

Still Buffering 427: In Defense of the Millennial

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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: And this is a very special episode!

Taylor: Yeah!

Sydnee: It's the MaxFunDrive! Woo!

Taylor: It's everybody's favorite time of year—well, maybe that's an overstatement. No! It's your favorite time of year.

Sydnee: It is—

Taylor: Goin' with it.

Sydnee: It's *our* favorite time of year. No, I think... [laughs quietly] listen. We're in good company here. I think we have a lot of fellow, like... when I say NPR fans, you know what I'm saying about us all.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: We understand the importance of pledge drives in supporting the things we love. We're those sorts of people.

Taylor: That sounds like one of those—like a flagging statement. Like, “Oh, are they a, you know... NPR fan?” [laughs]

Sydnee: “Hmm. They seemed like an... NPR fan?”

Taylor: “They seem like somebody that would carry a printed canvas tote.”

Sydnee: That's right! And that's the same for us Max Fun fans. I think maybe, like, the quirky ones! The quirky—[laughs quietly]

Taylor: That's true.

Sydnee: I hated the way I just said quirky. No, it's Maximum Fun Drive which is the—once a year, because we are a listener-supported network, we come to you and humbly ask that if you are in a position to donate to the Maximum Fun Network, to help us make the content that you enjoy, please, this is the moment to do it. Maximumfun.org/join is the website. You can go there any time. You can go there while you're listening. You can go there after. You could go there before, but I don't know how you did—you traveled back in time to do it.

Uh, we'll call Bill and Ted and ask. But Maximum Fun is a network of shows that we are a, um—we all create our content, a lot of us on our own from our own houses or apartments or basements. Uh, and we really count on our listeners donating to our network to help us continue to research our shows, and get equipment to make our shows, and to in some cases pay the staff that helps us create content, and to give us the time to be able to do these things that we love to do, and that we hope you also love.

Um, and this is a great time, if you're in a position, to become a monthly donor. And that's if you want to donate monthly, then you can become a member. And if you sign up during the MaxFunDrive, you get gifts! Uh, and those gifts range from at \$5 a month you get a *ton* of bonus content from all the shows. It's locked unless you're a member, and then it's unlocked for you. Welcome to our secret garden of... podcasting. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: And it's all kinds of great, fun content from all the shows across the entire network, not just our show. And then of course we'll go over the gifts later. There are higher levels that you can donate and get even more presents in addition to all the BoCo. But Maximumfun.org/join. We would really appreciate it if you are not a member, but you're in a position to

become one this year, we would love that. And if you are a member and you're thinking, "You know, I could throw a few extra bucks to these creators way, and help them make more content for this network that I love," this would be the time to do it, because it's the... time you get a present. Which, what's better?

So we'll tell you more about that later in the show, but Maximumfun.org/join!

Taylor.

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: There's been a lot of Millennial-bashing on TikTok.

Taylor: Well, the Millennial-bashing has been going on for, I would say... the better part of... I don't know. At least five, six, ten years, I guess? Right?

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: I would say the better part of a decade. Uh, it used to be the Boomers. It used to be the older people that had nothing but negative things to say about our generation, which is pretty normal. Usually the old generation complains about the younger one.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: What is less normal is now the younger generation and the old generation are both complaining about us.

Sydnee: And it's—yeah. And it's weird because the... none of is quite in step with what's actually happening. The older generation is still convinced that we're young people who eat avocado toast.

Taylor: Yeah. I mean, we might. I don't think that is our defining quality, but...

Sydnee: I don't know how that happened. And I will say that I know people of all ages who enjoy avocado toast.

Taylor: Yeah. Yeah. I don't... I don't know what—I mean, we enjoy lots of things. Avocado toast is just one of 'em.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. Yeah. But—and then the younger generation finds us cringe.

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: I think. Yeah. That we're—which I guess cringe is the new cheugy?

Taylor: Yeah. Well, and this was—this—what we're going to do today was partially inspired by the trend that is specifically poking fun at the Millennial burger joint.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: With that horrible—it's a fake—like, the song is a parody song that's supposed to sound like what Millennial music sounds like. And, like, look. I... [laughs quietly] I think it's a hallmark of our generation that we're pretty good at laughing at ourselves. Um, I have no problem when someone's got me. I'm like, "Ah, you got me."

But every time I see one of those I'm like, "Eh, this is not..." What bothers me that it's... I don't—like, what are you making fun of? One, the song isn't from our generation, and it doesn't sound like anything we do. And the same format is used. And it's like—I saw one last night that was like, "Millennial conventions."

And it was all, like, the things they were quoting was like, "Nothing but AI-generated stuff. Plastic, 3D-printed garbage."

I'm like, this has all happened in the last two years.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Our generation—no. Our generation did not use AI and 3D printing. That is... we absolutely did not. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: No, no.

Taylor: Our cons' artist alleys were still pretty good!

Sydnee: No. That's the next—that's Gen Z, even into—especially if you get to AI stuff, you're getting into Gen Alpha.

Taylor: Well, and I think that the misconception is just anything that's... I guess anything that's, like, cringy or not good, we just call Millennial now. And it's like, well no, already. Words mean things.

Sydnee: Yeah. Exactly. And, uh, I agree. I don't know. I barely understand AI. When I was doing those scholarship interviews the other weekend, all the kids were telling me about how they use AI. And I didn't want to say, like, "I don't... I actually have no context for what you are saying. And, uh, it sounds like gibberish. So if you could please—" [laughs quietly]

Taylor: You're better than me. Because I think if somebody in a scholarship interview said that they use AI, I would be like, "Well, you're not getting it. Nope!" [laughs]

Sydnee: They use it to teach themselves things, Tey. And I don't know—like, they're like, "There was a concept in class I didn't get, and so I had AI teach it to me, and now I understand it."

