

Still Buffering 422: Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me

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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 Teylor Smirl.

Sydnee: Uh, Tey, did you watch the Grammys last night?

Taylor: Uh, I watched it via TikTok. Like, I watched the clips of people talking about their pretty outfits, and then a few of the acceptance speeches. Um, that's how we consume media now, right? I don't... who has cable? I don't.

Sydnee: I watched it on TikTok.

Taylor: [laughs] Okay.

Sydnee: I mean, I didn't watch the Grammys. I watched parts of it. But it's—so... I guess I'm vaguely interested in who wins. Like, in the most... not-interested interested way? I don't know. I don't know how to express that. I don't really—I'm not invested. I am not in any way invested.

Taylor: It felt a little—and this is not—there were lots of artists that were honored that I think deserved their roses. But also it felt a little bit of a Hunger Games moment, where with everything going on in the world I'm like, "Oh. Here are people wearing pretty outfits and getting shiny awards. That's nice." [wheeze-laughs]

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: [laughs] How am I supposed to look at this?

Sydnee: I know. I felt very detached from it. And then I do—I am always interested in the TikTok compilations of, like, outfits. I don't—and this is not from a judgmental perspective, and some people, like, on TikTok get very judgmental about outfits. I don't know what good fashion is. I have no idea.

And so, like, for me it's just like, "Oh, that's interesting. Oh, that's cool. Ooh, that's a weird one."

Like, it's basically just that. Um... I... it was ruined, though—like, my TikTok enjoyment of it—because everybody just wanted to talk about the same thing. I don't know if you saw this over and over again on TikTok, but I kept looking for outfit compilations and instead, all I got was how that one person was naked.

Taylor: Oh yeah. Yeah, I did see that. The, um...

Sydnee: It's Kanye's... wife, or girlfriend, or—I don't know what their relationship is. Partner.

Taylor: I...

Sydnee: Was naked.

Taylor: There is some—

Sydnee: I guess? I don't know. I mean, I couldn't see, of course.

Taylor: Oh no, she was—I mean, there was a—there was a slip of some kind there. But that's been going on for a while. You know that, right?

Sydnee: Just, like, she goes out totally naked?

Taylor: Well, it's—he dresses her. That's why—there's something there that is not—is not good, 'cause he dresses her. And, like, there was another look that she went out in where she was just holding a pillow in front of her body, but was otherwise naked.

Sydnee: Oh, I didn't know that.

Taylor: Yeah. This is a consistent thing. Like, he dresses her. And he dresses her in these, like, I don't know... humiliating outfits. And I mean, you know, the man's not well. But, uh... I don't know. That's... I... we provide commentary on the internet! I would not touch that with a ten foot pole!

Sydnee: Okay. Well, I—

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Obviously I didn't know all that context. I didn't understand. Like, I'm looking for outfits, and everybody's like—the first one I saw they were like, "This person's naked."

And I'm like, "She's wearing a giant fur coat. How can you tell?"

And then I saw other ones where it was like, "Oh."

Taylor: No, she is—she was more or less—and that's not the first time that's happened. Like, this has been ongoing.

Here's the thing. I don't know if maybe—'cause a lot of people have... have surmised that she's just getting that bag. To which I'm like, "Alright. Yeah. Make your money."

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: You know? But, uh... that's a lot.

Sydnee: I don't know. I am—I was impressed with how many TikTokers found a way to talk about it while positioning their head in front of—like, they had the image—

Taylor: Yeah!

Sydnee: —of her behind them.

Taylor: That's a—[laughs quietly]

Sydnee: And they could position their head right in front of her in such a way that it covered the nudity. Like, that's... I guess they're very skilled at that. I feel like I would not be able to do that.

Taylor: Yeah. I know. I was curious—

Sydnee: But I just wanted to see outfits!

Taylor: —how naked she was. And then it was entirely. Uh, yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah. I—I just wanted to see more outfits. Like, I think—was Chappell Roan wearing, like, a princess hat?

Taylor: Yeah. She was—

Sydnee: One of those tall, pointy hats with the...

Taylor: She looked—she had a whole—

Sydnee: ... thing? The ribbon?

Taylor: A whole renaissance moment happening.

Sydnee: Yeah. Like, see, that's—I wanna see that stuff! Like, what's—

Taylor: Gaga looked like a—

Sydnee: What's going on there?

Taylor: —a goth queen.

Sydnee: Yeah? See, I didn't see any of the cool outfits, 'cause everybody on TikTok was just talking about nudity. And I'm like, well... how did—I don't know how you make a best dressed or worst dressed list if you're not dressed.

Teylor: Well... [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: [laughs] Again, this is why—

Teylor: [crosstalk] Such, like, a—that was such, like, a catty old southern woman thing to say. [laughs]

Sydnee: Well, that would—okay. That would be—

Teylor: "I don't know how you make a best dressed list if you're not dressed at all."

