

## Still Buffering 445: Serial Mom (1994)

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

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

**Sydnee:** Well, I feel like the internet just keeps giving us gifts lately, Tey.

**Taylor:** Uh, the internet... [laughs] Yeah, always gifts. Also curses. But, uh, what specific bestowment are you thinking of?

**Sydnee:** Well, Tey, as good as the antipasto salad drama was, the Coldplay concert is a far superior...

**Taylor:** Oh, yeah.

**Sydnee:** Oh, just—just, I mean... just so perfect in so many ways.

**Taylor:** It's, uh... it is—the clips of everybody pretending to do the same thing.

**Sydnee:** Yes.

**Taylor:** The new Coldplay cam. Wonderful.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** We can agree on one thing in this country. It's that.

**Sydnee:** This is funny.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** She was head of HR!

**Taylor:** Oh—well... [laughs quietly] she left her work in the office. She did not take her work home with her. Good for her! Queen, honestly.

**Sydnee:** [laughs quietly] He was her boss. She was head of HR. He was married. Was.

**Taylor:** Was.

**Sydnee:** Was. I mean, I can't imagine the legal proceedings have taken place so quickly, but...

**Taylor:** Oof.

**Sydnee:** Just... at a Coldplay concert!

**Taylor:** Would you—would you give it all up for Coldplay? I don't know. [laughs quietly]

**Sydnee:** No! No!

**Taylor:** No. Uh...

**Sydnee:** No, I wouldn't. Not for Coldplay.

**Taylor:** Amazing.

**Sydnee:** Uh, I just—the schadenfreude.

**Taylor:** Well, and as a lot of people have pointed out, if they just acted normal, it never would've gone viral.

**Sydnee:** No.

**Taylor:** Like...

**Sydnee:** No, it was the diving below the wall there. It was the... like, he vanished.

**Taylor:** I didn't even—

**Sydnee:** She turned around and looked embarrassed, but he vanished.

**Taylor:** I—I didn't even know... I mean, to be fair, I have never attended a Coldplay concert. Uh, true fact about me.

**Sydnee:** Nor have I.

**Taylor:** I didn't—the camera to the crowd, that's... that's a horrible thing to do at a concert. I hate—I—like, the baseball games that do that—like, the cams where they, like, "Oh, here's something that you look like."

**Sydnee:** Kiss cam.

**Taylor:** Yeah. I hate those things.

**Sydnee:** Oh yeah. The celebrity lookalike cam and all that.

**Taylor:** I—I assumed that the event happened at some sort of baseball game, and that was the vibe. I can't believe Coldplay has a cam. Like, who came up with that? Like, "You know what pairs well with Coldplay? Audience humiliation."

Well, yeah, actually. I say them together... yeah.

**Sydnee:** And I hate, like—it's really revealing something about all of us, our feelings about Coldplay. 'Cause here's the thing. I'm not gonna argue that they didn't have some songs that, like, when they came on the radio back in the day I would leave on, right? Like, "Okay. That's an okay song."

But it... the leap between, like, "I won't turn your song off" and "I will willingly go to where you will play lots of your songs live... "

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** "And pay money for such event." I... I would never consider it. I would never consider going to a Coldplay concert. If somebody said "I have free tickets to, like, the best seats at a Coldplay concert," I'd say, "Oh, no thanks." I mean, it wouldn't... I wouldn't go.

**Taylor:** I agree. It's like, it's not... again, there are some songs I can think of that, like, I like that song. But it's like, the music that—I could never imagine putting it on. But if it came on in, like, a Walmart around, like, the holiday seasons, I would feel an appropriate amount of feelings in a public place. I feel like that's what it's for. It's for feeling something, but an appropriate amount of something in a contained fashion.

**Sydnee:** But not too much.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Right. It's—yeah, it's a very distill—not distilled, the opposite—diluted. Diluted feelings. Diluted. Like... you know. It's homeopathic medicine. It's homeopathic music. That's where I'm going there. They took, like—like the intensity of music, and then you just keep diluting it in water until you're just sort of...

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** You get the essence of happiness, or sadness, or jealousy, or regret, or whatever the feeling is in the song. You get the essence of it, like the vibration of it, without actually experiencing it.

**Taylor:** Yeah. Like something sort of devised in a lab. Like, "We want to reach a threshold of feeling that comes before action. 'Cause we don't want any action! We just want the threshold of feeling without action." [laughs quietly]

**Sydnee:** But—but then what does it say about a couple that was moved to the point of infidelity by Coldplay music? [laughs]

**Teylor:** I think people are just different. All around the world. Just a beautiful landscape of different kinds of people. And some of them are moved to adultery by Coldplay. And that's... America, baby. [laughs quietly]

**Sydnee:** [laughs quietly] I just can't—I can't. I always said that my problem with Coldplay music is I felt like when it was playing that if you, like, blew on it hard enough it would float away.

**Teylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** And then be gone. Like, it just feels very, like—like there's no meat, like it's very unsubstantial, to me.

**Teylor:** See, now I'm thinking of, like, is that Cold—'cause I agree with that for, like, a lot of it. But then I think of, like, The Scientist. But I don't know if that's actually because of the song, or because it's got that really messed up but, like, in a good way, music video. You know? It's the one where there's, like, the car crash, but it all happens backwards?

