

## Still Buffering 441: The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert (1994)

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[theme song, "Baby You Change Your Mind" by Nouvellas plays]

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

**Taylor:** And I'm Taylor Smirl.

**Sydnee:** Tey, did you— I know you were working on some new drag, last time we talked. How did your... I saw your pictures. I know how it *looked*, but how did your show go?

**Taylor:** It was super fun. It went really well. I, uh... I had planned two numbers, and then it was just— the crowd was down, and we had some extra time to kill. So we ended up doing a couple more impromptu, which was uh...

**Sydnee:** Ooh!

**Taylor:** ... which was good. It was good for me, 'cause sometimes, I can be in the habit of over...

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** ... overpreparing, you know? And I knew this song. I made, like, some fun mixes, that's what the first two numbers were. So I don't know, my first one, it was rapped around Alaska's "wow," but I had the "Batty Rap" worked into it from *Ferngully*...

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Taylor:** And, like, Britney Spears' "Crazy." It was fun. But then, it was just like, the host was like, "I don't know. You know, get up, do a few more." So I did a Courtney Love song, and I did a Pink song. It was great!

**Sydnee:** Well, great!

**Taylor:** It was great to be doing drag with a bunch of queens that I love during pride. And I've got another show coming up in, like, a week and a half.

**Sydnee:** That's incredible.

**Taylor:** Yeah, I'm currently— I guess I'm entering into the realm of crafty queen, because my last outfit was made entirely from grippy socks.

**Sydnee:** Right.

**Taylor:** And this one, I'm making from— All of New York went anti-plastic bags. Like, that was 2020, 2019 we did that. But then they just started giving you different kinds of recyclable bags, they're all canvas. Some of them are like this really thick plastic that's apparently— the appeal is, it's reusable. Anyway, I have a *giant* pile of them under my sink. Just...

**Sydnee:** Ooh!

**Taylor:** They take up so much space. And so I'm making a sort of punk rock Frankenstein look...

**Sydnee:** That sounds good!

**Taylor:** Yeah, yeah! I'm making, like, a punk vest out of the shiny bags. And then I'm gonna make patched pants out of the canvas bags. I will say, there is no material that is more uncomfortable to be working with in [through laughter] 100-degree weather...

**Sydnee:** [chuckles]

**Taylor:** ... than thick plastic bags.

**Sydnee:** Oh, I— Ugh.

**Taylor:** I've been sewing—

**Sydnee:** It feels like they would get sweaty.

**Taylor:** Oh, they get so sweaty. I've been sewing this vest for the last day and a half. And it's just like, every time I put it on me to fit check, I'm like, "Yes, good! Oh, God, get off of me!"

**Sydney:** Ugh. Yeah.

**Taylor:** Like, I run the air conditioner, but you know, I've just got the one unit. And it only does so much.

**Sydney:** Has it hit 100 degrees up there, where you are, too?

**Taylor:** Oh, it got up to like 107 yesterday. Like, a real feel above that.

**Sydney:** It's been rough here, too. It's been... I don't know, the heat index, which means that it feels hotter than it is, however that works...

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydney:** I feel like temperature is just a— Like, I'm not saying we created temperature, but we created the concept of measuring the amount of heat, so I don't know why the amount of heat I'm feeling is not the amount of heat that you're telling me there is. I don't understand—

**Taylor:** I'm always confused by that. They'll say, like, "real feel," and I'm like, [through laughter] "What is that?" That's all I wanna know! What does it feel like?

**Sydney:** Yeah. The other number [through laughter] really doesn't matter to me.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydney:** That is what matters. So yes, the heat index has been up over 100. I guess the actual temperature has been 98 to 100.

**Taylor:** I guess that factors in, like, humidity and wind, but...

**Sydney:** I don't know. I think it's been dry, 'cause my hair has been not curling as well.

**Taylor:** Mm.

**Sydney:** It's just been sort of flat, and stringy. So that tells me there's less—  
[chuckles] That's how I measure humidity.

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydney:** Forget the temperature!

**Taylor:** I... But hey, you know, yesterday here in New York, it was election day, and it was the hottest day of the year. And we're real worried about all those old people, going out and voting for Cuomo, so maybe they took those heat advisories serious. I don't know, better stay inside! Best for you. Best for us, too.  
[chuckles]

**Sydney:** I understood— Well, so TikTok has told me that there's both a lot of clever little TikToks using that part from *Mary Poppins* where Bert sings about the winds in the West. "Something is coming," blah-blah-blah.

**Taylor:** Oh, yeah.

**Sydney:** Today is a new moon.

**Taylor:** Oh!

**Sydney:** And it's a particularly powerful new moon for reasons that I do not remember, but [crosstalk]—

**Taylor:** Alright.

**Sydney:** Take TikTok's word for it that it's a particularly powerful new moon. It means it's a time of great change, and shifting. The energy is shifting.

**Taylor:** ... I'll take it. [laughs]

**Sydney:** The veil is thin, the energy is shifting. Something is coming. So maybe this is— Maybe this is the beginning of change!

**Taylor:** I mean... I think last night's results were the first moment of hope that I felt since, I don't know... I wouldn't even say, like, the most recent presidential election. I'd say the presidential election, like, what, back in 2000— When was that?

**Sydnee:** '16.

**Taylor:** Yeah, yeah. I feel like we've just been in a spiral since then. It was the first moment I went, "Uh... Wait, maybe we can do good things." [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** Well, you know what helped me, though, was over the weekend we had Pride in the Park. It's, like, a big outdoor brunch drag show that we do every year. And Charlie and Cooper both jumped up on stage, during the kid's dance segment.