Sydnee: Well—

Teylor: "Blanche." [laughs]

Sydnee: But, I mean, okay. I think that would be... it would be a catty old southern woman thing to say if it was like—

Teylor: No, I love it! That's not a judgment. I adore that. I just... [laughs]

Sydnee: It wasn't like she was wearing, like, a miniskirt and I'm like, "[nasally] Oh my god."

Teylor: No, no, no. No, and look, if she was doing, like—'cause, you know, Julia Fox, I love Julia Fox. Sometimes she shows up on the red carpet dressed in something, I'm like, "What are you doing?"

But I know it's her doing that. Like, she's just doing her weird own thing. And I love that. And if this had been this woman's, like, this is just what she does. She just likes to show up naked. I'd be like, "Yeah. Rock it out."

It's that weird, like, "Ugh, but like, ugh, I think it's he's doing it. Ugh."

Sydnee: Does she want to? Yeah.

Taylor: Yeah. And that's what makes it gross. Like, I support—I support women's wrongs all day, every day. Show up naked. Wear a tutu and chapstick. I don't care. Live your life. But... [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah. I just wanted to see all the... all the weird outfits. I shouldn't say "weird." That sounds like I'm passing judgment.

Taylor: They are weird! No, they—they are weird.

Sydnee: I mean, is that okay to say? Like, sometimes it's just kind of—like, I don't—and again, this is because I don't know what's fashion and what isn't. All I know that's fashion is Alan Cumming on Traitors. That's fashion.

Taylor: Well, that is fashion.

Sydnee: Everything he's wearing is... what I think is the best. So that's my—that's my metric. When I see Alan Cumming I'm like, "That is amazing." Whatever it is. His whole thing. Before I even see it I know it's gonna be amazing. And that's, like, the peak for me. And then I don't know... I'm wearing overalls, so I don't know where I land on this.

Taylor: I mean...

Sydnee: Chart.

Taylor: I don't know why my TikTok started skewing towards runway shows, like... I guess fashion week just happened, so that's why. But like, I get a lot of those. And I watch them and I'm like—have very strong opinions about Chanel's spring efforts, and the overuse of black belts. And then I'm sitting there in, like, sweats and a dirty t-shirt. Like, what am I—what am I doing, having a thought about this?! Why do I think I can have a thought about this?!

Sydnee: I literally—my getting ready in the morning is, am I gonna—if I'm going to work I'm wearing scrubs, so there's no thought there. It's just like, I have the shirts I wear. I have my warm weather shirts with scrubs, and my cold weather shirts with scrubs, and that's it. And then the rest of the time it's overalls. And if it's hot, they're short overalls, and if it's cold they're long

overalls. That's my entire getting ready! [laughs] Why am I watching these fashion TikToks? I don't know!

Taylor: I mean, it—I like it. It's like candy. But yeah, it's—you know. But I do agree that... we can all agree that Alan Cumming is always a well-dressed man.

Sydney: Yes.

Taylor: Always.

Sydney: I mean, just—just gorgeous. Just gorgeous always. And so I feel like if it looks like that, it's fashion. And then maybe if it doesn't it's fashion too. I don't know. [laughs]

Taylor: That'd be nice. [laughs quietly]

Sydney: But that's all I know about the Grammys. I think Taylor Swift got one?

Taylor: She always gets one. I don't know.

Sydney: Um... somebody from West Virginia got one.

Taylor: Oh!

Sydney: I saw a bunch of people from West Virginia getting real excited about that. But I don't know anything. I'm passing no judgment pro or con. Man. Sticky—when you say they're from West Virginia, and I say that as someone who is from and still lives in and is proud to be a West Virginian. I do not stand by all of us. I do not support all of us. Sorry.

Taylor: That's just a statement on mankind. That's alright. It's not West Virginia exclusive. I live in New York. Like, I would say that about my state. I don't stand by all of us. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Yeah. Without doing more research I can't just inherently say, "Well, they're West Virginian. They must be great." [strained] Ehh, no—well, hmm.

Which, by the way, I feel like—Teylor, this is a helpful disclaimer. And I know you've been out of West Virginia for a long time, so you may not know this either. Um... our senator, Jim Justice, is... not a good person. And he's—he was bad at being a governor, and he's gonna be a bad senator, and he's not gonna do good things. But he has a dog.

Teylor: Babydog.

Sydnee: Called Babydog.

Teylor: I know Babydog.

Sydnee: Yeah. Okay. Babydog arrived in the Senate chambers or somewhere in Congress. He showed up in the hallways, in the big, white, fancy hallways in his own little wagon they were pulling him in.

Teylor: [snort-laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] His own little doggy wagon.

Teylor: [laughs breathlessly]

Sydnee: And, like, all the press flocked to him to take pictures.

Teylor: "[high-pitched voice] I hate being alive!" [laughs quietly] Go on.

Sydnee: So here—all I'm telling you is, you can like Babydog if you want. It is not a tacit endorsement of Jim Justice or any—

Teylor: Isn't it wild that these people are so soulless and lacking of—of any sort of... empathy, that they just have a to have a dog be their moral compass that they carry along with them?