**Sydnee:** Oh yeah.

**Teylor:** It's a really cinematic music video. Maybe I just really like that music video. [laughs quietly]

**Sydnee:** This is—man. This is a real advantage that I think musical artists back in our day had. Because music videos were such a thing. Because, like, I mean, now, the idea that you made a video—I mean, I don't know. Like, Jojo Siwa released a video of her doing Bette Davis Eyes on TikTok. Just... apropos of nothing. Just 'cause.

**Teylor:** We're agreeing we're not discussing that, right?

**Sydnee:** Oh, no. No, I can't—I am saying that it happened.

**Teylor:** Okay. It happened. Well, 'cause I think we talked about her enough that I think I have an understanding of—it's just like, poor girl. I hope she gets the help she needs. Let's move on. [laughs quietly]

**Sydnee:** Yeah. But, like, no. I am referencing that she just decided, like, "I should cover this song. I will make a video of me doing it, and here it is."

And so, making a video of you doing a song is such a, like, low—like, the technological bar is so low, and you don't have to have it produced. You can just do it on your own. Now, I mean, a lot of people do produce them still, of course. But it's not the thing it once was.

Having a music video released was a big deal. And sometimes, if it was really well done, you wouldn't notice that the song was not that great.  
[laughs quietly]

**Taylor:** That's true. Well, and it definitely, like—like, it even—even if the song was good, the music video could, like, turn a 10 into an 11.

**Sydnee:** Yes.

**Taylor:** And, I mean, I don't know. Like, you got to know a band in a really unique way with how they chose their music videos. I always think of, like, Foo Fighters as an example of, like, what weird fantasies were they constantly living out in their music videos? I mean, Dave Grohl was almost always in a dress. I don't know what that's about. I support it, sure. But, like, it's a lot—a lot of drag in Foo Fighters music videos, that made you get to know that, like, you know—it could be kind of a serious song, but they were always sort of weird, goofy, like... I don't know. Dreams.

**Sydnee:** Playful.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. No, I think it definitely told you a lot about who the artists were. And then, like, gave the song more meaning. So, sometimes all the sudden you were like, "Oh. Well, I didn't really think much of that, but now that I understand that lyrically they're referencing this, or that it's a metaphor for that, or whatever, like, oh, that's more interesting for me." I don't—I mean, you really could... you really could elevate a song that way. And I just don't know if you can do that.

I'm not—again, I'm not saying that people don't make great music videos now. It's just not as... I don't know. Like, everybody makes a video of everything.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Videos are everywhere! [laughs quietly]

**Taylor:** Well, and I mean, you get the—like, now I think the... the goal is to have your chorus be TikTok. friendly and have, like, a soundbite. You know, you weren't making some operatic, cinematic masterpiece. You're trying to just get something with a hook for 15 seconds.

**Sydnee:** Exactly. And it's hard to compete, too, when, like, you could make an incredibly cinematic, beautiful music video that elevates the song and, like, really captures the imagination. But then, at the same time, at a Coldplay concert, you could accidentally catch two people having an affair on video. [laughs quietly] And that video is gonna do so much better! [laughs]

**Taylor:** That's true.

**Sydnee:** You're never gonna compete! Millions more people are gonna watch that Coldplay video than are ever gonna watch your beautiful, cinematic music video masterpiece, so...

**Taylor:** But, you know, it also—it's true. And now, also, forever, any cheaters that want to cheat live on the Coldplay cam can get away with it, because if you freak out and run away from each other, you're just doing the bit.

**Sydnee:** You're just doing the—ooh, that's true.

**Taylor:** Right?

**Sydnee:** They've opened that door.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** It's just—there—I was thinking about it. Like, there were people that they worked with around them. So they were already, like, affairing in public, right?

**Taylor:** Affairing. [laughs] That's the word for it.

**Sydnee:** Adultering. They were already doing that in public. So, like, probably people at the office knew, right? Like, probably. I mean, or suspected.

**Taylor:** Yeah, but who are they gonna go to? The head of HR? Uh-oh!

**Sydnee:** Right.

**Taylor:** [laughs quietly]

**Sydnee:** So, like, then you have to worry about, like, workplace culture. Like, that feels like not a very, uh—like, kind of a toxic environment. Right? Like, kind of a problem. If you know your CEO and the head of HR are hooking up, and they do it in public at a Coldplay concert with other people that work with you around, it's like, man. I don't know. That's not great.

And then, you know, I don't know. I don't know that America is in love with billionaire CEOs right now anyway.

**Taylor:** Uh, that's an understatement. um...

**Sydnee:** Yes.

**Taylor:** Yeah. Yeah, I don't... I don't think we are either. I think the last time that we had a CEO in the news it was because someone took... [laughs quietly] much more action than a Coldplay concert against them!

**Sydnee:** That's, uh... I mean, but that's the thing. Like, so he—and they both—I mean, I'm not just gonna say him. In the power differential, he's the one in charge. He did this knowing people saw. Not knowing, necessarily, he'd be on camera, but knowing people saw. But he felt like he could do it anyway. That's hubris. This is a tale as old as time. You flew too close to the



sun, the Coldplay sun, and your wings melted. And that's what happened, and the ancient Greeks knew it, and we still know it today, and there's something very comforting to me about, like, that—yeah. it... mm-hmm. There it is. Hubris.

