

Still Buffering 347: Batman the Animated Series (1992)

Published February 12, 2023

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

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Taylor: And I'm Teylor Smirl.

Sydnee: So, everyone ready for Valentine's Day? [laughs]

Taylor: Mmm...

Sydnee: That's... nothing? No?

Rileigh: No.

Sydnee: No one?

Taylor: I feel like I... I don't—I mean, I'm glad that it seems... It's nice. People get candy. That's good. [laughs]

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: I—

Taylor: That was—go ahead.

Sydnee: Well, I was gonna say I feel the same way, honestly. I don't—Justin and I were talking about last night, why can't we just do another Halloween?

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: In February? You know? Like it's a long time since Halloween until Halloween so why can't we just like... This is another Halloween that we do.

Taylor: Yeah...

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: That one's more fun.

Taylor: That's true. I feel like I've done my years of like anti-Valentine's Day where like you know, whatever, Single Awareness Day, SAD.

And I'm just like... Now I'm just like, "It's fine." I'm glad people love each other and I'm glad they have a day to celebrate it. This day is not for me and that's okay. Not all dates are for me. [laughs]

Raleigh: That's about how I feel.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: I just don't—I mean honestly, from my perspective, it's a day now... At this point in my life it is a day where I stress about, "Did we get Valentines for the kids?" like to give to them.

And then, "Did we get all the Valentines they need to bring to their class and did we get the kind they wanted and did we get a treat to give to everybody in the class?"

And then also, "Did we make their Valentines box that they have to have for their classroom to collect all the Valentines in?"

These are the things that I worry about now in connection with Valentine's Day.

Taylor: That's fair. That's a whole other can of worms as far as kids getting Valentines and what Valentines do they get from who at school, that whole... I don't miss those stresses.

Raleigh: I—

Sydnee: Like going through the Valentines to pick the ones that you thought were the coolest to give to the kids that you liked the best?

Taylor: Yeah. Or who gets like your two big Valentines that you get in the box.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Rileigh: I do remember making those boxes though.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Rileigh: That was always a highlight for me.

Taylor: Mm.

Rileigh: Mostly because Mom would have a cool idea and would do like 90% of it and then would let me just like add some glitter or paint it pink or something.

Sydnee: I don't think I ever did the boxes. Like Charlie and Cooper have had to, but I have never had to do the boxes.

Rileigh: I did at least two or three times, I think.

Sydnee: It feels like to me, I was telling Justin last night, I think the problem from like, kids' stuff, like stuff I have to do 'cause I'm a parent, aside, it's...

Sometimes Charlie and Cooper will like try to make Justin and I kiss so that we can kiss and they can go, "Oooh!" Like sometimes they think that's funny.

And I feel like Valentine's Day is like that, but a holiday. It's like, "Now everybody show love for each other. Oooh! You love each other! Ooh." That's like the whole day and it's like, well, I mean...

Rileigh: [poor baby voice] [sarcastic] Oh is it so hard for you to be in a happy relationship on Valentine's Day, Syd?"

Taylor: [sarcastic] That is so rough!

Rileigh: [poor baby voice] [sarcastic] Oh, is it so hard for you?

Taylor: [sarcastic] Ugh, a yearly reminder...

Rileigh: [poor baby voice] [sarcastic] Everyone wants to see how happy you are. Mmm.

Taylor: [sarcastic] My thoughts are with you.

Sydnee: I just don't think it's a big deal! I've never thought it's a big deal! I just don't- I mean, I like chocolate.

Taylor: Wow.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Rileigh: [sarcastic] Then this must be so tough for you, Syd.

Taylor: [sarcastic] I will be thinking of you—

Sydnee: I'm not saying it's tough!

Taylor: ... going into the trenches of having a loving relationship this Valentine's Day.

Sydnee: [begrudging] Mm-hmm.

Rileigh: With children that—

Taylor: While I sit alone with my cat. [laughs]

Rileigh: With children that want to see their parents love each other.

Taylor: Yes. [laughs]

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Raleigh: [sarcastic] Really hard.

Sydnee: They don't want to see us love each other, they wanna see us kiss so they can go, "Oooh!"

Raleigh: To be fair, I think that's just a little kid thing 'cause there's a whole episode of *Bluey* about that.

Sydnee: That's where they got it.

Raleigh: Oh, okay.

Taylor: Mm.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: It's called, "Smoochy Kiss."

Sydnee: They want to see romance. Yeah.

Raleigh: Which by the way guys, *Bluey* is blowin' up on TikTok now.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: I don't know if you're aware, but everyone else that's in my generation has finally caught on to how good that show is.

Sydnee: I mean it's a good show. I don't know if I would watch it without Charlie and Cooper, but it is very good.

Taylor: Yeah that's... I don't... I think it was Mom that was encouraging me to do that the other day, was telling me in detail about a *Bluey* episode and was like, "Oh, I'm sorry, have you seen this one?"

And I said, "No, of course I haven't."

Raleigh: [laughs]

Taylor: [laughs] "I'm an adult. I don't have children. Why would I?"

Sydnee: Um, the—

Raleigh: Well, I enjoy it...

Sydnee: The only one I ever recommend to just like adults to watch on their own is "Flat Pack."

Raleigh: Oh, it just makes you cry.

Sydnee: It's just... But it's really... It's a beautiful episode about growing up and also about evolution, [laughs], all in one episode. That's like... What are the...? *Bluey* episodes are like seven minutes? Eleven minutes?

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Something like that.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: And somehow they manage to like chart the entire history of the evolution of our species as well as the entire life course of a human.

Taylor: It's a lot for...

