

Still Buffering 388: The Donnas

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[theme music plays]

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

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Taylor: And I'm Taylor Smirl.

Rleigh: Sydnee, you made a ding and it threw me off the beginning.

Sydnee: I know. You counted my count.

Rleigh: I counted too many times. And then I forgot my name.

Sydnee: I'm sor—

Taylor: It's—

Sydnee: You forgot your name?

Rleigh: Just for a second. But then it came out right.

Taylor: You said it right, though.

Rleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: You said the right one.

Rleigh: It came out right.

Taylor: It's alright.

Sydnee: There's always a part of me that almost says Sydnee Smirl.

Taylor: I mean, you could. That's alright.

Sydnee: Just go by my maiden name for this show?

Taylor: Just this show. It would maybe flow a little bit better. All Smirls, no waiting.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: It would flow better. That's absolutely true. I've listened to that; like, the cadence of it. It's too choppy.

Raleigh: You should just change your name back for that reason.

Sydnee: Just for that.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: [laughs] "I'm sorry, Justin. For one hour every week, uh, I am not your wife."

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee Smirl. Well, I mean, at least—we had considered the hyphenating, and it just seemed like a lot of name. Like... Justin was up for whatever and I was like, "I don't know."

Smirl-McElroy is a lot for people to have to say every time.

Taylor: I just don't know why you didn't make a fusion, you know?

Raleigh: [simultaneously] Did you consider combining them? Yes.

Taylor: Yeah! SmackElroy!

Raleigh: That's what—yeah. Yeah!

Sydnee: Yeah. We talked about that. We also talked about both of us becoming Smirl-McElroy.

Taylor: I like the fusion.

Sydnee: So he would take my name and I would take his, and we would have a new name.

Raleigh: Or SmackElroy.

Sydnee: SmackElroy.

Taylor: Or—or Mirl?

Sydnee: You'd have to, like—Mirl. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Mc... McMirl? [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Mc—McMirl?

Raleigh: McElsmirl?

Taylor: There you go. That sounds—that could be a name.

Sydnee: [simultaneously] McMirl would be wild.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Uh... yeah. I mean, you know the crappy thing is, though, um... to do that kind of thing you have to petition the court. Even if, like, you're getting—when you get married you're supposed to get, like, a freebie name change, 'cause typically you have to pay for that. You have to petition a court and pay to change your name. And when you get married it's supposed to be, like, a perk is that you get a freebie name change. But it's sexist. 'Cause, like, only I was able to change my name for free. Justin wasn't.

Taylor: Wow.

Raleigh: Well, that checks out.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: And I don't know—now, that being said, it would've been interesting to ask, what if I wanted to change my name to something other than either of our names?

Raleigh: Do I still get a freebie?

Sydnee: Yeah. Like, is that still free?

Taylor: Just like, I'm getting married. Let me—I'm gonna cash this in.

Sydnee: Yeah. Like, do I—could I—if I had gone in and said "I'm getting married, and here's my marriage certificate. Blah, blah, blah. And I want to change my name to something completely different." Do I pay for that?

That's an inter—I don't know. Legally, I don't know. That seems like your area, Raleigh.

Raleigh: I don't know.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly]

Taylor: [laughs] Well, there's the answer.

Raleigh: I mean, when you're in law school, man, you don't learn about actual laws and specifics like that. You'd think you would. You don't.

Taylor: Those laws differ state to state, too, right?

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I'm sure, yeah.

Taylor: 'Cause I know, like, getting your name changed in, like—if you were born in New York City and your birth certificate's from New York City, it's—or New York—it's very easy to get your name changed for, like, you know, in my case for a trans person that doesn't want to go by a deadname.

But West Virginia, like, I've gotta go and I've gotta, like—people can show up and be like, "No. I don't think that they should be able to do that."

Which seems wild to me. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I will say that I think that it can be very difficult, but I've had several—like, I know people who have managed to do it with rela—I don't know want to say it's ever easy. Nothing—and obviously it's West Virginia, you know. It's harder, generally, for my transgender patients.

But they have been able to do it relatively unhindered.

Taylor: Well, yeah. I mean, I—

Sydnee: Relatively.

Taylor: I think it would be weirdo behavior to show up and be like, "I don't think you should change your name because—[laughs] I'm not—I vote against it."

Sydnee: Can you imagine? I'm sure someone would. I'm sure someone—

Taylor: It's happened.

Sydnee: I mean, I'm sure that's a po—I'm sure it's happened. I'm sure it's happened.

Raleigh: Well, I—yeah. That... I can say for sure, 100%, personal experience, that has happened. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Well, and I know that the stipulation—I think it's designed so that someone who's trying to hide their identity because they've committed crimes is

allowed—or it's an opportunity for people to come forward and be like, "This is why that person is trying to change their name."

But I think it could perhaps get misused. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Sure. 100%.

Raleigh: I always think about that when I watch that one Friends episode where Phoebe gets married and goes in to change her name to Paul Rudd's last name, but instead changes her whole name to Princess Consuela Bananahammock.

Sydnee: Yeah...

Raleigh: I always think, like, it can't have been that easy to just change your entire first, middle, and last name, right? [laughs]

Sydnee: I want—well, and I mean, that's a good question. Like, is that legally accurate for the state of New York? Could she just go in and petition—like, instead of getting a freebie last name, could you get a freebie whole name?

Taylor: Well, I mean, maybe? Maybe their laws are a lot—I don't know. I haven't looked into it in New York.

Raleigh: I don't know, man.

Taylor: If they did it on Friends, it must be sound legal territory, I'm sure.

Raleigh: It must be true, yep. Yep. That's what I always say.

Sydnee: Well, that's what we know about Friends. It's an accurate representation of what life is like in New York City.

Taylor: All aspects. Absolutely.

Sydnee: There's nothing about it that feels off whatsoever.

Taylor: No. No.

