

## Still Buffering 332: "Battle Royale" (2000)

Published October 8, 2021

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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:** Uh, so we did karaoke with the kids last night.

**Taylor:** Oh, that's fun.

**Sydnee:** Yeah, there was a fundraiser for Harmony House where we went and karaoked for a cause, as it was put.

**Taylor:** Hmm.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** I imagine since it was an all ages kar—I love karaoke. I've never done, like, not adult, maybe alcohol-involved karaoke. I'm trying to picture children involved, sober karaoke, [through laughter] and maybe that's a different vibe.

**Sydnee:** Well, children were involved, yes. But it was at a place called The Market, which is like an outdoor area where you have access to multiple stores and restaurants, including a craft beer store. So I wouldn't say everyone was sober. [laughs quietly]

**Taylor:** Okay. That's— I mean, that's— however you like the karaoke it's fine. I just— I've— I cannot imagine. But that sounds fun.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. Um, it was a lot, to karaoke without— first of all it's, like, a well-lit, outdoor area. [laughs quietly]

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Um, it felt very much like you're performing. It didn't fe— you know? Like, it was definitely— it felt like "Oh, I'm just doing a little show here." [laughs] "Outside."

**Taylor:** I ended up at one of those— there's a karaoke place here in the city that— it has weird hours. Like, it's open early. You can book private rooms, and I think they start at, like, 11 AM?

**Sydnee:** Wow.

**Taylor:** And they have really good deals earlier in the day, so I once, a long time ago, went to a birthday party that was, like, a daytime karaoke thing. And at first it was like, "Well, it's too early to drink." Like, they did have drinks in the establishment, but it's like, it was just, you know, whatever. But then I realized I was with really serious singers, people that take karaoke very seriously.

**Sydnee:** Oh...

**Taylor:** It was a whole different— a whole different vibe. I was like, "Oh, no. This requires a— [through laughter] perhaps some lubrication."

**Sydnee:** Yeah. That's— 11 AM is, I feel like, early for karaoke.

**Taylor:** I do agree that at that point you're just performing.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm. This felt like a performance. There was an element— in order to up the donations, there was tag element where you could, like, forcibly have one karaoke to a song of your choosing.

**Taylor:** Oh...

**Sydnee:** But, like, you could get out of it by paying your way out. Like, if somebody tagged you and was gonna make you sing a song you didn't want to sing, then you just donate money, and then you don't have to.

**Taylor:** Did you buy your way out of any songs?

**Sydnee:** I did not. I did bail on a song I was tagged to sing along, um, with someone else as, like, a duet. And I had never heard of the song, I'd never heard

the song, I had no... uh, awareness of the existence of the song. So I, um— as I stood there staring at the screen going "I don't even know what sound—" I mean, I know— I can read the words, but I don't know— you know? I don't know the melody of this song. Um, someone in the audience said "I do," and so I handed them the microphone and walked away. [laughs quietly]

**Taylor:** That's a good move.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** I think you got about a 30-minute window where not knowing the karaoke song is funny, and you can kind of say the words and it's funny, and then you gotta—[through laughter] you gotta— you gotta get out of there!

**Sydnee:** I had never heard this song. It was something about "Let's hear it for the girls?"

**Taylor:** Oh, you don't know that song?

**Sydnee:** No.

**Taylor:** Oh.

**Sydnee:** I know "Let's hear it for the boy."

[pause]

**Taylor:** No. I mean, yes. But I think I did a cheerleading routine to "Let's Hear It for the Girls."

**Sydnee:** A cheerleading routine?

**Taylor:** Yeah. You know, back when I... that was, like, middle school.

**Sydnee:** So is it an old song, then?

**Taylor:** Maybe not? Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe I'm thinking of the boy, not the girl version. I don't know.

**Sydnee:** I don't— I don't know. I have no idea. Anyway, I mean, it was nice. It was a nice song, it seemed. I just had never heard of it.

**Taylor:** [simultaneously] It was nice. [laughs quietly]

**Sydnee:** It was nice. Um, but yeah, there was that. And then, um, Charlie and Cooper performed "The Time Warp" for everyone.

**Taylor:** Oh, that's amazing.

**Sydnee:** Yes. Just the two of them got up. And, I mean, they really— they did a great job. They sang the whole song. It was very impressive. I was very proud of them.

**Raleigh:** I saw in the video they did the dance too, of course.

**Sydnee:** Oh yeah. They did the dance, they did the song. Um, the—[laughs quietly] the guy who was running the karaoke, who was really good, as they walked up there and he saw what song it was he was like, "Are you sure you all know this song?" [laughs quietly] I was like, "Oh, buddy. Just wait. Just wait. Do they know this song."

**Raleigh:** Um, I had to investigate because I was dying to know. There is a song by a band called Alabama called "Let's Hear It for the Girl." It came out in 1986.

**Sydnee:** Oh.

**Raleigh:** There was another one that came out in 2016, "Let's Hear It for the Girls" by Morgan Myles.

**Taylor:** I imagine that might've been the one you were... or maybe not. Who knows?

**Raleigh:** There is one that would've been around when you were in middle school.

**Sydnee:** It was sort of a female empowerment-type song, I believe.

**Raleigh:** I bet it's this one from 2016, then.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Rileigh:** The other one's, like, an all-male, like, white dude, mustache band.

**Taylor:** Hmm.

**Sydnee:** Hmm, yeah. Mustache band. [laughs quietly]

**Rileigh:** I don't know. I don't know anything about Alabama other than their album cover, and it's four white guys with mustaches. [laughs quietly] And sunglasses.

