

Still Buffering 289: "Donnie Darko" (2001)

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[theme music plays]

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

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Taylor: And I'm Teylor Smirl.

Sydnee: You doin' okay over there, Rileigh?

Rileigh: I am f—[laughs quietly] I sounded pretty rough!

Sydnee: I know! [laughs quietly]

Taylor: What's goin' on?

Sydnee: I didn't know if you were trying to hide your condition, um, but—

Taylor: Did you stay up late studying last night?

Rileigh: That's exactly what I did. I was in my room, just workin'—workin' away.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Workin' on some White Claws!

Rileigh: Me and a nice mug of hot cocoa.

Taylor: Sure.

Sydnee: Hot cocoa.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Is that the newest flavor of White Claw? Is that what it is?

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: There's a new hot cocoa flavored seltzer. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: I'm surprised Bud Light doesn't have one did.

Raleigh: Yeah, I did try the Bud Light holiday seltzers, and there was a seltzer nog. It was bad.

Sydnee: I heard about that, and that was, um, SNL actually made a good joke about that.

Raleigh: Really?

Sydnee: When they said that the flavor is what it tastes like when you throw up in your mouth.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: And I thought, "I bet that's right."

Raleigh: It is.

Sydnee: I haven't tasted it, but in my head that seems accurate.

Raleigh: No, that's very accurate. And then I went to Kroger last night in search of the Truly holiday seltzers, because I have heard those are good, or at least better.

Sydnee: Justin likes 'em.

Raleigh: Yes.

Sydnee: I don't— I don't really like 'em, but I don't like a lot of— I like seltzers that just taste like they were in the same room as a fruit.

Taylor: [laughs]

Raleigh: So you like White Claws.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: I don't like seltzers where they're like, "Hey, do you like a fruit? Here's a fruit." I like the ones where it's like, "Hey, were you... were you neighbors with a fruit once?"

Raleigh: "Are you just thinking about watermelon?"

Sydnee: Yeah. That's what I want. A seltzer that's thinking about watermelon. [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: Um, but I couldn't— I couldn't find the Truly holiday seltzers. But you know what I did find? I mean, I found other drinks that I drank, but ones I didn't—

Sydnee: [laughs loudly]

Rileigh: —ones I didn't buy but were extremely intri— I was extremely intrigued by, um, were— have you all heard of BuzzBallz?

[pause]

Sydnee: [muffled laughter]

Taylor: Oh, wait.

Rileigh: No, listen.

Taylor: What are these?

Rileigh: You can't laugh at me before I even finish it.

Sydnee: BuzzBallz! I don't know if this sounds more like something from *Calvin and Hobbes* or *The Simpsons*, and either way...

Rileigh: I haven't drank them. I didn't buy them. I'm just curious if you've heard of them.

Sydnee: No.

Taylor: It sounds like an edgy street drug that would be in *Riverdale*.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Rileigh: Fair.

Taylor: [through laughter] Now they're hooked on BuzzBallz.

Sydnee: Oh no! [laughs]

Rileigh: They're little— they're little orbs.

Taylor: And Jingle Jangle!

Sydnee: "[frantically] Are you using BuzzBallz?!"

Rileigh: They— they're little orbs that are, like, the size of your hand, pretty much. They're not— they're not huge, but they're— you just rip the top open, and you drink the whole thing. Like, that's the purpose of, like,

drinking it pretty fast. They're small, but they're very high alcohol volume, um, and they do have holiday flavors. They did have an eggnog one that was, like, solid white like eggnog, but in this tiny little Buzzball. And normally they're, like, bright blue or green or red or whatever.

Sydnee: Sure, right, of course.

Rileigh: They also had, like, a spiced apple one that was green for the holidays, um, but they did have eggnog ones.

Taylor: [sighs]

Rileigh: And I almost did it, and then I thought, "No, I can't."

Sydnee: You didn't follow through?

Rileigh: No, I can't.

Sydnee: I'm realizing— I'm realizing how old I am that, like, I understand what this is. I was there at one point in my life. Like, this sort of stunt drinking?

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: I get it. I lived there. I'm so far— I'm too old! [laughs quietly] I can't do it! Like, I think about it and I think, "Ugh, the heartburn." [laughs]

Rileigh: Those tie-dye Bud Light seltzers, though. Those are great.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Rileigh: Got a 12-pack of those.

Taylor: Just having to look up what these BuzzBallz are. I'm so... oh, wow.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Well, the important thing was that you drank what— you drank whatever you found, so...

Rileigh: Tie-dye Bud Light seltzers.

Sydnee: [snorts]

Taylor: These have such good names!

Raleigh: I found those.

Taylor: Forbidden apple. Cranblaster! [laughs]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: This sounds like—

Taylor: Lotta colada! Peachballz, with a Z.

Raleigh: Lotta colada! [laughs]

Sydnee: Sometimes for fun Justin'll get a Beatbox.

Raleigh: Oh. [shudders] Yeah.

Sydnee: Have you seen those?

Raleigh: Yep.

Sydnee: It's like this cardboard carton of...

Raleigh: It's like one of those cartons of water.

Sydnee: Yes.

Raleigh: Like, the little— yeah.

Sydnee: Like coconut water or whatever.

Taylor: Oh, okay.

Sydnee: Like those little cardboard cartons, except it's full of alcohol, and juice, and... well, I say "juice." That's not— there's no way it's actual juice, right? Like, it didn't actually...

Raleigh: No. I think it's like a—

Sydnee: ... come from a fruit.

Sydnee: No, no.

Sydnee: At any point. [laughs]

Raleigh: Isn't it like a wine drink?

Sydnee: No. I mean, it— it tastes— like, I've tasted it, and it tastes more like a...

Raleigh: I've had many a Beatbox.

Sydnee: It tastes more like a cocktail to me. It doesn't taste like wine.

Taylor: Well, we're throwing around the word "cocktail" here. [laughs]
We're using—

Sydnee: Well, I mean—[laughs] okay, a liquor-based... uh, drink with mixers is what it tasted more like to me than wine, but maybe... I don't know.

Raleigh: Well, I just didn't know if it was technically one of those, like, it's a— I don't know.

Sydnee: That might be how it gets away with what it is, that it's, like, a wine-adjacent beverage? I don't know.

Taylor: Malt liquor and...

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah, I think—

Taylor: ... flavoring.

Sydnee: Actually, I think you're right. I think it is a malt liquor beverage, technically.

Taylor: No.

Sydnee: I don't know. There— I think they're gross.

Raleigh: Beatboxes are popular on the football game days around here.

Sydnee: Hmm.

Taylor: Hmm.

Raleigh: You just kinda walk around with your Beatbox.

Sydnee: I— I will tell you that, like, there is a major shift. When I drive around downtown on a game day, like, back in the day you would see everybody walking around, like, on Greek Row and that whole area, carrying, like, a big box of Natty Light or something, or if you were bougie then you would have, like, a Bud or a Miller Light. But, um, now... it's all White Claws, and Trulys, and, like, everybody's got a big box of seltzers. Like, n— I never see people drinking beer. They're all drinking seltzers.