**Taylor:** I agree. I would like a little bit more of that karmic return on billionaires and CEOs. A little bit more. Like, just turn it up a little bit. We can go—we do better than Coldplay concert humiliation, can't we?

**Sydnee:** Well, I mean, I saw somebody made a meme. I am not endorsing this, I just saw it. Again, I'm just referencing that I saw things on the internet. Where they said "Every summer," and they had a picture of, like, the OceanGate, and they had a picture of the orcas, and they had a picture of Luigi.

**Taylor:** Mm. Mm.

**Sydnee:** And then the Coldplay concert.

**Taylor:** Really—

**Sydnee:** Now, granted, this guy just got divorced, so...

**Taylor:** Yeah. He's gonna be fine. You know that man had an ironclad prenup.

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Oh yeah. The wife's—the ex-wife's statement was pretty, uh—pretty... cool, though.

**Taylor:** I did not see. What was cool about it?

**Sydnee:** She basically was like, "Do not cry for me. This is not sad. I am walking away in power. I am being set free. I am not, like—I do not want your pity. I do not want your sympathy. This marriage is over and I am taking what's mine." And, like, and then basically was like "He is so small. At a Coldplay concert."

[both laugh quietly]

**Taylor:** Did she say it that way? "He is so small at a Coldplay concert?"

**Sydnee:** [laughs] Not exactly, but it's all in there. Read the statement. It's all in there.

**Taylor:** I need a statement from Coldplay on all this. That's who I need a statement from. I need them to be like, "I mean, come on. You could celebrate this—this CEO getting caught. But can you lighten up on us? It's, you know... we..." [laughs quietly]

**Sydnee:** "It's not—it's very mean. We didn't do anything."

**Taylor:** "Our music's a—it's pretty good. You like some of it."

**Sydnee:** I saw that the next concert when they were putting—they were about to do the camera thing again they, like—Chris Martin, like, gave them a huge lead up. Like, "Okay, everyone. Now, listen. Pay attention."

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** "We're about to... start filming you."

**Taylor:** That's gonna be really good. People—I mean... might be good. Might be good for Coldplay. I think they could use a little controversy, a little... a little stank. I think that's good for Coldplay.

**Sydnee:** Something. Yeah. That's gotta help Coldplay.

**Taylor:** That's good. Because something good came out of this. It's good for Coldplay.

**Sydnee:** [laughs] They had a couple good songs, so they deserve that.

**Taylor:** I think they've had—I mean, I feel like we're talking about them in kind of a—they've been a massive successful artist for, like, decades. Like, Coldplay is—Coldplay is good. We can all agree. It's just it's, like, good in

that, like, very, like, "Yeah, it's good. I don't—I have no feelings about it. It's good." [laughs quietly]

**Sydnee:** Yes. It is—it is—and it's one of those where, like, you never expect—when you ask somebody their favorite band, you never expect them to say Coldplay. Does that make sense?

**Taylor:** If someone did say Coldplay, I would immediate think, "Ah, so we do live in a simulation. You are a computer program that is speaking to me." [laughs]

**Sydnee:** But by—but, like, when I say that, I also—I would be similarly confused if I said "What's your least favorite band?" And you said "Coldplay." Right?

**Taylor:** Yeah, absolutely. Like...

**Sydnee:** Like, that—

**Taylor:** Well—

**Sydnee:** It should not elicit that sort of, like...

**Taylor:** Unless it's one of these two people that were caught on camera. Then I'd be like, "Obviously!" [laughs quietly]

**Sydnee:** Well, yeah. They're—I mean, there gonna have a negative association with Coldplay for the rest of their lives.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** No. But, like, I mean, there are songs that, like, when I hear them I almost become angry because I think they're so bad. And Coldplay doesn't do that to me. There's no Coldplay song that makes me angry. There are songs that I'm like, "Why is this a song?!"

**Taylor:** [laughs quietly]

**Sydnee:** Not Coldplay.

**Taylor:** I'm curious—and I don't want to put you on the spot. But what is the song that comes to mind when you do think, "Why is this a song?" 'Cause I have an answer that immediately came to my mind, but I'm curious if you've had one.

**Sydnee:** I mean, okay. Putting aside some of the, like... new country trash that's, like, you know, I hate.

**Taylor:** "[exaggerated southern accent] We'll put a boot in your... butt. It's the American way," yeah.

**Sydnee:** Exactly. Putting aside that stuff that's obvious, like, that I don't engage with, there was this song. Do you remember Lover's Concerto?

**Taylor:** Wait, why does that sound familiar? I feel like I...

**Sydnee:** It was like an old, like, '60s kind of doo-wop song. And it was like, "[humming repetitive melody]" Except it was just that on and on and on. And it's something about loving your man, and I don't remember. But it was like, "[humming repetitive melody]." And that, over and over again. And it just—every time it's like a drill in my head, every time I heard it.

**Taylor:** Hmm. That's fair. That sounds... I—

**Sydnee:** I don't think we needed lyrics to that. I don't think we need to put, like, pop lyrics to it.

**Taylor:** See, for me, it's that—do you remember that LFO song, Summer Girls, or—it was Summer Girls, right?

**Sydnee:** Ohh. Yes.

**Taylor:** Nothing's ever made me angrier than the rhymes in that song. Like, at some point he rhymes macaroni and cheese with a bunch of trees.

