

Still Buffering 427: Garbage

Published March 14th, 2025
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[theme music plays]

Sydnee: Hello, and welcome to Still Buffering: a cross-generational guide to the culture that made us. I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Taylor: And I'm Taylor Smirl.

Sydnee: Uh, Taylor, I had a really interesting and—it was fun, it's always gratifying—experience this past weekend. Uh, I was interviewing potential, like, future college students for a scholarship program that I took part in.

Taylor: Oh, fun.

Sydnee: Yeah. And it's always cool to, like—I'm talking to an age—because my kids are little, and then I'm old. And so I don't often talk to, like, high school senior-y age—you know what I mean? Like, that's... 'cause I'm not a weirdo who would, like, hang out at—[laughs quietly] hang out at a high school where I don't work and try to talk to kids, 'cause that'd be weird, right?

Taylor: Yeah, that's—it's good that you don't do that. It's a very good that you don't do that.

Sydnee: Right. So I don't do that. So, like, the opportunity to kind of see, like, what that generation is thinking about and talking about and what they care about, it's, like, really fascinating to me, 'cause I have no insight into...

Taylor: That would be a great idea for podcast. Young people talking to old people.

Sydnee: [sarcastic] Yeah, really.

Taylor: [laughs quietly] Someone should do that.

Sydnee: I should've invited one of them to be on our show. "Come say that on a podcast."

Taylor: "Hey, you."

Sydnee: It was really interesting. We asked a question about what technology is indispensable for you.

Taylor: Hm.

Sydnee: Isn't that interesting? Like, to think about, what could you... I mean, my knee-jerk is like, my phone. But I was trying to think beyond that. And that's—I mean, that's true for a lot of us, right? Like, I couldn't live—not just communication-wise, but my entire life is on my phone. And I also use it in my—because I do, you know, street medicine, I use it out in the field constantly to send in prescriptions and, you know, look things up, and that kind of stuff. So... I don't know how I would live without my phone. But, like, what else? What is beyond that?

Taylor: Did you get answers that were otherwise?

Sydnee: Here is something I thought was really interesting. Um, I mean, 'cause largely, like, computers and phones are answers. Several people mentioned cameras, and not on their phone.

Taylor: Really? Like...

Sydnee: Like, a camera is coming back.

Taylor: For, like, artistic photography?

Sydnee: Well, I don't even necessarily think it's that. Because... several people referenced, like, digital cameras, or even, like, Polaroids or disposables. Cameras that would not be as high quality, necessarily, as your iPhone. Do you know what I mean? Like, they're talking about a kind of photography that when we just talk about, like, clarity of the image... in many cases would be less than your phone, or at least would be equal, but in many cases would be less.

Taylor: Oh no, I've noticed this. I've noticed this in my bars and stuff, like the places that I'm working now. I've seen people come in with, like, little disposables, you know? Like, little car—little cardboard cameras? And, like, that's—they're having a night out. They're gonna take pictures with their little cardboard camera.

Sydnee: There is something about—and I mean, I'm assuming part of it is that you create a physical... object with it. Right? Like, it's not on your phone. Those sorts of cameras you actually, like, take and develop, and you have pictures.

Taylor: Right.

Sydnee: But the quality was referenced several times as part of why they like it better.

Taylor: Hm.

Sydnee: Which I feel like that we come from sort of like, our progression of technology and our age range was we just kept trying to make pictures clearer, right? Like... we grew up in a time of VHS tapes. The magic of DVDs is that the picture was clearer. Well, I mean, other things too, but you know what I mean. It looked better. And then Blu-ray was supposed to look even better.

And so with photography, it was the same idea. Like, the iPhone. or whatever your computer phone is, it's supposed to keep taking better pictures than the one before it. Clearer. This is sort of like an endorsement that sometimes you want the image to be a little fuzzier, a little grainier, a little less clear.

Taylor: I feel like that's kind of—but that—I don't know. Even in our generation, I mean, think of like, early Instagram. Everybody used, like, the Polaroid filter. Like, the filter that made it look like more of something that would come from an instant camera.

I also think that, you know, for the younger generation—I mean, we watched physical media disappear. Like, everything worked towards a trajectory of just like, I don't know. I think of Apple products just becoming a smooth, round box that did everything for you. [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Like, everything is stored in there. Nothing exists outside of it. It's just a little clean white dome with an Apple on it. That's where all of your media, your music, your art, your pictures, everything is in there. Your movies.

And I understand why, if you grew up with just that, physical media feels really novel, you know? Having *stuff*. Like, I'm amazed at the younger generation collecting CDs, which is very in. It just seems kind of goofy to me. But then we were into records, so. There's always that kind of nostalgia for the thing that you didn't have.

Sydnee: I think that's true.

Taylor: [crosstalk] nostalgia. I don't know. [laughs]

Sydnee: No, I know what you mean, though. But like—

Taylor: Something.

Sydnee: Records are a good corollary to that. Because, I mean, I recognize I have a lot of vinyl, and I know it is not as convenient as music on my phone. Like, I recognize that. I recognize that the quality is different and that, like, I can't pick up my record player and take it with me. [laughs quietly] You know what I mean? And also, like, it's a finite object.

I put a record on, I can listen to the songs on the record. If I want to listen to any different artist or different songs that aren't on this album, I have to pick it up and get the thing I want and put it on the record—so, like, there's so many ways it's less convenient. But I still do like the sound, and I still do listen to it sometimes, you know?

Taylor: I think that... I mean, this is definitely a concept in art, that limitation drives creativity, and it drives, like, specificity. When you have to make a choice, that choice will tell you something about yourself.

