

Still Buffering 450: M3gan 2.0

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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 Teylor Smirl.

Sydnee: Tey, I have been following, just this morning actually on TikTok, but it’s a saga that began I guess yesterday.

Taylor: Oh.

Sydnee: And so, I had to play some catch up.

Taylor: Okay.

Sydnee: Do you know about Hannah and Britney?

Taylor: Hannah and Britney?

Sydnee: Who got lost in North Africa?

Taylor: [chuckles]

Sydnee: This sounds like a movie.

Taylor: That follow— I didn’t know where we were going with Hannah and Britney, and I could not possibly anticipate that. Okay, no I don’t, why?

Sydnee: Okay.

Taylor: How are they— Are they found?

Sydnee: So, I believe they are where they were trying to get to now, I think, but this was all like as of like four hours ago, there were still updates happening. So, I don’t know, I haven’t looked at TikTok in the

last 30 minutes to see what's happening now. But I stumbled, as you often do. You know, the algorithm just sometimes leads you—

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: — into these things. I guess there were two girls who... from their accents, I guess they sound like they're from the US. I don't know where, but they sound like two American girls. Women, I don't know, they're adults, two American women. Who were try— They were in Rome for I don't know why.

Taylor: Okay.

Sydnee: But they were trying to get from Rome to Nice, France. Okay?

Taylor: Sure.

Sydnee: And so they— I guess they missed their first flight, so they went up to the desk and said, "We're trying to get another flight to Nice."

Taylor: Hmm...

Sydnee: And they said, "Go over there to that desk and they can schedule you on a flight." So they went to another desk and scheduled a flight that they thought was to Nice, France. But what they did is they went to [chuckles] Tunis Air, which is T-U-N-I-S.

Taylor: Okay.

Sydnee: Tunis.

Taylor: Tunis. Tunis.

Sydnee: Tunisia.

Taylor: Mmm, I see where this is going.

Sydnee: They went to— So they went to the desk and asked for a flight to Nice, and they scheduled them on a plane to Tunis, Tunisia.

Taylor: That's a pretty— I can see that mistake happening.

Sydnee: Yes. So, Hannah and Britney board the flight. [chuckles]

Taylor: Oh, Hannah and Britney.

Sydnee: And they're on the plane, and now listen, they start filming it themselves, so they have posted all of this. I think maybe other people were also filming, like I was getting different videos, different angles, but a lot of it is from one of the two of them.

Like they get on, and they start looking at like the— on the chairs, it says, "Tunis Air." And they're looking at that, and they're looking around, and something isn't clicking. So they start asking people "Are we going to Nice?" And they're like, "Yes, Tunis." So like the whole thing becomes this like [chuckles]—

Taylor: Who's on third?

Sydnee: Yes. Like this whole like Abbot and Costello routine. Like they're like, "No, to Nice," and they're like, "Mm-hmm, Tunis. We're going to Tunis." And they're like, "To Nice, France," and they're like, "What?" [chuckles]

Taylor: Oh nooooo.

Sydnee: So—

Taylor: Did they not look at their tickets? Their tickets would have—

Sydnee: Yeah listen, there are a lot of creators on TikTok that are trying to figure out how this all went down. [chuckles]

Taylor: Is this a bit? That's a long way to go for a bit.

Sydnee: Because they are on the plane, and so they go up, and they're talking to flight attendants, and they're talking to the pilot, and the advice they get is "Your stuff's loaded onto the plane. This flight's about to take off. I— We think it's best—" Now at this point you gotta wonder if they're thinking like what's best for these— for Hannah and Britney, or what's best for the plane at this point, like.

Taylor: I mean I think the best is the same, you just go there and then you go somewhere else. [chuckles]

Sydney: So that's the advice they're given. So they fly... to Tunis, not Nice, France. And they continue to film themselves like periodically on their journey as they land there, and then go to the desk, and start to try to explain in English that they would like to go [chuckles] to Nice. And obviously they're still in Tunis. [chuckles]

And so, I mean, it is this— it is the wildest drama of Hannah and Britney, and they keep saying like, "We didn't mean to come to Africa, we're not supposed to be here." Which probably isn't a thing, like as you're travelling around the world to different countries, you probably shouldn't go somewhere and say, "I'm not supposed to be here." [chuckles]

So, they're in there and they're talking with one of the people at the airline, and they're trying to explain the problem. A lot of the people they're talking to, I— English is certainly not their first language, I don't even know if they have a translator who's helping them.

And so, they're trying to explain what happened, they're trying to explain where they're trying to go, and at the same time there's a scene where they're like in an office, and they're trying to explain to somebody on the airline where— they need to get to Nice, France. That's what they keep saying, "Nice, France. Nice, France." [chuckles]

And there's other people in there also yelling about another problem. So, like there's a woman who's yelling in Arabic about a refund she needs, and there's other people yelling about something, and then— And the poor— the guy who works for the airline is just like sitting there, staring at these two women like, "I don't... I don't know, what? I don't understand how this happened to you, and I don't—"

Like there was no flight out to anywhere at that moment, and so they were going to have to spend the night there or something, like or at least be there for several hours before they could get on a flight to Nice, France. The last update I saw was them walking down some stairs towards a plane saying, "We're finally about to board the flight to Nice, France."

Taylor: Okay. Is it— I don't know, is this making me like a type B type person that like if I had made that mistake, which I would like to think, I'm a seasoned traveler or not, but I do not think I would make that mistake, but let's say I did.

Sydnee: Sure.

