

Still Buffering 335: "That Thing You Do!" (1996)

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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: Um, I almost mandolined my thumb off.

Taylor: Oh no! You don't have an iron glove for that?

Sydnee: I did—I do, but I wasn't wearing it.

Taylor: You do not use a mandolin without a glove, Syd.

Sydnee: I know. Rileigh, you look confused.

Rileigh: [simultaneously] You're a doctor. You're a doc—

Sydnee: [simultaneously] Do you know what a man—

Rileigh: Yeah?

Sydnee: Do you know what a mandolin is?

Taylor: It's not the musical instrument.

Rileigh: That's what happens on the cooking shows all the time.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Okay.

Rileigh: It's like the number one way they hurt themselves on, you know, Hell's Kitchen or something.

Sydnee: Yeah. I grated the tip of my nail, but that was fine, with a grater. And then I was trying to make a salad in a hurry, and I didn't have lettuce, so I was trying to grate and mandolin a bunch of other vegetables to sort of make, like, a... you know?

Taylor: I... I mean—

Rileigh: No. [laughs]

Taylor: We're gonna ignore the fact that that is, in fact, not really a salad.

Rileigh: [through laughter] That's not a salad. That's not—

Taylor: That's just vegetables.

Rileigh: You can't make lettuce. [laughs]

Sydnee: Well, [laughs] I wasn't trying to make lettuce, per se.

Rileigh: Well..

Sydnee: But it's like a salad base.

Taylor: You know what? This is—somehow TikTok fed me a video of someone making—they said they were making a salad and they were like, "You know what? I thought, instead of lettuce I'm gonna use a bunch of shredded carrots."

And I'm like, that's not—what—that—I mean, we're moving into a different type of salad at that point, but it is hardly a one-to-one. You cannot just sub in some carrots for lettuce.

Sydnee: I shredded carrots, and radishes, and celery, and... what else?

Raleigh: That's just all the stuff you put on a salad.

Sydnee: Cucumbers.

Raleigh: Without the lettuce.

Sydnee: Yeah. And then I just threw some chickpeas in with that and mixed it all up.

Taylor: That's like putting a bunch of condiments on a plate and calling it a sandwich. Like...

Sydnee: I didn't have lettuce! [laughs]

Taylor: Well...

Raleigh: [crosstalk]

Sydnee: I used to make these salads out of all my herbs. I would just go out and pick handfuls of all my herbs and chop them up and eat that in a bowl.

Taylor: I mean, at least that's lettuce-adjacent. Like, I've had a salad that's just a bunch of cilantro that's dressed. That's okay. But... Raleigh, I know that's your nightmare, but...

Raleigh: That is my nightmare. I don't know how I ended up being the one of us that has the soap gene.

Taylor: I don't know. Or does it mean that maybe Sydnee and I both have the soap gene and we're just like, "Mmm, soap!" [laughs]

Sydnee: We just love soap.

Taylor: Yeah!

Raleigh: That is possible.

Taylor: Give me that leafy soap!

Sydnee: The only way for us to know is if we eat soap and see if we enjoy it.

Taylor: I feel like I have at some point.

Raleigh: [laughs] I did that test in biology test where they made you lick the strip of stuff, and if it tastes bad then you have the gene, and if it doesn't, then it doesn't taste like anything, then you don't. And I thought it tasted horrible and I was, like, making a whole big thing about like, "Oh, god, it tastes so bad. Oh no." And someone else was like, "Yeah, it tastes like something. It doesn't taste like nothing, but it's pretty good."

And that was someone who did have the bad cilantro soap gene, but they just thought it tasted good. [laughs] So you never know.

Sydnee: That's interesting.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: That was—wasn't there that—what was that? Like, a super taster test where you could taste the thing, and if you could taste it, you're a super taster?

Raleigh: Justin did that.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: I'm not.

Taylor: Is Justin a super taster?

Sydnee: Hmm, I don't believe he was either.

Raleigh: I'm not.

Sydnee: No, I don't think any of us were.

Taylor: No.

Sydnee: No, somebody was. Was it Mom?

[pause]

Sydnee: Although—

[all laugh]

Sydnee: We're all thinking the same thing, but we also know Mom listens to our podcast so we don't want to say it out loud. [laughs]

Raleigh: I don't know what you're talking about, Sydnee. I love our Mom. I would never say anything—

Sydnee: Of course I love our Mom!

Raleigh: I would never say anything even close to mean about our Mom. I love our Mom.

Sydnee: [simultaneously] It's not mea—

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: It's not mean!

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: [sighs heavily] Uhh... [laughs]

Taylor: I... I... I could—I could believe Mom was a super taster. That's all I'll—yep.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. I bet, yep. Mm-hmm. Yes.

Taylor: Umm...

Raleigh: Dad—Dad is definitely not, and I say that because Dad eats... almost anything.

Taylor: Dad eats garbage doodles.

Raleigh: And I feel like super tasters—'cause you taste, like, more when you're a super taster, right? Like, everything's, like, elevated.

Sydnee: Yeah, all flavors, yeah.

Raleigh: So I feel like—like the gas station, like, cakes and stuff that Dad eats, you know, like I feel like a super taster would, like... not love that. You know what I mean?

Sydnee: Did—did Mom—has Mom filled you all in on Dad's healthy snack, and his sad realization?

Raleigh: His Jello?

Taylor: Yeah, she sent me a picture of just Dad eating some—a hideous green cup of Jello and just said—it just said "Dad's sad Jello." And I'm like, "What is this? Is this a—" [laughs]

Raleigh: I got the same exact test! [laughs]

Taylor: Is this a piece? Is this an art—

Sydnee: Dad's been trying to eat healthier. And the problem—[laughs]—Dad's been trying to eat healthier, and not eat as much sugar. Um, 'cause he does. He does tend to, like—

Raleigh: Yeah, he just likes sugar.

