

## Still Buffering 442: To Wong Foo, Thanks For Everything! Julie Lemar

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[theme music, "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:** My... Our— My oldest, Charlie— I'm telling you Taylor like you don't know of our oldest, Charlie. You obviously do.

**Taylor:** I am aware of your spawn.

**Sydnee:** [chuckles] Had a— Had her first slumber party last night.

**Taylor:** First like, at your house? Or she went to it?

**Sydnee:** She attended.

**Taylor:** Okay.

**Sydnee:** But it's also, I will say... Has she ever... ever had kids spend the night here? Outside of family. So this is the first time she's ever spent the night anywhere other than Mom and Dad's. Than here.

**Taylor:** Ah.

**Sydnee:** This is her first sleep away from home.

**Taylor:** Okay. This is when she figures out what kind of sleepover kid she is, 'cause there are different sleepover kids.

**Sydnee:** There are different sleepover kids?

**Taylor:** Well yeah, like you know, are you— 'Cause I— Like we had a lot of sleepovers.

**Sydnee:** Yes.

**Taylor:** And I had a lot of sleepovers. And like are you the kid that like your parents pick you up at nine AM, like, you're out? Or are you kid that's there for like three days, and you just kind like move in? 'Cause sometimes there's like— there's that kid too, you know.

**Sydnee:** I—

**Taylor:** That kid that's still there at dinnertime, like, "What's up? What's for dinner?"

**Sydnee:** [chuckles]

**Taylor:** "Hey y'all, you're my family now." [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** And you're all sitting there like, "Do you...?"

**Taylor:** Yeah, like—

**Sydnee:** "Are your parents worried, or...?"

**Taylor:** Right, like, "It's cool that you're still here, but why are you still here?" [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** Well and now I wonder how this is gonna change. So I've been— I have checked my phone a thousand times because— I mean obviously I have exchanged numbers with— I know the kid whose house she's at, I know the parents and all that.

So we have each other's phone numbers, but also Charlie has her iPad, so she can call on like Kid's Messenger. And so I have been eagerly checking to see if she's reached out, if the mom has reached out. The last I heard, all of the kids were still asleep, so.

**Taylor:** It's still early.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** You know, they were probably up runnin' around 'til five AM.

**Sydnee:** Uh-huh, they were because I had a missed Kid's Messenger FaceTime call at 4:45 in the morning.

**Taylor:** [chuckles] What?

**Sydnee:** I know, It didn't wake me up. [chuckles] At 4:45 in the morning. I will say, Cooper has been calling Charlie on her iPad non-stop since seven AM.

**Taylor:** Cooper wants to be in on the party.

**Sydnee:** She says she— Well, she's claiming she misses her sister, that she desperately misses her sister, she needs to talk to her, she has sent her so many messages and called so many times. [chuckles]

**Taylor:** She just— She wants to be up in that party.

**Sydnee:** She told— She was giving her advice before she went, and she was like, "Now Charlie, the big thing is you can't be the first one to fall asleep."

**Taylor:** That is true.

**Sydnee:** And Charlie said, "Why?" and she said, "Well, 'cause see they'll play pranks on you, like they'll put your hand in warm water to make you pee." [chuckles] "Or they'll put whipped cream on your hand, and then tickle your face with a feather, and then you'll smooch whipped cream on your face," and I'm like, "How do you know these things?" [chuckles]

**Taylor:** That's some YouTube video has fed her that. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** I know, I was like, "You never had a sleepover. How do you know any of this?"

**Taylor:** She—

**Sydnee:** Charlie was like listening very attentively, like, "Okay, okay yes, what else? Give me more information." [chuckles]

**Taylor:** [chuckles] Poor Charlie up at four o'clock in the morning, like, "I have to stay awake. Bad things'll happen, I can't go to sleep."

**Sydnee:** [chuckles] Yeah, I tried to prepare her with like slumber party games. I was like, "Well, you know the stuff that people do at a slumber party, right?" and she was like, "I know," like, what did she say? "Light as a feather, stiff as a rock."

**Taylor:** [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** I'm like, "Well, no."

**Taylor:** Close.

**Sydnee:** Almost.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Almost. And I said, "Then of course, you know, you make prank phone calls," but I don't know, how do you do that now?

**Taylor:** Was she trying to prank phone call you? Do you think that's what was going on at four o'clock in the morning?

**Sydnee:** Maybe, but like because it's on Kid's Messenger, and also her account's like attached to mine, so.

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Like I knew it was her. I asked—

**Taylor:** That's the best they can do.

**Sydnee:** Well, and apparently there is a way to like hide your caller ID, so you could— you can do prank phone calls.

**Taylor:** Mm.

**Sydnee:** I don't know how. But the kids did.

**Taylor:** There used to be a number you could dial before you dialed the number that hid your number. That's old school, right?

**Sydnee:** Yeah, but yeah that's on like a landline, right?

**Taylor:** That's true, and nobody has those anymore.

**Sydnee:** No, I know there was a way to do that... but it wasn't... There's the \*69 was how you would call somebody back, right?

**Taylor:** Yeah, that was call— But there was like a different star, like \*67 you put in before?

**Sydnee:** I wanna say that's right, \*67.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** And then it hides your caller ID, and then after— Yeah, that used to— For all the kids out there, when you— [chuckles]

**Taylor:** [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** When somebody called and you— if you missed a call and you just wanted to call back whoever it was, you don't have their number, you could just pick up your phone and hit the \*, then 6 and 9, and it would call back whatever number had called you last. Isn't that weird?