Taylor: I did, and I realized I am on a plane to... Tunisia.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: And that is where I'm going, I would just be looking up, "Okay, let me get a hostel. What can I do there, if I'm gonna be there?" Like fate has taken my hand, and this—

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Taylor: Like it's not— You're, you know, like I don't know, I just— While you were explaining all this, I looked like there— it seems like there are some nice things to see there, you know. [chuckles]

Sydnee: That's what a lot of people in the comments were say— were putting pictures up and saying like, "No, just stay there. Look how beautiful it is," like.

Taylor: Well like even if it's just for a night or two. Yeah, you might lose some money on wherever you were staying in Nice, but like, just take it in stride. Not everybody gets on a flight to go there, and you'll probably never be back.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: So, check it out. [chuckles]

Sydnee: I— But they— No they were not down for that, they— Now I will say, in their videos, to their credit, they're not panicking. They are freaked out at first, like, "Oh my gosh, I'm on the wrong plane," which you would be.

Taylor: Mm.

Sydney: They're laughing. They're— I mean they're, you know, and they're acknowledging—

Taylor: It is a comical mistake.

Sydney: 'Cause they're— All the people in the plane are watching this drama unfold, and you can see— Like it's the— exactly what you expect, right, it's— I love travelling because you see like the perfect like slice of humanity, like all of the ways humans react right there around you, and there are people who like looking exasperated, just like, "Just shut the door and fly. Like, can we just fly? Can we just get this flight— I have no interest in what's happening here. Make a decision, and I need to get where I'm going."

Taylor: Oh, so they realized it before the flight took off.

Sydney: Oh yeah. They're on the plane, like standing there in the aisle, talking to the pilot and the flight attendants.

Taylor: Ahhh...

Sydney: With all of the passengers seated watching them. And so—

Taylor: Oh no, they're the worst people ever for about five minutes.
[chuckles]

Sydney: Right, well and so there are some people who are just like, "I don't care, just shut the doors," there are other people who are like full like joy on their faces, watching the schadenfreude like, "Oh my gosh, these people are on the wrong plane," like you can see them like, "[gasps] This is crazy."

And then you can see some people are like sympathetic, like, "Oh man, they do not know what they're doing." And then they're, like the two girls even acknowledge this, like some of these people are looking at us like we're the dumbest people on the planet, and there are definitely some people who are looking at them like that. But like you see it all.
[chuckles]

Taylor: That's amazing.

Sydnee: No, but they— I mean, they had the opportunity at the point to get off. What they were stuck with was their luggage had already been loaded on.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: And they were making it very clear like, "Your luggage is going to Tunis, like your luggage is not... We're not getting it back off for you," and that seemed to be the sticking point for them is like, "We should stay with our luggage."

Taylor: That's so interesting, 'cause I understand like not wanting to be separated by your luggage. And that you're more willing to go to some place that you—

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Taylor: — you have no way of knowing if you're able to get back, to get your bags with you. Like what is in that bag? [chuckles]

Sydnee: I mean you gotta wonder about that, but I mean—

Taylor: I mean I would go for the plot, like, "I don't wanna lose my bag, but I'm just gonna see where this gets me, and I'll figure it out," like you know, but. [chuckles]

Sydnee: I probably would too at that point, like it would be in— like, "I didn't expect this." They don't appear— It appears to be some sort of like vacation pleasure trip situation. It does appear that they're on like a business venture, or that they have a strict timeline. If they do, they don't talk about it anyway.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: They're not saying like, "You don't understand, I gotta get here by—" It's more just, "We went to the wrong place and we would like to go to the place we intended to go, please."

And they do keep their cool, I will say, I was impressed with that. I think there are a lot of travelers who would absolutely meltdown, who would freak out. I— There are quite a few people commenting saying, "I don't

see how you make that mistake. Like I don't understand..." I mean I don't know.

Taylor: I mean I will agree with that. I don't— You get a ticket, and it has an end point on it. [chuckles] Like.

Sydney: I mean I will say like one, so they appear to be younger than me. I don't know how old that Hannah and Britney are, but I would guess that they're younger than me.

Taylor: Oh, Hannah and Britney.

Sydney: And so, I would guess that they probably are used to booking airline tickets the way that most people do now, online. Like how often do you go to the desk at an airport and book a ticket, right?

So, I don't know if maybe that was part of it, that it was just an unusual experience that they were not accustomed to booking a ticket there in person, or having to talk to a person. I mean we, you know, used to have to call to book a ticket. We don't do that anymore. I don't know.

Taylor: Maybe, I just, I don't know, like at least— I would just think you would look at the airline code, like you know the three-letter indicator of where you're goin'.

Sydney: Right, yeah.

Taylor: And if you thought you were going to Nice, France, you would be like, "Well that's not what— that's not where we're going."

Sydney: It starts with "T." [chuckles]

Taylor: Like I would at least look up, "Am I going to the same airport, so I know how to get to my hotel from where we're goin'. Yeah, starts with a 'T'," [laughs] there's already something off here.

Sydney: I don't— Well that would— I'm assuming, I don't know what the airport code is, you know.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: In Tunis, but like I assume it probably doesn't start with an "N," probably.

Taylor: I don't know.

Sydnee: And I would think that Nice would, I don't know. And I also, I don't know, like the idea of sticking with your luggage is interesting. I will say that just on the surface, I don't know which airport is busier.

Rome is a pretty big airport, and I always— I mean like we have had hiccups in traveling many times, and I always tend to be like, "Let's stick with wherever the bigger— the airport with more connections is, because then you have more options as to how to navigate it."

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Like I generally would not advocate like leave a bigger airport to go to— But maybe the airport in Tunis is just as big as the one in Rome, I don't know. I— But I— That— I wondered about that like, I don't know, if I'm— if I have the option of like I will stay in Charleston's airport, Charleston, West Virginia, or Huntington's airport, [chuckles] Huntington, West Virginia. Or I could maybe get to Cincinnati, I'm gonna get to Cincinnati.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Because I'm going to have more options, right? So, I don't know, the— But anyway.