Sydnee: Lots of refined sugar. Um, but he was eating whole bags of those pea—you know those dried pea snack things?

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Like, two bags. [laughs]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: [muffled] For lunch. And we had to counsel him about, like, there's a lot of sodium, and like, two bags of crunchy peas is not—'cause they're still, like, chips. They're still like a...

Taylor: [crosstalk]

Sydnee: They're still, like, a snack food. [laughs]

Taylor: Yeah. Like, just eat a—eat a sandwich or something.

Sydnee: I know! Like, let's get some protein, and some actual veggies. I don't know if they're—are they vegetables, really? Like, they're not really peas, are they?

Taylor: I think once you puff a vegetable it's not really a vegetable anymore.

Raleigh: Yeah. I thought they took just like the powder, like the pea protein or something, and then, like, made it into its own, like, thing.

Sydnee: I think that's sort of what they are. It's like a pea-flavored cheese puff deal. Like, imagine a cheese puff but it looks and tastes like a pea. But they're also delicious.

Raleigh: They are delicious.

Sydnee: Yes. They are delicious. And I highly endorse them as a snack food, but I don't ever endorse eating two entire, like, family sized bags of any

snack food at once because, like, you need, you know, you need other things too.

Raleigh: See, I guess I inherited that tendency from our father, because I too am the same, in that if I find something I like, I just only get those few things that I like when I go to the store. So then when it comes time for, like, a meal, I'm like, "Well, just have to grab one of these three things I like. These are my meals for the next week. What am I gonna like next week? Who knows?" [pause] I just—I can't—I can't be bothered to try new things.

Sydnee: I'm the same way. I tend to get into ruts. I just keep eating the same things over and over.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: It's a—you know what, though? That crunch sauce you introduced to our lives, Taylor.

Taylor: Oh. Yeah, that's good, right?

Sydnee: I put that on a wrap every day now. Like, that's my—I have a wrap, and it's got some turkey and some—whatever veggies I have, and then that. Every day.

Taylor: Nice. Crunch sauce, game changer.

Raleigh: I haven't gotten that exact one, but they have, like—I got the equivalent, after we had that conversation, that they have at Trader Joe's it's like a crunchy, spicy sauce, something.

Taylor: Oh, it's with chilies in it?

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: I got that after that conversation. I now put that on almost everything too.

Taylor: It is—rice.

Raleigh: So good.

Taylor: Sandwiches. Just sometimes I just eat it, a little spoonful. Just like, I see some crunch in my life. Just a little cronch.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: A little cronch.

Taylor: Yeah. Has Dad tried crunch sauce? That's probably healthier than two bags of peas.

Raleigh: Dad would probably like crunch sauce.

Sydnee: You know, I should get him into crunch sauce.

Raleigh: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: I should get—[laughs quietly] there's some protein there. I mean, it's also—it's fine. I don't know. Just get him a—get him a sandwich. Have some—have one bag of peas and, like, a sandwich.

Sydnee: Right. Or like he loves kidney beans. Can't he just eat a can of those?

Taylor: Well, that's sad again. That's sad.

Sydnee: Well...

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: We went back to sad. Don't go back to sad.

Raleigh: He has—

Sydnee: But he loves kidney beans!

Raleigh: He has a refrigerator, a little teeny one, and a microwave, in his office. I know he does. I don't know why he can't just pack a little lunch like he's going to school!

Taylor: You need to find a recipe for, like, a kidney bean salad that's zesty and tasty and has flavors in it, and maybe some other vegetables. I know that there's a recipe there. I shouldn't just eat a can of beans.

[all laugh]

Taylor: He's not a—he's not a—

Raleigh: You made it sad.

Taylor: A cartoon miner. [laughs]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: Give the man some fresh herbs, please.

Sydnee: That would fit into a lot of people's unfortunately stereotypical views of West Virginia. Like, "Our Dad takes a can of beans with him to work, and he eats that!"

Taylor: Can of beans.

Sydnee: And some bags of—they're not really peas. They're, like, processed, fake peas. [laughs]

Raleigh: He's got a pepperoni roll in his back pocket.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Washes it all down with some moonshine.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: That's not—none of that is true.

Taylor: No.

Sydnee: That's not—

Raleigh: No.

Sydnee: That's not what it's like here. Except the pepperoni rolls. The pepperoni roll—that is a real—

Taylor: [simultaneously] That part is true. That's a—

Raleigh: That's true.

Taylor: You get those at the gas station.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: That's where they're best.

Raleigh: When you tell people that, by the way, they will look at you like you are... making something up to make them laugh. Like, when people here asked me what a pepperoni roll was, and I explained it, and they said, "Well, where do you get them? Do you make them? Like, do restaurants have them?"

And I said, "No. You get them at the gas station."

They all started laughing, and then said "No, really, where do you get them?" [laughs]

Sydnee: I mean, you can make them. And some people are very good at it. And you can get them at restaurants. It's just I usually—my experience is that when we get them at local restaurants, the restaurants have tried to elevate them in some way.

Taylor: No way!

Sydnee: And you miss the—right? You miss the point. Like... yeah, I guess you could. Like, you could do that with it, but that's not the point. [laughs]

Taylor: There's a very important process that happens when it's wrapped in plastic and mooshed with the oils, and then it chills. Like, that... it needs to be kind of cold and mooshed, 'cause you need—

Raleigh: With the bread—

Taylor: —the oils to soak into the bread.

