

Still Buffering 470: Superbowl 2026

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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: Tey, you been following the 'Lymps?

Taylor: The 'Lymps?! Is that what—

Sydnee: That's what the cool kids call the Olympics.

Taylor: I'm not a cool kid. I don't—I don't call it that, and I haven't been following that, I guess.

Sydnee: I—I—yeah. Well, okay. There's—it's the winter ones, so they're the cold sports.

Taylor: Cold sports!

Sydnee: The cold sports.

Taylor: Sports on ice!

Sydnee: Yeah. I would also say the more dangerous sports, on average.

Taylor: Dangerous sports... on—cold, dangerous sports! Woo!

Sydnee: Yes. Cold, dangerous sports. I think that ice skating and especially speed skating is terrifying. Like, absolutely terr—like, when I watch them, like, fly around in circles on those—on the blades on their feet, those razor sharp, limb-severing blades, I think it's terrifying.

Taylor: I don't... I'm not a professional sport person, and so I don't judge any sports. But I do think, like, abstractly, as a human, the idea of someone saying, like, "What if I throw you this thing and you catch it?" And, like, whoo! That seems nice.

Versus "I strap blades to my feet and I go down a hill at high speeds."

Like, that's a harder jump in human creation. Not a bad one, no judgment. But I don't think I'd do that naturally.

Sydnee: Well, you think about how much of the summer Olympics is, like, running for various distances.

Taylor: Can you jump real far?

Sydnee: Yeah. And then you're like, "But in the winter... let's—" I mean, I was watching freestyle skiing. Which means you ski down a big hill, but also, like, you do, like, skateboard tricks but on skis. Like, there's, like, rails that you, like... ski on. And then you do flips and stuff. And you're backwards for a lot of it.

Taylor: I don't think I'm alone in this. I'm gonna speak for the people, and we're gonna start with a basis of, we admire those of you that can do these things.

Sydnee: Oh, yes.

Taylor: There is not an ounce of my humanity that wants to do these things. Everything about it I hate. I hate cold. I hate cold. I hate restrictive clothing. There's always restrictive clothing. I don't want to move fast in a direction that I can't control. And like, "Oh no, you can control it! You've got two sticks."

Nope. Not enough. Not enough sticks. So...

Sydnee: No. Do you—have you ever watched luge?

Taylor: Oh, the—wait. Is that, like, the—there's the one they call the skeleton. It's where they go down? No? Is that different?

Sydnee: Yeah, it—well, okay. Similar. It's like sledding but more dangerous. It was like, somebody was like, "Sledding should be a sport." And they were like, "Well, sledding... "

Taylor: Yeah. You're just on a sled, but your whole body is out.

Sydnee: Yeah. Well, like, you're on a sled, but it's like, you're not on a hill. You're on a carefully crafted ice... tunnel. Well, not tunnel. It's an ice... hollow. And you're flying at a very high rate of speed. And it's the difference—if you're on your back, it's a luge, and then if you're headfirst, it's a skeleton. Why? Who? There's...

Taylor: I mean, I...

Sydnee: I don't—

Taylor: I went down a rabbit hole about this because there's—clearly there's somebody that famously lost their life doing a luge or a skeleton, one or the other. I think it was a luge.

And, uh—and they were like, "Yeah, no. We just didn't anticipate the velocity that this one corner would create that would just—no matter what you did, your whole body was gonna be flung against an opposite wall."

And I'm like, I don't know why we didn't do the math better. I don't know why we didn't do the math better. But I don't wanna compete in a sport where we [laughs] like...

Sydnee: Where that would be—where it would be that delicate.

Taylor: I don't think that should be a part of sports. Sports should be, like—sports should be like, "If I don't do my job well enough, I might not go fast enough."

Not, "Oops! I might die."

Sydnee: Have you seen doubles luge?

Taylor: No...

Sydnee: Tey, it's two people laying on a—

Taylor: They're Romeo and Juliet?!

Sydnee: No, it's two people laying on a luge, one on top of the other.

Taylor: Are we just—are we just making stuff up now?

Sydnee: Look up a picture. I'm telling you.

Taylor: I won't.

Sydnee: Look up a picture.

Taylor: I won't. I believe you, but I won't.

Sydnee: Doubles... luge... image. Look at it. I don't know why—I don't know why with doubles luge already existing they were like, "Heated Rivalry should be about hockey players."

I just—I didn't know that was a—I can't believe somebody was like, "Luge is so wild. How can we make it wilder?"

