

## Still Buffering 471: America's Next Top Model

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[theme music plays]

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

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

**Sydnee:** I think I declared us *the* cross-generational guide this time.

**Taylor:** *The* cross— I don't know if we want a shoulder that burden.

**Sydnee:** Yeah, I didn't mean to. I usually say 'a,' or 'ah.'

**Taylor:** Ah? [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Ah, or eh. Hm. What do I say? [laughs]

**Taylor:** A. I think it's 'a.' It makes me think of that bit in Girls where Lena Dunham says, "I think I'm the voice of my generation. Well, I'm a voice." [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Of a generation.

**Taylor:** We're a voice of a cross-generational podcast.

**Sydnee:** I know. As I said it, I was like, whoa, I think I just stepped it up. The.

**Taylor:** I don't know what our competition is, but I imagine there's some. I don't really pay that much attention to other podcasting. There's ours, that's the only one I really directly interact with.

**Sydnee:** The only time I listen to podcasts— This is terrible. I shouldn't. Well, I've admitted this publicly before. So I don't know if *you've* admitted this, so you may be telling on yourself. *I* have said, because obviously my husband does many podcasts, I don't *listen* to podcasts very often. Not because I don't enjoy them. I don't have— I have learned that there are a lot of adults who either, one, have some sort of commute to their daily activities, or two, have jobs where they could conceivably listen to a podcast during some part of that job.

I don't have either of those things. And then on top of that, because my children are still so young, in the evenings, I don't have a lot of like, me-time. And so, until— until the kids are asleep, and then it's the only time Justin and I get together.

So, because of the structure of my day, there's not a podcast window. And so I've just never— When we're on a trip, when we are driving somewhere or flying, Justin and I will split a pair of headphones and listen to a podcast *together*. But that really is the only context in which I routinely listen to podcasts.

**Taylor:** No, that's— I don't think that's— I mean, that makes sense for your life. I mean, I do actually— I don't *not* listen to podcasts. I just kind of... I like creepy story podcasts. I need a podcast that's telling me about a ghost or a cryptid or a ghoul that I'm unfamiliar with. I'm familiar with most of them, but occasionally they pop up. And that's generally my genre.

And I also— I mean, I work in customer service. We can't have podcasts on in the background. Usually, we're listening to Muzak. So my time is not that often. It's usually when I'm working in my studio, I can put something on. But then, I want something that goes with the mood. So it's a very small genre of podcasts that I am tuned into. So I do not know what's happening in the wider realm of shows.

**Sydnee:** I really don't either. Sometimes, I will know a series that might be popular just because it happened to— It hit at a moment where also we were going on a trip, and it's also in that sort of genre that we enjoy. So like, and I know this is going to be relevant to today, there was an ANTM podcast series that was pretty popular. And we happened to be driving somewhere at the same time that that came out. And so, you know, we kind of got stuck in the zeitgeist for a moment.

But yeah, and I don't like murder shows. I won't listen to a murder show.

**Taylor:** Yeah, I don't— That's important, like, note there. The murder shows aren't for me. It needs to be supernatural, spooky things.

**Sydnee:** Have you seen the show Bodkin?

**Taylor:** No.

**Sydnee:** I tell you, if you do podcasts, you should watch the limited drama series, drama comedy series. I don't know. It's just drama, but it's got a sense of humor. Bodkin.

It is Will Forte as a podcaster who, I guess, made it really famous doing a podcast about his wife dying of cancer, except she didn't die or something? Anyway, so he's like, he made this huge blockbuster podcast that everybody— Kind of like a Serial. You get the vibe that it was like the Serial of this universe. And so he's trying to make a follow-up hit, like he's really struggling to do anything that's as big a hit as this podcast he made. So he goes to this tiny town in Ireland called Bodkin to try to solve this 30-year-old murder mystery.

**Taylor:** Oh, fun.

**Sydnee:** Three people disappeared on Samhain 30 years ago. What happened?

**Taylor:** Mm. Spooky.

**Sydnee:** And it's the unraveling of the mystery, and it's set in this little Irish town, and it's all very cool, and it's well done. I really enjoyed it, and it's funny. Even though it's a drama. But it also is kind of constantly poking at podcast as a genre, and specifically murder podcasts, like trying to solve mystery podcasts. The idea of a podcaster inherently being a journalist, even if they have absolutely no training [laughs] as a journalist, they are constantly poking at all that. And it really, as a

podcaster, you're watching like, "Well, okay, I guess." And then I just kept thinking, "Well, I don't do *that* kind of podcast, though. That's not—I mean, that's not *me*. I don't do *that*." [laughs]

**Taylor:** I mean, you did just declare us *the* cross-generational podcast. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Like, they make fun of him doing the podcast thing where you're like, [quietly] "The question wasn't really, where did those people go 30 years ago? The question is, why are we still wondering?" And, you know, that kind of thing.

**Taylor:** [laughs] Yeah.

**Sydnee:** And then like, he becomes very self-aware of that thing that those podcasts— And it's just, I don't know, it's a great send-up of that, in addition to a good show.