**Sydnee:** Yes.

**Taylor:** And they don't fit lyrically. Like, he's not—these aren't—there's not a reason he's singing about macaroni and cheese and a bunch of trees. He just says, like, "I like you, macaroni and cheese. We met last night, and a bunch of trees."

**Sydnee:** Yes.

**Taylor:** That's—and it's just like—that came out when we were kids, and even as a child I'm like, "This is not fair." [laughs quietly] "This is not fair that these people have a musical career, and this is what they're doing."

**Sydnee:** Yes. That is a rage-inducing song. I agree. I agree. That's up there.

[pause]

**Sydnee:** Yeah, no. And—

**Taylor:** "New Kids on the Block had a bunch of hits. Chinese food makes me sick." That's not an exaggeration. That's a lyric.

**Sydnee:** The, um... that song is—I agree. I think that that song is... bad. Um, do you know what song does it for Justin?

**Taylor:** What?

**Sydnee:** Old Time Rock and Roll.

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** He becomes angry when he hears that song.

**Taylor:** What?! That is... that's a pleasant song! You hear the—

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

**Taylor:** "[humming]" And you just wanna rock out. No?

**Sydnee:** He feels like it's disingenuous. [laughs quietly]

**Taylor:** It's disingenuous? Is he looking for authenticity with his old time rock and roll?

**Sydnee:** Like, "You don't want that old time rock and roll! You're lying about that! You don't really need that."

**Taylor:** You don't—I mean, I guess I've never questioned the validity, or the depth of the emotion in Old Time Rock and Roll, but now I am! I don't know! And now I need to listen to it. Go, "Is this gentleman being sincere?"

**Sydnee:** I don't—he just hates that song.

**Taylor:** Wow.

**Sydnee:** That song will make him mad any time he hears it.

**Taylor:** That is a... that's... that's a—that's a wild swing.

**Sydnee:** I don't know. But that—but see, okay. Coldplay doesn't do that to anyone, I bet.

**Taylor:** No.

**Sydnee:** When I hear Yellow I think, like, "Eh. I never got why this song was so big." But I'm not mad.

**Taylor:** Yeah. They do that, what, the Viva la... Vida song? That's them, right?

**Sydnee:** Is that them?

**Taylor:** I think so.

**Sydnee:** I know The Scientist. The Scientist is—that's a good song. You know? That one I like. Like, when it comes on I'm like, "Eh. Good song."

**Taylor:** Viva la Vida is Coldplay. That's good. That's on my—I have a running mix of, like, up-tempo songs that I know the lyrics to. I don't know if I like any of these songs. I just know them. So, like, it makes my brain enter some sort of stasis where it doesn't have to think too hard, and I can run in circles for hours. [laughs quietly]

**Sydnee:** Yeah. There you go.

**Taylor:** That's a good song for that. That's a good band for that.

**Sydnee:** Sorry, we're not, like—this is not... some sort of Coldplay diss podcast.

**Taylor:** I don't think we've dissed it. I think we have pretty much established that we have no emotional reactions other than appropriate ones to Coldplay.

**Sydnee:** Okay.

**Taylor:** And that's alright.

**Sydnee:** That's fine. If you really love Coldplay, that's fine too.

**Taylor:** That's fine.

**Sydnee:** Or if you really hate Coldplay, that's fine too. I don't really...

**Taylor:** Well... we're not—

**Sydnee:** We should—we should live in a country where we can all have whatever feelings we have about Coldplay.

**Taylor:** And adultery.

**Sydnee:** Yes. Have those feelings too.

**Taylor:** [laughs quietly] They might be whack, but you can have 'em. That's freedom, baby!

**Sydnee:** The thing to remember is the when you're in public, you're in public.

**Taylor:** Yeah. Yeah, don't—don't fly too close to the sun. Well... uh, that's not what we're gonna—I mean, I'm glad we talked about it. But we should... just...

**Sydnee:** We should talk about Serial Mom.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. Uh, Taylor, I really enjoyed Serial Mom. I had never seen this movie before and, uh, I thought it was so funny.

**Taylor:** I'm glad. I feel like with this little journey through John Waters—as I was watching it I feel like—I was like, "This is the one that'll hit with Syd. I feel like this is the one."

**Sydnee:** Yeah. It's—it's very funny. I, uh—Justin watched it with me. He super enjoyed it too, and we both talked about, like, why they didn't try to make it a TV series.

**Taylor:** [laughs] You think it could've, like, continued on for a TV show?

**Sydnee:** I think you could develop this into, um, kind of like Dexter.

**Taylor:** Oh, yeah.

**Sydnee:** Except not—not so dark, right? It would all have to have that John Waters sense of humor. Like, the whole thing is sort of... uh, like, a farce almost. You know? Like, the whole thing has to feel a little disconnected from reality, so that it's not—like, you're not sad that people are getting killed, because it's all sort of silly, and tongue-in-cheek, and meant to be... not real. I think if you kept that tone, and you just had a mom—like, a sort of, you know, middle class, suburban, conservative mom who went around



murdering people for, like, hurting her kids' feelings, or breaking social mores or whatever.

