

Still Buffering 302: "(500) Days of Summer" (2009)

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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 Taylor Smirl.

Sydnee: Well, it's almost spring break.

Taylor: Woo hoo!

Rileigh: Woo hoo!

Sydnee: Anybody partyin'?

Taylor: I mean, I'm not in school, so I don't really know what that... [laughs quietly] means. But I'll take it as an excuse, sure, yeah! I'm partyin'! Are you partyin'?

Sydnee: You can always celebrate spring bake— spring break, Tey.

Taylor: It's— it's a state of mind, spring break, really.

Sydnee: Spring break was inside of you all along.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Um...

Taylor: I don't think I ever celebrated spring break even when I was in school.

Sydnee: No.

Taylor: It was just time to, like, do the work that you had to do.

Sydnee: I don't remember ever going anywhere for spring break. Did I?

Taylor: Right?

Sydnee: You know what? Actually, no. One time we went down to Uncle Michael's. When he lived on the beach.

Taylor: Hm.

Sydnee: Were you with me?

Taylor: Oh, you— I was there for that road trip, but that was summer. I don't—

Sydnee: That was summer. No, we— I—

Taylor: I don't I ever went.

Sydnee: I went one spring break. [pause] [laughs quietly] I was cool. I went to my uncle's house for spring break. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: On a beach!

Sydnee: On a beach. He was a surf uncle.

Taylor: He was also a cool u— yeah, that's a cool uncle.

Sydnee: Um... you know, seven-year-olds don't do big things for their spring breaks, I've learned.

Taylor: No?

Sydnee: No. Charlie doesn't have any... any, um, MTV spring break-esque plans.

Taylor: They're not going to the beach with their cool uncle? I don't— I don't—

Sydnee: No.

Taylor: I was gonna say they don't have a cool uncle. 'Cause, like, oh, they've got some uncles. Never mind. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] Well, we— they— okay. She— she will be seeing uncles. But... [laughs quietly]

Taylor: That's—

Raleigh: They don't live on a beach.

Taylor: Hmm.

Sydnee: No. It'd be a lot cooler if they did, though. [laughs quietly] Uh, Raleigh, big spring break plans?

Raleigh: Um, I'm just going to look at apartments, and look at how much money I'm going to have to spend to live in DC for law school. So... woo. [laughs]

Taylor: Oh, that's a trip.

Raleigh: It is. I am— I am excited. We'll be there on St. Patrick's Day, so.

Taylor: Oh, wow!

Raleigh: That's something.

Taylor: Gonna... par— party?

Raleigh: Party.

Taylor: Do a lil party?

Raleigh: Me and mom and dad. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: St. Patrick's Day? [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Um... mom and dad would probably party pretty hard for St. Patrick's Day, I bet.

Taylor: I could feel that, yeah.

Sydnee: Um... well... we will, uh— it will at least be warm. We're having a quick snowstorm today, just real quick here. We're gonna get that out of the way.

Taylor: Good, good.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: In the middle of March.

Sydnee: The weather this past week was—it was—this is not a joke. It was, like, 30 degrees, and then it was 70, and then it was, like, back to 40, and then we had, like, two days of 60, and then now today there's gonna be a big snowstorm, and tomorrow it's gonna be, like, below freezing.

Taylor: Makes me really sad for, like, plants and, like, nature and stuff. That's gotta be har— I mean, it's hard on, like, us as humans. It just kinda sucks. But, like, I'm pretty sure, like, you know... like, trees and stuff, this is kind of a... it's bad for 'em, right? They're like, "Oh! It's good! I can do my bloom now!"

And then it's like, "Oh no, never mind. It's cold again."

Sydnee: I think so. I remember that this sort of thing happening with the ice storm and all that last year. Like, I was having a lot of trouble. Like, my garden kind of sucked. My herbs never— like, nothing really worked as well as it had the first year that I did it all. And, um, I talked to some friends who are much better at gardening and planting and, like, actually have, like, big, giant gardens and stuff, and they said similar things. So it made me feel better. 'Cause it was like, it wasn't just me and the fact that I'm not very good at it. So I imagine we could have similar problems this year.

Taylor: Hmm.

Raleigh: Isn't that why mom always goes out and throws, like, random sheets and something over the plants?

Taylor: Yeah. It's like— like your yard's full of ghosts.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Rileigh: Yeah. Just frantically as it starts to snow, making dad go out and throw old sheets and towels over all the bushes.

Sydnee: Yeah. Last year was a— that was a nightmare last year. 'Cause there were, like— there were like, weeks where I had to leave the sheets on. Because it was, like, summer weather, and then below freezing again for, like, a wee— yeah. So maybe that's why everything got screwed up. I don't know. My bulbs are already all sprouting. I assume they'll be fine. I don't think they freeze. I don't know.

Taylor: Yes. I think somebody said that there were some— some cherry blossom trees that started to bloom here in New York, and I'm sure after we had a bunch of— just a horrible snow ice day on Wednesday, so I don't know how— don't know how they're doing after that. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: I'm excited to see if my lavender survived. Supposedly, like, lavender you can just let freeze and it'll come back and it's okay. So I have tra— I pla— I moved it from its pot out to my, like, flowerbed proper. So we'll see. It'd be nice to have a big ol' lavender plant there right by my door, but we'll see.

Rileigh: It's very inspiring that lavender is so resilient.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] Lavender and scallions.

Rileigh: That— well... [laughs quietly]

Taylor: The heartiest of plants.

