

Still Buffering 387: "Mean Girls" (2004)

Published March 17, 2024

[Listen here at themcelroy.family](https://themcelroy.family)

[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 Teylor Smirl.

Sydnee: Uh, so we had to... we had to do something interesting at Charlie and Cooper's school last night.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm?

Sydnee: They had to be student ambassadors for their school.

Taylor: What does that mean?

Sydnee: It means that—they had, like, an open house to invite people from the community to come tour the school. Like, mainly incoming kindergartners, you know? But they had—

Rileigh: Yeah, I—

Sydnee: Huh?

Rileigh: I mean, we have student ambassadors that, like, you know, do the tours and stuff when people come to visit our school. Um... but it seems odd that a five-year-old... could be a student ambassador. [wheezes]

Sydnee: To be fair, she is six now. But yeah.

Rileigh: Six-year-old, I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

Sydnee: No, it's okay.

Rileigh: She just had a birthday. I forgot.

Sydnee: Yeah. No, I mean, but yes. It was—it was odd. Um... 'cause it was like, of course Charlie as soon as we get to the door she's like, "I've got this. I don't need help."

Rileigh: Right.

Sydnee: And takes off running. Like, you know, Charlie would've run the whole thing had she been given the opportunity.

Like, "Welcome to my school. I'll give you a tour. Let me introduce you. I know everyone." [laughs quietly] "Here's my number if you have problems. Just give me a call." [laughs quietly]

Cooper, uh—I don't know. I hung out with her in her kindergarten classroom, and we welcomed all the new prospective kindergartners. And I don't—she had on high heels, and—[laughs quietly]

Taylor: What?!

Sydnee: She wore makeup. [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I don't know.

Rileigh: I love that.

Sydnee: It was... I didn't know what to do. And I had to awkwardly stand around and be like... "I'm a parent." [laughs]

Rileigh: [laughs]

Taylor: Uh, I mean, were the—in my head this is, like, a bunch of unaccompanied children being led around by another child. Like, I'm assuming that's not accurate. There were adults in all of this. [laughs]

Sydnee: Well, so, like, I think the pur—what I finally figured out is the purpose of Cooper's age being there was that they would play with the kids while the

parents could ask questions of the teachers and other parents, right? Like, that seems to be what the purpose was. But it was sort of like that. Like, children leading children around the school.

Rileigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] While parents chatted.

Taylor: Alright.

Rileigh: Man.

Sydnee: I never know what to say, either. Like, "Do you like it here?" It's like, "Huh? Yeah. I mean... "

Rileigh: I mean, to be fair, you don't go there.

Sydnee: No. I mean, like, I don't know. Like... so far... my kids go. They learn things. They're... I don't... they... get food. [laughs] Like, yes. I approve. Endorse school.

Taylor: I mean, it's not like it's, like, a prestigious academy, right? You don't audition for it.

Sydnee: No. Mm-mm.

Taylor: It's just—this is school. You gotta do it.

Sydnee: No. Yeah. It's school. I don't know. It was—it—it's... [laughs quietly] I don't know how to—I would not be a good ambassador. Like, if you have questions I'm happy to answer them, but I don't know how to stand at the door and greet people.

I mean, I understand, logically. Like, I could... it's just not my vibe.

Taylor: Well, it's a good thing your kids didn't get the ambassador gene from you.

Sydnee: No.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: No, they were very good at it. And as a reward they got to dress down today for school, which meant me arguing with Cooper for 20 minutes about why—why are you not allowed to wear a crop top to school?

Raleigh: I mean, it's a valid question. That doesn't really have a good answer.

Taylor: Well, I mean... I think—[laughs]

Raleigh: I'm anti dress code. I'm anti dress code when it comes to, like, girls can't wear spaghetti straps or skirts that don't go past your fingertips or crop tops or whatever.

Taylor: I—I agree with the first two. I don't know. I think an exposed midriff on a six-year-old child I don't think is a good thing.

Sydnee: This was—okay. This is where I started to—like, the spaghetti straps I don't have an excuse for. Like, I don't know. It's a rule. It's stupid. I agree with you. And, I mean, my kind of feeling on it is if you really insist on wearing this, knowing that it is technically a rule break, then you've gotta accept that there's a chance a teacher is gonna make you put on your jacket or is gonna call me and make me bring you a t-shirt or something.

And, like, I don't know how—I mean, I can disagree with it all day long, but what am I supposed to do? It's in the rule book. I knew that.

So, like, I agree. And if they want to push it and wear the spaghetti straps, I'm gonna let 'em do it. But they're gonna have to accept that all this other stuff might happen. You know what I mean? I feel like it's good to understand that. Like, and I don't want you to be embarrassed, and if that would embarrass—I just want you to understand what you are undertaking, and you're pretty young for this sort of social protest. [laughs quietly]

Which is fine! I support you. But are you ready for that?

The bare midriff—and this is not a—this has nothing to do with gender. I don't even know that this has anything to do with age. Are we prepared for a society where we just, like, walk into our schools and our businesses, like our offices, with bare midriffs? Is that—

Taylor: [through laughter] Prepared as a society!

Sydnee: Is that where we are? Like, I don't know! I don't—

Raleigh: Well, there's a—

Sydnee: You can show shoulder and leg all day, but is bare midriff... like, can I, as a physician, can I see patients with a bare midriff?

Raleigh: No, I think there's a difference between a school dress code and, like, a professional workplace environment.