**Taylor:** Oh, yeah.

**Sydnee:** It's all a big family thing. And so they always have a moment for all the kids to get up on the stage. Actually, the way it works is all the kids who want to participate in the contest jump up on stage and dance, and the drag queens get to squirt you with squirt guns, if you're out. [laughs]

**Taylor:** Ah! That's how it works.

**Sydnee:** So... [laughs] Which they acknowledge pretty quickly. They were like, "This doesn't look good, for all the concerned about drag queens and children. [through laughter] We have a stage lined with queens who are squirting children with squirt guns." [laughs]

**Taylor:** Well...

**Sydnee:** No, it was fun.

**Taylor:** But guns are involved, so that's— We like those, right? That's fine.

**Sydnee:** [laughs] It's always a big event, and it's always a big family event. But Charlie won the dance competition. She kinda made her outfit. Like, she pieced together a top out of a tutu and a sports bra, and then—

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** She had on these rainbow tights that came up. I don't even know. She had on a feather boa and a cowboy hat that were both rainbow. She was, like, down on her knees, and rollin' around, and...

**Taylor:** I saw the video. That was a lot of movement.

**Sydnee:** She tore the knee of her tights, she was so into her dancing. Anyway, what I'm saying is, it gave me hope. I watched all these little kids dancing around with the drag queens, and... it was just lovely.

**Taylor:** Well, I'm glad. I'm glad that can happen there. That's awesome.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. In Huntington, West Virginia. So that's a good thing.

**Taylor:** That is a good thing.

**Sydnee:** Did you see— Speaking of TikTok discourse. I somehow stumbled into some sort of conversation about Western elegance. [laughs]

**Taylor:** [wearily] Oh, was this about the wedding?

**Sydnee:** I don't wanna— Listen. I have no fashion. I am not gonna sit here and criticize this person for whatever they wore that they considered Western elegance. I don't know. I don't— I think the concept of dress codes in our society, I think we need to reevaluate.

I understand that there are situations where it would not be conducive to whatever activity you're doing, for people to be, like, naked. Like, I worked in hospitals most of my life. I think we should wear close-toed shoes. Like, there are reasons. [laughs]

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** You know? There are reasons for some standards of dress like that, and I agree with those. But I think, when it starts to get into formality and like, "That

skirt's not fancy enough for that," or you have to wear heels, not shoes. I start to really— that chafes me. I don't like that.

So I'm not gonna sit here and judge anybody on, like, "That's not what Western elegance is!" I had never heard the term "Western elegance."

**Taylor:** I don't think those words even go well together.

**Sydney:** In my mind, when I heard "Western elegance," this is what I thought: there was a TV show called *Dallas*.

**Taylor:** Oh! Okay.

**Sydney:** I never saw the TV show *Dallas*. It was—

**Taylor:** It was the *concept* of Dallas.

**Sydney:** Right. It was in the air when we were children.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydney:** But it was not something we would've watched, 'cause it was an adult, soapy kind of show. You know, it was not our interest. We were kids. But it was a concept that I osmosed, so I kind of know what *Dallas* is. And when I heard "Western elegance," I was like, "Did they mean like on that show *Dallas*? Was *that* Western elegance?" [laughs]

But probably not *that*, right? ... Probably not? Or is it?

**Taylor:** [laughs] I don't— I mean, that's better than my thought, is it's like, a dress with a cowboy hat? Like, it's a rhinestone cowboy— it's a *shiny* cowboy hat. But...

**Sydney:** Yeah?

**Taylor:** I don't know.

**Sydney:** Or, like, all those— Ooh, like they had some sort of conservative woman convention where a bunch of young women went, got together, and pledged not

to be feminists, or never to have jobs. I'm not really sure what it is. Something that...

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** [chuckles] Something concerning. Something we don't wanna dwell on too much, here. But I think they were all in some sort of white sun dress and cowboy boots. Is *that* Western elegance? Do they mean, like, Utah? Is it like the Utah wives?

**Taylor:** Is that why the Utah Curls? Is that—

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** Or Waves, Utah Waves? I don't—

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** I don't— I feel like... I refuse to engage with it, because I went down the rabbit hole when the whole conversation about black-tie wedding came out, and like, "What is black tie?"

Specifically, they're talking about a woman's dress code. And there was a girl that was on that was like, "Is this a black-tie dress?" And she kept wearing dresses, and showing up in different dresses on her TikTok. And everyone was like, "No, that's not, and this is why," and "It's not, because this."

I was like, "Can somebody show me what *is* black tie? Can somebody show me what it is?"

**Sydnee:** Does it have to be— And I don't mean to have to be, like, actual, but if you're concerned about such things, is it supposed to be a long dress if it's black tie? Isn't that part of it?

**Taylor:** Well, yes, but it was more than that. 'Cause people were like, "No, but it has to be fitted, but it can't be that fabric. It can't be sheer, but it needs to be more dressed up than that." Nobody could agree on it, and it was just... Nothing was good enough.



I hit the nexus point of, like, the TikTok audience where, when one new option would make ten people go, "Oh, that's fine," another 15 people would emerge and be like, "Nope, that's wrong!" So I'm not gonna concern myself with Western elegance, because no one's gonna show me what it is.

And also, I hate that it exists. I don't need to know anything about it. I know that I hate it.

