

Still Buffering 436: Avril Lavigne

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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: Tey, we had to delay recording one day for a classic elementary school tradition.

Taylor: Ah, yes, yes. I could not be upset at all when you told me why you couldn't record yesterday.

Sydnee: Yeah, I had to— I was one of the parent volunteers for Field Day, which I thought this was really interesting, we were talking about Field Day and not everybody knew what I was referencing.

I was talking— I think Justin didn't know what Field Day— I mean he does now as a parent, but like prior to parenthood, did— I don't think he experienced Field Day.

Taylor: Is this a local thing? Is it a cultural thing? I'm not—

Sydnee: I thought Field Day was universal.

Taylor: Well, so for— I would gather then that there are people out there that do not know what you are talking about. Can you explain Field Day [chuckles] briefly?

Sydnee: Okay, I feel like I need to be Googling as I'm doing this, like, "Didn't everybody— [chuckles] Didn't everybody do this?"

Taylor: I mean, you know, we've got international listeners. They—

Sydnee: Okay.

Taylor: Maybe they had it, but they have some like different, like you know, like I'm sure that if they had it, like our British listeners have some like cute, little, it's the polliwog—

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Taylor: — outsidey... time.

Sydnee: Field Day... Okay, Field Day, at least what I'm referencing, because I just looked up "field day" on Wikipedia, and there's a lot of Field Days. It's apparently like a mu— a couple of different music festivals, and a theatre company.

Taylor: Oh. Well, we don't mean that.

Sydnee: And there's Sports Day and Club Day, which may also be corollaries to Field Day. Also it's a Canadian pop punk band. But Field Day [chuckles] here is a day of school, typically towards the end of the year, like last— this is our last week of school, so. Where they take all the kinds out to usually a field, a big, open, grassy space, and then do a bunch of games.

Taylor: [mumbles] I see.

Sydnee: I mean they're not sports. Like... for instance, I was in charge of helping with the tricycle races. Where, you know, they got in two lines, there are two tricycles, and they take turns racing down, and around the cones, and coming back, and it's like a relay.

There's usually like— There were like ring tosses, there's tug of war. Multiple different sorts of relays. And then always some— like usually because it's warm by now, there's some water-based activities.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Like, "Carry this sponge over your head, this sponge full of water." Like dip it in the bucket, carry it over your head down to another bucket, squeeze it out, whichever team fills their bucket first wins, like that kinda task.

Taylor: The big one was always the water balloon toss, as I remember.

Sydnee: We did not do a water balloon toss. I don't know if that's because—

Taylor: Mm, is that—

Sydnee: Bad for the earth?

Taylor: Is it dangerous? Well I was— I assume this— Did it— Was it dangerous somehow? Was it one of those things we did that was very dangerous, but we did it because it was childhood.

Sydnee: Probably, I think it was that, and I think it was also like the environmental impact. So we— They do— At my kids' school, the Field Days are on the local university, Marshall, they hold them on their fields.

Taylor: Oh wow.

Sydnee: Like the kids walk down. We're like a downtown school, they walk to... either the football field, or the one yesterday was on the softball field. So I'm assuming they just don't want like a bunch of water balloon pieces all over the softball field.

Taylor: That's fair.

Sydnee: Yeah. But it was... And they blast Kids Bop the entire time over the loudspeakers, and then all of the elementary school is there, and they rotate in stations to the different places. And then they get popsicles at the end. I don't understand how, like as an adult, as a 42-year-old, it's like, "Why is this a reward?" It's like—

Taylor: The popsicle?

Sydnee: No, it's like 78 degrees outside, we're in the like just blazing sun on a softball field, and we're just like, "Run. Run there. Now go over there and run. Now go over here and run." [chuckles] They're all just like ready to fall over by the end of Field Day. [chuckles]

Taylor: Yeah, but kids love that. Kids love just running in various directions, that's like a solid— I mean that's definitely a day's worth of activity.

Sydnee: We had to nix— The activity I was in charge of last year was like you use two pool noodles to like almost as giant chopsticks to pick up a rubber chicken.

Taylor: [chuckles]

Sydnee: And then carry it.

Taylor: Course you do.

Sydnee: And then run around a cone, and come back, and hand it off to your teammate. And that was one, very hard. [chuckles] For them to do, and—

Taylor: It sounds very hard.

Sydnee: It was. And two, they started beating each other with the pool noodles.

Taylor: Of course.

Sydnee: Yeah. So. That was kinda that. [chuckles]

Taylor: I feel like in kid brain, this all sounds fantastic. I understand why your adult brain goes “No. Why would you do this by choice?” but...

Sydnee: It— What was funny, first of all, Charlie brought— They walked from the school to the softball field, which is I mean several blocks, it’s a decent walk in the heat of the day, and she had carried with her her sunscreen the whole way, to be safe.

Taylor: Mm, good.

Sydnee: Not in a bag, just in her hand.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Taylor: She was ready.

Sydnee: She was ready, which is good, I'm glad she remembered to— I did not remember that, she remembered that on her own.

Taylor: [chuckles] Of course.

Sydnee: Yeah. But that was very cute, and I was very distracted by listening to Kids Bop pop songs of today.

