

Still Buffering 288: New Kids On The Block

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[theme music plays]

Raleigh: Hello, and welcome to *Still Buffering*: a cross-generational guide to the culture that made us. I am Raleigh Smirl.

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Taylor: And I'm Taylor Smirl.

Raleigh: [sighs] Oh, guys.

Sydnee: How are—how are you doing today, Raleigh?

Taylor: Hoo. [laughs]

Raleigh: I am so tired. I— I, uh... "Red (Taylor's version)" came out last night at midnight. We're recording this on November 12th. By the time this comes out—

Taylor: The— the other Taylor, not me.

Raleigh: Right, right. Not—

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: —not this Taylor's version. Um, Taylor Swift's version.

Sydnee: Did you do a version?

Raleigh: Did you do a version?

Taylor: I'm still working on mine.

[all laugh]

Raleigh: Okay.

Taylor: My rebuttal.

Sydnee: What—what are you gonna call it, though? Because it can't be Taylor's Ver— unless—

Raleigh: Oh, it's still Taylor's version, but just spelled [laughs] the other way.

Sydnee: Just spelled—[laughs] it's Teylor's version, with an E. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: I'll call it... "Unred". [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: [laughs] "Blue."

Taylor: There you go.

[all laugh]

Raleigh: [laughs] Uh, it came out last night at midnight, and it has 30 songs on it. It's over two hours long, so of course I had to stay up and listen to the entire thing as soon as it came out so I could participate in the discourse, but also because I've been waiting for it for five months.

Sydnee: So you could participate in the discourse? [laughs]

Raleigh: Yes. Um—

Taylor: Is there some intense discourse going on? I guess so, huh?

Raleigh: Yeah, it's everywhere. It's all over the place.

Sydnee: There was a lot about it on Twitter, I will say, 'cause I looked at Twitter this morning and I was like, "Wow. A lot of people seem to like Taylor Swift."

Raleigh: That was the first thing you said to me this morning when we sat down was "I realized you're not the only one who likes Taylor Swift that much." [laughs] It's like, "Yeah, Syd!" [laughs]

Sydnee: I— the word I— the word I used was "obsessed." [laughs]

Raleigh: Okay, obsessed with Taylor Swift. There are people that are way worse than I am.

Taylor: I'm just really happy that for as many years as she had to put up with people complaining about her writing songs about, like, exes and stuff, and now people just, like, wait for it. Like, "Oh ho ho, who are we trashing now? Like, give it to me."

Rileigh: It's so good, uh, especially because this entire album just is a— almost all of it is about Jake Gyllenhaal. There are a few songs about a Kennedy, but they're not— yes, she dated a Kennedy for a brief summer.

Sydnee: Which one?

Rileigh: Connor Kennedy.

Sydnee: What's his deal?

Rileigh: Um, what do you mean?

Sydnee: Do we... like him? Hate him? Is he good, bad?

Rileigh: I think it— I think it was just fine.

Sydnee: Do we know?

Rileigh: I think he was just fine.

Sydnee: Okay.

Rileigh: The songs are, like... not bad. They're not like the songs about Jake Gyllenhaal.

Sydnee: I don't know what the Kennedys are up to these days, so I don't really know where all that— I don't know where all that lands. [laughs] I don't keep up with them.

Taylor: I didn't know we still had Kennedys. I'm glad, I guess that's good.

[all laugh]

Rileigh: Um... yeah. So, she also had two appearances on late night shows last night, one on Fallon and one on Seth Meyers. And she hinted at several other things that now people have been dissecting and analyzing, all night long and all morning.

Sydnee: Oh my goodness.

Rileigh: Um, like, she mentioned that people say "You should've made music videos for these songs, these songs should've been singles," like, how intense her fans are is what she was talking about, basically.

Sydnee: Ah.

Rileigh: Um, and she said, "So I listen, and I'm making the videos," and, you know, all that kind of stuff. So then everyone heard that and was like, "What has she made?! What videos?! [laughs] It's plural!"

Taylor: That feels pretty straightforward. [through laughter] It sounds like she's gonna make some videos.

Rileigh: It sounds like she's gonna make some music videos. [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah, I was gonna say, I don't think—

Taylor: If we rearrange the letters in this sentence...

[all laugh]

Sydnee: I don't think that's a puzzle.

Taylor: [laughs]

Rileigh: Um—but, uh—

Sydnee: [laughs]

Rileigh: She also— which even I thought was a little silly— her lucky number is 13. We've talked about this before. It always has been. So when she was on Jimmy Fallon they played a game where you could pick numbered boxes to, like, play the game. The two she picked were one and then three. Like, it just...

Sydnee: Yeah.

Rileigh: It was probably a nod to that, but everyone saw that and was like, "The next two albums she's recording is her first one! It's *Debut*, and then it's *Speak Now*, her third one! That's what she's confirming! It's one, then three!"

It's like, no, I just think... it was a nod to 13, 'cause that's, like, her thing.

Sydnee: It— it really— when we did that alternate reality game in Huntington last weekend...

Rileigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: ...it really made me know, like, what it's like to live in your Swiftie world.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Like, constantly—

Taylor: [laughs] Swifties are just living in a long-form ARG.

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah. It's just, like, looking around and going, "Is that just... a— like, a stop sign, or is it a clue? I don't know. Is that— is that poster [laughs quietly] for, like, a job posting, is that a real poster, or is it a clue? I don't know."

But that's, like, what it's like to live in the Taylor Swift fandom.

Raleigh: And it's ridiculous, because she even said it last night. The way it started was just she wanted people to read the lyrics for her songs when she would sell the CDs, so in her little lyric booklets that came with the CD, she would capitalize certain letters, and if you circled the capital letters it gave you, like, a message for each song, um, that gave a hint about, like, when she wrote it, or who it was about, or where she wrote it, or whatever.

Um, that was how it started, was just very obviously if you look in the lyrical booklet there are some letters that are capital that stand out and you circle those and it makes a thing. Um... now it has turned into just, like... I Spy, everywhere, all the time, in everything she does. It's like, how did we go from that very obvious, like, "Here's a cute little secret message!" To... "There are five poles in a fence, and April 30th was going to be the day that she released, like, her secret third album, *Woodvale*." I don't— I don't know.

Sydnee: That's really on you all, though.

Raleigh: [sighs] Yeah, yeah, no, I take responsibility. Um... partially, along with everyone else.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: Obviously, but...

Taylor: [laughs]

Raleigh: We'll talk— we'll talk about it. The next time it's my turn, we'll talk about the whole album. But, uh, I need some time to process it. She also made a short film about the 10-minute-long version of one of her songs, uh, that comes out today. Really excited about that.

Sydnee: I— I asked— I asked Cooper this morning after I looked at Twitter. I said, "Cooper, why does everybody love Taylor Swift so much, do you think? Everybody's really obsessed with Taylor Swift."

And she went, "[croaky voice] Who's Taywor Swift?"

Rileigh: [muffled laughter]

Sydnee: So not Cooper.

Rileigh: I— I have obviously failed.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Rileigh: And also, if you still have to ask after all the episodes we've done about Taylor Swift, "Why does everyone love Taylor Swift so much?" What are you— what are you—

Sydnee: No, no, I just mean, like—

Rileigh: You don't listen to me?!