Sydnee: My hearty scallions that never died, that just persist through the winters and...

Taylor: Yeah, but they're uncomfortably big.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: They were chunky.

Taylor: Yeah, I don't know. I can't make direct eye contact with your scallions.

Sydnee: I am excited that that project taught me— like, I took them from my garden— er, from my kitchen. Like, the leavings from my kitchen scallions, popped 'em in that pot, and... you know, a year or so later I had a flower. [laughs quietly] Like, they flowered.

Rileigh: It is a fun science experiment. I did not know that would be the outcome.

Sydnee: I didn't know either. I knew that they would keep growing, but I didn't know that they flowered.

Taylor: The— the rare and beautiful scallion blossom. [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: Do they smell like onions?

Sydnee: Hmm, they—

Rileigh: Are they good-smelling flowers?

Sydnee: When they flowered, like a lot of the herbs, when they flower they lose a lot of their... like... pun— pungency? [laughs quietly] I don't— like, I noticed that all—'cause all of my herbs— I kept trying to clip the flowers off and stop them from going to flower, but then they all ended up doing it just 'cause I wasn't paying close enough attention. And that all of them lose some of their flavor and the scent and, like, they get a lot... blander when they flower.

Rileigh: Oh. At least the flowers can be pretty and not smell like herbs and onions then, I guess.

Sydnee: Yeah, they were pretty. They cilantro were flowers are pretty, the thyme flowers are pretty. Like, they're pretty. It's just like, now I have worthless cilantro. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Aww.

Rileigh: All cilantro is worthless cilantro to me.

Sydnee: I love cilantro.

Rileigh: Fill my mouth with dish soap.

Taylor: Don't. Don't listen. Don't listen to Rileigh, cilantro. I love you.

Rileigh: I have the bad genes. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: [laughs] You got— you got the soap gene.

Rileigh: I got the soap gene.

Sydnee: My cilantro came back in the middle of the winter. It was very strange. I looked out there one day and there was cilantro growing again. I was like, "What are you doing there?"

Taylor: Just got confused.

Rileigh: "Whoops, sorry!"

Taylor: "Uh, is this anything? Is this— no? No?" [laughs]

Sydnee: It was right in the middle of, like, really cold days, so I went out and picked it and ate it, 'cause— I mean, like, I put it on something, 'cause I thought, "Oh, you're gonna—"

Rileigh: You just ate it raw.

Sydnee: [laughs] I like it, but it's better on stuff. But I thought, "You're gonna die. [through laughter] I gotta get you in my tummy before you die."

Rileigh: That's a sentence. [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: Well, uh... well, soon it will be... summer?

Rileigh: Ohh.

Sydnee: Oh, there we go.

Rileigh: Yes. We are talking about *(500) Days of Summer*, to be exact. Um...

Taylor: I mean, you know, with global warming we probably will have [through laughter] 500 days of summer eventually.

Raleigh: That's fair. That's fair.

Sydnee: That's a— there's gonna be a remake of this movie, and it will be a post-apocalyptic hellscape.

[all laugh quietly]

Raleigh: Commentary on climate change.

Taylor: Yes. But weirdly, also a love story that's not a love story.

Raleigh: Exactly. Uh, yes. *(500) Days of Summer* is a 2009 movie, um, that I wanted to talk about this week that stars little Joseph Gordon-Levitt and little Zooey Deschanel. Um, I say little 'cause they really— I didn't think they looked that different, but looking back they really look like babies, um, in that film, compared to, you know, I'm used to seeing 'em in.

Sydnee: They do look like babies. I agree with you. I will say, Joseph Gordon-Levitt persists in looking a little... like a baby.

Raleigh: Well, that's fair.

Taylor: He's just got that permanent baby thing going.

Sydnee: He does. He does have a boyish charm. [snorts]

Raleigh: Mm-hmm?

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: Just a little baby man.

Sydnee: Zooey Deschanel remains, uh, quirky and adorable.

Raleigh: Yes. Yes, that is her strength. Um, but yeah, it's, uh, just like you said. It's a like a love story that's not a love story. It's 500— her character's name is Summer, so it's the 500 days, basically, of them going from meeting to kind of

casually dating, and then Joseph Gordon-Levitt gets more into Summer than— what is his name? I'm having a hard time remembering his character's name.

Taylor: Tom?

Rileigh: Tom, yes. I was gonna say, I'm just gonna keep calling him Joseph Gordon-Levitt. Um, all three names. Uh, but yeah. She, like, doesn't want to define their relationship. She just wants to stay happy and be casual, and then he wants to date her, and then... she, spoilers, breaks up with him, and then they see each other again on the 500th day, and... or, I guess, almost 500th. And she's married, um, and tells him to keep believing in love. And then he meets Autumn on the 500th day.

Sydnee: Get it?

Rileigh: Yep.

Sydnee: Autumn.

Rileigh: 'Cause that comes after Summer.

Taylor: I was not— I was not expecting that right there at the end. That little, "Ohh. Now it's time for Autumn."

Rileigh: It was a little on the nose for me. [laughs]

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: It is. It was very much like, uh— what was it? *The Departed*? It was all about the cops who were rats, and so at the end they had a big shot of a rat, just in case you missed that. [laughs]

Rileigh: Just in case.

Sydnee: Just in case. Scorsese wanted to make sure you got that— "See? They were rats! They were rat in the—"

Taylor: "And this is what a rat looks like, so... "

Sydnee: "And here's a rat."

