you're not thinking about it! And the only one smelling your breath is you!

Well, put on a mask. Smell your own breath. And say, "Oh! Time to brush my teeth."

**Teresa:** [laughing] Yes.

**Travis:** I will say... masks, great. Everyone should wear them. That's just a helpful tip from us to you.

**Teresa:** That's right.

**Travis:** Not just etiquette.

**Teresa:** But prerequisite. You should brush your teeth.

**Travis:** You should brush your—these are both things, independently, you should do. And together, you should especially do.

**Teresa:** A winning combination.

**Travis:** Plus, I just love Quip. [laughs] Like, I'm a big fan. I would be talking about it even if they weren't sponsoring us. Because here's the thing – before Quip, I was one of the 75% of people who used old, worn-out bristles that are ineffective. And I was hardly ever flossing.

**Teresa:** And I was not brushing for long enough.

**Travis:** No! Because you sit there, and unless you have a timer going, you're like, "That was like, two minutes." And it was like, two seconds! Because the Quip electric toothbrush has timed sonic vibrations, that with 30 second pulses to guide a dentist recommended two minute routine, and be honest with yourself... are you?

And there's a sized down version designed for kids! It's great! And their anti-cavity toothpaste in mint or watermelon is amazing. Their mint toothpaste is like, my favorite toothpaste ever. You get all the ingredients teeth actually need, and none that they don't. And they have floss! And you can get Quip brush heads, toothpaste, and floss refills automatically delivered on a dentist-recommended schedule every three months for just five dollars each.

It's a friendly reminder when it's time to refresh and stay committed to your oral health, and shipping is free. So, go to [GetQuip.com/Shmanners](https://GetQuip.com/Shmanners) right now, and you'll get your first refill free! That's your first refill free at [GetQuip.com/Shmanners](https://GetQuip.com/Shmanners). That's spelled [GetQuip.com/Shmanners](https://GetQuip.com/Shmanners). Quip: The good habits company!

--

[music plays]

**Manolo:** Hey, you've reached Dr. Gameshow. Leave your message after the beep.

[beep]

**Sarah:** Hi, this is Sarah, and I'd like to tell you about Dr. Gameshow. Dr. Gameshow is a band of geniuses, or nerds, or brilliant artists, or kids, or some combination of all of those who get together to make a show like no other. It's family friendly. It's an interactive call-in game show podcast.

When I found Dr. Gameshow, I found joy. I told my friends and family that if they weren't listening, they were wasting joy. I sent them the episodes that made me laugh until I cried, played it for them in the car... they laughed, too. Laughed their butts off. But they still don't listen on their own, so they're wasting joy, and I keep looking for someone to understand me. Maybe it's you.

Give Dr. Gameshow a listen and find joy.

[beep]

**Jo:** Listen to Dr. Gameshow on Maximum Fun. New episodes every other Wednesday.

--

**Teresa:** Alright! So, um—

**Travis:** We're back.

**Teresa:** We're back.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** In their—

**Travis:** So, when last we left off, we were driving in.

**Teresa:** No. We were not driving—not yet.

**Travis:** Uh? No? Okay. Cool.

**Teresa:** Uh, we're gonna reach the hay day. Right? The hay day of the drive-in movie theater reached about 4,000 theaters across the US.

**Travis:** Huh.



**Teresa:** This is just the US number. Drive-in movie theaters became popular internationally.

**Travis:** Okay. That's, I will say, way more than I would've expected.

**Teresa:** Um, it was billed as a kind of like... family friendly outing, um, at this point in time.

**Travis:** Well, 'cause, that's the other thing. A lot of the times, right? Along with parking in there, people would arrive fairly early. So I—I seem to remember this at the drive-in that I went to. But I definitely have seen it in others, and that might also just be because I think there's a drive-in in Fallout 4 that I remember going to.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** But a lot of them had like, playgrounds, and like, uh, like barbeque areas where you could like, y'know, grill and stuff, and like, have a picnic before the movie started.

**Teresa:** Right?

**Travis:** So people would like, get there early and kind of make an evening of it.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** And because you could, y'know, roll up in your pajamas, uh, you could bring your kids, usually, for free, and they could sleep in the back while you watch the movie from the front seat.