Sydnee: Well, I mean, I know—

Rileigh: We've talked about this so many times!

Sydnee: I just— I—[laughs quietly]

Rileigh: She is the music industry! She's a musical genius.

Sydnee: I— I think— yes, I understand. Her music is good. I think there are—

Rileigh: Don't—

Sydnee: —are other—

Rileigh: No!

Sydnee: No, I'm just—

Rileigh: Don't say just, "Her music is good."

Sydnee: [crosstalk] [laughs]

Rileigh: [through laughter] I will fight about this.

Sydnee: The frenzy around her I don't quite understand. It's like a— it's like Beatles mania, but it's Taylor Swift.

Raleigh: Yeah, but think about—

Sydnee: And I don't understand Beatlemania either, so—

Raleigh: Think about just in the past cale—

Sydnee: —I mean, this isn't targeted. It's, like, the—

Raleigh: J— Sy— Sydnee, j— just in the past calendar year, she put out two full new albums, and two pre-recorded albums with ten new songs on each one, pretty much. Like, in one calendar year she has put out four albums.

Sydnee: I— it's— I am not...

Raleigh: In quarantine! She recorded them all, like, at her house!

Sydnee: It's impressive. I am not saying it's not incredibly impressive. It's...

[pause]

Raleigh: Unbelievable.

Taylor: You are— you are on such thin ice right now, Syd. I am—

Sydnee: I know. I'm trying to be careful, here! I— well, I have— I don't wanna—

Raleigh: Trying to be careful?! You said, "Her music's good."

Sydnee: The one thing you don't wanna—

Taylor: [shudders]

Sydnee: —do is upset a Taylor Swift fan. [laughs]

Raleigh: Obviously!

Taylor: No!

Raleigh: I have got— I got no sleep last night! All I did was stay up listening to her talk about how horrible Jake Gyllenhaal is!

Taylor: Rileigh's about to walk off the podcast if you continue with this.
[laughs]

Sydnee: No, no! I— I respect her...

Rileigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: ...abilities, and skill, and talent. All those things.

Taylor: I like that this is where you're at on Taylor Swift.

Sydnee: I have no problem with Taylor Swift.

Taylor: You— you brought New Kids On The Block to the table today. I'm just gonna remind you.

Rileigh: Yeah, really!

Taylor: That that's your—[laughs quietly]

Rileigh: Your track record of New Kids On The Block and *Grease 2*!

Sydnee: But— okay.

Taylor: Oh hoo hoo!

Rileigh: Your big contributions to the podcast.

Sydnee: But what I'm saying is, like, I... I have a passing interest in what's going on with New Kids On The Block.

Rileigh: Wha—! Well, j—[laughs]

Sydnee: But not... not the degree of devotion. How about that word? Devotion that I see among Taylor Swift fans to Taylor Swift.

Rileigh: If anyone had that degree of devotion—

Sydnee: As a concept.

Rileigh: —to New Kids On The Block today, in the year 2021, I don't know what I would—[laughs] like, I don't know how they're functioning today if that was what their— that— that's a— that's their obsession.

Sydnee: You know what? There's somebody.

Rileigh: Is it you?

Sydnee: I guar— no, it's not me. But I guarantee there's somebody. I guarantee there is.

Raleigh: You said that too fast.

Sydnee: [laughs] It's not. There really isn't. I— I, uh... I— no. But there— there's somebody. You know there is.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Anyway, I have no— no, of course. I think— and I like— and Charlie knew who Taylor Swift was.

Raleigh: Well... yes.

Sydnee: Right away.

Raleigh: Charlie also knows some of her least popular songs ever, [laughs] so Charlie's in, like, the small minority of small Taylor Swift fans that, like, love her the best.

Sydnee: Well, she— I mean, she really likes—

Raleigh: "You Need to Calm Down."

Sydnee: "You Need to Calm Down."

Raleigh: And "Me."

Sydnee: And "Me." Oh, she loves "Me."

Raleigh: Which is considered, like, her worst single of all time.

Sydnee: Really?!

Raleigh: Yeah! [laughs]

Sydnee: Oh, she loves "Me." We listen to "Me" in this house a lot. Um, and then she also, uh, I don't know if you remember her obsession with "Look What You Made Me Do."

Raleigh: Oh yeah. I love that song.

Sydnee: Except she couldn't watch, she always had to cover her ears [through laughter] during the part where she says...

Raleigh: "The old Taylor can't come to the phone right now. Why? 'Cause she's dead." [laughs]

Taylor: Oh, is that scary?

Sydnee: She couldn't hear her say she's dead. It— yeah, it used to upset her to hear the word "dead," and so she would cover her ears and hide when she said she's dead. [laughs]

Taylor: Aww.

Raleigh: Even though the music video starts with a zombie Taylor Swift crawling out of the grave.

Sydnee: She would cover her eyes during certain parts.

Raleigh: Oh, okay. Okay.

Sydnee: Um, but she liked the end when they were all standing in a line.

Raleigh: Yeah. That part's good.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: [sighs]

Sydnee: Anyway. [laughs]

Raleigh: Um, but we are talking about New Kids On The Block.

Taylor: Phew!

Raleigh: I had to listen to it the whole first part of this week, because I knew if I put it off until yesterday or today I... I couldn't listen to New Kids On The Block.

Sydnee: You were gonna have to turn off Taylor Swift to listen to New Kids On The Block, and that wasn't gonna happen.

Raleigh: That sounds illegal. [laughs]

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Um, so... [laughs]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: I was— I realized, too, I was really on the young end of the New Kids On The Block fandom. Like, it— the— when I—[sighs] there was a picture I saw of me recently. Did you show me that picture? Did mom?

Raleigh: Mom.

Sydnee: Yeah. Mom showed me this picture recently of me with one of my friends when I was Charlie's age, I believe, in this picture. So, seven. And we are both wearing matching New Kids On The Block nightgowns. So, like, I really think the peak of my New Kids On The Block fandom was, like, seven to ten. [laughs] Which I was thinking about this as I was listening to this music. Like, "What was going on with me?" [laughs] "What— what was happening?" [laughs]

Taylor: I was— I was trying to figure out that time frame, because I— when I was listening to it, and I won't get into this, but, like, I was like, "Oh wow, this reminds me so much of, like, The Backstreet Boys, and how did Sydnee have New Kids On The Block and I had The Backstreet Boys, and we're not that far apart in age, but these are two completely different, like... decade bands?"

Sydnee: Oh yeah. And, I mean, if you look at, like— so, New Kids On The Block was active from, like, 1984 is when they started... I was one.

Raleigh: You were one.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: Hmm.

Sydnee: And 1994, was sort of, like, the end of that first wave. They came back later, in 2008, but...

Raleigh: They had an album put out in 2008.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: But—[laughs] I mean, I was not that old! [laughs] But I was obsessed. I— everybody was, was my recollection. I mean, I had— so, New Kids On The Block, I should start with, if you don't know who they are, which I can't imagine anybody hasn't at least had a passing, like, heard the name.

Raleigh: I guarantee you if there's anyone listening who is my age or slightly younger, there is a, like, 50% chance they have no idea.

Sydnee: Who New Kids On The Block are?