Rileigh: "Do you get it? Her name is like the season, and this is the next season. This is the one that comes after, and she is the girl that comes after. Did you get that? Okay. Just making sure."

Sydnee: Um, I remember— you know, I had watched this movie once before, I only once. I remember because I was very disappointed with the ending.

Rileigh: That they did not end up together?

Sydnee: Yes.

Rileigh: Interesting.

Taylor: It's interesting that you'd be disappointed in that, because they kind of spell it out for you in the first couple minutes of the movie.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Well, but I thought maybe there'd be a twist.

Rileigh: [snorts]

Taylor: [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: It's, like, the title is, you know, *(500) Days of Summer*. It's like, okay, well, this is gonna end... at some point. 'Cause... well, now we see her name's Summer. It's 500 days of 'em. Not— not all of 'em. It's like *The Last Five Years* when you watch and you're like, "Maybe they won't break up." And then you remember the movie's called *The Last Five Years*, and that means at the end of the five years... they're not gonna be together anymore.

Sydnee: That made me sad too.

Rileigh: It— hm, it's right there in the title. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Well, this reminded me a lot of, um... uh, one of the other movies that you brought to the table, Rileigh. Uh, *La La Land*.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: In that kind of the same structure of two people that... you know, are... the point of the story isn't so much that they fall in love and have, like, true love together. It's that they, like, help each other move in the direction that they're meant to move in life, even though they don't stay together.

Raleigh: Yeah. It is very—

Taylor: And it's in LA. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: Yeah. It is very similar in that way. Um... which I do like. I mean, kind of the whole message of the movie is that Summer says when, you know, they meet again and she's married and he's like, "Okay, well, I guess— you know, I thought true love existed, and it doesn't."

She's like, "Well, no, it does. Um, just not... with me. And not for me, with you. Just with someone else for you. 'Cause I found the person I wanted to be with, and you will too, so."

Sydnee: And he's— and he's— I will say, like, watching it again, um... as much as I do love him as an actor, I was a lot less charmed by his character.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Um... it was— that was a— what year did this movie come out?

Raleigh: 2009.

Sydnee: This feels late, for *that* guy. You know what I mean? You know that guy that he is? I f— were we still in love with *that* guy at this point in time?

Taylor: Well, I feel like it's kind of a send-up of that guy, though. You know? I do think the movie takes its— like, makes points that this is not— this isn't the good guy in this story, right? Like, the— when he goes on the awful, horrible date with the— the other girl to try to get over Summer, and she points out to him that Summer wasn't unfaithful, didn't, you know, do anything really heinous, and specifically asked for it not to be a relationship. And that, you know... like... she's

not some monster or some evil person. He just wanted things from her that she couldn't give him.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah. They just— 'cause he still, like— when he says, uh, to his buddy— what's his buddy's name? McKenzie?

Taylor: Which— there are two buddies.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: The bu— the... the work buddy.

Raleigh: We're really bad at this, guys.

Sydnee: I know. I always forget characters names. Anyway, when he says, like, "Why do pretty girls always treat me like crap?"

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: And it was like, "Oh, come on. I know. You watch too many John Cusack movies. I know how this goes." [laughs]

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: "I'm so nice! Why don't you like me! What's the matter with you that you can't see how great I am!"

Taylor: Well, and also the trope of, like, "Oh, I too know who The Smiths are. Wow, a girl who knows who The Smiths are!"

Sydnee: Ohh. [laughs] That— that moment— I mean, and that really— see, that's what was funny to me, is I thought, like, gosh, this movie feels a lot older than it is in those ways. Because that is such a, uh... a 90's kind of— even earlier than that. Like, "Oh my God. You're a girl and you like the same music I do? You— it must be fate. There can't be a girl who knows who the The Smiths are. Certainly there's not any girl. And a cute one, too! Must be fate."

[pause]

Rleigh: What is it— one of 'em— is it McKenzie who's like, "Someone can like the same stuff as you, like the same weird stuff you're into, and it doesn't mean, like, it's true love, or it doesn't mean you're in love," or something. Like, that's— that feels very that.

Taylor: I think it's the— actually the little sister? The... what's...

Rleigh: Oh! Uh, uh, Rachel.

Taylor: Mor— Moretz— what's her—

Sydney: Chloe Grace Moretz. Yeah.

Taylor: Yes. I think she says that, yeah.

Rleigh: You're right. You're right.

Taylor: That character was great. But yeah, well—

Sydney: Yeah, it—

Taylor: Go ahead.

Sydney: Well, I think what you're hittin' on there, tho— it is— like, you have, um— even though they're not the central characters— and maybe that's the thing that would modernize the movie. You have women in this movie saying very, like... logical things that make sense about relationships and about humans and, like, good advice, and then you have, like, your central male character, who is not... his version of events is not— you know what I mean?

Like, he— he's the one with sort of the view that is unhealthy. Um, but he— that's whose eyes we're watching it through, and they feel just sort of like little commentators on the side. But they make sense.

Rleigh: I would be interested in seeing this movie from Summer's perspective. Like, she meets a guy and she's like, "Well, he's kinda cool. We can just, like, hang out a bit. Like, I don't think he's, like, the love of my life, but we can just hang."

And then, like, he's, you know, fully in love with her after, like, the first time they meet. And she's like, "Okay. Well, maybe this is not— I'm just gonna— maybe this is not right."