Sydnee: Well, is there, though, really? I mean...

Raleigh: Yeah, 'cause you're sending your kids there just to, like, sit in a classroom all day and... you know. Do nothing. Like... it's not like work.

Taylor: I would also say—I guess I think that there's a difference between, like, a six-year-old wearing a bare midriff and, like, I don't know, high schoolers. Like...

Raleigh: Well, I just—when you say crop top you have to get specific. Because in my head there's a spectrum. And I had gotten dress coded in high school for wearing a shirt that was quote-unquote a "crop top," and by that it meant, like, the hem of it fell, like, right at the top of my jeans, if that makes sense.

So, like, if I moved my arms up at all there was a sliver of midriff. But... it's not, like... like, up here. You know what I mean?

Sydnee: Let me share the shirt in question, 'cause this might give you some context. And also it's funny.

We got the shirt at Disney World once, because she was big enough to ride the Yeti ride at Animal Kingdom. And so we got a Yeti shirt. So it's a shirt with a picture of the Yeti on it.

Raleigh: Cool.

Sydnee: It's, like, one of those plasticky ones that has, like, glitter underneath the plastic. You know what I mean?

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: And when we got it I looked—'cause Cooper's tall for her age. And, like, stuff does tend to hit—like, stuff that fits her tends to be a little short. Like, her torso's long. And when we got it I was like, "This shirt's gonna be a little short."

Well, now that she's gotten—

Taylor: [crosstalk] Long Smirl torso. [laughs]

Raleigh: [laughs]

Sydnee: Like, her shirts often—

Raleigh: Welcome to the club.

Sydnee: —sit kind of high, unless we go a size up, in which case then she's swimming in it. So, like, I knew when we got it it was a little short. Well, now this has been—I don't know how long ago it was. But anyway, enough time has elapsed that it's gotten much shorter. But it fits her up top. It's just that probably the hem of the shirt hits right at the top of her jeans. And as soon as she, like, lifts her arm, even to put her arm up to, like, raise her pencil to her paper, you can see stomach.

So, this is—the Yeti shirt is the shirt that we were debating this morning.

Raleigh: What—was there—

Sydnee: And she kept trying to pull her jeans up, like, really high. Like, way up on her rib cage. [laughs]

Raleigh: Was there no convincing her to wear, like, a tank top underneath or something?

Sydnee: I—she has the cutest little white thermal long underwear shirt that I had gotten her to wear under things. And I thought that would look so cute, those thermal sleeves under a t-shirt. I was like, "This'll be a really cute little look!"

And she was so angry at me. It was—no. I was ruining the look of the shirt. I was ruining the whole vibe. I was so cringy.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: I don't know. I mean, I guess that's the question. I agree that dress codes are stupid in school. 'Cause they're often, like... they're often based on this idea that everybody is looking at kids in a way that I'm not—you know what I mean? Like, I don't understand why you're thinking about that. I don't understand why your concern is my six-year-old wearing spaghetti straps. That's weird for me.

But I think that the bare midriff is a question we need to ask ourselves, like, as a society. Are we there? Like, is it practical to have your stomach out all day, for one thing? They're out playing on the playground. They're gonna eat hot lunch. Is that practical to have bare stomach exposed in those scenarios? In an office setting, can I have my stomach out? I don't know!

Raleigh: Okay, we're not—we're not talking about office settings! This is a big difference, here.

Taylor: Why does it matter if it's hot lunch? [through laughter] I'm trying to understand the danger of [unintelligible].

Sydnee: Sometimes it's spaghetti, and I'm imagi—I kept imagining her dripping spaghetti on her tummy and thinking, like, "That would be unpleasant."

Taylor: No! Not spaghetti on your tummy!

Sydnee: I mean, she comes home covered in her lunch, so I assume her tummy would be covered in her lunch.

Taylor: I mean, I feel like that would be easier to clean up than off of, like, a t-shirt.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Well...

Raleigh: You just wipe it.

Sydnee: Then you got spaghetti on your tummy all day at school.

Taylor: You got spaghetti in your belly button. That's bad.

Sydnee: I don't know.

Rleigh: I think we've hit a very large generational difference here, 'cause I... [pause] it doesn't—I own many crop tops. A cropped top, if you will. Um, I... it does not phase me at all to see someone wearing one.

Taylor: No, I don't—I guess my standpoint is, people, yes, I think should wear whatever they want. I do think that there are a lot of creep-os in the world, and I think that when you're a little bit older you can understand that. I think when you're a kid you can't quite get that, you know? It's one of those things where no one should be harassed for what they wear. Women shouldn't be subjected to unfair dress codes at this notion of like, the men will be distracted by your collarbone. Like, it's very stupid.

But also, in reality, there's a lot of creeps in the world. And you just, you know, that's just the truth. So little children in very revealing clothing makes me uncomfortable just because it's like, they're—that's a small, defenseless child.

Sydnee: It's such a weird transition, can I tell you, as a parent. Because when they're little enough, we let them just run around in diapers.

Taylor: Right.

Sydnee: Like, when you're little enough you get to be mostly naked at all times, if you want. And if the weather is appropriate.

Rleigh: Well, and parents post pictures of their babies all the time that are, like, naked babies. Just a diaper.

Sydnee: And then we hit an age where we wear a lot of clothes. Like, where we go all the way the other way. And then as we get older we're allowed to start taking those clothes away again. It's a very... I don't know. For me, like, weather is the primary factor, I feel like. Like, comfort in the weather. Like, being able to brave the elements in your outerwear.