And so, I mean, when you can just take—when you've got your phone and you can just take a million pictures, you're not gonna run out of film, you're not gonna run out of memory, you just take all the pictures you want and, you know, that's that. Or, just by the same, you go on Spotify. You can listen to any type of music you want, whatever genre. It doesn't matter.

But when you have to choose, you know, when you've got a limited amount of memory in your camera in a digital camera, or you've got one of those disposable cameras, or, you know, you're at the record store, or the... the used CD store. [laughs] Like, you have to make a choice, and that choice is gonna inform you about yourself in a useful way. Which I think is—it's part of what makes us feel special and unique.

I have to look at all of this sea of options, and I have to make choices. And those—because I have to make a choice, it feels more special.

Sydney: I think that makes sense. It's really interesting that that would be coming back. And I mean, specifically cameras. Like, we didn't talk about... I guess CDs came up a couple times. So other physical media did, like, make an appearance in conversations. Like, I think kids are getting back into CDs and stuff.

But idea of how we preserve a memory, and wanting to do it in a different way, and wanting to do it in a way that isn't... I don't know. There's something about... if I take a picture of something on my phone, and then a take a picture of that same thing on a Polaroid, the picture of that thing on my phone is closer to what it actually looks like, right? I mean, I think we can say that. Just in terms of digital clarity.

Taylor: Sure.

Sydney: You know? I mean, I'm going to produce an image that more closely replicates the actual object that I—or person, or whatever, that I took a picture of.

But the Polaroid... maybe there's something about it being less clear, maybe there's something about you interpret it more. Your memories, your feelings, your—the you of the moment becomes more part of it, because it is less clear. Because it is not so defined by reality, by the actual, you know, objective boundaries of the space and time. It's more defined by you.

Taylor: Well, and it really is a true capture of the moment. Because when you take a selfie on your phone, or you take a group shot, it looks bad, you delete it, you know.

Sydnee: It's true.

Taylor: You can take a bunch. But a Polaroid limits... you can't delete it. It exists. It's a physical object that captures a specific moment. And, you know, you're kind of stuck with it. But in that sense, it feels more authentic.

Sydnee: Yeah. I don't know, it was very interesting to hear young people talk about that, talk about cameras and taking pictures and, like, why that is so important. And then also why it's not the same—like, yes, they use their phones. Of course they're using their phones, too. I'm not saying, like, "This entire generation of young people has stopped using their camera phones!"

No. [laughs quietly] Uh, but the—there is something... I don't know. There is another thing happening. it's a turn back to something that I can appreciate.

Taylor: I mean, I've seen young people—like, young 20-something-year-olds with flip phones. That's become a thing that's, like, a trend.

Sydnee: Is it?

Taylor: I don't know.

Sydnee: Is it so that you don't have so much access on your phone? Like, is it to limit the time waste that a phone can be, that a smartphone can be? Is that why?

Taylor: It could be? I feel like it's just—you know, 'cause I mean, I... I remember a lot of the analog stuff that became popular in our generation, you know, I mean, I was in the center of... of Brooklyn when all that was going down. It was just, like, a sign that your—it was a way of being different. It was a way of, like, being sort of out of step with the time. Being your own person.

And I think it probably comes from the same place, you know? Just as much as our generation turned back to—to vinyl, and I don't know, like, it's just... "I don't need all that. I'm gonna simplify things."

Like, we—we had the novelty of going from not having those things to then having them. And it's like, oh, wow. Look, this is an improvement. But all the younger generation has ever known is having everything at their fingertips. So it's a novel experience to lessen that.

Sydnee: It's the human impulse. Like, we like to hunt for things. We like to search for things. [laughs quietly] Don't give it all to us.

Taylor: Wow, yeah!

Sydnee: Yeah. I don't know. It was very—I learned a lot. Um, I could go on and on about how I think young people are a lot more worried about climate change than old people seem to be. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: I mean, that's... well, I don't—everybody should be... *all* of the worried about climate change. So...

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: Good for the young people?

Sydnee: But I feel like that being in my 40s and hearing the conversations of people in my age group, and then talking to people who are substantially younger than me, the amount of time that—and I mean, it's just the truth, right? Like, older people just aren't talking about it as much. They're not thinking about it as much, which is the problem. It is the problem. I'm not saying, like, "It's just weird!"

I mean, it's a problem. But it's fascinating. Like, just the... the difference.

Taylor: [laughs] It's upsetting I think is the word. The word you're looking for.

Sydnee: Well...

Taylor: I am upset by that. Hey, old people. Hey, other old people!

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Climate change is happening. We should worry about it.

Sydnee: Yes. I mean, yes. [laughs quietly] Well, worry about it, and also we should, as nations and corporations and large, you know, groups, be doing something about it. Not just as individuals. I mean, I always feel like that—I don't want to be that person who's like, "So, listen. What can you do? Start recycling, and that's gonna save it all."

No. I mean, like...

Taylor: No.

Sydnee: You know. We have to—I mean, I'm not saying don't recycle. Sure, recycle. I recycle. Recycling's great. I try to compost. It's just sometimes what you get in the composter is so gross. It's just so gross. [laughs quietly] But I try. I do it some. I don't do it as much as I should. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Well, yeah. I mean, I don't think that... we can both recognize that it's giant corporations that are causing the problem, and our individual actions, even if all of us on an individual level did everything right, it would never hold a candle to what big industry is doing wrong.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm, and governments.

Taylor: But we should still...

Sydnee: And governments, yeah.

Taylor: Yeah. Well, yes. Well, the government is enabling the industry, and they're being paid by the industry, and owns the industry. It's all just, you know.

Sydnee: Our government is a corporation.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Anyway.

Taylor: [sighs]

Sydnee: So, speaking of garbage.