And they were like, "Put another person on top of the first person."

And they were like, "Got it. Done. Great."

Taylor: Is there a throuples luge?

Sydnee: I don't—[laughs] I don't think there's a throu—I don't know why there couldn't be.

Taylor: Polycule luge!

Sydnee: Um, there is—you'll appreciate this. If you do—I think you should watch some Olympic luge for one reason. They have, like, the luger—the luger goes down, and then there's, like, a separate little track.

Taylor: Luger first!

Sydnee: Like, there's, like, two tracks that then converge into one. And on the second track, there's a little robot camera that's gonna luge behind the luger to video it, to film it. And so if you're—as you're watching them start, they take off, and then you see this teeny little robot come zooming up right behind 'em. Zoom! Following them. [crosstalk]

Taylor: [singing] I'm a luger, baby.

Sydnee: "I'm the luge robot. I'm luge bot! I'm the luge drone!" It's just lugging right behind the luger. And I feel like Pixar is really missing out if that's not their next film—like, their next animated character, beloved animated character needs to be a luge bot that, I don't know. It wants not to luge, probably. Probably that's what it wants, right?

Taylor: I don't think anyone wants to—who's forcing these people to luge?

Sydnee: I don't know. I mean, you must come from, like, a proud tradition of lugers.

Taylor: Proud lugging. It's so close to loser that it feels like a joke, but no.

Sydnee: I know. I'm not trying to say loser. I think anybody who can compete at that level is incredible. I'm not making fun of any of the athletes. It's amazing.

Taylor: No, I like—this is a test for ever—specifically with, like, the couples luge. Like, that should just be what every couple has to go through to decide if you should make it or not.

Sydnee: Yeah. [laughs]

Taylor: Like, right? Like, how do you—how will you manifest this? 'Cause honestly, fair parallel to any relationship. We're gonna throw you at high speeds down a hill. What you gonna do?

Sydnee: And you're gonna have—

Taylor: 'Cause I'd be like, "We're gonna slow things down. We're gonna take it slow, so that neither of us flies off and dies. But we're definitely gonna make it to the bottom."

That'd be my play.

Sydnee: I would wanna win.

Taylor: Yeah, well, that's—okay. See, that's not... [laughs]

Sydnee: But I also, let me say, if I was gonna luge, I'd wanna win. But I also don't want to do the luge.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Ever. I just don't...

Taylor: I would...

Sydnee: It's too scary!

Taylor: Now, if I was gonna luge, I'd take my time on the luge. Like, with the—the luge is the luge we've made along the way.

Sydnee: If you're gonna take your time on the luge, you're sledding. You're not lugging anymore. You're sledding. [laughs]

Taylor: Maybe I am! Maybe I am.

Sydnee: That's the thing. I, um—I also think you should watch ice dancing.

Taylor: What is the difference between ice dancing and, like, figure skating.

Sydnee: Well, I'm not sure, Tey. As far as I could tell—I've watched both. I've watched two people figure skate together, and I've watched two people ice dance together, and I think there's more dancing in ice dancing and less dancing in figure skating.

Taylor: Okay. Is this like when they did the, um... what was the—

Sydnee: Break dancing?

Taylor: Oh, gosh. Yeah. Is that, like—this is one of those they're trying it out, they're seeing if it works?

Sydnee: No! Ice dancing's been around a while. And it—you, uh—I mean, it is much like couples figure skating, except there aren't as many of the, like, throws and flips and jumps. There are those. Like, some of those are in there. But there's a lot—like, synchronicity is a big piece of it. Like, they do a lot more synchronized dance moves. And it's very dramatic, and they do, like, facial expressions, you know. I don't know. There's, like, a married couple in the ice dancing competition this year, and they're just very good and, like, passionate, and... some of it is just incredible.

Taylor: I should check that out.

Sydnee: Yeah. I would recommend ice dancing. I think luge is terrifying, but there is the luge bot. Skiing I don't understand how humans can—I don't understand how anybody can ski, period. I tried skiing twice and it was horrible. So I don't understand how people can ski. Curling has lost its novelty for me, personally. When it was first a thing, we were all like, "This is a thing?!"

And we were all excited that this was a thing. And, like, anybody can do it. You don't have to be, like, super athletic and work out all the time necessarily to do curling. Like, you just have to be really good at curling. And so it seemed like a really approachable thing.

But now I know what it is, and I'm less excited to watch people sweep the ice.

Taylor: Well, I mean, look. I think it's a skill. I think that that's a very, you know—it's a lot of fine measurements that go into a good curling...