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** That's a weird thing. I recommended to her that she call the local radio station and dedicate a song to her crush.

**Taylor:** Oh, I don't think that happens anymore, right?

**Sydnee:** No, I don't think any of that— [chuckles]

**Taylor:** Not—

**Sydnee:** None of that made any sense.

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** She looked at me like I was an alien.

**Taylor:** None of those words are in the Bible.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. [laughs] She was like, "What? What?" Like no.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Won't do that. So I don't know, I'm eager to find out what was the slumber party experience like. I don't— The biggest advice I had was this, it was all girls, of course, and just a small group, like five or six girls, so not a big giant group.

But I said, "Here's the rule. Don't talk about anyone." [chuckles] "If someone starts talking about someone, do not comment, do not affirm, do not contradict, go silent. Be neutral."

**Taylor:** I mean solid advice that is not gonna... be very helpful in the world of girl, I feel like.

**Sydnee:** Well it—

**Taylor:** Like that's how you bond as a young woman, you— I talk about someone and you go "Oh right," and then you talk about them too. And then we've made a subconscious connection of like, "We're friends now."

**Sydnee:** But you don't know— The problem is when you're young, you don't know who you can be catty with safely yet, right.

**Taylor:** Mm.

**Sydnee:** Like I know now the people that I can sit down next to and be like, "Can I be mean for a second?" and they're like, "Yes please."

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** And we can be mean together. And like I know that they're not gonna go run and tell the person we're talking about like, "You will not believe what Sydnee just said."

**Taylor:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** But when you're 10 you don't know that yet.

**Taylor:** Yeah. But you do figure it out the hard way. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Yeah. Yeah, well that's what I was trying to avoid. I was like, "Now [chuckles] it doesn't matter because as much as the other girls may have said it too, or may have said it first, or may have been the only ones to say anything, if you sign on, it could get pinned on you later."

**Taylor:** That— That was one element of girlhood that I never got and I was bad at, and you know me, I don't think it's even like a gender thing. I don't know, could be like a slightly outside of like not being exactly neurotypical.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** But like if somebody's talking about someone, it's like, "I'm gonna go tell that person what you said, 'cause it's important that the—" Like if you're talkin' about it, you want someone to know that, right? Like...

**Sydnee:** No.

**Taylor:** I should tell that person that thing.

**Sydnee:** [chuckles] No!

**Taylor:** We should all be open and honest and all know how we feel about each other, and then we can move forward. And then we can stop talking about this and we can talk about interesting things, 'cause I don't wanna talk about this. And that's not how— that's not what people want you to do. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** No.

**Taylor:** You will want someone to mediate the truth, they just wanna talk. I've learned it as an adult. Took a while though.

**Sydnee:** We're social animals, we're interested in one another and like to try to talk about and dissect and figure out each other. That's normal.

**Taylor:** Yeah, it's— sure.

**Sydnee:** [chuckles]

**Taylor:** Alright. I don't know, I don't exist in those realms anymore, it's fine. They can exist as they do. [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** You're right, 'cause definitely there's no gossip or cattiness in queer spaces.

**Taylor:** Oh, yeah.

**Sydnee:** Definitely never. [laughs]

**Taylor:** It, you know, it's funny though.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Taylor:** Absolutely. But it's— I think I appreciate how openly mean it is, I think that's it is— Like I have mean thoughts sometimes and I wanna say something mean to somebody, and I like I think that's why I like drag spaces, 'cause you just say the awful thing you're thinking.

And everybody is— [laughs] Everybody— But you know, you look at the person, you're like, "Ah, you look like hot garbage today," they're like, "Yeah, I was going for that, thanks. Like it's fine." Like [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** [chuckles] "I was going for that?"

**Taylor:** Sometimes. I certainly have. I don't know, I think there's a real earnestness in queer meanness, where it's just like not always, there are absolutely some, you know, jerks out there.

**Sydnee:** Well—

**Taylor:** But it's just a refreshing honesty and just like, "I need to tell you that you're kind of a mess today. Can I tell you that?"  
"Yeah, I think you should. I need to hear that." [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** Well, and I think— I wonder if that sort of like... It's in a way, you only dish it out if you're also willing to take it. And that kind of like, "I'm gonna take away your ammunition first."

**Taylor:** Mm.

**Sydnee:** That's a very useful tool if you are part of a, you know, a societal group that has been marginalized or oppressed or alienated. That ability to like... "We're gonna say mean things to each other before you can say them."

**Taylor:** Oh absolutely.

**Sydnee:** "And then what?" you know what I mean?

**Taylor:** Well and I think that's true too, like just the like defense mechanisms you build up. Like to be so aware and almost over-prepared to like defend yourself, to like talk back to people.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** Like if you grew up like you said sort of ostracized or othered, you develop those mechanisms. And then when you're surrounded by people like you, there's this weird natural way, I mean just in the same way that, you know, you were saying you connect with people as social creatures, you connect in this way of like you kind of— you kinda give each other crap back and forth.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** Because this is how you learned to interact with each other, but it's also again like the— a subconscious establishment of like, you know, we're all— this is all out of love.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** Like, "This is how I learned to communicate with the world, with my dukes up, but we can play fight, 'cause that's..."

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** No one's gonna get offended, no one's gonna say like, "Oh, too far, too far," like you're safe here, you can be yourself.

**Sydnee:** Yeah, that makes sense.

**Taylor:** Even if yourself is nasty and mean. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** [chuckles] And then that's even more fun.