Sydnee: Um...

Taylor: Everybody has a monkey, it's true.

Sydnee: [laughs] Well, and I mean, like—

Raleigh: And everyone has giant apartments.

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: And jobs they don't have to be at. [laughs]

Sydnee: And they're all white! [laughs]

Taylor: Yeah. Yeah, mainly white people here in this city. [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah. That's an accurate representation.

Taylor: Straight white people.

Sydnee: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Clearly.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Well... [laughs] I don't know. I could go back and ask, but I'll be honest. When I was trying to change—initially when both Justin and I were trying to change both of our last names, the kind of response we were getting at the social security office... it's just not worth it.

Like, first of all, why would you both want to change your—that's not how it works. He doesn't have to do that. Why would he do that? What is the—I don't understand. And then the, like—like, the—you can see the sort of realization. And I think this is probably unique to living not just in West Virginia but in areas like this, in areas that are redder states, more conservative.

A lot of people who assume you're gonna be on that level when you walk in to interact with them. And you see this dawning realization in their eyes, like, "Oh, you're one of those. Oh."

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: "Oh, you're one of those. Okay. Okay! Okay, I know what's happening!"

Taylor: I wanna know, what is the blank though, there in their mind? What is "one of those?" [laughs quietly] Just... someone that lives in 2024? Just... not—not a—[wheezes]

Sydnee: I would bet it depends—like, the exact word that pops into their head is probably different depending on their specific, like, prejudices.

Raleigh: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: But I would bet—I would bet, like, feminist is a common one. I would bet heathen is a common one.

Taylor: Heathen! Heathen!

Sydnee: Yeah!

Raleigh: I always liked that word.

Sydnee: A heathen.

Taylor: I just started reading a book on—it's specifically about Loki in Norse mythology, and the writer is a heathen. And I did not realize that that was a term used to recognize a very specific type of, like, religious... uh, denomination.

Sydnee: Oh, I didn't know that either.

Raleigh: Oh.

Taylor: Yeah. So now—I mean, it makes sense why Christians would use that term in a derogatory manner, because they took all of the old world religions and tried to convert everything to Christianity, so heathen now, you know, is a derogatory term. But no, it's a term for people that practice a certain type of religion. I didn't know that. I like it more now. [laughs]

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: That is really interest. No, yeah, I would say that when people level that at someone here it's more just, like, generally godless, you know?

Taylor: Yeah, yeah. It's not godless. I worship the old gods. [laughs]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: That would be wild. Although, man—see, that's a whole dangerous thing, too.

Taylor: [through laughter] Yeah! Don't say that in court!

Sydnee: Huh?

Taylor: I said don't say that in court, definitely. Just for your little casual name change. [laughs]

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: No. No. And that gets into—you've gotta be careful with that too. It took me a while to realize—I had some people who I was taking care of who were telling me how they were, like—they worship the Norse gods, and that Norse mythology was very important to them, and that they identified—

Taylor: Ohh.

Sydnee: Yeah, yeah, yeah. See, you start going—

Taylor: Yeah, I know—I know where you're going with this. [laughs]

Raleigh: Ohh...

Sydnee: That's the—I didn't know at first. I was like, "That's really fascinating! That's really inter—oh, really? That's interesting! Tell me more about it." [laughs]

Rileigh: It took me a second, but I got there.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: I will say, the book I'm reading does recognize that, that there's a whole lot of ol' white supremacists that like—the like the Thor's Hammer and they like the fact that these are all—all these gods are white, right?

And they're like, "No, that's not—you're ignoring everything. You're not—please don't do this." [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: That was a real bummer when I found that out. I had no idea, and then I learned that. And obviously that's not, like, everybody who's into Norse mythology, clearly. But, like, that—the people that I was talking to, that definitely was what they were saying. Like, that was absolutely, 100% part of it, I just didn't realize that at first.

Um, and that was, like, right on the heels of us, like, finding out that genetically we've got a bunch of, like, Scandinavian in us. And I was like, "Oh, man. I didn't know."

Like, I thought that was really fascinating and, like, "Oh, I had no idea. Hm." [laughs quietly] "I'll go watch the movie Thor now."

Rileigh: "[holding back laughter] He's my—he's my ancestor."

Sydnee: "He's my ancestor!" [laughs]

Taylor: Yeah. [laughs] Well, I do think that's how Dad interpreted that. 'Cause Dad's the one that—he did the 23 and Me that revealed that thing, that stuff, right?

Sydnee: Well, I did too.

Taylor: Oh, okay.

Rileigh: Yeah. I was gonna say, I think it was me and Syd.

Taylor: I feel like that—

Raleigh: I don't think you could get Dad to spit in a tube.

Taylor: I don't know, I thought he did. Well... I feel like that just makes sense when you look at our Dad. Like, yeah, we could be related to Thor. [wheezes] That could be a lineage.

Sydnee: Yeah. I thought it kind of made sense. I was like, "That's kind of interesting. Okay, cool." And then...

Taylor: Well, there are definitely people of all—of all races and backgrounds and alignments that worship elements of Norse mythology, and also enjoy that culture, you know. It's just unfortunately the worst people in the world have hijacked a lot of the symbols and the imagery. It doesn't mean that the myths and the history is evil. It just means you gotta be real careful when you're—when you're, you know. [laughs] You're looking for tattoos.

A lot of horror stories out there of people that are like, "Oh, I just wanted to get Thor's hammer, and oh no!"

Raleigh: Oh no. Oh no!

Sydnee: Don't do that. Don't do that. No. And it—

Taylor: No, no. Just—that's—anything Celtic, Norse, anything, just double-double-triple check your symbols.

Sydnee: Yeah. Yeah. Well, 'cause I mean, that's the important thing about symbols. Like, even if it's not what you mean, once culture and society has started to adopt that, that is what I think of when I see that symbol. That's the connection I make. You have to accept that reality. And so do I want to put a symbol on my body, even if I don't intend it in this way, if there are gonna be people who feel, like, scared or, you know, that it's an act of aggression towards them when they see it. Like, is that worth it? Do I really want that?