Taylor: Speaking of garbage! [laughs] Exactly.

Sydnee: That was—

Taylor: We're talking about Garbage the band. Good one, Syd. Good, nice.

Sydnee: Thanks! Thanks! I felt pretty good about that. That was seamless. It was unintentional. I wasn't thinking, like, "Oh, this'll be a great ramp to talk about—" it just happened. It was organic.

Taylor: I love it when we make a smooth—we make a smooth transition, and then we instantly blow it by talking about what a good transition it is. [laughs]

Sydnee: Well—

Taylor: One of these days, we gotta do it, and we can make eye contact and be like, "Yeah." But then we just gotta roll.

Sydnee: I know. But I feel like—

Taylor: That's what actual cool people do.

Sydnee: Well, see—

Taylor: I think.

Sydnee: Yes. That is what I was about to say. That's the difference, though. Is that I know I'm not cool, so I feel the need to be like, "Did you see that? Did you see?"

Taylor: That's fair. That's fair.

Sydnee: "That was a cool thing I just did. I have to call attention to it because I'm not a cool person."

Taylor: Fair. Totally fair. Garbage. Good Garbage!

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: The only good kind of Garbage there is: the band.

Sydnee: Right.

Taylor: Um...

Sydnee: So, Tey, you chose Garbage, and—well, we kind of collectively chose Garbage. And we are specifically gonna focus on the first two albums, the self-titled album Garbage, and then...

Taylor: Version 2.0.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: So the first one was „95, and the second one was „98.

Sydnee: Very—very defining times in our youth.

Taylor: Yeah. It was funny when I was thinking of those years, 'cause I remember listening to these albums when they came out. And like, in my head I was like, “Oh, I was a teenager.”

It’s like, no, I was like, 10, 12? [laughs] This is young.

Sydnee: Well... I feel like, though, that that was the age—I mean, part of this too, I bet, as long as we're talking about technology shifting, I bet if you started looking at like, when it was easy to get CDs, like when they became affordable, or Discmans, and like, if you start lining up those years, that informs why, you know, why at that point you started listening to new music.

I mean, I know a lot of it I trace to the—I remember the Christmas that I got a CD player for my room. Remember I got that big stereo?

Taylor: Oh yeah.

Sydnee: Which makes it sound like it was so fancy. It was just 'cause stereos were really big.

Taylor: They just had to be big. They did not have the technology. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: No. We couldn't make „em little. They were big. And it had, like, two speaker that you had to, like, attach the little speaker wires to it.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Did it have a record player in it, too? [pause] Maybe.

Taylor: We had one that had built-in record player, but I don't think that was the one in your room.

Sydnee: The one in my room just had tapes. It definitely still had cassettes.

Taylor: Yeah. Yes.

Sydnee: It had a CD place, but then it also had, like, two cassette places, so I could record a cassette. [laughs]

Taylor: See, I remember my first CD player being—it was super cool. It was wall-mounted. Do you remember that one?

Sydnee: Yes!

Taylor: And, like, the speakers were separate from it. It was all connected by wires. Nothing was wireless. But it was like, it was shiny, chrome, space-age-looking CD player that was, like, see-through blue and chrome, and mounted on the wall.

Sydnee: Well, you had that aesthetic in your room for a while.

Taylor: I did.

Sydnee: Which I will say, fits very well into the music we're talking about. 'Cause I feel like especially, like, Garbage, like, the music videos, like, their aesthetic felt very like that futuristic, space-age, plastic, shiny, neon color.

Taylor: Yes. It was sort of the—[laughs] music you would hack a computer to?

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: [laughs] Fictionally hack a computer, not actually.

Sydnee: No. No. The way that they do it in Hackers.

Taylor: Yes. This is the kind of music that I imagine Angelina Jolie's character listening to in Hackers.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. Hey—

Taylor: She was that kind of girl.

Sydnee: Have you—by the way, have you ever heard of the concept of an ethical hacker?

Taylor: I mean, I can understand that concept. But...

Sydnee: This also came up this weekend, that I was introduced to this as a potential job that one might have.

Taylor: Like, something that you actually are employed to...

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. They employ you. This is—I mean, this makes sense. Like, I think if you thought—like, it was one of those things where I, like, “Well, if I thought about that long enough, I probably would've figured it out.”

But I had not been introduced to the concept before. You hire a person to break into your systems. So that you can find the weaknesses. Right?

Taylor: That's cool.

Sydnee: So your job is like... big corporation has very secure system. I'm hiring you to try to break it, and then tell me how you broke it so that then we can fix it so nobody else can do that.

Taylor: See, I thought—you say “ethical hacker.” I’m like, oh, you mean the people that, like, take down the government’s website and, I don't know... yeah, ethical. Absolutely.

Sydnee: The ethical hackers are the people who have reached out to me in the last few weeks and sent me entire—like, I have all of the CDC website saved on my computer now. Like, the original.

Taylor: That's amazing.

Sydnee: I have the entire thing saved so that as it’s been torn down and destroyed, I still have the original. [laughs] So... that’s ethical hacking, I think.

Taylor: That's good. It’s good it exists somewhere.

Sydnee: I'm not only one. There—listen. There are a lot of, uh... I don't know, maybe this'll be the moment where doctors actually start using our voices. Maybe. Maybe. Fingers crossed.

Taylor: I don't know. If you could just, like, maybe make a daily update about, like, bird flu and, uh, polio? Just a daily—just, where else are we gonna get it? That would be appreciated. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: I mean, listen. I will—not to—we should get back to Garbage, but let me just say this.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: If you didn't receive two measles vaccines as a kid, which is possible for anybody born before 1989... so that includes us, Tey. Now, I know I have measles immunity because for med school I had to get titres drawn. So, like, I know I have the antibodies. But if you don't know, you may consider, talk to your healthcare professional about titres, or just getting an MMR booster. Something to consider.