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Like, it's like a shield. It's like Elon carrying his kid around his shoulders to, like, keep him from being shot in the head. Like, that's what... it's not the kid's fault. It's not the dog's fault. It's not Baby—Baby... Babydog, you're fine. You did nothing wrong. I hate it here. I hate it here! Can I leave?

Sydney: We have grappled with this in the state of West Virginia. Are you allowed to like Babydog? You are.

Taylor: But this is how I feel. Every time when I run in my park, there are always people walking their dogs. And, like, they will let their—they'll be on their phone, and the leash is going over the entirety of the running path to the point that I have to, like, leap over it. And they always get, like, a dirty look. It's like, your dog did nothing wrong. You, the dog owner, are a bad person, for this. And I need to make that distinction. And I need my eyes to communicate that in the two seconds that we're making eye contact. [laughs]

Sydney: It's tough. It's tough. I totally feel you. And I, you know, I've got cats. I don't have a dog. And so it's easy for me to pass judgment.

But then on the flip side, I get that look sometimes from people if, like, my kids are being loud in a restaurant.

Taylor: That's different!

Sydney: I get this look. And it's like, I want—I always want to look—man. I'm at a point in my life where I think I would just say it. When I was a young parent I wouldn't, 'cause I was always like, "Oh, oh, everybody be quiet."

And I was so scared that, like, "Oh, I'm offending everyone." I don't think I would care anymore. 'Cause now I would just look at somebody and say, "Do you really think I have any control? Do you really think there's anything I could do or say? My kids are gonna be kids, and they're gonna be loud, and you were a kid once, and deal with it!"

Taylor: Well, as much—

Sydnee: That's what I would say now, at this point in my life.

Taylor: [laughs quietly] I—

Sydnee: "[emphatically] Deal with it."

Taylor: I think that is a perfectly good response to that, because I—I—as a person who only just has a cat, I will never have kids, and so I might fall into that like, pet parent quadrant. I do understand there's a difference between human children and pets. I chose to have a pet. It's important to have kids and, like, you know, kids are—they're whole other beings. It's different. It's the difference between having—like, not... not cleaning up after your dog, and like, a kid is just gonna do kid stuff.

Sydnee: Yes. Kids are gonna be kids. My daughters are loud, and they take up space, and I have encouraged them to do so.

Taylor: That's good.

Sydnee: So I will not apologize... for them taking up space and being loud.

Taylor: Maybe—

Sydnee: Eventually they'll... [laughs quietly] I assume they'll get to a point where they won't wanna shout and sing in restaurants. I'm sure they'll get there.

Taylor: Or maybe not.

Sydnee: I did.

Taylor: They might be Broadway kids all the way up.

Sydnee: I don't know. Maybe they won't. [laughs quietly] And you know what?

Taylor: I don't know, I think there are certain members of our family that never did that. So I think yeah, that's in the cards.

Sydnee: And there are people—like, listen. Think about it. You've been to a restaurant where there's, like, usually some guy at a table near you who is just... he just thinks this story is so great that everybody needs to hear it.

Taylor: Is this that verse from the Bo Burnham song about have you ever been a birthday party with children? [laughs] And there's the one that won't screaming? Like, yes. Those adults exist. Yes. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Uh-huh. Yeah. They're in charge of the department of DOGE now.

Taylor: Aghhh!

Sydnee: Uh...

Taylor: Every now and then, every now and then you've just gotta let out a little scream. Just a little scream. Just a little. You gotta find the time and the place for it and you just gotta let out a little scream. And you do it, and then you move on.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. It's... [laughs quietly] It's—you can contain multitudes. Part of it is going to be anger, but there can be other things with the anger.

Taylor: Yeah. This is just like—this is just where we're gonna be, I think, for the next... four years? Hope it's just—knock on wood—just four.

Sydnee: Uh... but Taylor, that—

Taylor: We have a very good thing to talk about today.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: Um... I wanted to talk about David Lynch, specifically Fire Walk with Me, which is the center of this discussion. But I think it's also a good opportunity to just... spend some time appreciating an artist who shaped our, uh—our lives.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: I don't think that's too audacious to say.

Sydnee: No, I don't think so at all. I think, um... and I'm sure we're not alone. A lot of—there are a lot of people who were touched by sort of the theming and aesthetic and messaging, and kind of the whole thing that encompassed... I mean, well, we use the term Lynchian for a reason. Um... and we are certainly not alone in that.

Taylor: No. And I... I have watched this movie before, but I rewatched it again last night. And like, the one thing—I don't—I guess... [sighs] It's a prequel to Twin Peaks.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: Is ostensibly what the movie is. So it shows you the last days of Laura Palmer. It also introduces you to Agent Cooper. It also sort of has a side story about a, um... uh... oh, gosh. He's got the best name in fiction. Uh, another agent that disappears randomly.

Sydnee: I'll tell you in a minute. You keep talking and I'll get there.