**Sydnee:** You know— you know, one of those mustache bands.

**Taylor:** Wait— yes. [through laughter] That is a— that's a genre.

**Sydnee:** I would've thought—

**Rileigh:** Like what our dad looked like for a brief period of time.

**Sydnee:** I would've thought mustache band wasn't as much Alabama as, like, something hipstery. You know?

[pause]

**Taylor:** No. I feel like if we're talking about music, there were other genres that had claim to the mustache before hipsters came along and made them... twee. [laughs quietly]

**Rileigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Do they have— do they have beards, too?

**Rileigh:** Um... yes.

**Taylor:** I mean, even that. Like, that's not...

**Rileigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** That's a different vibe.

**Rileigh:** One of 'em does kind of look like our dad, so maybe dad was in a band. [laughs] But dad from, you know, 1986.

**Sydnee:** Um... somebody was asking me if they— like, they were trying to figure out if they knew dad. And they were like— I was talking to them the other day and they said, "Is he, like, a... tall guy with long hair? Kind of a— kind of a cowboy, kind of?"

And I was like, "Yep. That's— yeah, that's him. Kind of a cowboy."

**Rileigh:** Yep.

**Sydnee:** Kind of a cowboy. Um... Teylor, it is spooky out there.

**Teylor:** It is spooky out there. Well, you know, it was. Like, the 1st— October 1st we had, like, drizzly, rainy weather, and it lasted for, like, five days. And I'm like, "Yes. We are here. There is no sun in the sky. It is 50 degrees every day. I can wear multiple black layers. I'm so happy. I'm going to make soup and eat pumpkin, and— and look—"

**Sydnee:** [laughs] Make soup and eat pumpkin.

**Teylor:** Yes. Make soup, eat pumpkin, look at gore. This is my— this is it. And now it's, like, 70 degrees and nice out. So it still is spooky outside. Just it's...

**Rileigh:** Oh, you said... look at gore.

**Teylor:** Yeah.

**Rileigh:** Not gourd.

**Teylor:** Look at gourd. No, look at gore.

**Rileigh:** I thought you said look at gourd—

**Teylor:** Behold gourd.

**Rileigh:** —and I was like, do you just get— do you just get some gourds and just look? 'Cause I get it.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Taylor:** I mean, yeah. Actually, last night on my way home, a bodega had put out, like, pumpkins. And they had this barrel of pumpkins. And they were, like, the big pumpkins that were, like, five dollars. And then there was, like, this assortment of, like— some of 'em were, like, palm— like, pretty big. Like, I don't know. Like a 3x4 pumpkin, [laughs] in inches.

But they were all, like, two dollars. And then there were itty bitty ones that were in that same barrel. And I went through and I found the smallest one. Because with pumpkins it's like you either want the big one, or the small one.

**Sydnee:** Right.

**Taylor:** So I paid the same price for the smallest pumpkin I could find. And that is absolutely just a beholding. It's a gourd of beholding.

**Sydnee:** [laughs quietly]

**Raleigh:** Well, yeah. I mean, I think a lot of people just look at gourds around Halloween. 'Cause then the— you know, they carve 'em, and then they just look at 'em.

**Taylor:** Yeah. This little guy is too small to carve. He's just gonna be there. Maybe I'll paint a face on it. Maybe he's just— he will be the unknown. That's his name. [laughs quietly]

**Raleigh:** I did get tiny pumpkins from Trader Joe's, but they were with the produce. Like they fully intended on you getting them to, like, you know, I guess cook with them, or eat them? But I just went through and found all the little white ones. Like, little teeny-teeny white guys, and light orange guys.

**Sydnee:** I love those little guys.

**Raleigh:** I wasn't— I didn't cook with them.

**Sydnee:** No.

**Raleigh:** They are looking at. So I guess you can look at gourds and gore.

**Taylor:** You can look at both.

**Raleigh:** There you go.

**Taylor:** There's some gory gourds, too.

**Sydnee:** Well, speaking of gore...

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** There we go. How's that transition?

**Taylor:** Uh, yes. I asked you all to watch *Battle Royale*, the original. The year 2000, it came out. Japanese— I guess it— it's an action thriller. There is a sequel.

**Sydnee:** Oh, okay, okay.

**Taylor:** Um, yeah. And the sequel's interesting. It gets a little bit more— it's more on the political end, less on just the... just death island.

**Sydnee:** Murdering, yeah.

**Taylor:** Yeah. Uh, it was one of my favorite— I mean, you know, I was remembering. 'Cause I was looking at, like, when this movie was released in the states. And it was after I remember seeing it, 'cause I remember watching this in high school. But I absolutely bought an illegal subtitled copy at an anime convention in, like, 2002, 2003 I think is when I first had it, first saw it? I was definitely still in high school. So, it's got— it now has an official release.

**Sydnee:** Now—

**Taylor:** Questionable dub. You know, I'm not anti-dub, but this dub is interesting. [laughs quietly]

**Sydnee:** Okay. That's what I was gonna say.

**Raleigh:** It is an interesting dub.

**Sydnee:** What did you— did you— you probably watched it on the same thing I did. What was it?



**Taylor:** Uh, I watched it free with ads on... Hulu?

**Sydnee:** Free— free—

**Taylor:** Prime. Prime had it free with ads.

**Raleigh:** That's where I watched it, yeah.

**Sydnee:** Justin— Justin is yelling the name of the streaming service from the— what is it?

**Raleigh:** Was it Vu— Vudu?

**Taylor:** Free— Freevee?

**Sydnee:** Freevee?

**Raleigh:** Freevee?

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Freevee.