Taylor: Well, alright.

Sydnee: There you go.

Taylor: [laughs quietly] That wasn't—that didn't make me feel *better*.

Sydnee: I've had to—

Taylor: I'm not gonna say anything other than "Get some shots."

Sydnee: I've had to memorize—this is—this is where we are know. I've had to memorize these dates. So if you were born before 1957, we assume you probably had measles at some point and you have immunity because you were exposed to it. If you were born between „57 and „65, you may have gotten the inactivated measles vaccine, which didn't work very well, so you might not have immunity, and you may need a booster. And if you were born any time after „65 but before „89, you may have only gotten one MMR

instead of the standard two that we do now, in which case, you might not be immune. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Good to know.

Sydnee: I know! Like, it's sad that this is what I'm having to memorize... to inform people. In 2025, about *measles*!

Taylor: Garbage!

Sydnee: Garbage. Back to Garbage.

Taylor: Garbage.

Sydnee: Did you ever see Garbage in concert?

Taylor: I never did. Have you?

Sydnee: I did. I did.

Taylor: Oh, wow.

Sydnee: I know. This feels like such a... this is so, like, a sweet spot for our show for me to get to talk about. Because I saw Garbage in concert, here in Huntington, West Virginia. Why did Garbage come to Huntington, West Virginia?

Taylor: That's a great question.

Sydnee: I know, right? And this was, um... I would've been a senior in high school at the time.

Taylor: Hmm.

Sydnee: A junior or a senior. So this would've been, like, I graduated in 2001, so this would've been around the year 2000. So these are after these two albums have come out. So Garbage is huge, right?

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydney: Like, they are—everybody knows. The music video's out. The, um... we've already had their song on Romeo and Juliet. This would've been—

Taylor: [simultaneously] #1 Crush.

Sydney: —I think pre-James Bond song. When did they do The World is Not Enough? That came later, right?

Taylor: Hmm, I don't know.

Sydney: Anyway. They were super popular. MTV used to do a thing called MTV Campus Invasion.

Taylor: [laughs] Oh! Is that what it was part of?

Sydney: Yes. MTV used to come to different college campuses all over the country, and they would do, like—they would do live shows from there. So they would do a bunch of, like—I mean, they're reality shows, is what we know them as today.

At the time, this was really, like, revolutionary and unique, 'cause they would do some sort of, like, college, like, cheeky game show kind of thing. Like, you know, spraying whipped cream on college students or, like, having them go through some sort of, like, Double Dare-esque obstacle course that they built on their campus. Or whatever, right? Or eat a gross thing. Sometimes it involved drinking or, you know, debauchery. Whatever.

So they would come on your campus. They would set these things up, like, out on the quad and around campus and in the student center. They would film live all of these different things. And then the big culmination of it is that they would bring a band—or two, in our case—and do a big concert there, and film the concert and, like, all the college students got tickets to the—well, I mean, I... no, we did buy „em. But, like, you got discounted tickets. They made it so that everybody could go.

And Garbage came as part of Marshall University's MTV Campus Invasion. And they were—the opening act was Lit. Remember the band Lit?

Taylor: Oh. [laughs quietly] I remember Lit.

Sydnee: So I saw Lit and Garbage at the... it was at the time the Civic Center, then known as the Big Sandy Super Arena, and now it is the Marshall Health Network Arena. But anyway.

Taylor: Oh.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] It was where the now defunct—

Taylor: I didn't know it changed identities again.

Sydnee: —now defunct Huntington hockey team the Blizzard played for a while.

Taylor: Yeah. Yeah, I remember that. Wow, that was—I mean, you had, like, the quintessential... like, that is the—the Millennial experience, there. [laughs]

Sydnee: It was, it was the Millennial experience. It was. And we—

Taylor: That is the backdrop to a teen movie of some kind.

Sydnee: It was. Well, even to the extent where, like, um... I got tickets to sit in the stands. But then I had a friend who had, like, snuck their way onto the floor? And so, like, I snuck my way onto the floor of the concert with my friend. So I got to, like, be down in the pit to watch Garbage. It's very Millennial. The whole thing. The whole story. It's like, it—

Taylor: How was—how was the pit? Did you get twisted?

Sydnee: No. it was a—it was Garbage. It was just people sort of, like, bopping, you know?

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Kind of, like, jumping sometimes. [laughs] That was about it.

Taylor: That sounds awesome.

Sydnee: Yeah. There was no actual pit action. Certainly not to Lit, either.
[laughs]

Taylor: I could see—I don't know, I could see people... [holding back laughter] moshing to Lit. I don't know. Just that kind of, like, vaguely punk-ish pop rock was popular to... dance to at the time.

Sydnee: Yeah. It was a great—I mean, it was a great show. I will say, there was a problem. The floor was slippery, because it was an ice rink. Like—

Taylor: They—I mean, they got rid of the ice, I'm assuming.

Sydnee: They got rid of the ice, but something was happening, because Shirley Manson kept slipping. And she was—

Taylor: She was on the floor? She wasn't on a stage?

Sydnee: She was on the stage, but then she would, like, come out. They had, like, an extension.

Taylor: Ahh.

Sydnee: And it was slippery, and she was mad. And I remember her, like, saying, like, "What is wrong with your floor?"

And I remember her climbing on somebody's back and singing while somebody was carrying her around, like, piggyback.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: So she didn't fall. So it had something to do with it being an ice rink is what—I have no idea. This is not something I understand. I just know

that, like, I remember her getting mad and being like, "Why is the floor so slippery?" [laughs]

Taylor: That's amazing.