Sydnee: Sure.

Taylor: ... uh, player?

Sydnee: Yeah. Curler.

Taylor: Yeah, a curler, a good curler. Thank you.

Sydnee: Yeah, no. I mean, you're right. Like, absolutely it's a skill. But, like, it just initially, the first time you see curling you're like, "What?!" You know?

Taylor: It's like big—big boy shuffleboard.

Sydnee: Yeah. But when you first see it, it's very shocking.

Taylor: I like that.

Sydnee: It's like, you know that one big—that one big bird? That one big tall, scary bird that looks like a Muppet that has, like, a human face, and it's scary looking, and the first time you see it you're like, "That can't be real."

Taylor: Oh, yeah. I know the bird you're talking about. Where is the corollary?

Sydnee: Like, the first time you see that bird you're like, "Oh my gosh. That can't be a real bird," and you're totally freaked out, and you look at a lot of pictures of it, and you read about it, and you're like, "That can't be real."

Taylor: You feel that way about curling?

Sydnee: Initially I did. I was like, "This can't be a—what? What is the—what are the rules?" And I, like, read about curling, and I—

Taylor: No. See, I would feel that way about the luge, about the skeleton.

Sydnee: Well, I think it's too terrifying for me to contemplate. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Like, I can get curling. I can get shuffleboard. Like, those, yeah, we're pushing a thing into a thing. And we have to make the thing work. Easy, yeah, sure.

Sydnee: I, uh—

Taylor: That's not the same as, what if I hurtled my naked body—naked but with a thin Lycra suit on—down a hill at 100 miles per hour, and the goal is don't die?

Sydnee: I should—I do want to read about, like, how did we get from sledding to the luge? There's gotta be a line. I'm gonna read that. See, I don't research things that aren't medical enough. And this is a historical thing I need to research for my own edification to know. Somebody was sledding and they were like, "I have to make this more dangerous." No.

Taylor: It all seems bad. 'Cause it's cold! 'Cause it's cold. That's the thing that stops me from all of the winter sports. They're all cold!

Sydnee: No. I can get into, like, the summer—the summer 'Lymps. Like, I don't wanna—

Taylor: Keep calling 'em 'Lymps. You're gonna make it work. I'm sure you will.

Sydnee: I don't wanna run. But, like, I understand running, conceptually.

Taylor: I run every day.

Sydnee: Yeah, I know. Well, you like to run. I like swimming. I once—I once told mom and dad, and I may have had a few drinks when I told them this. But I once told them that if they had encouraged me as a child, I could've been an Olympic swimmer. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: [snorts]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: Was this said, like, wistfully? Angrily? What was the mo—what led you to that point that you were making?

Sydnee: I think I was—I think it was kind of matter of fact. I think it was kind of like, you know. Like, no, I'm not mad at you for this, parents. Like, it's not—this isn't, like, a grudge. Like, I'm not sharing some, like, deeply held resentment. I'm just saying I've thought about it a lot. I am a good swimmer, and I'm a good swimmer without any formal training. And if—

Taylor: Why do you...

Sydnee: If you had given me formal training in swimming, like, from childhood, like Olympians are trained from early on, I think... [pause] [holding back laughter] I think I could've been an Olympic swimmer.

Taylor: What—I've seen you swim, babe! What—what—what?

Sydnee: I'm a good swimmer! I'm a very good swimmer!

Taylor: Yeah, you're—yeah, Sydnee. Lots of people are good swimmers. Not very many people are good enough to be Olympic swimmers.

Sydnee: That's 'cause nobody trained me!

Taylor: Like, don't get me wrong. When we did the thing where we all, like, swam around our grandma's swimming pool to create a whirlpool, you were really good at keeping the pace. But, like, I don't know if that's an Olympic qualifier.

Sydnee: I'm just saying, if—if anyone had seen that spark in me... when I was, you know, Cooper's age and, like, really nurtured it...

Taylor: We did not swim! You were not a—[unintelligible] swum—we did not swum! We're not a swimming family.

Sydnee: We had a pool!

Taylor: For a few years.

Sydnee: Yes. I just—I'm saying, I think it's in me. We'll never know.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: We'll never know.

Taylor: Go now. Do it—do it now. That's a great Olympic American story. This woman is joining us for the Olympic swim feat. She is in her 40s. She has had two children. She's gonna do it. I love that.

Sydnee: No.

Taylor: American Gladiator. Yes. Do it.