Raleigh: See, I just like the one where the mom's trying to teach Bluey about like, what it means to lose someone, and the whole time the mom is standing there holding Bingo over the bush so she can have a bush wee.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: 'Cause that's a moment that Cooper and I shared together, where I let her take a bush wee.

Sydnee: Mm.

Raleigh: And that feels very special to me and also something that I can bring back up when she's a teenager and embarrass her. [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] Well, I don't know. She may be beyond embarrassment, Cooper.

Raleigh: Oh. That's... that's fair.

Sydnee: She's her own thing. Her birthday is the day after Valentine's Day. Or no, the day before. Excuse me. The day before Valentine's Day. [laughing] I know when her birthday is. And it is going to be *Addams Family* themed.

Taylor: That's amazing.

Sydnee: She was asking about like, how can we... She wanted to make it scary and bloody and she—like, all these different things.

And I'm like, "Well, first of all I don't think your friends, the other preschoolers, will enjoy that. [laughs] A bloody, scary, birthday party. [laughs] I don't know how they will react to that." Um...

Taylor: That sounds fine.

Sydnee: I was like, "Most kids don't like decapitation." Like...

Raleigh: Well, Cooper does.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: I mean, as like a hobby? Or as like a concept?

Sydnee: [laughs] She's always pretending to decapitate me these days. [laughs]

Taylor: Mm. Okay.

Sydnee: I don't know how to deal with that. But she has a... She has a conscience. I had a moment where I was like, "You feel bad about stuff, right?"

And then she got... [laughs] She got upset at me while I was washing her hair because I... She stopped looking up right in the middle of me dumping water on her head, you know? And so the water just went in her face and then she cried 'cause water got in her face. And then she turned around and she was holding a little baby bottle full of water that she was about to feed her doll and just doused me. [laughs]

Raleigh: [shocked laugh]

Sydnee: Just soaked me. Like, I'm sitting on the outside of the tub and she just like soaked my entire front. And I like just sat there staring at her like, "Did this really just happen?"

And she was like, "I'm sorry! I'm sorry! Like, I don't know why I did that!" [laughs]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: And then this morning again she was like, [baby voice] "Hey Mom. I'm really sorry about throwing all that water on you." [laughs]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: And it's like, "It's okay. I forgive you." So, she felt remorse!

Raleigh: Well, there you go.

Taylor: Was this... Was this a question mark, up until this event? You weren't... you weren't sure?

Sydnee: I mean she draws pictures of like people without heads a lot and she talked about like, decapitating me once and how would that work and what would happen.

And I didn't know how to say like, "Well, I mean honey, what do you mean what would happen? I... I would die. [laughs] I mean, like do we have to talk about death now? I'm not ready. I'm not ready for this!" [laughs]

Taylor: I mean as somebody that regularly draws bleeding, I also... I have... I have never murdered anybody, so I don't know.

That's... I might not be a shining example of anything beyond that, but I would not correlate the drawings to... [laughs]

Sydnee: Well, but ostensibly Tey, at your age, you know the difference between right and wrong. [laughs]

Taylor: Enh...

Sydnee: At four to five years old, you don't necessarily yet.

Taylor: Well, sure.

Raleigh: I do think it's funny, the many times I've watched Cooper like, I don't know, like push Charlie and say something mean or whatever.

And then just like Charlie of course is like, "How could you? I love you so much!"

And Cooper just stands there like looking around like, "I don't understand what I did. What just happened? Why is she upset?" [laughs]

Sydnee: Well, Charlie's the other extreme. Charlie like... Cooper'll barely touch her and Charlie will do like a fake fall and collapse on the ground.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Like, "Oh no! My leg! I can't move! She hurt me!" [laughs]

Raleigh: There have been many times where I've talked to Mom on the phone and heard in the background like, "She's trying to kill me! She almost killed me!"

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: Like, "No, Charlie. She's four."

Sydnee: [fake crying] "She's bullying me again!"

Taylor: Well...

Raleigh: Is it... Is it bullying if it's your sister?

Taylor: I mean—

Sydnee: We've had a lot of talks about the use of the word "bullying," because like—

Raleigh: Isn't that just what siblings do?

Sydnee: Well, Cooper will go in Charlie's room and start playing with one of her toys. Like, not take it from her, she'll just start playing with it.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: And I mean we have talks about asking to play with each other's stuff and like that kind of thing.

So like that is a concept that we value and that we try to reinforce, but I don't think it's bullying to go into your sister's room and start playing with a Barbie doll, you know what I mean? And Charlie will instantly say, "Look she's bullying me again!" And I'm like, "That's not... Okay. Okay. Hold on."

Raleigh: You need to write a definition and give it to her.

Sydnee: "This is not bullying. We can reinforce that she should ask first, I think that's fair. It's your thing, that's totally fine. But this is bullying."

Taylor: Yeah, it's not like she's taking her and hiding her in a laundry basket or cutting her hair off against her will or anything like that.

Sydnee: That was a long time ago.

Taylor: [laughs]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: I'm almost 40, I don't have to answer for those crimes anymore.

Taylor: [laughs]

Raleigh: [laughs] Speaking of crimes...

Sydnee: Hey!

Taylor: [sings Elfman Batman theme] *Batman: The Animated Series*, is what I have brought to the table this week.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: Yay.

Sydnee: That's a really great theme song that you're singing there, by the way.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Yeah, it's fantastic. The opening is just, gorgeous. I went... It's wild how old it is and like when I was watching, like you can see the dust in the animation 'cause it's all hand animation.

Like, it was '92 when it started, ran until '95. And I don't know, for me it's the... For me, just my preference, it's the definitive depiction of Batman.

Rileigh: Okay.