**Taylor:** It's like a—it's like, um—yeah. It's like a middle class Hannibal type situation. [laughs quietly]

**Sydnee:** Yeah. And I think—now, I think you'd have to update it. So, like, okay. First of all, if you haven't seen Serial Mom, that's basically the plot.

**Taylor:** Yeah. There's not, like, a—she doesn't, like, snap. Like, and it's not established that she has murdered people before the events of this movie, but you could believe she might've. 'Cause she's, like, really into murder. [laughs quietly]

**Sydnee:** Yes. She's, like, obsessed with serial killers, and the idea of murder and, like, gory horror films. And she, like—Ted Bundy sent her a... [laughs quietly] an audio message.

**Taylor:** Uh, fun—fun fact: that's John Waters. He's the one that voices the Ted Bundy tape.

**Sydnee:** Oh, is it?

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Oh, that's funny. But, like—so she's really into murder, and then—you don't know, is this when she finally takes the leap and decides to start murdering, or has she before? It doesn't really matter. But the point is, she murders for things like, uh, a guy broke up with—a guy stood her daughter up for a date, and then a math teacher was not very nice about her son. Like, that—and then, you know, wearing white shoes after Labor Day.

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Ah. Just the—just the best. So, for reasons like that, she commits murders.

**Taylor:** She's also, like, um—like, harassing her neighbor anonymously with phone calls. Like a—for—

**Sydnee:** Because—

**Taylor:** Go ahead.

**Sydnee:** Because she took her parking space—

**Taylor:** That was it, yeah.

**Sydnee:** —at the grocery store.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** That... that's very relatable to me. [laughs quietly]

**Taylor:** Honestly. Like, it's really—it's just, like, the—I will always love the trope of the violent murderer who has really good manners and just gets very angry at people that don't. That is the—

**Sydnee:** Yes.

**Taylor:** I've never really felt like a violent person, but any time that's the bit I'm like, "I get it. I totally get it." [laughs quietly]

**Sydnee:** Well, it's interesting, because from, like, a—from a psychology standpoint, what you're recognizing is that somebody who, like, we would think of as a sociopath or, you know, in a movie you probably would call a psychopath. Whether or not that's the appropriate term, that's typically the term that they use, colloquially.

Um, that—that idea of, like, "I don't have empathy, and I don't have a conscience, and so people could be impediments to me. And I have no feeling about removing an impediment from something I want. If there is something I want, and there is a person that's standing between me and the thing I want, removing that person by any means necessary—I have no feeling associated with it. I do not want to suffer negative consequences of

society, but in terms of, like, guilt, or regret, or value for their life, it is just not something I inherently experience. And so I am willing to remove that impediment by any means necessary."

**Taylor:** Hm.

**Sydney:** And then, like, take that down to the most, like, insignificant minutiae. "They took my parking place. That was a barrier to me parking in that place. I must remove this impediment to me." Like...

**Taylor:** [laughs quietly]

**Sydney:** And, I mean, obviously that is not typically how people who are antisocial operate. But, like, that's what the movie is talking about. What if we took that down to that granular level? Every tiny inconvenience.

**Taylor:** Which is—there is that—there is something joyous in witnessing that, as fiction. 'Cause, you know, sometimes people do—like, I—when I work in customer service, people are rude to me all the time, and sometimes people will say something wild to me, and I'm just like, "Well, you shouldn't be alive." Not a thing I can act on but, like, I walk around all day trying to be, like, a normal person who's not rude to people. And you do just do this. Huh! Different—different creatures altogether. [laughs quietly]

**Sydney:** That's—it really is, like—it is... it is something that we all experience. That impulse where when somebody is just... rude, or inconsiderate, in a way that you work really hard not to be, where you have that flash of like—and, I mean, I don't think "I wanna murder you."

**Taylor:** No, no.

**Sydney:** I don't have that thought. But I do sometimes think, like, "I would like to punch you in the face."

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** I do have that thought. Like, "I would like to do that right now. I wish that I could just, like—just hit you really hard one time. Because you need to know that this is wrong."

But I don't do it. Because then I have all those other voices that say, like, "No. We don't do that."

**Taylor:** "Murder is bad."

**Sydnee:** [laughs] "That's bad."

**Taylor:** "Hitting people is bad."

**Sydnee:** "Hitting people is bad."

**Taylor:** "Empathy... people have reasons for being bad people. Blah, blah, blah."

**Sydnee:** "Violence doesn't help. All you're doing is escalating the problem. Nobody learns anything from this. You could go to jail." Like, you know.

**Taylor:** Yeah. But it's nice in fiction.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. And I understand, as a mom, I will say I understand the impulse that, like, if someone is mean to my kid, there is a flash of, like, "I'm gonna go make 'em pay."

I mean, again, I wouldn't do it. But, like, that is a normal thing to feel.

**Taylor:** And she's got such great kids. You know, when I first saw this movie, I was really—I mean, obviously it's Ricki Lake, who is a repeat in a lot of John Waters movies. Um, but it's Matthew Lillard as well. A young Matthew Lillard. And this was right before *Scream*, which in my fake little headcanon I'm like, "Oh, this is Stu, and his parents. That's why he's a murderer."