Taylor: Yeah. Well, you gotta try on all different levels of clothes, too, to figure out what your chosen level of clothes is, you know? Like, for me I like pants all the time, sleeves never. That's me. [laughs]

Sydney: [laughs]

Riley: And see, I like sleeves all the time, pants never. [laughs]

Taylor: Yeah, see?

Sydney: [laughs quietly] Um... I guess I like sleeves and pants.

Taylor: That's alright. You can do that. [laughs]

Riley: Yeah. See, you have the choice! You can do both!

Sydney: I don't—you know, it's weird. I—

Riley: But they're the only two categories. It's just sleeves or pants.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydney: I will say, it's an all or nothing kind of thing for me. Like, when it's hot I'm in a tank top. When it's cold, I'm in long sleeves. I don't have a lot of use—I have t-shirts. I don't find a lot of use for 'em.

Taylor: [quietly] Well, you just wear... wear 'em.

[all laugh]

Sydney: Well, I mean, I understand what they're for. Like, I...

Taylor: Well, [crosstalk] useful garment. [laughs]

Sydney: [laughs]

Riley: Oftentimes, Sydney, when the weather is warm but perhaps not hot, then it's comfortable enough that you could wear a t-shirt. That's when you'd wear a t-shirt.

Sydnee: Then I'll be cold if it's that level.

Rleigh: Well, there's this great thing called a jacket?

Taylor: Yeah, or a hoodie.

Rleigh: Or a flannel. Or—yeah, or a hoodie.

Sydnee: Can I—

Taylor: Sydnee, wait. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Can I share—this is embarrassing. I have a heated jacket that I was wearing all the time. Justin got it for me for Christmas and it was just, like, the greatest thing, 'cause I'm always cold. And so I could wear this around all the time, and it was heated, and I wasn't so freezing.

And, uh, I think I gave myself, like, a heat rash on my back from wearing it so much. [laughs quietly] Like, I slept in it at one point.

Taylor: Oh no!

Rleigh: Well, that just seems like a safety hazard.

Sydnee: I know.

Taylor: Yeah, it could burst into flames!

Sydnee: So I'm having to—I've had to, like—and, I mean, luckily it's been warmer, so I'm not wearing the heated jacket, and I have an ointment, and I believe my back is healing. But... cautionary tale. Watch out. The heated jackets are great. Don't overuse 'em.

Taylor: Yeah. That feels like an accident waiting to happen.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Rleigh: Speaking of a cautionary tale...

Taylor: Hey!

Rileigh: That's the name of the first song in the musical Mean Girls.

Taylor: Oh!

Rileigh: Yes. Um, which did make it into the movie, surprisingly. It's a very, very musical theater song. I was very surprised of all the songs that made it, that one did.

Um... but yeah. We're talking about the new Mean Girls today. I had not watched it, actually, until yesterday.

Sydnee: And what was your take on it?

Rileigh: You know, it's hard. Because I love Mean Girls, the movie and the musical. And I love Renee Rapp. But... something about watching this, I just kept finding myself saying, "Why did we need it?"

Taylor: Oh!

Rileigh: You know what I mean? Like, the stage show is very good. I've seen it, and I loved it. A lot of people disagree with me on that, but I think it's a lot of fun. The movie, the OG, is great. It's a classic. Everyone loves it.

What... there were so many things that were lost in this one, and then so many story lines that I was like, "Do we still need that in 2024? And was there a way to update this?"

But they did a little bit, but not entirely. And, I don't know. I enjoyed it. I thought it was fun, 'cause I like all the music so, you know, I was having a great time sitting and, you know, singing along, but... I don't know.

Sydnee: Yeah. Yeah, I—I mean... [sighs] What was hard for me is that—and I was sitting here thinking, like, I've seen the musical, right? Yeah. I saw—technically I have not seen Mean Girls: The Musical. I have seen Mean Girls JR.

Taylor: [laughs]

Rileigh: Ah. Okay.

Taylor: That's a—hmm.

Sydnee: That's what I realized. I was sitting there thinking, like, well, I've seen this 'cause I saw a local children's theater production of it. That was JR. That was Mean Girls JR. So I've not—

Rileigh: Do they leave the song Sexy in there for the JR. version?

Taylor: No way.

Sydnee: Hmm...

Rileigh: I saw a TikTok where they changed it to Sassy.

Taylor: [laughs]

Rileigh: And I didn't know if that was just the school's choice or if that's, like, a universal, like, MTI Junior, like, it's Sassy now instead of Sexy.

Sydnee: I—okay.

Taylor: That's kind of adorable. [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: Yeah. [laughs]

Sydnee: I'm gonna look this up. I had listened—so Charlie and Cooper fell in love with the soundtrack, so I've heard the whole soundtrack many, many times, even though I've only seen Mean Girls JR. [laughs quietly]

I don't rem—I'm gonna have to look this up, because I don't remember. 'Cause, like, right now, you know—memory's such a weird thing, isn't it? I don't remember if I've seen someone sing it live or if I've just listened to it so many times, and I also saw Mean Girls JR., and I could picture what it would look like to see someone sing it live. You know what I mean?

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: I'm not sure right now. Um... that's a good question, though. Uh, I just felt like the original movie was a better movie. And... the—the musical is a better musical. So it was con—

Rileigh: I just—

Sydnee: Why—like, what was this? Who was this for?