Sydnee: You know what was really interesting, Tey, like I remember this show. I remember watching it sometimes. So I mean I was familiar with it but I didn't really have any kind of connection to it personally, you know?

I was like, "Oh yeah. I remember that Batman show. That was pretty good." That was about it, though. And I was asking Justin like, "Do you remember this?"

And he was like, "Well, I mean obviously. Of course."

And he talked about how excited he was when like they found out it was coming out and somehow because of where his dad worked at the time they got like an early tape of one of the episodes or something to like watch and how he just thought it was the greatest thing.

He just loved it, and he loved it especially because it was something that was a cartoon, so like for kids is sort of implicit here. I mean, I'm not saying that's always true but like in his mind it's a cartoon so it's for kids.

But his dad really liked it, too, so it was like cool enough that adults liked it but also it's for kids. And it's funny 'cause he definitely had that connection with it as this like excellent cool amazing thing.

Especially as like an evolution of the character Batman, that I would I would guess is more similar to the connection you have with it.

Taylor: Oh yeah. Well you know obviously I was watching this when I was young, before I really got into the Batman comics, but I mean it's part of the reason I did.

And also as a comics fan there are a lot of storylines that they take from comics, especially in season one, a lot of the storylines really are just taken

right from a companion story or they have the same setup, maybe change a few details.

I just think it's amazing how well it operates, because it's not like, "Oh it's an adult cartoon."

Sydnee: Right.

Taylor: Like, you know, "It's a dark take on Batman." It's a very dark show but I don't think it's inappropriate for kids, you know. Appropriately aged kids but...

Sydnee: Sure.

Taylor: There's no blood. There is violence but it's cartoon violence.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Yeah, no I agree with you. I don't think it's... I think it was cool enough that adults would watch it, but it was not... Like you said, it wasn't adult content.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: It had... I mean it was... It's noir, and like it has noir elements and so I think that because the genre is a more complex, nuanced... I don't want to say... "Adult" has so many-

When you use the word "adult" to describe a piece of media, there's so many implications to that and that's not what I mean either.

I don't mean like, sex. [laughs] I feel like whenever you say something's "adult" people assume you mean either sex or blood, and like, well, I don't mean that. I mean complex themes.

Taylor: Well, I think that's... It's such a... We get a lot of those. And some, with mixed results, we get a lot of those type of shows now, where it's like "Here's an adult version of this or an adult version of that."

But it's like this is a very... Yeah, I mean this is a mature cartoon. I can watch it at my current age and find it engaging because it is good storytelling.

It's just minus any of the stuff that you know, would perhaps be disturbing to a very young person, which can be done. Without needing to have like gratuitous sex jokes and language and gross stuff.

Raleigh: I will say I had never seen this.

Taylor: Oh.

Sydney: Hmm.

Raleigh: Which I think is because probably it was on and over all before I existed.

A lot of the ones that we've talked about I feel like there was at least some overlap and that's why I caught glimpses, but I was... It was definitely past it's era when I was born.

So I had never seen it, but I guess it makes sense. I was thinking about like "Well I know who Batman is."

And I thought like, "I know like the recent, you know, live-action Batman movies. I've seen those and I know that's Batman."

But Batman's been around longer than that and he must have been around outside of comic books, because it wasn't just like a comic book audience it was like a more widespread audience or else I wouldn't have known who Batman was.

But I had never experienced where like the modern depiction, popular culture image, of Batman came from and I assume it's this cartoon. Like you were saying, Tey.

Sydnee: Yeah, I mean I think, Teylor, you can correct me, I feel like this is an area you're going to know a lot more about than me, but I feel like the original—not the original Batman—I'm not talking about campy Batman. I mean like Batman movie 1989.

Teylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Is, I mean, a similar- Like a darker Batman.

Teylor: Yeah, but I think it's still... I mean it keeps that balance of like it's dark, it's aesthetically dark.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Teylor: Its themes are dark but it's not... Like, there's a point where Batman became kind of a nihilist [laughs] in a lot of modern cartoons and movies and I kind of...

This sweet spot where it's like, it's dark, but Batman himself is still kind of a hopeful character.

Like I forgot this, going back and like watching it a bit more chronologically, especially in like the first episodes, which were apparently aired wildly out of order.

So if you like watch it on like HBO Max, where it is now, and watch the order they have it in it's completely different than the aired order.

Sydnee: Oh.

Rileigh: Oh, okay.

Teylor: Or the produced order. But anyway. Like from the very beginning there's a clear desire to show that Batman tries to save every villain he comes up against, you know? He tries to give them outs that aren't just, "Get thrown into Arkham," you know?

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Or like tries to help like Clayface find a cure, you know. Like shows up to deal with Selina Kyle on his own so the police don't have to get involved. And that's... I like that Batman a lot more than just like, [Batman voice] "Ugh, the world's a... the world is a vampire set to drain." [laughs]

Sydnee: Well... Yeah.

Taylor: Just the most emo, sad, sad, angry man.

Sydnee: Well because they really start to imply over time, especially like with his relationship with the joker, that they're more similar than they aren't.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: And like that they're both fundamentally messed up in a way that is... I mean, I feel like they kind of imply that is harmful, which is you know weird since Batman like, saves people.

I don't... But like they do get to that point with the evolution of, not on this show, but like with the evolution of the character Batman. Where like, he's kind of bad too.

But he doesn't hurt people but he's kind bad... You know what I mean?

Taylor: Yeah, well and that's what I think like... That, it goes against... Which I don't know, I feel like the conception of Batman... Well, maybe not like the very... Like, the conception of Batman is, "It's a guy that dresses as a bat and he's a detective."