Raleigh: Yeah. When you bite into the bread and it almost tastes like it's still dough.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: Like, that's the best part.

Sydnee: And I—I am a—I believe it has to be pepperoni slices, not the pepperoni stick, you know?

Taylor: Oh, yeah. Absolutely.

Sydnee: The long pepperoni stick log.

Raleigh: I don't like those.

Sydnee: Don't like those. Mm-mm. Doesn't look appropriate.

Taylor: I can't—I can't believe there hasn't been some obnoxious, like, New York food trend that is the elevated pepperoni roll. Maybe that happened and I just did not see it, but that sounds like something that would happen.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: It's definitely a thing, like, in West Virginia. You'll see restaurants—especially people who are, like—like, places where they're actually making good, like... I don't want to say fine dining, 'cause I don't really go to a lot of places that are very fancy. We don't have a lot of places that are very fancy. [laughs] But you know what I mean. Like, this is good quality, people who have studied and are making really cool things. Um, they try to—they always try to throw, like, a "Here's a West Virginia classic pepperoni roll."

And it's like, there's cheese in there, and there's all kind of seasoning all over it, and it's sau—there's a sauce with it, and all...

Raleigh: [crosstalk]

Taylor: You just made a calzone.

Raleigh: No cheese.

Sydnee: Yes, this is fine. But it's not a pepperoni roll. [laughs] Yeah.

Raleigh: Pepperoni rolls are good. Now I can't wait for my drive home, and I can stop at a gas station and... that's when you know you're getting close is when you stop at a gas station and they have pepperoni rolls right by the checkout. [laughs]

Sydnee: And listen, I love Sheetz, and you could stop at a Sheetz, but that's not where you want to stop for a pepperoni roll.

Raleigh: No. The tiny little gas station where, like, the inside part is barely big enough for a few things and a bathroom. That's where you want to go.

Sydnee: That's, like, just named after a dude.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

[all laugh]

Taylor: Wait. The bathroom or the whole establishment?

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: It's—

Taylor: The establishment is Randall's. The bathroom is Gerald.

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] Well, it's always something like Cap's Market. And it's like, "Who?" You know? Like, who's Cap? I don't... we don't know. But this is his market.

Raleigh: We are all Cap.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: When you're there, you're Cap.

Sydnee: That's where you stop for the pepperoni rolls. [laughs]

Raleigh: Um... we're not talking about pepperoni rolls today.

Sydnee: No. Unfortunately, no we're not. We're talking about That Thing You Do. I can't believe—I was watching the movie and Justin came in and he was like, "Is this for Still Buffering?"

And I said, "Yeah?"

And he said, "How have you not done this yet? How are you just now doing this movie?"

Rileigh: [simultaneously] I was thinking that too.

Taylor: I know this was a—a big favorite of yours, Syd.

Sydnee: Oh yeah. Well, it was... sorry. I'm trying to pull it up so I can tell you what year it's from.

Rileigh: I think 1996.

Sydnee: Thank you.

Rileigh: I think. 'Cause I looked it up also.

Sydnee: My—I went down this rabbit hole looking at the cast earlier and trying to figure out what other stuff—

Rileigh: [quietly] Yeah, '96.

Sydnee: —Jimmy did.

Taylor: Yeah. 'Cause he's so—he's just such a handsome boy. And I'm like, how has this face not been in more things?

Rileigh: Has he done anything else?

Sydnee: He—well, he is—so he's—yes. I mean, he's done a variety of movies and TV shows I had sort of heard of, but I couldn't—nothing else huge like this that I've found, except he's in a whole bunch of DC Universe-related TV shows.

Taylor: Really?

Sydnee: Like, Batwoman, and, um... hold on. What were the other ones that I found? He was in Batwoman. He plays Jonah Hex?

Taylor: Oh! That's a great character.

Sydnee: Yeah. He was in The Flash. He was in DC Legends. He was in, uh... Crisis. I don't know what that is. Anyway, he is in the DC Universe, it appears.

Sydnee: So that—

Raleigh: [crosstalk] scary movies, too.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: That's funny, 'cause at first—it's been a while since I've seen this. I thought he looked like Tom Welling, who was Superman in Smallville. Different actor. I was like, "Oh, that's—" it's interesting that he's in DC, because that's who I thought he was at first.

Sydnee: Really?

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Well, cool.

Taylor: Similar looks.

Sydnee: So that is where he—'cause he is. He is a very handsome young man. That is where he ended up.

Taylor: Well, and Guy Patterson. Has he done anything? That was the other question mark I had.

Sydnee: Tom—what else has Tom Everett Scott done?

Raleigh: Um, I've definitely seen him in things, because I recognized him. And now I'm looking at the things he's done, and I... all I recognize is he was the dad in the Diary of a Wimpy Kid movies. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: I mean, he's a cutie patootie.

Taylor: They're all cutie patooties.

Raleigh: They're all cutie patooties.

Sydnee: I think I've seen him in Hallmark movies.

Raleigh: That sounds right.

Taylor: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: I think that may have happened. Um, I think that's possible. Uh, I used to have such a crush on him.

Raleigh: He was also in La La Land.