**Raleigh:** Yoohoo. Vubu.

**Sydnee:** Freevee.

**Taylor:** I have the DVD of it. [through laughter] Like, the actual legal release DVD, so.

**Sydnee:** [distantly] Freevee?

**Justin:** [unintelligible]

**Sydnee:** Freevee. Justin just interrupted this recording to stick his head in the room—

**Taylor:** [simultaneously] I said Freevee, like... a minute ago.

**Rileigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Oh.

**Taylor:** But you're gonna keep screaming that. Alright. [laughs quietly]

**Sydnee:** No, I'm sorry. Justin was yelling it from the other room and I couldn't hear him, and I didn't know what's happening. Um, yeah. We all watched the—

**Rileigh:** I watched it on Prime, also.

**Sydnee:** Okay.

**Taylor:** Yeah. It's not, like— like, dubs— I mean, some dubs are really good. I think some dubs are on par with the original. This one, maybe not.

**Sydnee:** No, this was not. I— watching it, I was thinking, "I'm not finding this as intense for some reason," and I think it's because the dub is not... the best.

**Taylor:** It's not the best, and also the translation isn't the same. Like, the subtitles are accurate, are more accurate to the dialogue than what the dub is saying. So, the dub is saying one thing and then the subtitles are translated accurately, which is— it's an interesting move. I don't know. But whatever, it's fine. It was free.

**Rileigh:** Does that happen? Because, like, I've noticed a few times that when I've watched something that I need translated, I always have subtitles on anyways, and then if it's dubbed there's usually, like, some differences. Is it usually that subtitles are more accurate?

**Taylor:** Yes, because the subtitles are there for simply the subtitled version, so you're listening to the original language, the subtitles are there. They're usually more accurate. And with the dub, there's a lot more localization that tries to happen to make things sound natural. Which sometimes works, but in the case of this it didn't. You know, you try to throw in, like, colloquial phrases. When the dub is using a— like, you can translate a colloquial phrase in the Japanese language to just a subtitle. But then if you try to throw it back, 'cause this character speaks in slang or whatever, you have to put English slang in their mouth, and then it gets lost in translation.

**Rileigh:** Sure.

**Sydnee:** Well, and some if it just— it was just sort of, like, the— the acting of the dub was a little, like... I mean, I felt like there were moments— well, okay. So, first you should share the plot of this, Tey, if anyone is unfamiliar.

**Taylor:** It's— it's *The Hunger Games* before there were *Hunger Games*. The plot is basically, um, in response to the sort of civil unrest and, I don't know what, delinquency that's running rampant in the Japanese youth, the government in— in... imparts this BR act, which is meant to sort of get the kids in line. And part of that is that one school— or one class every year is selected to go to this island and battle to the death, and only one child is allowed to survive, so they have to kill each other. They're given weapons, randomly selected weapons, and they have to fight against each other, and the one kid that kills everybody else is allowed to live.

And how this is supposed to make kids behave, I'm not sure. But that's the premise. And the story is just following this class, class B, that is selected to go this island and murder each other.

**Sydnee:** The sense I get is that what— like, from the speech that the teacher gives who's sort of running the whole thing, is that, like, because you think you can do whatever you want and you don't have to listen to adults, we are doing this to show you that ultimately, adults control you. Like, we have control over your life. And whether you're good or bad, we get to decide what happens to you. Because since it is sort of random, there are going to be people in the class who maybe were behaving well, and weren't, like, bad kids or whatever.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Rileigh:** I think if anything it would make me behave worse, because I'd want to practice if I got taken to the island. I'd wanna, you know, at least have some sort of fighting, defense skills.

**Taylor:** Just murdering people for sport, just to prepare for murder island.

**Rileigh:** Not the— not the murdering. But just, like, maybe my friends and I would have some— some practice fights, so I'd know how to defend myself against murder, you know? Like, I might get in trouble just so I— yeah. Like a little Fight Club.

**Sydnee:** Just some playful stabbing.

**Raleigh:** That we never talk about. Yeah, just a little.

**Taylor:** I should note that it is— there is a novel that came out before the movie, that came out in '99, by Koushun Takami. So perhaps that has a bit more— I would imagine it probably goes a little bit more in the plot. I will say, this is very— one thing I like about this movie is its very tidy storytelling. Like, it gives you just enough to understand what you need to understand, and it doesn't belabor anything. So, you know, yeah. I think—

**Raleigh:** That's true.

**Taylor:** It makes sense. There's some reason, this is gonna keep 'em in line. You know, maybe if you're particularly a bad class, your— your former teacher can get you to the front of the lottery.

[pause]

**Sydnee:** They were a particularly rough class, I guess.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Um...

**Raleigh:** Yeah. Um, there were some that I think maybe in, you know, off screen, maybe had been having a little fight club. 'Cause they were, like, ready.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Raleigh:** Like, *ready*. Like, you know in *The Hunger Games* where it's like the ones who, like, want to be in *The Hunger Games*, like, they're ready for it. Like, that's— I got that vibe from a few.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. It definitely— it's weird. When they— so, does *Hunger Games* ever— is it ever said, like, has the author ever said, like, "Yes, of course I was inspired by *Battle Royale*"?

[pause]

**Raleigh:** I don't know, actually.

**Sydnee:** I feel like— I feel— as I was— I had forgotten how— I don't know. I mean, I guess... it's just so— like, it's clearly of the same vein.

**Taylor:** Well, and it—I mean, it is. And it's to the point that it—I mean, outside of *Hunger Games*, there's sort of a genre of this type of media that's out there that I think comes from *Battle Royale*. I mean, like, *Squid Games* is definitely partially aware of *Battle Royale*.

**Sydnee:** Justin said the same thing. He said— and in video games. He said, um, *Fortnite*.

**Taylor:** [laughs quietly]

**Sydnee:** Yeah. He said has— I mean, that has to in part be inspired *Battle Royale*. And, I don't know. I have remained ignorant of— I know that *Fortnite* is a video game. I recognize some imagery as, like, that is a thing from *Fortnite*. I don't know anything about the game. I don't know what it is. I don't know what your goals or objectives are. I don't know what you do in the game.