Rileigh: Yeah. That's—yeah.

Sydnee: What niche was this filling?

Rileigh: And I just think it's very rare that you can take a stage musical and turn it into a movie—not, like, just film the stage musical professionally. Like, turn it into a movie when it started as a musical. It's very rare that you can do that and it holds up the same as the musical, I feel like.

Taylor: Yeah. Well, I—it's weird. We keep getting these musicals that come out in movie form, and they don't really advertise it as a musical. And it's as if to recognize the public doesn't really get musicals, right? I mean... so it is—like, I don't... if there was a big demand for musical movies right now I'd get it. But I feel like studios purposely have to try to circumvent that fact in the advertising! [laughs] Kind of trick you in.

Rileigh: Yeah.

Taylor: It's like, who had a gun to your head and made you make this musical? [laughs]

Rileigh: People had no idea! Like, you watch the trailers, it is not—they do not say it once.

Sydnee: But then—but then why—if you didn't know it was a musical, you had to have asked yourself the question, why are they remaking Mean Girls?

Rileigh: Well, 'cause they're remaking everything these days.

Taylor: Yeah. I mean...

Sydnee: But, like... [sighs] it—it's—

Taylor: But I mean—go ahead, sorry.

Sydnee: Well, I was gonna say, it's not different enough. It's not—it's just the same, you know?

Taylor: I feel like—I mean, I'm not a big fan of remakes in general, just because, I don't know, I just... if it was done in, like, the 80's or the 90's, that's still, like... that's still a watchable film, you know? The expiration date for when a movie gets remade is becoming shorter and shorter, to now I feel like they're just gonna, like, I don't know... remake the same ten movies on a yearly basis, and that's cinema.

Raleigh: I mean, it's only been 20 years since Mean Girls came out.

Taylor: [quietly] 20 years. Wow.

Sydnee: And, like, if you want to critique the message of the original Mean Girls, if you want to look at it through a modern lens, I do think that there are things we could update and change in terms of the whole—I don't know. I think things are a little more nuanced now. I think it's lacking in a little complexity. It's very... it's a wave of feminism that we've kind of moved past.

This is not me criticizing the movie as a whole. Like, I love that movie. It's a great movie. But I definitely think there are some things you could bring into today. But I don't really feel like this movie necessarily does that either.

Raleigh: Yeah. That's what I was gonna say, is I feel like the brand of, like, Mean Girl or, like, bullying or whatever that takes place in the year 2024 in a high school is just inherently different than what was happening in 2004 in a high school.

And the 2004 movie captures it very well, I think. Not that I was in high school at that time but, I mean, it seems like it fits in with the kind of societal norms of that period. Um, but to bring them up again now, just feels like that can't be... that can't be still what's happening in schools, right?

Taylor: That's—yeah. I was confused by the choices, the updates that they did make. It either didn't go far enough or they went too far. I don't know. It's like, the mean girls weren't mean anymore.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Does that make sense?

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Like, the scene that kind of makes you be on Cady's side is when Regina tells the crush, "Oh, she's obsessed with you. She's got a crush on you," whatever. Like, when she's dressed in the wedding dress. And that—oh, man. That's really mean.

In the musical, it's not—she doesn't say anything mean about Cady. She just sings a song... seducing him? Is that it?

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydney: Mm-hmm.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Is that what she does? [laughs]

Sydney: Yes.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Which is much less mean.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: It's just kind of—it's like, then I'm not really hating on Regina, so the whole revenge plot seems kind of... like... ridiculous. You know? The whole, like...

Sydney: Yes.

Taylor: Janice was Lebanese, not a lesbian, in the original one. And in this one she's out and proud, but they also don't really make a point of explaining then what happened between Regina and Janice to make Janice—it's just like, I don't... like, I get that these were problematic elements, but it's okay to have a mean girl who's mean. Like... [wheezes] people would still love, you know, Renee Rapp.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Yes, I agree. I feel like there are a lot of moments where she doesn't seem mean. They're just making her kind of cool. Like, kind of unaffected moving through the school on her own without necessarily caring what anyone else thinks. Which isn't mean? Yes, there can be cool people who are mean. But, like, that doesn't come across as mean.

I don't know. I felt the same way. Like, that's not... and maybe there aren't mean girls now like that. Maybe there isn't this, like, hierarchy of the mean girls who are beautiful and perfect and make everyone miserable. Like, did that exist in the 2000's? Yeah, I think so. In the 90's I think it did. Maybe that's not it anymore? And so to find a modern corollary, there just isn't?

I'm not in high school. I don't know.

Taylor: [laughs]

Raleigh: I mean, I'm not either. I've just got—I've just gotta believe that the high school hierarchy still—there's gonna be someone at the top of the food chain, right? I mean, that's just, like, the nature of high school.

Um, but is it someone who's the most stereotypically beautiful and popular and, you know, dating a football player and all of that? I don't think that's where it still is. And they didn't really update that.

Sydnee: Yeah. So, uh, I did double check, and from what I can tell, Mean Girls JR. did not contain Sexy.

Raleigh: Okay. Yeah, that makes sense.

Taylor: [simultaneously] That's for the best.

Sydnee: I don't—I was sitting here thinking, like, I don't think it did. But I don't know. It's—it's all blended together. [laughs quietly] I've heard the soundtrack so many times.