Sydnee: Hmm. I used to have such a huge crush on Tom Everett Scott because of this movie. Um, so That Thing You Do... I don't remember—gosh. I saw it, like... one of my earliest memories of seeing this is it had just come—I had—I didn't see it in theaters. But it was, like, one of those movies that TBS decided to replay over and over and over again. So—or like VH1 Movies that Rock.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: So I kept watching it over and over and over again. I remember watching it at Uncle Danny's house at the beach one year.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: I like the—

Sydnee: Just like, everybody's in the room talking, all the adults are talking, and I'm just, like, planted in front of the TV really close, 'cause it was turned down really low, just watching That Thing You Do intently. Like, "I love this movie." [laughs]

Taylor: It's interesting that that's your Uncle Danny's beach house movie memory and mine is Hellraiser. Yeah, right? Different paths there. [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] I mean, I remember that one too.

Taylor: Right, yeah. That's very memorable.

Raleigh: This was—we watched this at our beach... I don't know if it was a house, or it was a condo. A very long time ago, when we were on vacation, you showed it to me. Um, ever since that point, I keep forgetting they're from this movie, but I guess I shouldn't, because one of them is the titular song. But three or four songs from this movie show up on my most played songs list every year now.

Taylor: [laughs]

Raleigh: Like, I just—I love 'em. They're just, like, boppy, boy band, upbeat. Little Wild One, That Thing You Do, Um, not Wildest Dreams. My Only Dre—is that what it was called?

Sydnee: Yeah. No, I know what you mean. I used to listen to the soundtrack over and over and over again.

Raleigh: Yeah, it's great.

Taylor: Are those all—obviously That Thing You Do. But are they all composed for this film? All those songs?

Sydnee: Now, that I don't know.

Taylor: I mean, I know—'cause, you know, sometimes it's like there's sneaky covers. But I can't... I don't think I've ever heard them anyway else other than this movie. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: I think so.

Sydnee: Um...

Raleigh: Looking at the...

Taylor: Like, the credit is to The Wonders.

Raleigh: ... soundtrack. Um... if you—on the, uh—

Sydnee: It may have all been.

Raleigh: I think it is. Tom Hanks is credited as a music writer for several of them.

Taylor: [crosstalk]

Sydnee: Well, and Adam Schlesinger did a lot of the music. From Fountains of Wayne, who sadly we lost a couple years ago.

Raleigh: He wrote the music for my favorite TV show, Crazy Ex-Girlfriend.

Sydnee: Yeah. He did a bunch of great music.

Taylor: I was gonna say. You know, it's wild. 'Cause when I was listening to songs like, this feels like this has his stamp all over it. I wonder if he was involved with this? That makes a lot of sense.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Um... yeah. I—a lot—I think a lot of—I think all the music. I'm looking through. I think all the music...

Raleigh: I mean, we wrote That Thing You Do. He's the only person credited on that song.

Sydnee: Which is—you know, I always think like—okay. So, to back up, if you haven't seen That Thing You Do, I don't know how that's possible. I feel like I've seen this movie maybe more than any other movie. Nah, Princess Bride. That's the only other movie I've seen more in my entire life.

Taylor: Or High Fidelity.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] Maybe?

Raleigh: When I mentioned this to people they didn't know what I was talking about, I will say.

Sydnee: Really?

Raleigh: Like, people around my age, yeah.

Sydnee: Really?!

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: It's a—okay. So, it's a movie about a band, The Wonders. If you're thinking like, "Like one-hit wonders?" Yes. That is the whole conceit. They rise to prominence—this is, like, the early 60's—very quickly. And then sort of fall apart, fizzle out. And they have one song that they're really well known for, which is called That Thing You Do.

It is all, what, produced, directed, whatever by Tom Hanks, put together by Tom Hanks. Tom Hanks is the driving force behind this film. Directed, written by Tom Hanks. And, like, all his pals are in it. [pause] Like, both his kids are in it. His wife's in it. There's all kinds of people who were in, like, on stage with Tom Hanks at various times in movies and TV shows. Like, he filled it with, like, the Tom Hanks universe.

Taylor: I didn't realize what a Hanks project this was.

Rileigh: Yeah, I didn't either.

Sydnee: It feels like Tom Hanks. It's so, like... it's so wholesome, and well intentioned. [laughs] It's just like—[laughs] Tom Hanks is like... I mean, is there anything offensive about Tom Hanks? [pause]

Taylor: Hmm.

Sydnee: He just seems like a nice guy.

Taylor: I think that—

Rileigh: I mean, not that we know about.

Taylor: I mean, that's his brand. I get it. Like, I don't—

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: He's a celebrity.

Sydnee: The movie feels like him.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: It feels like that. Like, it's nice. It's clever. It's funny. We enjoy it. I feel like that the, um—the drummer, Tom Everett Scott's character, is very much a stand-in for Tom Hanks a lot of times.

Taylor: Ahh, alright. I see that now.

Sydnee: It feels like—I mean, I'm certain he didn't say this. But it feels like Tom Hanks looked at him and said... "Just think about what I do, and... do that. Do me."

Rileigh: "Do me. Do Hanks."

Sydnee: "Do your best, you know, me." [laughs]

Taylor: This is a weird aside, but Syd, do you think that... part of the reason that you like Tom Hanks movies is because he's kind of got—him and Justin share a vibe? 'Cause I haven't noticed that until I was watching this movie last night. And I'm like, I feel like they have, like, similar facial features, Tom Hanks and Justin.

Sydnee: I can see that.

Taylor: Your titular husband.

[pause]

Sydnee: I can see that. I think they do share a vibe. I would say Justin's brand is a little less wholesome.

Taylor: Oh, well not brands.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: I mean, like, they kind of look alike.

Sydnee: No, I can see that. I can see that. Definitely. Um, and I think there are moments where Tom Everett Scott is mirroring a young Tom Hanks in this movie. Do you think he just said, like, "Get me a Tom"?

Taylor: "Get me a little Tom."

Sydnee: "Get me the cutest Tom you can find."