Sydnee: Yes. It was just also very Huntington. Like, yep, that's right.

Taylor: Yeah, yeah.

Sydnee: Bring your giant, popular band to Huntington, MTV, and we will have them fall. [laughs]

Taylor: On an ice rink.

Sydnee: On an ice rink. [laughs]

Taylor: I love that.

Sydnee: Where our city's hockey team used to play.

Taylor: Man. I'm so jealous. Was she just amazing to see live? What was she wearing? Do you remember?

Sydnee: Hmm, I don't remember what she was wearing. I mean, it was ama—the show was incredible. She was incredible, the show was incredible. Even as she was sort of yelling at us for having a slippery floor, it was incredible.

Taylor: I would love to—I would pay money to be yelled at. She doesn't even have to sing. She can just yell at me. I'd pay for it.

Sydnee: And it was really, like—it was so huge. It was, like, the height of... I mean, I don't want to say the height of their career, because they have continued to be—

Taylor: [laughs] Height of career, playing in a—

Sydnee: Playing at Huntington.

Taylor: —Huntington, West Virginia ice rink. [laughs]

Sydnee: No.

Taylor: It's all downhill from here!

Sydnee: No, it was—

Taylor: Slippery.

Sydnee: We don't get—it's funny because, like, we generally don't get acts—big acts in Huntington at all, period. And if we do it's usually because either we got super lucky and we got somebody who then later would hit it big, and then we would all be like, "Oh, do you remember?" Like, I—this wasn't in Huntington, but in Ashland, Kentucky which is, you know, 30 minutes up the river, and similar-sized town. Justin and I saw Fun there. And I mean, there were like, maybe 100 people there. [laughs quietly] And that was before Fun was Fun, you know? Before.

Taylor: Before Fun was Fun. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: That was right—that was early days. Um, so we either get lucky like that, or it's because somebody's declining in popularity, and so then they'll come to Huntington. It is—it is very rare that a band that was super popular at the time would come to a place like Huntington.

Taylor: I was gonna say, I remember when I was very young seeing Aerosmith with a friend of mine, going with her parents. But I... I think that was—that might have been, like, Armageddon era, which was still—that was a resurgence of Aerosmith.

Sydnee: That's popular. Yeah.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: How did we—I—well, and I mean, to be fair, like, we took Dad to that Kid Rock concert.

Taylor: [laughs] Yes we did.

Sydnee: And—

Taylor: Yeah, that was during the—Kid Rock. Ooh, talk about a falloff.

Sydnee: Yeah. I mean, he was popular at the time. And he played Huntington. I don't know, though.

Taylor: It's probably a demographic thing, though. I think somebody crunched some numbers and said, "Yeah, we're gonna do well in Huntington, West Virginia with a Kid Rock show."

Sydnee: Well, and I will say that... there—when country acts come through here, I don't know who they are, and I don't go see them. But I bet you that Civic Arena is full.

Taylor: Yeah. Well, that's awesome. Man. That is a great experience.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. It was a truly great concert, and I feel very lucky to have had the whole—the whole MTV... [laughs] man. Does MTV still do that?

Taylor: I... I have no idea. I don't know what MTV—MTV used to do so much. I don't know if TRL is still a thing. I don't know if they still do the Spring Break, the Campus Invasions.

Sydnee: Yeah. MTV Spring—I hope that—you know what, though? Honestly, Campus Invasion was pretty cool. MTV Spring Break probably... [laughs] needed to go away.

Taylor: It probably killed people.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Well, 'cause they definitely did, like... drinking competitions. You know what I mean? Like, stunt debauchery.

Taylor: [laughs] As we came into the modern age and, like, HR departments were taken more seriously, there were some—some—[wheezes] some things lost.

Sydnee: Yeah. Uh... well, I mean, like, we've talked about Singled Out before on this show. But there was a moment where... I don't know. Well, and this isn't a moment. This is, like, a big chunk of, like, teen stuff where we have movies and TV shows that are all just centered on, like, look at all the... stuff we'll get these teens to do if we give „em money and put a camera on „em. And it's like, well... let's not.

Taylor: Yeah. That's a—

Sydnee: Let's not do that.

Taylor: That's a story that happened with a lot of networks in the „90s into the early 2000's, where the only adults at the table were just... they were not that old. And there was nobody looking into what they were doing. So some of the products that came out of that were creative and awesome. A lot of, you know, like, the animation at the time that was wacky and weird. And then you also had probably a lot of debauchery and horrible things happen.

Sydnee: Yeah. So, for the best that a lot of that went away. But...

Taylor: Yeah. Well, what is—

Sydnee: Anyway—

Taylor: Oh, go ahead.

Sydnee: Oh, well, I was gonna ask you about, like, Garbage. What— obviously the music is good. I mean, obviously, you know, it was well-loved, very popular. But what specifically about Garbage is meaningful for you, or do you love?

Taylor: Um, I mean, I will say I always felt like it was... a little too cool for me. I wanted to be the type of cool person that could listen to Garbage, and I did listen to it. I just never—it just always seemed like... like, yeah. I mean, it did seem like music that some cool person wearing lots of—of... I don't know, shiny clothes with some cool sunglasses and slicked-back hair would, like, listen to while they were, I don't know...

Sydnee: Hacking a computer?

Taylor: Hacking a computer. Yeah. Or, like, I don't know. Doing a sick trick on a skateboard while smoking a menthol. Like, I—this is cool people music.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Um... but it's also just—it's also just really good. Like, I just think... it's funny listening back, 'cause I think—the album that was bigger for me was 2.0. I didn't realize how much, like, every song on 2.0 I knew the words to.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: Like, you know, beginning to end. And I mean, I don't know. Like, I Think I'm Paranoid, When I Grow Up, like, those were big hits. They were so... they were such bops.