Sydnee: No. There is no room. There is no room for—okay. When are the next summer Olympics? Not this summer, right?

Taylor: Oh, you've done the—you're thinking about the math. You're like, "Maybe. But what if?"

Sydnee: No. I mean, like, okay. I'm gonna be 43 next month. I don't know when the next Olympics are. But a mid-40s, uh, newly [laughs quietly] trained swimmer does not join the Olympics.

Taylor: Unless you've got that special skill set. I don't know. You seem to think you have.

Sydnee: No. I think if you're gonna join the Olympics at this point in your—like, at the point where I am in my life, you have to be like... remember that guy who did the shooting who was in the Olymp—'cause that's an Olympic event, is shooting—

Taylor: [simultaneously] Yeah, you could do that.

Sydnee: —a gun. That—see? There you go. Really, Olympic sports are—the ones that they include sometimes are wild. 'Cause that one is shooting a gun. And then there's the ski jump. That's a wide array. You know, Tey, though, if we're gonna talk about sports that we shouldn't play because of how many people get injured...

Taylor: Football!

Sydnee: It's so true. And I say this. We're gonna talk about the Super Bowl halftime show primarily. But I'm just gonna say, I do enjoy watching football. I have for a long time. This is not—like, I'm not pretending. I do. But I also acknowledge, football is an incredibly dangerous sport that has led to, I mean, probably, like—well, I don't want to say cumulatively more injuries than other sports, 'cause there are all those sports that, like, people outside the US are playing that we pretend we don't know about.

Taylor: Yeah, but do you think that your understanding of the injuries that happen in football include the amount of injuries that are, like, tertiary to, like—isn't a big thing in football, like, there are brain injuries that cause people to be violent? And then there's a whole swatch of violence associated with that specific type of brain injury that is from playing football?

Sydnee: I mean, it can. I don't want to say specifically. Like, there are traumatic brain injuries, and certainly that can lead to changes in behavior, and at times, those could be erratic, or violent, or, you know, labile. Not always. I don't wanna, you know. 'Cause there are a lot of people with traumatic brain injuries who are certainly not. But yes. That—

Taylor: But isn't that, like, a big, like—that's kind of like a cover up in the NFL. Like, we don't give people the time to recover, and so there is this, like, heightened violence that is—it's not counting the numbers, but it is part of it.

Sydnee: I mean, we definitely know that repeated traumatic injury to the brain, repeat concussions, are bad for the brain. I mean, that, you know. I think that that is—it makes sense. It's intuitive, and we have lots of research to bear it out. And there is a lot of—like, I know that they wear helmets, but

I don't know. I don't want to go down a really bumme-y road. But when people—I know a lot of doctors who say, "I will never let my kids play football," because of the research that's out there around this. I know a lot of physicians who have made that choice. And I'm not saying that, "So everybody should avoid football." I'm just saying that we know this is true. It can be very dangerous.

Taylor: It should all just be two hand touch.

Sydnee: Yes, two hand touch, or flag football.

Taylor: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Would be much safer.

Taylor: But it's not. It's not. Well, this year, hey. It didn't matter, because let's be real, there wasn't a lot of touching going on. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: No. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Sorry to the Patriots!

Sydnee: Up until the fourth... up until the fourth quarter, that was a pretty boring game. Other than halftime.

Taylor: I mean, yeah. Even in the fourth quarter. Like, by then, they were so clearly gonna lose. Which, uh...

Sydnee: I mean, I personally was rooting for the Seahawks. But, uh... [laughs quietly] I didn't really care, ultimately, about the football part of it. I was hoping for a good game. Nobody gets hurt and has a good time. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: I agree. It was like—I felt like before the halftime show, I caught the vibe of who was gonna win, and it just stayed that way. Like, that... it felt like a very slow massacre.

Sydnee: Yeah. Yeah, it was not—it was not exciting in that sense. But I, um... but that aside, uh, the halftime show was worth it. Like, you should just have watched—if you didn't—you didn't need to watch the Super Bowl. Just watch the halftime show.

Taylor: Yeah. Well, and that—you know. We said we were gonna talk about Bad Bunny, but specifically because he was performing the halftime show. Um, and I think that everything that I like about Bad Bunny as an artist was—I mean, I think the show itself was such a... it was a piece of art! Like, the...

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: The set design, the dancing, the things that he interacted with, like, the songs that he chose.