Rileigh: Everyone— like, you— literally there's a— I mean, there's a liquor store right on campus, and if you go and just get one of the boxes, it's usually— usually people get the singular flavor boxes of White Claws that all just have one flavor, but I will see people just carrying their own personal box of White Claws.

Taylor: [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: On game day. Like, under their arm. Like, one open, and then once you finish, just pull the other one out from under your arm. [laughs quietly] Out of the box.

Sydnee: [laughs] I'm gonna— I'm gonna make— I'm gonna make some— I'm gonna make an exactly— I'm gonna make a little cooler that's exactly the size of a box of White Claw.

Taylor: Hell, there you go!

Sydnee: And I'm gonna— I'm gonna put the Marshall logo on 'em.

Rileigh: That would sell.

Sydnee: And I'm gonna stand on the street corner downtown on game day and make a lot of money. [laughs]

Rileigh: That would sell.

Sydnee: Hello, Sharks! Have I got an idea for you. [laughs] Turns out, college students are now carrying around their own boxes of seltzers, and they need something to carry it in. This is a healthy behavior I'd like to encourage. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Help me help our youth drink more! [laughs]

Rileigh: I just try to encourage the switch to the White Claw Surge, because you can drink half as many.

Taylor: Yeah.

Rileigh: Because they have more alcohol, so.

Taylor: Well, and they do— I do— they do taste like something, I think.

Rileigh: They do.

Sydnee: Well...

Taylor: With Sydnee, I know that would be upsetting to you.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I do— well, Justin and I have discussed this, because the whole holiday flavors. We— we've both— we feel that same way. That, like, the idea is that it sort of gives you the vaguest hint of a flavor, and I feel like with some of the holiday things they're like, "Well, we really wanna make sure you know what flavor it is," and so they put more flavor in 'em. And, like, I... [laughs] I need less fla— I'm so old! I need less flavor! [laughs quietly]

Taylor: [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: The—

Sydnee: I just want fizzy alcohol! No flavor! [laughs]

Raleigh: The things Bud Light has done this year, for fall and for the holiday season, are criminal.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: Their fall box, their flannel fall whatever—

Sydnee: Oh, that was disgusting.

Raleigh: Toasted marshmallow and pumpkins? No. That is a crime.

Taylor: I— I'm gonna say something, though, 'cause I tried 'em. Dad and I did a taste test, and I think of all the flavors, at least the toasted marshmallow tasted like something I understood. It tastes like cream soda, which is, like, not everybody likes cream soda, but at least there was a reference point other than, like, potpourri, or candle.

Sydnee: Ugh.

Raleigh: I just got candle.

Sydnee: I got— yeah. That box is like the *Tiger King* of seltzers.

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: You don't need any further explanation for that. That—

Taylor: No, that's fair.

Raleigh: —that stands on its own.

Sydnee: Um... well—

Taylor: Dad liked the nog. Dad's favorite one was the nog.

Raleigh: I can't believe that. I— it does taste like when you've thrown up in your mouth.

Taylor: You can believe it, though.

Raleigh: Well, I can for dad, yeah.

Sydnee: I... yeah. It really— all I could think of is when you've tried to do some sort of drink at a bar that involves, like, a cream-based something, and not— you know what I mean? Like, when you try to drop Bailey's into so— or something. You know what I'm talking about, Tey? And, like, you let it curdle.

Taylor: Yeah. Well, but there— I mean... yes. It's just—

Sydnee: That's what I assumed it would be like.

Taylor: It's just interesting that the idea is like, people are drinking eggnog for the delicious eggnog flavor, so we're just gonna remove that essence of flavor. And not like, "No, it's just alcoholic, like, heavy cream." Like, that's what people are wantin'. [laughs]

Raleigh: When I tried the seltzer nogs I was with a friend, and, uh, he said "This is like if you just took an old LaCroix that'd been sitting out for a while and dumped it into the, like, remnants of what was left of your eggnog after you'd had a whole glass and poured it in."

That's very much the vibe I got from it. Just, like, old carbonation, a little bit of eggnog. But, like, after it's been out for too long.

Sydnee: [sighs heavily] I'll just stick to beer. I'm good. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: I just gotta find those Truly ones. I'm on the hunt.

Taylor: What are their flavors?

Raleigh: The Truly ones?

Taylor: Yeah.

Rileigh: Um, there's cran-orange sparkler, ginger pomegranate, holiday sangria, and...

Sydnee: There's an apple one, isn't there?

Rileigh: ... apple, spiced apple something. Cider, maybe.

Taylor: Oh, those— those are—

Sydnee: We —we might still have some upstairs.

Rileigh: Really?

Sydnee: Yeah, Justin got 'em. 'Cause I tried them, and I would say that yes, they are much less offensive than that fall box. But, um... I mean, I still—I don't know. Justin said he will go back to White Claw after this.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: He will not buy this box again.

Rileigh: The flavors the least sound more fitting.

Sydnee: Yes.

Rileigh: For a seltzer.

Sydnee: Uh, well, I have no transition from seltzer to *Donnie Darko*.

Taylor: No.

Rileigh: Well, there it is, right there.

Sydnee: I don't know if you have one, but...

Taylor: Back in the late 80's, they didn't drink as much alcoholic seltzer, and also... *Donnie Darko* is set— not made, just set... [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: No. I— in my head, it's an older movie. I was surprised that it was 2001.

Taylor: Yeah, it's not that old.

Rileigh: I mean, that's 20 years ago.

Taylor: Well...

Sydnee: Yeah, but it felt like a product of the... 80's to 90's sort of— which I know that's when it's set. But, like, it felt— like, even the feel of the movie felt older to me... than... I don't know.

Raleigh: That's fair.

Sydnee: Anyway, we watched *Donnie Darko*.

Raleigh: Yes.

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] Taylor, would you like to start off with explaining why— and I would probably concur with a lot of what you'd say— why this film is so meaningful to you? And, like, I'd say a lot of us of a certain generation.

Taylor: Um, I mean, it's a... it definitely hit that point, 'cause this was, like, my freshman year in high school when this came out. And, you know, it's sort of about, like, a weird, sad teenage boy who, uh... gets... I don't... uh, gets caught in a time loop, really.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: But, like, gets the opportunity to sort of sacrifice himself, and save the world. But it's in this very, like, subdued— it's like a subdued superhero story, which I think is really cool. But it's also just— it's very kind of gothy and emo. The mood's really great. Um, I think that the kind of— that sort of "I'm smarter than everybody else in the world" way you feel as a teenager is very much on display, and I think that was very anthemic of the time. Like, "Oh, *Donnie Darko* gets me." [laughs]

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. No, I really— I do too, 'cause I think, um— and it's easy to, like, sort of snicker at it when you're grown up, because you know better now. But at the time, I think it's a very important thing to know, is you have this moment as a teenager where you go, "Oh my gosh, everything's screwed up. Does— nobody knows it. Everything's— everything's messed up, and I'm the only one who sees that."

And that really is a very important moment, because then you get a little older and go, "Oh, you knew it too."

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: [laughs] "Oh, you knew it too! Oh, wait! We all knew it! [laughs] We're all just trying to get out—" but, like, we all have that moment where we go, "Am I the only one who sees how effed up everything is?"