Sydnee: They're trying to do that at some times. Like, I feel like they're trying to— when, uh, they're at the karaoke bar early on and he says, like— and she's like, "I just wanna be myself, be independent, be young, single, have fun."

And the friend's like, "You're a guy. You're a dude." [laughs] And it's like, yeah, anybody can feel those things, I guess. I guess anybody could. [laughs]

Rileigh: Yeah! You know, in movies usually where there's a girl that, like, wants a relationship with a guy who's like, "No, I'm just, you know, having a— I want it to be casual."

And the girl keeps wanting— I mean, and I wouldn't say recent, but very, like, older, more heteronormative movies, the girl that keeps pushing for the relationship is seen as, like, the crazy girl or something. Um, but in this movie, you've got the girl who wants a casual relationship, and we're all supposed to feel a little bit bad for Joseph Gordon-Levitt, I think.

At least they make him somewhat of an empathetic character. Um, that, like, he wants a relationship, and she doesn't. It's like, "Aww, guys never want commitment, and he does! Why can't you just, like, let him have a bit of a relationship? Just let him have a little."

Taylor: Hm.

Sydnee: Yeah. And towards the end, when— or at the very end when he looks at her and says— like, he's trying to figure out why she danced with him that night at the wedding and stuff. And he's like, "You just do whatever you want."

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: The way he says— the way he delivers it, it makes her sound very selfish. And, like, it comes off almost as if she was cruel. You wanted— you knew that would lead me on. You knew that I still cared about you. You knew how I would feel, and you did it anyway.

And instead, like, my thought process is, like, yeah. You do. You do whatever you want. It's just shocking to you that a woman would also be doing whatever she wants. Like, that's the— the problem is that you expected an imbalance. But it was balanced.

Taylor: And, I mean, she was a very consistent character throughout. Like, I don't feel like she ever really wavered on who she was. That was always— even in the way that she fell in love, it was very much like... you know, yeah, she does what she wants. She outlined what she wanted from him very clearly, and then... you know, when... she insisted upon that, he was the one that kind of spun out.

So I don't— I mean, I think that's kind of her— her character was never— outside of maybe inviting him to what looked like maybe was an engagement party, [through laughter] maybe that was kind of cruel, but I don't know. Outside of that, I think she didn't do anything wrong.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah, I guess that is. [laughs]

Raleigh: I mean, even when, like, we see her married, I feel like there's a moment where it's supposed to be like, "Oh, what? Like, you didn't wanna date this guy, and now it's only been this long and you're married?" And he's like, "You didn't even want to be someone's girlfriend. Now you're married?"

It's like, well... you don't know— I think we got, like, her— like you were talking about, Tey. Like, that's who she is. But then we also had his version of her in his head that's like this, you know, perfect woman that he's in love with, and when she doesn't live up to that, it's like he knew everything about her and now it's, um, not... not who she really was the whole time. Spoiler alert, people are not the idealized version of themselves, um, that you create in your head when you meet them, and you find out you both love The Smiths. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Yeah. And it, um— in that— I think it's weird. Watching a movie like this now, and kind of with the cultural shift we've had in the last couple decades, it is... I don't— he sounds so immature when he said, "You didn't want to be anybody's girlfriend, and now you're somebody's wife. I just don't get it."

Like, it sounded so immature, right?

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: And then I thought, does it sound immature because I'm watching this in 2022, and was charmed by that when I was younger? Or is it just supposed to sound immature? Like, is that intentional? Like, were— that was always there in the movie. It was just [laughs quietly] I, the first time I saw it, was like, "Poor kid— poor guy, he just doesn't get it. He just doesn't understand! His heart's so broken!"

And now I'm like, "Come on! Yeah! Like, that's how life works, dude!"

Raleigh: Yeah, I will say the first time I watched this when I was much younger I had that reaction of like, "Aww. Aww. Poor buddy."

Taylor: Well, and I mean, it is interesting. Like, what is the perspective of the film? Because, like, they— they use the word "friend" as quite like a— like a stab. Like, "Oh, she wants to be his friend."

And at one point she calls him her best friend. But I feel like, I don't know, also rewatching I'm like, "Man, I really feel bad for Summer. She seems like she needed a friend, and she thought she had one." And, you know, friendship is valuable. Friendship is important. Like, that— that's what they had, ultimately, and he didn't care about— you know, maybe she didn't care about him as a partner, but he didn't care about her as a friend! And that's... that's... you know.

Sydnee: 'Cause it was what he needed. He had friends. He wanted a girlfriend. He didn't need friends, so it was all about his needs. Um, there's a lot more to talk about in the movie, um, but before we do that...

Raleigh: Let's check the group message.

Um, so I... have some little— little buddies I wanna tell you all about.

Taylor: Little buddies?

Raleigh: Little buddies.

Sydnee: Okay?

Raleigh: Um, and those are my ear buddies.

Taylor: Ahh.

Raleigh: My little everyday earbuds, um, from Raycon. So, you know, I'm always listening to stuff, whether it's on a walk to campus, or between classes, or at the library, or working out. I'm always listening to my favorite podcast, or my favorite Taylor Swift album at the moment.

Um, and that is why I always rely on Raycon to provide me with that sweet, sweet ear entertainment that I crave. Um, because Raycon's wireless earbuds are the best way to bring audio with you, because no matter how much you shake things up, literally, no matter how much you shake, you know they won't fall out of your ears, which is great, especially when, like, you're on the treadmill, and then you drop one and it's a real silly look to try to have to, like, bend down when the treadmill's still moving and pick it up. You don't have to worry about that with Raycon.