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Because it's like, I don't know, I mean I guess Kids Bop has always been this way, it's just now I'm noticing it, I'm listening to "Hot to Go" Kids Bop. [chuckles] And it's like as I'm listening it's like, "Well what are they gonna do— Oh, okay."

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: "Oh, they're gonna do— Oh, they're gonna make it that. Okay. Okay." I mean it's like, I don't know, I mean they did Kids Bop Olivia Rodrigo... "Vampire?"

Taylor: Well that's— it's about a real vampire, right?

Sydnee: Well, it's just weird, like it— at some point you have to change so many words to not only get out— Like you have to eliminate the cuss words, „cause it's Kids Bop, but you have to kinda change it so that it's more about like... "You were— Like you bullied me." [chuckles] I don't know. You know what I mean? Like they're—

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: They have to change enough lyrics so that it doesn't sound so intense.

Taylor: It's interesting to me that Kids Bop even persists, „cause I don't know, I feel like kids are so... exposed to the culture in so many ways. Like I think kids know that bad words exist.

Sydnee: Well.

Taylor: Like I think they know that Chappell Roan exists. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Well exactly, and it's like... [pause] Okay. [pause] I want— I'm trying to find the lyrics to— of how they changed it to... No one— Okay, "You don't have to stare, come here, come get— Come here, get with it. No-one done like that in a real hot minute."

Taylor: Yeah, "No one's done like that in a real hot minute." I don't know, it could still be pretty hot if you wanted to say it right. [chuckles]

Sydnee: What does that mean!? [chuckles]

Taylor: "No-one's done like that."

Sydnee: "No-one's done like that in a real hot minute." What?

Taylor: I don't know.

Sydnee: You have to wonder if there are kids walking around who have only heard the Kids Bop version of these songs, and are like...

Taylor: Oh, absolutely.

Sydnee: "Man, that's a weird song," yah know?

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: I don't know, but it— Anyway. That was why—

Taylor: This is just a— it's a really— [chuckles] This is a really strange world where it's like, "I don't know, kids, let's do an active, you know, shooter drill, but also the concept of human attraction sung vaguely about in a pop song. No, we gotta protect them from that." It's just a very strange...

Sydnee: It—

Taylor: Strange thing to worry about. Like it's Field Day, they're running around outside, just put on the pop radio station.

Sydnee: Well but like you can't, like I was thinking— Well first of all, like the song "Vampire" by Olivia Rodrigo is not like a bop for Field Day, right?

Taylor: No.

Sydnee: Like why is that playing at Field Day, first of all. But like I think it's weird that we change, obviously we take out the cuss words, makes sense, but we leave in there the part about like... "Never— Ne— No I never will, why you went for me and not her, „cause girls your age know better." Okay, that's weird. Like we left that in there.

Taylor: I don't know. Mmm.

Sydnee: Anyway. [chuckles] Anyway, the kids were—

Taylor: I think if you— [chuckles] if you made me stand outside in an overstimulated environment, where children were armed with pool noodles, and I was forced to listen to Kids Bop, I think you would have some sort of, it would be very dangerous, some sort of rage out scenario. You know.

Sydnee: I don't know. I mean the main thing is that the kids are trying to hurt themselves, and so that's—

Taylor: [wheezes] As kids always are, right?

Sydnee: Yeah. Well like I— Again, I was in charge of tricycle relay. Well, what we— Here's what we figured out really quickly. Even the littlest kids couldn't actually make the tricycle go very well, because it was on AstroTurf.

Taylor: Mm.

Sydnee: And like it wouldn't go. So they got frustrated really fast, so they started using it like a scooter, like sort of standing on it with one foot and propelling themselves with the other foot while holding onto the handlebars.

Which actually was a pretty decent method, and they're low enough to the ground that I was like, "Eh, this is probably not gonna get „em hurt." But then they were like standing on the seat, and then they were just like

running while pushing the tricycle. And then eventually, like as we got to the older kids, „cause it like went up.

Like we started with like kindergarten and we were all the way up to 5th graders. By the time we were getting up to the 5th graders, they were just like picking up the tricycle and running full out, like sprinting while carrying a tricycle.

Taylor: Well now there should've been some rules in place.

Sydnee: Well that was up to— [chuckles]

Taylor: I feel like.

Sydnee: The problem is they make— they tell the parents “You’re in charge of trike races. Do it— Like do it however you want,” and we’re like, “I don’t know, what are the official rules on tricycle races? Like I don’t know.”

Taylor: I mean I would assume that the three wheels of the tricycle need to remain on the ground.

Sydnee: Well.

Taylor: You need to utilize the tricycle as a vehicle.

Sydnee: We made that rule once we saw the first kid just like pick up the tricycle whole. We were like, “No, we can’t do that anymore.” But then it became fun for them to like throw themselves off the tricycle at the end, like as they got to the end to pass it off to the next person, they would like throw their body off.

Taylor: Mm.

Sydnee: In like a roll, and let the tricycle go. And then also this was like a combined threat too, „cause like they are diving with their literal bodies like onto the AstroTurf, and then they are also simultaneously flinging the tricycle forward, full speed at the next child in line, like right at their shins. [chuckles] And it was just like, “No. Wait. How did this—? You’re riding a tricycle.” [chuckles]

Taylor: They're gonna find a way to make it dangerous, injure you or others. You gotta be real quick with those rules, you gotta make it a real tight, you know, range of performance. Gotta be on the tricycle, trike has gotta stay on the ground, you cannot perform any like last sequence in an action film type scenarios.