**Travis:** That's why I also remember like, in the movie theater—the drive-in that I went to that, a lot of times, it was like, a double feature.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Well, because also, if you think about it, if you have to wait until it gets dark, we're talking like, nine o'clock sometimes in the—

**Teresa:** In the middle of summer, even later sometimes.

**Travis:** Yeah. And so, you're not really going to be able to show one movie, clear everyone out, and then bring people back in. Like, it's just not going to happen in cars. So you would do a double feature, and normally, the first movie was like, more aimed at kids. And the second movie wasn't like, R-rated or anything, but it was a little more, uh, like, for adults. Because the thought being, yeah, by 10:30, the kids are asleep.

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** Right? So you bring your kids, you get the kid movie first, and then you're watching something a little more adult, like PG-13, right?

**Teresa:** That was a great way to grab audience members, but also, you could have—they had, uh, drawings for prizes, helicopter or hot air balloon rides, there could be petting zoos, musical groups before and after the show. Sometimes, even the movie stars made personal appearances to open their movies at a drive-in!

**Travis:** See, they made it—I think that that was another thing, is when you think about drive-ins, because they are having to compete with the existence of theaters...

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Right? That they had to kind of work harder? Um, and you see this a lot in businesses that are like, disrupter businesses, where it's like, they work really hard, and then they become popular, too. And then, like, cool. Time to ease off. [laughs] And then it's like, oh nooo!

**Teresa:** Nooo! Um, some drive-ins would host Sunday religious services, or offer one dollar a car deals on slower days like Wednesday and Sundays. Some had miniature golf courses, swimming pools, motels with large windows facing the screen, so you could even watch the movie from your bed!

**Travis:** Oh, that's genius. That's like, a lie-in theater.

**Teresa:** It is a lie-in! Uh, so, one of the largest drive-in theaters to host many of these amenities was the Johnny All-Weather Drive-In in New York.

**Travis:** [gasps] The Johnny All-Weather Drive-In!

**Teresa:** That's right! It covered 29 acres, and had space for 2,500 cars.

**Travis:** Wow.

**Teresa:** It had a full-service restaurant with seating on the roof, and a trolley system to take kids and adults to a playground. They offered a large indoor theater for bad weather, and those who wanted to watch the movie in air-conditioning, and... this seemed to be the—the vacation destination for all of New York for a long time.

**Travis:** Yeah, makes sense. Where was it at in New York? Do you know?

**Teresa:** It was in... Cop... Copyog—Copiague. Oh...

**Travis:** Spell it.

**Teresa:** C-O-P-I-A-G-U-E.

**Travis:** C-O-P-I-A...

**Teresa:** G-U-E.

**Travis:** Okay, yeah. So this is like... Long Island-ish, right? So this is like, near-ish, uh... so this is like Long Island, right? So this is like, out there kind of away from Manhattan, away from the Bronx, everything... okay. I can see where this is. Great. I got it.

**Teresa:** Got it.

**Travis:** Now I'm picturing it.

**Teresa:** Now. This is where I think my experience watching movies commentating on the drive-in movie theater starts. During the '50s, drive-ins also got their reputation for being, quote, "passion pits."

**Travis:** Well, yeah. Privacy, privacy, privacy, right?

**Teresa:** Well, that's right. Um, and it got to be such a widely accepted cultural thing, that drive-ins might slip in some modesty rules in between their ads for like, snack bar and next week's features. Um, one of the ones included on my copy says, "Hello, young lovers, whoever you are. We're glad the love bug has caught up with you. But, we must insist that you do not allow his bite to affect your conduct while in this theater!"

**Travis:** Ahh!

**Teresa:** Ehh!

**Travis:** Yeah, I mean, that's the thing is, another thing I remember... oh, there's a Pete & Pete episode, I believe, where they go to a drive-in, and Endless Mike, which is perhaps one of the greatest character names ever... Endless Mike Hellstrom like, loans his car to old Pete to take Ellen. God, I remember everything about this show. To the drive-in, and he's telling him like, "You gotta roll up the windows, and you gotta get a good steam going on the windows, so that you can have privacy in there for a make-out sesh."

**Teresa:** Ooh.

**Travis:** Uh, by the way, I looked it up. Uh, the drive-in in Huntington was simply called the East Drive-In. East Drive-In Theater.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** And it had spots for a thousand cars. Um, and it—let's see. It had the concession stand, and there was places where you could, uh, y'know, set up chairs. It opened in the early 1950s. Um, yeah. And they had both. They had the speakers, and the system that would broadcast into your cars. Uh, and then... people stopped going in like, the '80s.