**Taylor:** And absolutely. I had to like tell me friends, like I— Like especially when I'm in drag, like, "You can be mean to be, it's fine, like I don't— I— I know the parameters of this." [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Although I also feel like, and I don't know what this would say about us culturally, but I feel like there was an element of that... Like if I think about Maw Maw, our grandma.

**Taylor:** [laughs] Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Like Maw Maw told us exactly what she thought.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** And like if one of us looked bad, she'd be like, "Well you look like Death suckin' on a cracker today."

**Taylor:** [laughs] The infamous—

**Sydnee:** Like— [chuckles]

**Taylor:** The infamous "Death suckin' on a cracker."

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Taylor:** The indecipherable, but nonetheless devastating read. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** And like I, you know. [chuckles] Okay.

**Taylor:** I give you—

**Sydnee:** I mean like well it would let you know—

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** — like she wouldn't let you leave the house that way, yeah.

**Taylor:** "Your eyes look like two blank holes in a blanket."

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** There was also the famous... and this only really plays in this area, "Guy and Dot Suzie."

**Taylor:** [wheezes]

**Sydnee:** Which if you're not from Huntington, or the surrounding area—

**Taylor:** Yeah that's a deep pull.

**Sydnee:** — you have no idea— you have no reference.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** [chuckles] But you get where I'm— you— I mean you get it.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** You get it.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** You have your own neighborhood corollary to this, I'm sure.

**Taylor:** Which is— I think it's especially wild in a place [chuckles] like Huntington to be like, "Oh, but you're not from Guy and Dot."

**Sydnee:** [chuckles] That's all— Like that's all Appalachia's about though. "Well, at least I'm not from 'name the town next door that's exactly the same in every way." [chuckles]

**Taylor:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Sydnee:** Well, and then, but here's the thing, all of us in West Virginia would say the same thing, "I mean at least we're not from Ohio though."

**Taylor:** Well, and I would stand by that actually, that's different.  
[chuckles]

**Sydnee:** Sorry, Ohio. I— You— Listen, I don't— I'm not gonna hate on Ohio, you have lots of wonderful things. You have Cincinnati, and you have Columbus. Those are the two things that I know the most about.  
[chuckles] 'Cause that's where we went for concerts and CoSci. I don't know much about the rest of Ohio, except the part that's immediately adjacent to Huntington. [chuckles]

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Sorry, but you also— I mean like you gave— You also gave us JD Vance, so like... you take the good, you take the bad.

**Taylor:** Yeah, I think you've got some making up to do for that one, honestly. All of the, what was it, the Hillbilly Elegy? Anybody that was subjected to that I think has to...

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** Ohio [chuckles] owes an apology.

**Sydnee:** [chuckles]

**Taylor:** To all of Appalachia. [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** Yeah, it's— it— It's not all your— all of your faults though, Ohio.

**Taylor:** No.

**Sydnee:** We here in West Virginia maybe have a thing or two we could answer for. Maybe.

**Taylor:** Not up here in New York, baybee, we're doing alright. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Oh yeah! Every— Yeah. [scoffs] New York has always been doin' great.

**Taylor:** We're doin' great.

**Sydnee:** Uh-huh.

**Taylor:** We've got a—

**Sydnee:** You've had to problematic leaders ever.

**Taylor:** Hey, we're about to elect a socialist. Yeeeeeeah. [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** Yeah, remember when America's Mayor was Rudy Giuliani?

**Taylor:** Yeeeeeeah. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Taylor:** I dooooo. [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** Our point is none of us are ever getting it right all of the time, right?

**Taylor:** No, no well any time you're lookin' at the top, like the top always is garbage. It's always some horrible person. Most people are good, most leaders are bad.

**Sydnee:** I think that's fair. I— We always joked in West Virginia about how people from Ohio are bad drivers, and I learned recently that West Virginia drivers are some of the best in the country.

**Taylor:** Really?

**Sydnee:** Like statistically, West Virginia drivers are rated really highly, and it made me wonder if we were hatin' on Ohio unfairly all these years. It's not that they're bad drivers, we're just really great drivers.

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** And so— And they're the state that's closest to— like especially here in Huntington. So like it's not fair, everyone by comparison is gonna

look like a bad driver, they're just the ones that we compare the most 'cause they're right there.

**Taylor:** Do you think that West Virginians are— I think that I'm curious what could lead to that statistic. Is it that... the roads are just so windy and rough that like you learn to drive better?

**Sydney:** I think you have to. I think you have— to survive. I mean, I was thinking about that when I was young, at one point, when I lived up near the museum.

**Taylor:** Oh yeah.

**Sydney:** Which means nothing if you don't live here. I live— We lived up on a hill, and there was a back way down from our house, which was one of those West Virginia one and a half lane roads.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydney:** It's not really two lanes, so if a car is comin' at you, there's— there were definitely spaces along that road where two cars could not pass each other.

**Taylor:** Mm.

**Sydney:** Right? And so at one point, I had to back my way down... this hill. And there's no guardrails or anything, like you could back right off the side of it. Like this curvy, windy, blind curves, going backwards, so that the car that was coming down towards me could get— like I could get to a wide enough spot in the road that they could pass me. And then I could go back up.