**Raleigh:** Well, it is— it is a battle— like, a battle royale in the sense that one person is left standing.

**Sydnee:** Well, there you go.

**Raleigh:** Like, a bunch of people enter. You want everyone to die except for one person. I did look up, by the way, 'cause I was curious to see if Suzanne Collins had said this was inspired— or this inspired *Hunger Games*. And apparently she has said repeatedly, it did not inspire *the Hunger Games*. But Quentin Tarantino, on the other hand, has been very vocal about how much he thinks *The Hunger Games* quote-unquote "ripped off" *Battle Royale*.

**Sydnee:** Hmm!

**Taylor:** Yeah, Quentin Tarantino is a big fan of this movie. He said it was the one movie that he wishes he had made that he didn't.

**Sydnee:** Wow.

**Rileigh:** Wow.

**Taylor:** Which honestly, it makes sense.

**Sydnee:** That's it? That is the— hold on.

**Taylor:** Okay, but to be fair—

**Sydnee:** Hold on, Quentin!

**Taylor:** This— he made this statement around the time *Battle Royale* was very popular, so maybe there have been other movies since then. But...

**Sydnee:** That's just a— that's a very— that's a wild thing to say. Like, there is only o— of all the— I mean, there's lots of great—

**Taylor:** *Casablanca*? No. *Battle Royale*? Yes. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Yeah! [laughs] I mean, like, there are a million different, like, movies, books, TV shows, works of art that I wish I could say, like, "[gruff voice] Yeah, I made that." [laughs] You know? I mean, like, look at David. Like, I wish I had... chiseled that.

**Taylor:** Okay. Alright. But... I think in the sense of, like, it does look like a thing that Quentin Tarantino could have made. I think that's more what it is.

**Sydnee:** Okay.

**Taylor:** That he didn't make it is a little surprising, 'cause it has very much— he's clearly very inspired by it. I mean, one of the actors that's in this then goes on to be in *Kill Bill*, and it's clear that he was just like, "You. [laughs quietly] Be in my movie now."

**Rileigh:** I didn't realize that.

**Sydnee:** I didn't realize that, either.

**Taylor:** The, uh— I mean, *Kill Bill*, she's what? Her name is Gogo? You know the character I'm talking about.

**Rileigh:** Oh, okay.

**Sydnee:** Oh, okay, yeah.

**Taylor:** Yeah, she's in both. Um...

**Sydnee:** Hmm.

**Taylor:** But yeah. I mean, the cultural impact— it was referenced in other horror movies. *Shaun of the Dead* references it. Like, it— it was such a big— when it came out, like, it was a big deal. On— I don't know what. Like, nerdy... horror fan message boards. Like, "You gotta see this movie."

Like, I remember seeking it out at a fan sub booth at... Otacon? It had to have been, like, 20... 0... 2. I think. Or 2003. But, like, this was the one goal I had was to get a copy of *Battle Royale*.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. You were the reason that I have seen it before. But I think we watched it forever ago, and I had not seen it since. Um, I was worried. I really thought all of the kids killing each other and the kids dying would, um, be too much for me. But I'll tell you, the— the dub... [through laughter] sort of softened it.

**Taylor:** That's fair.

**Sydnee:** Becau— well, it's just, people don't sound— people sound, like, mildly annoyed by the killing sometimes. Like, at times where you imagine they probably, if you could hear the original, people are very alarmed. Like when they first find out the premise. Like, "We're gonna put you on an island and you have to murder each other."

Somebody's like, "[casually] What are you talking about? Like, what? Nuh-uh." Like, I don't know! Like, that's not the exact— You know what I mean. I felt, like, a lack of alarm. Like, when I imagine if I could understand, you know, the original Japanese, it probably was very alarmed.

**Taylor:** I think that that definitely takes away from it. I mean, 'cause the original voice acting is so powerful. I mean, the acting is so powerful. I do think, also— 'cause I was worried about that, too. I'm like, "Oh, I picked this movie. Like, it is

very violent." And I remember it being very violent, but I don't remember being as disturbed by this violence as in some. And I think it's because— and honestly it is kind of the same thing. Like, Tarantino also has a lot of ultraviolence. But there's a level of absurdity to it that you kind of can't— it is bordering on, like, cartoonish sometimes. And even in how it's depicted, like, that is not how...

I feel like at this point we should say, like, a bit of a trigger warning. Like, this is a violent movie. If you're upset by things like that, don't watch. Maybe don't listen to the rest of this show.

Uh, little break so you can leave if you want to leave.

Even the way the gore is presented is— it's very— like, the blood is just bright red, and you just see blood spraying, and that's kind of it. Like, it is not... concerned with being realistic depictions of slaughter. It's kind of just a lot of bright red blood, and that's it. So I think that there is that little bit of, like, removal from if this was a real... it's like hyper-reality.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. I agree.

**Rileigh:** To me it had the same campy edge that, like, *Scream* has. Like, the original *Scream*. Where it's just like— 'cause I had never seen this before. I will be honest, I had never even heard of this movie before. I was not aware it existed. Um, and I'm very glad we watched it, 'cause I really enjoyed it. But that's why I enjoyed *Scream*, is because it's, like, violence, but without feeling like you're watching violence. Um, this felt very similar. Like, I could watch this story without being distracted by, like, absurd amounts of gore or blood or violence or something.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. It had that same effect that, like, *John Wick* has on me. Where after a while, like, it's just like, how many people did he just kill in that room? Like, how many people did he take on single handedly and defeat? Like, it becomes so ridiculous after a while that, like, it's not— it doesn't make me feel sad. Like, you know what I mean?