And I... right? And like, they say that and I'm like, "I know what all those words meant, and I'm still... "

Taylor: [groans]

Sydnee: "Like, did you Google it and then just read the AI-generated paragraph?" Anyway, I'm getting off topic.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: We are not the AI generation, clearly! [laughs quietly] Clearly. If what I just said is not [laughs] enough evidence for you.

Taylor: No, no. We're the generation that made all of the art and info and content and stuff that AI scraped, and is now... using to take—well, not our jobs, 'cause we never had those jobs. [laughs]

Sydnee: You're welcome, AI.

Taylor: [crosstalk] take the next generation's job.

Sydnee: You're welcome, Alexa and Siri [crosstalk].

Taylor: Your AI is the Millennial brain. [laughs]

Sydnee: So we are going to—this is a full-throated defense of Millennials.

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: Listen. I'm not gonna say we're perfect.

Taylor: No.

Sydnee: But we're also not that bad. And a lot of the stuff that you make fun of, you also really love. I'm looking at you, young people. You have adopted so much of our culture. And—whether you know it or not. And listen, when you say “'90s... ” You know, I think that's part of it, Tey. A lot of what we're about to talk about—we're gonna do the top 5 contributions of Millennials.

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: A lot of what we're talking about is what *you* call '90s. Well, guess what? That's Millennials.

Taylor: Yeah. A lot of—Gen X was there at the very, very beginning but, you know.

Sydnee: They were, but they were, like—like, if you think about it, Millennials start in 1980, right? Technically?

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: We're born in '80. So, I mean, most of us were around 10-ish entering the '90s. 10 to 20 years old. Those are, like, the prime... you know, culture-making years, right?

Taylor: Absolutely.

Sydnee: So there you go. That's us. Yeah, Gen X was up in there. And I know I kind of fall into that weird sort of, like, X-ennial mix generation, little micro thing. But anyway, I'm a Millennial for this episode.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: I choose to be.

Taylor: We're elder Millennials. We're both in that category.

Sydnee: We're both elder Millennials. Ugh. Don't say elder.

Taylor: Oh, I like it! I feel like I get a robe, and a hat, and a wand.

Sydnee: Alright. We're gonna start off—

Taylor: And a pair of skinny jeans. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: We're gonna start off easy. We're gonna talk about fashion. I think this is the easiest sell as a contribution to... I don't know, to modern culture? To the culture of people who poke fun at us.

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: Uh, let me start off by saying, Millennials gave you all sizes of jeans that you may need.

Taylor: Yeah. Everybody always focuses down on the skinny jeans, which even when we were wearing them, it was only a very specific demographic

that wore them. Like, it was... you know, your clothes kind of signaled what you were into. Um, whereas now I think it's kind of funny to me that, you know, you'll have kids that look very, like, punk or alt or whatever, and they're just buying what's on the—what's popular. Like, just a Nirvana shirt for funsies. And it's a little bit more acceptable.

That was not...

Sydnee: No.

Taylor: You—you dressed to tell people who you were and what you were into. And the skinny jeans were a very specific type of person. That was like, the indie... into the—into the punk, but not quite? Like, that was sort of where that was.

Sydnee: I—perhaps I could offer, the Weezer fan?

Taylor: Yeah. Oh, the—I mean, yes.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: The iconic Weezer fan. The skinny jeans. The one size too small, or possibly bought in youth size, t-shirt. Could be a band shirt, could also just be an ironic, thrifted shirt.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: That worked well as well. And, um, usually of course—you still rock them, the Chuck Taylors. But you could also opt for a Doc Marten.

Sydnee: Sure. Yeah. Yeah, no. And that was the style—the Millennial style that I sort of, like, latched onto, and it has never died.

And I will say, like, I am seeing the skinny jeans out there again today. Um, I see that fashion. So I don't pretend like it went away forever. It didn't go away forever.

I do think it's interesting, Tey, 'cause we've talked about, like, early Millennial was more the giant jeans. The, like, classic—we talk about the JNCO jeans, the... the big, wide leg, stripes and chains and, you know. It was kind of skater culture, sort of?

Taylor: Well, but those were—those coexisted.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: I—in high school, I was of the skinny jeans variety. And there were the big pant variety at the same time. You know, I would compare it to, like, you know, the mods and punks back in the—in the 70's. Like, they were two very popular fashion styles that represented two different ideologies, two different music fandoms. And you dressed according to your code.

Sydnee: But I want to say, too, that this is a—I think this doesn't get as much recognition. Maybe Millennial fashion is all about jeans is what I'm beginning to wonder. Is it just about denim? [laughs quietly]

This is a big part of Millennial fashion is the kind—like, being defined by the kind of jeans you wore, clearly.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Well, there's a third thing. A third jean type I feel like we need—that has been reintroduced into the cultural conversation by Kendrick Lamar. Did you see his Super Bowl performance?

Taylor: I did, but I don't—I'm...

Sydnee: Okay. He was wearing the jeans that I think we forget, but I will tell you, especially girls in high school, when I was graduating, so we're talking late '90s, early 2000s, especially early 2000s, we wore the sort of bell bottom. They were bell bottom in that sense, but you know what I mean.

Taylor: The flare.