Raleigh: Yeah. I did see a TikTok of Sassy, which is the song, except it's just... the word sassy. Which, you know, I guess works. I don't know.

Sydnee: I mean... [sighs] I don't know. That was interesting to me, too. I think that I can, uh... what is the line from that song? That I think is very interesting as, like, taking the character of Karen and making her, like, "I'm owning my sexuality as, like, a powerful—" you know, as a way of, like, being powerful in the world? "I'm gonna run the world in shoes."

Rileigh: "This is modern feminism talking. I'm going to run the world in shoes I cannot walk in."

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] I thought that was a really interesting take.

Taylor: That's a change, right? The original line is different?

Rileigh: Yeah. In the musical it's "I expect to run the world in shoes I cannot walk in?" I intend or I expect, and they changed it to I am going to.

Taylor: Watch me, right?

Rileigh: Or watch me, yeah, yeah.

Sydnee: That's interesting. Yeah, I expect the run the world in shoes I cannot walk in is prob—that's a—hmm. There's something about that I don't like.

Taylor: Yeah.

Rileigh: I don't know. I... I have always enjoyed that line particularly, and that song as a whole. I think it's funny to make a whole song about how we just turn everything into sexy versions of literally anything, and that's just like a—what you're expected to dress as as a young woman on Halloween, once you reach a certain age. And, uh, I... I think a lot of the music, I just really enjoy. I just think that the treatment of it... in a movie doesn't do with it—I don't know.

That's, like, a cautionary tale, like the first song. That's Damian and Janice, like, telling you what, you know, is gonna happen. That's very musical theater to have, like, a setting-the-stage little introductory number by, like, your quote-unquote "narrators" that kind of break the fourth wall, and then jump into the action. And that feels very musical theater. And it just doesn't feel like it fits a movie. You know what I mean? Like, of all the songs they cut out of this, to leave something like that in just felt like, what? Who's making these decisions?

Taylor: Yeah. Well, I feel like—I don't know. I mean, movies that—there are lots of musical movies that work. And I feel like they always exist in a little bit of a heightened reality. And I feel like this had that kind of—almost like the same—like, High School Musical, to draw a weird comparison here, is cheesy enough that it kind of—when people start bursting into song it's like, this makes no sense, but whatever. Like, this movie was—it was almost too much of a movie that when they started singing I was like, "Oh."

Or started, like, synchronized dancing or, like, broke away to a bit more of a staged effect. It's like, this—this doesn't jive with the, like, serious movie dialogue we had just a second ago. Like, it's [crosstalk]—

Raleigh: Right.

Taylor: Like, make it more cartoony, or more musical, or don't make it a musical at all. [laughs]

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydney: That's—that's exactly—yes. I think you're hitting on what the problem is. It's like they're still trying to be cool.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydney: And I think we are still, for some—

Raleigh: [laughs] Musical theater isn't cool, and that's okay!

Taylor: No! [laughs]

Sydney: Yes. I mean, I think that we—like, I think it's cool—well, I don't—I'm not even gonna sit here and—

Taylor: [laughs]

Raleigh: I love musical theater. I'm never gonna sit here and say it's cool.

Sydney: But there's an—because it knows it's not cool, you can just be really earnest about it. And I think that if you compare this to, like, old school—look at, like, Grease. There's nothing cool happening here. Even the cool kids, the...

[laughs quietly] the greasers. They're not cool! No one is cool in this. Nobody's trying to be cool, really. They're trying to be cool in the way that, like, you're taught to be cool in musical theater. [laughs] Which is like, "Hey. I'm the cool person." [laughs] "I'm too cool to care what you think."

Like, you can feel that coming through. They're theater kids. And in this it felt like, "Well, don't be too... cringy, okay? Just, like, be cool about it. And then just sort of, like, sing the song or whatever now?"

Like, I almost felt that energy. And it's like, no, no, no. Just do it. It's okay. Just... be a nerd. [laughs]

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: Yeah. Yeah. Um... it is hard, though, 'cause I do love Renee Rapp. And I love listening to her sing. But she also—she is a theater kid, but her energy in this gives off "I'm too cool to be singing right now."

Taylor: Which out of everybody in the cast, I guess that works the most for her character.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydney: Yes.

Taylor: Um, but yeah. When it's every—I mean, I felt like the standouts for me were her and then Janice, who's also—she's the same girl that sang Moana's voice, right?

Raleigh: Yeah.

Taylor: So, she was great. And I don't know. Like, they were captivating to me. Everything else just kind of felt like, eh? [laughs]

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydney: Yeah. I think the music is really good. And I do think there were some—I think Damian was good too. Um, there were some good performances. But overall I just—I'm not sure... why—and I think that the musical obviously added a lot. I mean, in a movie you can show things a lot faster. In a musical you

have to take some time to develop 'em, and then you lose some plot time when you're singing and whatnot.

Taylor: [laughs quietly]

Raleigh: Sure.

Sydnee: And I feel like this sort of... it didn't know what to cut. And so the result is that I don't know—we have this, like, sad song from Gretchen Weiners about "What's wrong with me?"

And, like, talking about that. Like, "I want this person—I kind of worship this person, but I also hate this person, but I also desperately need this person to love me and approve me. And really underneath it all it's 'cause I have no self esteem."

And that's the song. What kind of resolution did Gretchen Weiners really get?

Raleigh: No, yeah.