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** It's more about the plot.

**Rileigh:** You're right. *Kill Bill* does have a similar vibe.



**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Raleigh:** Now that I think about it.

**Taylor:** Like the neck cut where there's a moment, and then it's just like, choo! Spray. Like, I— Sydnee, as a doctor, does that happen?

**Sydnee:** Not like tha— well, I mean, okay. I've never seen anybody, you know, do that in real life. But no, it wouldn't be quite like that.

**Taylor:** That— that— that's— I don't imagine the human body works like that. It's a good look.

**Raleigh:** I like to believe that's how it would look. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** I've seen— blood doesn't— it doesn't, uh— like, I haven't seen it spray like that. Like, it spurts, would be a better... you know. If it's, like, from an—if it's an arterial bleed you're gonna get a spurt with each beat of the heart. But, like—

**Taylor:** But we don't mist.

**Sydnee:** No.

**Taylor:** [through laughter] Not like a—

**Sydnee:** No. It's not a mist. It is definitely not a mist. That is not... [laughs quietly] that is not a factual depiction. Um, let's talk more about the intricacies of the plot itself, beyond the blood spraying or spurting or misting. Um, but before we do that...

**Raleigh:** Let's check the group message.

**Sydnee:** So, I like to listen to podcasts, in addition to, you know... making them. And music, and all kinds of things with my ears. Um, and I love a good pair of earbuds that work well and won't fall out of my ears. That's important, um, because I'm busy. I'm on the go. I can't sit in one place and listen to stuff in a

speaker. I need it in my ears on the go. And Raycon wireless earbuds are my go-to choice.

Raycon's everyday earbuds look, feel, and sound better than ever. They've got these optimized gel tips so that they stay in your ears. They fit well, they're not gonna fall out. That's one of the biggest problems for me. That happened with another not-Raycon pair of earbuds long ago on an airplane. One popped out of my ear, and that was it for the rest of the flight. I had to wait until everybody was off so I could dig around under the seats to try to find it, and that's a pain. Um, but that won't happen with Raycon's earbuds. They'll stay right in there. They're not gonna budge, trust me.

Raycons give you eight hours of playtime and a 32-hour battery life, and they start at about half the price of other premium audio brands. So you're getting a great deal on a great pair of earbuds, that are also going to stay put. Teylor, if our listeners want to check out Raycon earbuds, what should they do?

**Teylor:** Well, they should go to [buyraycon.com/buffering](https://buyraycon.com/buffering) today, and use your promo code "buffering" to get 15% off your Raycon order. That's [buyraycon.com/buffering](https://buyraycon.com/buffering), and code "buffering" to score 15% off. Once again, [buyraycon.com/buffering](https://buyraycon.com/buffering), code "buffering."

**Sydnee:** So, um... I also thought— one of the things, getting into the plot itself, I thought it was interesting. So, we know how... have we talked about *Hunger Games* on the show before? I feel like we have.

**Teylor:** Did you— have we not?

**Raleigh:** We must have. We must have.

**Sydnee:** I feel like we must have.

**Raleigh:** I actually feel like at some point we've gone into it enough that we've talked about more than just the first one. I feel like then we started talking about the second one, didn't we?

**Sydnee:** I agree.

**Teylor:** I feel like that's why I watched them all at some point was because you brought it to the table.

**Raleigh:** There's no way. I was too into that book series and movie series when I was young. There's no way I haven't brought it.

**Sydnee:** I think it's interesting that— and, I mean, I guess if we haven't I'm spoiling *Hunger Games* as well in this episode— um, that they both end with, like, a couple surviving.

**Taylor:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** I think it's—

**Raleigh:** And some— some trickery.

**Sydnee:** And some trickery. [laughs quietly]

**Taylor:** That is true.

**Raleigh:** Some mis... mischievous behavior.

**Taylor:** I do think— I mean, I think one of the I would say stronger things about *Battle Royale* over *Hunger Games* is that it gives real screen time to the interpersonal relationships of the kids. And now, granted, they don't know that they're going into a *Battle Royale*, whereas the *Hunger Game* candidates do. But there's a lot that just is— it's very tidy storytelling, where you get the reason that these characters feel the way they do, the stuff that might've happened in their past that caused them to act that way. You know? And I mean, we're also— it's all teenagers. And I like that, like, this— this is that age where, you know, you can be in love with somebody, and you have never spoken to them before, or have very strong feelings about other people. Like, you know, "You're my best friend. You'll never betray me."

And it plays with those dynamics, but it doesn't really belittle them. It doesn't really treat them as not important.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. I know what you're saying. They do take all that very seriously. Um, which I think is nice. I think, you know, it's nice to see that with teenagers, who are usually sort of, like, that's— especially in our culture, like, everything that they're into we kind of disregard as, like, well, that's not very important. It's just a teen thing. Um, but it also makes it sadder. [laughs quietly]

**Taylor:** Yeah. Oh, yeah. It's brutal.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm. I like— there are two moments I feel like in this movie where, um, kids— in both cases it's, um, young women murder someone, a man, who is attacking them. [laughs quietly] That I feel like are, like— I don't know. I feel like they're little, like, feminist moments in there. Like, there's the one guy who gets sort of stabbed in the crotch. [laughs quietly]

[pause]

**Taylor:** Uh—

**Sydnee:** Because he is threatening to sexually assault her.

**Taylor:** That was, uh— Chigusa did that, right? The girl that runs.

**Sydnee:** Yes.

**Taylor:** That's— and I'll ask you all later— but, like, that's the character that I felt like, "What would I do?" You know when you watch a movie like that, "What would I do if I was in that situation?"