Sydnee: The flare jeans. So, like, tighter at the top, and then boot cut, except it was a little big—like, boot cut just means a little wider at the bottom. These were definitely wider than that. But I'm not talking about wide leg all the way down. So I think flare is the right term. But you gotta know—I mean, really, if you saw Kendrick Lamar, those were the jeans. Those were the jeans that were kind of like a basic jean that most people had a pair of in high school in my era.

Taylor: Well, and that was often paired with another important element of the jeans of our generation, the low rise. The ultra low rise.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: Like, that was very much a late '90s, early 2000s thing.

Sydnee: The ultra low rise flared jeans. So they're like—so every time you, like, crouch down or bend over or anything... danger.

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Like, butt crack is gonna show. But also, the hallmark were those jeans would drag the ground when you walked. And so the back of your jeans, like around your heel and your Achilles area, were usually dirty and torn. Like, kind of frayed and shredded from walking on the back of it. And then if there was any weather, soaking wet, and the wetness would seep up halfway up your leg. And so, like, walking around high school with the bottom of your jeans soaked up to, like, mid-calf was just standard. Like, for like—there were a bunch of us who just did that. And like, we didn't question, "Is this a good idea?"

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: We just did it. And I... like, it was a wild—when I look back I think, man, those were so uncomfortable! I'm not saying they looked bad. This has nothing to do with how they looked. But, like, they were crazy uncomfortable. And then when they got wet, obviously they probably didn't look good. But... maybe they'll make a comeback! Clearly you all like 'em.

Taylor: Well, the low rise thing is coming back, because they also did the high—I mean, the high waisted was sort of a later into the 2000s, kind of a—I think that coincided with sort of the hipster style. That's where it sort of started. You know, the kind of...

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Like, old... the granny look that was popular, that kind of came—you know?

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: Like, the thrifted look that brought back a lot of that. Yeah, a whole cultural conversation happening just with our pants. Because I could say—I could put the pants on what kind of kid wore them. You know, you had, like, the alt, the punk kids, the sort of nerd rockers that wore the skinny jeans. You had the, like, metal kids, and specifically, like, nu-metal kids that wore the big—the giant pants.

And the low rise flares, those were kind of for the normies.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Those were the—

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: —the pretty girls wore the low rise flares.

Sydnee: They did. They did. And the thing is, I mean, for a lot of us, you know, during those years of our life, we're trying to figure out what we are. And so I owned all of those jeans, and wore them at different times. And I think that kind of gets to what is at the core of a lot of why Millennial fashion persists today, is that it's so much about expressing who are you are as an individual and telling people about you. Differentiating yourself, making people know why you're unique, or whatever.

And less about the appropriateness for the space you're in. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Right.

Sydnee: So my dirty jeans are dragging the ground, and I'm walking, you know, in someone's business. But I don't care, because these dirty jeans dragging the ground are telling you who I am. I'm making a *statement* about *myself*, and that's more important than whether or not I'm dressed appropriately for work. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Right.

Sydnee: And I really think that's persisted. I mean, I see it in myself. I don't... I refuse to wear what I think they would like me to wear at work. I get away with stuff.

I'm not saying I don't follow a dr—like, yeah, I follow close enough. I get away with stuff because it's important to me that I am telling people who I am. And I don't know that I've even thought about that until we've talked about it today. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Well, and that's a very big shift. Specifically with, like—you know, when you're a kid it's a bit more normal to experiment. I mean, every generation, you experiment with fashion. You know, you go back through history and these always the look that goes along with any sort of alternative culture, has a style.

Um, but I feel like bringing it into the workplace, bringing it into adulthood, you know? That was—at some point you're supposed to, or at least we were told we were supposed to put it all down, and yeah, become an adult.

And that... that—I don't—you know. I don't wanna work in a place that doesn't allow my individuality. Or I feel more comfortable at a place, like at a restaurant or a cafe where the people that work there feel like individuals. Like, they look like, you know, people, not just uniforms.

That... that idea, outside of the specific elements of clothing, I think was sort of embraced and pushed out by our generation.

Sydnee: I think you're right. I think Gen X started to ask the question, is this really how we should do things? And I think Millennials were the one to step and answer it. "Nah. Probably not." [laughs quietly]

And then we would say something random. And walk away.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Uh, moving on to the second contribution that we've made to culture. Uh, we're gonna talk about the—like, the media of today, and how... we made that. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: I was thinking about how many cartoons—like, the kind of cartoons that adults and kids can both enjoy, that have, like, kind of deeper messages if you want to look for them, that's not the kind of cartoons that we necessarily grew up with. You know, there was maybe a joke thrown in here and there.

Like, when were, like, kid-kids, you know. The cartoons that were made by the adults before us. There might be a joke here or there for, you know, for... the adults in the room. But it was mainly made, like, "You're a kid. Here's the dumbed-down media that's okay for kids."

And then, you know, had, like, Gen X with, like, the adult cartoons. All of the Liquid Television, and Ren and Stimpy, and all the stuff that felt like "Ooh, we're not supposed to watch this."

But our generation kind of merged that in "Hey, we can have things that all ages can enjoy. Can be appropriate for kids that adults could enjoy. And we could take our characters and our stories seriously, 'cause kids... "

You know, we're considered a stunted generation that never grew up. But hey, a benefit of that is we're really good at knowing what will actually make kids happy, and the emotional and intellect level that kids can handle. And we can make content for that.

Sydnee: Well, and I think it speaks to children in a new way. And then I think the other part of it is that it's recognizing the pieces of us—which, I

mean that's sort of the theme of all these things. The pieces of us that don't... age?

Taylor: Right.