Sydnee: I was surprised by that too, as I was listening back to both of „em, how much, like, I knew. Um, Special. I have not listened to Special in so long, and I love that song. And I don't—but yeah. There were so many songs on there that I was like, “How have I forgotten?”

But like, as I'm listening, I—the words start coming back to me, and so yeah. I—2,0 I think is the one that I knew more, which makes sense. Like... in „95 I would've been 12. So... you know. In „98 this is—you know. Obviously I am peak buying-CDs-age at that point.

Taylor: Well, and I would say—“cause I know we had a copy. I don't think it was mine. I feel like it was yours. I mean, who else would—

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] Yeah. I don't think our parents had a... yeah. No, I did have a copy of that. And I—yeah. I absolutely loved Garbage, and I loved—I mean, and some of „em, too—like, I was talking about the Romeo and Juliet one, #1 Crush.

Taylor: Oh, yeah.

Sydnee: Oh man. I listened to that so many times. Also on the Romeo and Juliet soundtrack, which man, that's a great soundtrack.

Taylor: Uh, yeah. That song, though. I what I like that—I don't know. There was always something sort, like... not creepy in, like, a gothic way. But I feel like there is something kind of creepy about a lot of the music. It's just something... I mean, also just Shirley Manson's whole style and everything. Like, she was just always, like...

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Powerful, intimidating, and a little bit spooky. [laughs quietly] And it comes through in the music.

Sydnee: Yeah. It does come through in the music. It does come through. I mean, it's also—there's quite a few songs that are pretty sexy. But, like, yes. Yeah. It is—she is not... I don't know. There was a—I don't wanna... I feel like we've moved past bashing, like, girls for being girls. Like, all that I mean by—you know what I mean. Like, girly-girl girl.

But at the time, Shirley Manson did provide sort of a different version of feminine power and joy and whatever. You know what I mean? Like, I feel like there was—like, Gwen Stefani was such a girl of the moment.

Taylor: Hmm...

Sydnee: I mean, her music was tough, but she's still, like—there was nothing about her that was, like—I don't know. She was not spooky.

Taylor: She wasn't spooky, but she was tough. I mean, she got down and did push-ups on the whole, like... [laughs] like, guitar break in Just a Girl. Like, that was her thing.

Sydnee: She was tough. But she wasn't... there's something about Shirley Manson that was always a little bit, like... like, legit, she could—she could take you down if she wanted to.

Taylor: Well, and I think—well, I agree. Like, bashing women for being women—being feminine, none of that's ever okay. But when we look at a lot of the artists that were concurrent, I do have a problem with the sort of baby-fication, the kind of—I mean, it was like, you know, the Britneys and Christinas where it's like, "[high-pitched] I'm just an innocent little baby! Oops! I don't mean to be sexual. It's a mista—oh no! It was an accident."

Like, it's that kind of creepy, like... you want a perpetual little girl.

Sydnee: Right.

Taylor: And Shirley Manson was... not. She was not sorry for being a woman. She was a woman who owned every aspect of herself, even her sexuality. Like, to say she was sexy, yeah. But it's like, she was very aware of it, and her songs that are sexual are very confident. And that was different than the—the bigger, mainstream message, which was, "A woman should not try to be sexual. But she also absolutely should be sexualized."

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. No, I—I mean, I think there is... that—I think that's what I'm getting to, even. And I don't mean to, like, bash Gwen Stefani, certainly. I love No Doubt. I love Gwen Stefani. I loved her whole thing. Her aesthetic was very appealing to me at the time as well. But I also never... I don't know. I think as somebody who's always been less feminine, but a woman, Shirley Manson was somebody I connected with more. Whereas Gwen Stefani I still felt like... I don't know. I've—I'm not just a girl. [laughs quietly] You know what I mean? Like, I never connected with that. 'Cause I—"cause all that goes into the concept of "girl" was never quite—you know

what I—and I'm not talking about gender. I'm just talking about, like, conceptually.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Girlhood.

Taylor: Although I don't—I mean, that's all—like, I'm just—not to go off topic, but that song was specifically about being limited to just being a girl. Like, fighting against that. Which is funny because it's made a resurgence on TikTok, just that soundbite, going along with clips of, like... I mean, this is a whole other conversation. This weird trad wife, like, incapable woman trend, where all of a sudden it's cool to just be like, "Oops! I crashed my car! [baby voice] I'm just a girl!"

It's like, self-infantilizing stuff. But they're using that song as the backdrop to it. It's like, no! The point of that song is that you're not... you're not just a girl! [laughs] You're so much more! Ahh!

Sydnee: It's tough, though. Because it... I mean—[sighs]. Again, this is a whole other conversation. Because what we're really digging into are, like, the different waves of feminism, and what being an empowered woman was—what it looked like, and what it could be packaged as.

'Cause that's the other thing. All of this was shaped by how it could be marketed. Part of Gwen Stefani saying "I'm just a girl" in an ironic way, but then also... looking and feeling like a girl in so many ways. Like, that was—that's packaging. Don't want her to be too threatening, right? Like, 'cause you're trying to sell CDs. [laughs quietly] So, I mean, it's hard. 'Cause we're talking about them like it's who they are as people, and it's not. It's the... it's the filter, packaged, public image that record companies presented of both Gwen Stefani and Shirley Manson, you know, and Garbage.