That's what I'd do. Just find someplace to hide and get my daily run in, [through laughter] and just be ready to run from people. You come to me I'll kill you, but I'm not gonna kill anybody if you don't come to me. [laughs quietly]

**Raleigh:** Honestly, I had a very similar thought. Of just, like, that's a pretty good tactic, actually. Just staying out of people's way, knowing you can do some damage if needed, but you're not gonna seek it out. I agree.

**Sydnee:** The problem is that if more than one person decides on that, both of you— that's the other element to the plot. You're wearing a collar that can explode and kill you if it's activated. And, like, they can do that because you're either in a danger zone, or if more than one person is still alive on the end of day three. So they have that sort of failsafe, so that there's no way you can, you know, get out of it.

**Raleigh:** The time limit is an interesting addition, because obviously I was viewing it through the lens of only having seen *Hunger Games*. So even though

this obviously came first, and probably did influence *Hunger Games*, in my mind I was looking at differences between this and *Hunger Games*. And *Hunger Games* obviously doesn't have that. They kind of, like, try to force it if it goes on too long, but there's no, like, set amount of days. And it almost makes it feel more exciting to watch when you know there is that limit, because instead of it just being about making these kids, you know, kill each other, it's like, oh, there's this whole other outside influence that's not just, like, little magic fires they can set, like in *The Hunger Games*. It's, like, always there, at all times, and adds a sense of urgency. That makes it, I think, more exciting to watch. It's hard to kind of fall out of it.

**Sydnee:** And it really underlines, like, the hopelessness they must feel at first. 'Cause it's like, there is no way out of this unless you're willing to either kill other people, or hopefully wait it out long enough so that everyone else kills everyone else— you know?

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** Well, and I mean, it is... I don't know how to... it's interesting commentary on, like, just— it's sort of a microcosm of what would people do, different types of people do in a situation like this. I think the sad thing is that there were not just one, there were two ways that anyone that could've survived and been organized enough could've gotten out of this. Because both the— what, Kitano? So there are two, like, exchange students that are brought in.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Taylor:** I know. Just to be cool and... they— they—

**Raleigh:** I was wondering if that was—[laughs]

**Taylor:** Well, they've survived prior... games, I guess is the idea. Um, and one is sort of there to seek justice. He was forced to— he was the last one alive with his girlfriend, and one of them had to die. And then the other one is just there because he likes killing people, I guess. That— that's his character.

**Sydnee:** Yeah, that's the implication. Yeah.

**Taylor:** Yeah. But, uh— but there are— the one that came back sort of to— who had been forced to face off against his girlfriend sort of wants revenge. And he knows how to deactivate the necklaces, so he came in with that knowledge. And

then there's also, what? Minami I think was the character's name, or Mimura. Minami, yeah. Who... who hacks into the system. I like that the time that this took place in, too, is that the kids were kind of smarter than the adults as far as, like, how computers work. So he can hack into the system, and could've shut it all down and probably also gotten everybody off the island. Like, there were two ways that if people had just organized and worked together that maybe lots of people could have survived. Which I think is a little sad. It's— you know, that they could've easily outsmarted the dumb adults that orchestrated this.

**Rileigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Well, and you have to imagine that's intentional commentary.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. Like, if you worked together, you guys could've beat us.

**Taylor:** You need to learn to play in our world! Oh, you know, you've gotta— only the strongest survive. It's like, actually no, it's the people that work well together who survive. [laughs] That's what it is.

**Rileigh:** I also thought it was interesting. I noticed, um, not in the movie but, like, the making and production of the movie, I noticed on Wikipedia it said that it wasn't allowed to be, like, widely distributed in the US for several years, and then it was, like, direct to DVD produced in the US. Is that right?

**Taylor:** Yeah, and it was banned in a couple countries for a while, too. Like, there was a lot. Um, I mean, it was even met with controversy when it was released in Japan. Which is— it's interesting now in retrospect, because I don't think it is anything more violent than a lot of movies that were concurrent with the time. I don't know if maybe it's the added layer of the social commentary.

**Sydnee:** Either that, or just that it's explicitly children killing each other, you know? Like, that— I mean, usually, like— there aren't a lot of movies that are prefaced with that, or at least there weren't at that time. If, you know, if teens are getting killed, it's by some sort of malevolent, you know, homicidal slasher, kind of. You know, that thing. It wouldn't be other kids killing each other.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Rileigh:** That was just interesting to me, because I figured, uh, how many years was it before it was released here? Do you know? Like, actually released.

**Taylor:** I wanna say, um...

**Rileigh:** I figured it was at least a couple.

**Taylor:** 20... 2010 was when it got a direct to video release.

[pause]

**Rileigh:** 2010?

**Taylor:** Um... I think that might be right.

**Rileigh:** Wow.

**Taylor:** I thought it was even later than that, honestly. But, yes.

**Rileigh:** Wow. So, that's interesting, then. Because we didn't— not we. But, like, as a country we were like, "No, we don't want that here," for a decade. And then... I think in 2008 was when *The Hunger Games* book came out. And all of a sudden we were like, "Oh, well, if, you know, an American woman writes it and makes it more of, like, a... euro-centric love story, then that's okay."

That's interesting that we changed our minds about literally the same exact story, and then it was okay to have *Battle Royale* released here. 'Cause I'm pretty sure 2008 was when the book *Hunger Games* came out, and then the movie in 2012? 2013, maybe?

**Sydnee:** That's interesting.

**Rileigh:** Right around the same time.

**Taylor:** Yeah. Yeah, 'cause it looks like it— it was... it was never given a theatrical release in America. It was test screened in the early 2000's, but that was right around Columbine, and then it was...