Um, and there's also awareness mode, for when you need to listen to your surroundings, so you can take Raycons with you wherever you go, which I've utilized on my walks maybe in the dark, back from the library, back from the gym. Um, always good to be able to still listen to what I want to listen to, but also know that I'm safe and secure.

And, they're priced just right! You get quality audio at half the price of other premium audio brands. So, Tey, if our listeners want to check out Raycon, what should they do?

Taylor: Well, right now *Still Buffering* listeners can get 15% off their Raycon order at buyraycon.com/buffering. That's buyraycon.com/buffering to save 15% on Raycons.

Once more, that's buyraycon.com/buffering.

Sydnee: So, in this household we love cereal. I think you know that. Uh, Justin loves cereal, the kids love cereal. Who doesn't love cereal? But cereal— traditional cereal is packed with sugar, and so it's kind of a sometimes food. You don't always feel like this is the complete meal that I need, especially after, like, a long day or a workout or something.

But Magic Spoon has fixed that, because this is cereal that you can feel good about eating anytime, um, because it has zero grams of sugar! It's got a ton of protein, 13 to 14 grams of protein, it's gluten free, it's grain free, it's soy free. It's delicious, and it's better for you than traditional cereal. If you're looking to cut down on your sugar, it's a great way to do that. Um, so that, you know, you can—you can have that enjoyment from a delicious bowl of cereal, uh, and you get some protein in there, too. That's a great deal.

And there's all kinds of flavors! They've got cocoa. They've got fruity. They've got frosted, peanut butter, blueberry, maple waffle, all kinds of things that you will enjoy. You can build your own box. Like, if you wanna mix two together, you get some cocoa, you get some peanut butter, you got a Reese cup right there in a bowl! It's delicious.

Um, and again, it's zero grams of sugar, so you can feel good about treating yourself to Magic Spoon. So, Teylor, if our listeners want to check out Magic Spoon, what should they do?

Teylor: Well, they should go to magicspoon.com/buffering to grab a custom bundle of cereal. And be sure to use our promo code "buffering" at checkout to save \$5 off your order. Magic Spoon is so confident in their product, it's backed with a 100% happiness guarantee. So if you don't like it for any reason, they'll refund your money, no questions asked.

Remember: get your next delicious bowl of cereal at magicspoon.com/buffering, and use code "buffering" to save \$5 off.

Raleigh: So, one thing I wanted to point out— I was just looking back through, um, quick little note synopsis about the movie. Um, I had forgotten that when Summer breaks up with him— they work at a greeting card company. And when Summer breaks up with him, and he's so sad and mopey, his boss moves him to the— what, like the, um—

Teylor: Sympathy? [laughs]

Raleigh: Condolences section? Um, to make those cards, instead of being able to write happy cards, which I think is just a really funny little note there. Um, that's like, this guy's so sad he can't even write happy cards. He can only write sad cards.

Sydnee: I, uh— I get a little bit of a Ted Mosby vibe from this character.

Raleigh: Yeah!

Sydnee: Although he predates Ted Mosby, so— or does he?

Raleigh: Umm... *How I Met Your Mother* came out a pretty long time ago.

Sydnee: But he— I— I felt like sometimes, like, is this a continuation or, like, a prologue? [laughs] This is a prologue to the Ted Mosby story.

Raleigh: This is a continuation. *How I Met Your Mother* started in 2004.

Sydnee: Wow.

Raleigh: 5. 4 or 5. 5.

Sydnee: That makes me feel old.

Raleigh: Yeah, so.

Sydnee: Not— not as old as *How I Met Your Father* makes me feel, but that— I guess that would be another episode, on a side note. [laughs]

Raleigh: Um, so yeah, this is four years post-Ted Mosby. You are right, though. 'Cause, I mean, that's another show looking back at it where it's like, these are— a lot of the times for Ted Mosby, there were women he dated where it was just like, they didn't think it was working out and they broke up with him. They weren't bad people, they just weren't feeling it in the relationship. But he's, like, this poor guy who just can't— can't find the right one.

Um, and I do think that the way Summer breaks up with Tom is very much like, "Hey. It's just not— it's just not working. Like, we're fighting, we're having these issues." It's not like, "I don't care about you." It's very much like, "I don't think we should keep doing this. It's not good for either of us."

Um, which is a pretty mature way of going about it, but he still acts like she's, you know, just completely destroyed him.

Sydnee: It's when she says "I love these pancakes."

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: [through laughter] Which is a pretty, pretty good moment.

Raleigh: Yeah. [laughs]

Taylor: "You can love those pancakes, but you can't love me."

[all laugh]

Sydnee: Um, but I think that— I think that's why I often hear this movie is, like, one that falls into the trope of the, um, manic pixie dream girl. You know? That he is putting Summer into that mold. I don't think the character of Summer necessarily merits that. But I think his reaction to her is as if that's what she should be.

Taylor: It's almost like a— like a meta manic pixie dream girl situation, because it's not where— you know, like a movie like, oh, I don't know. What's the— *Garden State*. I was like, "What's the one?" Uh, there are other ones. But where the character is written with no real agency or purpose outside of to drive the main— the guy to, you know, his next step in life.