Taylor: And, like, the adults knew it too, but they just had accepted it.
[laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: What did you think, Raleigh? This was your first viewing of *Donnie Darko*.

Raleigh: Um, I did have to just dissociate from the fact that it was Jake Gyllenhaal I was watching.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: Yes, this was a— this was a pot-stirring choice in my part.
[laughs quietly]

Raleigh: And of all the weeks... of all the weeks—

Taylor: Specifically, of course.

Raleigh: —um, but, uh, I did have to ignore that. But I will say, I did enjoy it. Like, I found it, like— I never knew what was going to happen, which I often enjoy in a movie. Where, like, I'm not guessing what's going to happen next. I— at no given time was I, like, "I think I understand where this is going."

I did not, ever. Um, but in, like, the way that isn't, like, "This just doesn't make sense." It's like, "Oh, I'm not supposed to."

Sydnee: Well, I mean, it's definitely sci-fi, so it's supposed to be, you know... I don't know. My interpretation was always that we are— the movie— the brunt of the movie takes place in an alternate reality.

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: And, like, in a very literal sense, I guess you could consider— 'cause he does, like, talk about time travel and stuff in the...

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: ... in the movie. That, like, an alternate reality has accidentally been created in the universe, and Donnie Darko's mission on Earth, in time, in space, in the universe, is to... fix that. Delete that alternate universe so that we can go back to the original timeline, and he prevents the collapse of all reality.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Yeah. Which is, like— that is the— like, if you look at the lore, the stuff that was written that kind of supplements the movie, that is the intended idea behind it. I think when I first saw it I thought, "Well, is this some sort of... symbolism going on?" Like, this isn't real time travel. It's like, no, it is. That's what's happening in the movie. [laughs]

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Rileigh: Yeah. I do think that I, upon first viewing, imagined this was more of, like, a symbolic, everything's metaphorical, like, kind of like an *Inception*-type deal. Like, nothing means what you think it means, and it's all... I don't know. I was trying to look in for the deeper, what does this all actually— what is actually happening? But I do think it makes more sense if you just accept that all of it is actually happening, and it is not symbolic. It is just... the literal events... of the movie. Like, actual time travel.

Sydnee: And, like, it is also talking about all these things that we talked about. Like, being a teen, and feeling like you're the only one. I mean, 'cause it's like the— you take that idea, "I'm the only one who gets it, and I'm the only one who sees how screwed up everything is." Um, you take that to, like, this sort of fantastic extension of, "I literally am the only one who can see into the future, who can fix these problems, who can save the world."

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I mean, you just take that sort of teenage fantasy and then... dark fantasy, I guess.

Rileigh: Darko... fantasy.

Sydnee: Ooh.

[all laugh quietly]

Sydnee: It— I— it does— it's funny, 'cause there's so many moments in it that really still hit me. Like, as, "Aw, that's— that's so good. That's so good." Except for the one that I remember thinking was so poignant when I was a kid, and now it kind of made me, like, cringe at my younger self. When he's looking at Frank. Frank is a giant bunny. A scary bunny.

Rileigh: I found it very unsettling.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: He— yeah.

Rileigh: Almost the entire time.

Sydnee: Frank is a giant scary bunny that *Donnie Darko* sees throughout the film, and he's sitting in a movie theater with Frank, and he looks at Frank and says, "Why are you always wearing that bunny suit?" And he— er, "Why don't you take off that bunny suit?" Er— wha— no, "Why are you always wearing that bunny suit?"

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: And he said, "Why are you always wearing that man suit?" [laughs quietly]

Taylor: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: And I remember as a kid being like, "Yeah! [laughs] Why are we always wearing... these suits that we wear?"

Rileigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] Um, "Of, like, this caricature of who we really are inside... like, yeah, I get it, Frank!" [laughs quietly]

Taylor: There are a lot of moments like that, though, where Donnie is kind of giving, like, a speech, you know? Like when he's, uh, confronting the teacher about the— the love and fear scale, as this is where all human emotions fall on. 'Cause there's sort of a subplot where there's this motivational speaker who has a lot of influence in the town, and this is his philosophy that's spreading that's like, you know, everything falls on a line between love and fear.

And he gives this little, like, "That's not all!" like, speech. Which is great, but watching it as an adult I'm like, "Well, he's not really— [laughs quietly] he's—" I mean, yes. But, like, he's...

Sydnee: I had that same thought.

Taylor: He's a teenage boy making this statement. [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: He— he's right, but he can't express... you know? Like, he never get— he's just like, "There's more! There's more than that! There's more!" And, like, he's absolutely right, and it's more complex than that, but he's not getting— he's not able to really tell you, because... he is a

teenager. He doesn't have it all figured out yet, you know? Although he is supposed to be very intelligent, as we are reminded... many times.
[laughs]

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: [laughs] Throughout the movie. And if we're— if there's no doubt from him, like, referencing, you know, whether it's literature or science or whatever, like, all of these references he's able to make. Or, like, a very well-articulated argument about *The Smurfs*. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: [laughs quietly] Which also seemed more poignant when I was young. I don't know why, but I was like, "Oh, this is... this is just a horny teenage boy now." [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Yes. I know.

Raleigh: Yeah, I spent a good amount of time— I paused the movie, actually, at that point, and just kind of sat there and thought, "What a— is this really just about *The Smurfs*? Is there something else here? No? Okay. Alright. They're just— they're horny teenage boys, and it's *The Smurfs*. Alright."

Sydnee: Yes. It's just that. But, like, if any of that missed you, then there's the moment where the principal's like, "Your Iowa test scores are... "

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: "... intimidating." [laughs] Like, "Hey, uh, everyone out there in the audience? He's smart!" [laughs]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: Um... but, uh, Jake Gyllenhaal's so good in it. [laughs]

Raleigh: [sighs heavily]

Sydnee: He really is, though. When he does the thing— I remember what used to stick with me, which is incredibly creepy and disturbing but, like, I think it's intentional... whenever he's talking to Frank he gets that smile.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: And he's not really looking at Frank.

Rileigh: It is unsettling.

Sydnee: He's— he's looking to the side, in between— it's like at this angle that it's in between you, and audience, and Frank, the bunny. And at any moment I feel like he's about to look at us with that smile, and I'm so, like... anxious about it. I don't know. It's...

Rileigh: Yeah, no, that's fair.

Sydnee: It's very effective.

Rileigh: Yeah, um, he does do a good job.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Rileigh: At doing what he's supposed to do, I guess. This was also, like, ten years pre-Taylor Swift, so.

Taylor: Long before the scarf.

Rileigh: A different boy. It was long before the scarf.

Sydnee: Uh, I love the casting of him and Maggie Gyllenhaal.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: As, you know, brother and sister, and being actual brother and sister. That's great.