**Rileigh:** Oh...

**Sydnee:** Hmm.

**Taylor:** ... delayed.

**Raleigh:** Oh, I didn't even think about that.

**Sydnee:** That makes sense.

**Taylor:** I mean, I was thinking about that in terms— before I watched it, I kind of felt bad because I was like, "Oh, I forget how much gun violence is in this."

And it's interesting how the— I mean, the symbolic— any piece of media you create, write, you're both thinking of the story you're telling and the symbols you're employing, and how guns have— there's such a gap in their meaning between some cultures and what they mean here in America. And I think that's something, too, that's in play here. I mean, this was before a lot of... well, not before a lot of the gun violence in America. Let's be real. But the proliferation in recent years. And how even more departed that symbol has become in our country. It's just like— it's not— I mean, I remember thinking the character Kiriyama, who's the other transfer student, the kid with the roughly red hair. I thought he was the coolest character. Like, I loved that character. And I feel bad that I still kind of do. Like, he doesn't have a single word of dialogue. He's just, like, a force of nature.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** But now I kind of question my intrigue of that character as a young person. Because it's hard to have that same admiration and, like, "Oh, wow. He's so cool." Like, no. He's just a problem. He's a problem that we— that is real.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Raleigh:** Yeah. That is interesting that you bring that up, 'cause I guess I hadn't really thought that... thought about the fact that there aren't— there aren't guns in *The Hunger Games*, I guess. Like, they have bows and arrows and spears and stuff, but I don't believe even, like, the... well, maybe the, like, police officers, basically. They do. But not the kids. Um, that is interesting you bring that up. I hadn't thought about that cultural moment of this being here in 2000.

**Sydnee:** That— yeah.



**Rileigh:** 'Cause obviously that was when I was born, so I didn't have a lot of cultural awareness, uh, of the times.

**Taylor:** [laughs] It's okay.

**Rileigh:** At this moment. Then I developed a cultural awareness and I was like, "Oh, guns are just everywhere! Woohoo, it's okay." [laughs]

**Sydnee:** You know, too, I will say, like, something that *The Hunger Games* did that maybe made it more palatable for people is that it was set in this sort of dystopian future. And so as part of that, there was weirdness about, like, the way people looked, the way they dressed. There were all these technological things that were weird and advanced, and stuff we don't have now, which removed it even more.

This— *Battle Royale* is very gritty and realistic, in the depiction of, like— you know, these are the weapons that existed. You know what I mean? Like, it looks like it's just happening now. Yes, obviously it's dystopian, but it doesn't look futuristic in any way.

**Taylor:** And I feel like that's sort of a *Catch-22* if you're purpose in writing fiction is you want it separate enough that people will follow it, will pay attention to it, and won't be repulsed by it. But you don't want it so distant, so removed, that they can be like, "Oh, that was a nice story. That'll never happen here," [laughs] 'cause it's a little too close to home. It's like, no, that's awful, that's terrible. Like, well, yeah. That's happening. It's happening, in our country.

**Rileigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Rileigh:** That's why I think— I don't know if this is why. Probably not why. Probably just, you know, money that Suzanne Collins decided to write the prequel, you know, two years ago, for the entire trilogy.

Um, but I think the generation of people reading it when it first came out, a lot of them were my age, and we read it like, 'Oh, this is so distant and removed. They have all this cool technology, and look at the outfits they're wearing, and oh, this is a nice love story. And then we got older and reread it and we were like, "Oh,

wait. This is— this is maybe social commentary. They just— we put it in the future to tell ourselves that it's not. It's not about right now. But it is.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Raleigh:** Um, so basically they're both, uh... I don't want to say they're both saying the same thing, 'cause they're different in a lot of ways. But Battle Royal was just okay being, like, "We don't need to hide this and pretend like it, you know, isn't talking about the current world." [laughs quietly]

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm. No, and I think that is kind of interesting, because, um, you can directly apply it to society, then when it came out, and now. Um, so maybe that did make people more uncomfortable with the idea. And especially like you pointed out, like, the problem, as insurmountable as it seemed, if they had worked together from the beginning, nobody had to die.

**Taylor:** Yeah. Kitano came on the island knowing how to deactivate the necklaces.

**Sydnee:** Uh-huh.

**Taylor:** Minami could've shut them down so nobody could've been tracked. Like, everybody could've survived.

**Raleigh:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** And I think that also kind of separates from *the Hunger Games*. Because there's a level of control in *the Hunger Games* where you kind of— no one's gonna get off of there without, I mean, basically like a full-scale attack, like when they actually do break into the games in the third book or whatever. Um, like, that— this is— this seemed sur— more escapable. Than it— you know, than it ultimately was.

**Sydnee:** And that's a really powerful— like, if you really take that message and extrapolate it out, like, if the people in power who are desperate to maintain their power, even if they're not the best, the smartest, the strongest, but they are desperate to maintain their power, are constantly telling everybody else that they have to fight each other to survive, that each other are the enemies, then they're constantly pointing their anger and their violence at each other instead of working together to overthrow the power that is oppressing them.

**Rileigh:** Hm.

**Sydnee:** Which is, I would say, relevant.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Rileigh:** It did feel very relevant to the times. Having watched it for the first time, you know, in 2022, it didn't feel like I was watching something that was super out of date. Some of the technology stuff obviously is, like, a little. [laughs]

**Taylor:** Sure. Like the little two-bit hacking. I love that, like—

**Rileigh:** [laughs] Yeah.

**Taylor:** —he's hacking and he's, like, [through laughter] wiping sweat from his forehead 'cause he's hacking so hard!

**Rileigh:** I miss when that's what hacking was in movies.

**Sydnee:** I know.

**Rileigh:** I was aware for a brief period of time when that's still what we thought it was.

**Taylor:** Just typing really hard.

**Rileigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** I miss that, too. I miss the old hacking days. I don't know— you know what, though? I don't actually know if hacking ever was like that. It probably wasn't, right?