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: Like that was it. That was a very silly concept. [laughs] But I think that whole like, he has experienced trauma, so he understands his rogues gallery in a very specific way, because they all... They're, for whatever reason, they're a bad guy usually it's based in trauma.

So he understands that, so he kind of walks in between like you know...

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: ... the law and the villains and can help them, because he understands them.

But yeah there is a point where I think a lot of the narratives pushed it over to like, "He's just another crazy person. He's just crazy in a way where he targets villains."

It's like, well that's a different Batman. Like, it's not wrong. If that's your favorite Batman, that's fine. It's not mine.

Sydnee: Yeah. It is a long way away from like, what I think this cartoon was trying to counteract, which is the Batman who carries shark repellent and [laughs]. The campy Batman with the blue costume. [laughs]

Taylor: Yeah. But it still does pay homage to that, like there's a scene where he fights the Jokered shark and it's very much a Batman versus a shark moment.

You know there's a great episode where they bring back, what is it? The Gray Ghost, where they have Adam West do the voice.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: That episode always brings a tear to my eye, 'cause it's just a very sweet homage to like you know, a Batman prior. The sort of heroes prior.

Sydnee: The Batman who got all the world leaders mixed up.

Taylor: Yeah, well that's a...

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: Well, I want to talk more about—there's some specific things I didn't know. As I was watching the show again and then reading some about it, there are some specific things I did not know about this series that I think probably you already knew, I thought were cool.

Taylor: Maybe.

Sydnee: But before we get into that...

Raleigh: Let's check the group message.

[ad break]

Sydnee: All right. Well, we've already mentioned Valentine's Day is coming up and that usually means candy, right?

Buy yourself some candy, you don't have to wait for somebody else to buy you candy, you can buy yourself some candy if you want. Just eat candy.

You can also celebrate candy with Native's new limited-edition candy shop collection.

So they've got some deliciously fresh new scents that are candy-inspired, candy... I was gonna say candy-coated but they're not like physically candy-coated. Like they're coated in a metaphorical way, right?

Taylor: Mm.

Sydnee: Like candy scent... You know what I'm trying to say. They smell like candy. They smell wonderful. [laughs]

And the thing about Native deodorant is that you know exactly what's in it. Their ingredients are things like coconut oil, shea butter, baking soda. But it still...

You know, it's a deodorant that you know what's in it and it works well. It's 72-hour odor protection, a smooth residue-free application so you don't have to worry about it getting all over your clothes.

And it offers a variety of scents in addition to the new limited-edition candy scents that we have all received and checked out.

There is a strawberry and vanilla taffy, I know we got, that smells amazing. The one, the cinnamon candy hearts Charlie really wanted to steal from me 'cause she loved the smell of it so much. There's gummy bears, there's sour berry belt.

And that's in addition to all of the usual flavors—not flavors. They're scents, don't eat it. Put it on your body, it smells great, that you would love if you want to smell woody or clean or fresh or whatever.

And so check out Native deodorant, the new scents are amazing and they're just in time for Valentine's Day. And if our listeners want to that Teylor, what should they do?

Teylor: Well, right now go to nativideo.com/buffering or use promo code "buffering" at checkout to get a sweet 20% off your first order. That's nativeD-E-O.com/buffering or use promo code "buffering" at checkout for 20% off your first order.

[ad break ends]

Sydnee: Teylor, I didn't know, Justin told me this actually, that there is a character that was made in this series that... I mean this blew my mind.

Teylor: Oh, you mean like that was debuted in this series?

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. Yes.

Teylor: Like the character that's probably best known for being debuted in the series? Are you talking Harley Quinn?

Sydnee: Yes!

Teylor: Yeah!

Sydnee: I didn't—

Taylor: Yeah, Harley Quinn was—

Raleigh: I didn't know that!

Taylor: Uh-huh. Did not exist in the comics before this. She first appears, I think "Joker's Favor" is the first episode she's in, which is one of my favorite episodes. And she is presented as one of Joker's henchmen but you don't really get a lot of her back story.

I don't think she was initially meant to be much more than just a member of Joker's gang who was designed like a harlequin and was a woman. And then they had such a good reaction to her and...

Paul Dini was her creator, he wrote that episode, and they kept plugging her back in and then eventually gave her a back story and developed her character a lot more. And then that character transitioned into the comics after that but, yeah.

Sydnee: That's so... I had no idea. I just assumed, because I never really read Batman comics, so I assumed they were... That like, she was just part of, you know, Batman comics and the fact that she wasn't in the, you know, the movies that I had seen before that didn't really... Well, you know "She must be from the comics." It never occurred to me that this is where she was introduced.

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: I didn't know that at all. I guess I just assumed she was in the comics.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Yeah. That was a...

Raleigh: Wow.

Taylor: That was... I mean that was not that... Like I said, she was introduced in the comics while the show was still on.

Raleigh: Mm.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: So it was some point in the production they issued... There was a *Mad Love* comic which told their back story and there was also a "Mad Love" episode. But yeah, that may be the most long-lasting contributions to the Batmanverse from *Batman: The Animated Series*.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Oh yeah.

Raleigh: Why do you... Why do you think she was so popular, when added to the series? Like why do you think of like, you know, all the characters that was one that was introduced and obviously stuck around for always?

Taylor: I mean, I think partially because she was just tangential to the Joker who was always such a popular character.

But also, she's such a stark contrast to a lot of the other... to the other women characters you have. I mean there are other, you know, women who were both villains and heroes. But you've got like Catwoman and Poison Ivy, who both kind of...

Like, they're both very different characters and they've been written very differently, but at their core they're both like "Ooh, sexy femme fatale," like [laughs] you know?