Like, maybe the confederate flag would be a good... [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Taylor: I mean, well, yeah. I think that that's, you know... the people that you're gonna attract versus the people you're gonna repel?

Raleigh: Yeah. That one—

Taylor: You're—yeah. [laughs]

Raleigh: That one's on one end of the spectrum, there.

Taylor: Yeah, I think it—

Sydnee: Well, I'm talking about the defense people—you know? The way people try to defend it.

Taylor: It's the same idea, exactly.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: I just use the Scandinavian lineage as my excuse for when people ask me why I'm so extremely pale, and I can't go in the sun without burning every single time. I say it was my viking ancestors. [laughs]

Taylor: I... yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah, I mean...

Taylor: I use it to explain why I can hold my alcohol. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: That too. [laughs]

Taylor: It's like, Irish and Scandinavian. I'm—I'm bred for this, baby.

Raleigh:

Sydnee: With a big chunk of Scottish, too, so.

Taylor: Yeah, yeah. I just... [laughs] the international drunks got together and made our family. Good job!

[all laugh]

Sydnee: I got a lot of enzymes.

Taylor: [laughs loudly]

Sydnee: A lot of enzymes. [laughs quietly] That's all it is.

Rileigh: I'm gonna start telling people that. "Oh, where's your family from?" "Oh, well, you know, I got a lot of enzymes. A lot of enzymes, a lot of different cultures."

Taylor: "What does that tell you?"

Sydnee: A lot of enzymes.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Uh, well, I don't have a transition here.

Rileigh: Enzymes. [laughs]

Taylor: We're not talking about enzymes. I mean, The Donnas have a lot of enzymes. They seem to party a lot.

Sydnee: They seem cool. They seem like they can hang. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Uh, yeah. I brought The Donnas Get Skintight album, which was released in '99. On Spotify it lists it as 2019, but I think that's a rerelease. But it was released in '99.

Rileigh: Okay. I was wondering about that and thought I'd listened to the wrong album when I realized it said 2019. [laughs]

Taylor: No, no. I looked at it and was like, "No, that's not possible. I was definitely listening to this album when I was 12. That is not possible." [laughs]

Uh, no. They rereleased a bunch of their music not too long ago. But, uh...

Raleigh: Okay.

Sydnee: For, like, a 20 year anniversary?

Taylor: I guess so, yeah. And they're not—now, they're not active anymore. Uh, they didn't have any sort of horrible breakup, they just don't play out anymore. But, uh, they formed in '93. They all knew each other as kids, like, growing up.

Um, and I like—[laughs quietly] I like that before they were The Donnas, they first went by Ragady Anne, and then they went by The Electrocutes.

Sydnee: Aww.

Taylor: And they were still playing as The Electrocutes while they were also playing as The Donnas, 'cause basically they invented The Donnas to be their outlet for quote-unquote "softer music."

And by that not, like, soft music. But The Electrocutes were, like, a metal act. So they wanted to preserve their metal integrity, so then The Donnas were their way of playing, you know, a little bit more, like, classic chord progression punk rock. But then The Donnas were more successful than The Electrocutes, so they became The Donnas.

Sydnee: Yeah. I feel like that as I was listening through the album—'cause, like, based on titles, I recognized a handful of the songs right away, right? Like, I knew. Like, "Okay, yeah, I know these songs."

But then as I was listening through it, that music sort of permeated that time period. Like, it was everywhere. Like, I had heard pretty much every one of those songs at some point or other. Some of them obviously were much bigger than others, but I feel like they were everywhere for a minute.

Taylor: They—I mean, they were in a lot of, like, teen movie soundtracks, in a lot of teen movies.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Like, they definitely had—I think this was slightly before that. Like, *Get Skintight* was the first CD I bought of theirs, and definitely I played it a lot in your *Neon*. But I think it was probably their album that followed this that had some more of the mainstream hits. Because this was theirs on Lookout, which we listened to a lot of Lookout records back then. And I think after this, they signed to Atlantic. They eventually went to a bigger label, and that got them wider distribution. But I don't know.

This was—I mean, I like all their albums, and let's be honest, they all kind of sound similar. They have a vibe, and they stick to it. Their music becomes a little bit more unique as they go along, but I think it still sticks to the same vibe. So, you know, I think the whole discography is good.

Sydnee: It's interesting, yeah. I wonder—it's having me que—as you say that, Tey, I'm questioning, like, is my sense of how popular music was at that point in my life based on whether or not you played the CD in my *Neon*? Like, do I think music was ubiquitous because... [laughs quietly] it was playing in the car I drove everywhere?

Taylor: I mean... you know, they definitely—I'm trying to remember. We just watched a movie that they're the band in. Uh, we talked about it not too long ago.

But, uh, they were definitely—they popped up on a lot of—again, like, a lot of soundtracks. Well, they're at the end of, um—they're at the end of *Mean Girls*, right?

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: They have their cover of *Dancing With Myself*.

Raleigh: I'm looking at their Wikipedia.

Sydnee: That makes sense, them being at the end of Mean Girls.

Taylor: Yeah. I don't think they were ever, like, mainstream-mainstream at that period. I feel like they kind of had their moment. They opened for a lot of big bands, you know. But...

Sydnee: Well, and it's hard too, because, like, they have the kind of sound that I feel like I would argue is really easily recognizable.

Like, it's immediately like, once you've heard The Donnas and you know that a lot of Donnas songs sound kind of like that, then you're gonna have a lot of people who immediately can recognize 'em, which makes it seem like they're—you know what I mean? Like, their popularity goes up just from the fact that, like, everybody immediately goes "Oh, I know who that is."