Raleigh: If it weren't—

Sydnee: Like, that even that they existed?

Raleigh: If it weren't for you, I would have no idea. That they even existed. It's not, like, a name—

Sydnee: That's so weird.

Raleigh: Like Backstreet Boys, NSYNC—

Sydnee: Really?

Raleigh: —you hear those. Don't hear New Kids On The Block.

Sydnee: But New Kids was before them.

Raleigh: Exactly.

Taylor: Yes.

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: Or as they went on to be known as, NKOTB. [laughs]

Raleigh: I think that contributed to their downfall.

Taylor: [sounding it out] N-kot-teb. Doesn't really roll off the tongue.

Raleigh: Katbuh.

Sydnee: N-kat-tub. Uh, they were— they weren't the first boy band, by the way. They weren't the first one. They were one of the early boy bands, no doubt, but, um, they were not the first. I think that's important. Because the guy— I was actually reading a little bit more into who wrote their songs, um, Maurice Starr wrote a lot of their songs, and he had initially done New Edition, and then— that was— that band predates New Kids On The Block. And then based on that success he was like, "I'm gonna put together another boy band... New Kids On The Block."

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Um, and he tried to do other boy bands, but none was ever— were ever successful as those two.

Raleigh: Basically when Simon Cowell put One Direction together.

Sydnee: Yes.

Raleigh: Same exact thing.

Sydnee: It— I mean, well, the— there's, like, this whole history of—

Raleigh: That's, like, a trend of putting boy bands— yeah.

Sydnee: —people putting bands together of young men. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: I don't— were The Spice Girls put together? Or did they just find each naturally, because all of their names end in Spice?

[pause]

Raleigh: Now, Syd.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: I thought they were all related. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Taylor: A family name.

Raleigh: They're all in the same family.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: It's a family band. No, I don't—

Raleigh: The Spice family.

Sydnee: I don't know— I don't— what I'm— I guess what I'm getting at is, are there girl bands that were put together in the same way...

Raleigh: I mean, there, uh— Little Mix was made around the same time as One Direction, and it was a group of five girls from *X Factor*, just like One Direction was a group of four guys from *X Factor*. Five guys? I don't know how many people were in One Direction.

Sydnee: [simultaneously] I've never heard of that.

Raleigh: Um, have you heard of Camilla Cabello?

Sydnee: Yes.

Rileigh: She was in— that's where she started, in Little Mix.

Sydnee: Okay.

Taylor: Hmm.

Rileigh: But she kind of did the same, like, Harry Styles. She Beyoncé-d.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Rileigh: She left, yeah.

Sydnee: But, like, Destiny's Child, I don't— I don't believe they were, like, put together. Or TLC.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Like, I think these were groups, like, that just... naturally. They organically arose, as opposed to these boy bands that were sort of manufactured.

Rileigh: That's the only— yeah, that's the only one I can think of that was put together.

Sydnee: Um, I— New Kids On The Block— they were— I was not alone. They were, like, a gigantic... hit. They encouraged this sort of Swiftie fandom, Beatlemania sort of thing.

Rileigh: [holding back laughter] Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: I mean, they did! Like— and I'm sure— Taylor, I don't know, because I felt like Backstreet Boys and NSYNC came too la— like, I was too old for them. Which is weird. This is very weird. Like, the commentary we're making on the age, like, the target age [laughs quietly] for these boy bands is very weird.

Rileigh: Yeah. Also, there is, like, only three years between the two of you, and there is such a difference in—

Sydnee: Well, 'cause I always felt like— like, "Well, I'm too old to be into... Backstreet Boys and NSYNC. Like, that's for the younger kids." Like, that was my perception. Not like I was too cool, but, like, too old.

Taylor: I mean, the debut album for Backstreet Boys was '96, so that was not long after New Kids On The Block hung up their... sneakers? I don't know.

[all laugh]

Sydnee: I would've been, like— but see? That's weird! 'Cause I would've been 13.

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: That feels like a good time for Backstreet Boys.

Taylor: I mean, 'cause I remember I think Backstreet Boys, my friends that were really into, like, Backstreet Boys and NSYNC, like, that was through late elementary school and middle school. By the time we got to high school, it wasn't cool anymore. It wasn't cool to like boy bands in high school, you know? People still did, but I think that the... the young target audience is— I don't know if that's unique to New Kids On The Block, but I think that was really a factor that influenced later boy bands. Like, I don't— which is hilarious, if you think about the way the songs are written and, like, the— the lyrical perspective of most of the songs is, like, towards, like, "Hey, girl." Like, all of them. [laughs] Like, you're singing to a nine-year-old!

Raleigh: Yeah. [laughs]

Sydnee: Well, I mean, but they're— and they're— the thing is, like, whether or not they intended... I don't wanna sit here and say, like, the whole plan was to target nine-year-olds. I'm not— I don't think that. I think the thought was, "Young girls will go crazy for these cute boys singing."

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I don't think that it was more insidious than that, certainly. But... the lyrics to a lot of the songs are incredibly, like, chaste.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: I mean, they're not sexy. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: They would evolve in a direction that was more mature eventually, but, like, a lot of the early songs are like, "[singing] There's so much we can do."

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: Like, we could go to the park! We could get some ice cream! We can hold hands! I mean, like, it's all very...

Rileigh: Well, that's probably why it appeals to young— younger kids, right?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Rileigh: I mean, it's like you said. It was the same thing when One Direction was a thing. It wasn't cool to be a One Direction fan if you were in high school, but if you were, like, you know, in late elementary, middle school, that was the thing.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Rileigh: But they didn't sing about sexy stuff.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly]

Taylor: And it was— I mean—

Sydnee: I don't know what they sung about. [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: The same kind of thing!

Taylor: Yeah. It was something they had to have been aware of, because, Syd, I don't remember— like, listening to this music, the hits I remembered, but I never really— I was too young. But I do remember you having the New Kids On The Block Barbie dolls. And, I mean, if you're making dolls that are sized with Barbies, you have to know who your audience is. You're not making that for, like, a 20-year-old girl to play with or collect. [laughs]

Sydnee: Well, I mean, I guess that's true. You're not— and you're not making— you're not even really making it for teenagers, because Barbies are definitely, like— I mean, not that teenagers can't play with Barbies, but you're definitely aiming at a younger... I mean, that's true. And I—

Rileigh: That's not the target demographic.

Sydnee: I did— so, I think that was the other big thing about New Kids On The Block is that they had their music, which was very, like... you have now listened to it, standard boy band-ish.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: 90's.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: A little cheesy.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Right? Like, we— we're 80's, into the early 90's. It was the height of cheese.

Raleigh: It did have a little bit more of an 80's feel, I guess, than, like, Backstreet Boys or NSYNC. Um, but still very much just boy band.

Sydnee: It was the time where you could say things in a song unironically.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Like... "C'mon, fellas."

Raleigh: Yeah! [laughs]

Sydnee: "Here we go." Like, as if, like, that's just a thing that we do! [laughs] Calling your band mates "fellas," by the way...

Taylor: That's kind of adorable, actually.