This character is written with agency and opinions. It's just Tom sees her as that. Like, you're here for me to, like, you know, fall in love, and be with, and... not— the script doesn't treat her that way, necessarily.

Raleigh: Right. Yeah. It's a good point.

Sydnee: It's funny, 'cause you think if you— if you flipped it and you did see it from Summer's perspective, what happens for her is that she had a job, she met a guy, he was great, he wasn't the one but she had a lot of fun. And then one day sitting in a diner, a guy walked up and commented on the book she was reading, and she fell madly in love and had this wonderful love affair and is now married

and happy. So, like, if you watch the movie from her perspective, it's a very traditional... [laughs quietly] like, it's a romantic movie.

Raleigh: I mean, it is a little bit like *La La Land* in that sense that we see Emma Stone, like, you know, in her relationship with Ryan Gosling. And, you know, they're not right for each other, and then we see her get married and have a kid. It's like, "Oh, but look how happy she is now." Like, they weren't— it wasn't them.

Uh, do think what *La La Land* does better, though, and you can tell it's much more modern than this, is that even though it's the same kind of thing in the sense that we're looking back a relationship that ended between two people that we think are going to end up together, um... it, uh— it does a better job of showing flaws in both the characters, and not really making it look like one is the bad person.

This one, I think— what you were saying, Tey, made me realize, like, the script doesn't necessarily make Summer out to be the bad person. It's not the things that she does or says. It's just his reactions to her that are supposed to make us feel what he's feeling, which is that, like, she's the— the bad guy.

Sydnee: What do we think of the way that they— because, again, this feels old-fashioned to me. What do we think of the way they handle, like, after they sleep together and he's, like, so excited, and they have the whole scene where people are, like, dancing and high fiving and stuff? Is that— is that still cool, or are we past that as a society? Like, where are we culturally on that? [laughs]

Taylor: It's funny, 'cause I— after that scene, like, I just— I interpreted it more as, like, "Oh, he's in love." But if it's literally just like, "Oh, I slept with her!" Like, then it kinda sucks. [laughs]

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I mean, I could— I don't know. It reminded me of the scene in *High Fidelity* when he's trying to figure out if Laura has slept with Ian.

Taylor: Oh, right.

Sydnee: And she finally is like, "We haven't made love yet."

And then he walks out of the building, like, with his hands up in the air, like, "Victory!" Like, "Yes! Yes! Yes, yes, yes!" Just because, like, here his— his girlfriend who he loves has left him, is with another man, and his only concern is, "But they're not doing it." And it's like... [sighs] it— I don't know. I got that vibe from this scene. Like, okay. [snorts] Come on. [laughs]

Taylor: That was the— that's— that scene kind of— you know, that weird sort of out of— like, obviously it's not a realistic portrayal. Like, there's a dance number in the middle of it. Uh, I did like that stylistically about the movie, though, that there's always a little bit of a turn away from reality. Which makes sense. I mean, that's kind of a theme in the movie is the difference between reality and expectations. Uh, but I really— I liked that there were kind of consistently weird moments that, you know, you could kind of— that weren't really in reality.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: Yeah. Which also, I think, matches the— the energy of, like, Zoe Deschanel in general, just as, like, a character in everything she does? [laughs quietly] Um... which is kind of just, like, a little bit removed from what's realistic, and a little bit different than what you're expecting. Um, I don't know if that's intentional, that people just, like, saw her like that in one movie and they were like, "Okay, well, that's her thing," or if that's just, like, the energy she brings.

Taylor: Well, that's— Oh, go ahead.

Sydnee: No, finish your thought.

Taylor: Well, I was gonna say, even, like, the color palette of the film. It's all, like, baby blues and tans and browns, and it's colors that specifically feel designed to match her. [through laughter] Like, make her look good.

Sydnee: It— it does feel that way. She— she reminds me— and she's like this in a lot of things she does. Like, she's a character that somehow wandered out of a musical and got lost. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: And has ended up in this thing we're watching, but has somehow managed to bring some of those elements with her. [laughs quietly] Like...

Taylor: That's very true.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: But that— that makes sense. You know, the movie's called *(500) Days of Summer*, and that's meant in multiple different ways. But, like, in a sense his whole world is colored by her in that time period. He's seeing everything through the lens of her. Um, not as an independent human, but as what she is doing to his life, for his life. You know? So, like, it almost makes sense to put it in a color palette that matches her, because that is how he is— his entire life is being viewed through the lens of her, during that time period.

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: Which I think is interesting, when you look at— 'cause they have, like, the little numbers on the screen going through the days every now and then. Um, that the 500th day, that the last one isn't when he sees her and she's married. Like, it's not that moment when it's, like, obviously this is over. I think it's not until he meets Autumn, right?

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: Like, that's the last one. It's almost there when he sees her, and she's married. But he doesn't, like, quit making that period of life centered around how she made him feel, until he meets someone else. He still, like, is thinking about her, even though he's like, "Oh, she's married."

He's thinking about, like, "[mumbling] Oh, she didn't wanna be my girlfriend, but she's married." Until he meets Autumn.

Sydnee: I also— I'd have to go back and watch the scene again, but I feel like the color palette of that scene is different.

Taylor: The one where he meets Autumn?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Well, even, like— 'cause his whole— you know, his whole wardrobe, you see the shift that when he's on the overlook spot, right before— or when he's— I don't know. He's got his portfolios. Right before that, or it's while he's going on interviews.