**Sydnee:** I'm still not sure what it was supposed to be. I guess what that girl showed wasn't right, but I don't know... Man. It makes me feel like, if I had to go to a wedding— If I was invited to a wedding, even a dear friend's wedding, and it had something like that on the invitation, like, "Please dress in Western elegance," I would just be like, "I'm... I have diarrhea." [chuckles]

**Taylor:** Oh, that's— I—

**Sydnee:** "I know that I will. I am telling you, in the future, I will." Because it's just too stressful! Like, I don't know what that means, and if you put it on the invitation, you must really care about it. Like, if I do my usual thing, which is like, "I don't know, I just kind of showed up in Chuck Taylors again. Sorry!" Like, you're probably gonna be upset.

**Taylor:** Yeah... Well, and you know, there was another one— I don't know why— I wanna get off of "Is this okay for a wedding?" TikTok. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** I know! [laughs]

**Taylor:** You know that girl that was like—

**Sydnee:** Me too, now!

**Taylor:** Yeah! There was a girl that was going to an Indian wedding. And she was asking if her outfit was appropriate. And, you know, there were lots of people that were from the specific culture that she was going to the wedding for that were giving her good advice. I think she settled on something good that worked.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** And I actually learned a lot about what is expected that was cool. But

there were so many people that were angry that, like, "Well, if you really care about— Like, why wouldn't you just ask the bride? If you're so close to this person from this culture, why can't you ask them?"

And it's like, a bride, probably of a wedding of several hundred people, do you think she wants every person to send her pictures, like, "Is this good? Is this good?"

**Sydnee:** No!

**Taylor:** No. No. I hate that this is a good use of TikTok, but it is a good use of TikTok, so can people just— If you don't have anything good to say, move on! [laughs]

**Sydnee:** It's also like— I think this is a good use of TikTok. Because I think I know what you're talking about; I saw that creator. And I think that it did a good job, at least— And I am a white person, so this is what I *think* cultural appreciation is supposed to look like.

**Taylor:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** Where she genuinely— This was the dress code for the wedding, this is what she was expected to wear. She wanted to get it right, she wanted to look nice, she wanted to be part of the celebration and part of the beauty of it. She was excited to wear these clothes.

Like, I think that's a good thing. I think! [laughs] Like, I think that's what we're *supposed* to do. Instead of appropriation, I think it was appreciation. I think that was a positive thing. Right?

**Taylor:** No, I would agree. You know, yeah, it's a good use of having a broad audience of people that can give you feedback. It'd be nice if the people that have just nothing to add to the conversation just sat down. [chuckles] Like, just...

**Sydnee:** Some people just have to add to every conversation. And the internet, for better or for worse, has told us all that we should! [chuckles] We *should* speak up about everything all the time...

**Taylor:** All the time.

**Sydnee:** ... whether we understand it or not. [laughs]

**Taylor:** Well, and to me, there's a difference between some weird, artificial concept of "nice dress," whatever "Western elegance" is. And this is based around a longstanding culture tied with religious beliefs. Like, those are different things, you know?

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** Like, 'cause I feel like fashion on TikTok goes through that weird blender, where people are like, "Are we wearing this kind of pant now?" And I'm like, "Who's 'we'? Where are the pants?"

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Taylor:** You have the pants. Just wear the pants! Like... [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** Well—

**Taylor:** You don't need people on TikTok to tell you to wear the pants!

**Sydnee:** And I also, sometimes I think— I mean, I guess with ads, maybe the algorithm starts to break down when it comes to ads. Because ads must get pushed to people, and maybe it's a demographic thing. Like, I don't know. I'm a 42-year-old woman, so certain stuff just gets pushed to me.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** But my "For you" page just keeps getting ads, or sort of like— I guess they're ads. You know what I mean. Like, you don't notice they're ads at first.

**Taylor:** Any time you see the orange box. Yeah, I just scroll if there's an orange box.

**Sydnee:** They are for this swim dress.

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** And they keep trying to get me to get this swim dress. And I don't want *any* swim dresses, I don't wear swim dresses. I don't know if this is a good swim dress or not. And they're like, "Look, we found the answer to your prayers. Look at this swim dress. Look, this is the best swim dress. Everybody's wearing this swim dress."

Okay, I don't want a swim dress! [laughs] Like... I don't know why this is being foisted upon me! [laughs]

**Taylor:** Yeah. I mean, I guess that's better than my targeted ads. Which, like, I get it, I'm not offended by it. But there is a point when I have to remind myself that it's a robot sending it to me. And it's like, it's just like a tank top with the F slur on it.

**Sydnee:** [chuckles]

**Taylor:** [bursts out laughing]

**Sydnee:** I mean, that's better than the swim dress, honestly. Like, that would be—

**Taylor:** [laughs hard] Well, and it's like, "Yeah, I get it. Yeah." Like, if I found that, if I ran across that in the store, I probably would've grabbed it. But, like... Hey, robot. You can't be like, "This is for you, by the way." [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Here's what I think they do. Here's the rabbit hole, I think, for me. Like, when I've thought about my algorithm. I like WitchTok, I like the witchy stuff. And so that borders on a lot of gardening – I have tons of gardening stuff in my TikTok, and herb stuff, and spell casting, and that kind of stuff is all up in my "For you" page. And I like it, and I engage with it a lot. And it sometimes overlaps with somebody who's, like, homesteading.

And the homesteading thing, you don't know. There are homesteaders who are, like, leftists. And there are homesteaders who are *not*. And sometimes, that content looks very similar. And you don't realize, like, "Oh, no!" until you're halfway through the video. Or even, maybe, all the way through a video, and then you go, "Wait a second. Something was weird about it." And then you're like, "Oh, no!"