Sydnee: They all were, they were all doing that, it was— And I kept running over to every kid who dove off his tricycle, or her tricycle, going like, "Are you okay? Are you okay?" And they're all— I mean they were all fine. Like there was only one kid who like got a little bit of a skinned elbow, you know, on the AstroTurf.

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: That was about it though.

Taylor: I mean I guess that's just, you know... that's gonna happen.

Sydnee: That's you.

Taylor: If you let „em outside and let „em run around, they're gonna fall down.

Sydnee: They definitely fell down a lot. But anyway, it was a classic— That is— I am curious to know if that is— I don't think it's local, I mean I think there are definitely other schools across the US that do Field Day, but I wonder, my quick Google, if Club Day and Sports Day are the same thing. Although these are not sports that these kids are playing.
[chuckles]

Taylor: Well there—

Sydnee: I cannot stress that enough.

Taylor: [chuckles] We don't have any national tricycle... cycling team.

Sydnee: No. [chuckles] No, there—

Taylor: I do wonder... does the origin of Field Day, it feels very like I don't know— I know nothing about when we started doing it, but it feels

very like 1950s, like nationalism, like, "Look at how healthy our young citizens are" kind of weird.

Sydnee: It does, it does

Taylor: Performance.

Sydnee: Yeah, like better baby competitions and all that kinda stuff.

Taylor: Yeah, like the Presidential fitness exam.

Sydnee: Ahhhh... I don't know, I'm trying to figure— See, I can't—

Taylor: The term comes from like military use, but.

Sydnee: Does it?

Taylor: Yeah, yeah.

Sydnee: Okay, I was looking for like where it came from. Well, that— Yeah. I bet it does, like instead of playing fun games with sponges and tricycles, I bet it was like pushups and pull ups, and—

Taylor: Lawn darts.

Sydnee: — sprints. Lawn darts. [chuckles]

Taylor: Yeah, just bare knuckle boxing. They were 5th graders.

Sydnee: It was just *Hunger Games*.

Taylor: Basically. If you ask Dad, I'm sure that's what he'd tell us it was in his day.

Sydnee: I will say, this is my anecdotal, based on two Field Days running, so I have very little evidence. There is something about kids at 1st grade level, so age of 1st grade, that they are just unhinged. Like two years now, kindergarteners, they're trying to do the thing, whatever it is they're having fun, but they're trying to do the thing.

Once you get to 2nd grade, they're like listening, they understand like, "Oh, I should probably stand in this line, take turns," whatever. There is something in 1st grade where these kids are just... I don't know, like they're just wild, they're just all over.

They kept trying to take off with the tricycles across the field, and attack each other with tricycles. And I don't know, it was there's something about 1st grade. I don't know what exactly is happening.

Taylor: [chuckles] You have like just enough sentience to pilot the human vehicle, but not enough awareness to like really, fully control it.

Sydney: Yeah, and like by—

Taylor: And you understood, you have free will, but you don't really know what that means in a wider sense. [chuckles]

Sydney: It's really weird „cause like I noticed it last year, like the 1st graders I was like, "Wow, these 1st graders." And this year, the 1st graders. So it's not the same cohort, right, „cause the 1st graders from last year are now 2nd graders, and they were, you know, fine. [pause]

Taylor: Well they haven't gone through the necessary many choices you make in life with your free will result in falling down. That's a probably a big stage. I learned to walk, I learned to talk, I can do a whole bunch of things. 99% of these things end in, "Ow!"

Sydney: [chuckles] That's when you start learning that.

Taylor: That's a big lesson.

Sydney: Mm. It was successful, they got popsicles, they went back to school, they ate pizza and snow cones. Today they were told [chuckles] to bring a pillow and blanket to school. [chuckles] So.

Taylor: Is it after Field Day is just like lay down and...

Sydney: I don't know, they were like, "Bring a pillow, and a blanket, and your favorite stuffy. And we're gonna have a quote „virtual field trip’," meaning they're gonna watch a movie. [laughs]

Taylor: That's not what a virtual field trip is.

Sydnee: [laughs] Mm-hmm.

Taylor: I think... I think that the teachers probably needed a recovery day from Field Day, and so the kids are just along for the ride.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: Yeah. This is fair.

Sydnee: No there is no school happening this— Well it was— Like today, „cause they wear uniforms, so today was a dress down day, and Cooper wore essentially what are pajamas, but they kinda look like they're not, so I just let them. Like it's fine. Everyone was exhausted.

Taylor: It's funny, I feel like I never remember actually going to our Field Day. Like because it was optional, to a certain extent.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Right?

Sydnee: Yeah, I mean—

Taylor: And I feel like it was always offered up by Mom, like, "You could do this or you could just not [chuckles] go to school."

Sydnee: No, this whole week of school is kind of optional.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Like I feel like the teachers are like, "Now you know you can take „em home early, or not bring „em. Bring „em late, or don't bring „em."