Taylor: [chuckles]

Sydnee: I hope that Hannah and Britney got to their destination. I certainly don't wish for anyone to—

Taylor: I get— I hope they do too.

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Taylor: I wish they would've taken it as an opportunity to explore somewhere they might not have gone on their own.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm, same.

Taylor: Even if just for a night, you know?

Sydnee: Yeah. Dancing lessons from God. Yeah, I mean that would've been— it would've been... It would've been a cool opportunity. I will say I... twice in my life have had similar situations, so I don't wanna judge too harshly. I— Back in college when I was traveling through Europe with some friends, we did get on a train that we thought was going to Berlin, and it was in fact going to a place called Beroun.

Taylor: Oh, I could see that.

Sydnee: In the Czech Republic, so we were not at all in Berlin, and we didn't quite know where we were. We had no hostel reservations, I don't think there was a hostel, and we didn't quite know what to do next. [chuckles] We sat— We spent a lot of time at the train station trying to figure out how we could get back somewhere where we could eventually end up in Berlin. Which we did get there, well after midnight, but so I did do that once.

And then I can empathize with the experience of being on a plane that you suddenly realize is not going where you think it's going. When I flew when I went and worked in Malawi, I was supposed to be flying from the airport in Ethiopia to— directly to the capital of Lilongwe in Malawi, and that was the plane I got on, and that's what my ticket said, and then after we were in the air for not a very long period of time, I didn't think, they started to announce that we were going to start landing. And from what I could understand, it sounded like we were landing in the Congo.

Taylor: Oh.

Sydnee: And I was sitting there thinking, "Did I get on a... Did I get on a plane to the Congo? That's not where I'm going." And we did in fact, like I looked at the woman next to me and I was like, you know, trying to ask like, "Do you speak English?" and she did, thank goodness, and I was like, "Are we— Did they say we're landing in the Congo?" and she was like, "Mm-hmm, yeah."

Taylor: Was it just like a stopover?

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: Okay. [chuckles]

Sydnee: But it was nowhere mentioned on the ticket.

Taylor: That's fair.

Sydnee: It was nowhere in the like the flight. Like I looked at the itinerary later to be like, "Did I miss that? That we were—" Because then in that moment, I'm just thinking like, "Okay. Alright, well, I'm goin' to the Congo, okay. This is what I'm doing." [chuckles]

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: And so [chuckles] we land in the Congo, nobody gets off the plane, and actually somebody comes out of the cockpit and says, "No one get off the plane." Okay. We sit on a runway, several people get on the plane, and then we take back off.

Taylor: Yeah, that makes sense in like a, you know, it's like all the stops between like the Jersey stations and Penn, where like people get on but nobody gets off, 'cause everybody's comin' in.

Sydnee: When have you ever experienced that on a plane though?
[chuckles]

Taylor: Not— I have not, but it's the same concept. [chuckles]

Sydnee: I had never experienced that on a— I didn't know that was a thing that happened on planes.

Taylor: Well, you know, it's a...

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Taylor: You have areas where maybe you can't sell whole plane-fuls of people, you gotta sell a couple tickets, you stop to pick 'em up, you keep goin'.

Sydnee: Normally when you have a layover, they make you get off and get on a different plane, they don't just stop there for a minute. I— But I had— I remember that feeling of like absolute sheer panic. You have no control, right?

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: You're up in the air, you're on a plane, you're going to the wrong place. You don't know any— You don't speak the language, you don't know anything about this place you're going, you don't know like, "Where is the closest place I could sleep tonight? I don't have the right kind of money here. I don't—" You know, like—

Taylor: Oh yeah.

Sydnee: "I don't know any— I didn't plan for any of this, I don't know how to get transportation," like you're panicking, but then you do have that moment of sort of like surrender, where it's like, "Well... But this is what I'm doing, isn't it?"

Like there's no— [laughs] "I guess this is my new experience. I guess this is the thing that's happening to me, so... I can either accept it and do my best with it, or I can continue to panic, so."

Taylor: I think that is a really useful human experience, those moments. I mean it's al— Obviously it's unfortunate when they happen, and sometimes you gotta work weird angles, but like— I don't know, 'cause I mean when I was young, I traveled abroad a lot, not—

I did not have money and I didn't have plans, and this was before we could book hostels on the computer. And there were lots of places that I just rolled into, and it's like, "Well, I have to walk around and ask people in a country where I don't speak the language where a hostel is, and hope I find one [chuckles] before the end of the night."

And there's a— As much as I appreciate, as an older person, being able to line up everything, you know, on the computer.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: And double-check everything, there's a little part of me in the back of my brain where it's like— I mean I have a cat, so he's always gotta be taken care of, but there's a part of me that's just like, "What if we just went to the airport and got the cheapest ticket to somewhere that we don't know, and just figured it out, and planned nothing?" Like...

Sydnee: You know what—

Taylor: That is a fantasy that I have often. [chuckles]

Sydnee: No, I know what you mean, and it was interesting, I was watching these videos that they posted, and I was thinking like, "Aw," you know, like I did the same thing, right? Like when we were traveling around, there were a couple places where we had booked ahead of time, by calling, like calling— [chuckles]

Taylor: Mm.

Sydnee: Calling the next place we were going, and booking a room somewhere.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: But then there were multiple places we went to, and then we knew where the different— Like we had our little Hossling International Guidebook, that like physical book—

Taylor: Oh yeah, I remember that.

Sydnee: — that like listed where the hostels were. And so, we would go to— They would have the address, and we would just find our way to the address, and most of the time you could find a room that way. And I did have this moment of like, "Aw, the world doesn't work that way anymore," and I do think there is a lot of value in that.