And I think that slowly guided me into some of that, like, Nara... what's her name? You know...

**Taylor:** Oh, Nara Smith?

**Sydney:** Yeah! And for a while, Ballerina Farms.

**Taylor:** Tradwife stuff.

**Sydney:** Yeah, the tradwife stuff. Like, the Ballerina Farm stuff was popping up. And I knew right away, like, "Oh, I know what this is. No, no, no, no." So I think my algorithm got confused. And then, all of a sudden, I'm being showed...

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydney:** ... swim dresses [chuckles] and discourse about Western elegance.  
[laughs]

**Taylor:** Ugh...

**Sydney:** I think that's what happened. And I'm trying to guide it back. Like, "Take me back to like— This is the theme from *Practical Magic*. I see some lavender there. You are making something slowly in a pan with herbs, and you're gonna put some cream in there, and you're gonna get a piece of crusty bread at the end. Like, show me *that* again." [chuckles]

**Taylor:** Yeah. It is hard, because that is the point where the political spectrum starts to become a circle.

**Sydney:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** And it seems to intersect right around that [crunchy?], like, DIY, "I live off the grid" moment. And it is a bummer, because— I don't know. A lot of, like, making your— I like to make as much of my own stuff as I can. I enjoy that.

**Sydney:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** But it does always run the risk of, like, "Oh, this was cool. This person

had a cool recipe for, like, different bread recipes, and different starters and stuff." And then they're like, "Oh, and also, you know, your fresh milk that's not pasteurized."

And like, "Oh, wait!" And then it's...

**Sydnee:** Oh, no!

**Taylor:** "By the way... [through laughter] The government is full of aliens." And like, "Ahh! They got me! They got me!"

**Sydnee:** I know! That happens. And it's true, because— And I don't know how to explain. Like, I'm a kid in the '90s. I do like— I grow *some* of my own food. Not all; I can't! I can't grow all my own food. I got, like, other stuff to do. I don't have a farm. But I grow some food. I like herbs. I like to bake, or cook things sometimes.

That being said, I have no problem with [through laughter] artificial food dyes. I love GMO. Give me that pasteurized milk! Like, I will vaccinate everybody, all the time. If you hold still too long, I'll find a way to get you vaccinated. Like, that is not my world. [laughs] I don't... You know?

**Taylor:** Yeah...

**Sydnee:** I am fine with science, and I'm comfortable eating a bag of Doritos. So there it is. [chuckles softly]

**Taylor:** No, yeah, there's uh... [sighs] It's a wild world, the internet.

**Sydnee:** [chuckles]

**Taylor:** We just subject ourselves to every day.

**Sydnee:** Well, I shouldn't have led with your drag, because that would've been a great segue. But we'll circle back to drag.

**Taylor:** Yeah, I thought we were gonna dive back into it. But yeah, no, I don't...

**Sydnee:** Well, we got off.

**Taylor:** We strayed so far from the path, we ended up [through laughter] on tradwives.

**Sydnee:** I will say— Okay, can I say "Western elegance"? I think maybe we saw a little bit of Western elegance. [laughs]

**Taylor:** What look— We're talking about, uh... I always knew it as *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*, but then the way I came across it on Amazon was *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*.

**Sydnee:** Yes. I think that is technically the full title. I only ever knew it as *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*. I think— I don't know. Is that just its nickname? [chuckles]

**Taylor:** Yeah. I guess that's just what the cool kids called it. But yeah, what look in *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* do you think is [through laughter] Western elegance?

**Sydnee:** Um, it has to be one of the ones that was worn while riding atop the bus. With the beautiful, like...

**Taylor:** That's what first came to mind.

**Sydnee:** ... fabric flowing out, billowing out behind them.

**Taylor:** Yeah, that's—

**Sydnee:** That has to be Western elegance, right?

**Taylor:** That's how they want you to show up at their wedding. Just on the back of the pickup, just wafting in shiny fabric.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm. With all the eye makeup, just like— Yeah.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** That's— If I'm ever invited to [laughs] a wedding with Western elegance

theme, I'm showing up— Like, not inspired by one of these characters, but I'm gonna just cosplay as one of these characters.

**Taylor:** Just full-on, full-on.

**Sydnee:** Yeah, full-on, yeah.

I had forgotten— So this movie came out in 1994. And it's got, like— Those are some kinda big-name actors.

**Taylor:** Yeah?

**Sydnee:** Like Hugo Weaving, and Guy Pearce, and Terence Stamp. I'm sure you recognized, like, Hugo Weaving and Guy Pearce especially.

**Taylor:** Yeah! I mean, I recognize both their names. Hugo Weaving is...

**Sydnee:** From *The Matrix*.

**Taylor:** Okay, that's what I was thinking.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** He's the Mr.— What's his name? [crosstalk]

**Sydnee:** Not Mr. Anderson, but he says it a lot.

**Taylor:** Yes.

**Sydnee:** [chuckles] Um...

**Taylor:** He's one of the antagonists.

**Sydnee:** There was this great— Justin made me watch— After we watched that, he was like, "You have to see this one clip from this movie called *The Limey*. He said it was his favorite thing that Terence Stamp ever did.

And it was very cool, where he's like— I don't know. He's an assassin whose daughter got murdered, so he shows up and kind of John Wicks everybody. It's kind of the vibe, is kind of a *John Wick* kind of vibe.



**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydney:** Anyway, he was very cool.

But I was thinking, like, "Some kinda big-name actors for the time to be doing a movie like this, where not only is it a queer story... I would say it's a really happy one?"