Sydnee: You know what I mean? Like, I feel like they didn't know what to do... I don't know. A lot of it feels—even the buildup to the Burn Book doesn't work as well without understanding, like, you don't have the whole setup of, here are all the groups in the cafeteria. You get some—like, here's why they all hate each other. Here's the friction. Here's some other minor plot lines so that you understand at the end why they start turning on each other. Like, I don't know that you earned the chaos that the Burn Book causes. Because, I mean, the whole thing has to be tied to Gretchen knows everybody's secrets.

And so it's not just that they wonder who wrote the Burn Book. It's "My friend must have betrayed me, because that was a secret I only told my friend."

I don't know that any of that... I don't feel like we earned it. We didn't earn the massive chaos that results.

Taylor: Yeah. I don't know, like, the changes—like, softening of all the characters. Even, like, in the original movie you get the point of, like, Cady when given the opportunity becomes a mean girl. You don't like Lindsay Lohan's character in, like, you know, the scene at the party. Like, that's her low point. And you really don't like her in that scene.

That didn't really happen with this character, this version of her in the movie. Like, it just—they didn't make her as bad. They didn't make Regina as bad. And I don't know if that's to, like, remove, like, I don't know what, problematic elements?

But the point of the movie is that girls are really mean [laughs] in high school!

Rileigh: Well, and of all the elements if you want to say they're problematic—which again, I don't—I think it's just an element of the movie where it was—she was a mean—Regina—or Cady became a mean girl and was doing mean things to another person. Why are the Kalteen Bars still in... this movie?

Sydnee: That was—that—

Rileigh: Why is she secretly making her gain weight instead of lose weight—why—[wheezes] why is that still there? If we're gonna try to fix things, why is that the thing that we kept?

Sydnee: Well, and that's—and they try to, like—they do it, but then they try to sort of backpedal away from it, a little.

Rileigh: That's the thing. Like, you gotta either go full in and, like, it's a—like, in the musical that is still 100% part of the plot, same way it is in the movie. Like, there's the scene of her in the cafeteria talking about, like, how her pants don't fit and, you know, all of that. Like, 100% the same.

You can't have it in there a little bit and then back off of it. Like, if you're gonna have that plot line in there, you've gotta just go all in. And you can change it. You can replace it with something else. There's other ways in the modern era of social media to, you know, be mean girls. But... I don't know.

Sydnee: Yeah. We could do something else. And they kind of like, "We're gonna do it, but we're a little embarrassed that we're doing it, so we're gonna do it."

And then it's just, I don't know. I don't know who that serves.

Rileigh: Like the light version. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Yeah. And I don't know who that helps. And it doesn't fix the problem. I agree. Cady never gets as mean as she does in the movie. And so—but I don't

know. I really—I didn't feel... I didn't understand much about that character, frankly, from this. If I—I think that the only way that—the only reason this works at all is that most people who are watching this have seen the original movie.

If you have not seen that character played by Lindsay Lohan to understand who she is and what the transformation's supposed to look like and what we're supposed to be doing, I don't feel like we got that in this version.

Taylor: Well, and that's I think on casting. Because, you know, Lindsay Lohan at the beginning of the movie in her flannel with no makeup on looks like a nice girl. When she gets the dress and the makeup and everything, she looks like your quintessential mean girl. Like, it was proper casting to play both sides of that role.

This girl looked like a sweet lil baby the whole time. [laughs]

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. Yeah, she never—I mean, other than that she wore a skirt at the end.

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydnee: Which, like, that's a weird—when you get mean, you wear skirts. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Yeah. I don't know.

Sydnee: You're—nice girls wear pants. [laughs]

Raleigh: You know, I think this is—I'm looking through the track list, because I'm doing what you were, Syd. In my head I'm thinking, "Well, no, that song's in there."

But no, it's not. It's just because it's in the movie and I listen to the musical. There are so many—this is... I think they were trying to be too cool of a movie. They cut out any songs that felt too musical theater-y. That couldn't be, like, just listened to or, like, played on the radio.

There's a whole song that Cady sings in the beginning of the musical called It Roars about how, like, desperately she just wants to, like, leave Africa and become, like, a normal American teen.

Um, that's not in the movie. There's a song between Aaron and Cady at the party where he's talking about, like, how there was more of her when she was more authentic, and now she's plastic and she's fake. That's not in the movie.

Um... my favorite song personally, just selfishly, is Where Do You Belong, which is Damian singing about all the cliques in the cafeteria in a very, like, high camp, musical theater style with, like, a dance break and everything. That's not in the movie.

I don't know. It just felt like they tried to cut out any elements that felt too musical theater. But if you're gonna make a movie out of a musical, you've gotta embrace the elements that made it a musical. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Well, and it's like, I think... [sighs] There's a—I think we're supposed to get to this big, like, triumphant scene with I'd Rather Be Me, which is a great song. And, you know, I thought that she did a great job with it. Like, it's very enjoyable. I enjoy watching Charlie and Cooper sing it in the house and flip everybody off while they're singing it.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Um—[laughs quietly] like, I like all that. But again, I don't know that we've earned it. Because what Janice decides to do with her anger, by helping Cady take revenge on Regina, are we endorsing that action? Like, are we saying "This was good." Because what the song—

Raleigh: Especially when we don't really get the same kind of traumatic background between her and Regina that you do in the original movie.