If you play music that's more like, I don't know, it kind of sounds like other stuff that's out there at the moment, it's harder to make it—you know? To get everybody to know your name. 'Cause you're like, "Oh, I don't know. That's one of those bands that kind of sounds like that. You know."

I feel like I'm saying that a lot these days. Like, "Oh, you know, that's one of those bands. That there's, like... "

I feel like there are a bunch of bands where there's, like, a lot of people in 'em? They're pretty good. They sound nice. Like, one of those bands.

And The Donnas were always like, immediately, like, that's The Donnas.

Taylor: It's funny, 'cause I have a very distinct memory of listening to The Donnas in art class in maybe my sophomore year in high school and having some, like, quote-unquote "punk dude" be like, "Oh, The Donnas. They're just copycats of The Ramones. Like, I'm all for women making music but, like, don't copy something that already exists."

It's like... first off... 75% of punk rock is just copying The Ramones. The Ramones were just copying The Ramones, which was kind of just copying The Beach Boys, so everything is... is replication.

But also, like, they have—it's a unique sound that they are making. Like, yes, they're doing simple chord progressions. The topics of the song are not deep. It's like, "I wanna party! I wanna hook up with somebody! I'm angry! I... like meat!"

There's a lot of songs about meat. I don't know. That's a thing. [through laughter] But it's very simple ideas. And that is very punk rock.

But, like, they have a very distinct sound. I think the lead singer's voice is very iconic. Like, yeah, you know it's Donnas, and they have an identity in that.

Sydnee: Yeah. Well, I want to talk some more about some of the music and stuff. But before we do that...

Raleigh: Let's check the group message.

Sydnee: Yes. So, I was on a longish plane trip recently, and I don't think there's anything worse than when you're on a plane, you've got in your earbuds, you're relaxed, you're listening to your podcasts in my case, or maybe music for you, and one of 'em falls out of your ear and gets lost in your plane seat. Is there anything worse?

And they tell you specifically. They're like, "Please don't dig around in your plane seat. Please get a flight attendant to help you dig around in your plane seat."

And it's like, "Well, but you all are busy. And now what am I supposed to do? It's just in there for the rest of the flight and I've gotta sit here with one earbud."

Anyway. That didn't happen to me, 'cause of Raycon! Raycon earbuds are—they have optimized gel tips that are designed to fit comfortably in your ears and stay there, which is big for me, 'cause I guess my ears are weird shaped? I don't know.

But all other earbuds fall out, but not Raycons. They stick right in there where they're supposed to be so I can listen to my podcasts the whole flight, and I don't have to worry about trying to dig 'em out of the plane seats later.

The other great thing about Raycons is that they offer amazing quality audio at half the price of other premium audio brands, so you're not sacrificing quality, but

you are getting a better deal for that quality. They've got eight hours of play time, 32 hour battery life, you're not gonna have to worry. You know, they're gonna last you those longish flights. They're gonna last you car trips. They're gonna take you when you're out jogging, or just going about your day, whether you're studying or whatever. Your Raycons can hang with you the whole time.

And, uh, they've got noise isolation. They've got earbud tap functions. That noise isolation is so great, too, for traveling, for being in an airport and a plane, whatever, a bus, wherever you're going, to have that, too. It's so great. Um, and like I said, I cannot emphasize enough, they won't fall out of your ears the way that other earbuds, for me personally, tend to do.

So, Teylor, if our listeners want to check out Raycon, what should they do?

Teylor: They should go to buyraycon.com/buffering today to get 20% off your Raycon order, plus free shipping. That's right, you'll get 20% off and free shipping at buyraycon.com/buffering. Again, that's buyraycon.com/buffering.

Sydnee: I think that's what really sets it apart for me. 'cause I agree that, like, the music itself is similar to a lot of music I was listening to at that point. And I'm sure, like, if you are playing simple chords like that, it is gonna sound pretty similar. But, like, I don't know how much of pop music—there's that one YouTube video of those guys who play all those songs that are the exact same chord progression. You know what I'm talking about?

Teylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: I mean, so, like, how much of pop music are the same sort of chords? But her voice, the singer's voice, like, you hear it and you know exactly what you're listening to immediately. I felt like that was unique and stood out. Now, I do think after a while I need to hear something else. Like, it's the kind of music where I can listen to it for a while, and then I need some sort of variation. Like, I'm gonna put something else in to mix with these songs so that I have a little bit of back and forth. But I know right away what I'm listening to.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm. I, um, I was looking into their Wikipedia because I was intrigued when I saw that one of their songs was on Donkey Konga for the GameCube. That was a game I played very, very—like, a lot as a kid.

Sydnee: Yeah?

Rleigh: It was the one where you had the little bongos that you could hit. And then I was looking further, and their drummer, Torry Castellano, when they got back together to do, like, a greatest hits album I guess, um, had to retire because she hurt her shoulders from drumming incorrectly, 'cause she taught herself how to drum. So she had to retire as their drummer, and when she retired she went back to college at Stanford University, and then went to Harvard Law School.

Taylor: I saw that! I was like, "Oh, Rleigh would like this fact!" [laughs]

Rleigh: That's crazy!

Sydnee: Is she a practicing lawyer now?

Rleigh: That's all it tells me. I couldn't tell you.

Sydnee: That's cool.

Rleigh: Um, what comes next for Torry Castellano. I do think that's funny, though, and shows kind of like the, um... more... how do I—I don't know how to say that. The fact that she was self taught on the drums and was, like, holding the drumsticks incorrectly and that's how she hurt herself makes the band feel very, like... grassroots. You know what I mean? Like, obviously it was just people who started because they liked playing music together, not because they all, like, were really, really great musicians that wanted to be famous and were like, "Okay. Here's how we market ourselves and package ourselves to be the most famous."

You know?