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Very serious, very dangerous. And Harley Quinn was just a very different type of character to that, you know?

Sydnee: Well, when she was introduced... I mean I know that the evolution of the character in a lot of depictions today is a, I would say, is depicted as a very sexy character. But that... I would not have said that when she was introduced.

Taylor: The harlequin suit not uh...? [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] Well, I'm not saying... Look, listen. If that's your thing that's fine. I'm not... There's nothing wrong with that. I'm just saying it is not overtly sexual in the way that certainly a lot of other female characters would have been. You know what I mean?

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: I still—

Sydnee: It's different than Catwoman. [laughs]

Raleigh: Yeah. I was gonna say, I still feel like even modern Harley Quinn doesn't quite meet that level.

Sydnee: I think it—

Raleigh: Catwoman is like the... I feel like the peak of like, "This is what sexy lady villain/heroes look like." [laughs]

Taylor: [laughing] Villain/heroes, that's good.

Raleigh: Villain/heroes.

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: I mean she's all in like, leather or vinyl or whatever that is. I don't know how much more... You know? [laughs]

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: I mean...

Taylor: Well and even with Poison Ivy, like being seductive is part of her game plan.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Like she doesn't, you know... She's very much a feminist character but she will absolutely seduce you so she can poison you with her lipstick.

But yeah, Harley Quinn just has like a giant mallet. I don't—just yeah, it's very... As much as she has been sexualized in certain comic book iterations and they keep trying to change her outfit into something other than what it originally was, you know?

Like, "What if... What if it was...?" Like, no. Just go back to the original. The original's good, you know?

Sydnee: Yeah. [laughs] I know, that bothers me too 'cause the original is good and it's like... It is kind of scare—it's not scary, scary's not the word.

It's... It's disturbing, you know? Like if somebody came at you wearing that outfit you'd probably pretty freaked out. Like, carrying a large hammer?

Taylor: Yeah. Well, and she's supposed to be a gymnast. Like that's supposed to be kind of her thing, is she's very... Like that, you watch... You know, that outfit's like, "Yeah. I can imagine you could..." I don't know. I don't know gymnasts, like...

Raleigh: Gymnast in that?

Taylor: You could gymnast in that, yeah.

Raleigh: [laughs]

Taylor: They like... There was one, oh gosh it was a while ago they did a relaunch of like all the DC titles the New 52. And they had her not only in

like a corset, but the corset had like knives pointing downwards, anchored in.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Like towards her stomach. And it's like, that feels just design-wise like... [dissolves into laughter]

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Not... None of that works. A lot of...

Sydnee: Why?

Taylor: I don't know. I like the... I feel like the... 'Cause I get the need to do something more interesting. You know, that's the one interesting thing about design... Well, there are many things. But she was designed for the cartoon which is always going to be pared down it's...

Sydnee: Sure.

Taylor: It's, you know, gonna be easier to draw a million times. So I understand why comic artists have tried to make her outfit a little bit more visually interesting, because they have the time to draw it.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: And I think the only- The iteration that's been most successful to me is the like derby girl take.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Where she's got like the top and the shorts and like—

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: ... sometimes she wears skates. I get that. I feel like that's a good translation of her same vibe in the animated series you know?

Sydnee: Sure. Yeah. No, I think so. And I actually think, I don't know how much you've watched of like *DC Superhero Girls* or... [laughs]

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Or what's the other one? There's *DC Superhero Girls* and there's the one where they're in high school. Anyway.

Harley Quinn is depicted as a teenager in these and I think that it's a similar thing. It's like a younger vibe for the same outfit and I like her as a character in those because she's still like a student and like good?

She's not doing crimes or anything yet, but she causes like a lot of mischief and sometimes it goes too far and she's tempted to do actual crime. But she doesn't want to. But she will. And she's torn.

And it's like, I don't know. It's a fun like, "We're kind of alluding to the fact that she's going to be bad someday, but right now she's just like, 'I just love chaos. I don't know. I can't help it.'"

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Well and that's because, you know, I think that, I mean similarly to Catwoman, maybe even more so in modern comics, she's a bit more antihero than villain.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: And I mean it's a very sympathetic character. I think she's a good... The fact that she's the character that was sort of launched from this specific, *Batman: The Animated Series*, makes sense.

Because it has... She... Her design has that sort of empathy for the villain built into it, you know? You get her back story, you get everything that happened to her.

And she operates, there are many episodes were like she's either... it's kind of a funny episode that involves her, like there's not any real threat. Or she helps out Batman at some point when the Joker has like a nuclear weapon. It's like, "Oh, I don't want... I don't want that to happen. I'll help you out, Batman."

Sydnee: Yeah. She's definitely more complex.

Which is also cool too 'cause she is a female character, and she's given that sort of nuance and complexity in a way that like, even it took a while, as we've talked about to get Batman that sort of complexity.

Taylor: Yeah. Which is weird because he had it... Like I mean, he had it in this, in the animated series, you know?

They make a point of like showing his friendship with Harvey Dent before everything happens to Harvey and he becomes Two-Face.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: And that's a really, for kids show, that's a very emotionally like intense storyline, that this was his best friend and then this... You know, he has like several chances where he's trying to save Harvey Dent. There's never that... The Batman in a lot of the movies is so detached from Gotham.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: You know, his only companion is Alfred. He is alone. Especially the modern movies.

And *Batman: The Animated Series* firmly roots Bruce in like... Bruce exists. Bruce is not just this masquerade that the Batman wears, which is kind of again that modern take.

I prefer that, like...

Sydnee: Yeah.