Sydnee: That we can pretend like they do, and we can dress ourselves up like we're all grown up, but there are parts of us that are so, you know, impacted by our youth that they cling—I mean, they're still there. There's—I mean, we've been talking about the concept of the inner child for how many decades? For a good reason. Because your kid-you, your kid-you is still in there. And I think that the media that when you think about cartoons like Steven Universe and stuff, I enjoy it as an adult. I'm not just watching it and thinking like, "Oh, this is something I can... you know, my kids like it, and I guess it's pretty good, so I can watch along with 'em."

I'm enjoying it.

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: I'm enjoying this. Because it is speaking to that that is eternal, to those aspects of yourself as a child that you don't wanna lose when you're an adult. And I think that the generations before us said, "Well, you have to." Or at least suppress them. Push them deep down inside. [laughs quietly] And never address them.

And we said, no, we're gonna continue to embrace those pieces. And you see it when you watch Gravity Falls. You see it—I would say when I watch Bluey with my children today, I'm seeing that. I'm seeing that. Like, I know what you're talking about because it's eternal, 'cause it doesn't go away, and I don't have to pretend that it *did* go away to be an adult.

Taylor: I feel like Adventure Time is kind of *the*—one of just, like, the iconic—like, what do we mean by Millennial animation? Like, this is it.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: There are parts of it that even as an adult, like, I'm not quite sure what they're trying to say, but it feels important. Like, there's a lot of that

there. But then, you know, kids today still—you can put it on and they'll enjoy it. And I think that's really beautiful.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. Yeah. And I know we're mainly focusing on—I mean, man. I feel like we could talk about cartoons—and movies, because I think it's really interesting when I watch something now, I can kinda tell if it was made by somebody from our generation. Like, I feel it. And I think it's this common thread that we're talking about of, you know, this ref—it really is, the Boomers saw it as a refusal to grow up, that we would not mature and grow up.

And I don't think it's that simple. It's more nuanced. It's "I grew up, but I decided not to... abandon everything that I was before I grew up."

Taylor: Right.

Sydnee: "I decided to carry some of it on with me." And that is a—I think that is a very distinct voice in movies and cartoons and TV that when I see it today, I immediately—I hear it.

Taylor: Yeah. Yeah. I mean... I'm trying to think of—I was trying to like—I don't know. When I think of, like, iconic movies from our generation, I always think of, like... like Juno, or Napoleon Dynamite, or like, Garden State.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: And they're all kind of—like, they're very human stories. You know? They're very, like—all of those movies are a little—there's silliness, there's sort of smallness. The characters are very... small. Very kind of—there's a pathetic—[laughs] a recognition of being a little bit pathetic as the human condition, that is very heartfelt.

Sydnee: Yeah. it's a lack of bluster. Um, which again I think was interpreted by Boomers as being, like, immature.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: No, we don't have the bravado that is supposed to come with adulthood. And that's because I think it's a question of whether any of that is real.

I don't know. I mean, it really echoes—I look around myself every day. I'm in my 40s. I should be part of... the people who, like—am I The Man, now? And I don't mean The Man, like, cool. I mean like *The Man*. You know? Like, I'm an adult now. I am the establishment, by my age. I don't think I do that with my job, but whatever.

The point is, I'm looking around waiting for, where are all the answers I'm supposed to have? Where's this, like, you know, all-knowing sense of rightness and what to do next? When does that happen?

And I'm realizing that it doesn't. And I'm realizing that no one else around me has that either. And then I start looking at the old—people older than me and thinking, “You don't have it, either. None of you ever had it! It was all a facade! No one ever knew what they were doing!” [laughs quietly]

Teylor: Well, and you know, we're gonna get into this with some of our other topics. But I think that when you're told, “Hey. This is what you're supposed—this is how life is supposed to go, and this is what you're supposed to want from life.”

And if those things happen very easily, you'll just go along with it. But when those things suddenly become hard, if not impossible, you have this moment of like, “Do I even want that? Do I... I'm told I'm supposed to want it. I don't even know if I want it, and it's gonna be real hard to get there. What if I... what if I don't want that? What if I do something else, you know?”

I mean, for—obviously, mainly for worse, but somewhat for better, growing up in I think the financial climate we grew up in, and having so much off the table for us, it's like, well, if it's that hard to have 2.5 kids, a house, and a steady, serious, office job, and it sounds miserable, maybe it's fine that it didn't work out for me. Maybe, you know, I can do my own thing.

Sydnee: Yeah. Alright, Tey. We've still got three more things to talk about.

Taylor: Alright.

Sydnee: But before we do that... the group message is so special today. Because as we said at the beginning of the show, it is MaxFunDrive. Maximumfun.org/join. I say it over and over again. I have—this is another mark of our generation. I have a bad brain for URLs. [laughs quietly] I have to say them over and over again. I feel like young people can just rattle 'em off no problem. And I can't.

Anyway, Maximumfun.org/join. Once a year, again, we come to you and we ask you to help us out, because we are a donor-supported network. That's how we get to make the stuff we make, and make more of it, and make it better, and make new things. And for many members of our network, create even beyond this podcast, or the show that they do. Because they are creators. They are artists. And we believe in supporting art. In our lives, and then we hope you do too, so that you can help us make the shows.

And again, this is a great time to donate, to become a member, because you get gifts! Uh, at the \$5 a month level, you get bonus content from all of our shows. I can't even tell you how many hours of BoCo, because there's just so much of it.

Um, every show on the network has been creating bonus content every year for as long as we've been doing this, and you get it all.

And it's kind of fun stuff, right? it's not just our typical episodes. it's usually something a little more unique. Something a little more, um... uh, out of pocket? Is that... using it the way the kids use it today?