**Taylor:** That's terrifying.

**Sydney:** But like if you— I mean like if you have to learn how to drive like that, I guess you get pretty good at it. [chuckles]

**Taylor:** Yeah. Well, I mean... there's— there's a long history of good, clever driving in the Appalachias. That's— I mean I don't know, if you wanna do a weird— I won't go into it at all because this is not what this podcast is about.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** But like if you go into the history of NASCAR and how it's tied to moonshining.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** And like all the old moonshiners that would like carve out their cars to be the lightest, most maneuverable cars possible, so they could just outrun cops. Like do little maneuvers to like leave cops in a blind alley and like get out of there like a cartoon character.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** That's Appalachia, that's West Virginia, that's where that started, so hey. [chuckles] That factors in.

**Sydnee:** And people are still doing weird stuff to their cars here all the time.

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Like just drive around here for a while.

**Taylor:** Yeah, yeah.

**Sydnee:** [chuckles] There's— Yeah, there's still that weird stuff, and... I— There's a really fascinating video about the history of the turnpike [chuckles] in West Virginia, if you're ever interested.

**Taylor:** Oh. [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** Yeah. Anyway. [chuckles]

**Taylor:** All sorts of deep dives.

**Sydnee:** Very normal stuff for us to be into here.

**Taylor:** There's nothing normal going on in West Virginia. I haven't— I haven't lived there in 21 years, and I can say that with confidence, and I bet I'm right. [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** Mm. Yeah.

**Taylor:** [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** No, I mean... I mean I love this state and I won't ever leave it, but... it is weird.

**Taylor:** I didn't say, "bad," I just said, "nothing normal." [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** No. It's weird here.

**Taylor:** [through laughter] It is.

**Sydnee:** [chuckles] It's weird here, but you can hide.

**Taylor:** That's... That's... These days, that's a selling point.

**Sydnee:** I know! Well I've been thinking about that. Like it's weird here, but you can hide. That should be our new state motto. It used to—

**Taylor:** [through laughter] "It's weird here, but you can hide?"

**Sydnee:** "It's weird here, but you can hide." It was "Wild and wonderful," and then for a while, remember they made it "Open for business."

**Taylor:** Oh, I don't like that.

**Sydnee:** "West Virginia, open for business." It's like, "No it's not. Don't say that."

**Taylor:** "Wild and wonderful" was always so much better.

**Sydnee:** Yeah, well they— and then they went back to, "Wild and wonderful," and I think we should change it to "It's weird here, but you can hide." [chuckles]

**Taylor:** Or, "Wild and wonderful, and easy to hide." [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** "And easy to hide."

**Taylor:** I saw like a ranking list of like the states that would be, in like an apocalypse situation, where's the best place you could be to like defend yourself from any sort of, I don't know—

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** — zombie threat, and evil people post-meltdown threat. And I— West Virginia was ranked number two and I was angry that it wasn't number one, 'cause they argued that Virginia would beat it out because it'd have a bigger military presence. Like that'll— One, I don't think that'll help you in that situation.

**Sydnee:** No.

**Taylor:** But also I was offended on behalf of West Virginia, like West Virginia should be one. [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** You can bury yourself in a holler and survive in perpetuity.

**Sydnee:** Well and—

**Taylor:** And there will be people there that have been doing it for decades. [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** I don't trust any list that puts Virginia above us, because if we would all like to take a step back into history and look...

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Why do we exist, Virginia? And who was on the right side of that war?

**Taylor:** Yeah, I don't think you wanna talk about that, Virginia.

**Sydnee:** Yeah, Virginia. [chuckles]

**Taylor:** I get— That's— It amazes me, and I guess it's only gonna get worse as our education system continues to erode, how many grown adults I meet that don't know that West Virginia is a state separate from Virginia.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** And I have to say, "No, there was a whole war [chuckles] that you should know about, and why we exist. Do you know why we exist?" and they're like, "Well maybe, no I don't know why you exist, I don't know." I'm like, "Okay. Alright." [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm. Look how weirdly we're shaped. Do you wanna know what that's all about?

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** [chuckles]

**Taylor:** Carved ourself out.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. Mm-hmm. Got out.

**Taylor:** Wow.

**Sydnee:** Yeah, I still— I was on a trip to Virginia visiting once, and somebody was like, "Where are y'all from?"

**Taylor:** [coughs]

**Sydnee:** And I was like, "We're from West Virginia," and they said, "[sighs dramatically] Welcome back to the old Virginia," and it was like—

**Taylor:** [laughs] I think I was with you on that trip.

**Sydnee:** Yeah!

**Taylor:** That's a— Yeah.

**Sydnee:** And it was like, "I'm not— I wasn't here initially," like.

**Taylor:** [laughs] No, I don't want any part of that.

**Sydnee:** Mm-mm. "Welcome back."  
"No."

**Taylor:** "The old dominion."

**Sydnee:** "The old dominion."

**Taylor:** The people that—

**Sydnee:** "I'm from West Virginia."  
"Is that near Richmond?"  
"Nope."

**Taylor:** That's always the question.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Well anyway. [chuckles]

**Taylor:** Yeah, well.

**Sydnee:** Speaking of rural towns.

**Taylor:** Well I was gonna say, West Virginia was mentioned in the movie that we're gonna talk about today, which is of course *To Wong Foo, Thanks For Everything! Love Julie Nemat*.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** I got that right?

**Sydnee:** You got it right, yeah.

**Taylor:** I've always just called it *To Wong Foo*, and like having to say the rest of it. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** I— Can I just say— Okay first of all, I think that it's criminal that this movie has 48% on Rotten Tomatoes.

**Taylor:** [aghast] What?! What?!

**Sydnee:** Yeah. Yeah. I know, I was shocked.

**Taylor:** It's a— such a good movie.

**Sydnee:** It's a— It— I think it's a great movie, and I— Similarly to *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*, how in— This was in '95, so in 1994 *Priscilla* comes out, '95 this comes out. How in the mid '90s did we get these lovely little quirky stories about drag queens and trans women, and the gay community in general that are over— I mean overall positive.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** And happy. And accepting.