**Taylor:** It's a really happy one. I feel like there's some really rough, like, sad moments, but the overall narrative arc, I think, it's not looking for those Emmy points of queer suffering, you know?

**Sydney:** Mm-mm!

**Taylor:** It's a pretty upbeat, fun message.

**Sydney:** Well, it really— I had not seen it in so long. And as I was watching it, and Justin was watching it with me— And I don't think he had ever actually seen the movie. He was like, "Some of this imagery," he said, "I feel like was around me when I was a teenager, but I don't remember watching this movie."

But I had forgotten how it all ends, and so I was kind of bracing myself. Because I think, especially movies from the '90s, if you have queer characters, you kind of expect that something tragic is going to happen. Because that was usually... the way of things.

And the fact that it doesn't have a tragic ending that actually has a really positive, uplifting ending, is... I think it's gotta be a rarity for its time, right?

**Taylor:** I wish I had seen this, 'cause I don't— I didn't watch it when *you* were watching it in high school. And yeah, it's a completely— It's a very kind and good portrayal of a trans woman that, I mean, I don't— I can't think of many current things that have done that to that degree.

**Sydney:** Mm-hmm!

**Taylor:** Where it's just, you know, it's not treated as any sort of audacious thing. She's just there, she exists. I feel like we took, I don't know, a decade of *Drag Race* for *Drag Race* to recognize that trans women exist, trans people exist

comfortably in drag spaces – always have, always will. And that this centers around the cast of, like, three drag queens, but one of which *is* a trans woman, like, that's just— Yeah! That's...

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** That has always been reality, but... You wouldn't have expected to see it even now, let alone back then.

**Sydnee:** It is really strange that this came out in 1994, and that there wasn't— I mean, I don't know. Was there an uproar? I don't remember there being—

**Taylor:** Eh, it was all—

**Sydnee:** I remember that my friend circle really loved it. I mean, I... I hung out with theater kids. I hung out with a lot of people who were growing up, maybe not even knowing what word to use for themselves, but knowing that they were something other than what society wanted them to be.

But they were also experiencing that in Huntington, West Virginia. And so I grew up with a lot of people who were probably closeted – or now I know, for sure, were. And we engaged, I think, with any kind of queer content that came out, because it was like, "These people exist, and they're out there in the world, and so maybe we can too." So it was a very popular movie among my group of friends.

It's also— I mean, part of that, it's not just because these were young, queer people who were maybe starting to see themselves in the world. But it's really funny. [laughs]

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** It's just really clever. It's funny. It's sweet. It's just a really good movie, too. It's... Like, the queens are super funny. All the scenes, you could do— I wonder if it's a stage show. 'Cause you could do a stage show of just them hanging out in the RV...

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** ... with their banter and stuff. And it's hilarious!

**Taylor:** And the drag designs, the costuming. I love it, because so often, you see drag represented as this incredibly rich, decadent thing in what gets to the mainstream. I like how you could see what they made a lot of their stuff out of. Especially when they— You know, like, Tick loses a bet, so they end up going into the first small town they arrive in, in full drag. And one of them is wearing what is clearly, like, loafahs.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** Like, baby loafahs, as what makes up part of their bathing suit piece. And then your main character, his dress is made entirely of sandals. Like, flip-flops. And I love that! I was like, "I could make that. I could go to the 99 Cent Store at the end of my block, and buy..."

**Sydnee:** Yeah! You could make that.

**Taylor:** "... a bunch of sandals, and cinch them together, and that would be great." But it's like, that's a lot more like what you see in local drag. You know, you do see people that clearly have gone to the Dollar Store and bought 50 of some weird thing, and glued and sewed and melted things together, and that's your outfit.

**Sydnee:** I also thought that it was such a nice, like, very honest representation— Now, this was set in Australia. And when they're talking about— They start out in Sydney. And I know Sydney's a big city, so I'm not shocked that, much like in the United States, there were certain places where, if you were a part of the LGBTQ+ community, you kind of flocked to, 'cause you knew there were safer places for you to be. I assume Sydney would be the same, you know, for Australia.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** And so, going more rural, much like the US, I assume that you start to question, like, "How safe will we be? Will we be accepted?" And they really show, sort of, that. And I don't know how it translates directly to cities I would know in the United States.

But it shows that kind of range, where you can go into some smaller towns, and you could come, you know, walking out of that big bus in full drag. And there would be people who would maybe, for a moment, be a little kind of surprised or shocked, but then would warm up to you, and give you a chance, and talk to you, and loosen up.

And you could be accepted by a lot of people, like they are in the bar where Bernadette wins the drinking contest, and all that. And it's like, you get this sense that, "Okay. More or less, they won people over."

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydney:** And now, granted, there were obviously terrible people in the town, 'cause they spray painted that awful stuff on the bus. But there were a lot of people who just, "I don't see this every day, but I also don't hate you." And then they go to Coober Pedy, which is even more rural, more remote. And obviously, they're immediately in danger in a place like that.

I don't know, it was interesting to see that sort of range. Like, it's not like... I don't know. There are people out there who, if you give them a shot, they won't be complete jerks. And then there are the ones who are complete jerks. And, I mean, the scary thing, whether you're a drag queen or a trans person, is they can all look the same, and it's hard to know who's who.

**Taylor:** I do, in all of that, like that the people that were the kindest to them were, like, the indigenous Australians.

**Sydney:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** Like, that scene, where they're having the party out in the desert, and then the queens perform... [laughs] And everyone's like, "Yeah!" And it's like, "We're into it."