Sydnee: It is kind of cute! [laughs] "C'mon, fellas. Here we go." And then you do the la's. "La la la." [laughs] There is something cute about that.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Yeah. Well, I mean, just the entirety of the song "Hangin' Tough" with all of these, like— their voices have just turned, but not entirely. Like, what are— you're hangin' tough. Are you? [laughs]

Sydnee: Uh, "Hangin' Tough" I love, because— oh, what is it in parentheses? Um, "Hangin' Tough" was the one that in parentheses said something about bad boys. Oh, that one made me really happy.

Taylor: That's— that's—

Sydnee: I also—[laughs quietly]

Raleigh: I like that— I just— I love song names that have the parentheses on them, um, but that, like— like, for example, "I'll Be Loving You," in parentheses, "(Forever)."

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: [laughs]

Rileigh: It just feels like a little bit of an aside. Like, in the title. They couldn't just name it "I'll Be Loving You Forever."

Sydnee: Boys—

Rileigh: "I Be Loving You... [whispering] Forever."

Sydnee: "Boys In The Band" is the boy band anthem.

[pause]

Taylor: Well, that—

Sydnee: I don't know if you noticed that.

Taylor: That song must've come later, 'cause they— they name drop bands like Backstreet Boys and NSYNC in that song, right?

Rileigh: Hmm.

Sydnee: Yeah. Yeah, they did do that. Um, the song that I, upon relistening to— well, first of all, with the hits, like... "Hangin' Tough," "Step by Step," "Please Don't Go Girl," those were... those were so huge. I mean, those were giant songs. Which is weird that "Hangin' Tough" was, because they— I think they yell the line "We're rough."

Rileigh: [laughs] Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Rileigh: Yep.

Sydnee: [through laughter] And no one has ever sounded less tough than they do singing the song "Hangin' Tough."

Rileigh: Um, can I ask, just for context, like, the average age of member in this band, at the height of their fame?

Sydnee: So, the— the little one...

Rileigh: [snort-laugh]

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] The one that I was, um, obsessed with...

Raleigh: Well, 'cause you were also the little one. [laughs]

Sydnee: 'Cause I was the little one. Um, was Joey McIntyre.

Raleigh: Yes.

Sydnee: Although my recollection is that he went by Joe McIntyre when he was with— like, early in the band, and then he had a solo career. A lot of 'em would go on to have a solo career. And he was Joey McIntyre when he had his solo career. So did, um, one of the Knight brothers. 'Cause there's Jordan and Jonathan Knight, who are brothers, and... one of them also had a solo career.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Or maybe both. And then of course you've heard of the Wahlbergs.

Raleigh: Right.

Taylor: Right.

Sydnee: Donnie was in this.

Raleigh: Yes. Yes.

Sydnee: Not... Danny.

Taylor: Now, was he the bad boy back then?

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Did they have the roles of, like, there was, like, the cute one—

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: —the bad boy, the romantic one.

Sydnee: Yes. So, uh, Jordan and Jonathan were supposed to be the ones that you swooned over, and most of, like, my friends I remember, like, having a crush on one or the other. They were, like, the genius ones who, like, wrote the music, was the perception. Made the music, played instruments, um, dreamy—

Taylor: [holding back laughter] The genius ones?!

Sydnee: Well, I mean, like, that was the perception. Like, these are the two— like, they're so talented, and they're brothers, and they're so cute and, like, they're behind the music. And then there was Donnie, who was the bad boy. Because, like, he w—[laughs] he wore, like, a denim, like, vest with, like—

Raleigh: Oh God, this first picture that comes up.

Sydnee: —cut-off sleeves. [laughs]

Raleigh: Yeah. Yeah. And he's, like, making an angry face in the picture they're all taking, with a— with a cap on.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: And the rest of them are kind of, like, givin' a little smirk.

Sydnee: Joey was the little baby. He was the sweet little baby face who— who's, I believe, like... who could hit the high notes. Like, especially early on. Like, super high notes. And then there was Danny Wood, and I never quite understood Danny's role other than, like, he lifted weights. That was the main thing. Danny, like, was always muscly. And in, like, the— when they would, like, do things, like appearances, he always looked like he just came from the gym. That was sort of— he was sorta— he was the sporty one. He was Sporty Spice.

Raleigh: He was Sporty Spice.

Taylor: There you go. Yeah.

Raleigh: Sure.

Taylor: There's gotta be a sporty one.

Sydnee: Yeah. Um, but I— Joey was the one I was obsessed with, which would've made sense, 'cause he was the youngest member of the group. I need to know how young they all were. I'm gonna give you some ages for some reference. Um, but before we do that...

Raleigh: Let's check the group message.

Sydnee: Let's do that.

Uh, you know, when you're listening to music... [laughs quietly] you wanna make sure that you're having a comfortable experience, right? You want, um, something that fits in your ear well, that feels good, uh, noise isolating, um, lasts for a long time, that you can listen to for hours. Uh,

and that's exactly what you're gonna get with Raycon wireless earbuds. Um, I can attest, a lot of the earbuds that I have used before will fall out of my ears, especially if I'm wearing them while I'm, like, working out or walking or, you know, doing anything kind of active. But you don't have to worry about that with Raycon wireless earbuds.

Uh, the new everyday earbuds come with three new sound profiles to make sure everything you're listening to sounds its best. So whether you need, like, more or less bass, they've got, like, pure mode for if you wanna listen to maybe your favorite podcast.

Raleigh: Hmm!

Sydnee: By three siblings who talk about pop culture, then and now. Uh, they've got balanced mode for, like, rock or heavy metal. They've got bass mode. Um, whatever you need, you can set it on that, and you get the best listening experience possible, and something that's comfortable. And, uh, and this holiday season, they would make a great gift! So, think about that.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: If you're not sure what to buy for somebody, this is always a great present for them. And, um, then they can use it for music, work, play, calls, podcasts, whatever they're doing. So, Tey, if our listeners want to check out Raycon wireless earbuds, what should they do?

Taylor: Well, they should got buyraycon.com/buffering today to unlock exclusive deals up to 20% off your Raycon order. But hurry! This offer is available for a limited time only, and you don't wanna miss it. That's buyraycon.com/buffering to unlock up to 20% off your Raycons. Once again, buyraycon.com/buffering.

Sydnee: Okay. So, Joseph Mulrey McIntyre. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: Mm-hmm. Full name.

Sydnee: Uh, was born on December 31st, 1972.

Raleigh: Oh.

Sydnee: So I said '84 is when this band started?

Raleigh: Uh-huh.

Sydnee: So am I doing the math right that he was 12?

Raleigh: Uh-huh.

Sydnee: When the band started? [laughs]

Taylor: That's a child!

Raleigh: That is a baby.

Sydnee: He was a little teeny baby when that started! That's wild.

Raleigh: Sorry, Taylor— Taylor sent in our group message a picture of the New Kids On The Block, [laughs] and [through laughter] said it's non-binary people at brunch, and their outfits... [laughs]

Taylor: That— that's— yeah.

Sydnee: Okay. One of the Knight brothers is wearing just overalls with no shirt.

Taylor: I... I've dated that person.

Raleigh: [laughs]

Taylor: [laughs] No but, like, the— the vest, the beret and the oversized glasses, the—

Sydnee: Oh my gosh.

Taylor: —the sweater jeans hat combo.

Sydnee: What is that hat called?

Taylor: I mean, it's— it's kind of a fedor— it's maybe, like, a pork pie?