Taylor: That's the best version of young Tom.

Raleigh: I guess this was before Colin Hanks could've done that, right?

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: What? [crosstalk]

Sydnee: He's in it.

Raleigh: He's in it, but he's much younger.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: Who?

Raleigh: Yeah. He's the Page. I just looked it up 'cause I didn't know, I didn't recognize him in it. But he's in it for, like, a scene.

Sydnee: Yeah, like five seconds. He escorts Liv Tyler from the car into the building when they're at the...

Taylor: Ohh.

Sydnee: What is supposed to be, like, the Ed Sullivan show, but isn't, but is basically the Ed Sullivan show.

Raleigh: And apparently Elizabeth Hanks appears as Bored Girl in Dress Shop.

Taylor: [laughs]

Raleigh: That's his daughter.

Sydnee: There you go.

Taylor: Got 'em all credits. That's what matters.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: And then of course his wife, Rita Wilson, is in it as well. Which, like, if you continue to imagine that this main character guy is sort of like a Tom—like Tom Hanks is putting a little bit of himself in this character, and then his wife plays this, like, hot cocktail waitress who's hitting on him. [laughs quietly] I don't know. I was thinking, like, that adds a whole other level to that scene.

Raleigh: That's true.

Taylor: Is this a parallel to acting, then? Is this like a retelling of, like, he was the one that had the passion for the art form? 'Cause that's what, like... my memories of this movie differ from the rewatch. I remembered it as, like, the lead singer was a jerk, and Guy was the only good guy in the band. And, like, my memories were totally wrong.

'Cause rewatching it I'm like, I feel kind of bad for the main... Jimmy. Like, he's a talented singer and a talented songwriter, and he seems to just be keeping to—it's just like, "I would like to play my music and write my songs," and he's kind of treated like the bad guy in the film? But he's... he's not?

Sydnee: Which is why he—I mean if, like, in the little after credits he goes on to be successful, you know?

Taylor: Sure. They get that. But it's interesting on the rewatch where I'm like, I don't—I mean, I don't think anybody was a bad guy necessarily. But I think it's more of an indictment of, like, the industry that they're just kind of stuck in.

Sydnee: Yes.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: No, I think that's true. I think what you just see are, like, four people who are kind of thrown together and happen on success. Like, they didn't intend on it. It just happened. And none of them really are headed in the same direction.

Raleigh: So what you're saying is they were One Direction before there was One Direction. Just... crazy kids thrown together.

Sydnee: That—that's—they could've been, instead of the O'Needers —

Raleigh: [simultaneously] Reaching stardom.

Sydnee: —becoming The Wonders, they could've become One Direction, but instead they changed it to Wonders. Um... I—can I just say, I think—

Raleigh: [simultaneously] That's really—

Sydnee: —Steve Zahn in this movie is one of my favorite performances in anything ever. [laughs] [pause]

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: He's Lenny.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Raleigh: I had to take a minute to look who that was. Yeah.

Sydnee: So, he is hilarious. From the moment that he's, like, a guy in a really nice camper wants to put our song on the radio, I just—[laughs]. Everything he does cracks me up. He has so many moments in it that are hilarious. Um... I love his whole thing. I think he is one of the funniest characters in anything, as he is in this role. I forget—

Taylor: Go ahead.

Sydnee: Oh, go ahead.

Taylor: No, please continue. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: I was gonna say, and I also forget that that's Ethan Embry.

Taylor: Well, I was gonna say, 'cause I—I love Ethan Embry, and I loved him in this movie. He was maybe my favorite band member. And it didn't realize it till the end that he was never named. He is credited as—

Sydnee: TV player.

Taylor: Yeah. Just the bass player.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Rileigh: Oh, that's really funny. I didn't even notice that until I'm looking at the cast.

Sydnee: Yeah. He's really good at disappearing into the role and, like, really becoming it. And you do, you forget it's Ethan Embry, and I'd say that's true for him a lot. Steve Zahn is Steve Zahn, but man, he's so funny.

Taylor: [laughs] The only part—

Sydnee: Captain—

Taylor: Go ahead.

Sydnee: All I was gonna say is Captain Geech and the Shrimp Shack Shooters? That scene kills me!

Taylor: I was gonna say, the only thing that's hard to believe is it's kind of an ongoing joke. Like, "Oh, the rest of the band is so much more attractive than him, and he's always trying to get a lady." It's like, that's not... that is not true at all. [laughs] That is an incredibly attractive man.

Sydnee: Yeah! No, I think—I think he's adorable, and funny. Um, when he says that his greatest—that interview on the radio when he says his greatest influence is Captain Geech and the Shrimp Shack Shooters, gosh. He's so—his character is so funny. He's so well written. Um, what do you all think—it was funny, because I always felt frustrated that I don't feel like they let Liv Tyler be much of anything. Her character, Faye, doesn't get to be... a fully-fledged human.

Taylor: Well, I mean, I would go as far as to say that the romance element felt really... kind of forced?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Like, I agree. Faye is there. She's adorable. I wanted the world for her. She's, you know, very enthusiastic about the band. Um, they don't... I mean, it's kind of implied that maybe her boyfriend is cheating on her, but it's never really explicit. They break up, and then she's just sort of picked up by Guy Patterson. Like, it's a bit of a... what is it when a woman has no agency in a movie? It's a sexy lampshade situation.

Sydnee: She's a sexy lamp.

Raleigh: Sexy lamp, yeah.

Taylor: She is. And that makes me sad. Because it's Liv Tyler!