Taylor: Yes, but I would also say that given the test of time, Shirley Manson was—I mean, I would say even then she had an air of more authenticity about her. I felt like what we were getting was who she was. And... I read a recent interview with her. I mean, she's done a few recent

interviews. There was also, like, a love letter she wrote to the LGBT community in 2017.

Like, she's spoken recently. Like, not came out as non-binary. Just kind of said, like, "Yeah. That's probably what I am." Like, in the coolest way possible was like, "Yeah, I'm just as much a woman as a man. So, you know, sure. I get what that's about." Like, however, whatever sort of image was put forth of her just being unrepentantly cool and, like, *that girl*, she is. [laughs] She always has been.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: She's always been a staunch feminist. She's always been, like, an amazing ally. She's, you know. Just everything you hope she is through what the industry packaged her as, she just really was, which is cool. You don't always get that.

Sydnee: She was also so much—I always felt like her and the concept of the band Garbage were always so closely linked for me. You know? She was Garbage, Garbage was her. It was her band. And, like, her band was with her. Like, if you even look at, like, imagery from the time, like, obviously she's very striking. I mean, with the red hair and everything. She stands out. You know, and she's beautiful.

But then she's with her band. In a way that, like, I feel like other women artists of the time were pushed to be alone and, like, be a whole—you know what I mean? Like, you are the thing we're selling now, not your music or your band or anything around you. Just you.

And she always felt a lot more like—when I thought of her, I didn't think of her as the individual artist. I thought of her as... her band.

Taylor: She was a frontwoman.

Sydnee: So it was a different—yeah. It was a different vibe. We don't think about Gwen Stefani that way. Like, yes, she was in No Doubt, but she became—and she also had a solo career, of course.

Taylor: I can see that.

Sydnee: That's really cool. And, I mean, I think that I... again, maybe that's what... maybe that's the importance. [laughs quietly] Maybe that's the importance of allowing everybody—of allowing people to be the whole spectrum of ways that humans can be, as opposed to sort of like that—and, I mean, that was such a „90s thing. Like, package. Like, oh, you're a girl and you're blond, so—and you're music's kind of like this, so we'll package you like this. Oh, and you're a girl and you're a redhead. Ooh, you're a little harder, so we'll package you like this.

And, like, trying to decide that is so damaging, because there are infinite ways that humans feel, and you can find yourself in different—you know, different representations in media and music and whatever. And that makes you feel valid, and seen, and celebrated, and everyone deserves to feel that way. Not just people who fit into certain stereotypes.

Taylor: Well, and I—you know, I think artists—you always have to kind of be aware you're a product. But you should be able to design yourself. I mean, in the, you know, famous words of Dolly Parton, “Know who you are and do it on purpose.”

Like, that's when you—when you really get somebody that... you have to know what your packaging is, but when it's yours and it's not just something that the industry says “This is what's gonna sell, so put it on.” We've seen that happen to lots of specifically women, and very much from this time period. That they were just sort of forced into a role and said “Play this role, „cause this is what tracks. This is what sells.”

And then, you know, when you have that opposite someone who very much—I would... I would confidently say that Shirley Manson decided who she was, and did not bend to any other... any requests outside of that. And I think that comes through in the long run.

Sydnee: I think that's very true. And I think, you know, a good contrast to that—if you look at—I was looking back at pictures of her. I was trying to refresh myself of her style and everything. Um, if you contrast her with, like, Avril Lavigne—

Taylor: [laughs] Right.

Sydnee: From around the same—you know what I mean?

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Who very much felt like she was being forced to—like, she was... everything around her was manufactured, right? And so, like, that lack of authenticity, people felt. And, I mean, this is not a criticism of Avril Lavigne. I like some of her songs, and I still do, so whatever. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: You know. And I'll defend that. But I think that there were a lot of people who were like, "This is not... you're not punk. Like, we can feel. We feel that this isn't you."

Whereas with Shirley Manson, that authenticity, whether you know that's what you're... sensing, or not, that is why she draws people—that's why Garbage I think was so huge, is like, this feels real. This feels authentic. I love it.

And it's great. The music's great.

Taylor: And I think that leads, too, why it's kind of hard to categorize. I was reading, like, they describe themselves as sci-fi pop, which I think fits.

Sydnee: Sure, yeah.

Taylor: But how many other bands could you name in that? Like, that is a... it sounded like its own thing because it was, you know. I feel like that's the mark of a really great band, when you just can't... put it on, like, a playlist of four other bands and have it disappear. Like, it's always gonna stand out.

Sydnee: Yeah. No, it does. And, I mean, it is. Like, every song—and I don't wanna say they all sound the same. But they definitely—like, you know it's a

Garbage song. You know that vibe. And, I mean, Shirley Manson's voice is just—it is, like, singular, what it is. In a good way.

Taylor: Oh yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah. Hey, do you remember last year when we were lucky enough to have Jojo Siwa invent gay pop? Wasn't that nice?

Taylor: [laughs quietly] That was. That was. It's nice that...

Sydnee: When that just happened last year for the first time in human history.

Taylor: Just last year.

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] I shouldn't say that. Poor Jojo.

Taylor: Yeah. Well, I mean, talk about industry products. That is just someone who's had every—every aesthetic choice, artistic choice in her entire life told to her.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: I think it's only gotten worse in recent years. I feel like most of the music we get is... it's been tested. It's, you know, an industry production that they have run all of the numbers on and said, "This will sell." You know.

Sydnee: I think... you know, I hope, though, that people who are making music and feel discouraged by that, younger people who are, like, not there yet and are trying to find their place, like, they want a career in that—if you look at somebody like Doechii...