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: "Just don't bring „em if you don't— You don't have to bring „em."

Taylor: "This— We're just going through the motions here, you don't have to do—"

Sydnee: "We have a certain number of days we are legally required."
[chuckles] No, it's great, it's good, they've learned enough, they're fine.

Taylor: They've learned enough.

Sydnee: They're fine for now, we'll teach „em some more in August.

Taylor: Sometimes life's like this.

Sydnee: That's the way it is.

Taylor: There you go.

Sydnee: We're gonna talk about Avril Lavigne.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: I listened to a very interesting podcast.

Taylor: Oh yeah, you were telling me about this.

Sydnee: Yeah, trying to crack that myth, that legend, that Avril Lavigne had secretly died and been replaced by someone named Lissa.

Taylor: Right.

Sydnee: And it's not true, I should just preface with that. „Cause like this podcast was really funny and interesting, and also like called attention to the fact that like that's a really crappy rumor to spread about somebody. That they're dead.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: So it's not true. But it was something people believed, and maybe some still do.

Taylor: And is there any like start point for this rumor, that it makes sense why it got so big?

Sydnee: So part of it— I mean like the tri— kind of like the triggering event for it I— makes a little bit of sense. But then a lot of the quote unquote “evidence” makes no sense. Avril Lavigne— Which I mean we’re talking about Canadian pop punk star Avril Lavigne, who was very big—

Taylor: Pop, I guess.

Sydnee: — back in 2000. When did she start? 2000... I don’t know.

Taylor: Yeah, early 2000s.

Sydnee: Early 2000s, whenever. And is still making music, by the way. I was listening to a song of hers from this year.

Taylor: I was gonna say, she had a song literally drop like 10 days ago.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: I was trying to remember „cause in that song, I believe she talks about the summer of 2002, so I’m like, “Is that her start date, or is that just the lyric though?”

Sydnee: So she rose to fame in the early 2000s, and she was really young when she started her career, right?

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Like 16 or 17, wasn’t she?

Taylor: 16 when *Let Go* came out, which was 2002, and that’s the one that “Complicated” and “Sk8er Boi” are on.

Sydnee: So like... super young. She became really popular really quickly, and I— bas— Like listening to this other podcast, and like based on my memory of it, she has like some personally things happen, like I think like her grandma passed away.

And like she would— she was just struggling with like constantly being in the public eye. And then all of the backlash, „cause I mean, and I’m sure we’re gonna talk about this, but like as popular as she was, there were a lot people whose whole thing was how much they couldn’t stand her.

Teylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: And so she kinda took a break from the public eye for a brief period of time. And when she came back, a lot of people felt like she had changed significantly, and had moved away from like her punkness into a more pop persona. Like wearing more pastels, and not doing like the, I don't know, the black nail polish or the tie, or the, you know, the punk stuff.

They thought her voice sounded different. And then some people claimed she was a different height. But like also— [chuckles] also she was 16 [chuckles] when she got popular, so of course her height and her voice were going to change, she was 16.

Teylor: Well, and it's wild that you would have, like that— I mean I was looking at her discography, she never really took that much of a— like that much of a break. There's only really two to three years between each album. Like she—

Sydnee: Oh, and I was only—

Teylor: She has a consistent career. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Yeah no, I mean I think it was like she cancelled a couple of tour appearances or something.

Teylor: Mm.

Sydnee: Like I mean it wasn't like a huge thing, it was just like she was struggling emotionally, she needed a little bit of time to herself, she pulled away, and at that same time, people began to theorize like, "Oh, she's sick. [chuckles] She secretly something happened and she died, and then they replaced her with somebody called Melissa."

Teylor: The— That's even— I mean it's more messed up than the fact is that she was sick for a long time. Like that's— Her album— Her 2019 album *Head Above Water*, is that what it was?

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Is about her battle with Lyme disease, which is apparently quite debilitating.

Sydnee: Yeah, she— So I don't know why— I mean it— and that wouldn't have even fed into those rumors, „cause the rumors predated that.

Taylor: I was gonna say, that's pretty recent. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Yeah. But no, and I— then the people would point to like that her face changed. I mean a lot of stuff just has to do with if somebody becomes famous when they're very young—

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: — they are going to look different.

Taylor: „Cause they change.

Sydnee: Yeah, I mean like we all do, it's just the way that we change when we're going from 30 to 40 is not the same as the way we change when we're going from, you know, 16 to 26. Like that— there's some really significant changes in the way our face and our bodies and our voice, and like all kinds of things can still, you know, change in that period of our life.

Whereas we're a little more fixed. The predict— The changes are a little more predictable once we get into adulthood. So I don't know. It was all— Like the evidence was no evidence, there was no real concrete anything, nobody around her ever had anything to say that was suspicious. Like there was never anybody who like alluded to something. And when she wrote her— “Melissa” on her hand, remember that?

Taylor: Oh yeah.

Sydnee: And everybody thought it was like a secret message. It was for somebody who had one a like a charitable competition.

Taylor: Was that? I feel like these things get so entwined in themselves. It's like is that the origin point, and then people worked backwards from there, yah know?