Taylor: Uh, so it sets up Twin Peaks. But it's a lot... it's very heavy. It's a lot darker than Twin Peaks. It is... it is... an incredibly—like, I—it was originally panned at Cannes when it debuted, but like, I think on the rewatch, I think it holds up as, like, one of Lynch's most, like, dark sort of, like—he does this dream narrative thing where everything that happens doesn't really make sense unless you just sort of let go of reality, and then it all makes sense.

Sydnee: Chester Desmond.

Taylor: Chester Desmond. What a great name. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: He has this thing about, like—like, he has this great way of just kind of creating these sort of archetypes with a name or a stroke or a

costume. That—I don't know. Like, I... Lynch was an artist before anything else.

Sydnee: It's really interesting, because it does... I think that if you have watched all of Twin Peaks, and then you watch Fire Walk with Me... everything that they—it takes you, like, the entire series—and I guess it's fair to say we're gonna be spoiling this as we talk about it.

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: Yeah. Um, if you don't know... [laughs quietly] I mean, if you have not watched Twin Peaks, we're gonna tell you who killed Laura Palmer, so. [laughs quietly] I think it's good to know that.

Um... but I think that everything that, like, the series slowly unfolded to reveal to you, like the central mystery and, like, who is Bob, and all of that, the slowness with which it's revealed, and then all of the other story lines in Twin Peaks, it kind of... softens what happened. Like, if you get down to, like, literally what happened, what happened to Laura Palmer, who was hurting her—like, if you get down to that core story, that is what Fire Walk with Me shows you.

And so I can see where—you know what I mean? Like, it is darker in that way. It is, because if there was any ambiguity, if it took you a minute to figure out what was happening in Twin Peaks, it's not ambiguous in Fire Walk with Me. And I think that probably did make it a lot harder—if you were a huge fan of Twin Peaks and you thought it was, like, aesthetically so cool, and Dale Cooper is so cool, and I love the mystery, and it's dark, and it's, you know, like it looks pretty on the surface but underneath—you know, and all that stuff. Fire Walk with Me was like, yeah, it is really dark. And it hits you right in the gut with that.

[pause]

Taylor: Yeah. Well, and I mean, I appreciate that like... I feel like it creates an archetype that's not—it's not—it existed before this movie, but I think it's been replicated since this movie, of like... because Laura Palmer's actions,

when we finally—'cause you know, she's like the weight that hangs over Twin Peaks as a series.

Sydnee: Right.

Taylor: But you don't get to see her except for in flashbacks, and like, when she's representing another character. But when you see her in her own autonomy in this movie, her character is so heavy. Like, she knows what's coming for her.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: She does not act like just your teenage prom queen. Like, she knows that something bad is coming for her. And it reminds me a lot of like... I don't know, have you seen the movie *Melancholia*?

Sydnee: Mm-mm, no.

Taylor: By Lars von Trier. Uh, or the character Nell in *House on Haunted—* House on, er... what is it? Not *House on Haunted Hill*. It's one of those, uh...

Sydnee: I know what you're talking about.

Taylor: Gosh. Yes. Uh, the idea of knowing your fate in some way to the fact that it impacts your current existence. 'Cause it's like, *Melancholia*, Kirsten Dunst plays a character who kind of has precognition and knows the world's gonna end, and so she just freaks out and just, like, miserable. Um, and Nell is kind of the same thing. Like, she's, you know, haunted by the bent-neck lady, and she knows that her death is coming, and her death kind of shapes her life in that way.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Like, that idea of somebody that—the way that their life will end is so violent that it shapes their life now.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: I—Laura Palmer is kind of the blueprint for that.

Sydney: Which—and it does, because you know, as the series goes on, especially as you get to Twin Peaks: The—what did they call the—the re—the second... not the second season. But, like, the...

Taylor: Oh, the...

Sydney: There was a specific name. The more recent Twin Peaks.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydney: That I have watched. I have watched the series Twin Peaks multiple times. Not... the recent—not, like, the newer episodes. That I watched through one time and I just have not been able to go revisit, because of Dougie. I just can't. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydney: It's so frustrating to have a character like Dale Cooper who get, like, you know, benched for so long. And then you have to deal with this—the same actor, Kyle MacLachlan, who's incredible, being Dougie. [laughs] It's hard! It's hard to watch. So I haven't revisited.

But, um—but you play with time as the series goes on. Like, the idea of like, what we know from the future and the past, and how things can ripple, and how, like... I don't know. Like, you definitely get the idea that stuff that will happen in the future can be existing now, and happening now simultaneously as will happen. You know, like... I don't know. I feel like this idea of time being relative is sort of a theme.

Taylor: Well, that's—I think... it's one of my favorite, like, artistic thoughts to explore. It's like, we experience time as a linear thing. But time exists in, like, a big puddle. And so the ripples of something in your future can have such big waves that it can impact your past, and almost predestine you for your future.

And, like, Lynch was... just a smart guy that cared a lot about dreamspace and, you know, kind of collective unconscious space. Like, of course he would explore those themes. And they're scary, and they're big, but he did it in ways we could digest.

Sydnee: And he did that, but he also—and I think this is what—as I watching *Fire Walk with Me* again, I was thinking about it in comparison to *Twin Peaks*.