Sydnee: It was incredibly theatrical. Okay, first of all, the grass was people. And that, um—I didn't know when I was—it didn't, like—as I was watching it, I didn't realize that. It wasn't until I saw, like, pictures of them and, like, videos of them running onto the field. [laughs quietly] To get to their places.

Taylor: And on a functional level, obviously that's the best way to get your set dressed quickly. But it also, I feel like, had a symbolic level of, like, you know, the livelihoods that are taken from the—like, Puerto Rico, which their farming, their sugarcane, like, that's a huge part of their industry. So to have physical bodies represent that... that's important. Right up front, you're saying, yeah, people are behind all of this. Our people.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. And it reflects a connection to the Earth, too. The people and the Earth. Um, yeah, no. I thought that was really smart, um, from a pragmatic standpoint, and I like that symbolism. I thought, um, the... I mean, just all the set, all the sets, from the cocita, to, like, the, uh, piragua, and the market, and all the different, like, little village kind of set. Like, it really—I felt like it was... it was like a piece of Disney World or something. It was really incredible. You know what I mean?

Taylor: I was super happy by the inclusion of Toñita's.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: I don't know if you know that.

Sydnee: No.

Taylor: Okay. So, I've been to Toñita's.

Sydnee: Really?

Taylor: So, when he's going through all the little businesses while he's, like, walking around, you know, like, I think that was his first song. And he does a little shot of something with an old lady that's in, like, a window that looks like a bar setup. That's Toñita's. That's Toñita. and Toñita is the owner of one of the last remaining New York City Puerto Rican social clubs. It's up in Williamsburg. And it's one of those places that I've walked by a million times, and I know what it is. I've had friends that have told me what it—but I would never—I would never walk in there. I don't think it's my place.

So when I worked at a bar recently, one of my managers was from Columbia. And she's like, after we got to know each other, we were drinking buddies, she was like, "Oh. You gotta come to Toñita's with me one night."

And I'm like, "I would love to." I'm not... it's important to respect places that are not for you.

And so I was like, "But I would love to go with you." So she brought me to Toñita's with her one night, and it is literally like you walk in, it is so well lit. Like, it looks like somebody's living room. Like, wood paneled walls, like, pictures of everybody's families up. There's a dude in the corner that's, like, got, like, a food setup. Like, he's just ba—he's just made some food that you can, like—you wanna come over here? Do you wanna have some food? Here's some, like, rice and beans and something.

Like, that's part of it. There are just people dancing. Like, and then—and to get a drink, you just go to a couple coolers in the corner that have, like, Heineken in it, and you can just grab one. And it's on the honor system.

Like, you just—you get a beer. You throw some money down on the bar. Like, "Yeah, I got a beer." That's it.

And Toñita is holding court there. And she's this, you know, older woman who's dressed, like, in gold lame, and she's got her rings on, and her hair done. And she's the one, like, if you want hard liquor, you gotta go to Toñita. So, like, my friend, like, brought me up like, "Oh, they want some aguardiente. Like, let's have some shots."

So Toñita served us. And it was so cool. And then I knew that Bad Bunny had had one of his record launch parties there. And then she was onstage with him!

Sydnee: That's so cool.

Taylor: Like, that was just... that was such a beautiful, like, no. This is not—like, this is a woman that has—she fought landlords to hold her spot in Williamsburg. Like, she refused to take million dollar deals to hold this spot. And it's so cool to see an artist hold that up. 'Cause that's what America should be. That's—like, that's New York City. Like, that is what it is. Like...

Sydnee: I thought—that's really cool. I read about it, because I was reading about all the references that I didn't—the ones I did, and then didn't get, after the show. Um, but I didn't realize you had been there. That's really cool.

Taylor: Oh, yeah, no. I didn't—I didn't realize what a big deal it was until after. It was like, oh. Like, I just had a buddy take me there. Like, "You're gonna love this. You're a weirdo that loves to learn about other people's culture. You're gonna love this."

I'm like, yeah, I will love this.

Sydnee: That's really—no, that's very cool. And there were tons of references like that. Like, obviously, the electric poles were a reference to the issues with electricity and power and the grid in Puerto Rico.

Um, I didn't realize the number on his shirt. Did you read that?

Taylor: Oh, the 64?

Sydnee: Yeah. Was a reference to after Hurricane Maria, initially the US government tried to say that was all—that was the entirety of the casualties from the hurricane.

Taylor: Oh, I didn't know that. I was wondering about that.

Sydnee: I assume that was the reference. But yeah. But obviously that was untrue, and proven to be untrue. But, um—and there was so much about it that was about, like, love and community and neighbors and friends and family. Um, it's really weird, 'cause for all of the, like, uproar about it, if you look at the things that are being celebrated, a lot of them are fairly traditional values.