Sydnee: Yeah. Well, I mean, it's a very punk rock kind of thing, too. "I don't know how to do this but I'm gonna figure it out myself, and even if it hurts I'm gonna keep doing it, because I refuse to learn how."

Like, I don't know. And I feel like there was also that—and Taylor, you know way more about music and the history, like, the progression of it than I do. But I also,

like, having lived through that time period and then sort of... been peripherally involved with, like, the garage band kind of scene, at least locally...

Taylor: You went to some shows at the YWCA. [laughs]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: I—I traveled. I went to shows on the—on the road.

Taylor: I know, I know.

Sydnee: [laughs] But I—I got a sense that part of music at the moment was sort of this, like, almost ironic detachment from, like, "We're not making music. We're just, y'know, playing music. Like, it's not music, it's music."

It was almost like, "We're not trying too hard, because we're not taking ourselves too seriously," but it was very serious. There was this whole, like... and I almost feel like the singing that they do, that The Donnas have, like, that kind of just, like, monotone kind of thing, is that vibe.

It's like... you know. Like, don't take yourself too seriously. It's just music. You know.

Taylor: Yeah. I do—yeah. Like, we're not making art, and we're not making product. We're making music, and it's its own thing.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Yeah. I think that—I mean, on one end that's very, again—like, that's kind of the punk rock ethos. Like, The Germs famously didn't play their instruments at their first show. They didn't know how. They eventually learned and they actually got pretty good, but that's not—not knowing how to play the guitar does not exclude you from playing the guitar in a punk rock band. [laughs] You just have to want to be in a punk rock band. That's it. Um, and I think—I don't know. I was thinking about this.

Back in that time period, in the '90s, late '90s, early 2000s, uh, the concept of selling out was such a big idea, you know? Like, staying true to your roots or selling out. And, like, selling out was a bad thing. And now I feel like selling out is the goal of any—like, music is designed as a product these days. Most of the artists that we see that get big, their goal is to get big. Their goal is to play stadiums. Their goal is to... be mega hits. That concept of, like, you can just play in a band with your friends and tour around in a van and have a good time, that can be your life, like, that's kind of not—I mean, it still happens. There are definitely people out there doing that. But there's not that, like, kind of stank on selling out that there used to be.

I don't know if that's a good or a bad thing, but it's definitely a difference.

Sydnee: I think it's tricky, 'cause I think on some level what you're talking about is, like, music becoming a little more, like, egalitarian. Like, if—okay. If you look at, like, the hair bands of the 80's and stuff, you've got a bunch of people who are—I mean, they're good at playing instruments. They're very good at what they're doing. They trained, they learned, they studied. You know, they play these incredible guitar solos that, like, obviously you have to be skilled to do. And so the bar to enter the industry would be very high if that's—if music is this, not a lot of people can create music.

So what punk does is say, "Well, anybody can create music." Like you said, you don't even have to play your instruments. And so all of a sudden you got a lot more people who can create music and art, which is really cool. And so you get a lot more voices and sounds and, like, things shift in terms of—because if it doesn't take that level of skill, a lot more people can do it.

But then with the selling out thing, I don't know. It's tough. 'Cause, like, I don't know about the concept of selling out. Everybody's gotta pay the bills.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: But on the flip side, if that's what it takes now to succeed in the industry, if that's the goal and if selling out has no stigma on it, then does music start to become more homogenized again? Do we start to go back to, like, "Well, then let's make the music that sells. If selling is not a big deal, like if it doesn't matter,

nobody'll judge you for it, then I wanna make the music that sells, 'cause I wanna be rich and famous and play stadiums too." You know? I don't know.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I mean, there's always TikTok, I guess. Everybody can make music on TikTok.

Taylor: Yeah. Well, but then that's—you know, again, you're having to use the app to get famous, and you're having to design very—like, people write songs to get TikTok famous. You have to have a very specific length, catchy hook, like, phrase that people will replicate. And I think that that is part—that goes into the writing process. Like, "I have to write my song so that it has that... what, 15 second clip that people are gonna want to lip sync to."

And I'm not saying—like, that's not—I'm not judging it. If you're making art and you're doing something that makes you happy, do it however you want to do it, but I do think it drives the industry in a way that it didn't used to be driven that way.

And I think that, coupled with how much music is kind of backwards engineered, you're not going into clubs and finding musicians that are out there playing, you're bringing in performers, putting them in a band together and saying, "This is the new product we're selling." Which is a big part of the music industry these days. And that's... I mean, that's, you know, unfortunate. Because it does sort of leave the people that are just—like, there should be a place for people that don't want to play stadiums and want to stay true to their art, but also do want to be able to pay their bills.

It's just like the separation and the ability to, like, afford things in general in this country. We're just not having that middle group that can just cut a living doing what they like.

Raleigh: Yeah. It's interesting, 'cause I think you can even see that same thing with, like, TikTok and Instagram and kind of the homogenization of music, even with people who are already established as, like, musicians and maybe have already made money. I was thinking specifically of, like, Sam Smith released that song, Unholy, and the chorus of it came out before the song, and the chorus blew

up majorly on TikTok, and everyone was lip syncing to it, and everyone was obsessed. And the actual song came out, and when people heard the rest of it they were disappointed.

They were like, "Oh, well, the chorus is so great and the rest of it isn't. I don't like the rest of it. I'm just gonna go back to listening to the TikTok sound and, like, watching TikToks with it. I'm not gonna actually listen to the song."

And it's crazy 'cause it's like, I have listened to Sam Smith for a very, very long time and really, really like his music, but... it was like, people forgot about all of the actual other art and music he had made, because this one TikTok sound blew up. You know?