Um, I made a comment, like—Justin and I were watching it together and I made a comment about how, like, even when they're, like, having a scene that's supposed to be somewhat sexual, like a sexy scene, something about it is—there's, like, some sexual nature to the content of any kind, I never find any of it personally, to me, like, sexy. Like, it is not—that word does not spring into my head.

And it's because there's this... idea in all of it, between the colors, and the furnishings in the rooms, and the wallpapers, and the clothes, and the music, and everything is so pretty and perfect and kind of fuzzy, kind of like that soap opera-y kind of, like... you know what I mean?

Like, soft, pretty, perfect. And then underneath it—like, that is so thin. It's just this tiny, thin, eggshell veneer, and underneath it is rotten, and decay, and death, and violence, and darkness.

And that is so ubiquitous in all of it, I feel like that theming just comes through. That one, like, none of it is sexy to me. [laughs quietly] But two, I think that that's Lynch saying, one, like, this is what we are. And two, like... it's interesting to, as you watch *Fire Walk with Me*, thinking of yourself as kind of like a voyeur. Like, watching it thinking it's cool, and then having that thrown back in your face like, is it, though? Is it cool? Like, do you still feel good about that? Do you still feel good about... how you feel about this? I don't know.

I think—I found myself feeling very uncomfortable, which I think is the point. I think that's the point. Like, I'm supposed to feel uncomfortable with the way I'm engaging with this media. That's so hard to do.

Taylor: Well, I think that's... there's a real—and I don't give this praise without, like—I mean this, like... Lynch had an ability to tap into what I think specifically... not every artist is an American artist, but I think Lynch is an American artist. And I think he has a good ability to sort of put you into what Americana is, the good and the bad. And he presents it without... without judgment. But when you see it for what it is, you do judge it. Like, I think that is inherent in across his creations. Like, there's always an el—you're creating the judgment. He's almost a... a documentary filmmaker, in that sense. Like, he's just showing what is the underbelly and the reality, and you're creating assumptions. And they're real, but there's not judgment behind the lens.

Sydnee: No. No. I don't think there's judgment behind the lens. I think it's just—yeah. I think you're right. It's laying it out there. But I do think... I think you can get drawn in. And, I mean, his casting is part of it, right? Like, such excellent—not just casting, like, the actors. But like, the way people look is just right.

Taylor: I forgot the random David Bowie in this movie until I rewatched. [laughs] I was like, "Oh, yeah! Of course."

Sydnee: Yeah. David Bowie shows up. I mean, like, the casting is so perfect. Um, and I think that you get drawn in by that. And again, by the aesthetics of it. And then, like, I was thinking of early in the movie when you're seeing all these scenes, and then all the sudden they're in the morgue and there's a dead body. And the way that that is shown to you is like, there is no... it is just, bam. It just hits you in the face. And—

Taylor: Well, it's not—it's not a good representation of a dead body.

Sydnee: No.

Taylor: Like, it's an actress laying there, you know, her pupils are dilated—like, it looks like an active body, representing it. Like, you could show a dead body better if you just want to show a dead body. I think it's purposeful that it's not a dead body.

Sydnee: It's—and it's, like... deeply disturbing in that moment. It is. And I think that it is the conflict between—again, we've had all of this sort of, like, witty dialogue, and this cool FBI Agent, and like, you know, we're in this like, pleasant-looking office space with a secretary reading a book at her typewriter. Like, all of that, and then it leads up to a moment where you're like, "Holy—whoa. Crap. That's a dead body."

Like, I think that that's all very intentional, 'cause that's kind of like life. [pause] That's just how life is. [laughs quietly] It's like, you're surrounded by both all the time. And you learn to cope with it, and then, like, decide with you're engaging with at any given moment.

Taylor: Well, and I think—you know, it really—like, the—all the FBI characters... [laughs] there's not just Dale Cooper. There's, you know, Chet Desmond and Kiefer Sutherland. Like, it's... it kind of plays into the idea that there's archetypes that we cling to.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: And that there's this archetype of like, the FBI agent, the man that's trying to discover, that Lynch has in a lot of his media. And also the woman in distress, the woman who's lost. That is a consistent back—like, I recently rewatched *Inland Empire* and, like, you kind of get that same back and forth. Like, that's a common thing.

And... I don't know. I think that's why I love Lynch as an artist, is that he's not—I don't think he's trying to say... I don't think you could type out what he's trying to say and say, "This is what he's trying to do."

Sydnee: Right.

Taylor: He's... looking at that sort of shared dreamspace we all have and pulling symbols out of it, and putting them on film. And, I mean, his, you know, his great response of like, you know, "Why is this—what is behind this film?"

And he's just like, "No, I won't tell you."

Like, that's... it's all there. But it's for you to interpret. Like, he's playing in the collective unconscious, but you have to figure out what it means, because it's important you do.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. And I—I do think it's—I was reading that too, about how, like, when the film was first—like, the critical reception of the film when it was first released was not great. Like, generally speaking, critics did not love this. Some did, but the majority did not.