Like, that's the first time you see him. He's wearing, like, stark black, his hair's done definitely. And even then, when he talks to Summer, Summer's dressed very differently than she's been the whole time. So I do think there's, like, a shift.

Is it to reality, or is it to the next palette? I don't know. But there is that, and then it carries through into that office scene.

Sydnee: Yeah. 'Cause I feel like that it's a little warmer. And, like, actually more fall colors. Like, literally, I feel like we have shifted from a summer palette to an autumn palette in that scene. Which, you know what? I wonder what that brings up for me is, like— 'cause he has that moment where the narrator's talking about, like, he doesn't— like, it's just coincidence. No such thing as fate. But just in case, kind of. You know? Like, there's that whole moment. Will he still believe in love or not? Um... is it— is it a continuation of the same problem? Has he learned a lesson?

Taylor: That's what I was wondering. Because I feel like... you know, Summer learned from him. When they have that final talk it's like she kind of gave the idea of love a chance because of how insistent he was on it. But what did he learn from her? [laughs] If he's just gonna go, "Oh, Autumn. This is meant to be. Now, *that* wasn't meant to be, but *this*. I bet *she* knows who The Smiths are." [snorts]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: She doesn't. It's over.

Sydnee: Well, she doesn't know who The Smiths are, but we have to assume she also likes architecture, because they're going for the same architecture job, I would assume? It's an architecture job? [laughs] Right?

Raleigh: It's an interesting shift in job, there.

Taylor: Well, he makes that comment at the— the, um— whatever. The party, the rooftop party about— he's joking about, you know, why do something as temporary as build buildings when you can work in something as eternal as a greeting card? And I get it's a— like, kind of... swapped, that makes sense. Maybe that's implying something about the relationships. Like, he dated Summer when he was making greeting cards, which are sort of ephemeral, you know, instances of feeling that are disposable, whereas now he's working in architecture, so he might build something real.

Raleigh: Hmm.

Taylor: Yeah. [laughs]

Sydnee: Mm. That feels intentional to me.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Is that anything? [laughs]

Sydnee: Now that you're putting it that way. That feels like an intentional parallel.

Taylor: Oh.

Sydnee: Um, but yeah, I don't know that we know that he learned something. I agree with you. I don't— other than— I mean, the only thing from that conversation... and I hope he learned more than this, but the only thing that we know he took away was that he was [wheezes heavily] right. Like, love is real. I was right all along. I was— it was just with the wrong person. But, like, I was right, she was wrong, and she's admitted it.

And so I don't know that— you know? Like, what about all the other— like, you can't... you can't make somebody— someone else can't fix your whole world.

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: You know, I think that's one of the probably common tropes, though, of movies from— I mean, I don't wanna say that time period, 'cause it wasn't just, like, the 2000's. I mean, a lot before that too that had to do with romance. We weren't supposed to really care if they learned a lesson, or if they became better

people. It was just like, but did they find love? But did they get, like— did they end up with someone? Because I feel like that was the ending for most, you know, romantic movies, or non-love stories. Like, they have to end up with someone. They can't just end up alone.

Um... it took a while before we got more comfortable with that idea, I think. That, you know, your story doesn't end when you end up in a romantic relationship with someone. Like, there's no ending up with someone. It's just they become a part of your life, and it's okay if that doesn't happen. Um, and maybe the more important thing is, like, learning about yourself and becoming a better person. I don't think we're really supposed to care if Tom learned anything. It's just like, "Oh, but good for him."

Taylor: Well, and you know, that's another— kind of a funny parallel with *La La Land* is, like, you know, I liked that about the ending of *La La Land*, that, you know, the girl ended up with a family, but also her career that she wanted, and Ryan Gosling's character had his club. He didn't have love, but he had his— the thing that he loved, he had. Which I thought— I don't think it was played as a sad thing in the movie. It's like, no, he got what he wanted.

And, like, in this it's sort of like the boy gets a career, and the girl gets a husband. But, like, kind of... still comes back to like, but— you know, it's not that he chased the thing that he really wanted to do in life. It's like, oh, it led to him meeting the person he's was supposed to meet, I guess. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: It is very— well, it is— as we've talked about, it is very heteronormative, for one. I mean, they even make the false statement at one point, "There are two kinds of people in the world: boys and girls."

Taylor: Right.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: So.

Taylor: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Like, that's obviously there. Um, but I also think it's like— it's almost like the belief is—I feel like there were a lot of movies and shows at that time where the idea of, like, being a better person or, like, changing for the go— I don't know that that was really a goal, or seen as, like, something that was feasible. It was more like, we're all so screwed up. We're all such disasters, and the best we can hope for is to find somebody to be a disaster with and, like, work out your disasteriness together.

But, like, striving to be better I would say is a newer idea. [laughs] I mean, especially, like— this was in the 2000's. But if you go back to the 90's, the idea that we were all gonna be better pe— no. It was like, "No, we're bad people. We're all bad. Like, everything's bad. Everyone's bad. Everything's bad. You know, let's just... [sighs heavily] let's just survive together." Like... it was a shift that came— although this movie feels so late for me, for that. But I guess maybe that was the end of that sort of thinking, and the beginning of the, like, "Well, maybe we could... feel better." [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Right.

Raleigh: I mean, it was 13 years ago, to be fair. 2009 does not feel that long ago, [through laughter] but it was 13 years ago.

Sydnee: And culture has shifted a lot faster in the last couple decades than it did in the previous ones.