**Sydnee:** It makes total sense.

**Taylor:** [laughs] It's a—it's—chronologically, it fits.

**Sydney:** And obsessed with—with gory horror movies? I mean, it makes total sense.

**Taylor:** Yeah. This is—this is the real truth.

**Sydney:** Yeah. You have to almost wonder if when they were casting *Scream* if they had seen this.

**Taylor:** I mean, maybe. It makes sense. He's so good. I love him. [laughs quietly]

**Sydney:** He's so great. No, but that would make sense, 'cause his character could easily evolve into who he is in *Scream*.

**Taylor:** Right?

**Sydney:** I mean, like, yeah, that would make total sense.

**Taylor:** I would—I would protect, uh—I was gonna say Stu Macher. I would protect Matthew Lillard from a mean math teacher. Maybe not with, you know, vehicular manslaughter, but... [laughs quietly] I don't know. That's a maybe.

**Sydney:** Well, and I do like—I mean, I have to imagine there's also—so she's doing these murders, and from the beginning, she's not very good at hiding it, right? Like—

**Taylor:** No.

**Sydney:** She gets wit—she is witnessed pretty much every time. [laughs quietly] She's not particularly good at keeping it secret. Um, and she still gets away with it, which I feel like is part of it. The fact that she is not trying very hard to hide it, she's just putting up this veneer of, like, perfect, you know, Leave it to Beaver household and, you know, cooking dinner every night and going to church on Sunday. And she puts up that facade, and it's

enough at the end of the day... like, she wins over the jury and gets away with it.

**Taylor:** Yeah. Well, and you know, like, in a real world sense, you know, the idea of, like, a pleasant, uh, you know—a pleasant white lady getting away with murder because she's a pleasant white lady is a problem. It's nice to see it weaponized for—for good? [laughs] It's not good. These people didn't do anything that deserved murder. But in the sense of the movie, it's that sort of fantasy fulfillment. Like, what if you used your power for good? This is what it would look like. [laughs quietly]

**Sydnee:** Yes. Although, I mean, you could argue, unlike Dexter where Dexter, like, kills murderers, she's not necessarily eliminating, like, the worst of society. [laughs quietly]

**Taylor:** No. There's, like, a—a, you know, a crappy boyfriend. Some rude neighbors. I think the one couple... does she kill them just because they're eating chicken and she likes birds? 'Cause that's kind of the implication.

**Sydnee:** They do imply that. I have to imagine it stems from—remember when she was supposed to go birding?

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** And then her birding trip with her husband got canceled because that couple called and were like, "You have to—like, we need—" he's the dentist, and they were like, "We have to see him now."

**Taylor:** That's true. Well, and he was—he was eating sweets, even though he had cavities.

**Sydnee:** Yes.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** So I have to imagine that it was related to that, too. I don't know.

**Taylor:** [laughs quietly] I just died laughing at the cut where she's sneaking in their—like, by their house, and she looks in their window, and they're eating the chicken. And then it just, like, cuts between her cute little birds, and then the chicken. And she's like, "Nope. Gotta die." [laughs]

**Sydnee:** "I've gotta kill these people."

**Taylor:** "That's it." [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Well, and the last woman it was 'cause she didn't rewind her tape.

**Taylor:** Oh, yeah.

**Sydnee:** Which is a very—see, you'd have to update that if you did a TV show now. Nobody would understand that. See, back in the 90s...

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** When you returned your VHS tape, you could get charged an extra fee if you didn't rewind it before you turned it back in.

**Taylor:** And they all had nice little stickers on them that said "Be kind, please rewind."

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** It was right there as a reminder.

**Sydnee:** It takes no time. If you remember, our VHS player automatically rewound the tape when it got to the end.

**Taylor:** Yeah. Like, you'd have to let it play all the way to the end, like, credits and everything, but it would do it.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** You know, fun fact. So, during that last murder scene, the woman's watching Annie, and she's murdered to—she's murdered with a giant... piece of meat? [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Yes.

**Taylor:** To the song Tomorrow. Just what a quintessential John Waters sequence. Uh, but... the people that own the rights to that song did not want it in this movie. This violent movie.

**Sydnee:** Makes sense.

**Taylor:** Yeah. So they just charged an absurd amount for it. I think—I don't know what it was. But they, like, just asked an absurd amount of money. And the film company was like, "Okay. You know what? Yeah. Like, we're gonna pay it." [laughs] 'Cause it fits. It's needed.

**Sydnee:** That's wild.

**Taylor:** Yeah. Did not want to be associated, but, uh, ended up anyway.

**Sydnee:** I—I... I think it's interesting, and I don't—I don't understand completely why. But I do think it's important that in that moment she's, like, got a butcher knife. And then she's like, "Wait, no. Not the knife. I'm coming back with a giant piece of meat. I'm going to club this woman to death. I'm not going to stab her. I'm gonna beat her with a piece of meat. That's the right way to do this."

**Taylor:** [laughs quietly] It's so—

**Sydnee:** 'Cause it's not—there's no, like, clear reason why. Like... it's not like—it's not like she looks at the knife and thinks, like, "Well, this won't work," or... it's—it's just 'cause she needs to be clubbed with meat.

**Taylor:** Yeah. I mean, I think it's just that, you know, once—once you break that seal on, "Okay, what if I do just murder people that... commit small social faux pas?" I guess you just keep going, you know? You just elevate it every time.