**Taylor:** I mean... I think it is a great danger to assume that progress is always happening and it's always moving forward. I think history tells us time and time again that that's not the case.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** And this is a good example of that. That like you had this very— I don't think either of those movies you mentioned, *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* or this one, could come out today without massive backlash, and that's really—

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** It's really sad. [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** I think you're absolutely right, and I think, you know, do they handle everything as deftly as, you know, certainly you could today?

No, I mean I think it was interesting, as I was watching, we noticed that in *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*, I feel like they made a pretty clear delineation between the two who were drag queens, and then Bernadette who was a trans woman and also a drag queen.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** In this movie, I never really knew... I don't feel like it was clearly defined. You know what I mean?

**Taylor:** The—

**Sydnee:** 'Cause they were always presenting as women.

**Taylor:** Well and that's something where I wonder if it's just the time period specifically in America, where I don't— Like these characters behave... as if they are trans woman. 'Cause like drag—

**Sydnee:** Yes.

**Taylor:** — drag queens don't walk around in drag all the time, like you...

**Sydnee:** Right.

**Taylor:** You get in drag for a show, you're a, you know, whatever your gender is outside of that. But these characters are very much trans women coded, and I wonder if that is more the intent of the movie, but it just— at that time period, that's a whole other conversation. You know, and they even have that—

**Sydnee:** Well, you know—

**Taylor:** — that breakdown at the beginning where they're talking about like what is a drag queen versus a transsexual, versus you know—

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** — they're using kind of outdated language, but they do separate the characters from the concept of being trans. But they behave in a way that is not what drag queens do.

**Sydnee:** Well, I mean that's exactly— Yeah, I can— That's— Pretty quickly I was like, "Why are they still in drag? Oh, well are they trans? I don't know." And I feel like especially Patrick Swayze's character, we're

really supposed to— I mean that whole exchange with Stalker Channing about being a friend— being a lady friend with an Adam's apple.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** I— Like that feels like she's saying "I know you're trans and I'm okay with it." It doesn't— You know? That's not something you would say to a drag queen.

**Taylor:** Well, you know, and that's— After— Watching this after *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* was really interesting because we talked about how kind of wholesome *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* was.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** And the overlap of America on this movie does make— It's kinda sad to see. Like you know, like one, it makes sense that "Yeah you can't openly engage the time period with trans characters, so we're just going to like have them behave as a trans woman would, but call them drag queens."

But even just like all of the... Like the drama around it, like the awful cop character, who's sort of treated as like a goofy like— I haven't seen this movie so I was like I wanted him to just be dead. [chuckles] He wasn't— The fact that he wasn't just dead upset me, I was like, "Oh right, he lives."

**Sydnee:** I know. I know.

**Taylor:** I would've loved if they had just murdered a cop and moved on about it, like great. [chuckles] Love that.

**Sydnee:** That was— I was kinda— I— Yeah. And they do— they— I mean he— What's his name, Dullard?

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Like right on the nose, and then they... They also sort of play with the idea that he might be closeted.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** You know?

**Taylor:** Yeah, when he's at the bar, reminiscing about men, being with men. [chuckles] Like.

**Sydnee:** Which I mean, you know, that— these aren't all necessarily helpful tropes.

**Taylor:** I don't... I agree. I do think that there is like it's such a common one, and it's something we see like so often, "Oh it's— they're somehow in the closet." And I'm a big, big fan of the belief of like you know what? Probably in some way you are. Probably if seeing people be open and free makes you angry, you're in some closet. I don't know what it is, it could be a million things.

**Sydnee:** Right.

**Taylor:** But there's something about you that you're suppressing. But way, way, way more importantly is that's not my problem. You're still... a bad dude.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

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

**Sydnee:** That's right.

**Taylor:** I don't care what you're suppressing. Like I'm not afraid of the idea that a bunch of people that hate us are us. I'm not afraid of this idea, it doesn't offend me, 'cause at the end of the day they're wimps that are still stuck in a closet, so that's your problem, not mine.

**Sydnee:** It's hard 'cause it's just not stuff... We don't... We don't play around... Like we don't joke about some of this stuff anymore, we take it too seriously.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** And so I think sometimes that's hard, like the danger of that police officer, the danger that police officer posed to these, especially if we're seeing them as trans women, we know how real that is.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** And so it's hard in a like today's world to see that as funny. Any sort of like move towards violence, like it— there's the moment where like you're really worried that John Leguizamo's character is like surrounded by a bunch of, you know, angry dudes.

**Taylor:** Oh yeah.

**Sydnee:** And like those scenes, it's not... The gravity of them is much heavier now that it probably came across in 1995, you know what I mean?

**Taylor:** No, it's true.

**Sydnee:** I think the awareness of how real and serious that is is so much more. And it's hard, because then when you throw in there like the cop has a list of places where he might find gay people.

**Taylor:** [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** [chuckles] That's actually kinda funny, like that's a funny joke, like antique stores and flower shops, and what is it? Beauty parlors? I don't remember, but it's just— I think it's funny, it's—

That's not a particularly offensive joke, it's— you know, it's silly, and it's hard to see those things sort of juxtaposed as like, "This is all funny." It's like, "Well, some of it is."