**Sydney:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** I thought that was really sweet. And I think also, part of a central message of just, you know... Oftentimes, people that are pushed to the outskirts of society find camaraderie with each other. And it doesn't matter if you're out there for the same reason; it's that you're out there together.

**Sydnee:** It's also— And they don't belabor this in the movie. They don't even say it, because we weren't having these conversations this much about gender back in 1994. But it also kind of inherently highlights the fact that the gender binary is a white construct.

It's a western idea. It's born of patriarchal Christian-based societies that *need* there to be a gender binary, that *need* there to be a dominant gender and a submissive gender. And, like, that is not true in many indigenous cultures throughout time and place. And that's sort of in this, but it's not said out loud. I think if you made that movie today, you probably would highlight that point.

**Taylor:** Well, there is that similarity of, you know, the dress and the ceremonial outfits of, like, high beauty that you find in a lot of— A lot of cultures around the world have them. We lack them. We don't have them in Western elegance.

And I think that there is a parallel there with drag, which is the desire to sort of... be. To, I don't know, like... Decorate yourself to the highest degree.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm, yeah!

**Taylor:** You know, to be something above human, in a certain way that I think drag speaks to. It's not always— It's a play with gender, but I think that's a really limited look at drag. I think drag goes beyond that.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** And it is the desire to decorate oneself, and celebrate the body.

**Sydnee:** Well, I mean, it has to— And this movie really illustrates it, and I don't know— Like, we watched *Paris is Burning* last week, and that showed a lot of different ideas from ballroom culture of what drag is, right? Like, there were a lot of different themes and concepts of what is drag.

This, I think, portrayed sort of that— If you asked me, especially when I was younger, "What is drag?" This movie would show you, like, "It's this."

**Taylor:** Right.

**Sydnee:** It's very elaborate, probably homemade, or at least— And by "homemade," I don't mean, like, shoddy. Because a lot of queens are incredible seamstresses. But probably homemade, maybe constructed out of household objects, or maybe just actual, beautiful, showgirl-like pieces that you have made yourself, with elaborate headdresses and exaggerated—

I mean, in the end, like the last show they do, where they have the big... emu heads, or whatever...

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** ... on their head— You know what I mean? Like, that's not just femininity, right? Like, we are not just being super fem. Because it is not, like, feminine to walk around with a big— Is it an emu? I don't know what it is. [chuckles]

**Taylor:** I think it is an emu.

**Sydnee:** A big emu head, right?

**Taylor:** Ostrich, emu? I don't know.

**Sydnee:** Ostrich, something— I don't know. But this is something else, right? It's something beyond that. So I think you're right, it's not just about being *super woman*. It's something else.

**Taylor:** I think it's being beyond human, to a certain degree, you know? It's rising yourself up as sort of a momentary, mortal God of this particular song, this particular night.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** That's the freedom, and I think it offers those things. I participate in the art form.

**Sydnee:** Well, and there are some really— And I don't know— I mean, as I was watching, I was wondering how much of this is intentional, or is it just me reading it into the movie, but like... There are some messages.

When they are stuck in the desert, they don't just— Yes, Bernadette does go looking for help. But also, while they're out in the desert, they build a kite out of a blowup doll, they practice their drag routines, he paints the bus pink. Like, they kind of embrace that, "In this moment, I cannot do the thing I want to do," which is, you know, keep moving, get the bus moving.

**Taylor:** [chuckles]

**Sydney:** "So I will engage in other things that will be productive, or bring me joy, or make me happy, or make my world a little more beautiful, because it is what I can do right now. Even if I can't—" There's something very zen... [chuckles] about some of these scenes, where it's like, "You are stuck in the Australian Outback, I assume," and they're just sort of, like... painting the bus and dancing. And I don't know, there's something kind of... There's a philosophical lesson underneath that.

**Taylor:** Well, and I think it also ties into, sort of, queer resistance. You know, when your whole life has been a series of letdowns, and nos, and rejections, and... I think you do get to a place where it's like, "This is just the road. And I can stand still, or I can walk it. And rarely, things are gonna go my way, but that's assuming there's a 'my way' at all. There's just *the* way. There's just the way that events roll out, and I can do my best with each given situation, and that's all I can do."

And I think that there's a— You meet elder queers that have that. Almost like— You know, there's a weird cross-section. It almost circles back to, for the people that were shoved out of religion, it almost becomes religious. Where it's just like, "I have been on the path of being myself. And this is where I'm at. And anything that happens, I'm gonna roll with."

**Sydney:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** And it's really beautiful when you meet people that have that. And I think that these characters all— But you understand why they're there, for their own reasons. You know?

**Sydney:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** And there's even—

**Sydnee:** No, I—

**Taylor:** Oh, go ahead.

**Sydnee:** Oh. I was just gonna say, I think that's very true.

**Taylor:** Well, and during that time, I really like the clip of the younger one, Felicia, right?

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** They have that flashback to her childhood, where you think it's gonna be like, "Why are you like this? Oh, you were molested."

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** But it's played as, like, a laugh. Like, "No, you specifically were."  
[chuckles] Like...

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** "You had, like, a creepy uncle, and you... you took care of him."

**Sydnee:** Yeah!

**Taylor:** "And made sure he couldn't bother you. You're just gay, and that's fine."

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** Like, I thought that was a really good— Again, it felt very progressive. Like, I really thought that's exactly how that scene was gonna play out. Like, "Oh, of course. Yeah. Oh, he's gay, so of course it must be because of this." Oh, no.  
[chuckles] Thank you, movie.