Taylor: That is how they use it today.

Sydnee: At \$10—that is—

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: Did I use it appropriately? Okay. [laughs quietly] At \$10 a month you get one of our 42 enamel pins. Each one associated with one of our shows.

Ours is super cute this year. You can go and you can check 'em all out. They're so colorful. We've got, like, a very Lisa Frank-looking vibe to all of our stuff, all of our MaxFunDrive stuff this year. It looks so cool.

But there's a Discman for Still Buffering. If you don't know what a Discman is, I'm sure they'll come back. Don't worry. You'll figure it out.

Taylor: [laughs] They're vintage now.

Sydnee: But that's at the \$10 a month. Exactly, they're vintage, yes. Those CDs, have you heard of those? And you can pick which one you enjoy. Ours is super cute, but there's tons there. And obviously you get the BoCo as well.

At \$20 a month you get to pick, do you want a beach for the stars towel—so it's again, very cute, very, uh—you've got a unicorn and it's very colorful. Or there's a bucket hat with our Max Fun logo on it, and I love a bucket hat. We should've mentioned that. I think that's a big contribution of—well, maybe that's Gen X. Maybe Gen X gave us the bucket hat.

Taylor: Hmm. It's a crossover event.

Sydnee: Yeah. We'll let you—Gen X, you can have the bucket hat.

Taylor: [laughs] Take it, take it.

Sydnee: But listeners, you can have the bucket hat! [laughs quietly] If you donate \$20 a month. And of course you get the BoCo, and you get the pin.

And then there are higher levels where you can get a cooler bag, you can get your membership card. There's all kinds of fun gifts. Go over to Maximumfun.org/join and you can check out all the gifts and levels. You can become a member, if you're donating for the first time. You can upgrade if you are in a position to do so. You can be a booster if you feel like, "I'm not really in a place right now where I can bump up to the next level, but I do want to kick a few extra dollars to these creators' shows," then you can do that too. Uh, whatever you can do helps us. It helps us make these shows. It helps us make these shows better. It helps us make more content that we

think you enjoy. And it's important to support the things you love, especially I think as things, uh, appear to get more serious in our country right now. Like, remembering to preserve art and creation and making things I think is really—it's really vital. And so we will keep doing it, and if you can support us while we do it, man, we sure appreciate it.

Taylor, do I have anything you would like to say about what our donors over the years, and what our members have meant to you?

Taylor: Oh yeah. I mean, I'm one of those obnoxious Millennials that refuse to give up on my dreams. [laughs] So I'm still, you know... I might pay my dues and pay my bills with a food service job, because that's what I could get. But I also do still make art. And boy, having the podcast has kept my head above water many a time. Be it through COVID when my entire industry shut down, you know, between jobs. Anyone that works in a restaurant know it's not always the most dependable paycheck. And, uh, the ability to make literally any—if you have ever purchased art from me, anything that I've had time to make, I've had that time because of the little bit of wiggle room that this podcast gives me. And I will always be grateful for that. It is... I don't know where I'd be [through laughter] if it hadn't saved my butt many times over the last few years.

So I am grateful to all of you who have provided that safety net for me.

Sydney: Thank you, Tey. And thank you, listeners. We love you, whether or not you donate. Of course we love you and we hope you enjoy what we do.

Taylor: Yeah, sure.

Sydney: Um, and if you are in a position to become a member, thank you, thank you. Maximumfun.org/join. Do it while it's on your mind, 'cause if you're like me, there'll be something else in there in 30 seconds, and then it's too late. [laughs quietly]

Uh, thank you. Alright, Tey. We want to—do we want to move on to... number three?

Taylor: Yeah. We had music as well in our second group. We didn't really talk about it, which is a pretty big element of culture. But, um...

Sydnee: Oh yeah.

Taylor: I mean, I feel like it's...

Sydnee: Well... anything you want to say—I mean...

Taylor: Well, I just think—

Sydnee: Anything you want to point out specifically?

Taylor: I mean, I think that, you know, a lot of—a lot of the music that is... popular or has come back now, like, today, is—I mean, it's wild to see young people be into bands like My Chemical Romance or Green Day. It's like, well, that was... that was us. [laughs] That was 100% us, so.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: And I think that those—you know, those bands specifically, I mean, that's—I can only speak for the kind of music that I listen to. But, like, on this theme of, you know... kind of earnesty and being... being in touch with our emotions and our inner child, those bands are two examples of, like, very, like—big, big feels. [laughs] Like... they're dramatic, and performative, and kind of ostentatious, and not at all afraid to be any of those things. You know, there was definitely, like, the hipster, ironic movement that happened and never goes away. Unfortunately. But those were bands that stood opposite to that, you know. Like, I remember it was like, "You should be a little bit ashamed of listening to these bands," when we were young, by that sort of way too cool, ironic crowd. But... they were some of my favorites.

Sydnee: Which to be fair, like, I think you could say, even though it wasn't really exact what we were into, there is—there is a joy in some of the just, like... sparkly pop that came out, you know, especially in the early 2000s. That, I mean, I think we can still celebrate. There is joy to be found in fluffy pop songs. And I will sing along to boy bands when—any time. [laughs]

quietly] And, I mean, I don't think we can deny the fact that, like, Britney Spears made some really good music. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Oh no, absolutely. Um, and it—well and I also—like, even the—you know, the kind of college radio music.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: That people continue to define themselves by. Like, the music they're into, the thing—the media they're into, well into adulthood. Going sort of along with our theme. That was a big influence that I think continues now. That you know, our parents didn't quite experience that.