Taylor: Um... yeah, he's— I mean, it's a— it's a charming character. I think he's a charming character. Like, I think that the dialog that they give him— like, it's very easy to, like, root for Donnie Darko in this situation that feels like kind of inescapable, but at the same time, you know... it's not all just like, "I'm smart, and— and scary." He's also, like, kind of— he's a fu— I don't know. Like, there's a lot of cute, kind of innocent dialog, like between him and Gretchen, the girl that he has a crush on, kind of comes out of nowhere, or the timeline throws in front of him, however your interpretation is. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Yeah. Yeah, no, I mean, I had a huge crush on Donnie Darko watching the mo— I mean, like, back in the day. Like, I was totally sold on Donnie— yeah. Rooting for him, thought he was the greatest, wished he had existed in my high school. Like... [laughs] like, I was very much there.

Taylor: You could've compared—

Rileigh: Wandering the halls of Huntington High, looking for your Donnie.

Sydnee: Well, and I think you are supposed to feel that way. 'Cause, like, I guess we haven't really... spoiler. The basic plot of the—

Rileigh: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] —of the film is that a... a rogue jet engine from a plane falls through *Donnie Darko's* house into his bedroom, and should kill him. But in that moment, this imaginary rabbit, Frank, has called him out of his room. And so he is therefore saved. And then the movie takes place in this alternate reality with him doing stuff that he wasn't supposed to do, and things happening that, I guess, if you believe in supposed-to's, weren't supposed to happen, until he— finally this results in Gretchen being killed.

Rileigh: And the world, like, ending.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yes, and the world ending.

Rileigh: Right, yeah.

Sydnee: And so the— so the thing that he has to do is go back in time, and get in his bed, and let the jet engine fall on him, so that he is killed and the world is set right.

Um, and, like, I think that in order for that to land, you have to care about Donnie, which you do. Like, at the end, you find yourself thinking, like, "Well, he saved the world, but I really... don't want... him to die."

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: So, I mean, it's— it works. Like, they pull it off.

Rileigh: Also, I don't know why but I've always loved movies that set you up with a time limit. Like, from the very beginning, like—

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Rileigh: —"This is how long we have until this thing's going to happen," just because I feel like then I very much can establish where we're going in the movie, and where— we're gonna have to end up here at some point. How are we gonna get there? That's gonna be a wild journey. And I

liked that from the beginning this rabbit is like, "It's 28 days and... however many hours and seconds, it ends."

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] This rabbit.

Rileigh: Yeah. He was just... it took me a while to get used to seeing that rabbit without being like, "Ah!"

Taylor: Very iconic rabbit.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Did it help when you find out at the end that it's, like, a guy named Frank—

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: —who made a rabbit suit that he would then encounter on the fateful night in question?

Rileigh: I do— I do appreciate that it is actually just a guy in a bunny suit, and it's not... a real big bunny. [laughs]

Taylor: The time travel rabbit? [laughs]

Rileigh: [laughs] Yeah.

Taylor: Comes to fix time loops.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Rileigh: Frank— Frank the Time Travel Rabbit.

Taylor: That's terrifying.

Sydnee: You know! You've heard of that, right?

Rileigh: Yeah! It's— yeah.

Sydnee: Obviously.

Rileigh: The— the classic bedtime tale.

Sydnee: It's in science class. [laughs]

Taylor: Cousin of the Easter Bunny. Uh, he's got a far less, like, fun and lighthearted job. He just... fixes time blips.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: And he doesn't just get a fun bunny name. He's Frank.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: [snorts]

Raleigh: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Um... we haven't talked at all about Sparkle Motion, so that—that's gonna need to happen. But before we do that... [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: Lets check the group message.

Sydnee: Uh, so I think Raleigh is gonna need something really good for lunch, maybe something sort of, like, greasy and—

Raleigh: Oh my God.

Sydnee: [laughs] And, you know, something that'll absorb anything that might still be down in her tummy.

Raleigh: Well, you know what I needed last night was, like, 2 AM Taco Bell.

Sydnee: Well, how did you get that?

Raleigh: Well, [laughs] of course I used DoorDash.

Sydnee: That's right. For all of your emergency... [laughs] emergency food needs, um, DoorDash has got your back. 'Cause, you know, right now we're all really busy, and depending on your situation it might not be the greatest time to go out to eat, uh, in a restaurant. Um, I know certainly with us having little kids that's hard for us, and so we can support our favorite local restaurants, and still eat yummy food, with the help of DoorDash.

It's an app. You open it up, you find the restaurant you're looking for, or they've got things like, you know, local convenience stores and stuff even, if you need that kind of stuff, like toiletries or whatever.

Um, you pick what you want from the app, and they bring it to your house, leave it safely outside your door, contactless delivery. It's as easy as can be. It is, I know, a mainstay in our household to, uh, get some of our favorite— like, we support our local pho place more times a week than I like to admit. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: We are eating pho through DoorDash. Um, and you can too! All your favorite local places. So Teylor, if our listeners want to check out DoorDash, what should they do?

Teylor: Well, right now our listeners can get \$5 off their first order of \$15 or more and zero delivery fees for their first month when you download the DoorDash app and enter code "buffering." That's \$5 off your first order and zero delivery fees for a month when you download the DoorDash app in the app store and enter code "buffering." Don't forget, that's code "buffering" for \$5 off your first order with DoorDash.

Sydnee: So, I think the other important sort of cultural thing that they talk about in the movie that I know for me, like, I used as a... a term for a long time, was this. You have this character of the gym teacher, who is a very, like... [laughs quietly] she has become this follower of this sort of self-help guru, played by Patrick Swayze, which is brilliance. Like, the casting and the— his performance...

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: It's— it's perfect. I mean, he's a terrible person, like, the character. But it's perfect. Um, Patrick Swayze does a great job. But she sort of, like, follows every— all of his teachings and becomes, like, this evangelist for them. And then she also coaches this dance team.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Called Sparkle Motion.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: And you know what's funny is the dance team is made up of little girls. I would say like Charlie's age-ish.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Seven to ten, maybe.

Teylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Somewhere in that range. Um, and in my memory of the movie, the performance you finally see in one of the climactic scenes in the movie, where they're at the school talent show, these little girls are performing in their sparkly outfits, a— a very suggestive...

Raleigh: [holding back laughter] Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] sort of inappropriate dance. And at the same time, *Donnie Darko* is setting Patrick Swayze's character's house on fire. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Um, but in my head that scene, which, like, is burned into my brain for all eternity, was so much worse. Like, the girls' dance was so much more, like, "Oh, oh, it's so gross. Oh, it's so bad. Oh, it's so awful," than it is, and I think it's because we just kept in that direction.

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: And then it— you know. You know what I mean? Like, it got so much worse from there.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: I had the same moment where I was like, "Oh, right. This part is so creepy." I'm like, "Oh, it's nothing compared to just an episode of *Toddlers and Tiaras*." Like...

Raleigh: Exactly.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: This is before all of that, but yeah.

Raleigh: It's *Dance Moms*.

Taylor: It's— yeah, unfortunately. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: But it's really— it's really prescient. Because, like, I remember watching it when I was younger and thinking, "Oh, it's so gross." 'Cause, like, none of the girls are smiling. They're all looking— like, making eye contact with the audience in a way that is very unnatural for a bunch of little children dancing. But their costumes aren't, like... I mean, they're just dresses. You know. I mean, they're not, like, dressed revealingly. It's not overt, but you can feel that it's inappropriate. You can feel that it's supposed to make you uncomfortable. And then our— our actual culture would just go in that direction, like, 100 miles per hour and never stop. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: Yeah. This being my first viewing, I was like, "Eh, okay. [laughs quietly] I've seen much worse."