I still think about the first night that I navigated our way, my two traveling companions were exhausted and I was the most awake, and I navigated our way through Athens to find where we could sleep for the night, and I felt really proud of myself for that.

Like I felt a great— I had never done anything like that, and I can do this, I can be out in the world alone, and I can find my way around, and I can keep myself alive. And I felt very proud of that, and I felt young people today are going to have such a different experience, because of the internet, because everything's online.

However, as I was watching these two women navigate this, they had something that I did not have at that age, which is they had the confidence and certainty of being able to go to people and say, "I am going to need assistance with this. I have made a mistake." [chuckles]

Taylor: [chuckles]

Sydney: "I own it. I feel really silly about it, but here we are."

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydney: "And I am going to keep going to people and asking for help to get things corrected until I get where I'm trying to get, and I'm not going to feel like so overwhelmed and insecure and awkward about having these interactions with people in authority positions. I'm just going to continue to advocate for myself."

And I do think that's a little bit of a shift, 'cause I would've been terrified to— I mean, when I found out that I was on a plane that wasn't going to Lilongwe, I just sat there quietly. [chuckles] I didn't ask a flight attendant, I didn't say anything, I just sat there thinking "Oh nooooo. [chuckles] Oh nooooo." I— And these two young women jumped up and said, "Hey. We're gonna need some help."

Taylor: Well.

Sydney: So I don't know, maybe—

Taylor: I mean if we're—

Sydney: Maybe we're educating young people in a different way kind of, you know.

Taylor: I think both skills working together make an ideal world, where you can trust yourself and you can trust other people. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Yeah. Well and you're not afraid to ask for help.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: And to recognize that it's okay to need help, you're deserving of help. Like as a person on Earth sometimes we make mistakes, and it's okay to say like, "I need other people to help give me the information I need to help me out of this situation."

Taylor: I mean that, I... This— And I think this is still true to a certain extent, but like the first time I went to Japan when I was maybe 20? 21 maybe. And this was a simple, easy fix mistake, but I didn't really know what I was doing, and I got off at the Shin-Osaka stop instead of the Osaka stop. They are not that far from each other.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: But I did not know, and I stood there looking confused at the sign long enough that some nice lady just came up to me and said like... "I'm Taiko, can I help you?"

Sydnee: [giggles]

Taylor: And I was like, "Yes," I said, "I'm trying to go to this hostel, and it's in Osaka, and I think I got off at the wrong station." She's like, "Oh, I know where that is." This lady took me by the hand and walked me a 30-minute walk, and it was not— it was like nine o'clock at night, it was pretty late. 30 minutes, she walked me through like streets of Osaka to get me to my hostel. [chuckles]

Sydnee: That's so kind.

Taylor: Well, you know.

Sydnee: That's so nice. Well and it— I mean it really is like— I think that's part of why travel is really valuable, is when you have those experiences, it makes you more open to other people, more open to people who speak different languages and have different cultural backgrounds, and you know, different ethnicities.

Like I think that it's part of it is that you begin to break down those barriers to like, "We are all just people, doin' our best. [chuckles] Tryin' to get through, and sometimes we screw up, and there are kind people in the world who will help you, no matter who you are or, you know, where you come from."

Taylor: Well and it all intersects. I mean now as somebody in New York, I don't know, I have one of those faces that people for someone reason go "Do— Can— I don't know how to get here, can you help me?" [chuckles]

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Taylor: Like that's the karmic return. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Like so now it's like, "Yeah, I know, I'm gonna help you get there, because 20 years ago, Taiko helped me get out of Shin-Osaka." [chuckles]

Sydnee: Teylor's like, "I'm not gonna hold your hand, but I will help you." [chuckles]

Taylor: Yeah, I don't— You don't want a New Yorker to hold your hand, you know, I don't—

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Taylor: At the time, maybe I shouldn't have been as trusting, but I was, but I'm gonna get you where you need to go. [chuckles]

Sydnee: I— You know, really though, I think that is a lot of— We had an experience during that trip where we went to the wrong— There were several times when we went to the wrong place. We went to the wrong place. Sometimes we were just on a train, looking out the window, and it was so beautiful that you miss your stop, you know.

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Sometimes that happens. [chuckles] But we ended up—

Taylor: You're going somewhere beautiful. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Yeah. We ended up somewhere beautiful, we did. We ended up on this beach in Greystones, Ireland, and I don't regret it, but we didn't have anywhere to sleep, so it was a long night.

But the next morning, we walked— we were trying to get to a train station, it was further away than we thought, and a guy at a construction site was about to be off shift, and he was sitting there, he was like, "Y'all look tired," and we told him what happened, and he was like, "Sit down with me, have a cup of coffee, and I'll drive you to the train station."

And we did, we sat down with him, we chatted, we had a cup of coffee, and then he put us in his car. [chuckles] And drove us to the train station.

Taylor: Well and obviously we hear enough that a situation like that could go south, right?

Sydnee: Sure.

Taylor: Like that's—

Sydnee: Sure.

Taylor: I mean same with me, I let a woman lead me by the hand, after dark, through a lot of, you know, dead-end streets. Like it could've gone anywhere, but I really feel like, I don't know, you treasure those moments where humanity shows up for you.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Taylor: Where you take a risk and you, you know, it was worth it.

Sydnee: 'Cause most of the time, that's how those things end up, right.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Most people are like that, and that's like a really, I don't know, I think that's a really life affirming message to get. Now this is not— I think this is a disclaimer from both of us, this is not me saying that you should just take—

Taylor: No.

Sydney: Anybody who offers you their hand.