Sydnee: And I will say, I think that it's funny to talk about even to now, there was an SNL sketch that I loved with Matt Damon and Leslie Jones arguing about Weezer.

Taylor: [laughs] [crosstalk] Yes.

Sydnee: And they're both, like, adults. Adults at a dinner party arguing about what was the best Weezer album. Because even as adults, like—and everyone else is trying to figure out, like, does anyone still care about this?

And it's like, if you're a Weezer fan, you understand that if—if—[laughs quietly] if your team Blue and somebody wants to start fighting with you about Pinkerton, you're always ready to, you know. [laughs quietly] You're always ready to start that fight.

Taylor: Well, Pink versus Blue will be like a little squabble. But then somebody brings up the Green album, and then that's...

Sydnee: Whoaaa! [laughs]

Taylor: It goes nuclear. [laughs] Chuck Taylors start flyin' in every direction.

Sydnee: The flannel's comin' off.

Taylor: Oof. But...

Sydnee: So, let—

Taylor: We got a lot to cover. [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah. Let's talk about... Millennials I think are the generation when we started making craft things. The artisanal generation.

Taylor: Yes. Well, and you know, this is kind of—there's a history lesson in this, 'cause that can seem like kind of an audacious statement. Like, what do you mean? Everybody's always made things forever.

Sydnee: Well, sure.

Taylor: Yes. But, uh—this is very America-centric. Just, all of this is, obviously.

Sydnee: Yes. Yeah.

Taylor: I don't even know if other countries are so naval-gazing about their own generations. I'm not sure. But boy are we.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: That's the truth.

Taylor: You know, like, post-World War II, like, up through, like, the 50's and 60's, this idea of, like, automation of, like, making fast food, making things fast, having things instant, TV dinners. This was, like, the new technology of the time that was very fascinating. And this idea of just making things more and more streamlined. No more slaving in the kitchen. No more, you know, having to... to, I don't know, have people make things for you. You can just—just—everything's automated. Everything's instant.

That kind of took the hands-on culture away from us for a while, because that was novel. That's what we were all into. And then you see this reaction

to that starting in, like, the—really in the '90s. Um, but embraced by the mid-to-late '90s and early 2000s.

Sydnee: Yeah. Where, I mean, I think that what people started to realize is that the ultimate luxury isn't to have machines that do everything for you so you never have to do anything.

I mean, 'cause I do think—and I mean, I know that sounds really reductive. But I do think for a while that was the way culture was moving. And then I think what was paired with that was sort of the capitalistic, like, height of the 80's, where you were so busy grinding... [laughs quietly] and, I guess, doing coke... that you weren't—

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: —you didn't have time... [laughs quietly] to make things. So we made things. We made, uh—the shift from beer being all sort of like, not great American lager, to really excellent, like, local craft beers, that's our generation. Our generation led that. Like, you can get—even in Huntington. I remember there was a time where we had to drive to Ashland, Kentucky to get anything outside of, like, your standard Millers and Buds and, you know, Corona maybe. It was a—it was only in our generation where we could find anything else in the grocery store, in the local liquor store.

Taylor: Yeah. Well, and that—I mean that specifically, when we talk about, like, beer and, like, spirits, I mean, those... [laughs quietly] you want to talk about the government and how it, you know, is tied into big corporations that rob us of wealth, but also of, like, quality, that's a post-Prohibition—well, during Prohibition, only select companies got contracts to stay open, distilleries and breweries. And wouldn't you know it, those were the companies that had connections, either to people in Congress or were owned by people in Congress. Like, so they erased the playing field.

Because pre-Prohibition, every town would have a brewery and a distillery. Local craft brews was sewn into the fabric of America, going back to the colonies. So that was—you know, the idea that like, that was always part of our culture. It was lost. We didn't create it. We brought it back.

And if you've grown up—you know, if you're in your 20s now, it's wild to think, but you grew up always having—always being able to go to the bar and have a nice cocktail. Always being able to go get a craft beer. You don't know how bad it was! [laughs]

Sydnee: No. That wasn't true at all. I mean, it really—I... I remember making the shift from, like—Miller Lite was my beer for—I mean, well into my college years. Like, beyond my college years. I mean, it was much later that we got good stuff, and it was 'cause people from our generation were bringing that back. Teylor, as you've referenced before, Millennials made pickles great.

Teylor: Yeah! Well... and this is gonna—I mean, this is—I think there's a bigger reason [laughs] we really did go hard on pickles.

But you know, I feel like part of it was driven by necessity. In that, you know, I am one of those people that, look, I—I went to college on loans. I graduated top of my college. I had an elite internship at DC comics that was unpaid. And after I graduated, like, I had to make money. I had to support myself. There were no jobs available, however qualified I was, whatever accolades I collected. I gotta—I mean, I worked as a waiter all through college, but that was the only job that paid me. So I stayed in the food service field.

And a lot of people—I mean, I graduated 2008, so this was *the* crash. That was the year that everything went to crap. Many of my peers did the same thing. We went into food service. We became those baristas that care too much about coffee. We became, you know, the cooks that got obsessed with, you know, molecular gastronomy. The people that brought back those distilleries and those breweries and cocktail culture.

I think that's because you had a lot of people that went into these fields and just decided, "Yeah, this is what I'm gonna do with my life. I'm gonna do it to the best of my ability." You know?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: I know as a creative person, I felt like I have to be creative. So I just have to find a way to make this job interesting to me. I have to find a way to enjoy this.