Sydnee: Yeah, I think it's a pork pie. [laughs]

Raleigh: I would wear that outfit right now, actually. Um, which one is that? Which one's the boy with the glasses?

Sydnee: That's Donnie. He doesn't look as much of a bad boy.

Raleigh: He does not.

Sydnee: This is what a bad boy looked like in the 90's. [laughs]

Raleigh: I would wear that outfit.

Taylor: Yeah, no, they're all great outfits. All of my friends would dress like this, but these would be queer hipsters in Brooklyn.

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] This is what a bad boy looked like in the 90's!
[wheeze-laughs]

Taylor: He looks like he's about to, like, set up his easel in the park!
[laughs]

Sydnee: And then he's gonna, like...

Raleigh: [snorts]

Sydnee: [wheeze-laughs] And then he's gonna argue with you about leftist policies.

Raleigh: [laughs]

Taylor: He has opinions about natural wines.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: Who— who's my boy in the front with the— with the vest and very ripped jeans, but it looks like, like, white tights on under the rips? And also loafers. [snorts]

Taylor: Oh.

Sydnee: That's one of the Knight brothers. I always got Jordan and Jonathan confused. The Knight brothers are the one— the one wearing overalls with no shirt and the one in the vest with the ripped jeans.

Raleigh: [laughs]

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: And then Danny is the one— he's just— I think that's, like, a tracksuit.

Taylor: Yeah, that makes sense.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Sporty Spice.

Sydnee: And then Donnie is the bad boy, which you can tell from the beret. [laughs]

Raleigh: [wheezes]

Taylor: I'm gonna have to post this picture somewhere so people understand. [laughs]

Sydnee: Everything is cuffed, too! Everything!

Taylor: Hell yeah.

Raleigh: Everything is cuffed!

Sydnee: If you can cuff it, they cuffed it. [laughs]

Taylor: So if you're a— if you're a young queer person struggling with how to figure out your personal style, just look at pictures of the New Kids On The Block. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Taylor: Pick one and go with it.

Sydnee: Um...

Raleigh: Now, they're going on tour next year. You know this, right? Like, do we just— do we just all go together and show up dressed as that picture?

Taylor: Absolutely!

Sydnee: I am— I am just— oh, man. Now, that— that's Halloween next year, by the way.

Raleigh: [laughs]

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: I am— it is occurring to me that... Joey McIntyre was about ten years older than me, 'cause he was born at the end of '72, so he's about— about ten years my senior. So when I was, like, wild about NKOTB... when I was— what did we decide? Like, nine.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] Seven, eight, nine. [through laughter] He was 17, 18, 19 years old.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: And I thought he was, like, the baby! [laughs] He was, like, the little one.

Raleigh: Well, comparatively, was he?

Sydnee: [wheeze-laughs] I mean... I... yeah, but...

Raleigh: Which always feels a little bit weird when— when, uh— uh, usually it's a boy band that appeals to, like, the very young, like, nine, ten-year-olds. At least, like, with One Direction they all were, like, 16 or 17. It's like, well, I guess that's a little bit better. But was this one, like, you know, 18, 19-year-old Joey McIntyre, and then, like...

Sydnee: They were all, like—

Raleigh: Okay.

Sydnee: They born in '68, '69, '71, '72. They're all— they're all around the same age.

Raleigh: Okay, yeah.

Sydnee: So, like, he was the baby, but not— not by that much.

Raleigh: Okay.

Sydnee: Um, but they— but, I mean, part of that is the, um— like, that's the story, right? Like, they played that up, that he was the baby because he was supposed to be, like, the cute, innocent— he was the one—

Raleigh: Baby Spice.

Sydnee: Well, and he was the one that it was okay for all the girls to have a crush on, right? Like, you can like Joey 'cause he's— he's a— he's a little boy, and he's a gentleman, and he's gonna be so shy.

Raleigh: He's a little boy.

Sydnee: He's not even gonna hold your hand, because that would be too much. Like, that's Joey, so don't worry. Don't worry, moms and dads. [laughs quietly] Your— your children can have a crush on Joey McIntyre and it's fine. Now, stay away from Donnie Wahlberg! [laughs]

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Look at that guy's beret. You know he means trouble! [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Oh no, I think that that's— it's a dangerous trap. They all can hang tough, Syd.

Raleigh: [snorts]

Sydnee: That's true. "We're rough!"

Raleigh: They are rough. [laughs]

Taylor: If you— if— we ain't gonna give anybody any slack, and if you try to keep us down, we're gonna come right back.

Sydnee: I like that! I like that threat.

Raleigh: [simultaneously] Which is very reminiscent of—[laughs]

Sydnee: 'Cause it's, like— it d— we're not gonna hurt you.

Raleigh: We're gonna come back.

Sydnee: We're just gonna come back.

Raleigh: Which, you know what it reminds me of?

Sydnee: What?

Raleigh: The Jojo Siwa hit, "Boomerang."

Taylor: Oh!

Sydnee: Well...

Raleigh: Do you think she took inspiration from the Back— from the New Kids On The Block.

Taylor: Maybe.

Raleigh: I almost called them the Backstreet Boys.

Sydnee: Well, maybe.

Raleigh: Um... it was very much the same.

Sydnee: I don't know. I mean—

Raleigh: I don't think she did.

Sydnee: I think that the music was supposed— I think it was way more about, like, a catchy pop hook than it was to be lyrically inspirational.
[laughs]

Raleigh: Sure.

Sydnee: Um, and they did. I mean, like, that song had that "[singing wordlessly]" which, like... you hear that, and you know instantly, like, "Oh, okay. I'm transported."

Raleigh: [snorts]

Taylor: Are you telling me... no, you're not telling me that "Don't worry about nothing 'cause it won't take long, we're gonna put you in a trance with a funky song" isn't brilliant lyricism?

Raleigh: [laughs] I never wanna hear you use—

Taylor: It— it's not gonna take long.

Raleigh: —New Kids On The Block and Taylor Swift in the same sentence ever again! [laughs]

Sydnee: "[singing] We're gonna put you in a trance with a funky song!"

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: Man, I thought this music was so cool when I was little. I had— not only did— so, like, the big thing is of course they were... I don't wanna say they were manufactured, 'cause they could sing. I mean, like, that's the thing. Like, they can sing, right?

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Um, and they can dance! Watch their old videos. Like, they can dance. They can sing. They can perform. I do believe some of them could actually play musical instruments and, like, probably... could write their own songs. Like, I'm not saying they weren't talented, but the concept was very manufactured.

Raleigh: Sure.

Sydnee: Um, and merchandised, and packaged, and, like, it had very specific goals and demographics and all that. And so there was, I mean, like, anything you could want with New Kids On The Block on it existed. Um, I— I, of course— I had two different nightgowns. In that picture I'm wearing my blue one, but I also had this purple one that I liked even better. Um—[laughs]

Raleigh: Which really ages their fans, if they're, you know, [through laughter] making nightgowns.

Sydnee: Well, I mean, it was a nightgown that fit... a seven-year-old, so.

Raleigh: Yeah. They— they knew their target demographic.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Um, I had that lunchbox that Taylor, you have now.

Taylor: Yes. I use it to carry cosplay supplies.