Rileigh: Do—

Sydnee: Yeah no, I think that's better too 'cause I get... I think it's kind of cynical, that take on Bruce Wayne, that like in order to like fly under the radar and not be figured out as Batman he has to be this like total jerk, total ostentatious rich, you know, a-hole kind of...

You know what I mean?

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Like playboy. Like it has to be that. It's only this and then he can be Batman.

Rileigh: Do you think that people in charge of, not making the Batman but like making the Batman medias, thought that like because that was how he was in a cartoon they wanted to like firmly separate it from anything that could be like for kids so they were like, "Let's make it... Let's make him not..."

You know what I mean? Like not more adult in like the gory, like you said Syd, like gory, sexy way. But more adult in like the sense that it's not a character that's as appealing to any younger audience?

Taylor: Hmm.

Sydnee: Mm.

Taylor: I could believe that just like... I think that's a... I think a lot of media does that. Like we want to separate ourselves and have our take on it, you know?

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Which is... I understand that, from a creative point but then it's also hard when it's like, "No, no, no but this... This was good. Like you should've done this."

Like, I feel like the Michael Keaton Batman kinda gets there. Like you kind of... He's the Bruce Wayne as well as he's a Batman.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: He has a lot of humanity.

Whereas when we get to like... And I love... [laughs] I was about to say Patrick Bateman. I love Patrick Batman!

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Taylor: I like the darkness of the character but also it's like, there's no Bruce Wayne there.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: There's just... [Batman voice] there's just the bat. And whatever Robert Pattinson did, I don't know.

Raleigh: I did see that one.

Taylor: I dug in the whole other way. It's just emo, emo, very emo Batman.

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: I didn't see... Yeah, well I think that—

Raleigh: Vampire Batman.

Taylor: Yes. [laughs]

Sydnee: I think that as it's evolved, part of it, there's been this sort of... I don't know, this is just something that I have observed and maybe I'm wrong, I'm just throwing this out there 'cause we're talking about it.

I do feel like there was this push for a while for characters that were created in things like comic books or in cartoons, things that had like the ability to be a little more fanciful or creative or less realistic, there was this push to like give everybody an explanation.

"But let's say why they're like that." Like, "That seems weird. Let's give it... Let's make it really clear." And I feel like that that took us down some really unfortunate roads where we have to like get so grounded and...

I mean that's how we end up with a Joker who's an incel, right?

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Like, you know? Like we have to make it make sense, and so now we've made it make sense. He's an incel. And it's like, "Okay. Well... I hate this now."

Like, "This is no fun. I'm not enjoying it anymore, because it's not this hyperbolic..."

You know, I mean it's not real. It's pretend. Nobody really like has this sort of childhood trauma and then to cope with it dresses up as a bat and solves crimes.

Taylor: [laughs]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: Like that's not [laughs] nobody's gonna do that.

Taylor: Not yet.

Sydnee: Well, okay. Somebody is.

Raleigh: That you know of.

Sydnee: Somebody has done it. Everybody's done everything. Someone in human history has done it. But you know like, it's not real and that's okay. And I feel like there was this movement for a while where we needed to...

I put that in the same category as like when we had to give the Grinch a secret bullied backstory to make sense as to why was the Grinch so grinchy? Well it's 'cause all the kids in school made fun of him when he was little.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: And it's like, "Well how about he's just a Grinch? How about we just accept that he's a grinchy Grinch and he doesn't have to have like this sad backstory?"

Raleigh: But we got the baby Grinch from that.

Taylor: I was gonna say, yeah, that's... That's an excellent baby.

Raleigh: I love that little Grinch.

Sydnee: No, I can't. No I will not... The Whos... The Whos are unfairly depicted. [laughs] They understand the meaning of Christmas. That's who the Whos are!

Taylor: [laughs]

Raleigh: I don't know, I kind of like the Christine Baranski materialistic fancy Whos.

Sydnee: I mean, that... See, that's unfair. You have to separate Christine Baranski from the plot, though. Like, yes of course I love everything Christine Baranski has ever done or touched or been a part of 'cause she's incredible, but I don't love this depiction of the Whos.

Taylor: Well... I think I get what you're saying. I don't know if that's the best example, because I too thoroughly enjoy like that whole reason is a fun backstory.

Raleigh: Mm.

Taylor: But you are... Like that, I mean especially with something, a property that is... It is a little goofy on surface, the... I mean, most comic books are, right?

Sydnee: Right.

Taylor: And like you've got to kind of have that slightly heightened reality. You know, and that's what like... Yes, it's like Spider-Man comics are not set in this New York City. They're setting a very specific New York City.

Sydnee: Right.

Taylor: And it kind of has a specific like vibe to it that fits with the personality of Spider-Man. And I think Batman is very true top. Like this, the noir setting, the Gotham as sort of this, you know, this gothic, dark hyper-realistic place, I feel like you kinda need those wrappings.

'Cause once you try to start explaining everything... I felt like the goofiest was when they had Catwoman in the Nolan movies. Anne Hathaway was great in the role, but her goggles that she used to do crime looked like cat ears on her head.

[sarcastic] 'Cause she can't... she can't actually be a cat. She can't have a cat motif.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: [sarcastic] 'Cause that would be goofy, right.

Taylor: So we gotta explain it. Like, I mean, they did the same thing with his little ears. Like his little ears had like sound things in it.

And it's like, "Can he just... He dresses like a bat though! Like, we recognize this, right?" Like... [laughs]

Sydnee: Well 'cause I mean like I... We all dug it when Michelle Pfeiffer was just like, [Michelle Pfeiffer voice] "I'm a cat now. I'm dressed as a cat."

Taylor: Exactly!

Sydnee: "Check this out."