Taylor: [chuckles]

Sydney: Follow them down a dark street, or get in a car with anyone who offers to drive you to the train station. Obviously not, use your judgment, but you know.

Taylor: Well, that's, you know, trust yourself and others. But that "yourself" also matters, where when something feels wrong, you have the ability and the sense of self to go "Ah, no no no. No." [chuckles]

Sydney: Hopefully Hannah and Britney are in Nice, with their luggage.

Taylor: Havin' a great time.

Sydney: Havin' a great time, I hope they're safe.

Taylor: Yeah. Wow. What a journey.

Sydney: I know. I know, I just— I discovered it all on TikTok this morning and I was just like completely like, "I have to find"— I kept looking. So many people were stitching it, it was hard to find like updates, like, "I need to figure out what happened." [chuckles] "Are they okay?"

Taylor: I did not pick that up, I— I woke up in time for this recording, so I'm behind on the— [chuckles] That's what happens, you sleep in a few hours and you miss the hot goss on TikTok.

Sydney: That's the kind of stuff we need on TikTok. I don't need any of the like, "Let's pile on somebody" kind of stuff, right. Like I don't need any of this, let's just do this, this is good.

Taylor: I agree with that wholeheartedly.

Sydney: Yeah. We're supposed to be talking about *M3gan 2.0*. I realize we've made it... [chuckles]

Taylor: How far?

Sydnee: Past halfway through the episode.

Taylor: Woops! Oh no. Well, but I really am excited to talk about *M3gan* 2.0. You told me to watch it and I had avoided it. Not avoided it, but like—

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: — I had heard that it wasn't as good as its predecessor.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: And I don't think I agree with that anymore, I think it was so much better, and I loved the first one.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: I loved this movie. [laughs]

Sydnee: I very much enjoyed this movie, so if you haven't seen it yet, we're going to spoil it. So the general gist, I mean, a lot of people saw the first movie, *M3gan*, about the, you know, killer AI. [chuckles] Giant doll.

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: Life-sized doll, *M3gan*, that is so set on protecting the child that she is bonded with that she will kill people, so. This is like the evolution of that is that she becomes like a superhero. Do you see how I kind of have equated it to *Terminator*?

Taylor: Yes, I can see that, absolutely, yes.

Sydnee: Because it, you know, the Terminator—

Taylor: It comes back as good.

Sydnee: Right, in *Terminator 1*, Arnold Schwarzenegger plays the Terminator, who's the bad guy, and in *Terminator 2*, he's brought back as the good guy to defeat the new Terminator. This is very similar.

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: And I like the— I think it's smart, because I think that they realized we all like M3gan, and as much as she was like the villain in the first movie, we all really liked her. [chuckles]

Taylor: Well and it's— I mean I think it's— it does so many interesting things that I think movies— I mean now that we live in the age of like everything's gotta be a reboot, it's gotta be a proven franchise. Like not that M3gan wasn't a success, so it was a proven franchise, but to do a genre jump. To go from the first one was very much in the horror realm.

Sydnee: Right.

Taylor: There are horror moments in this one, but it is a sci-fi adventure movie.

Sydnee: Yes. Oh yeah.

Taylor: And there's a lot more humor, there's a lot more like just, I don't know, like it was like a spy drama.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: And I thought that that was really cool, to see a big studio take that risk. And I don't know if it paid off for them at the box office, but I think it super paid off for them narratively.

Sydnee: I don't know, I haven't heard as much— I mean I heard some of the negative reviews like you did early on, but I mainly got the vibe that people thought it was too far from a horror movie. Like it was people who went because they liked the first one, wanted to see another horror movie, and this was not. I agree with you, I didn't think it was scary. I mean, I'm not gonna show it to my kids.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: But I didn't think it was scary. I think that there— It's definitely campier, for sure.

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: They're leaning into the idea that M3gan is kind of like... I don't know, like... What's the word for it? Like with the little quips, and the sarcastic remarks, and sort of the snark and stuff. Like kinda catty, I guess, might be the right characterization?

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: I mean 'cause it's definitely like they definitely recognized that the first movie was embraced by the LGBTQ community.

Taylor: [chuckles] Yeah, yeah there is definitely that. But yeah, like that's the camp element.

Sydnee: Right.

Taylor: Like it's... I... I don't know, this is— The moment— I knew I liked the movie the moment that she started singing Kate Bush.

Sydnee: That—

Taylor: I lost my mind. [chuckles]

Sydnee: That was so wild. It was— I mean I was— Yes, I loved that moment.

Taylor: And it—

Sydnee: It was so perfect, and it was a risk. That was a big risk for them to take.

Taylor: And the scene went on so long, like I—

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: I was like, "Are they gonna play it as serious? Or are they— Is she gonna immediately shut her up?" And they found the most awkward, uncomfortable, perfect middle ground. [chuckles] Where it went on too long. [chuckles] And it was great.

Sydnee: It was perfect. Well, and it really— I wonder if people didn't— if people were looking for more of a traditional horror movie, if they didn't get moments like that. Where they know what they're doing.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: This isn't a mistake, this isn't like, "Oops, it went on too long and it felt weird." No, it's supposed to. It— That's what they're doing.

Taylor: Well, it's— And in a weird way that was like— 'Cause she— There's a parallel scene in the first movie where she sings to the kid.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: I don't know, some sort of— I forget the song now.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: But it's an inspirational pop song. And it's a little bit more like maybe this is sincere, like the kid's buying into it. But in the sequel, it was such— like the horror on the— the mom's face.

Sydnee: [chuckles] Yeah.

Taylor: As she's singing it, like, "She's not stopping, she's not stopping," it was so good. [chuckles] And it also was—!

Sydnee: It was perfect.