**Teresa:** Well, so, during the '70s is where we start to see them decline, right? People were downsizing their cars, because the inflated cost of gas. And instead of having those, y'know, big, beautiful station wagons, uh, things started getting a little more snug and uncomfortable as efficiency tried to rule the day, right?

**Travis:** Mm-hmm.

**Teresa:** So, drive-ins really tried to keep the profits up, um, by starting to lose the family-friendly content we were talking about. And move towards, like, slasher films and things like that, right?

But then, once the VCR took off, it seemed more fun to be, y'know, at home watching the movies than it did to be in your car.

**Travis:** Well, yeah. I guarantee a smarter person than me could like, make a really, really strong case, and do like, a timeline that shows the decline of the drive-in corresponding directly with the increase of like, the home rental store. Right? The Blockbuster, the like...

Because this is a thing we were talking about the other day, and I don't know if this is the place for it or not, but it's hard for me to have thoughts and not share them publicly.

**Teresa:** Of course. [laughs]

**Travis:** But we were talking about like, that... as is often the case with many generations, our generation is a very transitional one. And like, it's weird to think how many things, when we were kids, like, was a thing. And then, by the time we were like, teenagers, and like, 20-somethings, was a different thing. And now that we're like, in our 30s, is a completely different thing.

**Teresa:** Exactly.

**Travis:** And so like, I remember being a kid, and like, when VCRs came out...

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** So it was like, you went from, if you didn't watch it when it was on TV, if you didn't see it when it was in the theaters, that was it. Like, you just—you just didn't see it.

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** There was no, like, "Well, I'll catch it later," or whatever, 'cause you couldn't stream. You couldn't like, buy it on VHS. You couldn't rent it. Right? And then you transitioned into... well, we recorded it, we set the VCR to record it when it was on, or we go to Blockbuster and get it.

**Teresa:** Or you could buy it eventually. Yeah.

**Travis:** Right. To now... it all streams. You don't even have to go to the store. You can have a moment's impulse of like, "Oh, I haven't watched The Rocketeer in forever," and just putting it on, right?

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** And so like...

**Teresa:** I remember as a kid, just... we had that cabinet that housed all of our VHSs, and just opening the two handles of that cabinet and looking in,

and it was almost like... [imitates an angelic chorus] I can watch whatever I want! Right?

And now, uh, we have a DVD cabinet a lot like that that I haven't opened in...

**Travis:** That we don't touch.

**Teresa:** ... a year. [laughs]

**Travis:** I mean, y'know, there's pluses and minuses. I used to say like, the DVDs were still superior in many ways, because they had the special features. But now, you can buy it like, digitally, and it comes with special features.

Our dad had like, uh, four of those cabinets, and an intricate, uh, like, catalog system. And like, numbered VHS tapes, where he'd recorded shows and movies and stuff from TV, and a card catalog.

**Teresa:** Oh my goodness.

**Travis:** That you could go through to see like, what was on. And like, probably 2,000 just like, VHS tapes where he'd recorded stuff on TV. So you could go back and say like, "I want to watch that episode of A-Team," and like, find out what was on that VHS and flip through the like, VHS card catalog to figure out what number it was on, and all this stuff.

**Teresa:** Whoa!

**Travis:** Yeah! And then you think, "Hey, you should've been spending more time with your family, Clint."

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** No, I'm just kidding. [laughs] It was great.

But I can see where, right? It's like, two ends of the spectrum, right? With movie theaters kind of in the middle. But like, drive-ins being this like, this is my space that I'm bringing with me.

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** And then, on the other side of that, being home movie watching, where you're like, this is my space where I'm bringing the movie to me.

**Teresa:** Exactly. Not only that, but also, it's really easy to close a drive-in, because you needed, uh, like, about 15 acres of land in order to even host a drive-in that has enough room to make it profitable. So, you could just sell off that land. And starting in like, the inflation times of the '70s and '80s, it was so much more profitable to sell that land. And a lot of the places where drive-ins used to be are now malls and flea market lots and storage facilities.

**Travis:** That's what happened to the East Drive-In in Huntington. It uh, y'know, it sold to Wal-Mart in 1993. And actually, now, the Wal-Mart is even gone. It's like a medical, uh, like, internal medicine plaza thing. But like, that's the thing – if you've never looked, if you've never been to a drive-in, if you look at an empty drive-in, it is more or less a giant parking lot.