Taylor: Mm-hmm!

Sydnee: You know? In that sense. There was a wedding! An actual wedding!

Taylor: [laughs quietly] Well, and that was a real wedding!

Sydnee: Yes!

Taylor: Like, those people got married on... onstage. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Yes. And it's funny, too, because I noted the—when I was watching it, I noticed the kid laying on the chairs asleep at the wedding. And that detail stuck out to me, because I thought, "Oh, that feels so familiar."

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: And it's funny, because I saw a lot of people talking about how, "Oh, that's Latino culture. Like, that felt very familiar to me, 'cause you will see that at a Latino wedding."

And I thought, huh. That felt familiar to me. And obviously we are quite white. And so I was thinking about, like, if I'm looking at that and thinking

that feels familiar to me, and I think what I'm thinking about is that I come from an area—we have a large family. We come from an area where a lot of people are living in or just above the poverty line.

And in that sort of socioeconomic strata, at large family gatherings, at big events like weddings or, you know, big reunions or anything where you would have all the family members together, you would have kids present, and you wouldn't have help to watch your kids or to take your kids to bed. So the kids would be laying on chairs passed out while the adults are still talking. So it's a connection across cultural barriers, because of this other shared commonality.

And I thought, that's the kind of thing that could really speak to people, if they were paying attention. To see how many things bring us together, as opposed to the differences in our language or skin color.

Taylor: That is, um, a thing that I think that—I've always been—part of the reason that I love what I do in food service is because I feel very at home in it. Even though usually I'm working with people from other countries, there is this... I don't want to reduce it to no war but class war. It's not that simple.

But there is a part of that that does ring true. Where, like, I have those moments of, like, we get each other. It doesn't matter if, like, I'm from Appalachia and you're from Colombia. We get each other because we learned that life is lived when you love your family, you love your friends, you take care of each other. You make the most of what you got. You—you know, you party, you stay up late, you sing, you dance, you scream. Like, that's what you do. You can't help the systems your put against, but that's how you live your life.

Like, that is the reason that I think I've consistently found family in the restaurant industry. Because despite where people come from—and I think in a weird way coming from Appalachia, I slot into that in a way. I mean, I don't think you're... there's a reason that makes sense. And I agree with that. [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah. And it's just—it's so unfortunate that there are people who I think live in this area—and not just this area, but areas like this, who are also, you know, people who are white, who may consider themselves conservative, who if they were open to it, would see a moment like that and also feel that connection, and see those things. But I just—I feel like the rhetoric has prevented people from even allowing themselves to consider it, you know? Let alone recognize those moments of commonality.

Taylor: You're only cheating yourself. I don't know how you turn that off and you turn on the guy that's like, "I got paid a million dollars to say [singing] I kiss fish, I shoot beer, I do a truck, I like American flags."

Like, I don't... [laughs] Like, how are you...

Sydnee: The alternative halftime show...

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: ... was—and, I mean, I didn't watch it. I just—TikTok was like, "You have to see this, Sydnee."

And I thought the song, the—I like—it's—I—I just... "[singing] I just wanna catch my fish." That's what it is. I was sitting there thinking [crosstalk].

Taylor: "[singing] I just wanna drive my truck. I like fish."

Sydnee: Yeah. I was sitting there thinking, "I like fish." And I'm like, it's not "I like fish." What is it? "[singing] I just wanna catch my fish. I just wanna drive my truck."

Yeah. I saw that and I was like, oh, this must be a parody. And then he goes into, "[singing] I just wanna cut my grass." And I was like, yeah, this has gotta be a parody. [crosstalk]

Taylor: "[singing] I just wanna feed my dog." Why aren't you feeding your dog?!

Sydnee: Okay, feed your dog! Like, these don't...

Taylor: Just do it! Jesus!

Sydnee: His thesis statement is that it's—in this country—it's hard to be country in this country now. But if these are the things that constitute being country, those do not sound difficult.

Taylor: Well, he also does say, "[singing] I wanna tell my daughter that a boy is not a girl."

Sydnee: Which, like...

Taylor: No one's stopping you from doing that.

Sydnee: Okay.

Taylor: It's just sometimes people might think you suck for, like, discriminating against other people.

Sydnee: Yeah. You're getting to...

Taylor: Like, there's no laws on the books!