**Taylor:** Well I mean I think... I would take the stance of it's real. And a normal reaction—

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** — is to make jokes of things that are traumatic, things that are painful. Like I think that's... Anyone that's gone through... situations are allowed to make jokes about it. And that's— there's a bit of catharsis

there where it's like, "Yeah, that— this is real world scenarios that people like this face," but like...

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** Look, like they win in the end, so there's that fantasy element.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** Everybody stands up for them, everybody supports them, and the bad people, they're literally named "Dullard." [wheezes] And they lose, you know?

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm. And really like overwhelmingly, 'cause even like the crowd of angry guys, or that earlier on were threatening are like all dressed in red, and fabulous, and part of their team by the end.

**Taylor:** I love this idea that just these like fairy godmothers come into a town and just make it... make people realize that— Which I do firmly believe, I think. You know, the idea that like any place can be beautiful and fabulous and wonderful. Your life can be that. You just need to take yourself off of the self-imposed leash.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** And like let yourself have fun. And that's a really beautiful like— It's not about like, "Oh, this only happens in New York," like specifically having that happen in this rural town. There's lots of movies that do that, right?

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** *Edward Scissorhands* is the same film in a different font, right?

**Sydnee:** Yeah. No, there are lots of movies that do that, and it's hard because like... you don't... I can see where people would take offense at the idea that small towns are always filled with like... I don't know, kind of like dull, ignorant, uncreative, you know what I mean?

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Like that— Like you could easily sort of “Well is that what you’re trying to say?” and I think what we’re really talking about isn’t— It’s not the place or the people, it’s the ability to break out of the system.

**Taylor:** Right.

**Sydnee:** It’s the ability to step out of the way society expects or demands you to be, and... be whatever you want. That’s what they’re talking about, and using small-town America as a vehicle for that is useful, right. Like that’s a helpful, you know, set for that, but it’s not a commentary on small-town America so to speak.

**Taylor:** No. But I think it was very— like the fact that so many of the people who lived there just are their defender, are, you know, stand up. That like, “I’m Spartacus” [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** Like, “I am a drag queen” scene made me cry, ‘cause it was just like, yeah.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** But also it’s true, like we all choose who we wanna be when we walk through the world, we all decorate ourselves, and I think that one of the great joys of being alive is deciding, who are you going to walk through this world as?

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** And taking agency in that, like, “I’m gonna be this. It doesn’t— Nobody needs to show up and tell me I can, I just am, ‘cause—”

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** “— ‘cause one day I’m gonna die, [chuckles] so I’m gonna do this now.” And that was a really like just— the whole town was pretty chill and pretty supportive

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** It was not like you didn't get a lot of those scenes where it's like, "Oh, some, you know, podunk hillbillies don't get things," like that was not... They— Like I feel like for the time period, I expected more of that, and it really wasn't there.

**Sydney:** I think the thing... Like the contrast is that... everywhere that the— that kind of our trio went in *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*, they knew like either, "That is a trans woman," or, "These are drag queens," you know what I mean.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydney:** Like they knew that. Like there was nobody— no one was confused about what was happening. I feel like they played around with that in this movie as if... almost like the idea that everyone in the town just assumed they were women.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydney:** And didn't realize, or something. And... I don't know if that again is just because then it's easier— then it's almost like a joke again, like then it's easier to swallow for an American audience.

**Taylor:** Mm.

**Sydney:** Like, "Oh my gosh, they've got everybody fooled, that's so silly, that's so funny." It's gets like a farce at that point, right? We're getting into the realm of farce. But like that was a little hard for me to— I mean, I mean sure, you know.

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydney:** Like Stalker Channing's the only one? [chuckles] She's the only one that figured it out? You know what I mean?

**Taylor:** Well, and I will say, like I think that the main cast, they all make beautiful women, it's hard to— Patrick Swayze is a— is, you know, like I think the most clockable of them, if you will. But...

**Sydney:** [chuckles] Well it is Patrick Swayze.

**Taylor:** It's Patrick Swayze! Like he's like a beefcake.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** Like a beautiful, beautifully made human, but like a beautiful man, it's a very masculine man.

**Sydnee:** Yes, yes.

**Taylor:** Wesley Snipes, oddly enough, the— a beautiful woman.  
[chuckles]

**Sydnee:** Yeah. I mean Jon Leguizamo too.

**Taylor:** Oh yeah. Like that's like... I... Just in terms of the actors in this movie, I have to mention, who pops up again? We were talking about *The Birdcage* and Robin Williams, you know, wow that was a big role for him at the time to like be supportive of something that was so subversive.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** Here he is again! Was he just like, "Hey, I got a name, I'm gonna bring it to little gay films that need some... some push?"

**Sydnee:** You gotta wonder.

**Taylor:** I—

**Sydnee:** You gotta wonder what the— I mean 'cause it was just a cameo.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** And so.

**Taylor:** And such a funny one. [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** Yeah. No, but I mean I wonder if he was just like, "I— This is a community I care about, and so I'm gonna show up any time I can. If you just need me in the movie for five minutes to—"

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** “— put me on the, you know, in the trailers, that’s fine.”

**Taylor:** I’m okay with the myth of Robin Williams to me being this dude just threw his name onto anything that could get a little bit more press and a little bit more showin’ up in the audience for queer films.

**Sydnee:** And I will also say that, I mean we’ve mentioned that she’s in the movie.

**Taylor:** [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** I adore Stalker Channing, I adore her.

**Taylor:** Like what filmography could be better than hers?

**Sydnee:** I— Anything with her in it, I’m gonna give a shot. I mean I just, I love her, I think she elevates everything she’s in, every scene, every interaction. This was— It was also weird to kinda see her in a... in vulnerable role.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** She’s always so strong and tough, I feel like. To see her vulnerable like that and then yeah, she made me cry at the end too.