**Sydnee:** No. Well, and the relationship between... well, Hugo Weaving's character.



**Taylor:** Uh, Tick or—

**Sydnee:** And his wife. Tick! Tick. The relationship between Tick and his wife, that they had a lavender marriage. I mean, they don't tell you the whole backstory, but you kind of guess. Either they knew, or they didn't know. Either it was intentional, or they figured out pretty quickly, like, "We are not... This is not what we want. [chuckles] "But we do love our kid."

And she raises the kid for a while. Now, he's gonna raise the kid. And that scene where he's trying to dress, like, all butch, so that his kid loves him...

**Taylor:** Yeah. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** And they're out, whatever. They're out in the desert, on the picnic. And as I was watching that scene, I found myself thinking, like, "Your son just wants you to be you."

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** "He just wants you to be you." Like, that's what he is craving, is "Who is my dad? I want to meet my dad— I want to *know* my dad. I want to know who he is. I want to get to know my father, the real person, not this fake thing." And he figures it out, but they never say it, but it's just so obvious. Like, that's what your kid wants from you. "Be real, be authentic, be yourself with me. Don't hide," which is also a really beautiful parenting lesson. That is what your kids want from you. Just be yourself with them, so that they can get to know *you*. But he figures it out pretty quickly, which is nice, too. We don't have to... [chuckles] We don't have to worry. Like, he takes his kid back to Sydney, and performs ABBA for him.

**Taylor:** Right. And even that, that interaction between the kid when Felicia's sitting with them. And Felicia's like, "Do you know what your dad does?" And the kid's just like, "Yeah! He's the best in the business." And you can see, like, it's a healing moment for Felicia's character.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** Where it's like, "Oh." Like, you know...

**Sydnee:** "This can happen."

**Taylor:** Yeah. People can accept each other.

**Sydnee:** They also have the great flashback with Bernadette, where— Was it Bob? Asks, you know, "Why did you—"

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Kind of a "Why did you choose this?" kind of, like, "Why?"

**Taylor:** Uh-huh.

**Sydnee:** And she flashes back to Christmas, when she would switch the...  
[chuckles]

**Taylor:** Yeah. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** ... Christmas present, so she'd get the doll. Just highlighting, like, 'cause that's who she's always been! That's just who she's always been. And, you know, why are any of us who we are? I don't know, we just are.

**Taylor:** I do love the character of Bob, the supportive mechanic that just is completely unbothered by everything. I think it's worth noting that his wife— Cynthia, I believe is her name?

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** Is an unfortunate stereotype. Um...

**Sydnee:** Yes. Yes.

**Taylor:** That was something that did not age well about the movie.

**Sydnee:** No. I agree. That was one part, as I was watching, I was like, "Oh. I don't remember—" I remembered that the ping-pong ball thing happened.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** But I didn't remember the other details about that character. And that is unfortunate, that is very stereotypical. And especially in light of the fact that Bob is such a nuanced character, and such a good representation. And then, you know, Cynthia is portrayed that way.

I thought it was interesting, Bob makes the comment that he's traveled the world so much. He's been all over the world, he's been all over the world. Which I feel like is important to understanding who he is.

**Taylor:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** He's been everywhere. He's seen everything. Travel like that makes you more accepting of differences. Makes you more... And not just tolerant. Accepting. People are lots of ways, and none of them are inherently good or bad.

**Taylor:** Well, most hate is really just fear masquerading.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** And fear is usually just around the things that you don't understand. And in this day and age, people have taken advantage of that lack of understanding to make you afraid of those things. And once you just see people living their lives, and doing their things, like, "Oh. Pretty much everywhere you go, people are just like me."

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** And it's— I don't know, I think we suffer from that, for as much as this is a country that— I mean, I get it, America's massive. But we travel the least [chuckles] of, like, any country. And I think we pay for that.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm. No, I think that's true. 'Cause I think just that perspective— And it's not about knowing a bunch of different languages, or liking a lot of foods, or anything like that.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** It's just meeting people who live life differently, and understanding that there are lots of ways to be human.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. I found it all very heartwarming, though, at the end. I found the ending with Bernadette choosing to stay there where Bob is, like maybe giving love another chance, like really being loved— 'Cause she kind of indicates that, maybe, her first marriage wasn't as filled with love as she would've liked.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** And so giving love another chance, and Tick getting to be with his son, and the relationship between Felicia and his son... It was the kind of happy, hopeful ending that you do not see gay characters get very often. Especially back then.

**Taylor:** No. I mean, I feel like it was an unstated code in the '90s – and maybe this is the difference, because this is not an American production, but – you gotta make the gay characters suffer for being gay.

**Sydnee:** Yes.

**Taylor:** There has to be a subtext of, "Life will be hard if you're gay." And this definitely has that in it, but not to the degree. It still, I think, establishes that most people are good. Occasionally, you're gonna run across a town of... [laughs] of losers!

**Sydnee:** Right.

**Taylor:** You wanna be safe.

**Sydnee:** But yeah. No, I mean, I think it's true. Because, well, it also— I think there was a long time where there was this sort of underlying theme of, like, "If you're queer, your life inherently has a sadness to it."

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** "Because you will face discrimination, and you might suffer for who you are," and all that kind of stuff. And I think that flipping that around to say, like, "These are characters who feel joy in who they are. They are not sad about being

who they are. They are joyful in their truth, and they express that openly and loudly, for other people to see and hear. And if other people have a problem with it, they're sad. Their life is sad, their life is less than."  
But our three main characters, their life is full of joy.