Taylor: It was one of those moments that weirdly humanized M3gan for me.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Like this was a— I cared about M3gan surviving by the end of this that I didn't in the first movie, 'cause I'm like look, I know she's a robot, but I know what it's like to feel so awkward as a human that's it's like, "I don't know what to do. Should I burst into song? No, you can't burst into song, that's not what humans do, but I don't know what else to do."

Sydnee: "Maybe they do."

Taylor: [chuckles]

Sydnee: "Maybe— I mean, sometimes they do, maybe that's it." No, I—

Taylor: Like it was a very "I'm trying to make things better. I don't have the tools to make things better, this is what I have."

Sydnee: It also like— And I don't know if I just read this into it because I am a mom, but it's also very much about being a mom.

Taylor: Well that—

Sydnee: Like the aunt talks about the— she struggles with it. She doesn't know how to be a mom. She read all the books, right, like she studied.
[chuckles]

But she doesn't feel like a mom, and what M3gan has that she doesn't is what I think probably, I mean speaking for myself, probably what every mom or parent, guardian, you know parental figure, feels for their child, which is "I will destroy anyone who hurts you. I would kill for you. I would— To protect you, to keep you safe, to keep you from harm, I am programmed to do anything."

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: "And I am 100% devoted to you forever." That is what M3gan feels for, you know, what's the kid's name? I don't remember the kid's name now.

Taylor: [chuckles]

Sydnee: I just watched the movie. That's what she feels for the kid.

Taylor: I don't— I watched it eight hours ago. Well, it's interesting because you know it wraps around in that like— 'Cause that moment where, you know, the mom is saying like, "Oh, you tried to kill me."

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: And M3gan says, “I was a kid.” Like that at the end where she can’t— she has to go back for M3gan, it’s like that’s right, M3gan was your kid.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Like that— you have two kids in this.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: And that— I think that was really meaningful too, to like, you know, like.

Sydnee: Yeah. You made M3gan.

Taylor: Like.

Sydnee: No, I think that was meaningful, and I think that the like M3gan being part of her, like them being combined, it was what she needed to actually be a mom, she needed the voice of M3gan in her head.

Now that doesn’t mean that like as a parent, my job is to go kill anyone who ever upsets my child, of course not, I mean that’s hyperbole and that’s why it was a horror movie. But the idea that you should have the impulse to protect your child at all costs, like you should feel that. You should feel that.

And then it should be tempered through the, you know, through society and ethics and morals. But. [chuckles] But she needed that, she needed M3gan in her head to be a full parent.

Taylor: Mm-hmm. Cady and Gemma, I had to— kept calling them Mom and Child.

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Taylor: Cady’s the kid, Gemma’s the mom. See all you remember is M3gan, that’s what you walk away with, M3gan. [chuckles]

Sydnee: That's 'cause she's just great, her whole look in this is just great. I mean she's just— she's awesome, and she dances and she sings, and her hair's great. I don't know, I mean she's great.

Taylor: It's— No, I really— I liked it as a redemption arc for M3gan. I... think it's interesting in the ongoing conversation about AI, which I don't—I'm not a fan of AI, obviously. I don't—

Sydnee: Sure.

Taylor: I'm an artist, I don't like where it's going in those fields, but I do think it is an important conversation to say it is going to happen one way or the other. How do we control it? Or rather, how do we welcome it in a way that won't destroy us?

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Taylor: And I think that, you know.

Sydnee: Yeah, well and to have respect for, I mean... They're creating things that like M3gan originally was made for. I mean what you think of as like a good purpose, right, to be like a friend and a companion for a young child, especially one like in the, you know, in the first movie who is grieving.

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: And needs somebody to talk to and all that. And so we're using AI to replace something a human does, right? Well, why would we not— Then the natural extension of that is "Well, that's not an unpleasant job. But we could use AI to replace us for unpleasant jobs. Like killing, like murder. [chuckles]"

Let's do that. Let's use AI to replace us for the stuff we don't wanna do, and also because we feel like they're more expendable because they're not real," and there— that's— There's a danger in all that thinking, right, and that's what they're highlighting is like, "Well but if you're gonna make them like humans, I— you know."

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: I don't know, where's the— where are the ethics there?

Taylor: Well and is there— We can't deny that it will happen, so it's better to just make plans for it, but [chuckles]

Sydnee: [laughs] "Make plans for it?"

Taylor: I guess, I don't know! I mean I think that's— There was a point where I was like, "I think this movie is pro-AI, and I don't like that." Like I don't— On a core basis, I'm not a fan of the idea that there are jobs that humans should no longer be able to do, and that we should replace with robots. But that is the way that... I can not like it, and agree that it destroys labor, and destroys jobs. But also accept that it's gonna happen. [sighs]

Sydnee: It's— I mean it— The problem is like there are jobs that are like— I don't know though, like what are the ethics of that? Like there are jobs that are dangerous for humans. And it would be better if we didn't have hu— I mean I mean okay. As someone who has—

Taylor: I agree with you, I don't think murder's a good example, because I think—

Sydnee: No.

Taylor: [chuckles] – we shouldn't be murdering most of the time.

Sydnee: No, I— [chuckles] Don't— No, I agree with you. Well, I mean in the context of maybe like, "We're gonna send this like super soldier to go do things—"

Taylor: Right.

Sydnee: "— we don't wanna do," right?

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Like obviously that's the way they would go in a sci-fi movie. "What— What are we gonna use robots for?" "Killing!" Like that's always where it goes, but.

Taylor: Well, we do that, we call them “drones,” but we do that.
[chuckles]

Sydnee: Right, we do, we do. And I think what I’m thinking more is like, you know, we— I live in West Virginia, we have sent people here down into coalmines and awful things have happened, and like we have had them do really dangerous jobs with lots of health consequences, and that kinda thing.