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: That's what kills me, too. It's not... how do you use Liv Tyler as a sexy lamp? I mean, don't get me wrong. I'm not saying she's not sexy. But like, how is she the sexy lamp?

Taylor: Because you also have Charlise Theron as a sexy lamp in this movie. You had two amazing powerhouse women, just kind of floating. I mean, looking lovely. Doing amazing. But, you know.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: This movie did not have the most, like, evolved women characters in it.

Sydnee: No.

Raleigh: No. They needed girlfriend characters for the men, so they existed to be extensions of the men. But they were not written to be their own characters.

Taylor: Yeah. It was disinterested woman and interested woman.

Raleigh: Yes.

Sydnee: Yes. Which I should say, like, on a side note, I talk about this movie being wholesome. I'm using that word, "wholesome," in all of the connotations with that word I think, which sometimes are negative. It is not in any way fairly representative in terms of gender, or race. I think that if you're a straight, cis, white dude, you probably have a lot to connect with and, like, feel represented by. And everyone else is not really in that equation. [laughs]

Taylor: That was the only part—well, and I don't know. But that was something that I was thinking of. Like, to get that kind of chance, that swing at success, and then everybody just kind of treats it like, oh, like, you know. The one guy quits. The one guy... you know, flits off to Disney World. The other guy goes to Las Vegas. Guy Patterson is like, "Okay." Just moves on, drums elsewhere. Like, I think it is a very specific perspective. Like, you can walk away from a major opportunity and know "I'll be okay." Whereas lots of other demographics it's like, this is the only chance I get and I'm gonna treasure it. I do think that's a very specific perspective in this movie.

Raleigh: It's—

Sydnee: I—yeah.

Raleigh: I was just gonna—it's right on the line between almost feeling like—it's not satire. But it could get there.

Taylor: Yeah. [laughs]

Raleigh: Like, I feel like if they just took it, like, one step further, it would not be taking itself seriously. It would entirely be satirical.

Sydnee: No—you know why? Justin pointed this out as we were watching it. Because if you take it one step further, you've made Wayne's World.

Taylor: Yeah. [laughs]

Raleigh: Well, you're not wrong. Yeah.

Sydnee: You know?

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: It's a similar—except Wayne's World knows what it is. [laughs]

Raleigh: If this movie knew what it was and accepted that, it would be Wayne's World. I'm not saying it's a bad thing.

Sydnee: No.

Raleigh: Like, it does feel very 90's. Like, I feel like it wouldn't feel as representative if it wasn't what it was. But yeah. It gets close.

Sydnee: No, it's tough, because the parts of it—like, the music is good, and that's a tough pitch. Like, "Write a song for a movie that is supposed to be believable as a song that would become, like, an overnight number one single that everybody in the country is listening to, and it has to be of this era." Like, not only write that song, but write a song that makes sense in the early 60's catching on like that, and it does. Like, I think the song, That Thing You Do, meets all of those marks. It is genuinely a good song. Um, I think that's impressive. I think that, like, you've got people who are turning in some really amazing performances. So, I mean, it's funny. There's lots of cute things. People love that aesthetic, that early 60's aesthetic. It's got that.

Raleigh: I mean, even just looking at the poster. Like, that just—like, the colors, and the outfits, and the... it makes you happy.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. I do find, like, as I get older—so, Charlise Theron plays Tina, who is Guy's girlfriend at the very beginning of the film, and then dumps him. Um... I found myself thinking—so, like, Guy and Tina are dating. We don't know how long. They're supposed to go to, as she puts it, like, dinner and the club, for a date. And instead he's like, "Well, I've agreed to play with these guys in this local band. We're gonna go play a talent show at the, like, high school gym or something? Um... so I want you to come to that instead for our date."

And she's not thrilled about it. And we, the audience, are supposed to be like, "[sighs] Ditch this chick. She doesn't get it."

And I'm thinking, "I get it, Tina." [laughs] I—if I was dating a guy who was, like, a grown up who was like, "Hey, I just joined a band, and I... I want you to come to the talent show at the high school gym with me."

I would have a moment of like, "What—what now?" [laughs]

Raleigh: I like that you added, "And we were adults," because you definitely did have that boyfriend.

Sydnee: I know! But that—

Taylor: [crosstalk] I feel like this is...

Raleigh: When you were a young adult.

Taylor: Mmm, you were an adult.

Sydnee: I was, like, 15!

Taylor: Mmm... hmm... When you had a punk rock boyfriend?

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Oh, we broke up when I was 19, so like—

Raleigh: Oh, there you go. [laughs]

Taylor: Oh. Oh, alright. Well, that, I will say—

Sydnee: But you know what I'm saying?

Raleigh: I know what you mean.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: He's been in the military. He's been overseas stationed in Germany at some point, so he is ostensibly some number of years out of high school.

Taylor: But is it—Guy is supposed to be older than the rest of them, right? 'Cause they keep calling them teen sensations, which is a little hard to believe with the actors, because while they're all very handsome, they also do not look like teenagers. They look like they're solidly in their mid-20's at least.

Sydnee: Yes. Well, and I mean, I think Guy is supposed to be older because he's, like—his—they reference his brother—like... them—I don't remember. They make a reference that makes it sound like he's the older guy in town that they knew siblings of or something. I don't know. Like, they make that reference, and then they also talk about his time in the military. So he's had enough time to graduate high school, be in the military, and return. Um... I don't know. But I sympathize with Tina is all I could say. Was like—and then he's like, "Can you continue to come to my gigs now?"