Sydnee: The plastic—

Taylor: Yes. [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah, that plastic orange lunchbox with just a picture of New Kids On The Block on the front.

Taylor: Which, I mean, also the fact that they made a lunchbox that had a matching thermos, like, there's only a certain amount— that's an age that's gonna use that.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. Uh, I had, um— I believe I had a backpack too, but who knows what happened to that? Uh, I had the dolls, as you mentioned.

Taylor: That's— I was thinking of that box you had, but that was a *90210* box. My bad. Sorry. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: I did. I did have a *90210*... little trunk box thing.

Raleigh: [muffled laughter]

Sydnee: Storage box, cube, in my room. Um, don't worry. I paper mached over it with, like, astrological symbols and zodiac signs at one point. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: [muffled laughter]

Sydnee: Because if it's a 90's cliché, I've done it.

Raleigh: [simultaneously] You did it.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Unless— unless we're getting into late 90's, early 2000's with the inflatable furniture, 'cause then Taylor did it. [laughs]

Taylor: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Raleigh: [laughs] Man.

Sydnee: Um, but I— the dolls, like you said, they were sized like Barbie dolls. They were perfect for Barbie dolls. And so, between the New Kids On The Block [laughs quietly] and my *90210* dolls... [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: Oh... boy.

Sydnee: Of which I had full sets of both.

Taylor: Ken did not stand a chance.

Raleigh: No.

Sydnee: No. Ken was outta there.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: There was— I—

Raleigh: There was no Ken.

Sydnee: There was no Ken. Why did I need Ken? [laughs quietly] Not when I've got Jordan, and Joey, and Jonathon, and Danny, and Donnie. [pause] *And* a Luke Perry doll!

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: I mean, come on!

Sydnee: Come on! Um... yeah, I— I had all— huh?

Taylor: Well, I was gonna say, I inherited those dolls and, uh, my— my friends and I played weird things with Barbies, so Luke Perry became, uh, Agent Mulder in our games. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Taylor: 'Cause we liked to play X-Files Barbie.

Sydnee: Well, I loved that. That Luke Perry doll, man. Barbies— that was always Barbie's favorite when I was playing. And then— 'cause, like, his *90210* character. But then also he was in the original *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* movie.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm. So he was not Barbie's favorite; he was your favorite.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: He was a dreamy doll.

Raleigh: Which meant Barbie's favorite, yes.

Sydnee: He was. And he was a bad boy. But with a soft side.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: [laughs] Like maybe he wore berets [through laughter] sometimes. I don't know. But he looked like he might. Uh... [laughs]

Taylor: I was really struck listening to this music by how much of it— you could put— there were so many of these songs that if I was listening to the Backstreet Boys and one of these songs came on and would've been like, "That's just more Backstreet Boys."

Like, I was expecting it to have more 80's flavor to it, but so much of, like, the way that they produce the music sounds, like, *the* same.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: Interchangeable.

Sydnee: It's very— yes. It's the same kind of thing. Like, as I was listening to it I was trying to feel, like, what about this sets it apart, makes it different? And it just— I mean, what sets it apart and makes it different is that it predated the Backstreet Boys stuff and so, like, I guess you can give it credit for that. But...

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: It— it's all very similar. Like, that is the style. It's...

Taylor: And that formula.

Sydnee: ...catchy, harmless.

Taylor: Yeah. And, like, having, like, the young one, the romantic one, the bad boy, the talented one. Like, that's all, like— those exact same roles were just what became the Backstreet Boys and NSYNC. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: And then you watch "That Thing You Do" and you're like, "Oh." [laughs]

Raleigh: No.

Sydnee: "Oh."

Raleigh: It was before them, too.

Sydnee: [laughs] "Oh, I get it now." Um, the other thing I had, merchandise-wise, other than all these things we've mentioned— I had the comic book.

Raleigh: Ohh.

Sydnee: There was a New Kids On The Block comic book that was released, uh, not with— not with the *Archies*. Which, like, Archie met so many people through the comic books. Like, there are so many Archie and The Punisher, Archie and KISS. Like, there are so many weird *Archie* comics where they meet strange celebrities. Why New Kids On The Block and the *Archie*— and maybe they did. And if it's out there and somebody knows about it, please tell me, because I have never read it. But they also had standalone New Kids On The Block comic books.

Which I feel like is a very—I feel like that's a very Beatles kind of progression for the band, right? Because it was really accessible to kids. I read them, and there was one that had— it was, like... Joey McIntyre is looking at you and talking to you. That was the entire story.

Raleigh: [snorts]

Sydnee: Um, and he takes you on a date.

Raleigh: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: I don't know. Is there a name for that? Like, is it...

Taylor: I—

Sydnee: Where's he's tal— where, like, the character's talking to the audience directly.

Taylor: Uh, I mean, if this was a piece of fanfiction [through laughter] it would be called a... a Joey McIntyre/Reader. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: Well...

Raleigh: You read fanfiction.

Sydnee: That's what it— I mean, that's what it was.

Taylor: [simultaneously] That sounds like that.

Sydnee: And...

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I mean— 'cause, like, he's looking directly at you in every panel. And he's like...

Raleigh: That's a little unsettling.

Sydnee: Like, he shows up at your doorstep and brings you flowers, and then he takes you out for a burger, and you sit with him and, like, eat a bur— I also remember the burger looked really good.

[all laugh]

Raleigh: Sydnee went on that date so many times.

Sydnee: For the burger!

Raleigh: For the burger.

[all laugh]

Sydnee: For the— I have been known to do that in my life. I love a good burger.

Taylor: Now I see why you like Jughead. [laughs quietly] Wasn't Jughead burger—

Sydnee: I know, I'm a Jughead at heart. I always I thought I was a Betty! [laughs quietly] Uh... but at the end of the date he gives you a kiss. He asks permission. He asks consent. So—

Raleigh: Right.

Sydnee: —I guess you could— if you say "No" you don't have to read the last panel. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Put down the book, yeah.

Sydnee: You— you can put down the book.

Raleigh: Is it just, like, his lips, just real close?

Sydnee: Yeah!

Raleigh: No it's not!

Sydnee: It is a panel!

Taylor: Ooh!

Raleigh: Oh, God!

Sydnee: Of his lips!

Raleigh: I was kidding!

Sydnee: Because what are they expecting?

Raleigh: You're gonna kiss it.

Sydnee: You're gonna kiss it.

Raleigh: [quietly] Oh my—

Sydnee: Of course I kissed it! Of course!

Raleigh: Oh, of course you did.

Sydnee: You don't know how many times I made out with this comic book page. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: That...

Sydnee: 'Cause it was Joey McIntyre! Taking me—

Raleigh: Well, you know—

Sydnee: —little Sydnee Smirl, on a date. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: That's fair. I remember ripping posters of, like, the Jonas Brothers out of magazines and putting them on my wall and kissing them, so...

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: ...that's fair.

[pause]

Sydnee: [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Teylor's like, "I did not do that with the Backstreet Boys."

Teylor: I never made out with— with paper. I wouldn't kiss my comics. They have value. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: [laughs loudly] Uh...

Raleigh: Teylor was more responsible than that.

Sydnee: [laughs] But, yeah. That was my favorite— my favorite piece of NKOTB merchandise, was that comic book.