Sydnee: And I think part of it is that, it's like, serving your own need to create. And I think the other part of that was that people respond to that, because all the sudden, your meal is not about getting food in you so you can, like, take the quickest lunch break possible and get back to your job. It was culture shifting to, "I'm gonna sit down and enjoy—" I mean, that's where, like, brunch... [laughs quietly]

Taylor: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Brunch came to light. We created brunch, right? [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Well, we—I don't know if we created it, but boy did we love it. [laughs]

Sydnee: We perfected it.

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: And it was because, you know, it's a shift on how we enjoy life. We don't live to work.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: You know. We work to live. And part of that is we start making things that will make your—you know. Like, you can go to a restaurant and you enjoy this in a new way. And we get—I think there's—you get so teased in Millennial culture for, like, the bespoke things.

Taylor: Right.

Sydnee: But it's about taking the time, and using your skills to make something specific to you, as a show of love, and skill, and connection. And, like, there's so much more to it than, like, "I want one that's just for me."

Which I think is exactly how, like, generations before us might interpret that, because they see everything—that was society. It was “I want, I want, I want. More for me.”

And it was a very, you know, self-serving kind of view. And our—and, like, Millennials started to open that up and say, “Well, no. I'm doing this as a show of love for you. it's why I crocheted this, why I cooked this, why I, you know, decoupled this.” Whatever. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Which is funny, because when you look at, like, older cultures in the world, I mean, around the world, the idea of, like, making good, high quality goods, but you know, in the food—we just talked about food, like, making good food, enjoying a meal, sitting down and enjoying a lengthy, good meal... and knowing—knowing how to judge quality, that is a... attribute to all of the cultures that, you know, we want to look up to. Like, that's a... a thing that you should aspire to, is that you have local culture that is cared for, and embraced, and encouraged. And... that is something that, I don't know—that's something that we care about.

Sydney: Which, I mean, I think before we move on to the next thing, because I know we're running low on time—I do think when we talk about the original inspiration for this, the Millennial burger joint—

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydney: —we're kind of getting into a lot of this here. “I'm going to make you a burger, and I know that you could buy this cheaper and quicker somewhere else. But it's going to be delicious because I put a ton of time into exactly what this burger is.”

And it doesn't have to be a burger. But replicate that, and you get a lot of Millennial restaurant culture. “I'm going to do this for you, and I'm gonna do it really well.” And it's not gonna be necessarily the fanciest. It's that I'm gonna be thoughtful about each piece of it and put, you know, the decoration, and the drinks, and the menu, and the chairs, and the vibe is going to be about creating an experience. Not just about fast and cheap versus slow and fancy. You know?

Taylor: Well, it—the Millennial burger thing, we... that reminded me of, you know, we discussed the cake thing.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: And it sort of—isolated, the two are both just kind of funny and whatever on their own. But then when you look at 'em both together I'm like, "Uh-oh, wait. This is bad."

Because we have, "Ugh," you know, "Why would I pay \$50 to a home baker when I can spend \$20 at Walmart? Why would I—when I can go to McDonald's and get a, whatever, a \$2 sandwich, why would I pay \$10 at a nice burger place?"

It's like, well, um, because you're supporting local businesses. You're having better ingredients. And you're, you know, you're supporting a culture that is your neighbors and the fabric of your community.

And it's really bad that the younger generation is really a huge fan of big corporations. [laughs] Like, pull back and look at what you're saying! Look at what these two have in common. They benefit McDonald's and Walmart! Come on!

Sydnee: Well, and I think this moves in really easily to, like—and maybe we've kind of overlapped it—our fourth area. Which is, I think this led into what persists today as kind of, like, the DIY movement. The idea that like, I don't wanna pay somebody to do this for me. I want to do it for myself. You know?

And part of that is like, I can't afford to pay somebody to do it for me.
[laughs quietly]

Taylor: I mean, that's—

Sydnee: But there's—

Taylor: Go ahead.

Sydnee: There's more than that.

Taylor: That's one of the other things that I've seen skewered with that same obnoxious song is Millennial weddings. And it's all just, like, weddings that have, like, twinkle lights, and they're in a barn, and, you know, you can tell that somebody made those flower arrangements by hand. Maybe everybody's drinking out of mason jars instead of, you know, fine crystal.

And... it's cheap! That's a—I've gone to a lot of weddings like that, because you can afford that wedding. That's... [laughs]

Sydnee: You can afford it. I do think—I think—and that's—I think it's important to remember. A lot of these things are driven by economic pressures, absolutely.

I think the flip side of that, though, was that all the sudden, our generation realized, "I can look online and find out how to do so many things that I don't know how to do. I can teach myself."

And so that movement to, like, I'll find the information myself. I'll watch the YouTube videos on my own. Like, you know what? I want to know how to fix this thing in my house, or in my car, or in my apartment. I want to know how to do that for myself. I don't want somebody else. I want to learn how to cook for myself. I want to learn how to bake bread. I want to learn how to do these things. And part of it is because I can't afford to pay somebody to do 'em for me.

But the other part is the satisfaction of being more self-sufficient. Which I think flies in the face of what older generations have complained about Millennials, which is that they're all children still. Well, but they have sets of skills that our predecessors don't. And it's because we've had to figure out how to do things for ourselves.

There are all kinds of things that Justin and I have on our own watched videos and learned how to do. Um, not because necessarily we had to, but because we want to be able to do 'em for ourself.

Taylor: Well, and I think there's real joy in the act of doing it for yourself.