Sydnee: Well, and I wonder if that's, like, a natural progression of, like—we've talked about before how when you purchased physical media, you bought an album. And so—I mean, if I'm gonna pay, I don't know, what would it have been? Like, \$12 for a CD, probably? Probably about right. 12.14, something like that. The really expensive—like, when something first came out it might be, like, 21.99 or something. [laughs quietly] But, like—

Raleigh: Crazy that CDs are cheaper now. [laughs]

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: But, like—so you buy the CD, you're gonna take it home. You're gonna listen to the whole thing. Like, you just spent money on it. You probably only know one or two songs from the radio at that point. But you're gonna listen to it all, and you're gonna experience the whole album, which I think a lot of artists intended for you to do at the time. They knew you were gonna buy the whole thing. They knew you were gonna buy the album, the CD, the tape, whatever, and they wanted to send you on some sort of musical journey, story, whatever, with the whole thing.

That sort of broke down with all the different ways we download music, because now you just hear the song. And so does that make the whole album not as important, as a piece of art?

And then you get TikTok, which takes the song apart, so now you don't even have to have a whole song to be successful. You just have the chorus or whatever. And I don't know. I don't wanna—like, I have no, like, purist sort of like, "[mocking] Well, that's not how music is."

I'm not trying to get that way, but like, is that how we're supposed to consume music? I don't know. I guess however you want to consume it is fine.

Taylor: No, I agree. I'm trying to avoid the old fogey arguments here. [laughs] Like, I'm trying not to be—

Sydnee: Me too, me too.

Taylor: —old and bitter. 'Cause there's a part of me that does feel like, "That's bad, right?"

When you used to buy the CD or the album and listen to the whole thing, sometimes that weird B track would hit you. And like, maybe this isn't for everybody, but this is for me. And these one of those unique things that you can do as an artist, right? Like, not everything needs to appeal to billions of people. Sometimes you write something, or you draw something, or you make something that someone goes, "This speaks to me, specifically."

I've had those experiences where, you know, you listen through a CD and that one weird song that nobody else likes you're like, "Nah, but this one."

And we're kind of losing that. And then also, yeah. Like, there's something about listening to the buildup of a song, and then you get to that chorus. It's like, you needed the before. You needed the buildup. It makes you appreciate that amazing line that everybody screams.

But then, I don't know. I mean, are we—are we... are we losing our attention span so much that we can't... [laughs] we can't appreciate a buildup to a punchline?

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I mean, it fits right in with the concern. And again, I don't know if we should be concerned. When you see these things sort of naturally happening in

response to technology, you can get all freaked out about it. Or you could recognize that the technology's not going away, and that our species is gonna continue to adapt to every new piece of technology. And so trying to push back to something in the past is ridiculous.

Like, whether or not it's beneficial, I don't even know why we're having the conversation, you know? Like, it's not gonna happen. We're gonna move forward.

But, like, you do see this sort of need for, like, that dopamine hit. "I need it to be good, and then good again, and then good again, and then good again."

And I don't know if that's good or bad.

Taylor: Well, I think that that's where—I mean, I feel like if you as an artist are interested in pursuing, like—if this is the thing you like to make, keep making it. Don't change what you're making because you want to appease the algorithm. I will stand behind that. And I don't think any artist is happy trying to construct 20 second soundbites that can also be used to, like, sell, I don't know, facial products on TikTok.

Like, I don't know, maybe! Maybe. And if you just wanna make a buck, I think that's fine, too. You know?

But maybe that's comes into it. It's the ability for, like, the individual creators to say, "If this is what I'm doing and it makes me happy, I can keep doing it."

If it's not, then there should be a place to exist, even without having to, you know, cut myself down to a 15 second soundbite.

'Cause that's the other part is, like, you know, I don't know. I mean, it's funny. We're talking about The Donnas, which is some of the du—I'm saying this lovingly. Some of the dumbest music we could be having this conversation around! [laughs]

But I love how dumb it is. I love how consistently—I mean, I say the same thing about The Ramones. There's this famous review of one of The Ramones' first albums that was written by, of all people, Morrissey. I hate that guy.

And he wrote this review as, like, a—I think he was in college—about how stupid The Ramones were, and how simple it was, and how basic it was. All of it true. Completely accurate. But 100% why people love that music.

It's simple, it's repetitive. There's something gorgeous about that. Like, I'm not trying to do something high art. I'm not trying to do something—you know, I'm not trying to get into the Louvre with this music. I just want you to have something to rock out to, or get high to, or party to. Like, that's what this is about. And I love that! But that's what they wanted to do, and that's what they did. And I'm glad that there was space for The Donnas to exist, you know? Without having to, like—they didn't have to be sexy. They didn't have to be—they don't have, like—I mean, they have good hooks in their music, but it's okay that the music's kind of repetitive, 'cause that's what they wanted to do.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. Yeah. And, I mean, it definitely—it's the kind of music where you can put this album on at a party and set an exact mood. Like, you set a tone. You know exactly what this room is, what this party is, you know what we're gonna be about, and it's nice to have—and, like, the entire album is consistent like that.

We're not gonna take you on some sort of up and down emotional journey. We're up here, and we're gonna stay up here. Does everybody feel good about that? Good.

I mean, like, it's nice to have that kind of album.

Taylor: It's amazing bar music. As somebody that occasionally DJs, like, that is something that I can put on for a shift and I know people are gonna enjoy it. Some people might know it, some people might not, but everyone's gonna, like, get the vibe. [laughs]

Raleigh: You know, and I think—I was listening to this and I was thinking a lot of the same things about how, like, it's a very distinct sound, and it's fun and it's silly and it's obviously made just for, like, people that enjoy making it. Not to appeal to any, like, specific brand or demographic.

But I even think—and I was thinking specifically of, like, Olivia Rodrigo and her recent album. Like, I can almost hear stuff like this in that. And that's a very, like,

mainstream popular TikTokable album. But a lot of those same things in here, like, where you're not necessarily repeating the same chorus every time, and like, you're switching things up and you're yelling and you're saying things that are silly and, like, on paper it's like, "Well, that's a dumb lyric."