Sydnee: I found that so disturbing.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: The first time I watched it. Like, "Ew! Ew! God, no! They're little kids! Why are they looking at the audience like that? It's so upsetting."

And it's supposed to be, because it's overlaid with the scene, Donnie Darko burns down the house, and they find a whole big stash of... what are they— a kiddie porn dungeon is the way they—

Taylor: Yes.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Keep describing it.

Raleigh: Yes.

Taylor: Uh, very specific terminology. Well, I mean, the whole, like, setup of that entire sequence, because it— before Sparkle Motion performs, there's Cherita, who's one of the classmates of *Donnie Darko*, has, like, a bit of a crush on him. And, like, she does this— I think it's beautiful, this dance that she does.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: And the audience is just not about it. And then the little girls come on and do their— I mean, they're also dancing to "Notorious." So it's like, you know, it's... [laughs] it's—

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: But I do think it's just sort of... I feel like... there's this sort of choice that Donnie Darko has throughout the movie. Does he save the world, or does he let it end? And they play it really subtle, but I think in that moment, showing us sort of there's beauty in the world, there's also this horrible thing, and the horrible thing is what people tend to love, in the moment that he's burning it down. Like, kind of— it's like a moment of, like, choice for him, you know?

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Yeah. Yeah, no, and I think, um— it's funny. I was watching it, and I never thought this about it before, but the character of Cherita, I

wonder if that's not supposed to be a little bit of an angelic figure, 'cause she's dressed as, like, an angel in that scene, and you see her, like, several times just sort of sitting quietly, or, like, looking at Donnie worriedly. And, like... I don't know. I wonder if she's supposed to be that kind of figure throughout the film.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Like, watching over, knowing what's happening. Not really guiding, just, like, that presence.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Well, that— that is interesting, because that plays into sort of the core, like, mechanics of the movie. There is, like, this whole— the— *The Philosophy of Time Travel*, the book that is in the movie that's written by... what is it? Old Lady Death, or, uh... Grandma Death.

Raleigh: Grandma Death.

Sydnee: Grandma Death, yeah.

Taylor: Uh, talks about, like— I mean, it really spells out the plot of the movie, where basically an artifact somehow skips into an alternate dimension and creates a time anomaly, and somebody in that is chosen to right things, or else that universe will collapse. It's only stable for a couple weeks. It will collapse, and it might create a black hole that will destroy the prime universe, along with time itself. So this is something that has to occur here, in the alternative universe, to save the main universe. And that around this person will be both manipulated living and manipulated dead, so Frank is manipulated dead. Uh, in a— in a sense, Gretchen is, I guess, because she will die if this happens. And then, like, it's kind of— it kind of explains why there's a lot of weird sort of— sort of— it feels kind of fantasy stuff that happens. Like when Gretchen arrives at school and Drew Barrymore, the teacher— she plays the teacher, it's cool—uh, says that she can sit next to the boy she finds the cutest. Like, that's not a thing a teacher would say.

Sydnee: Right.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: But that Drew Barrymore was one of the manipulated living, and so her linking Gretchen and Donnie together is what starts the direction that Donnie has to go in. So that's why all these people are sort of guiding him along the way, with very specific, kind of weird actions, is that they're trying to lead him, unknowingly, to the end where he'll save the universe by sacrificing himself, and ending the offshoot, yeah.

Sydnee: Like Noah Wyle's character. I guess the same sort of thing.

Taylor: Yeah. Exactly.

Sydnee: He's the other teacher.

Raleigh: Okay, okay.

Sydnee: He would— he was on *ER*.

Raleigh: Oh. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: For a long time.

Raleigh: Okay, yeah.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: He was— he was dreamy, right? That was a... that was a dreamy character?

Sydnee: Oh yes. I found him very dreamy.

Raleigh: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: Syd...

Sydnee: There are so many dreamy people in this movie.

Taylor: I know. You've also got—

Sydnee: Two Gyllenhaals and a Noah Wyle? Yes.

Taylor: And dark-haired Drew Barrymore?

Sydnee: Yes.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Mm-hmm. As, like, a cool lit teacher?

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: And, I mean, let's be honest, back in the *Dirty Dancing* days. [laughs quietly] I'll take me some Swayze

Raleigh: [quietly] Oh God.

Taylor: You've also got a young Seth Rogan playing one of the bullies.

Sydnee: Okay.

Raleigh: Yes!

Sydnee: That is something I wanted— I'm glad you brought that up. I meant to mention that. How... it is so weird to see Seth Rogan in that role.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Like, it's so weird to see him as that character, and his whole look. Like this sort of, like... tough guy, meathead, bully thing.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Is so not— like, it's almost like an alternate reality for Seth Rogan!

Raleigh: [laughs] For Seth Rogan.

Sydnee: Like, this was a direction that he could've gone. [laughs] And it would've been such a different trajectory for where his career went. [laughs]

Taylor: Well, Jake Gyllenhaal fixed the time loop, so Seth Rogan became the Seth Rogan we love. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: [laughs] I wonder if that—

Raleigh: Just at home making... making vases, and pots. [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah! Which, like, I mean, I love where Seth Rogan ended up, so I'm very thankful. [laughs] That that was not the reality that stuck. But, like, I was watching, and I had a moment where I was watching and I went, "Oh my God. Is that Seth Rogan? What is happening?!" [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: I only— I knew he was in it because I had looked up beforehand, like, who all was in the movie. Um, just because I always do the thing where I'll pause a movie and just try to figure out where I know

someone from, so now I've just started doing it ahead of time to try to avoid that. Um, but I knew he was in it, and I kept looking for him, and it took me a while to realize, "Oh! That's him."

Sydnee: Yeah.

Rileigh: "He's there." [laughs quietly] Very un-Seth Rogan.

Sydnee: Jena Malone is also great.

Taylor: Oh, that's right, yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah. As Gretchen.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: There's— I don't know. I... there's a lot of, I think— there are a lot of... reads on this movie that I really enjoy. I mean, one, it kind of works as, like, almost like an alternative *It's A Wonderful Life*. Where instead of seeing everything he'd miss out on if he was not alive, he has to experience everything that he's going to have to sacrifice in order to save it. He's gonna have to leave in order to save it, you know? Like, if the movie ended at the beginning, where the jet engine falls, we've only seen him have pretty antagonistic interactions with his parents, with his sister, and through the course of the movie we see, like, the love that his parents have for him, between him and his sister. Like, we see all of that. And also, like, you know, his relationship with Gretchen. So it's interesting that it's like, here's what you can save by not continuing to be alive.

Sydnee: It's— also, like, I was thinking about this. If he doesn't— if he dies in the beginning of the movie, then Patrick Swayze's never discovered to be a bad guy. Or whatever his character's name is.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Um—

Rileigh: Patrick Swayze.

Sydnee: Well...