Sydnee: Possibly, possibly. And there was like— They went back to there was some article that was written by an entertainment journalist. I forget the like... There was somebody back in Brazil, I— Like there is an origin article that you can trace to find where this rumor got started, and it was almost just like a joke. And then it—

Taylor: Mmm.

Sydnee: — grew into this, like people believed it, which is why you shouldn't joke about that probably, at the end of the day. But the point is, Avril Lavigne is alive, as of the time of this podcast, and still making music, including the song we just talked about, "Young and Dumb?" Is that what it's called?

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: "Young and Stupid?"

Taylor: I think that's it.

Sydnee: "Young and Dumb" or "Young and Stupid?"

Taylor: It was— Uh...

Sydnee: One of those. It's about being young and not smart.

Taylor: "Young and Not Smart [chuckles] In Some Way."

Sydnee: "Young and Not Smart."

Taylor: And it's with Simple Plan too, so it's a very of our generation song.

Sydnee: Oh yeah. What were your feelings? „Cause like I said, she was hugely popular in a like her songs were all over the radio kinda sense, and she sold a lot of records and all that kinda stuff, but there was a backlash too. Where did you fall on Avril Lavigne, Tey?

Taylor: Yah know, I mean I never— [sighs] I never thought it was very punk rock to... get all that twisted about whether or not an artist is authentic or not.

I don't know, I mean I feel like there's that— I was around, I was old enough when she got big to not really like be wooed by it. It wasn't for me. That was like when I was in high school when she kind of became— „Cause she's your age, so like—

Sydnee: Yeah, well she's a little younger actually, she's like 40.

Taylor: She was— I mean she hit it big at the time when I was already thinking of myself as like, "I'm too punk for that mainstream stuff." [chuckles] But even so, I always felt like, I don't know, there's a lot of pop punk that people— that's very produced and very mainstream that everybody like loves.

Isn't it weird that when a girl adopts the aesthetic, we— wow, we hate her. Wow, we like to discourse. I think that like even my 18-year-old brain could like put those, you know, thoughts together.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Like whatever, like she makes produced music, it's fun. It's not punk in the auditory sense, like if you listen to— if you took "Complicated" and you put like a girl with like, you know, like the boho curls, and—

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: And like low rise jeans, and like a hippie vibe on like— strummin' on a guitar, I think that could've— you could've had that exact same sound.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: And had paired it with that image.

Sydnee: No, "Complicated" is not— I do not think it is all— Like it has no elements, in my mind, of a punk song. I... I guess maybe "Girlfriend?"

Taylor: Well yeah, I think they leaned into it more because that's what, you know, was the thing that sold. Like I don't know how produced she was, she is an accomplished songwriter, but I mean she was so young that I have to believe that she was produced—

Sydnee: Oh sure.

Taylor: — to ex— their extreme. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Sure sure, yeah. Well, but and I mean it is interesting because like it's a good point, "Complicated" isn't. Even "Sk8er Boi," like the punkest thing about the song "Sk8er Boi" would be the spelling of "Sk8er Boi" in the song title.

Taylor: Yes. The fact that it includes an "Sk8er Boi." [chuckles]

Sydnee: [chuckles] But other than that, like I mean... it's a very traditional pop song.

Taylor: It is. Well yeah, and there's nothing wrong with that, like I don't— I mean, it's so interesting to me that the kind of arguments, they're all very silly, around punk or not punk. Like punk is many things to me, like there is a sound that is punk, that is usually simplistic vocal progressions, you know, fast fast fast. Hard. Kinda slappy, that's punk sound. And there's punk style, which is completely removed, I mean even—

Sydnee: So I guess she kind of had.

Taylor: She had, like she definitely had that like— Especially in that time period where you had sort of like emo, scene, punk, like pop punk, all of these sort of—

Sydnee: Mm.

Taylor: Let's be real, they were the things that Hot Topic sold [chuckles] at the time.

Sydnee: Yes, yes. You wear Hot Topic stuff.

Taylor: She had that style, yeah.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: It was like— It was, you know, what they would call now, you know probably derogatorily, like fashion punk, but it was punk style. And then I think there's like punk ethics, which is— You can have all three, and I think a good band probably embraces some element of all three, but that's a whole other conversation.

Sydnee: Mm.

Taylor: But the ethics is more like are you singing about like, you know, I don't know, I think pink— punk is about self-expression and freedom and kind of do whatever you want. And it... not really, so you know, she checks a box. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Yeah. Well, and it's tough, because it also like... it's— it doesn't fit in— I think part of the problem is that you have like people of the time that loved like pop punk, like Britney Spears pop, right?

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: And she's not exactly that, „cause her look isn't like pretty polished princess, right? Like she's not out there goin' for that look.

Taylor: Yes, but she does remind us multiple times that she's the mother-F-ing princess, so I don't know, be careful there.

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Taylor: There is some royalty involved.

Sydnee: But she's also not, I will say like as somebody who was still listening to a lot of angry girl music at that point, like the „90s were not that long before, and the angry women were still very much on my disc rotation, she wasn't really that, you know?

Taylor: Mm.

Sydnee: I mean she didn't seem angry.

Taylor: Right, but if—

Sydnee: She seemed annoyed. [chuckles] But not angry.