And she's not, like, all about coming to all his gigs and, like... like, I mean, 'cause we're supposed to contrast her with Faye, who Faye is happy to sort of abandon all of her personal... [pause] hopes and dreams and wants, whatever those may be, to just sort of follow Jimmy, right? Like, whatever she needs to do. She'll be the costumer. She'll do his hair. She'll do makeup. She'll carry things. She's just happy to be there. Tina's like, "Mmm, not my scene. I'm gonna date a dentist." And I kind of don't blame her.

Taylor: Well, when that dentist walks out of the office, you know, it's a very... I think—

Sydnee: He's a—

Taylor: It's a very attractive dentist. [laughs]

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: He's a dreamy dentist.

Raleigh: [crosstalk]

Taylor: They cast a very dreamy dentist.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: So, like, all I'm saying is, like, I don't blame Tina. As a young person I was probably like, "Ugh. That girl just doesn't get it." And now I'm like, "I get it, Tina."

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: You're a grown up. You just want to, you know, do grown up stuff. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: No, I felt... I was fully on Team Tina, and I was fully on Team Faye. I just wish there had been some agency for Faye where it's just like, oh, the one guy dropped you. Here's another guy... to pick you up. And you're kissing him. Okay!

Sydnee: It's really a shame, because I love Liv Tyler. And yes, she is incredibly—I realized that, like, early on. Like, I really was obsessed with that Faye character in this movie. And it took me many years to understand why. [laughs]

Taylor: 'Cause it's Liv Tyler!

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: 'Cause I had a crush on Liv Tyler! And I didn't know!

Taylor: [simultaneously] She's just beautiful.

Sydnee: At the time I'm like, "God, I just want to watch—why don't they put Liv Tyler in the movie more?"

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: "That's such a good character! I really want to see this character [through laughter] in the movie more!" It took me many years to figure that out. It's a shame, 'cause she is. She's gorgeous. But, like, what does she get to do? What does she get to be?

Taylor: Well, and I just—I wish—like, I was like—in my head, again, like, from my youth I remembered that there was more of a courtship between her and Guy. Like, "Oh, she's dating Jimmy, so she can't. This can't happen. But it could."

And it's like, no, there's not. Other than, like, he gets her in the car... when her boyfriend abandons her, when the crowd is crowding around them. And then, like, he tells her she looks nice when nobody else does. Like, that's—those are some crumbs, Faye. Faye, you deserve better!

Raleigh: That's what I had had in my head, too. Was like, there was like this forbidden almost-romance between them until, you know, there was actually one.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: And just not—not anything.

Raleigh: No.

Sydnee: No.

Taylor: They're kinda good friends. That's—he's a good friend to her, here and there.

Sydnee: Well, and I—I will say, like, I don't know if that—if the whole dialogue between them at the end with the, like, "When were you last kissed? What was—was Tina a good kisser?" This whole kissing dialogue. I don't know if we were supposed to, like... if that was—I don't know what I was supposed to do with that. I've never quite understand why that's the way things work out there at the end. Like, I feel a little weird about it. It's not sweeping, romantic words in my mind. Like... "Was Tina a good kisser?"

"Yep."

"Okay. Well... " [laughs] What—why are we so focused on kissing right now?
[laughs]

Rileigh: Well, it feels like the end to a movie that's about a love story, or like a romance. And that is not... I don't... I don't get that that's what this movie is. Like, yes, there is, like, romance. But that's not the main through-plot of the movie. And I feels like an end to a movie that's, like, a love story. It feels odd. It feels out of place. I agree.

Sydnee: It does. Because it's—I mean, I think that you can make the argument that Guy's character sets things in motion. He plays the song too fast at the gym. And that... version of the song is way better, and everybody likes it, and then they are propelled on to success. But, like, once he does that initial thing, everybody's just sort of... drifting. Like, there's no—you know what I mean? Like, who's the bad guy? Who's the good guy? I don't know. Everybody kind of drifts until they head their own directions. It's just sort of like, here's a snapshot of something that happened in a band's life, maybe, and then they move on.

Taylor: Yeah. 'cause there's, like, a bit of a push back against the music industry, but it's not harsh enough to really make a statement. Because it's like, "Oh, now we're never gonna get to record our own music, and now we have to record covers." And that's why Jimmy quits.

Which again, like, in my memory it's like, "Oh, Jimmy was a—a crappy character. Like, he was, like... egotistical and self-obsessed." Like, no, he was pretty straightforward. Like, "I just want to play my own music. You're gonna force me not to, so... I'm gonna walk away."

Like, it could've gone harder in that if it wanted to make that statement. But... it didn't. It just...

Sydnee: Well, and it was—I think that they contrast that with, like, Steve Zahn's character who, like, gets what this is.

Taylor: Yeah. [simultaneously] It's just a ride.

Sydnee: This is just a ride. This is a ride. And it's not—we have no control, and it will end, and the best we can do is have fun with it until... you know, until we've got something better going. Um, and Jimmy didn't want that.

And Guy, I guess—you know, in any movie when someone's into jazz, that's, like—we use that as code for, like, they're more—they have more sophisticated music taste than the rest of us. [laughs]

Taylor: Yeah. Yeah.

Sydnee: [laughs] So...

Raleigh: I don't know. I appreciate that La La Land said "Oh, you think that people who like jazz are supposed to be the more sophisticated? We're gonna make Ryan Gosling like jazz and be really annoying about it." [laughs quietly]

Taylor: This felt like the same character in two different movies, a little bit. [laughs]

Raleigh: Yeah. Yeah.

Sydnee: Right? Yeah. I felt that too. I, um... I don't know. And this is—part of this is my own bias, as I've said on this show before. I don't enjoy—I like songs that have distinct beginning, middle, and ends. I guess I like pop music. [laughs]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: I like—I like a chorus. I love a—I love a refrain. I like lyric—

Taylor: You like musical theater.