Taylor: Let's not say that. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: I don't wanna speak ill of Patrick Swayze. He was a wonderful... [laughs quietly] you know, actor, and guy. But, like, uh, I— I wondered about that. Like, it seems like he is being led to do these things by Frank. Like, Frank wants him to burn down this house and expose this character. But if he is crushed by the jet engine, he never gets to do that.

Taylor: Well—

Raleigh: It's like—

Taylor: Go ahead.

Raleigh: Go ahead.

Taylor: Oh, no, no. Uh, please.

Raleigh: I was just gonna say, the whole movie is kind of like the first ten minutes of a *Final Destination* movie.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: Where, like, you see all the bad things that should happen, and then none of them do 'cause, like, they get off the plane or whatever. It's like that's all of *Donnie Darko* is just like, "Here's all the bad things that should've ha— er, you know, shouldn't have happened," or whatever, or would happen. And then, never mind, none of them happened.

Taylor: Well, but the philosophy of how time travel or all this works in the movie is shown at the end. That sequence where they show, like, uh— uh, what's his name? Jim Cunningham is who Patrick Swayze plays. Like, crying on his bed and clearly, like, Jena Malone's character recognizes Donnie Darko's mom and waves. Uh, the idea is that the people that were involved in the split off universe will have some memory of what happened there, even if it's just, like, dreams. So it will change them, it will affect them, and so these characters all have basically some sort of haunting memory of what went on in that alternative timeline, an awareness of the sacrifice that Donnie made. Uh, so it's not *all* for nothing, you know?

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Maybe he'll turn himself in.

Taylor: Well, he, uh— there is a resolution. I don't know if it's in the movie or if it's just in the script, but that he, uh, ends the... ends his life, so.

Sydnee: Oh!

Raleigh: Oh.

Sydnee: Oh, I didn't know that. Oh, goodness. Um, did— this— I know that you all are gonna be like, "No, Sydnee. This is not something we thought of." But I'm gonna say it anyway.

Raleigh: [snorts]

Sydnee: I was thinking about Roberta Sparrow as the name of Grandma Death.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: And she wrote a book about time travel, and I was thinking about the Doctor Who episode with Sally Sparrow.

Taylor: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: And the, um— and the angels.

Taylor: [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: Mm-hmm?

[pause]

Sydnee: And how they— that's about time travel.

Raleigh: [simultaneously] No, finish— finish the thought. Finish the connection.

Sydnee: And I just wondered if they were...

Taylor: You think it's connected?

Sydnee: I just wondered if it was exp— inspired.

Raleigh: Which one— which one came first?

Sydnee: Well, *Donnie Darko*, and so it wondered if it inspired...

Raleigh: So you think *Donnie Darko* inspired Doctor Who?

Sydnee: Maybe— well, maybe they pulled from that. It was— you never know.

Taylor: Maybe a little bit.

Sydnee: *Donnie Darko* was a big mo— it was a moment.

Taylor: It was.

Sydnee: It was a cultural moment. It was— it was very much like... a... a *Catcher in the Rye* sort of thing.

Raleigh: That's a connection I never would've made, but I'm not gonna say that it's definitely not true.

Sydnee: I'm just saying that, like, it is common to pull from things that inspire you, that you love, if you're creating something, and I would not be shocked if that name wasn't in there somewhere. Um...

Taylor: Maybe there's some— well... I was gonna say, maybe there's ano— maybe there's a scientific or historical Sparrow that both things are pulling from.

Sydnee: Yes.

Raleigh: Hmm.

Sydnee: I'm just saying, 'cause the weeping angels, you know, they cause time travel.

Raleigh: They also time travel.

Sydnee: It's a time travel plot.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: I'm just saying. Anyway. But... [laughs quietly] but I— I really— I think that it— it was something that resonated. It was interesting for me for you to watch it, to see— and I don't know, maybe you're just— maybe you're old enough that it won't hit you the same as it did, like, Tey and I when we saw it and were younger. 'Cause when you're in those teen years, especially early teen years, you see it and it's just like it was made for you.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Which is the same way I felt when I read *The Catcher in the Rye*. "Ohh, this is for me. This is— yes, I agree with all— this is exactly— this is what the world is like. I understand it." Um, and I felt that way when I watched *Donnie Darko*. But I don't know. Like, certainly I don't watch it now as a 38-year-old adult and go, "This is how I see the world." [laughs]

Taylor: Well, I mean, I think for it's time it was— one aspect we haven't talked about is— which now I think wouldn't be as, you know, as impacting, because it's better represented, but the fact that *Donnie Darko* is— you know, he's in treatment. He's got some pretty severe mental illness that he's dealing with. And that that— I think— I don't know. I think that was part of it too, at the time, was it was a character we could root for, and that was shown to be not just one thing, you know? But he also— that was part of his story. Which is also I think the original read of what I thought was happening in the movie, is this is somebody, like, going through a schizophrenic episode or something. Um, but...

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I think you're— I think that's part of— yeah, and I don't know if that's part of what is supposed to, like— the whole thing I think is supposed to be a little unclear. I don't think it's supposed to be literal. And so I don't know if that's supposed to make you question that, or not sure. You know, what am I seeing? What am I, um... I definitely think that the end goal is that it's science fiction.

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: It— this— there is an alternate reality and all that kind of stuff, but I do think you're supposed to wonder, like, "Is Donnie just imagining all this, or is he hallucinating this?" Um...

Raleigh: But, I mean, you are right that that's not something that— 'cause I don't know. I guess me watching it, I didn't think too hard or too much about the fact that he was in therapy or in treatment for, like, mental illness, just because that's, I mean... if you go on Twitter—

Taylor: [laughs]

Raleigh: —everyone in Gen Z is like, "Let me tell you about this conversation I had with my therapist." Like, that's just, like, the thing. So I guess that is something that didn't hit me very hard, or strike me, or I— it's something I didn't even think about really, until you just mentioned it. Um, but I can see would've been a lot— a lot newer, a lot more novel of an idea at this time, when it came out.

Sydnee: And that— and this was also— you know, it came out in 2001, but you have to imagine, like, a lot of it was written leading up to the end of the 90's. Like, these ideas were sort of, you know, fomented as we're ending the 90's, coming up to 2000. And there was a lot of themes of, like, apocalypse and you know, the world ending and, like, that kind of, like, a little bit of cultural nihilism and stuff. Like a lot of that was sort of underneath what we were listening to and watching and, you know, reading.

Taylor: I also think it's a good counterpoint to that, because it's— I do think ultimately it's a hopeful movie. Like, I do view it as, like, a dark superhero movie, you know?

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: He's been tasked with this— this massive ask from the universe to save existence, but at the cost of himself, and has the opportunity to go either way. Ultimately, you know, he chooses to sacrifice himself, but I think that it works in that sense. You know, it's very much a hopeful, like, "Here is everything that's in the world, and here's this teenager that— you know, just like we all feel like we see what's wrong with everything, maybe it all should just burn down." It's like, no, at the end of the day, I— I want it to continue, even if it's without me.

Sydnee: And he does say that several times. Like, he just wants to make a change.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Like, and he literally does change the course of time.