**Teresa:** Yep.

**Travis:** With like, a screen? And a small out building that was like, the concessions, the bathrooms, the... right? It's cheap to bulldoze, and it's a huge amount of land.

**Teresa:** Exactly.

**Travis:** So there's not even... because this is what happened a lot with like, um... these very fancy, like, Vaudeville theaters, right? Even predating movie theaters, was they were like, so beautiful. So fancy, that like, even if they went out of business, they would still sit there while people were like, "What do we do with this?"



**Teresa:** Exactly. Yeah, what do we do with this building? This thing we don't want to get rid of. Whereas, with a drive-in movie theater, there's nothing there.

**Travis:** No. Like, you could bull—you could demolish it in a day, y'know?

**Teresa:** Um, so, by the late 1980s, the total number of drive-ins still operating in the US and Canada was down to less than 200.

**Travis:** Ooh. What a dip, right? That is, like I said, the novelty thing of like... I don't know that movie theaters will ever—well. I say that, but now, with things going direct to home streaming, maybe we'll see a difference in it. But I think the experience of like, big blockbuster movies will always be better, until we have gigantic screens in our home that accomplish the same thing.

Whereas, I think like, home movie rental, uh, and drive-ins and stuff was such a novelty thing, that until a better novelty replaced it... I mean, I guess I should say, once a better novelty replaced it, it went from four—what, 4,000 screens? To 200 or whatever.

**Teresa:** Yeah. Well, so, it's not dead. There are still drive-in movie theaters. And with the advent of the home projector system, people started hosting their own, quote, "drive-in movie experiences" for their neighbors, for their... y'know, you could even do it for your house. Just project it on your garage door or whatever.

**Travis:** They make inflatable screens that are like, 50 bucks, that like, blow up into, y'know, like a 12-foot wide, eight foot high screen that you can project a movie onto in your back yard.

**Teresa:** Um, so, there's another movement going with the drive-in, I would say, blueprint, called the Guerrilla Drive-In. And it's a group of dedicated artists that organize outdoor screenings that you pretty much take care of online, right? You sell the tickets, and things like that. And then, so, these screenings are held in like, um, abandoned warehouses. Or projected on bridge pillars. Or things like that.

**Travis:** I bet old amusement parks fall into there, too.

**Teresa:** Certainly. And one of the best known is Oakland's Liberation. And then, there are several more in California, and...

**Travis:** I actually know about this, 'cause I researched it when we lived in LA, and I never got to go.

**Teresa:** Ah!

**Travis:** But there—they do these like, *huge* themed ones. And like, you can find—I highly recommend looking it up. They did one for Back to the Future, where they like, rebuilt Hill Valley, and like, had a DeLorean, and like, had people in cosplay, and like—it's almost like a midway, where there's like, food trucks, and everything.

**Teresa:** Right, yeah. The smaller kind of boutique experience.

**Travis:** Right. It becomes like, a full-blown event.

**Teresa:** Exactly. Um, there's one here in Ohio.

**Travis:** What?!

**Teresa:** The Holiday Auto Theater in Ohio hosts the Terror at the Drive-In every October.

**Travis:** Oh no, is it scary movies?

**Teresa:** Uh, well, so, they do a three-film feature. A friendly Halloween classic, a new horror film, and then a vintage slasher.

**Travis:** Okay. If they show Hocus Pocus, I'll stay for that. I'll go to that.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Or maybe like a Coraline? That's the thing, man. [laughs] This is getting way off topic. But our Halloween traditions tend to revolve around like, Paranorman! Hocus Pocus! And even before we had kids. Teresa and I were like, "Let's just watch Coraline."

**Teresa:** We like cartoons better...

**Travis:** Yeah. I don't want to actually be scared!

**Teresa:** Um, so, there was a little bit of a, I would say, blip in the drive-in community during the 2000s, because of the oil crisis. But we're back up to about 300 drive-in movie theaters operating in the United States.

**Travis:** Do you think that they will ever make a resurgence to be anywhere back to like, the popularity that they once were?