Raleigh: A bridge.

Sydnee: I like lyrics. Um, a lot. I like to know the lyrics. I don't like songs that wander very much. Jazz has never been my thing. And jazz also, like—it

makes my brain feel too stimulated a lot of the times. So... but that's just me. I understand it's difficult. I understand it's hard. I understand that Guy is the most talented musician. I get it. [laughs]

Taylor: Well, no. Jimmy is the talent. Guy is the smart one. Is the... is the brains. That's how Tom Hanks breaks it down.

Sydnee: Yeah. I don't know. I guess I took it as, like, Jimmy is the creative one, whereas Guy is the one with technical ability.

Taylor: Hmm.

Raleigh: Huh, I can see that. I, um, was wondering, watching this, what his would be like if you made this movie again. Like, if they rebooted That Thing You Do and made it modern in the year 2023. And I feel like it... you couldn't... unless you set it, again, in the 60's, like unless you continued to set it back then and just tried to make it a little bit more modern in terms of, like, women and relationships and stuff, there's just no way that so much of that would work today.

Sydnee: I mean, I would—you would hope that the women would be given agency to do their own things. I mean...

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: You know. I don't know. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: That's why I said—I know it's not set in the 90's. That's why I say it feels very 90's, 'cause it feels like this is a movie that could've only been created in that era of film.

Sydnee: I think that's true. I think it's true of a lot of 90's stuff. We're just supposed to get swept away by like, "Oh, the cute guy and the cute girl kiss at the end. It's adorable."

Raleigh: The stakes aren't super high, which I appreciate. 'Cause it's like, I don't have to—there's not a lot of thinking or stress involved. It just is a fun—it's a fun ride. It's just a little bit, you know, two hours of just a detour.

Taylor: Well, that's—I think that was the thing that felt off kilter to me. It's like, the stakes should be high.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Like, getting a swing at, like, fame and like, oh, man, you don't have to worry about debt or, like, you'll have security and safety. I'm like, I guess in the 60's, and specifically for, like... I don't know. The main characters of this movie, like, it's not that—"Oh, I'll be fine either way." And you will be. 'Cause that's the world you live in. It's just not the world I live in. [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah. You'll be fine. I would like to think that if this movie was made in today's world, there are enough of us out there with podcasts—

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: —who have a basic understanding of, like, sound recording—

Raleigh: [laughs]

Taylor: What is... that threat?

Sydnee: —that—

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] What?

Taylor: [through laughter] "There are enough of us out there with podcasts," it just sounded like a threat. Sorry, please continue.

Sydnee: No! [laughs] That—that the scene where they record their hit song in a frickin' church...

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: 'Cause, like, I watched that now and I went—Justin walked in the room at that moment and I was like, "Okay. I'm not wrong. That would sound terrible, right?"

And he's like, "Oh yeah. You would never do that."

I'm like, "No! You would never—" I understand it's to reinforce the point that he's, like... a very conservative Christian dude that's recording them—Chris Isaak, by the way—who's recording them, and who is, like—who usually records gospel choirs or whatever. He doesn't record them in the church! It would sound terrible!

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: You'd think he would know that.

Sydnee: All that echoing?

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: It would sound awful! Anyway. [laughs] No one would buy that record.

Raleigh: You're right. Yeah.

Sydnee: I think we all know sound better than that. That's all I'm saying.

Raleigh: Now we do.

Sydnee: Now we do. But thank you—thank you all for watching That Thing You Do. I will still say, like, the soundtrack is great. Um, it's—it's funny. It's fluffy. When he says "He's off to write his hit song, Alone in my Principles," that's hilarious.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: So there's a lot of little funny bits. I would not say that it's, like, changing the world with any great themes or revelations, but it's a funny, cute movie.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: It's stylish, the characters are likable. It's—yeah.

Raleigh: The music is great.

Taylor: It is a very Tom Hanks film. 'Cause it's just like, there's nothing—it's just nice. It's very nice.

Sydnee: It's just nice. Uh, what's next, Tey?

Taylor: We're gonna talk about another cool band. Uh, Me First and the Gimme Gimmes. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: I'm so excited.

Taylor: It's like a super group cover band. Uh... they're probably still—I don't know if they're still making music. But there was a lot of—many CDs in our youth that we listened to, so I don't know. We'll kind of do an overview, because I feel like it's easy to listen to cover music. But I specifically—Raleigh, I know this is new to you, and I specifically want you to listen to Are A Drag, which is their show tunes cover album.

Raleigh: Oh my gosh. Okay. Done.

Sydnee: You will like it.

Raleigh: I'm so ready

Sydnee: Well, thank you both. Thank you, listeners. That Thing You Do will be on TBS, um...

[all laugh]

Sydnee: Probably. I don't know.

Taylor: It's also on Hulu.

Sydnee: Yeah, it's also on Hulu. Um... [laughs] uh, thank you both. Um, you should go to Maximumfun.org if you want to listen to a lot of great podcasts. You can email us at stillbuffering@maximumfun.org. You can tweet at us @stillbuff. 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 am Raleigh Smirl.

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Taylor: And I'm Taylor Smirl.

Raleigh: I am still buffering...

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

[theme music plays]

Taylor: [singing] Doing that thing you do.

Sydnee: [simultaneously singing] You do.

[all laugh]

Raleigh: That's good.

[music plays]

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

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

So, after you've completely finished to listening to every single one of all of our other shows, why not join the McElroy brothers every week for *My Brother, My Brother, and Me*?

[music and ad end]

[chord]

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