Sydnee: No. I mean, it—[sighs] I don't think—again, I think they're afraid to say what they need to say, which is—what it sounds like from the movie is that Regina knew Janice was a lesbian, or suspected, or maybe in some way because they were friends she understand this. And she used that to kind of humiliate her and alienate her as a way of, like, gaining popularity and friends.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: I think that's where they're trying to go. And if that's what they're trying to say, now you've made her a mean girl. Then you have succeeded in, like, okay, that's mean. Mean girl behavior. Of course Janice would be really scarred by that. Of course she would have a lot of anger towards Regina about that. That all works.

But if that's what—I don't know that... I mean, you know what I mean? I don't know that that's what they're trying to say. It's so... murky.

Taylor: Why the weird convoluted, like, stuffed animal thing?

Sydnee: Yes!

Taylor: Who—who came up with that? Because in the movie I think it's very clear. She either outed her, or she just started a rumor that she was gay.

Raleigh: Yeah. She's not gay actually at all, 'cause she—in the movie, she—

Taylor: [simultaneously] Right, she's just Lebanese. [laughs]

Raleigh: Yeah, she dates the guy on the math team, by the end of the movie. So, you know, in the original movie it's suggested she's not gay. And, I mean, in 2004, yes, it would've been a really horrible thing to be outed as a lesbian if you weren't, I imagine. Like, that would've been much more damaging socially in 2004 than it is in 2024.

I'm not saying it's not still damaging to, like, have someone out you if you're not ready. But I just feel like—like, gay as an insult doesn't have the same impact, 20 years later.

Sydnee: You wouldn't necessarily have the whole school turn on you, you know? You'd have people who would be your friend and defend you.

Raleigh: Right. Honestly, it would probably be—it would probably be more people turning on the person who outed you. [laughs] In my experience.

Sydnee: [simultaneously] I would hope so.

Raleigh: I would hope so. Than the person who is outed.

Taylor: Well, but that, like—you need Regina to be that evil to not have, like, her—you know, the whole, like—the Kalteen Bar plot line. Her getting hit by a bus! It's kind of brutal in this movie!

Raleigh: [laughs] It is!

Taylor: It's like, ah! And then they still try to, like—in the original they play it off as kind of a—it's kind of comedic, the way that they film it. And then her in the remainder of the movie is also just sort of played for laughs. This felt a little weird, when it's this character that we've kind of gained a lot of sympathy for, and now she's just drugged up and in, like, the brace for the rest of the—I don't know. Like...

Sydney: I do—I feel like they're trying to soften it on everybody. And I don't... and I—the stuffed animal thing, too. Okay. Okay.

Taylor: Explain that to me. [laughs]

Raleigh: Yeah.

Sydney: I... that—that barely—it barely makes any kind of sense. Barely. And I have—I've seen the movie twice now, 'cause Charlie and Cooper love it of course, so I'm gonna have to watch it 80 more times. But, like, it barely works. And then I'm sitting there thinking, okay. This was after they played spin the bottle, right? Like, the stuffed animal thing happens after playing spin—so how old are you when you play spin the bottle? I mean, at least middle school, right?

Taylor: Yeah.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydney: Okay. How old is she when she's walking around with a stuffed animal that she's making everyone say good morning to? [pause] Like, I'm sitting here—my—my—

Taylor: [simultaneously] That just felt, like, unnecessary.

Sydney: My brain exploded.

Rileigh: It felt like a weird thing that got thrown in there that, like, they forgot they didn't cut, and that it was in the final version of the movie and they were like, "Oh well, that's still in there." [wheezes]

Sydnee: Can you imagine? Like, if you're the popular girl and then you start bringing a stuffed animal to school and you force everyone to talk to it every day, you're not gonna be the popular girl.

Taylor: [simultaneously] You're not the popular girl. [laughs]

Sydnee: No! Like, you will lose your popul—like... that was weird for—and I feel like nobody really thought—they were like, "Yeah, that makes sense. That works. Whatever. Put it in there."

Taylor: Well, and it could have just as easily been that she outed her. And yeah, that would be traumatizing and that would—okay, now Regina's a bad guy. And we all believe that. And everything works. Janice wanting her revenge works. You know, you're a lot less sympathetic to Regina. I don't know. I think it's still relevant in this day and age.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Oh, I think all of that is still relevant. And I think... I don't know. It's interesting. We were doing some—I was doing some scholarship interviews over the weekend and I was talking to people who are currently in high school? And it was very interesting when they were talking about, uh—we weren't talking about Mean Girls, of course. I forget how we got on the—[laughs quietly] "What do you all think of Mean Girls?"

Taylor: Feedback. I got a podcast to record.

Sydnee: [laughs] But it was interesting that several of them started talking about how, like, high school isn't really like—like, they're aren't cliques like that anymore. Like, the idea of being, like, popular or being a nerd, it's not quite like that anymore. That, like, a lot of people will do more than one thing, like play a sport, and be in band or theater or—you know. Like, be smart and do other—you know. Like, a lot of those kind of divisions have kind of faded.

I would suggest that part of it is bigger schools, in this area anyway. Like, a lot of these weren't from too far away. And as schools consolidate and get larger, I

think some of that gets diluted. I would wonder in smaller schools if that's still more of an issue, where you could have more of, like, a hierarchy, because there's fewer people to keep track of. I don't know.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: I don't know. But it was interesting. 'Cause I forget why we were talking about it, but they were saying, like, it's just not quite like it seems like it used to be back when you were young. [laughs quietly] You know. Back 1000 years—these kids, by the way, made the point to me, when I was like, "I graduated from this program in 2005."