Teylor: That's amazing.

Sydnee: I— it may still be— you know how mom and dad have all those boxes of our old books in the basement?

Raleigh: Mm-hmm. I am sure it is still there.

Teylor: Oh...

Sydnee: It might be there.

Teylor: Sydnee, a New Kids On The Block—

Raleigh: All of your *Archies* are.

Teylor: —comic book that you have personally made out with, in— in— countless times, would be so much money on eBay.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: That would be a great— I'll raise money for a charity that way.
[laughs]

Taylor: I think that's a great idea. You've gotta find it.

Sydnee: [laughs] Ohh, I will look for it, because, I mean, I did love that. Man, I was obsessed with that.

Raleigh: It's probably actually worth money now, too. [laughs quietly] I bet you can't find 'em anywhere.

Taylor: I thought about that with the lunchbox I have, but I don't know. Some irresponsible child colored all over it with crayon. That was probably me.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Um... [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: I *guarantee* it was you.

Taylor: Sorry.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] Aww, that's alright. I'm not upset about it now.

Raleigh: [laughs]

Taylor: Oh, that's good. You probably were back then. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: As of this year, Sydnee is not upset about it.

Sydnee: This is officially... seems like there's other things to worry about now.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Um, the one song I— as I was relistening to all these songs, I made you— I sent one to you two specifically, because I listened to it, and then I found myself thinking, "This is legit a good song." It was the song "Tonight."

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Um, I believe off their album *Step by Step*.

Rileigh: Yes. What do you all think?

Taylor: This is— this is Sydnee's— Sydnee's "Bohemian Rhapsody" here.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: It has— it has movements.

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: It does.

Rileigh: Um... yeah. I mean, I would agree, in the sense that I think it's closer to a genuinely good song than...

Taylor: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: ...most of the other songs? [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: [laughs] That's so mean!

Rileigh: Only in the sense that, like, I would willingly listen to it now, and not turn it on, like, you know... I don't know. Like, I—

Sydnee: It's a good song.

Rileigh: It's not the kind of music that now I would go to and choose to turn on, but that song is probably the one that would be one of the most likely that I would go to and turn on if I was turning on this kind of music.

Taylor: I like a song that tells a story. I like that it had movements.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Taylor: I mean, I joke about comparing it to "Bohemian Rhapsody," but that is the first thing. I was like, "Oh, I get it. It's like their— their, like, their journey of a song." That's cool. It's cool that they did that.

Sydnee: It is.

Rileigh: Yeah. I love musical theater. Musical theater tells stories in songs. It's basically like if they were to make...

Taylor: [laughs]

Rileigh: Oh my God, a jukebox musical of New Kids On The Block.
[laughs]

Taylor: Oh, Sydnee.

Sydnee: I'm there. I'm there!

Taylor: With your skill at writing parodies, you could...

Rileigh: There you go.

Taylor: ...combine two of your loves.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I'm there, if they do it. Um, I just thought, like, it was musically interesting. Uh... I enjoyed it. It felt Beatles-ish to me.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: It had a Beatles-y feel.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Um... that I enjoyed. Which I read— I went and read more about it, 'cause I was like, "This song feels so weird to me, from a lot of their other songs."

And, uh, they were trying to take it, the band, in a more mature direction with it. Like, "This will grow them up," and they were inspired by Beatles music.

Rileigh: Really?

Sydnee: Um, Beatles and ska.

Rileigh: Interesting.

Taylor: Sure, yeah.

Sydnee: Were the two inspirations for that.

Rileigh: Okay.

Taylor: I love that combo.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Taylor: That— that's, like—

Sydnee: Well, that was kind of what I thought. I was like, "Well, that— you know what? I don't hate any of that." I mean, obviously I love the Beatles and, like, I can... I can do some... some ska now and then.

Raleigh: Some ska, mm-hmm.

Sydnee: A little bit of ska in there.

Taylor: That's one of those, like, dipping your french fry in, like, a chocolate frosty. Like, "This isn't gonna work. Ah, maybe it works! It kinda works." [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I— I mean— well, and again, like, with the era that I am from, you have to like ska a little.

Raleigh: Sure.

Sydnee: Like, it's in there a little. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Those No Doubt albums.

Sydnee: Exactly, exactly. Like, ska— ska just kind of showed up and, like, you didn't know how ska got to the party. They came with somebody, like somebody brought them, and you were like, "Well, I guess."

But then after you hang with them a little bit you're like, "No, you're pretty chill. It's cool."

Taylor: There's actually, like, a really cool ska revival going on right now. And I say that completely not dismissively. Like, I think it's awesome. Like, young kids, like, unironically embracing ska. Absolutely. Please, by all means, pick it up. Pick it up.

Sydnee: I have no problem with ska. [laughs]

Raleigh: Um, I would just like to say, what I said about the song "Tonight," and also all of the Ba— the New Kids— I keep on wanting to them the Backstreet Boys— New Kids On The Block music was— came off meaner than I intended.

Taylor: [laughs]

Raleigh: I do enjoy this kind of music—

Sydnee: [laughs]

Rileigh: —in the sense that I am... often in a certain kind of mood where I'm in the car and I'm like, "That kind of Backstreet Boys, NSYNC, now New Kids On The Block music, I just want that right now. That would make me feel happy right now."

And I think if I were in that mood, I am more likely to turn on that song than some of the other ones from this... band.

Sydnee: What was— do you have an equivalent? Was it One Direction? I was about to say New Directions. [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: [laughs] Well, that's— that's the show choir from *Glee*.

Sydnee: It was New Directions.

Rileigh: It was New Directions.

Sydnee: Well, I mean, it was! [laughs]

Rileigh: Yeah. Um, I mean, yes, I would say my generation, One Direction was that equivalent. Um, or maybe 5 Seconds of Summer, but they still make music, and have kind of transitioned away from that, like, more... traditional boy band vibe, but I think it was One Direction. I just never got into One Direction.

Sydnee: Yeah, I don't remember ever hearing— I have never heard— I mean, like, if I've heard a One Direction song, I didn't know I did.

Rileigh: Yeah. I was definitely in the right age group. I had friends that were very, very into them and, like, went to their concerts and collected their merch and all that kind of stuff. Um, I don't know, I just never... I never got into that vibe of music. I was listening to Taylor Swift the whole time.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Rileigh: That's been my whole music life, so.

Taylor: Just Taylor Swift. There's one song, I guess it's obviously one of their newer songs, but I think it was... I had never heard it before, but it was my favorite that I came across, and that was "80s Baby."

Sydnee: Yeah. [laughs]

Taylor: So, it's— it's got a ton— it's New Kids On The Block, but it's featuring, like, Naughty By Nature and, like, Salt-N-Pepa and, like, Tiffany. Like, all of these other 80's icons. But my favorite thing is, like,

the kind of chorus is like, "You're a sophisticated lady, but you're an 80—to me, you're an 80s baby."

It's like, that song... I just— I picture so many, like, happy wine moms, like, hearing that and being like, "Yes. Like, I am now a sophisticated lady."

Sydnee: Yes. [laughs]

Taylor: "But I loved you when I was [laughs] like, 12." That song makes me so happy.

Raleigh: When I was an 80s baby.