**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** That's how we get that scene. It's great.

**Sydnee:** Um... I think she's fantastic. We were talking about if there was a, uh—if there was, like, a modern day TV show, who could match the energy that Kathleen Turner brings to that?

**Taylor:** Hm.

**Sydnee:** 'Cause it's good—she's not, um... like, I don't think of her as a comedic actress. It's funny. It's dark. It's dark humor. But, like, it's all very funny. But she is very serious and dramatic and intense and, at times, very scary. Like, there are moments where the look she gives people that—like, she is a scary presence.

**Taylor:** Yeah. I think also—a lot of it is her voice, too.

**Sydnee:** Yes.

**Taylor:** She's just got such a low register. Kind of like—it can be very pleasant, and then it can be very creepy. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** So I wonder, like, how would you echo that if you were going to continue this, if you were gonna reboot this today?

**Taylor:** You're really about this.

**Sydnee:** [simultaneously] I was trying to think of—

**Taylor:** Are you—are you working on a script right now? Is that's what's going on? [laughs quietly]

**Sydnee:** No. I wish I had that kind of talent to see, like, the potential in something like that and... I mean, I'm just surprised nobody has, 'cause it's so clever. And I feel like people would enjoy that. I feel like that we're ripe—society is ripe for something like that right now. You've just gotta bring it

into today. I think—I know—a lot of John Waters loves that sort of, um... uh, 50s into 60s—you know what I mean? Like...

**Taylor:** Well, I mean, that's coming back. Uh... right? Unfortunately.

**Sydnee:** I guess that's true.

**Taylor:** The tradwife... thing.

**Sydnee:** But you would need to—I don't know. Like, in my head, like, I guess we could make her, like, a crunchy mom.

**Taylor:** Hmm.

**Sydnee:** Instead of the perfect conservative, like, Reagan era mom.

**Taylor:** Yeah. Like a mommy blogger.

**Sydnee:** Oh, a mommy blogger.

**Taylor:** The pressure of having to always have, like, the picture perfect life in public, and on camera.

**Sydnee:** Hmm. And not, um... like, she kills people for, like, not using BPA free plastics and stuff.

**Taylor:** [laughs quietly] Uh...

**Sydnee:** You know what I'm saying?

**Taylor:** I could see it. I could see it. The scene where she's interacting with the garbage men, and she brings them the little nips--like, little bits of alcohol. [laughs quietly] Like...

**Sydnee:** I mean, it's just really—it's very good. I think it would resonate with people.

**Taylor:** Yeah. I think you've got something there. I don't know. I would watch it.

**Sydnee:** Also, Sam Waterston. What a treasure.

**Taylor:** He's the dad?

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** Yeah. Great—great casting all around. Suzanne Somers just popping up there at the end.

**Sydnee:** Uh-huh.

**Taylor:** That was great.

**Sydnee:** That was a treat.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. it's—and, I mean, and a lot of his regulars. I mean, you can tell he must like working with Patricia Hearst, and Mink Stole, and...

**Taylor:** Oh yeah.

**Sydnee:** Uh, Traci Lords.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Obviously Ricki Lake.

**Taylor:** Yeah, he's got his set group the he puts into everything.

**Sydnee:** And, uh, you know, here's an interesting question. So we talked about, like—we started doing John Waters movies for Pride, and then just kind of kept on doing them outside of Pride. Because even the movies that aren't gay are gay. Is this... a gay film? In the sense—and you know the

way I'm using, like, enveloping the culture. LGBTQ+ culture. Is this a gay film?

**Taylor:** Well, I think it's from a queer perspective. It's from—it's outsider art. It's looking at the pleasant middle class from a very skewed place that I think you only got from somebody who's not in it. Like, somebody who is outside of it. And I think that naturally queer people, especially in this time period, take up those places.

But I think that's why I really wanted to do John Waters because, you know, we talk a lot about representation, and I think running the numbers and making a movie with queer characters because that'll, you know—that's what the kids want right now, can always be just a little, I don't know, um... disingenuous.

To me, queer art is art made by queer people, and so it's always gonna be essentially queer, because that's who was making it. And that's what I love about John Waters is he doesn't have—I mean, I don't think—other than Pink Flamingos, none of the movies we've talked about have been what you would think of as queer cinema. They aren't centered on queer relationships. They don't have characters that are obviously queer. Um, they—but it's queer art because John Waters is making it.

**Sydnee:** I guess that's true. I also feel like—you know how for whatever reason M3GAN, the murderous AI doll thing, has become, like, a queer icon?

**Taylor:** Yeah. Well, that's—I mean, that's a good point. 'Cause, like, there was—and I don't remember what it was called. There was a very much, like, "This is a gay comedy" that came out a while ago that the creator was angry 'cause, like, "Why aren't the gay people showing up for this?" And it's like, I mean, M3GAN's a gay comedy. 'Cause it's just—there's a sensibility there. There's enough camp, and it's fun, and it's not taking itself too seriously. And the elements of, you know, what makes something appealing were all there. You can't... you can't, I don't know, like, produce that inauthentically.