Raleigh: You know what I kept thinking about that it was reminding me of that I realized definitely came, like, way after and I didn't know if this had anything to do with inspiring it, was the video game *Life is Strange*.

Taylor: Huh.

Raleigh: 'Cause it is— like, it is about time travel kind of, and, like, redoing things, or, like, having— making decisions that impact—

Sydnee: Yeah, it is.

Raleigh: —the whole world. But at the very end of the game, the main character's a teenager who has to decide between saving her best friend, but at the expense of the entire world ending, or, like, her entire town being destroyed, and saving the town, but her best friend dying. And very much that decision of, like, do I do what's— you know. And, I mean, it's a video game, so you choose, but—

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Sure.

Raleigh: I didn't know if this— this gave me very similar vibes of, like, a little bit of science fiction, but also, like...

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: I don't know. A more complex main character that's also a teenager, um, having to make a self-sacrificing decision. Um, I don't know.

Taylor: Absolutely I could see that.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah, I'm not sure, but it makes sense. 'Cause, I mean, it really is. I mean, that's... like you said, Tey, if you think about it that way, the difference between everything— everything's messed up and there's nothing we can do, and at the end saying "Well, there is something we can do." That's very sad. [laughs quietly] 'Cause it's sacrificing yourself, or your friend.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: But... um...

Taylor: Well, but I think it goes back to what we were talking about. You know, feeling like you're the only one that gets it, and then part of maturing is realizing that other people get it, we're just— there's only so much we can do, and we have to live in this world. It's a weird symbolic take on a coming of age, is that, you know, accepting that... the world has flaws, but it should— you know, you have to live in it, even though, in Donnie's case, he specifically does not.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Are you trying to say that the hard— hardest thing in this world...

Taylor: [laughs loudly]

Sydnee: ... is to live in it? Is that what you're trying to say, Don?

Taylor: Wow! Wow.

Sydnee: [laughs] I mean, it's not wrong! [laughs]

Taylor: Well, no, 'cause he's— then he's not in it, so it's fine. He gets out.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] Um... well, I will say that overall, I still enjoy watching the movie. I mean, it is— it is sad. There is the whole scene about dying alone.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: That [laughs quietly] made me very sad.

Raleigh: Made me very contemplative.

Sydnee: But still, I enjoy the movie.

Taylor: I mean, I think that's all part of, you know, it's that path that he's on, part of— it's that his acceptance that this is, you know, every— I'm not alone. Everybody goes this way, so this is— this is okay for me.

Sydnee: And the other thing that we should mention, that song, Gary Jules' version...

Taylor: Oh!

Sydnee: ... of "Mad World." Oh my gosh.

Taylor: That— when that starts over that last bit of the movie... that breaks my heart every time.

Sydnee: That— that was huge. That was everywhere.

Raleigh: Really?

Sydnee: Oh my gosh.

Raleigh: I mean, I liked it.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: I just— I hadn't heard it.

Sydnee: You had never heard that?

Raleigh: No.

Taylor: Wow.

Sydnee: Oh my gosh. It's— Justin always gets frustrated 'cause he loves Gary Jules. Like, just as— already as an artist loves all of his work, and he's like, "This is the only song anybody ever knows Gary Jules for! And he did so many amazing songs, and he's wonderful! And the only song they know is this one, which is great! But still, he did all these other songs, and that's not even his song. Like, he covered it."

Taylor: Was he ahead of the curve on, like, all of the— the current— you know, the movie trailer covers where they take, like, a somewhat poppy song and then slow it down and make it sad?

Raleigh: Yes.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Like, I— I was— I don't know how I ended up on the Spotify playlist that was suggesting a lot of those, and there was like— like, that "Don't You Want Me Baby" song, but it was slowed down and kind of epic. And I'm like, "What is— no! This— [laughs] why does this exist?"

[all laugh]

Sydnee: I think he was, 'cause I don't remember. I mean, and certainly that happened a lot after that.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: *Glee* was all about that, weren't they?

Raleigh: Oh yeah.

Sydnee: [laughs] Um, but yeah, that is— that music was iconic. It really is, like— I think of it as one of the— one of the formative moments in my youth was watching that movie and the things that it made me think about. And just, like, knowing that— I mean, it's the same thing that you always look for as a— when you're growing up and trying to figure things out. A voice that sounds like you and goes, "Oh, someone else. Someone else thinks this, feels this, knows this, the way I do," and then you don't feel so alone.

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Well, and Raleigh, did you notice that your boy Spencer was in it?

[pause]

Taylor: From *iCarly*?

Raleigh: Yes! Yes, oh my gosh! I didn't even think about that!

Sydnee: That's who that is!

Raleigh: Oh my gosh! I didn't even realize that—

Taylor: [simultaneously] The lanky kid at the mic.

Raleigh: —until you just said that.

Taylor: Yes.

Raleigh: Yes! Oh my gosh. You're so right!

Taylor: Yeah, I—

Raleigh: I don't know how I missed that.

Sydnee: Oh.

Taylor: For some reason I was thinking, like, "Did he play the rabbit?" 'Cause I remembered his face when we were watching *iCarly*. Like, "I know this actor. I know him from *Donnie Darko*." And I was like, "No, he's the kid at a mic!" [laughs]

Raleigh: Yeah!

Sydnee: That's who it is! I knew— I knew I knew him from something! I was like, "Why do I know this guy?" Oh, okay.

Taylor: Oh.

Sydnee: That's so funny.

Raleigh: Oh.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: Well, I— I enjoyed it. This was my first time watching it. I had no idea what to expect still the entire time I while I was watching it. I didn't know what to expect was gonna happen, but I enjoyed it. It was good.

Sydnee: I like that about it. I mean, I still do, and I liked it then that you're never quite sure.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: It's funny, because, um, I was reading articles about it, and with the director and stuff, and they were asking, like, "So is Donnie really dead in the end? Like, are we— is that the final word? Is Donnie really dead?"

And he's like, "Well, I mean, I think there's lots of interpretations, and—"

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: He said something, like, vague about, like, the ending is like a return to reality, something something something.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: But is Donnie dead? [laughs] I mean, I think he is, but nobody'll say that.

Raleigh: Right.

Taylor: Well, and I—

Sydnee: 'Cause I guess there's another one coming out, right? Like a real deal sequel?

Taylor: There— I think it's already come out. *S. Darko*.

Sydnee: That's an old one.

Taylor: Oh.

Sydnee: I think— I think there's— hold on, I could be wrong. But my understanding is that there is...

Raleigh: Yes. So... *S. Darko* was the 2009 sequel. In 2017, the director said he had ideas for a new se— neqs— new sequel that was much bigger and more ambitious, and January 2021 he announced an enormous amount of work had been done on the script.

Taylor: Oh, wow.

Sydnee: Yes, so there's a whole— a whole new one that, like— 'cause I guess *S. Darko* was not well reviewed.

Taylor: No.

Sydnee: This is supposed to be, like, a real deal sequel. Like... [laughs quietly] I've never seen *S. Darko*. It may be great. I have no idea. My understanding is it's not. [laughs]

Taylor: I mean, I'm— I like the property, so that's cool, but I also feel like it's a perfect movie on its own. Like, I don't know what you could add

to that story. It's a cut time loop. [through laughter] Like, what can you do with that?