**Taylor:** Well, I wish we had more [chuckles] wholesome movies about trans women, or drag queens, making their way. We need a new... drag trans road trip film! I— What I’ve learned from this is not that we have too many, it’s not that it’s weird that two exist, it’s that I think this should be— You know this the like the hero’s tale that like we keep retelling? Like Joseph Campbell’s little book about it.

**Sydnee:** Mm.

**Taylor:** Well we need this story. I don’t know what this is, it’s slightly outside of the hero’s journey. Or maybe it kinda aligns with the hero’s journey, weirdly enough. But anyway, we need this to be a repeated point of culture. [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** Well, and it really, you know, it's funny because we just did—we just finished the show *The Prom*.

**Taylor:** Oh yeah.

**Sydnee:** And similarly, you have these four... Broadway actors. Two of whom are gay. Who come to this small-town America to try to like, teach them all a lesson, and now this— that show's more about like everyone learns something.

Like they learn that they were being kind of narcissistic and self-involved, and that you can't come in and call everybody an ignorant moron, and then they listen.

**Taylor:** Right.

**Sydnee:** You know, that's not how you change hearts and minds. And then the people in the small town were like, "Hey, we shouldn't be homophobic jerks." Whatever. Everyone learns, everyone grows. But it's a very similar idea because by the end, we have this big, beautiful, rainbow-drenched prom that everyone attends, and everyone is more beautiful, and everyone is more colorful, and you know?

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** It's a very similar theme, like...

**Taylor:** Well I feel— I mean that's... It's a beautiful concept, that the outsider who's been ostracized can return to society and let you know what you're all missing. That's it succinctly, right?

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** Like, "I'm going back into the places that I was unwelcome, and I'm showing you everything that— It's not about education level or ignorance, it's just like this is what's out there. And it's not scary and it's not bad, it's beautiful actually.

**Sydnee:** It's also a very— It's aspirationally kind, if you think that like people who have been ostracized or alienated or hurt by a place, or by a segment or society, or whatever, want to go back to those spaces with

kindness and openness, and not like to just burn them to the ground, you know what I mean?

**Taylor:** [chuckles] Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Like.

**Taylor:** Well that's like I thought that the end of this one like when Patrick Swayze's character says that like she wants to go to her town, or her family that has clearly rejected her, and she wants to put a drag show.

**Sydnee:** Mm.

**Taylor:** Like that's her goal, it's not "I'm gonna go back to New York City," it's like, "I'm gonna go back to my hometown and put on a drag show. That's what I'm gonna do."

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** That's what she takes away, that's how this changed her. And that's beautiful, it is that. It's like you know, there could be a younger version of her in that same town that she wants to see, that you know wants to see her.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. I think that is a really beautiful message, and I think it's important to kinda remember that. Especially like living where I live right now. [chuckles]

**Taylor:** [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** I mean I think it's a good thing to... There is gonna— As we're recording this, heck I don't know if it's started yet, there's a big vote happening.

**Taylor:** Oh.

**Sydnee:** About the Big Beautiful Bill.

**Taylor:** Oh, that's today? Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Today. Yeah, that's today. And I have seen a lot of sentiment locally that all these people who voted for Trump, who are the ones who were going to lose their healthcare, who are going to, you know, sink maybe deeper into poverty, maybe lose their housing, who are going to suffer because of this.

That like good. Basically the "F around and find out" kinda thing. And that's really hard. Like I don't— I can't feel that way about the people in my community.

**Taylor:** Mm.

**Sydnee:** Because there are a lot of them here who didn't have a voice, who don't have a say, who are so disaffected and disenfranchised, they didn't know an election happened.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** And you know, I don't know. I— And I see that in that same light. Like there are people in those small communities who are stuck and who are silenced, and who can really benefit from, you know, people bringing that kind of color and light and honesty and love.

**Taylor:** I don't— I stand firmly in the idea that like... [sighs heavily] In this world, man it's hard to make like a bold statement that I don't think evil exists, 'cause I don't know, I saw the pictures of Jeff Bezos's wedding [chuckles] and like come on. You're a bad dude who has enough money to save the world and you're not doing it.

But, but I still, I digress, I don't believe in evil. I think people— Bad things happen to people that it almost makes it inescapable to be anything but a bad person, but it's because you were hurt, it's because you were limited, it's because you were closed off and shut down.

And I believe, I mean this goes back to another media that we've talked a lot about, I mean that's why I love *Sailor Moon*. It's the power of love, and that's what happens.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Teylor:** You know, that's what these movies are about too, it's that if people see that they can be themselves, they can be loved, that they can be, you know, open, I think that's how we fix things. We don't fix things by killing our enemy, we fix things by making our enemy our friend.

**Sydnee:** I mean that really is the only path forward, and it requires— Maybe it asks too much of people... who are already suffering, you know what I mean? I understand that, but—

**Teylor:** Well yeah, that's— Well, you know, I know what it's like to be lost in your own pain, and like that is your cross to bear, and that's your— unfortunately that's your— [chuckles] that's your hole to dig yourself out of. And I don't fault anybody that's in one of those holes, 'cause I know what it feels like.

It's a double-edged sword of like I know what that feels like, and you don't have to show up, but also you are the only person that can get out of that. You're the only one that can dig yourself out of that.