Taylor: [chuckles] Well she also has a lot— I was specifically went back and watched a ton of her videos last night, which are great just eye candy. I don't— Not like like— Just the styling, there's always dancing.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: They're very fun videos. But she has a lot of songs that are just like, "I'm the hot girl and I'm dangerous, and ooo do you— Like what are you gonna do with me?" or "You should want me and not that other girl," or like, "I'm so cool and different." Like it's the kind of the what we'd now call a pick me, you know.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: The— Very that.

Sydnee: It is, it is very celebratory of pick me— I mean that's— that was the other thing I was going to say is like it's not feminist.

Taylor: Mmm.

Sydnee: In the way that she's constantly pitting herself, or whatever the main character, I don't wanna say it's her, the main character of the song.

Taylor: Right.

Sydnee: Against other women. Like the con— I mean there's a lot of that, like derogatar— derogatory comments about a guy's girlfriend or whatever.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Which is not— So it's not like a feminist thing, not that it needs to be to be punk. But I feel like that sort of [chuckles] girl on girl anger is not very punk. [chuckles]

Taylor: No, no. Well, I don't, I mean again, like it's selling something that was marketable, I mean I'm sure it's still marketable, yah know, to the young teen other—

Sydnee: Right.

Taylor: — types of girls. Like, “Oh, you know, that handsome jock, if he just gave me a chance, he would see.” I mean there’s the same parallel on the pop punk. Again, like boys sing— have these same songs where it’s always like, “If only you gave me a chance, you’d see like I’m the nice guy.”

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Like, “Your boyfriend’s a jerk.” It’s like I don’t know, I mean she likes her boyfriend, let her be with her boyfriend, whatever. [chuckles]
Like.

Sydnee: Well and there’s— I mean that, you know, a good comparison to that too is if you think about... the Taylor Swift song.

Taylor: Oh yeah. “If you could only see” or whatever.

Sydnee: Yeah. Yeah. People have—

Taylor: “I’ve got glasses, she’s got a skirt.”

Sydnee: “A cheerleader.”

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: [chuckles]

Sydnee: Exactly. Which you know she has— I think she’s owned up to like that you can do both.

Taylor: Yeah, well but that was very— Again, we’re just talking— I mean, you know, I don’t think hating on Avril was fair because I think she was a product kind of... She was put in a package that sold at the time, would still sell today, you know. And there were comparable, on the boy’s side of things, there were comparable products selling at the time.

She just got a lot of heart specifically because I think it was also in such a high point of “This is what punk is! No, this is what punk is! That’s not punk,” which it kind of comes back to the ethics of like I think the most punk thing is to say, “Are you havin’ fun? Do you like it? Okay, maybe it’s not for me, but do it. Who cares?”

Sydnee: Well.

Taylor: Like that’s actually punk. [chuckles]

Sydnee: It is, and I mean the lyrical simplicity got a lot of heat, like if you listen to the lyrics, they’re like, “Okay, that’s it? That’s all you got?” But like also she was a kid writing these songs, you know, and—

Taylor: They are very simple songs, yes.

Sydnee: And I— they were also about kinda straightforward things. While the song is called “Complicated,” it is not complicated what she’s saying. [chuckles]

Taylor: [chuckles] The only issue that I took with that, and it’s like I guess— I mean it’s— I guess what’s not punk is the idea that like, you know, “Chill out, what are you yellin’ for? It’s all been done before.” I was like, “I relate to that now, but it’s really important that 16, 17, 18, 20-year-olds don’t feel that way.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Like you’re supposed to be mad at the world and wanna rage against the machine when you’re young, and then when you get old you realize that there’s a lot of futility in trying, but the trying is still important. [chuckles] Like don’t feel that way yet, 16-year-old Avril Lavigne. It has all been done before, but you should still do it. [chuckles]

Sydnee: But I think like— I think what she’s trying to talk about, and I mean she says like, “Take off all your preppy clothes,” so she’s really just— I mean like it’s not really about life being complicated, it’s about you should just be yourself.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: I think— Right? Like that's what the song is about. Don't try to— Don't be a poseur. [chuckles]

Taylor: Don't be a poseur, yeah okay.

Sydnee: Don't be a poseur is the song. But it's funny „cause it reminds me of Vin Bolts has a song "There's Always Someone Cooler Than You."

Taylor: Mm.

Sydnee: Which is like lyrically the more articulate version of what she's saying with "Complicated." But they're talking about the same thing, and they're both good messages, for young people especially. Like... be yourself, don't be so worried about trying to be cool, don't be so worried about trying to fit in. Like there's always gonna be somebody cool. Don't— You cannot stress about that.

Taylor: Yeah, true.

Sydnee: Just do you thing. It's just, I don't know, instead— [chuckles] instead she went with "Take off all your preppy clothes." [chuckles]

Taylor: I love the beginning of that music video, „cause it's like her with her two dude friends, „cause of course she doesn't have any girl friends, she's got dude friends.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: She's like, "Yo, you wanna crash the mall?" and then they go wreak havoc in a mall, which again just— It makes me sad that like the image of like that wreaking havoc in a mall now feels dated, „cause malls don't exist—

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: — in the same capacity that they did in our youth. You know, not everyone experiences the joy, the cultural center. Social— Before social media, we had the mall, that was what— it's where you went to see and be seen.