And it's like, "Yeah, but think about how fun it is to say." Like, you can kind of see some of that in that music, and I wonder if they were any influence for her in that way.

Sydnee: Yeah. And, I mean, I think it's, like, a kind of empowering—it's a very distinct sort of flavor of feminism and, like, female empowerment. It's not for everybody, but that kind of, like, owning sexuality in a way that is not necessarily sexy. You know what I mean?

Like, you're not trying to be sex—like, when they sing about, like, skintight, that's a sexy thing to sing about. [laughs] But that's not what they're trying to—they're not trying to, like, get you to look at them. Like, they're not—you know? Like, they're not becoming the sexual object, necessarily, in the song, because of the way they're talking about it. I don't know. I think that that's a very... and I think you can draw that line to somebody like Olivia Rodrigo, that flavor of sexuality.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm. I thought about that specifically with the song I Didn't Like You Anyway.

Taylor: [laughs]

Raleigh: Like, feels very... early 2000s, '90s version of, like, a modern Olivia Rodrigo. Of like, boys are dumb, girls rule. But, like, in a fun, punky kind of way.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: That's one of my favorite songs on this album. I also love—Zero has kind of the same vibe where it's just sort of dissing a dude. And it has some of the stupidest lyrics ever! 'Cause the chorus is what, "You're a zero, you're nobody's hero." I know "You look like a gyro" is one of the lines. [laughs] Like the sandwich.

Raleigh: "You're always drinking beero. You look Bob De Niro." [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: It's so stupid, and it's so funny! It's like, what a great just, like—we don't have to create—like, never any offense to Taylor Swift. She does her, you know, her get-backs in such an eloquent, poetic way, like this high art of telling you you're a stupid boy. But this is just like, "No, you're stupid. You look stupid and you sound stupid and you're stupid." And it's kinda nice! [laughs]

Raleigh: [laughs] I like that. Because, like, I feel like male artists for a very long time have been—and I saw someone actually on TikTok who's doing a series of, like, songs written by men that if they were written by Taylor Swift you all would hate and say the lyricism is horrible, but you love them because they're written by, like, famous white men.

Um, and I feel like male artists for forever have been allowed to do kind of whatever they want in terms of lyrics. Like, they can say the same thing over and over and over again. They can say it in the simplest way that on paper it's like, "Well, that's a bad lyric, but it's fun to sing, so I like it."

Um, and I like that this is, like, women doing that. Like, yeah, you're gonna say "Well, this isn't what women are supposed to be singing about, and this is silly, and this is dumb, and it's bad."

But, like, yeah, we've been letting men do it for forever.

Sydnee: Well, and it is somewhat—I was thinking about it when You Don't Wanna Call, when that song came on, that triggered something in me so deeply. [laughs quietly] Like, because it was—I mean, I'm assuming it was one of the singles. I don't know. It felt like one of the songs everybody knew. And that sort of, like, "You don't want to call me. I guess I'll just go to the mall."

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: Yep.

Sydnee: There is something in there that is so powerful, at least to me as a young woman, as a teenager, was so powerful. Like, not only am I saying, like, "I don't care, whatever. Whatever, you don't wanna call me. Whatever. I'll go to the mall."

And I'm saying the mall because I know that's what you expect me to do 'cause I'm a girl, but I'm saying it anyway, 'cause I am just gonna go to the mall. What of it? Like... [laughs] bite me.

Taylor: It's not like "You broke with me so I'm, like, heartbroken, I'm destroyed." It's like, "I'm bummed. I'm just bummed!" Like, that's a normal thing. I'm bummed, I'm gonna go to the mall. I'm bummed. [laughs] Like, it's a—

Sydnee: I'm gonna go to the mall. I'm gonna hit Claire's. I'm gonna get a pretzel.

Taylor: Yeah. My friends are gonna meet up. We're gonna talk so much about you and how much you suck, and how you look like a sandwich.

Sydnee: I'm going straight to Hot Topic.

Taylor: [laughs] Yeah, these right. I'm gonna buy a spiked bracelet, and a shirt that says "Can't sleep, clowns will eat me."

Rileigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] "Labels are for jars. I am not a jar."

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: It's gonna be a baby tee and I'm gonna pair it with giant pants, and there's nothing you can do about it!

Taylor: Well, and I think—I've talked before about how, like, as much as I love punk and the history punk and it's one of my interests, it's like, it's very isolating for anybody that's not a cis white dude. Like, there's a lot of people that get left out of the conversation of punk rock and it's very isolating sometimes. And to have a bunch of girls just proudly, loudly, stupidly making three chord progression punk rock, that was for me.

When I heard that I was like, "This is for me. You can't say anything, 'cause this is for me. They're doing this for me."

And when you find those artists, like, it's really a gift. [laughs]

Sydnee: I really felt that way about—

Taylor: I'm not co-opting a movement.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah. I really felt that way about The Donnas at the time. Now, I will say, it did branch over into, like, it was a thing you could like if you were a cool girl. And by cool—you know what I mean by cool girl. I'm talking about the cool girl.

Taylor: Sure.

Sydnee: TikTok has a lot of stuff about the cool girl. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Um, and so it did, like, eventually become that. Like, liking The Donnas, having that album, knowing about The Donnas, became something that you could say and, like, a certain flavor of dude would be like, "Oh, alright."

Taylor: [laughs] "The Donnas."

Sydnee: Um, but that wasn't—but I agree. It didn't feel like that's what it was for.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: There is stuff that feels that way in culture. Like, "This is for you to like so that you can tell boys you like it now."

The Donnas never felt like that.

Taylor: No, I think The Donnas were for the girls. I think The Donnas absolutely were. I mean, and this is no—I think every member of The Donnas are gorgeous, but that was part of what made me feel safe with them was when you looked at them they didn't look like a studio designed band, you know?

Sydnee: No.