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Like, doing something—that is not manufactured or packaged. Because I feel like her whole thing is so unpredictable, and different, and unique—you know what I mean? Like, there's always—like, you can always

break through if you have something—if you've got a unique, different—and obviously talented... [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: ... perspective, that will break through. It doesn't have to be prepackaged.

Taylor: Well, and that's what—you know, I think of like—like, in our day, Nicki Minaj came up on MySpace. She came up as a MySpace rapper.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: And I think similarly, like, you get artists that break out through, like, TikTok. As the algorithm becomes more and more controlled, it becomes a spec of like, am I being fed this new song because it's an industry setup? And that does happen. But there's still those pathways of like, actually having grassroots success, building a career through, like, a, you know, a side door.

Sydnee: Yeah. No, I think that's still true. And I mean, all that to say, I recognize the era when Garbage got big, certainly there had to be a lot of people in that room helping them shape what Garbage was, right? Like, that was just the „90s. You couldn't—you know, it was a different time.

But they maintained that authenticity, and it's clear. I don't know. I think that music would resonate with people today. I think people who listen to Garbage for the first time today would enjoy it just as much as we did back in the „90s. I think it is that kind of music.

Taylor: Well, and they're still making music. I mean, I think they've got an album coming out this year, in May.

Sydnee: Oh, do they?

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: That's awesome.

Taylor: They've got a release on May 30th. So, you know, still... yeah. They had another one in 2021. So they're still making excellent music. Um, I know some of the more recent songs have landed on my radar. But, uh, I feel like all of my most listened-to favorites—again, that's the benefit of, like, having a CD. You just listen to that same CD over and over again. [laughs] You can't click away to something else. It gets ingrained in your head better.

Sydney: No, that's really true. Unless you had the fancy 6 CD disc changer.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydney: That you had to load in the back of your car. [laughs quietly] Do you remember those?

Taylor: Oh, I remember those. I remember having one of those in the back of the Rodeo.

Sydney: Yeah. You had to park, get into the back, [holding back laughter] get into the trunk of your car, load whatever six CDs you wanted in the back, and then you could control them from the front. Man.

Taylor: Like, I feel like it was easier to just have 6 CDs next to you up front in the car. [laughs]

Sydney: Yes. Yes. As a proud owner of a Dodge Neon with just a single CD player in it for many years, yes, it was much easier. Well, you had the visor CD case you could just grab out of. And then of course you got your giant brick, your book—brick or book. There were two different ways—

Taylor: [simultaneously] Binder. Yeah.

Sydney: —you could format CDs. Yeah. In your—you got your binder down in the passenger seat next to you. But...

Taylor: Yeah. I still have mine. Um, what would you say is your favorite Garbage song?

Sydnee: Special. That was definitely the one I was listening back through I was like, "Aw, man! I love this song so much! Why have I not listened to this?"

Taylor: That was a good song.

Sydnee: What was yours?

Taylor: Um, I mean, probably the one I listened to the most was When I Grow Up. But a bit of—not one of the hit tracks that I really love, which is actually off of the self-titled, is, uh—what is it called? As Heaven is Wide?

Sydnee: Yeah, that's a good one.

Taylor: It's a really good revenge song.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: You know, we talked about on Lady Gaga how some songs are sort of, like, sonic spells. That's a good sonic spell, and it's baneful. [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah. That's good. That's good. Yeah, if you haven't listened to Garbage, I would highly encourage it. It's really—it's fun. I don't wanna say "feel good." I mean, it's kind of feel good.

Taylor: Feel... justified. I don't know.

Sydnee: You don't feel bad.

Taylor: No.

Sydnee: It's not sad.

Taylor: Empowering. I think it's empowering.

Sydnee: Yeah, there you go.

Taylor: You, too, can be... intimidating, and beautiful, and spooky.

Sydnee: So Tey, next week we're doing something a little different 'cause it's Max Fun Drive.

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: So we have a special episode.

Taylor: Are you gonna tell „em what it is? Just tell „em?

Sydnee: Yeah. I think we should tell „em what it is.

Taylor: Well, uh, you know, there's been—[laughs quietly] there's been a lot of ragging on Millennials on the internet as of late. Well, it's been going on for years, let's be real. But, uh, I think as two Millennials—Sydnee, I know you're right on the edge there, but you're still one of us—

Sydnee: I count.

Taylor: —we want to mount a little bit of a defense.

Sydnee: Yep. We are going to share with you, uh, the top five contributions... [laughs quietly] Millennials have made, generally, to our culture. And, uh, defend the, um, [through laughter] existence of Millennials.

Taylor: Sort of a meta, because the idea of top five lists I think is something that we [laughs] we really loved.

Sydnee: We also brought to you. Your welcome. Um, but yeah. Yeah. We're gonna defend our cringe selves.

Taylor: Defend the cringe.

Sydnee: Defend the cringe, next week.

Taylor: Alright.

Sydnee: Alright. Well, thank you, Tey. I enjoyed listening to Garbage. And Cooper really did too, predictably.

Teylor: That makes sense. That absolutely makes sense.

Sydnee: She was like, "What is this? I like this."

Teylor: "Spooky."

Sydnee: "Show me this." Yeah. "This is spooky."

Uh, thank you, listeners. You should go to Maximumfun.org and check out all the great shows there. You can email us at stillbuffering@maximumfun.org, and thank you to The Nouvellas for our theme song, Baby You Change Your Mind.

Teylor: This has been Still Buffering, a cross-generational guide to the culture that made us.

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Teylor: And I'm Teylor Smirl.

Sydnee: I am still buffering...

Teylor: And I am too.

[theme music plays]

Sydnee: I will say the song #1 Crush from Romeo and Juliet, it's like every song on that album, any time I hear it I just see, like, Leonardo DiCaprio and his... colorful...

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