Sydnee: I mean you can still come to the Huntington Mall.

Taylor: Yeah, well you can. I don't think it's where the kids hang out, is what I'm saying.

Sydnee: [sighs]

Taylor: Like I don't think the teens are gathering in the food court. At China Max.

Sydnee: And the Big Loafers? No, I don't think so.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: No. No, that's true. But I do think that like my recollection is that I enjoy the songs. I don't remember, I think I was old enough that I didn't feel any of that, like I had no defensiveness about her image, or about punk or anything.

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: „Cause I wasn't really, and so for me it was like, I don't know, this is just what pop music does. Pop music takes on sort of the... a few elements and the artifice of different genres of music occasionally. But it's pop. Like I mean, you know, there's pop country and it does the same thing.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: It's not country, it's pop music. But it takes on a little bit of like a twang and it gets to be pop country. That's what pop music does, it's just this big, giant blob that sort of like slurps up other music genres occasionally and spits „em out in a weird way. And then everybody argues about what it is.

Taylor: Like— Absolutely. And I mean I— it's a soundtrack for, you know, the way most normal people engage with music is it just sort of soundtracks their life, you know.

Sydnee: Right.

Taylor: And so you think like what does— Here's a type of young girl that exists, this you know slightly alt girl, what feelings does she experience? What problems is she coming up against? And how do we soundtrack that life? In a marketable package, sure, but that's— I don't know, I mean I'm not gonna get into the ethics of music written for consumption versus music written for expression, it's just yeah, like you said, that's a— It's pop music, tale as old as time.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: She's not doing anything different than any of the other pop girls or boys at the time did.

Sydnee: No, no, and you're right, there were pop punk boy bands whose lyrics were just as simplistic, who were talking about just as— I don't wanna say things that we care about when we're kids are silly or trite, „cause I don't feel that way.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: I think that the things, you know, you feel those things very strongly. You get more perspective as you get older and you think like, "Oh, that wasn't as big a deal as at the time it felt like to me."

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: But like they were singing about those same things, they were singing about break ups, they were singing about fitting in, skateboarding. [chuckles]

Taylor: Yeah, skate— Big sign of the rebellion, skateboards. Don't know how that happened exactly, but it's fine.

Sydnee: I think *Jackass* has a lot to do with that, personally.

Taylor: Can you say that word? I guess we have before.

Sydnee: Yeah, we have. We were watching some old episodes of that the other day, and I was thinking about that like why did skateboarding become so synonymous with being a cool punk, counterculture. Like for a

while it was like— I mean Bart Simpson skateboarded because he was like...

Taylor: Bad kid.

Sydnee: He was a bad boy.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah. I don't know.

Taylor: Mm.

Sydnee: I feel like *Jackass* had something to do with that.

Taylor: That's fair, which is— then I guess *Jackass* was punk I guess. I don't know.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Doesn't matter, it's a word. [chuckles]

Sydnee: I don't know if Avril Lavigne was punk or not. I mean her songs—

Taylor: She was a punk.

Sydnee: Her songs were good. It is.

Taylor: Her songs are good. She's— She was a good lyricist. You know, she wrote songs for other artists too, like she helped— cowrote "Breakaway" for Kelly Clarkson.

Sydnee: Oh yeah? I didn't know that.

Taylor: Yeah, she's cowriter on a bunch of other artists' songs. I think also just looking at her career now at a distance, like whatever was going on behind the scenes, you know, she was consistently producing albums that performed well. She never had any like major drama, except for the completely fabricated, you know...

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: She— [wheezes] Is she dead? That's—

Sydnee: Which had nothing to do with her.

Taylor: That had nothing to do with her.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Yeah, so I don't know, a pretty, compared to a lot of the other „90s girls, early 2000s girls that got such a rough ride, and that's not their fault, it's just the industry ate a lot of young women alive, continues to. I would say I mean she had a pretty, pretty level head and a pretty even ride there, so you know, you couldn't ask for more.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. Yeah, and I think there were a lot more people who were listening to your music uncritically, just like, "Oh, this is nice," and turning it on, and buying her CDs or whatever, than there were people who were like, "She's not punk." I mean that voice was out there, but I don't know, I don't— I feel like that was not the dominating— It— The fact that there was a backlash just goes to show how popular she was.

Taylor: Yeah. Well, and I think—

Sydnee: More than anyone.

Taylor: — our generation might think— might've had those thoughts of like, "That's not punk, this is what real punk was." But there was a whole generation of kids younger than us that did see that as their first exposure to anything that felt vaguely alt, and that's sometimes all it is, it's just some sort of gateway, and then you go down those roads.

Like I was surprised to hear that like apparently Billie Eilish loves Avril Lavigne, like has listed Avril Lavigne as one of her big influences. And I can kinda see that.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: But like that's, you know, probably to— Like it seems funny now to hear like somebody that is a serious artist listing Avril Lavigne as like a

serious influence. But from that, you know, being so much younger than us, that would've been an artist that looked appealing to young Billie Eilish, which is cool.

Sydnee: There's also something to be said for an artist who appears to be making music and having fun. Like that— I feel like that's not always true. And I know there's room for both, there's room for all things.