And some of the critiques I read were like, "Laura Palmer turns out to just be, like, a typical annoying teenager," or something to that effect. Like, "A tiresome teenager." Or something.

Which is so wild to me, that you would watch that and read that into this character, who is, like—I mean, again, I think in *Fire Walk with Me*, it is so clear that this character has been through... I was gonna say a bad word. Has been through a really rough time. [laughs quietly] I'm trying not to use profanity.

Has been through terrible, terrible things. And like, is in no way tiresome or typical. Is in no way a teenager. But I think—I wonder if it was—this was 1992. There would be an unwillingness, I think, of society to engage with what Lynch is talking about. We're a lot more self-reflective now. We're a lot more open to critique of ourselves, I think, than we were in the 90's.

Um, I don't know. That's probably a social media effect, I would guess. But...

Taylor: No, I agree. And I don't think, like... like, what—[sighs] gosh. So, like, what Laura Palmer went through, like, the narrative I think is a very... I mean, the way that *Fire Walk with Me* ends, you know, with her kind of seeing her angel return to her, is such a—it's such a devastating moment where you realize that this young girl suffered so horribly, unfairly. And is sort of given some redemption.

Like, I think it is actually... it's given a lot of symbolic language to represent the story. But it's a very human story.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Of somebody that just has something horrible happen to them, and that makes them feel beyond redemption. And then they're given redemption.

Sydnee: And if it... if it makes you—which it d—like, I think there is, if you—especially if you were a big of Twin Peaks, which I was, and am, and continue to be. That doesn't change that.

But like, the—it opens with a teenage girl wrapped in plastic, dead in a river. Like, it opens with a horrible, criminal thing. But you don't... like, I don't think when you think about Twin Peaks, like, those of us who enjoy it, we're not thinking about, like... that. You know what I mean? We're thinking about all the funny, weird, quirky, cool, interesting, mysterious—you know what I mean? Like, you tend to think about all that stuff, and you don't really think about the horror that is underneath, the story underneath it all that is pretty horrible.

And then if you do start peeling that back and really meditating on it, it's like, well, I don't wanna—I don't wanna think about that. I don't wanna... engage with that.

And maybe that is what made Fire Walk with Me challenging for fans of Twin Peaks is that I feel like that movie makes you engage with it. It makes you.

Taylor: I agree. But I think that it—Fire Walk with Me—I will be honest, I prefer Lynch's movies to Twin Peaks. Like, I love Twin Peaks. I love everything the man did. He's a singular artist that gave us gifts that we might never get again. I'll say that, full stop.

But I like his movies, because they get... because of the darkness. I like his darkness. I like his willingness to go into the dark. And I think Fire Walk with Me is Twin Peaks... nighttime mode. Like, it shows you just everything horrible that led up to this kind of funny, like, network-friendly series that we got.

Sydnee: Yeah. Well, and I also think it probably reflects somebody who had demonstrated to the people who fund such products—projects—

Taylor: [simultaneously] Oh, for sure, for sure.

Sydnee: —that like, "I can be successful." And so then was given more free reign, given more creative license to do something that—like, "Just trust me. I know it seems dark. Just trust me."

And then it was like, "Whoa!" [laughs quietly] "Whoa, this is a whole other level."

You know what I mean?

Taylor: Well, that's... I mean, that—I don't know. I don't... my fear is that, where are our next generation of artists? I was thinking about this in specifically, like, the people that I look up to that have passed. And, you know, a lot of visual artists, but also a lot of filmmakers, just as far as their visual language. Like, Lynch was a big one for me. And I always had that dream of like, "One day I'll get to meet this go. Oh, he's gone."

And, like, John Waters is kind of the only one left in that category of filmmaker. [laughs] It's like, people that present a world that's unique. Like, you're never looking—you're never seeing reality when you watch a David Lynch film. You're seeing David Lynch's reality. I think John Waters does the same thing. And they create—by showing you what the world could be, they influence this world. They change reality. That's a powerful thing. And that only happens when artists are given space to create. And I don't know where that exists. Like, I don't see a younger generation of that.

Sydnee: I don't—yeah, I don't know. It's tough. I can think of things that I feel like... projects—like, shows and movies that you can feel the creator coming through. Like, people who have a distinctive perspective and voice.

But I don't—it's hard to compare anybody. I would almost not want to name anybody, because you can't compare them to David Lynch. Like, nobody does. And I don't mean nobody ever will, or like, he is... it's not like a quality judgment. It's just a... it's for the uniqueness. It is for the singularity of it. It is for the... he is—he—his work is just his. And...

Taylor: Well, but he was allowed—he had the space to do that. Not—I mean, that's... that's a privilege. Not many artists get that. Like...

Sydnee: Sure.

Taylor: Everything now is created to, you know, drive profit and have a quick turnaround and, like, that's... are we moving past the time that we can have artists that even exist like that?