**Taylor:** Yeah. And I do think—

**Sydney:** I mean, I—

**Taylor:** Oh, go ahead.

**Sydney:** Oh, that's just a good flip on it.

**Taylor:** Oh, absolutely. One, I think that's what, really, for all the discourse about what drag should or shouldn't be, I think that's really drag at its purest, is a heightened form of joy. It's joy to the 10th degree. That video you sent me of Charlie dancing, it's like, that's what it is!

It's like, I am a very reserved... fairly insecure— I'm working on that! But a kind of quiet person. And then when I get to go up on stage, and just like... I don't think I'm fully in my body anymore. Because *I* am dancing, and...

**Sydney:** Mm-hmm!

**Taylor:** You know, that's not something I get to experience very often. That's not something— I feel like I get to take up space, in that way. And you cover yourself in enough rhinestones, and you convince people that you're something that they should look at. And then they do, and then you dance! And it's really beautiful.

**Sydney:** That is beautiful.

Well, Tey, thank you for watching *Priscilla— The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*.

**Taylor:** [chuckles] Thank you.

**Sydney:** It *is* a musical! That is why...

**Taylor:** Oh! Oh, okay!

**Sydney:** And that might be the confusion. They did make a musical out of it in

the early 2000s, and the musical is just called *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*. So I wonder if that's the...

**Taylor:** Well, I wanna see that.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. I wanna see that too. We can do that here, I don't know.

**Taylor:** Yeah, I was gonna say, that sounds like a— When did— Early 2000s? I can't believe I missed that.

**Sydnee:** 2006...? Is that what I saw? Yeah, 2006. It's a jukebox musical, and I assume it's based on that.

**Taylor:** A lotta ABBA? Well, I don't know. ABBA has done musicals.

**Sydnee:** I don't know.

**Taylor:** Hard to say.

**Sydnee:** That's true.

**Taylor:** I dunno. I'll have to look it up.

**Sydnee:** "Downtown," "I've Never Been to Me," "What's Love Got to Do With It?" "Don't Leave Me This Way," "Venus," "Go West," "I Say A Little Prayer," "I Love the Nightlife." I don't see any ABBA. "Both Sides, Now," "Colour My World." "I Will Survive," of course. Mm... I don't see any... I bet that they couldn't use ABBA, don't you think?

**Taylor:** [laughs] They don't wanna compete with *Mamma Mia*!

**Sydnee:** Yeah. Yeah, I don't see any.

**Taylor:** I'm sure they found a different band to plug in there for the plot.

**Sydnee:** Yeah, I don't see any ABBA in here. Oh, it looks like there were different songs in the Broadway version? 'Cause it started in Australia. It started in Sydney.

**Teylor:** Yeah. That's awesome.

**Sydnee:** Yes! So there we go. Oh, and the UK had even different songs! Jeez. [chuckles] Everybody did their own thing with this.

**Teylor:** Did they change it— Well, I mean, to be fair, if it's just performing drag numbers, it's not like it's advancing the story. It's just...

**Sydnee:** Yeah, that's true.

**Teylor:** I feel like you could change that on a nightly basis, and just surprise the audience.

**Sydnee:** That would be fun.

Well, Tey, I know that technically our next episode won't come out during pride month, but we started, like, a week late, so...

**Teylor:** We did. We talked about *Minecraft*... [chuckles] which—

**Sydnee:** So I say, for 4th of July weekend, we continue with our pride theme.

**Teylor:** One more. 'Cause what else are we gonna do?

Well, and I think it almost works as a companion piece to *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*...

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Teylor:** ... which is *To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything! Julie Newmar*.

**Sydnee:** Yes, I—

**Teylor:** Which came out a year later.

**Sydnee:** Very similar. Came out a year later. I think it'll be fun to kind of compare and contrast.

**Teylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** It's got, also, some big-name actors.

**Taylor:** Big-name actors, another drag road trip movie. Wild that it happened twice.

**Sydnee:** Yep. Must [crosstalk].

**Taylor:** Or should it happen more often? I don't know. Maybe fall off there. Why don't we have more drag road trip movies?

**Sydnee:** Well, and it's an American movie, right?

**Taylor:** Yes.

**Sydnee:** So I think it will be interesting to see— 'Cause I don't know that I've ever actually seen *To Wong Foo*. So... I'm excited to watch it, and see the contrast or representations. 'Cause I think, as we've kind of highlighted, the drag in this movie, these characters specifically being drag queens, and then Bernadette being a trans woman who's also a drag queen, it was not played for laughs.

Yes, sometimes they're funny. Yes, sometimes they're in funny situations. But the concept of being who they are was not a punchline, and I think that was really key to the movie being good.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Alright. Well, we will watch that for next time. Thank you again, Tey.

**Taylor:** Thank you.

**Sydnee:** Thank you, listeners. If you haven't seen *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*, you would really enjoy it. It's really great.

Thank you to Max Fun. You should go to [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and check out all the great shows there that you would enjoy. You can email us at [stillbuffering@maximumfun.org](mailto:stillbuffering@maximumfun.org). And 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.

[theme song plays in background]

**Sydnee:** I'm Sydnee McElroy.

**Taylor:** And I'm Taylor Smirl.

**Sydnee:** I'm still buffering.

**Taylor:** And I am, too.

**Sydnee:** I used to perform that one song karaoke all the time. The... [singing]

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** And I had no context for that song.

**Taylor:** Oh, really?

**Sydnee:** Oh, I was like ten.

**Taylor:** That felt...

**Sydnee:** Just, like, singing my heart out to that song.

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