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: I think that's exactly— but yeah, that's exactly the intended— I mean, you know they did a cruise.

Taylor: [shocked laughter]

Sydnee: There was a cruise you could go on with New Kids On The Block a few years back.

Raleigh: What?

Taylor: And you didn't go?

Sydnee: Yeah, pre-pandemic, of course.

Taylor: Oh.

Sydnee: Uh, it was— well, I mean... it was definitely something I discussed with people, because I don't remember exactly when it was, so I don't know if it was work stuff or kid stuff why, like, "Oh, I can't go on a New Kids cruise." But, like, I definitely remember thinking, "I would... I would probably enjoy that." [laughs]

Taylor: That would be amazing.

Sydnee: [through laughter] I would probably like that pretty well!

Raleigh: Now, I just need to ask very quickly, because I will admit, I didn't really listen to most of the album they put out in 2008, just because I knew that the music you had listened to is probably the stuff from their first few albums, so that was what I listened to. There was a song on this album from 2008 with Lady Gaga on it.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: What?!

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: They did a song with Lady Gaga?

Sydnee: There— I mean—

Taylor: There was— it was— it, like, made the mainstream news when they launched their sort of revival. Oh, it's been a decade, but I remember, like, seeing that happen. Like, "Good for them." [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: There's also a song on this album called "Sexify My Love."

Sydnee: [snorts]

[muffled laughter]

Raleigh: They said "We're done! We're not little boys anymore, it's 2008!"

Sydnee: Nah, they grew up. It's 2— well, it was a such a great time, right? 2008. Obama was President.

Raleigh: [laughs] Lady Gaga was, like, making— making "Born This Way."

Sydnee: Making songs with New Kids On The Block.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Like, this was— this was just— it was a great moment to be alive. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Why not sexify your love?

Sydnee and Raleigh: Why not?

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: Alright. Well, thank you both. I won't make you talk about New Kids On The Block anymore, but...

Taylor: Oh, I thought this was fun.

Raleigh: I did enjoy it.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: It puts me in a certain mindset where I'm like, "I can't really be upset right now."

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: This is just, like— is enjoyable.

Sydnee: There— there was a certain— there is a certain degree to which that kind of cheese is earnest in a way that I really identify with, and long for in media, and so...

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: It will always— it will always hold that little piece of my heart. [laughs quietly] Alright. What's next?

Taylor: Uh, well, I'm gonna—

Sydnee: Tey, you're up.

Taylor: I'm gonna stir the pot here, I think, a little bit.

Raleigh: [apprehensively] Oh.

Taylor: 'Cause I know that Raleigh's up after me, and I know you're gonna do the re-release of "Red."

Raleigh: Yes.

Taylor: So I thought I would pick one of my favorite films from my youth, uh, teen years, whatever, that stars Jake Gyllenhaal.

Raleigh: [through laughter] Uh-huh?

Taylor: I thought we could talk about *Donnie Darko*.

[all laugh]

Sydnee: I'm excited. 'Cause I— I didn't know that there was a such a problem with Jake Gyllenhaal! [laughs]

Raleigh: He didn't come to her 21st birthday party!

Sydnee: I didn't— I didn't know any of this stuff!

Raleigh: Um, I—

Sydnee: I do love *Donnie Darko*, though.

Raleigh: I have never seen this movie, though, so I am just, you know, excited to watch the movie.

Taylor: I just—

Raleigh: I'll pretend it's just, you know, not Jake Gyllenhaal.

Taylor: Your opinion's gonna be so colored by everything you now know. Everything we all now know about Jake Gyllenhaal. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: I already knew so much, but somehow it just got worse with this new album. And it all happened, like, ten years ago. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: That's just...

Raleigh: Ah, but yes. That— that was exciting.

Sydnee: I'm exc— I'm excited.

Raleigh: Yes.

Sydnee: We can all go back to the time when he was just sort of dreamy.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: And mysterious.

Taylor: Uh, I don't— was he ever dreamy? I thought he was, like, weird, and that was his whole appeal. [laughs quietly] When did he become dreamy?

Sydnee: I thought that the weirdness—

Raleigh: [simultaneously] I think he was a little dreamy.

Sydnee: —made him dreamy.

Taylor: Hmm, okay. I'm curious what the overlap here, because *Donnie Darko* was 2001, and the idea of, like, *Donnie Darko* era Jake Gyllenhaal breaking Taylor Swift's heart this hard is just so... silly to me.

Raleigh: No. It was, like, a full ten years later.

Taylor: Oh, okay, alright.

Raleigh: 'Cause he was, like— I mean, he was, like, 30 when they— when they dated, so.

Taylor: Oh. Well, he— he was in his dreamy era by then. Alright.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydney: Okay.

Raleigh: Well, thank you Syd, for introducing me—

Sydney: [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: —to En-kit-ot-kot-tu-buh-tuh.

Sydney: En-kit-ot-ta-buh.

Taylor: Hmm.

Sydney: And check out— we gotta get— we'll get this photo up on Twitter or something so that you can—

Raleigh: I'll just make it our profile picture on the *Still Buffering* account. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Please, absolutely.

Sydney: So you all know... how to dress for next Halloween.

Taylor: I'm just really glad— no, not Halloween! This is just— I need some fashion inspiration, and here it is.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydney: It is— it is all very relevant to today. Um... [laughs quietly] thank you all. Thank you to Maximum Fun. You should go to Maximumfun.org and listen to all the great podcasts there. Um, you can email us at stillbuffering@maximumfun.org, if you know about an *Archie* New Kids On The Block crossover comic book that I missed somehow.

[laughs quietly] And you can tweet at us @stillbuff. Thank you to The Nouvellas for our theme song, "Baby You Change Your Mind."

Rileigh: This has been your cross-generational guide to the culture that made us. I am Rileigh Smirl.

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Taylor: And I'm Taylor Smirl.

[theme music plays in the background]

Rileigh: I am still buffering...

Taylor: And...

Sydnee: And...

Taylor: I...

Sydnee: I...

Taylor: Am...

Sydnee: Am...

Sydnee and Taylor: Too.

Sydnee: Alright, fellas! Here we go!

Rileigh: [snorts]

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: [singing] Ooh la la la la, tonight!

Taylor: Can we just change our intro to that? [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: Yeah. Or just "We're rough!"

Sydnee: [gruff voice] We're rough!

Taylor: Are you tough enough?

[all laugh]

Sydnee: 'Cause we aren't!

Taylor: Speak for yourself.

[theme music ends]

[music plays]

John: Look, it's a rough world out there, especially lately. I get it. So let's take care of our minds as best we can. I'm John Moe, host of *Depresh Mode with John Moe*. Every week, I talk with comedians, actors, writers, musicians, doctors, therapists, and everyday folks about the obstacles that our world and our brains throw in front of us. Depression, anxiety, traumatic stress, all those mental health challenges that are way more common and more treatable than you might think.

Speaker 2: The first time I went to therapy I was so ashamed, and I was like, "I can't believe I gotta go to thera— like, I thought I could be a man, and Humphrey Bogart was never in therapy!"

And my dad said, "Yeah, but he smoked a carton of cigarettes a day."

John: Give your mind a break, give yourself a break, and join me for *Depresh Mode with John Moe*.

[music and advertisement end]

[chord]

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