Sydnee: I don't know—I mean, I don't know. I certainly do not have the expertise to say I know for sure one way or the other. I would say that like, that's always the double-edged sword of the internet, is that you can make things and get them out, and find audiences who enjoy them, without having, you know, a label or a studio or an agent or whatever. Right? Like, people are doing that, and finding audiences that love their... whatever their unique thing is. That does happen. Is it the kind of, like, large-scale success that David Lynch enjoyed? No. Certainly.

But anybody can make something and get it out there in a way where they may be able to find their audience of people who enjoy it. I don't know.
[pause] The barrier to entry is lower. The barrier to success is still incredibly high. But the barrier to entry is lower.

[pause]

Taylor: Well...

Sydnee: But I know that's not the same as a producer, you know, paying you to do that.

[pause]

Taylor: I, uh... I don't know. I think that as it becomes more lucrative to fall in line with certain ideals, we will see most creative outputs fall in line. And so I think we should just, you know, appreciate... the time where people could just do things that are out of line.

Sydnee: Yeah. Well, I mean, I certainly—I am glad that they gave Lynch the license to make all the...

Taylor: Well, and that's kind of like—

Sydnee: ... stuff he made, you know.

Taylor: He didn't always get the license. I mean, like, that's kind of sad that there were projects that Lynch had that weren't financed. I mean, I mentioned John Waters. Like, John Waters has had movies that, like, he can't—he can't get the money to make. John Waters, who's a massive cultural impact on us all, can't get money to make his movies right now. Like... we are kind of turning away from a studio set point of like, having auteurs—like, people that are unique artistic visions—create content.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: We are kind of losing that. I think it's an important—an important perspective to... maintain. That like... I don't know. If you want—if you like what Lynch does, like, you should support... new artists. You should be willing to make that dive. Because what he did was unique, and it was weird, and not all of it hit. Like, if you screen tested most of his work today against a studio audience, it would not do well. But it's important that it exists.

Sydnee: Yeah. Well, and I think—I mean, I always think that it's a good message—um, because it gets lost a lot—that... art is—I mean, y—[sighs] Because we think of it as like, it's a talent, it seems like something that—it's different from, like, a job. I think people see it that way.

Like, this is different, because some people have this and some people just don't, right? Like it's inherent to you. Creative genius is something that you can't work for, it's just there. And that's not entirely true, right? Like, yeah, obviously there are people who have these thoughts and impulses and ideas that are brilliant, that are just there.

But to create things does take skill, and work, and effort, and time. And, you know, can be perfected through practice and schooling and all those things. And so paying for that, supporting that monetarily, financially, recognizing

that it has value, does not diminish it as art. And I think that's always been—there's this other voice that's like, "Well, but you just wanna get your art out there 'cause you have something to say to the world."

And it's like, well, yeah. But also, like, pay people for doing it. Like, that's okay to keep saying. Like, but also it's hard, and not everybody can do it, and we should compensate and support and make it possible for people to do it. That's okay to keep saying.

Taylor: Well, of course. I mean, I think, like, it's... it's inarguable that when you watch a Lynch film, be it *Blue Velvet*, *Fire Walk with Me*, *Eraserhead*, it's difficult.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: It's difficult to get through. There is a demand on you as the viewer that makes you think about how you think about yourself, how you think about the world. And it is easier to sell media that has no demands on the viewer. But that has no... I mean, that has no impact. Like, you just have to—like... I don't know. If you wanna view content as, like... [laughs quietly] as like, your vitamins, like, there are more vitamins in work like this.

Sydnee: And there can be—I mean, I think there can also be room for both. Like, right? Like, we can... we can enjoy fluffy things that are fluffy, and then we can also engage with stuff that challenges us and makes us think about the world differently, and makes us grow as people. And, you know, I do that a lot when I'm reading. I alternate between, like, romantasy, and then something that I know will make me look at the world a little differently after I finish it, so.

Taylor: Well, of course. And I think that's... I don't know. And I think Lynch is good about actually, even in his work, doing both. Like, there's a lot of, like... maybe not—like, *Fire Walk with Me* I think is a particularly dark piece.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: But I think in his, like, overarching... like, there's a lot of... he—he hones in on this specific type of Americana that I feel like is very comforting.

And I think he hearkens back to that often to kind of make us feel comfortable in what we're looking at. And then shows us—like, he can do both. He can show us something that's comforting and show us something that's dark and ugly at the same time.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: And I don't know. That's what makes him an artist. He is a true American artist.

Sydnee: Well, and I think that's also a really powerful thing to do in terms of the way life really is. I think sometimes we get lost in this idea that, like, um... life is hard, and dark, and gritty, and we need to engage with, like, the awfulness and the sorrow and the—and I'm not saying that there aren't parts of that. But like, at the same time that your life can be really hard, and dark, and gritty, you can have moments that are really wonderful, and joyous, and comforting. And it all—and again, like I said, it can all be happening at once. It can all be coming in moment-to-moment in the same hour, the same day, the same week.

And so I think reflecting that is really... I mean, it's very genius. It's very powerful, and probably very hard to do, 'cause I can't think of a lot of other works that remind you of that.