**Teresa:** Um, I think that because, uh, a lot of the space is pretty premium at the moment, um, maybe not all the way back up. But it's—they're kind of crushing it, at the moment, with all of the social distancing guidelines. It's a lot safer to stay in your car. Um, and people are itching to get out and do stuff, and this is pretty low on the list of hazardous outings.

**Travis:** Y'know, the tough thing... and this is now where I'm gonna get into a little bit of speculation. But I like to do this when it comes to like, technology stuff. The tough thing is, there's a part of me that says, there is a thing on the horizon that could make the drive-in theater all but obsolete. And that is VR.

**Teresa:** Mmm.

**Travis:** Right? Is to be able to sit there with your family, and all put on VR headsets. Because I remember the first time I ever like, tested a modern-day VR technology and watched a movie in it. And because of the way that it's situated on your face, they're able to play with like, perspective in a way that it feels like the same scale as watching a movie in a theater.

**Teresa:** Yeah, okay. But you're not actually with your family.

**Travis:** But... that's the thing. Is when it comes down to it, it becomes an experiential thing, right? This is, I also feel, the reason theater, like live theater, has existed for so long, and I think, in some form or another, will always exist. Is like, yeah, you could sit at home. You could stream it. You could watch it.

But there is something about being a part of a crowd, like, concerts, all of those things, right? You can sit at home and listen to a live recording of a concert, but it is a different experience than being there live in watching it, right?

**Teresa:** Same thing with comedy. Live comedy.

**Travis:** All that. I think that there is something experiential. And like, that's the thing – I have wonderful memories about going to drive-ins, of it being a very unique experience, right? That I hope we're able to like, take Bebe to. And now that I know you've never been, take you to.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** But like, this idea of like, being able to have this unique experience. I think the problem is, though... when it comes to like, going to movies, it has now reached such a level of convenience that like, it can be an afternoon. Like, not now. But there was times where it's like, "Well, I have an afternoon free. Bebe, do you want to go see a movie?"

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm. Yeah.

**Travis:** Right? Or sometimes Bebe would be napping, and I'd be like, "Okay, I know I have two hours, and there's this movie I've been wanting to see. I'm gonna go watch it at like, one o'clock in the afternoon," and didn't have to make big plans around it. No prep for it. Went, watched it, came home.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** That like, I just don't know that a drive-in could ever compete with, as far as like, becoming a regular thing.

**Teresa:** Um, I think that... I—it certainly wouldn't be, um... the convenience can't be beat. Right?

**Travis:** Right.

**Teresa:** But, the thing is, uh, there was an article in variety where there's a theater in, um, upstate New York called The Transit Drive-In, owned by Rick Cohen. And he said, specifically, that he's been juggling media questions, y'know, pretty much since his season started, that he actually doesn't like the idea that the drive-in is getting a resurgence in popularity. He said that, um, drive-ins aren't having a resurgence – drive-ins have always been doing well. It's a resurgence of the media remembering that drive-ins still exist.

**Travis:** Huh.

**Teresa:** So, I think that, although there are, y'know, there's pros and cons to the convenience of, like you said, y'know, day screening. And going to a theater. But there's also, like... this is something that has kind of always been around. Um, and it's a really great connection to community and history.

**Travis:** Okay. Now, before we wrap up, if I were going to go to a drive-in, which now I really, really want to...

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** ... what is some etiquette and some behavior I should observe?

**Teresa:** Okay. So if you're going anywhere outside of your car, in this time of COVID-19, please do wear your mask if you're going anywhere.

So once you get there, you want to turn off all of your lights completely, so that you don't disrupt anybody's viewings. And if you aren't staying the

whole night for all the features, try and make your exit with just your low lights on. Or y'know, during the break between the movies.

I suggest that you shut your car off, if you can help it. So, you can bring a portable radio to listen to the movie. Um, or if you have that, uh... if it's the one where you have the external speaker that you hook into your car, um, it's better for the engine noise and the exhaust and all that stuff. And y'know, with the lights going, don't tap your breaks, right? That's distracting.

You do want to be mindful of other people's views, 'cause not every view is completely un... unex...

**Travis:** Unobstructed.

**Teresa:** Unobstructed. Thank you. Um, and it's cool if you want to open up the back of your car to lay in, but if you have something with a high, um, a high trunk, try and get something so you can maybe tie it down just a little bit so it doesn't poke up above your car. Or you could even park near the back, right?