Sydnee: You just stood there on a stage and sung it on YouTube. [laughs] Sorry. I was gonna say, like, on TV, but on YouTube.

Taylor: I'm sorry! I'm sorry you didn't do it on the Super Bowl. But, like, the Super Bowl, like, doesn't care! Lady Gaga was there. I don't know.

Sydnee: And it's also a really bad song. So even if it had been, like, "[singing] I just wanna celebrate trans rights," It would still be a bad song. Like, we probably wouldn't play it at the Super Bowl. [laughs]

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: That was... I don't—ugh. Ugh. And then Kid Rock?

Taylor: Hm. And I don't wanna get up on a pedestal too much. But, like, you know. Like, one of my things for as long as I've been alive, and part of me being in the food industry, it's like, I was very much inspired by Anthony Bourdain. And I think the thing that inspired me the most is that he just went to places and met people where they're at, and he got to know people. And I think that's what made him kind of dangerous, is like, he said, "Hey. You shouldn't be afraid of people in other countries, 'cause they eat food on sticks, and they like... dancing, and they like alcohol, and they like partying. Like, we're all kind of the same."

That's the most dangerous concept in the world is the idea that most of us understand, we're all kind of the same. We all love all the same things. It's the weirdos that don't fall in line with us. And I don't know why they got control, but they do. Most of us are happy!

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Like, "[mocking] Oh, I like—I like kissin' fish," whatever. Like, that sounds like an alien wrote a song about being normal. Like, no! Bad Bunny is normal. That man represented exactly what normal is. "Oh, I'm a hot young man who can't decide on a girlfriend. Look at all, like, the things I like. Everybody's dancing. Everybody's—there's community. There's food. There's people. There's dancing."

That's it for most of us. And that's great. Like, they want to convince you that the only way to feel normal is if you follow them. But they're the most abnormal people there are! [laughs]

Sydnee: And I don't understand why, why you wouldn't see—like, I am—okay. That is—this was not a culture that I am a part of. I do have a minor in Spanish, and I certainly should speak it, by all rights, but I don't. I understand enough, like—I understand what's happening. I get the sense of the songs, right? Um, I could communicate very brokenly in return. That's about it. I wish it was better. I understand more medical Spanish, but that's not helpful in most situations. Um... [laughs quietly] but all that being said, I watched that and thought, "Oh, I wish I spoke Spanish!" I never once thought, "I wish this was in English."

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: What is wrong with you, if that's what you thought? Like, "I wish he would sing in my language."

I thought, "Man. It'd be cool if I spoke that too, and I didn't just speak one dumb language." [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Well, and I think that, you know, you open up more of the world when you learn more about it. Like, that's a good thought to leave with. And I think the fact that he ended it with talking about, like—naming all the other countries that are the Americas, that's a way that, I think, even that, like... I like to think of myself as someone that's a little bit worldly. But, like, that's not a way that I think of America, and it's a better way to think of us. Like, what if we thought of ourself as all one?

Like, when you go visit Europe, like, yeah, we think of the individual countries, but you also think of it as Europe. Like, the Americas. We all are, um, connected, and we're all family together, and we all share borders, and we all share culture. That's a better way of looking at the world. That we're not some isolated identity. Because what is the American identity, the USA identity, that's not a million disparate parts from other countries?

Sydnee: Yeah. And, I mean, on the very surface level, I don't know how you—like, you watch Bad Bunny, and then he's like—he's got Pedro Pascal, and Cardi B, and—

Taylor: Jessica Alba.

Sydnee: Jessica Alba. And then Lady Gaga shows up, and then Ricky Martin shows up. And I hope you've seen the TikToks of John Hamm.

Taylor: Oh, he's loving it.

Sydnee: Just losing his mind on the sidelines. [laughs] Just—just going—and, like, you see all that. And then you're like, "Nah. I wanna go hang out with... [pause] Brantley?" Was that his name?

Taylor: Brantley, Bugley, and—and—and Bigly.

Sydnee: [crosstalk]

Taylor: Burtley and—and—

Sydnee: [crosstalk]

Taylor: —Brent.

Sydnee: Biggens.

Taylor: Burg. Bigley, and...

Sydnee: And Kid Rock, who wrote lyrics about statutory rape.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: So...

Taylor: It's an understandable thing that if you're an American that likes to be an American, but also wants to have a good relationship with your identity, I think you have to grapple with these things. And I think a part of it is, like, the acceptance of the American dream, the American ideal, is kind of bullcrap. Like, we were never the good guys. We never did the good things. We, you know—I mean, us as white people, like, we came into a place where there were already people here. There were indigenous people here. And we took their land, and we murdered them, and we forced them into tiny colonies. Like, that's truth.