Like, "Okay, sure. I'm with it. Dress like a cat. I love everything that's happening." [laughs]

Taylor: Like those, the Burtons or the Schumacher movies got a little ridiculous but I feel like they started off in the right place.

Sydnee: But do you think that's why, and this is not something that I feel very strongly about so I'm not trying to start like some sort of war over this.

Taylor: [laughs]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: This does not need to be a bunch of emails or discussion threads.

But when I look at like Marvel and DC, and like the way their different movies have gone in recent years and all the success that the Marvel Universe has had with all of their movies, I feel like...

Most recently we watched the new Thor movie. And I feel like that fun is still there. I feel like parts of it feel a little silly. Parts of it are a little goofy. Like sometimes it's a little self-aware.

Do you think that that is where DC keeps trying to take itself so freakin' seriously and that they need to have a little more fun? 'Cause it is from a comic book.

Taylor: I do think that is true. I think that Marvel's maybe gone almost too far in the opposite direction.

This is just my opinion, again, like I...

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: And I'm also like... I will say I watch pretty much any superhero movie that comes out, like, happily. Like I don't... I'm not like...

To me it feels like judging pizza, again, like microwavable pizza. It's still pizza, it's still good.

Raleigh: Mm.

Sydnee: Sure.

Taylor: Like \$1 slice on the corner? Still pizza. Still good. Really fancy pizza? Pizza.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: It's all pizza to me. But I do think that like the DC movies have tried to maintain a more serious real-world tone while Marvel has leaned into like, "Oh, people like jokes. Let's have more jokes." Like that is where the charm of the Marvel movies has been.

So I don't know. I mean they've got new people at the head of... Right, they just did that big revamp in the DC cinematic universe. We'll see what comes out of that. I did like the second Suicide Squad movie, I thought was good. The James Gunn Suicide Squad.

Sydnee: I thought it was—

Raleigh: Is that the one with Pete Davidson in it?

Taylor: Yes.

Raleigh: For like 20 seconds? [laughs]

Taylor: Yes. Yes.

Sydnee: I thought it was good too. Yeah, no, I actually... I enjoyed that too, I will say. That—

Taylor: Well, and I liked the Harley Quinn movie. I know it was controversial 'cause it had just so many women in it and any time a movie has lots of women in it it's controversial.

Sydnee: Controversial.

Taylor: But I thought it got... it got the right tone. Like it was silly. It fit with the character, it was a believable Gotham.

Sydnee: And I think... I mean I think to get back to the *Batman: The Animated Series*, like I think it's cool when, and this is way ahead of its time, when a cartoon that...

And especially in the '90s if something was animated, the implication for a parent is going to be, "This is for kids."

And again I'm not saying animated stuff is for kids but like that would have been the message sent in the '90s.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: The idea that it would address, that it would on those noir themes which were usually considered, "Oh that's a grown up thing." That it would be addressing slightly deeper issues. That it would talk about things like Batman's guilt over the death of his parents?

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: You know? Like the idea that we can address that stuff and still make it fun and cool and kids can watch it and their parents can watch it with them was a really ahead of its time idea in this country.

I know that that's not the history of animation all over the world. But for us that was a pretty advanced idea.

Now it's commonplace. Like we talked about *Bluey*, we watch *Bluey* with our kids. We watched *Steven Universe* with our kids, it was as much for us as it was for them right?

Like, that's a commonplace idea but it was not in 1992.

Taylor: Absolutely. Well, and even the shows that had like little wink and nod jokes for parents, were comedic.

Like this is not a comedic show, which is... It is weird as like a cartoon. There's not... It's very light on the humor and I think the humor that you do get is a little... It's a little perverse [laughs] like...

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Like I mentioned that the "Joker's Favor" episode where some random dude cuts Joker off in traffic and then the Joker stalks him for two years to like, he eventually has to pay him back a favor.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: It's a very disturbing plot line that's kind of funny but in a very pitch-black way.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: Yep.

Taylor: Like I don't think a kids gonna laugh at that like...

Raleigh: Cooper might.

Sydnee: Yeah, no which is exactly why like leaving characters like the Joker in that sort of hyperbolic realm, where they're a little beyond reality is probably the best way to continue to handle them and not make them like,

"But what if he was real?" [laughs]

Taylor: Well that's—

Sydnee: “Now, what if he was just pissed off at the world that gave him a raw deal?”

Taylor: I mean that's the thing. Even like... The Joker in this is also, this is my definitive Batman it's also my definitive Joker.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Because this is... And again, if you disagree, you like a different one, that's totally fine. This is just what I like.

Sydnee: Sure.

Taylor: But it's like he will be entertained for two years by stalking a random man and plotting how he's going to like... what he's going to do with them and then you know, move on to the next weird thing.

Like he's tot- When he's an agent of chaos, he's not like [Heath Ledger Joker voice] “An agent of chaos because I'm raging against the machine.”

It's like, no, he just literally is like, [Mark Hamill Joker voice] “This is what entertains me now. Hee hee!” then moves on to something else. Like just completely random.

Sydnee: He's not like... It's not like, [Joaquin Phoenix Joker voice] “I'm not something that is loved! I'm not an idea.”

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Taylor: Exactly. Yes.

Sydnee: [still laughing] Not that joker.

Taylor: No. No. Like just... And I mean, you know I like the comic that you know, I mean even we did *The Killing Joke* forever ago, and even that one which I like, but it's because it gives you this whole back story, and then it kind of establishes this could be the Joker just making this up.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: 'Cause his back story changes every other day. That's what the mind of the Joker must be like to behave the way he does. I mean also you've got Mark Hamill voicing the Joker in this.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: And that is just... That's the best.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: That's what... I mean, after Luke Skywalker this is the second thing that he will be most remembered for, always. Right?