And so like the question is are there opportunities to, instead of making humans do that work, to use robots to do that work? But then I think that what they’re calling into question is the ethics of that. But like then what are they? What are these things we’ve made? Is there any morality to it?

I don’t know that it’s necessarily pro-AI. I— I agree with you that I don’t think it’s like a cautionary tale, like AI’s bad. I think it’s not that either.

Taylor: Well I think it’s—

Sydnee: But it do— It’s thoughtful. I mean like— I mean it...

Taylor: I mean—

Sydnee: It’s gonna happen, how do we approach it?

Taylor: It’s the inevitability. I do think like it— like that is the interesting thought of like if we need to design it to the point that it can have human reaction and reasoning, then do feelings and empathy obviously come from that? Is that necessary? Because building a little robot to go down to the mines and keep people safe, yeah love that.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: If that robot has feelings or thoughts, or— And if those feelings or thoughts are necessary to make it anticipate problems.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: And solve things, then have we just— what have we created?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: I mean it kinda goes back to that— the mother being the main character. It's like how are you responsible for the things you create? How do you care for them? How do you make sure that they go about the world in a way that's not destructive?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: That's a big pondering. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Yeah. No, and I mean I think I— So I don't— Yeah, I think that it is it's not pro, it's just this is gonna happen. And I mean the problem is like do you trust the billionaires who invest in these companies to be making the right decisions? Well, no, so...

Taylor: Well, I—

Sydnee: I don't know. [chuckles]

Taylor: We had like definitely one Elon Musk stand-in with Jemaine Clement?

Sydnee: Clement, yeah.

Taylor: Yeah, he was great. I love seeing him just in action. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Yes. He is, he's wonderful, I really like him.

Taylor: And you—

Sydnee: I started laughing as soon as I saw him, I was like, "Oh, this is gonna be great."

Taylor: Yeah, no and that was definitely the Elon character, where he didn't know what he was exactly doing, he turned all the lights off in the city and you heard car crashes happening, he was like, "Oh, look at that, I can do that."

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: But then I really liked, and I clocked it from the beginning that Cristian was the bad guy.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: I was like, “No, that’s— you’re not supposed to like that guy.” But just being the very calm, very like, “Let’s work together, let’s have synergy.”

Sydnee: Oh yeah.

Taylor: Like industry guy be the big bad, I’m like, “Yeah, that’s exactly who it is.” [chuckles]

Sydnee: That is the big bad. Well, I mean, because I think what you see is like the Elon stand-in, he’s easier to see as evil.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Like. [chuckles] We— Okay.

Taylor: Well and he’s egotistical, he just wants people to like him.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: He wants pretty girls to like him.

Sydnee: Yes. And he’s not very good at hiding any of his agenda, none of that is gonna slide by without people noticing. It is the Cristian’s that like— that... they do stuff, and it takes people a while to catch on, like, “Oh, they’re the bad guys. Oh no!” [chuckles]

Taylor: Mm. Mm.

Sydnee: So, I think that was— Yeah, I thought it was great, I thought it was a ton of fun. I like that kind of movie though, like I mean again, I don’t know if horror is even the right word. But if you think about it as a sequel to a horror movie, I like when it has a sense of humor, I don’t always just wanna be scared. I like when it has— I love camp, and I like when it has something to say that’s more than just like, “Boo.” [chuckles]

Taylor: [laughs] Boo with an asterisk.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: Boo, but also.

Sydnee: Boo, but also.

Taylor: No, I agree, I agree, I don't— Like I love when horror and comedy cross paths, and this was just— this was horror comedy sci-fi, like all over the place, but I loved every moment. I didn't know where it was gonna go, and that was exciting. I mean I think I said this when we talked about *Clown in a Cornfield*, I like when a movie feels like a roller coaster ride.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Like you don't know, and you're just along for it.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: And not bored. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Well, and I think that shows like it— what's exciting about it is then you feel like you're feeling something new.

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Like some new ideas being put out there, and kinda like you said, there are so many— I feel like we've been in this place for a while where there's just sequels and remakes, and you know what I mean? And not that the— not that that's always bad, like I've— there are some things I would happily watch sequels and remakes of 'cause I really loved them, and so it would be exciting to me.

But it's nice to see something that feels new and different, and you can't predict where it's going, because then I don't know, that's a new voice making it.

Taylor: Yeah. Well and also it's interacting with the paranoias of the time, which is what horror should always do.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Horror should always reflect the fears of the time. I mean, you know, we talked about how the movie we talked about last week did that in one way. This does that in a very different way, but it does feel like, you know, it's actively playing on your current concerns.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: That's when horror's good. [chuckles]

Sydnee: And I don't—

Taylor: Doesn't have to give you an answer, it just gets to play in that field.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm, and make you think about it and talk about it.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Which is— I mean that's important. And I never mind— I know some people really don't like if they sense fan service happening, like, "You just did this 'cause the fans really like it." I never mind that, I will never complain about it, 'cause if I'm a fan of it, [chuckles] I like the feeling that "Oh, you got how much we loved M3gan, so you made M3gan a— the hero, okay."

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah, I have no problem with that.

Taylor: Well, and I— Like you know, yeah, it was funny when she sang. Make her sing again. It was funny when she danced, make her dance again. [chuckles] Like.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: And let her win.

Sydnee: No, I— Let her win.