**Sydnee:** I feel like that, um, there should be Serial Mom drag.

**Taylor:** I'm sure there is. I'm sure there is.

**Sydnee:** She has the vibe of somebody who would become, like, a queer icon.

**Taylor:** Yeah. Oh yeah. Well, and I mean, like, even, you know, the scene where they... go into the punk club, you know? Which I think—which is also—the band that is playing is L7. Um...

**Sydnee:** Oh, okay.

**Taylor:** Yeah. So, they are a fake band in the show, but—or the movie, but it's L7. But that's such, like, a... like, a queer, punk rock moment. It's kind of reminding you of where this film actually comes from.

**Sydnee:** Yeah.

**Taylor:** But, uh—oh yeah. Like, I'm sure that there have been John Waters drag shows where someone has been Serial Mom, and there should be.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. No, it just—it feels right. She fits. I mean, and her whole—just her whole, like—when she presents herself, she's always dressed perfectly with, like, matching shoes and jewelry, and her hair perfectly done, and her makeup. And she's just like—her whole, you know—she is impeccable in society at all times and, like, knows the right thing to say. Like, you know—like, gracefully enters a room and says, "Oh, I love your jacket." "Thank you so much."

Just, like, you know. [laughs quietly] Everything about her—and then she murders people. It's perfect. It's perfect.

**Taylor:** This, uh—there was a—when the movie was first produced, there was a lot of back and forth with the studio about the ending. Because—the violence overall and the ending. Like, there was a big effort to try to tone it down. To try to not have the—have her get away, have the violent ending that happens. And it was a real fight for John Waters to get this movie made the way he wanted it. Um, and you know, there were other big name actresses in, like, line for the role. But the reason that she won out was that

she was the only one that was just, like, fine with the script exactly as it was. Was just like, "Yep. That's it. That's the role. I want it." [laughs quietly]

**Sydnee:** I mean, it was perfect. I think it's great, and I think that it's great that, like—it works that she gets away with it. But then she does go on to murder somebody after she gets away with it.

**Taylor:** Immediately.

**Sydnee:** Which leaves open the question, like, I mean, what's gonna—I don't know. I love the moment when her family looks at each other after she's found not guilty and is like, "Do we just take her home?"

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** "What do we do with—" like they have this wild animal that they now have to live with.

**Taylor:** I know. Well, there's kind of, like, this agreement where they're like, "Yeah, she's—she's a murderer, but she is our mom. Like, I guess we gotta, you know—that's what family's do. They stick together." [laughs quietly]

**Sydnee:** [laughs quietly] Even if their mom's a murderer.

**Taylor:** It's very wholesome, really.

**Sydnee:** I think it is. There you go, it's family values.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** That's part of the point. What we're talking about is part of the point. See? Look, they're a good, solid, American family. Mom, dad, brother, sister.

**Taylor:** Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:** Just a regular American family. They drive a Station Wagon.

**Taylor:** I mean, yeah.

**Sydnee:** Well, I really enjoyed it, Tey. I'm glad you suggested it. 'Cause I don't—again, I don't know how I've never seen it before, but... it was really good.

**Taylor:** Yeah it's a—

**Sydnee:** I very much enjoyed it.

**Taylor:** One of my favorites of his. And again, one of the more—I don't—accessible. One of the—I mean, obviously there's murder, so if you don't like that... avoid—avoid the movie.

**Sydnee:** But it's not sad.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** No, it's very campy. It's very silly. Um, Taylor, we should do something current next.

**Taylor:** Alright, alright. So we're closing the book on John Waters for now, but this has been a fun little venture. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** There's always more we can delve back into.

**Taylor:** Uh, yes. I, uh—I want to talk about, uh... all I want to talk about right now is Superman.

**Sydnee:** Let's talk about Superman.

**Taylor:** Alright.

**Sydnee:** We'll do that next week. The new Superman, the movie that just came out. Not... not the conc—I mean, we'll talk about the concept of Superman.

**Taylor:** [simultaneously] We'll talk about the concept, yeah.

**Sydnee:** We'll talk about the concept of Superman. You can watch other Superman things.

**Taylor:** There are a lot of good Superman things. This has been the best one in a while, but...

**Sydnee:** Charlie asked after we left, "Is this the only Superman movie that's ever been made?" And we were like, "No."

**Taylor:** "Oh, no." [laughs quietly]

**Sydnee:** But yeah, we'll talk about the new Superman. The woke Superman. [laughs quietly]

**Taylor:** Super-woke-man.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. Well, thank you, Tey. Uh, listeners, if you've never seen Serial Mom, and that sort of campy, murder-y kind of stuff is your vibe, I would highly suggest it. It was very good. Um, thank you to Max Fun. You can go to [Maximumfun.org](http://Maximumfun.org) and check out a lot of great shows you would enjoy. And thank you to The Nouvellas for our theme song, Baby You Change Your Mind.

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

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

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

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

**Taylor:** And I am too.

[theme music plays]



**Sydnee:** I also can't stand gum, so I also [unintelligible].

**Taylor:** [laughs quietly] Did you murder anybody over gum?

**Sydnee:** No. I wouldn't murder anybody over gum. I have—I have, like, risen to the point where I've said—to my family, not to a stranger—but, like, "Maybe don't chew the gum right there next to me. Maybe not right in my ear. Just, like, chew the gum further from my listening range."

**Taylor:** Hmm.

[chord]

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