**Sydnee:** And if you can, then you have it in you to like then turn around and stick your hand up to help somebody else out of that hole.

**Teylor:** Right. Well and I don't— I mean, I would say the powers that be, that's exactly what they are fighting. They want to make that as hard as possible.

**Sydnee:** Right.

**Teylor:** They wanna make it as hard as possible for you to get out of your hole, and they wanna make it as unwelcome as possible, and sound and feel as insane as possible for you to turn around and talk to somebody else.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Teylor:** But I think it's our base nature as human beings.

**Sydnee:** I think so too. I agree, I don't think most people are bad.

**Teylor:** [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** [chuckles]

**Taylor:** I— Yeah. It's hard to say nobody is, you know, but.

**Sydnee:** Yeah, I think they've just started voting on that Bill while we've been recording.

**Taylor:** It's... There's a lot of scary stuff in that Bill.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. Yip. Well, let's hope it fails.

**Taylor:** Yep.

**Sydnee:** I don't know how Baby Dog is voting, but I bet I do.

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** I have suspicions.

**Taylor:** You know Syd, I know you ran— I know you ran for gov— I just— I don't think you went big enough. I think you should've challenged the governor. Look what Mamdani did.

**Sydnee:** You think I should run for governor?

**Taylor:** I think you should have. I just like— You just needed more eyes on it, honestly. Just go.

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

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** I don't know, although I will always treasure the mailer that they sent out against me—

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** — that was me and Joe Biden, the McElroy-Biden agenda.

**Taylor:** I love that.

**Sydnee:** I think my agenda— Me and Joe Biden's agenda, that we came up with together, apparently.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Was to take everyone's guns and—

**Taylor:** What are you gonna do with all those guns? There's so many.  
[chuckles]

**Sydnee:** Well, I don't know how to use them, so I don't know how to do—

**Taylor:** You're gonna melt them down and cast them into a sculpture of Joe Biden, that was the plan, yeah.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. Of Joe Biden. I was gonna open all the borders, take all the guns.

**Taylor:** The borders of West Virginia. [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** Who's trying to get in? I'm sorry, who's trying to get in?  
[chuckles]

**Sydnee:** [in a heavy Appalachian accent] "I'm`onna trans all the mines."

**Taylor:** Aww, nothing wrong with that. [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** [in a heavy Appalachian accent] "I know they trans in the mines." I am never— That is going to be in my head forever.

**Taylor:** [chuckles] I love that woman, I don't know who she is, but I hope that she always has a cold pillow and a nice drink.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. Yep. Well Tey, what should we talk about next?

**Taylor:** Well, so we were discussing maybe doing a bit of— This was nice, going on this sort of like...

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** Queer 101 filmology, so I feel like we should maybe try it out, and you know, listeners at home, you tell us if you hate it. But [chuckles] doing some little like segments of content, where we stay on the same theme like this.

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

**Taylor:** And one name that came up a bunch as we were talking about this whole group of films was John Waters, remembered we haven't talked about any of his films. Instead of just doing one, like, why don't we talk about a few of them in a row, and just do a little John Waters retrospective. Starting with *Pink Flamingoes*, but then moving from there.

**Sydnee:** Perfect. You know, I've never seen that.

**Taylor:** I can't believe you've never seen that.

**Sydnee:** Good film, I'm excited.

**Taylor:** Our queer— Well, the Pope of Trash, and queer godfather to us all. [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** [chuckles] Justin was very excited, he's watched both these last two movies with me, and he was like, "I hope you and Taylor talk about some more gay movies, I'm really liking these."

**Taylor:** [laughs] Well here we go, we're gonna talk about just a bunch more gay movies.

**Sydnee:** Alright, gay movies.

**Taylor:** Well.

**Sydnee:** And if you have suggestions for us as to like whether it relates to John Waters specifically, or other like blocks of content that we haven't engaged with and we should.

**Taylor:** Right.

**Sydnee:** You can let us know at our email at [stillbuffering@maximumfun.org](mailto:stillbuffering@maximumfun.org), we always welcome suggestions and, you know...

**Taylor:** Absolutely.

**Sydnee:** Other stuff that we should be watching or listening to, or whatever.

**Taylor:** Yeah. Well and especially like I know that there are things that maybe weren't part of our childhood, but were tangential, that might have been massive to you.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** And we'll have to take another look at them.

**Sydnee:** Well thank you so much, Tey. I really— I genuinely like that movie, I hope— We should all watch it and rate it, and drive up the Rotten Tomatoes score.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** We should.

**Taylor:** And what a great double feature to *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*. [chuckles]

**Sydnee:** It really is. It really is. Back-to-back, and very joyful.

**Taylor:** Mm.

**Sydnee:** Well thank you listeners. You should watch *To Wong Foo Et Cetera Et Cetera* if you have not.

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** And you should go to [maximumfun.org](http://maximumfun.org) and listen to a lot of great shows there that you would enjoy. Remember, 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."

[theme music fades in]

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

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

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

**Sydnee:** I am still buffering.

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

[outro theme music plays]

**Sydnee:** Part of me thinks Patrick Swayze is was probably just like a good person.

**Taylor:** This move at that point in time, I would have to assume so.

**Sydnee:** Mm?

**Taylor:** With such earnesty, he's such a beautiful portrayal, and such a sweet woman [chuckles] he made.

**Sydnee:** Like and I think he'd already done— Like this was after— Yeah, this was after *Dirty Dancing* when he, you know.

**Taylor:** Well.

**Sydnee:** He became the hunk of all hunks.

[ukulele chord]

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