**Taylor:** No. You're usually— you— you—

**Rileigh:** I just don't think anyone understood it. [laughs]

**Taylor:** I think you have to run a program, and you have to let it kind of do its thing for a while, and then you come back and you do something else. But there's

a lot of waiting, from what I understand, in actual hackings. There's a lot of, like, just seeing if something works.

**Sydnee:** Not frantic typing.

**Taylor:** No. Not, like... somehow rendering an 8-bit sword to cut through a firewall. [laughs]

**Rileigh:** Um, I will say, thank you for showing us, or bringing us this, because I had never seen it. And this is exactly the kind of, like, spooky movie I like watching, 'cause it's more of a thriller, I guess, than like a horror movie, which I find more enjoyable because I don't necessarily have, like, nightmares about scary clowns or whatever in it. It's more so just, like, keeps you— keeps you on the edge of your seat and kind of, like, heart-racing while you're watching it. And then it doesn't, you know... it might give you some, like, social nightmares, but not, you know, like, scary creatures that are gonna come get you. So I really enjoyed it.

**Taylor:** You might look around your class the next day and be like, "Okay. But if... who'd win?" [laughs]

**Rileigh:** Exactly. I did—

**Sydnee:** [simultaneously] Who could I take?

**Rileigh:** I did kind of sit in my, like, 150-person sized lecture hall this morning like, "Hmm."

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Rileigh:** "There are a lot of us here. [through laughter] How would— how would that turn out?"

**Sydnee:** I hope I wouldn't get the pot lid.

[all laugh quietly]

**Rileigh:** Mm-hmm. That did feel very unfair.

**Taylor:** Pot lid and binoculars. That was very cute.

**Rileigh:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** I think that's kind of unfair. At least, like— I mean, if you're gonna say you each get a weapon... [laughs quietly] binoculars are not a weapon.

**Taylor:** Isn't that how life is, though? We're all expected to, you know, lift yourself up by your bootstraps, but some of us aren't even given bootstraps. We're given pot lids.

**Sydnee:** Some of us get a pot lid, and some of us get, I guess, a machine gun.

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Rileigh:** I guess.

**Taylor:** Society.

**Sydnee:** [laughs] Um, yeah. I appreciated you mentioning it, Tey. 'Cause I had— I literally— I don't know if I've seen it since way back when, so I enjoyed rewatching it.

**Taylor:** Well, thank you both for giving it a try. I was worried, with all the violence, but I'm glad you enjoyed the watch.

**Rileigh:** Oh yeah.

**Sydnee:** No, it— yeah, and I— we'll— we'll make sure and mention. I was about to say, this movie isn't for you if that kind of stuff is not your— you know, is not something you want to see. We should put that in the description of the episode, though, not just say it at the end of the episode, 'cause that is... entirely unhelpful.

**Rileigh:** Too late. I can do that.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. Well, what is next, Rileigh?

**Rileigh:** So, it is still spooky season, and the movie I want us to talk about just came out. And it's not necessarily traditionally spooky, but it is, because it's about

teenage girls, which I find teenage girls to be scary enough on their own. Um, and I want to talk about *Do Revenge*.

**Sydnee:** Alright. I haven't watched that yet, so I will have to.

**Rileigh:** I just think it's too perfect for us to talk about to not talk about it as soon as possible, and this is my first chance to bring something since it's been available, and also I've seen it twice now and I just really want to talk about it.

**Sydnee:** Alright. Sounds good.

**Rileigh:** It's on Netflix.

**Sydnee:** Um, thank you both. Teylor, thank you.

**Teylor:** Thank you.

**Sydnee:** Listeners, there is a thing called Freevee... [laughs quietly] or Prime.

**Rileigh:** Or Prime.

**Sydnee:** And Freevee on Prime. I don't know. Anyway, that is where we found *Battle Royale*, and it was great. Um... uh, thank you to Maximum Fun. You can go to [MaximumFun.org](https://MaximumFun.org) and listen to lots of great shows that you would enjoy. You can tweet at us @stillbuff. You can email us at [stillbuffering@maximumfun.org](mailto:stillbuffering@maximumfun.org), and thank you to The Nouvellas for our theme song, "Baby You Change Your Mind."

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

**Sydnee:** I'm Sydnee McElroy.

**Teylor:** And I'm Teylor Smirl.

**Rileigh:** I am still buffering...

**Sydnee and Teylor:** And I... am... too.

[theme music plays]

**Sydnee:** I think I'd want the poison.

**Taylor:** I was gonna ask, what was that... potassium cyanide?

**Sydnee:** Cyanide, mm-hmm.

**Raleigh:** Hmm.

**Taylor:** Does it really work that fast?

**Sydnee:** It's pretty quick. I don't know if that fast, but it is pretty quick.

**Raleigh:** Why are you asking, Tey?

**Sydnee:** Yeah?

**Taylor:** Just curious. Just curious!

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** I just want the medical— uh, medical situation there.

**Raleigh:** Uh-huh.

**Sydnee:** Yeah, cyanide's a fast one.

**Taylor:** I like that the redhead guy got the fan, the paper fan, 'cause it reminds me of Fushigi Yugi.

**Sydnee:** Yeah, it does!

[all laugh]

[music plays]

**Griffin:** And now, a live reading from Rachel's poetry corner.

**Rachel:** Elephants, theremins, Clifton. Neopets, pore strips, Jepson. Heinz smell, jelly beans, goalie goals. Skittles, squirrels, and the mole. Celery, chopsticks,

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[music and ad end]

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