Like we can have lots of different kinds of art, so I'm not saying it's the best. But I do feel like we were in an era where even the people, even like— even Britney Spears, did I think she was having fun when she was making that music? I don't know, because she was such a product at the time, right?

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Like she was so perfectly packaged. I don't know if she was enjoying it or not, that wasn't really part of what I was supposed to understand as an audience member.

Avril Lavigne appeared to be having fun, and there is something very joyous about watching an artist make things, enjoy themselves, and then you getting to enjoy it too. And so I don't know, that can carry you a long way, I think. There's something to be said for that.

Taylor: Yeah, I agree. Let it be— Like a lot of those songs that are just like, "Mm, you should've chosen me, I'm the better one." Like they're fun little songs to listen to that feel very like self-indulgent, but that's fine.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Music is allowed to be.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Like I think like a lot of people know the lyrics to Avril Lavigne songs because you listen to them when you're, you know, in— alone in your room, feelin'— [wheezes] feelin' salty about somethin', or you know.

Sydnee: And when they come on, you don't turn „em off.

Taylor: No, no. Like I can both say— Oh good ahead.

Sydnee: Oh no, finish.

Taylor: Well I can both say like yes, the “Girlfriend” music video is bad, and we shouldn’t pit women against other women. But also I can say, “Girlfriend” is a bop, when it comes on I will sing every word, and I [through laughter] really enjoy that song.

Sydnee: Yes. And somehow both my children already know it, and I don’t even know, they just osmosed it.

Taylor: They’re just born knowing it.

Sydnee: Yeah. I was gonna say the podcast I was referencing, in case anybody was interested, is called *Who Replaced Avril Lavigne?* by Joanne McNally Investigates.

Taylor: Oh.

Sydnee: It was very funny.

Taylor: Okay.

Sydnee: It was a very clever, funny podcast series about how that’s not true, and it chases down— It will give you all the answers, where did this come from and why, and you know... don’t say it anymore. [chuckles]

Taylor: That’s good.

Sydnee: Yeah. Avril Lavigne is Avril Lavigne, she’s always been Avril Lavigne. As far— Well actually I don’t know, is that her given name?

Taylor: Oh, I don’t know.

Sydnee: I don’t either. I didn’t look that up.

Taylor: I did—

Sydnee: We’ll say that it is.

Taylor: I saw comments on one of her music videos where people were talking about like, they're so sweet, it's like, "My mom named me Avril because Avril Lavigne was her favorite artist," which is just always so weird to me to be like, "Oh wow, like yes, there are moms our age, lots and lots of moms."

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Younger than us, that like feel— I'm saying that there's a generation of young Avrils out there. [chuckles]

Sydnee: She has a great name, that is her name, and her middle name is Mona.

Taylor: Avril Mona Lavigne, yeah, those—

Sydnee: Great name.

Taylor: [mutters] Very good name.

Sydnee: Well Tey, what are we doin' next week?

Taylor: Um... [chuckles] Well Syd, we talked about it at the start of this episode, and I've already forgotten. Oh no! No, *The Rehearsal*. There we go.

Sydnee: Yes. [claps]

Taylor: Yeah. It'll come back to me. [chuckles] Went through a lot of options. I don't know anything about it, I've avoided it „cause for— just because Nathan Fielder seems awkward, I'm assuming it's awkward humor and I hate awkward humor, but we're gonna watch it „cause everybody's talkin' about it.

Sydnee: Alright, we're gonna watch the episode with the fake singing competition, right?

Taylor: I guess if that's out, I don't know.

Sydnee: Okay.

Taylor: I know that's where the drama is, we'll talk about the drama, but anyway.

Sydnee: Okay. Alright, that sounds good. It is— I have watched an episode before. It is kind of awkward, but it's something else, so I don't know.

Taylor: Something else, alright.

Sydnee: I'm interested to see what you think, yeah.

Taylor: Curious what the something else is.

Sydnee: Alright, well we will do that next week. In the meantime, you should— Avril Lavigne has new music coming out now.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: So go check it out. The music video for "Young and Dumb" is kinda funny, so.

Taylor: It is, it's sweet.

Sydnee: Yeah. Well thank you, Tey. Thank you listeners. You should go to maximumfun.org and check out a lot of great shows that you're going to enjoy. And thank you to Nouvellas for our theme song, "Baby You Change Your Mind."

[theme music fades in]

Taylor: This has been *Still Buffering*, your cross-generational guide to the culture that made us.

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Taylor: And I'm Teylor Smirl.

Sydnee: I'm still buffering.

Taylor: And I am, too.

[outro theme music plays]

Sydnee: [mutters] I wonder if I could pull off that tie. I did like the tie.

Taylor: But do you ever rock the— like the tie over the tank top vibe?

Sydnee: Um, yes, I did. [chuckles]

Taylor: [chuckles]

Sydnee: I did, and then I felt self-conscious, so I wore the tie as a belt.

Taylor: Ohhhh, that's—

Sydnee: I quite—

Taylor: I do remember you doing that a lot.

Sydnee: Yeah, I did have a lot.

Taylor: I kinda like that.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Yeah... And you never once questioned if you were bisexual.

Sydnee: [laughs] I mean, of course I did.

[ukulele chord]

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