They were like, "That was the year I was born!"

Rileigh: [gasps]

Taylor: [laughs]

Rileigh: Oh my god.

Sydnee: I was like, "Ah!" I know. That was said to me over and over. [laughs]

Rileigh: I—see, I—you know, I agree with what you're saying, 'cause I kind of felt that way in high school. And now I've graduated, what, six years ago? So, you know, the cliquishness, the division... I don't know if that's—I went to a big school. I don't know if that's... social media kind of connecting everyone, no matter what social circle you're in, but I think you're right.

I don't know. I think overall, I love this, because I love the musical, and I love the movie. And I can't watch a filmed version of the professional musical, so this is the way I can, you know, watch the scenes with the songs in it that I like.

Sydnee: Yeah. And there are some good scenes, and some good songs.

Rileigh: Oh yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah. I mean, there—

Rileigh: I mean, Renee Rapp singing World Burn is, like, you know, top tier musical theater experience. Um, but Mean Girls 2004 feels like a movie that—I mean, I think we all agreed, even making a sequel in 2011 was a bad idea.

Sydnee: Yes.

Rileigh: It just couldn't hold up. Like... it just—it needs to live in its space, in 2004, and we can keep watching it and rewatching it, even if it's 20 years old or however many years old, and that's okay.

Sydnee: We need what the next iteration of that is for today, which has gotta only be informed by people who are more in touch with what's that like today. But, like, if Mean Girls was inspired by Heathers, but was more indicative of the time that it was portraying, we need the what's that now.

Rileigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: But anyway, I don't know. I mean, I—let me say this. I know that Charlie and Cooper have already demanded—'cause we couldn't finish it again last night because we started late, and I made them stop it. And the first thing they said was, "Please, can we finish it as soon as we get home from school tomorrow?"

And I know I will be watching it with them today. And I'm not dreading it. Like, it's not... it's not terrible. You know, I'm not... maybe it could've been better or different, but I mean, you know, it's still fun.

Taylor: Yeah. I mean, I really enjoyed it. I think because we have two such iconic things to compare it to, that's it. But, you know, it still was an enjoyable experience. [laughs]

Rileigh: Oh yeah. Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: I would watch it again.

Rileigh: 100%.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Raleigh: And just, you know, the song that's—I think it's in the credits, it's not in the movie, but that Renee Rapp wrote with Megan Thee Stallion called Not My Fault? Um, one of my top played songs so far of this year. So, you know, it's got a great soundtrack. [laughs]

Well, thank you all for watching this. I know we've talked about obviously Mean Girls OG. Um, so thanks for talking about the new one with me.

Sydnee: No problem.

Raleigh: Um, Sydnee, what's next?

Sydnee: Uh, I wanna talk about Double Dare next. Um, Mark Summers has a new one man show coming out off Broadway soon, and so I thought it would be a good time to revisit Double Dare.

I will say, there's no specific episode. I figure there's probably some on YouTube you can watch.

Raleigh: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Um, so, you know, I'll let you all pick if you want to just watch old school Double Dare or maybe a little bit of Super Sloppy, or maybe even a little Family Double Dare.

Raleigh: I've never seen any of the above, so.

Sydnee: Well, there you go.

Taylor: You're in for a treat.

Raleigh: Yeah. I'm excited.

Sydnee: I would say at least watch one original and one Family, because Super Sloppy is just—you know, it's the same thing but sloppier.

Raleigh: Sloppy.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly]

Rileigh: I could've guessed that.

Sydnee: So that—I don't think you need to understand anything other than it's sloppier.

Rileigh: Sure. Well, alright.

Sydnee: Alright.

Taylor: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Well, thank you all. Mean Girls was—I don't know where we watched—where did we watch it?

Rileigh: I think I watched it on Paramount Plus.

Sydnee: That feels right.

Taylor: [quietly] I rented it on Prime, I think.

Rileigh: Oh, I may have rented it. I don't remember.

Sydnee: We may have rent—no, I think we bought it somewhere, 'cause I know I'm gonna watch it 50 times.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Um, well, thank you both. Thank you, listeners. You should go to Maximumfun.org and check out a lot of great shows that you would enjoy. And you can email us at stillbuffering@maximumfun.org. And thank you to The Nouvellas for our theme song, Baby You Change Your Mind.

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

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Taylor: And I'm Taylor Smirl.

Rileigh: I am still buffering...

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

[theme music plays]

Sydnee: Now I gotta go cure some sexy cancer, so.

[all laugh quietly]

Rileigh: Some sassy cancer.

Teylor: There we go.

Sydnee: [laughs]

--

Jordan: It's hard to explain what happens on Jordan, Jesse, Go.

Jesse: So I had my kids do it.

Speaker 3: Saying swear words.

Jesse: Saying swear words.

Speaker 4: Yeah, um... bad jokes?

Jesse: Bad jokes?

Speaker 4: Bad jokes. Maybe it's like, you tell people that you're gonna interview them, and then you just... stay there, like... like, really quiet, and try and creep them out.

Speaker 3: [laughs] It's just really boring.

Jesse: Because of Jordan, right? Not me?

Speaker 3: Because of both of you.

Jesse: Oh.

Jordan: Subscribe to Jordan, Jesse, Go.

Jesse: A comedy show for grownups.

[chord]

Maximumfun.org.

Comedy and Culture.

Artist Owned.

Audience Supported.