There was no—this, like, "Let's go back to what's good. Let's go back to what's fair."

Like, there was never fair. There was never good. But I don't think it's without... taking the thought that we had and, like, making the lie real. Where, what if we did care about being a place where every culture could prosper, including the ones that were here first?

Sydnee: And, you know, I will say, too, to back up a step, as much as I do think this halftime show was a beautiful celebration of a lot of things that we should believe in, and aspire to, and that should inspire us about the America we could be, and about love, and like I said, just family and community and all those wonderful things. And it did send that message, and it was very unifying. All of that is true. That being said, there was a lot of discussion leading up to this about how important the Super Bowl halftime show is to unify the country. And I kept thinking, when did we decide that the thing that should unify the country was the Super Bowl halftime show?

Taylor: I think it's very important that we have...

Sydnee: I mean, you know?

Taylor: I think it's important that these artists get the platform that they get. But I agree with you in that there is a moment that I think has happened in the last, like, decade in American culture where we confuse consumerism for activism. And, I mean, like, last year's halftime show with Kendrick Lamar was amazing. It was very important. And it was a direct response to the Black Lives Matter movement. I mean, he built an American flag out of Black bodies in prison uniforms. That's important. Don't let it distract you. Don't let it pat yourself on the back and say, "I did enough. It got on the main stage of the Super Bowl, so now we're good. Now Black people are free. Now Latinos are respected in this country."

No! it's good that they're there. It's good that you see the message. It shouldn't be, um... it shouldn't release your anger in the way that I think sometimes it can.

Sydnee: Yeah. Well, and I mean, and I do think, like—I think that's a really important point. As much as I thought last year's was great, this year's was great. Very much enjoyed them. If people did take away these positive messages, I think that's incredible. I hope somebody did. I hope there was—I mean, 'cause you know, you don't need to sell me. I'm already there. But, like, I hope there were people who you did need to sell and who bought it. I hope all of that.

But the NFL did not choose either of these artists to be the Super Bowl halftime show to send a message, or to—they were not being woke.

Taylor: No!

Sydnee: It's because they were—they're incredibly popular, talented artists who millions and millions of people will tune in to watch, because they're incredibly popular.

And that's great, and that can also be true. And so, yes, watch that. Clap for that. Enjoy that. And then go do good things. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Well, exactly. Like, it... this question—and, you know, we've seen so much, like, in the... the weird aftermath. Like, I don't know why—why was there aftermath to the Bad Bunny halftime show where all of these, like, rich people felt the need to speak up? Like, "I thought that was performative. Why are performers speaking out?"

It's like, well, because that's what art does. Art gives you the idea. You have to do something with it. Like, it's not about, like, art doesn't have—art shouldn't do that. Like, no, it should! It's just you have to pick up the reins and run with it.

Sydnee: I'm glad that—I mean, like I said, I watched the Super Bowl anyway. But I found this a particularly enjoyable halftime show. I can't remember one I enjoyed more. And I do—I mean, I don't know. You always hope, maybe there's somebody out there who sees that and goes, "Maybe I was wrong."

Taylor: If you didn't need that convincing, that doesn't mean that you shouldn't see that and, like, look at the community around you and say, "What can I do to help people? What can I do to convince people of that?"

Sydnee: Well, Tey, we were so excited about this halftime show we didn't talk about past ones, but that's okay. It was worth all that time. [laughs quietly] But what are we gonna talk about next week?

Taylor: We're gonna talk about Bugonia. We're gonna talk about the new movie. [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah. It's wild. I can't wait to see what you think. Alright. Well, thank you. Uh, I'm sure it is easily available on YouTube or TikTok or wherever, the halftime show. If you haven't seen it, you should absolutely watch it. Um, it was incredible. And, uh, thank you to Maximum Fun. You should go to Maximumfun.org and check out all the great podcasts that you would enjoy there. You can email us at stillbuffering@maximumfun.org, and thank you to The Nouvellas for our theme song, Baby You Change Your Mind.

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

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Taylor: And I'm Taylor Smirl.

Sydnee: I'm still buffering...

Taylor: And I am, too.

[theme music plays]

Sydnee: We didn't even talk about Gaga.

Taylor: I love, like—everybody says, like, there's always—at any Latino function, there's one white person. She was the white person, and she did a great job.

Sydnee: Exactly.

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