Taylor: Yeah I would think that's fair.

Sydnee: Yeah. Well, anyway, I really enjoyed it.

Raleigh: I did too.

Sydnee: You know, I didn't watch it with Charlie and Cooper but I bet definitely Cooper seems like she would like it.

Raleigh: That's what I was going to ask, if you had, yeah.

Taylor: Well, and I think that you know, it's a lot. There are a lot of episodes. There is a change to the character designs, it happens in the fourth official season.

But it was the third season, but they cut it up on the DVDs weirdly. Later on in the show there's an animation change that I think is a little bit more kid-friendly.

The designs get a little bit more cartoonish, 'cause like... Which I don't know. People have different feelings about it as adults but I could see kids preferring the later designs. And that's—

Sydnee: I'll have to... I'll have to have 'em both check it out. I don't know, Charl—they might both like it.

I mean, and they're familiar with all the characters because we do watch some of the... Some of the DC shows that are for kids they really like.

There's a lot of good stuff for, especially aimed at young women, in the DC universe.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: A lot of stuff that I find very positive and empowering and you know cool for young women to see.

A lot of good stuff about female relationships that aren't competitive or combative, you know? But that are like true supportive friendships.

Taylor: I do... There are a couple... I was going to say, there's a lot of good early Harvey and- or Harley and Ivy content in the animated series.

There's a great episode where they kidnap Bruce Wayne not knowing he's Batman and have him... Like use his credit cards to buy them a girls' day out.

It's just a... it's a very goofy episode, it's very light-hearted. That was always one of my favorites, 'cause it's one of the first Harley and Ivy episodes you get.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: I love that.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Well, thank you Tey.

Raleigh: Yeah, thank you.

Sydnee: I enjoyed it and I will, I'll show it to Charlie and Cooper. I bet Cooper will really like it.

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: It seems like up her alley.

Raleigh: Definitely.

Taylor: Well, thank you for checking it out.

Sydnee: Raleigh, what's next?

Raleigh: Yeah, I wanna talk about music. Specifically an artist that's a newer artist that I really like called Lizzie McAlpine. Like, "Alpine" but with a "Mc" at the beginning.

Sydnee: Okay.

Raleigh: Like McElroy, but McAlpine.

Taylor: [laughs] Alright.

Sydnee: Is it "M-C" or "M-A-C"?

Raleigh: "M-C."

Sydnee: Got it.

Raleigh: 'Cause she says it like "Mick" even though you all say "Mack" but that's fine.

Sydnee: Hey, listen...

Raleigh: We're not here to judge how you say your last name.

Sydnee: I, as I always tell patients when they ask me why it's pronounced that way, I say, "I don't know. Ask my husband."

Raleigh: [laughs]

Taylor: [laughs]

Raleigh: But yeah, specifically she has just one... I think it's actually an EP, I don't know if it's technically an album. But it's called *Five Seconds Flat*.

Sydnee: Alright.

Raleigh: So yeah.

Sydnee: I have found her, we will listen.

Taylor: Thank you.

Sydnee: Alright, well thank you both. If you all haven't watched *Batman: The Animated Series* from back in the '90s, it's great. Where... where did I stream it? I always just search things on my Apple TV and then I don't know what I found it on.

Taylor: Um, it's on HBO Max.

Raleigh: HBO Max.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Okay. I never know which app I pop... like when you do the general search and then it pops up in an app, I never remember like, "Where did I find it?"

Okay. So check it out. It's great, especially if you like Batmans... Batman. Batm—

Taylor: [laughs] Or Man-Bats, there're both.

Sydnee: They're—either way.

Thank you to Maximum Fun. You should go to maximumfun.org, check out a lot of great shows that you would enjoy. You can tweet at us at [stillbuff](https://twitter.com/stillbuff), you can e-mail 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.

[theme song starts]

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Taylor: And I'm Taylor Smirl.

Raleigh: I am *Still Buffering*.

Taylor and Sydnee: [sort of in unison] And... I... am... too.

Sydnee: We didn't talk about... I think this is where I developed my fear of the Scarecrow.

Taylor: Um, the Scarecrow redesign especially is terrifying.

Sydnee: Is terrifying.

Taylor: Yeah. Yeah.

Sydnee: Maybe that's where that comes from.

Taylor: That one... I would say that's definitely not for kids, but then Cooper would probably really dig that.

Raleigh: She would.

Sydnee: She would, she would.

Taylor: [laughs]

[ad break]

Carrie: Oh, Ross! Hey, hey!

Ross: Yeah.

Carrie: Oh, I'm glad I found you in line.

Ross: These clouds are really freaking me out.

Carrie: I hate having to stand in line and boy, what a line.

Ross: These giraffes do not smell good.

Carrie: No they do not and they have such short necks!

Ross: But I'm hearing we need to get on this ark.

Carrie: We gotta get on the ark.

Ross: Yeah.

Carrie: It is about to rain. God is about to destroy humanity.

Hey! Oh, sorry sorry sorry! Are you Noah?

Ross: Yeah. I know we look like humans, but we're actually—

Carrie: [laughs] Yes, totally.

Ross: We're podcasters.

Carrie: We are podcasters so it's different.

Ross: Have you heard of *Oh No, Ross and Carrie!*?

Carrie: We investigate spirituality, claims of the paranormal, stuff like that.

Ross: And you have a boat and say the world's going to end, so seemed like something for us to check out.

Carrie: We would love to be on the boat.

Ross: And we came two-by-two.

Carrie: What do you think?

Ross: *Oh No, Ross and Carrie!*, available on maximumfun.org.

[ad ends]

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