Taylor: They don't—they were not cast to be, like, generic quote-unquote "pretty girls." And I think that was part of the power too. Like, they looked like kind of nerdy teenagers singing songs about, like, wanting to make out with people, and wanting to get high, and wanting to get—like, it was very [laughs] authentic.

Sydnee: I don't feel like they had—like, they all went by Donna, right?

Taylor: Yes. They all went—obviously none of them were actually named Donna, and then the last—like, Donna A, Donna C, whatever, it was the—the first letter of their last name was what separated them.

Sydnee: Okay. I knew that they did that, but I don't think they ever did the thing—which would have been very studio—where, like, each one got, like, a Spice Girl-esque personality based on her Donna. [laughs]

Taylor: Yeah, no. I feel like they all—they were their own people but there was not, like, a... you know, like a weird, like, "This is the sexy one. This is the dangerous one." [laughs]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Taylor: Like, no. They're just Donna.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah. No, but I think that also separates it too. That makes it more for the girls as well.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Well, and you bring up The Spice Girls, and one of my favorite songs is Get Out of My Room, and she's talking about doing—like, the posters on her wall. She specifically references Ginger Spice. Which I think if it was cool girl music for cool girls, it would not openly own up to having a Spice Girls poster on your wall, I think.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: That's true. That's true. No, I think that's true. And I should clarify, I was not—I did not mean it as a diss to The Spice Girls, 'cause I appreciate The Spice Girls.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Even though I was never—like, The Spice Girls were never my big thing, but I can appreciate The Spice Girls. But I also think it's cool The Donnas didn't have to have, like, a... a theme. [laughs] Each one of them.

Raleigh: Donna was the theme.

Sydnee: Donna was the theme.

Taylor: It's just Donnas. But it's such a fun thing. 'Cause, like, The Ramones took Ramone as their last name. The Donnas took Donna as their first name. It's clearly a reference to that. It's fun.

Sydnee: It seems like an homage. I mean, it seems like a reference in the best way. Like, yes, you were our predecessors in this style of music. We would like to acknowledge that and then do our own thing with it. I think that's really cool.

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm. Tey, do you have a favorite on this album or overall?

Taylor: Oh, man. I mean, I... Get Out of My Room is something that I think teenage Taylor really... dug. [laughs] 'Cause it was a vibe. I spent a lot of time alone in my room. It was very, very important song to me. Um, I think You Don't Wanna Call is probably the one that, like, gets stuck in my head the most.

Sydnee: Me too.

Taylor: The cover—and it's a cover—but the cover of Too Fast for Love on here, which is originally by Motley Crue—which I love that they're covering Motley Crue as a bunch of, like, 20-year-olds—I love that cover. But probably those are my three, like, repeat plays.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah, You Don't Wanna Call was my favorite. But I really liked—I didn't remember as well, uh, Search in the Streets or Party Action, and both of those I was like, "Yeah." I liked those.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Raleigh, did you have a favorite?

Raleigh: I really liked I Didn't Like You Anyway.

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: I really liked that. Something about it spoke to me where I was like, yeah, this hasn't really been true for me, but I do like the energy where every time a guy breaks up with me I can just say, like, "You know what? I didn't even like you anyway. Like, you're not even cool."

Taylor: [laughs] I love the—I'm a speed demon on the run. Like—[laughs]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Raleigh: I should say, we should note, there is a word in I Didn't Like You Anyway, um, that is not... that is a slur that we do not use anymore.

Taylor: That's true.

Raleigh: But yeah, just wanted to put that out there. I still really, really like the song. I think that it's my favorite. I love the energy and the vibe.

Sydnee: Well, Teylor, I appreciate you having us listen to The Donnas, 'cause I hadn't really listened to them in a long time, and I was glad I did. I will put it back in my—[holding back laughter] in my latest Apple Music mix.

Raleigh: Yep!

Teylor: Well, you do that. Introduce the next generation to The Donnas, you know?

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Teylor: Yeah, I don't know if Charlie would vibe with it. Maybe Cooper. [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: I think Cooper would.

Sydnee: I think Cooper would like this, yeah. I think she will.

Raleigh: Yeah, I'd never listened, so this was a great, great excuse to listen for the first time.

Teylor: Thank you both so much for listening.

Sydnee: Raleigh, what are we doing next?

Raleigh: So, I thought next we could talk about the new Mean Girls, the musical Mean Girls, but the movie musical Mean Girls. That is a movie and a musical, but it's—it's a reboot of the movie but it's a musical also.

Sydnee: Uh, theater kid TikTok has had much to say about it.

Raleigh: Oh, I know. And I haven't watched it yet, so we gotta talk about it.

Teylor: Oh, wow.

Raleigh: I know.

Sydnee: Alright. Well, we will check it out.

Taylor: I'm excited.

Raleigh: Alright. Me too.

Sydnee: Alright. Well, thank you both. Um, you can find all The Donnas' albums. I'm sure they're all streaming on all the—

Raleigh: On Spotify. [laughs]

Sydnee: On the normal services people use. [laughs] Highly recommend it.

Taylor: [laughs] Apple Music.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: Napster.

Sydnee: Yeah, on Apple Music. .

Taylor: Limewire. [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] All the ways people get music.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Go down to Sam Goody, buy the CD.

Taylor: Yeah, absolutely.

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

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

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Taylor: And I'm Taylor Smirl.

Raleigh: I am still buffering...

Sydnee and Taylor: [very out of sync] And I... am... too.

[theme music plays]

Sydnee: That was maybe our worst.

Taylor: Yeah, we had some lag. Sorry about that, folks. [laughs]

Raleigh: We had some lag.

Sydnee: No, that's alright. The internet's been acting up.

Raleigh: Dad—dad can fix it.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: Oh. Oh. Well, yeah. I thought you meant the internet. No, he can't fix the internet. He can fix the—the, maybe.

Sydnee: No. Absolutely not.

Raleigh: No, Dad would not.

[music plays]

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