Sydnee: [sighs]

Raleigh: Yeah, it did not strike me as a movie that could benefit from a sequel. I'm not saying it's, like, inherently bad if there is one, but it just— it has a perfect loop, quite literally, from beginning to end.

Sydnee: I agree with you, and— I agree with both of you, and I don't think— and I have no idea what the sequel is. I have no idea what it is. My thought is, in the world we're living in right now, in this moment, something similar with complete— a completely new cast, completely different story, disconnected from it, but the same ideas that you see in *Donnie Darko*, could be really interesting. Although instead of playing with, like, that late 80's and 90's kind of, like, the problems of then, the motif of then, the— you know, 'cause it's very intentional that, like, they're talking about the election, and then you see the self-health— self-help, you know, fake guy and, like, all this— all these things that they're talking about, were the issues of the time, were the problems and the gross stuff of the time. Like, if you look at now, you have so much to talk about! [laughs] That you could set a very similar story with different characters in the now and it could be very interesting. I don't know. But I have no idea what this is.

Taylor: Well, I mean, if everything falls back on that kind of— the guide of the— the time travel, how it works, you kind of have a permanent setup for movies, because you have an anomaly, you have an artifact, and then you have somebody that's chosen to fix the timeline at the sacrifice of themselves, so that is kind of an evergreen structure. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I think the one thing that all three of us can agree on for sure is that if they do make a sequel to the film, whatever the story is, whatever else is going on, Jake Gyllenhaal needs to be... the lead again.

Raleigh: [sighs]

Sydnee: Because he's one of our— all three of us love Jake Gyllenhaal so much. He's one of our favorite actors. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: [through laughter] Maybe he can get the chance to go back in time and give Taylor Swift her scarf back!

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: Oh, I bet he— I bet he wishes Frank the bunny would reach out right now. [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] I bet he wishes more than anything he could just—

Rileigh: He has just fully gone into hiding.

Sydnee: —say "Oh, wait, wait! One— one thing real fast. Here's your scarf!" [laughs]

Taylor: That's it. That's the end. That was the only anomaly they needed to fix. Everything else is fine.

Rileigh: He's just waiting for the next one to come out that's all about John Mayer so that all the attention's off of him. That's when the sequel will come out with him in it. It's once the next album comes out and everyone hates John Mayer again.

Sydnee: "Why are you wearing that bunny suit?"

"Why are you wearing that scarf?"

[all laugh]

Sydnee: "That's a great point! I'm gonna take it off and give it back to Taylor right now! Before I forget!"

Rileigh: Um, that was a great— that was a great transition to what we're talking about next.

Sydnee: Yes, yes. Thank you, Taylor, by the way.

Rileigh: Yes, thank you Taylor.

Taylor: Thank you for watching this with me. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Thoroughly enjoyed it. Always happy to watch *Donnie Darko* again.

Rileigh: Um, we are talking about "Red (Taylor's Version)" next week.

Sydnee: [laughs] Some more Jake Gyllenhaal content.

Taylor: Alright.

Rileigh: Except about how much he sucks.

Taylor: We're just gonna go back and forth every week. One episode about why you should like Jake Gyllenhaal and one episode about why you should hate Jake Gyllenhaal. We'll just see how long we can do it. [laughs]

Raleigh: Um, I do want to tell you all though, there is the whole album, um, but Taylor Swift directed and made a short film. It's 15 minutes. It's literally a very short film. Um, that's kind of a music video for the 10-minute version of the song about Jake Gyllenhaal.

Sydnee: Yes.

Raleigh: I would recommend that you watch that also.

Sydnee: Is that what they were showing on—

Raleigh: On SNL?

Sydnee: Yes.

Raleigh: Yes, that was what they were playing behind her.

Sydnee: Okay.

Raleigh: And they cut out some parts of it, 'cause there's a break in the middle, 'cause the song's 10 minutes. The short film's, like, 15. So there are some bits where there's no music and there's just dialog. Um, but it's very good.

Taylor: There's also a video with Blake Lively, right? Which she directed.

Raleigh: Yes. There was a music video for one of the songs off the album that Blake Lively directed, with Miles Teller in it, and Taylor Swift. Um, that's also very good. If you wanna watch that, that's just a regular music video, um, for one of the songs, but yeah. Lots to talk about. The album has 30 songs on it.

Sydnee: Gee—[apprehensively] that's a lot.

Raleigh: Yes.

Sydnee: That's a lot of songs. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: Yes. Yes.

Sydnee: Well, maybe I can get, uh, Charlie and Cooper into Taylor Swift, other than—

Raleigh: There are a few in there they'll like. I mean, like, "22" is on there. That's a good one. It's a hit. It's a bop.

Sydnee: We listened to "You Need To Calm Down" like five times last night, so...

Raleigh: Oh.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: It's not "Red," but it's Taylor.

Sydnee: I know. We—[laughs quietly] I'll get 'em into something else. We just keep listening to that. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Alright. Well, thank you again, Tey.

Raleigh: Yeah. I enjoyed it.

Sydnee: Uh, if you haven't watched *Donnie Darko*, um, you should. It's very—I mean, it—you know, be in the right mood.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: You gotta be in the right mindset. [laughs]

Taylor: It's a bit of a bummer.

Sydnee: Yeah. But, I mean, like you said, kind of a hopeful bummer, and interesting, and makes you think, and it's something to talk about. I always love a movie that makes you—that makes you wanna talk to the people around you about it afterwards, so.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Um, thank you to Maximum Fun. You should go to Maximumfun.org and check out all the great podcasts there. You can email us at stillbuffering@maximumfun.org, and you can tweet at us @stillbuff. And thank you to The Nouvellas for our theme song, "Baby You Change Your Mind."

[theme music plays in the background]

Raleigh: This has been your 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: I am still buffering...

Sydnee and Taylor: And I... am... too.

Raleigh: There are pictures of him in the scarf. He did take it.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: It's not a conspiracy. He did take it.

Taylor: Isn't he— he didn't take it. She left it there!

Raleigh: And he didn't give it back. It was a Gucci scarf.

Sydnee: He's gonna give it back when this alternate time...

Taylor: He's gonna...

Raleigh: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Taylor: Gonna want to fix the loop.

Raleigh: We'll see.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. He's gotta burn down a house a first.

[all laugh]

[theme music ends]

[music plays]

Jesse: Hi, it's Jesse Thorn, the founder of Maximum Fun. It's the Thanksgiving season, and I wanna take this opportunity to thank you, the members of Maximum Fun. This Max Fun Drive, your generosity, and your love of pins, helped us raise over \$90,000 to help bridge the digital divide. Families without internet access struggle to do things that the rest of us might take for granted, especially during COVID. Going to school, applying for jobs, finding medical care.

Your donations help the nonprofit EveryoneOn. They provide equipment, services, and training to get people online so they can access opportunity. You can find out more about the great work EveryoneOn does at everyoneon.org. Thanks for supporting Maximum Fun. Thanks for

supporting EveryoneOn, and thanks for being awesome people who want to do good in the world.

[music and ad end]

[chord]

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