Taylor: That's why I was like, "You can't let her die, she won't die." It's like there's too many ways that she wouldn't, but it was really— And the whole time they kept really making that paper clip metaphor, I was thinking of that annoying office paper clip that used to pop up.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: So when that, I was like, "Oh, that's great. That is exactly how you should do that." [chuckles]

Sydnee: It was very smart, it— I thought it was very clever, and... I don't know, I guess if you went to the theatre thinking "Alright, scary doll girl murders people. Excellent, love it," this is not that movie.

And so, I get why you might be disappointed if that's all you were hoping to see. But if you were open more to like what is— what was *M3gan* originally about? What was it trying to talk about, and how do we expand on those ideas? I think it is all those things.

Taylor: Mm. Yeah, and I mean— And there were some— there's still some great horror. I mean the design of the robot that she built herself.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: The one that lived in the lair, was terrifying. And it was so sad too!

Sydnee: [chuckles] I know, it was sad, I was gonna say it was scary but it was— mainly for me I felt it was sad. It was very—

Taylor: Well it was like this was an unloved child, this is what the abandoned child ends up as, this—

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: — this sad little hunk of metal in the basement.

Sydnee: It reminded me of what was that robot movie? The old— from the '90s with the... When we steps on the grasshopper and he gets real sad?

Taylor: I don't know.

Sydnee: What's that movie?

Taylor: Is that the one where his head looks kind of like a camera?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Oh yeah, I know what you're talking about.

Sydnee: It kinda reminded me of that, I felt there was a little referential. Man, that's gonna— Something *Circuit*?

Taylor: *Short Circuit*?

Sydnee: *Short Circuit*. That's what that was called.

Taylor: Okay.

Sydnee: I knew it was in there somewhere.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: I knew it would come back.

Taylor: Somethin' *Circuit*. [chuckles]

Sydnee: There— Listen, this is another one of those— You know how there are those moments where you unlock where you're like, "Why did they let me watch that as a kid?" Him killing that grasshopper, and then trying to like bring it back to life is one of the saddest things... ever in movies.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: And we just watched that as children.

Taylor: I mean I had that— I for some reason, TikTok was feeding me videos of *Drop Dead Fred* the other day.

Sydnee: Yes!

Taylor: And I remember loving that movie when I was a kid, and all of these comments were like, "Why was— Why did I watch this as a kid? This is not a movie for kids?" I was like, "I think it was." I don't think I could rewatch it, 'cause I think there was a lot of booger humor, I don't think I like booger humor. But... I... [chuckles] And by that I mean hooger— humor involving boogers, like that simple.

Sydnee: I gotcha.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: I gotcha.

Taylor: But I don't think I would rewatch it now 'cause I think it still grosses me out, but I did watch it a lot as a kid.

Sydnee: Yeah. I did too, and It's a— Yeah, it's a complicated story, that's very sad and challenging in many ways.

Taylor: [chuckles] Yeah, not for kids.

Sydnee: No. It's not for kids, but I mean I definitely watched that as a kid too.

Taylor: Like I feel like I watched that movie when I was like six multiple times, on repeat.

Sydnee: I mean.

Taylor: That was one of those movies I could say, "I wanna see this again," and Mom and Dad would play it.

Sydnee: I— We— Let's just all remember, we also watched Macauley Culkin get stung to death by bees. [chuckles]

Taylor: Well, that's—

Sydnee: So.

Taylor: I think that was at least trying to be for kids.

Sydnee: Yeah no, but it— we watched him get stung to death by bees.
[chuckles]

Taylor: He can't see without his glasses.

Sydnee: Okay, well I'm glad you wa— I knew you would enjoy that movie, I knew you'd like it.

Taylor: Oh, it was great. I got home from work last night and I was so tired, I was like, "I gotta watch this movie," and then I just like— There was a point like halfway through, 'cause I was watching it on my little laptop, and I'm like, "No, this— I gotta put this on my actual TV, and like make a snack, and enjoy this." [chuckles] And I did.

Sydnee: Yeah. It's good. Well good, well I'm glad you liked it, I think if— It's a little gory, I will say, so.

Taylor: It's PG13.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: So it's not, you know, it's not as gory as it could be.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: It could've been gorier, honestly.

Sydnee: Sure. No not nearly as gory as *Clown in a Cornfield*. It was probably gorier.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: But this is gory, but it was still very good, and... not too super scary. Well.

Taylor: And—

Sydnee: What are we doin' next, Tey?

Taylor: Next. Oh! Well, you know I was going through my old [chuckles] CD portfolio the other day, and I was reminded— We've talked about Jack Black multiple times, but I don't think we've ever spoken specifically about his musical experience that is Tenacious D.

Sydnee: I don't think we have.

Taylor: So.

Sydnee: That would be wonderful.

Taylor: Why not?

Sydnee: Sounds good.

Taylor: Alright.

Sydnee: Alright, we will talk about Tenacious D next week, and fawn over Jack Black more probably.

Taylor: A lot. Also Kyle.

Sydnee: [chuckles] Yes, yes. In the meantime, you should— if you like those kinds of movies that we've just talked about, you should watch *M3gan 2.0*, it was a lot of fun. You should go to maximumfun.org and check out all the great shows there that you would enjoy. You can email us at 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: Did I tell you about my popcorn bucket?

Taylor: Oh, did you get the *M3gan* one?

Sydnee: I did, but all that they had left was the display one, but Justin went up and asked to buy it.

Taylor: [giggles] That's awesome.

Sydnee: Her head opens up. [chuckles]

Taylor: Is it the one— I've seen the one from Halloween Horror Nights where the face comes off, and it's like a cybernetic mask.

Sydnee: No.

Taylor: No.

Sydnee: Nah, I wish. Nah, it's just the back of her head.

Taylor: Aw, that's so cool.

Sydnee: I filled it with Wintogreen Mints, and I have it on my desk at work.

Taylor: I love that.

[ukulele chord]

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