**Travis:** Yep.

**Teresa:** You could bring—you could park at the back and bring a lawn chair. Also, be careful of kids. We talked about a lot of these places have, uh, have playgrounds. And y'know, the bathrooms, you have to walk through other cars. Um, a lot of these places, the speed limit is like, five miles per hour, and there's a reason for that.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** So, here's the thing about the food, right?

**Travis:** Uh-huh.

**Teresa:** I think that, in normal circumstances, I would encourage people to patronize the, uh, the provided concessions. However...

**Travis:** Here's the secret, folks. Well, I will say real quick... before you sneak in that bag of M&Ms and Sno-Caps or what have you... I worked at a movie theater for a couple years, and the thing I learned is like... I didn't work there a couple years. What I mean is, couple months. Is that, um... most of the time, there's very little money made on ticket sales, and the overhead and like, the margin is in concessions.

So if you like movie theaters, buy food there.

**Teresa:** So, in any ordinary circumstance, I would say, don't bring your own food in. But, I think that everyone is willing to make an exception for the sake of public health.

Also, have a trash bag in your car. It is not good Shmanners to litter.

**Travis:** Ever.

**Teresa:** So, keep a trash bag with you so you can throw that out. Um, also... I... I love myself a little bit of public display of affection. I think that everyone can choose for themselves what would be, uh, appropriate for the age group that you might be with, for the audience you're among, for the placement of your car. Um, I'm not here to tell anybody what to do with their bodies, but I think it's something that you need to think about what your boundaries are when you go to these places.

Um, bring things like bug spray, if you're gonna have your car doors open, car windows open. Bring jumper cables. [laughs] Because if people are leaving their cars on, there might be a need to jump one or two from the batteries. Um, bring blankets. Right? Because if you want to take—turn your car off, and open your windows, it's probably gonna get cool inside your car.

And if you want to, wear your pajamas! Be comfortable.

**Travis:** Yep.

**Teresa:** You, y'know, need to make sure that you are, uh, clothed for the elements, if you need to get out and use the restroom. But nobody's looking at you, and it's night time. Be comfy.

**Travis:** That all sounds great. And that's gonna do it for us, so thank you for joining us. Thank you for listening. Uh, go check out all the other amazing shows on MaximumFun.org. They are great. Um, let's see... what else?

Oh! Go to McElroyMerch.com to check out, uh, the new stuff, as well as all the old great stuff! We have a new Twenty Hunny: Down to Beesness pin, which if you don't listen to My Brother, My Brother, and Me, you won't understand. But it's still beautiful.

**Teresa:** It's a cute little pin!

**Travis:** It's still beautiful. There is also a really wonderful, uh, Wonderful poster.

**Teresa:** Ha ha! That's their tagline, right?

**Travis:** It is so cute.

**Teresa:** It's a wonderful Wonderful poster.

**Travis:** It's a wonderful Wonderful poster! Go check that out. And you can go to McElroy.family to check out all the other McElroy shows and projects. What else? Who do we normally thank, Teresa?

**Teresa:** We always thank Brent "Brental Floss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. Also, thank you to Kayla M. Wasil for our Twitter thumbnail art. That is @ShmannersCast. When we ask for audience questions, that's where we get those from, so you can tweet at us there.



Also, thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for the cover banner of our fan-run Facebook group, Shmanners Fanners. If you love to give and get excellent advice from other fans, you can go and join that group.

**Travis:** Oh, and we also want to thank our researcher, Alex, without whom we would not be able to do this show. Thank you so much! Thank you!

**Teresa:** Thank you Alex! We also would like to thank everyone who has sent in some great ideas to our email, which is [ShmannersCast@gmail.com](mailto:ShmannersCast@gmail.com). That's where we get a lot of our topics, and uh, we are glad to see so many of them rolling in. Keep 'em comin'.

**Travis:** Yeah, a lot of people have been emailing in great, uh, suggestions for idioms to talk about. If you haven't listened to our idioms episode, check that out. And then, if you have idioms you want us to discuss in part two, let us know! That'll be coming up soon, 'cause it's a lot of fun, and I don't want to wait too long.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Uh, so that's gonna do it for us! Join us again next week.

**Teresa:** No RSVP required.

**Travis:** You've been listening to Shmanners.

**Teresa:** Manners, Shmanners. [gasps] Get it!

[theme music plays]

MaximumFun.org

Comedy and culture.

Artist owned.

Audience supported.