Yes, life is hard. Life is also wonderful. All at once, in equal measures, at all times. Deal with that. [laughs] Like, throw that up and tell me what you see.

Taylor: Yeah.

[pause]

Sydnee: But I was very happy to—I don't wanna say I was happy to watch *Fire Walk with Me*. I enjoyed revisiting, you know, David Lynch's work, and we're—Justin and I are way overdue for a *Twin Peaks* rewatch anyway.

Taylor: Well, I think we should all feel... genuinely gifted with... I don't know. I feel grateful for being alive when he was alive. [laughs] I guess that's what, like, a real artist does to you. Like, I got to see him do his thing

in real time. And I didn't always get it all, but I always felt it all was important. He was always trying to say something. And it was important, and it shaped who I am. And... I'm... of course we're all sad that he's gone. But like, god, what a—what a gift he was to the world.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. Absolutely. I would say that if you are someone who has not watched any of this—like, *Twin Peaks*, or *Fire Walk with Me*, or anything, I would say—Tey, do you think it's fair to say it would be hard... to get all that *Fire Walk with Me* is if you haven't—if you have no familiarity with *Twin Peaks*?

Taylor: No, I think you should watch *Twin Peaks* before *Fire Walk with Me*.

Sydnee: Okay, I agree.

Taylor: Um, absolutely. I think if you need an introduction to Lynch, um... honestly, I would start with *Eraserhead*! I think it hits—it's—it's a singular piece. It's an hour and a half. It hits hard and fast. Um, it... predicates everything that he's going to do. Uh, if you need something softer than that, I like *Wild at Heart*.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: I feel like that's... that's the, like, least Lynchian Lynchian production.

Sydnee: Uh, yeah. No, I agree. I think that's a good one. And then I think—I agree. I think if you're gonna watch this movie, you really have to see—even though it's a prequel, I think you kind of have to see *Twin Peaks* first to understand. You'd feel—I think you could feel a little lost if you didn't understand just the basic plot of *Twin Peaks*, and then tried to watch this movie.

And then you get to see Kyle MacLachlan as Dale Cooper, which is one of the best—I think one of the best characters ever created in any media, ever.

Taylor: You named your kid after him!

Sydnee: Yes. And Betty Cooper. It was kind of a combo, but yes. Yeah. I agree.

Taylor: What is it about... what is it about Agent Dale Cooper that you said, "This needs to be a name that lives on"?

Sydnee: Uh... I think it's—I mean, it's a lot of things, right? It's like... someone who is... smart, and open-minded, and introspective, and thoughtful, but also, like, determined. Like, it's that combination of like, he's open to, like, this mystical kind of—there's always this mysticism about him, right? That he's connecting to some sort of spiritual world. But he is also driven to figure this out in order to, like, prevent the loss of life, to save people, to make the world a better place. To have one foot in both realms, right? 'Cause the thing he's doing is human. "Solve this murder to prevent the loss of life" is a very human impulse.

But he's also got another foot in this other realm that he connects to constantly. And I think that's something to aspire to.

So I guess it's that. And he's cool. I don't know. He's very cool. [laughs] He's just very cool.

Taylor: [laughs] Cooper's got a good name.

Sydnee: Yeah. She does. Well, thank you, Tey. I—like I said, it's weird to use a word like "I really enjoyed watching," but like, I do. I do enjoy it. It's challenging, it's hard, but I'm glad I watched it again.

Taylor: No, I think if you have not engaged in David Lynch's work, you owe it to yourself. This is a unique artist that we've been lucky enough to live in the time with. So, you know, watch it all. Watch it all!

Sydnee: Yeah. And obviously as we've alluded to, there are heavy themes of, you know, sexual assault, and murder, and... I mean, it's heavy. It's heavy stuff. So know that going in.

Um... Taylor, I thought next week we'd do music. We haven't done any music in a while. And Lady Gaga won a Grammy, I believe, last night.

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: So—and we have never talked about Lady Gaga, somehow.

Taylor: How have we never talked about Lady Gaga?

Sydnee: I have no idea.

Taylor: I love Lady Gaga.

Sydnee: Well, me too. So we should talk about Lady Gaga. And not any specific album. Just, like...

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: ... the icon that is Lady Gaga.

Taylor: We're gonna focus on her stint on American Horror Story. Um...

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: I could—I could talk for hours about it! But no, we'll talk about her music too.

Sydnee: I watched that, so I could talk about that.

Taylor: I loved her in Hotel. Oh my god!

Sydnee: Alright. Well, we will talk about that next week, so enjoy some Lady Gaga until then.

Um... thank you, listeners. You should go to Maximumfun.org and check out a lot of other great podcasts that you would enjoy. Uh, you can email us at stillbuffering@maximumfun.org, and thank you to The Nouvellas for our theme song, Baby You Change Your Mind.

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 am still buffering...

Taylor: And I am too.

[theme music plays]

Sydnee: Yeah. I usually watch Twin Peaks in the fall, but...

Taylor: [laughs] Is that your—is that the right time to watch it?

Sydnee: It just feels right.

[chord]

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