Sydnee: Yes¹

Taylor: When we talk about what makes us, at a base level, happy as humans, I think making things, figuring things out, doing things, that makes us happy. You know, that is—it's encouraging. Whatever life was promised to you where you go to your office and everything is done for you. You know, your food is instant, and all of your problems you have enough money to pay somebody to fix, so that your schedule is clear just to work your job.

Where is the joy there? There's a lot of joy in taking care of yourself.

Sydnee: And it doesn't, uh, deprive anybody of job opportunities, because generally what happens is we try to fix the plumbing or the electric or whatever on our own, we mess it up worse—

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: —and then we are grateful for tradespeople who have the actual skill set to come fix it for us, and it's probably worse, and they make more money.

Taylor: Well, yeah.

Sydnee: So there you go!

Taylor: There are some trades that you should not DIY. You know, plumber, Doctor? Eh, you know. [laughs quietly] That's a whole other discussion.

Sydnee: There is obviously a downside to all these things. That's a whole other pod—maybe that's the next—[laughs quietly] we can get into the down—the dark side of all these. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Yeah. Yeah. Making your own centerpieces for your wedding is cool. Um, don't try to remove that... that mole. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Yeah. Making your own antibiotics is not cool.

Taylor: Yeah...

Sydnee: Um, and that—I know we're almost out of time, and I think the last thing—our last contribution has kind of been the undercurrent of the whole episode, so I don't know that we need to explain it too much.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: But Millennials are earnest.

Taylor: Well, and that's... I—look. Cringe is just shame in another language. You know? And shame is a form of societal control. It's trying to make you be a useful member of society by making you afraid of acting out of line. And Millennials, everything we've talked about, kind of is out of line. [laughs] It's being ourselves, not being what we're told to be, dressing the way we want, trying to solve problems with our own two hands, taking what's giving to us and finding the most joy in it. It's all done... yeah. Earnestly.

Sydnee: Earnestly.

Taylor: And I don't know, like, we were taught shame. And we said, "Well, that's—yeah, there's lots of things you told me that I was supposed to believe that didn't work out for me, so I'm gonna let go of that one too."

And the younger generation bringing it back as cringe kind of makes me sad. But I hope they get to the same point where hey, like, you don't get any points for being cool. You don't—it doesn't get you anywhere. Suppressing your joy, suppressing the things that make you happy, being a more useful cog to society won't get you anywhere... that you wanna go. It might get you somewhere, but it won't get you anywhere you wanna go.

Sydnee: No. I think loving the things you love and celebrating other people loving the things they love is one of the best things Millennials have given. And I hope that more people accept that and can let themselves do that.

'Cause you're right, Tey. I always think of the Ben Folds song—another... I don't know. That's Gen X/Millennial. Um, There's Always Someone Cooler Than You.

There's always—like, so let it go! So let it all go and just be who you are. Wear whatever size jeans. [laughs quietly] However big the bottoms of the jeans you want them to be. Wear those jeans. And listen to your music, and watch cartoons if you want to and, you know, eat at the local burger joint with the—[laughs quietly] with the bespoke pickles.

I mean, I think that all that stuff brought us joy, and so we've done it, and we've celebrated it. And we've gotten criticism for it. And I would say that, like, I would very much like to celebrate the weird stuff that Boomers are into, and the weird stuff that Gen Z is into, and the weird stuff that Gen X and Gen Alpha—I want to celebrate all your quirky weirdness and randomness too. And I know it's there. Just let it... let it happen.

Taylor: Yeah. Life is short. Be cringe. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: There you go. I agree. Uh, also, life is short, so donate to Maximum Fun.

[both laugh]

Sydnee: No, that's not—

Taylor: That sounds like a threat. [laughs]

Sydnee: Oh no. I didn't mean it that way.

Taylor: “Or it might be shorter!”

Sydnee: [laughs] But, uh, Maximumfun.org/join. Again, this is the MaxFunDrive. That's why we're doing something a little special, a little different. We will do something else special next week. We're not gonna tell you what it is yet, but... you're gonna be—you're gonna love it. And, uh... [laughs quietly] is that 'cause we don't know?

Taylor: No, we do know!

Sydnee: We do know? Am I just forgetting?

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: What are we doing next week, Tey? Remind me and our listeners.

Taylor: [crosstalk] This time we talked about the good things that Millennials have offered up. And then I thought next we were talking about maybe one of the worst but still most enjoyable things, which is the TV show Girls. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Oh, that's right!

Taylor: The quintessential...“What’s wrong with us?” Everything wrong Millennial TV show.

Sydnee: There we go. That's right! I—man! I forget. Yes, we're gonna talk about Girls.

Taylor: We’re gonna get both sides of the argument. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: You're gonna get both sides of Millennials. Because we are—again, we know who we are, and we don't lie about it.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Warts and all. But, uh, thank you, listeners. Maximumfun.org/join. Again, please, if you can, we’d so appreciate your support. We count on you all to help us make this show for you. And again, lots of great gifts. At \$5 a month it’s all that bonus content. \$10 a month you get a pin and the bonus content. And there are higher levels. Go to Maximumfun.org/join to check out what you can do to join, to upgrade, to boost, whatever. Anything helps.

Uh, we so appreciate you. Uh, we love you. Thank you if you've donated. Thank you for listening, if you haven't donated! That's okay. Tell a friend. Share it. Um, tell somebody about the show. That helps us too.

But Maximumfun.org/join is that website, one last time. Thank you to Maximum Fun. Thank you to The Nouvellas for our theme song, Baby You Change Your Mind.

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

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Taylor: And I'm Taylor Smirl.

Sydnee: I am still buffering...

Taylor: And I am too.

[theme music plays]

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