Raleigh: I will say, though, what I would like to see— and we talked about a while ago the TV show *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*, which does this. Um, but, like, *La La Land*, it is good. One of them ends up alone with the thing they love, and they're happy. But the woman still ends up with a family. And in *(500) Days of Summer*, Summer's ending, like, the last we see of her is she is a wife.

I wanna see the opposite. I wanna see the girl end up— if we're gonna keep having these heteronormative, like, boy/girl relationships at the center of movies, like, make the girl end up alone. You know? Like, on her own, doing what she likes and what she enjoys, that she doesn't have to end up with someone. I'm sure that movie exists, but not in the same scale, and the same place in the mainstream, if you will.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Yeah. Well, 'cause it's getting— it's getting into, I think, a better lesson to put in a film, which is that you meet people, and you can fall in love with them and have relationships, and no one has to be a big bad evil person, and then they end, and they can make you better and help you figure things out about yourself, and you can move forward. You know? But that's— like you said. Like, it's not like happily ever after, which is a normal story structure. That life continues, with or without a partner. There's a— your life actually comes first.

Raleigh: Right.

Sydnee: There's Isabella from *Encanto*.

Raleigh: That's true.

Taylor: Oh yeah!

Raleigh: You know, you're right.

Taylor: There you go. [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: No, that is a really good point! She does. She's supposed to get married, and she ends up just with her powers.

Sydnee: With her powers, and also in rainbow colors.

Raleigh: [sighs] I know.

Sydnee: I'm just gonna put that thought out there.

Taylor: Oh.

Raleigh: I could write a whole essay about that.

Taylor: It was a gay thing.

Sydnee: I don't know anything. I just... it's what I saw. That's all I'm saying.

Taylor: [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: Yeah. No. No, I agree.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: Unmarried and in rainbow colors. *We* know what that means. [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: We know. It's for us. Um, well, thank you all for watching this with me. It wasn't— I mean, I don't think I watched it when I was 9, when it came out.

Taylor: [laughs]

Rileigh: I was probably a little bit older. But it was just one of those movies that I always turned on at sleepovers that was like, "Aww. Look, a love story."

And it wasn't until I watched it again when I was older, I was like, "Oh. Well, there's more here. This isn't just about Tom finding who he's meant to be with and getting his heart broken. There's— there's more here." So it's one of those that's good to look back on for that, to see what's changed. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: It was fun. Cooper really loved the scene where he dances after they do it.

Taylor: [laughs]

Rileigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: And... we watched— we had to rewind and watch that scene a few times.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: And she was like, "Why are they dancing?" I'm like... "Th— love. Just love. Just celebrating."

Taylor: Just really happy.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: They're just happy. For love. Love is great. Just love. "Okay." Then we watched it two more times.

[all laugh]

Raleigh: Um, but yeah. Syd, what's next?

Sydnee: Oh, I'm next! Um...

[extended pause]

Taylor: [stage whisper] No Doubt!

Sydnee: What was I gonna do next?

Taylor: [stage whisper] No Doubt!

Sydnee: Oh!

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Sorry.

Raleigh: I'm leaving that in. I'm not gonna cut that out. That was good.

Sydnee: I forgot. I'm gonna do No Doubt next. No Doubt. Specifically, so you don't have to listen to all of No Doubt, *Tragic Kingdom* was the one that I'd say was huge when we were younger.

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: So, that is the album to focus on.

Raleigh: Never listened, so I'm excited.

Taylor: Oh, wow.

Sydnee: You're heard "Don't Speak."

Raleigh: Well, yes, I have.

Sydnee: Yeah. [laughs]

Raleigh: I have heard that. I did not know— I couldn't have told you the band name, but...

Sydnee: Oh my goodness.

Raleigh: For that.

Sydnee: Okay.

Raleigh: Yes.

Sydnee: That's Gwen Stefani.

Raleigh: Okay. I know Gwen Stefani.

Sydnee: She was in No Doubt.

Raleigh: I didn't know that.

Taylor: Oh, wow!

Sydnee: Oh my God! Okay!

Taylor: Alright.

Sydnee: I'm excited for that episode.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: [laughs] Alright. Well, thank you both. Uh, listeners, you should check out *(500) Days of Summer*, if you haven't watched it. It's not a love story.

Raleigh: N— no.

Sydnee: [laughs] Um, thank you Maximum Fun. You should go to Maximumfun.org. There are a lot of great shows you would enjoy. You can tweet

at us @stillbuff. You can email us at stillbuffering@maximumfun.org, and thank you to The Nouvellas for our theme song, "Baby You Change Your Mind."

Raleigh: This has been your cross-generational guide to the culture that made us. I'm 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.

[theme music plays]

Sydnee: Umm...

Raleigh: Um...

[all laugh quietly]

Taylor: Autumn.

Raleigh: Autumn.

Sydnee: Autumn.

[all laugh]

Jesse: Hi. I'm Jesse Thorn, the founder of Maximum Fun, and I have a special announcement. I'm no longer embarrassed by *My Brother, My Brother, and Me*. You know, for years each new episode of this supposed advice show was a fresh insult. A depraved jumble of erection jokes, ghost humor, and— frankly, this is for the best— very little actionable advice.

But now as they enter their twilight years, I'm as surprised as anyone to admit that... it's gotten kinda good. Justin, Travis, and Griffin's witticisms are more refined, like a humor column in a fancy magazine. And they hardly ever say Bazinga anymore.

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[music and ad end]

[chord]

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