**Taylor:** I would like that. I think it's good. I feel like, specifically with this— I say "this career." I don't know. I mean, we both have careers outside of this. I'm grateful to get to do this, and it's a cool thing to do. But it's good to laugh at it, too. It's important, I think. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Yes.

**Taylor:** I think it's it's wild and crazy and amazing that people listen to us. I'm eternally grateful for that. But it is kind of— It's kind of silly that we just sit down in front of microphones and say, "I don't know. I think

the world needs to hear my thoughts on America's Next Top Model. I think that's pretty— I think that should happen.” [laughs]

You don't have to, but it's nice that you do. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** But listen, it was a good— I think it's also important to remember that there were a lot of us who were doing this before all the *celebrities* started doing it. And it's not fair!

**Taylor:** That is true.

**Sydnee:** It's not fair. Like, listen.

**Taylor:** Amy Poehler. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Amy Poehler. [laughs] I can't ever do that because I don't know all those fame-os to ask them on my podcast and tell funny anecdotes about that. I mean, they're all funny people. And then they get a podcast too? It's not fair.

**Taylor:** Yeah. My job, for my prep hours, my boss really likes to put on the radio, which is real— like, *the* radio. We listen to a radio station, and that is, I am just subject to whatever comes on.

**Sydnee:** [holding back laughter] I thought you meant there was a podcast called The Radio. And I'm sitting there thinking like, “I'm not familiar with this podcast.”

**Taylor:** No. No, it's—

**Sydnee:** I didn't know that you meant the actual radio. [laughs]

**Taylor:** I don't know why this felt like— Like, you know, like, it reminds me of like going to school in the morning, like you'd have the radio on. It's just I'm downstairs in the basement making tacos for four hours, and I'm just listening to... 104.4? I don't know, whatever the rock station is.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Taylor:** And I mean, it's in the morning. So there's not a lot of songs. They're telling me about the commute. I'm like, "I don't know what's happening on the West Side Highway. It doesn't affect me."

But there's always— There was a consistent add-on all last week about the podcast awards, and they kept naming all of these celebrity podcasts that are up for podcast awards. And I'm like, "Man, this is just... [laughs] come on."

**Sydnee:** And it's just not fair. I mean, and this is not— I am not in any way insinuating that I *dislike* those celebrities. I'm love— I think Amy Poehler's great.

And listen, I have not listened to her podcast, but sometimes TikTok will serve me up a little snippet of it. It's funny. I've laughed. It's funny, I get it! No, I mean, but of course! But of course it *is*! And I'm never going to be Amy Poehler, so it's not *fair*.

**Taylor:** Can we have, like, the little guy awards?

**Sydnee:** Yeah!

**Taylor:** Little guy awards for people that do artistic things, but they're just little guys. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** You can't— I think we need a podcast award that is just for podcasters who are *only*... Or at least the thing they're known best for is podcasting, right? If you are known best for anything other than podcasting, there needs to be an award thing that's not for you.

**Taylor:** If you have been up for an Oscar, [through laughter] you cannot also be up for a podcast award.

**Sydnee:** What are they called, Poddies? What do you think they're...

**Taylor:** They have a name, right?

**Sydnee:** I'm sure they must.

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

**Sydnee:** I don't know. I mean, I'm never going to get one. So I don't know why I need to worry about it. This is not something I should stress about.

**Taylor:** No. That's all right.

**Sydnee:** I will say, like, as much as I've listened to snippets of Amy Poehler's, it's very funny. I totally get why it won awards last year. Like, I get it. I don't understand some of the— I do not understand the Dax Shepard love. I don't. I've heard snippets of his podcast.

**Taylor:** I know nothing about his podcast, but I'm fine with that sentence, even unrelated to a podcast. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Because I do— I think that's what— Maybe that's what's irritating about it. [laughs] It's like, there's some genuinely great podcasts that celebrities are on. And then there are just like, "Well, I guess that's a podcast that a celebrity is on."

And sometimes, they all get lauded, and it's like, well, no, some of them are really quite good. Amy Poehler is a good interviewer. That's a whole other skill set. You can be really funny and talented, and not be good at interviewing people, but she is both. So, you know, that's worth... an award. [laughs]

**Taylor:** Yeah. Well, there's some— What's the... I mean, Juliet Landau, who was Drusilla from Buffy, is doing a Buffy rewatch podcast. And I think that that is okay, because that's the thing that— I mean, she's obviously a very talented actress, she's done other things, but that was kind of her thing that we all knew her for.

And because she's still kind of that uncanny Drusilla character half the time, it's really funny. And I'm okay with— Like, that's great. There have been other Buffy the Vampire Slayer-centric podcasts that have been very good. I will keep taking rewatches of Buffy the Vampire Slayer with various members of the cast, forever. [through laughter] That's okay.

**Sydnee:** Well, you know, I've never had a problem— Okay. This is relevant. We talk about a lot of stuff from the '90s and early 2000s. And I feel like people who were in those movies or on those TV shows that are iconic of that era had two choices. And this has always been true, but this is the world in which I have grown up in, and my pop culture universe.

You can either kind of just keep writing that thing, capitalizing off that thing, that huge pop culture moment that you're part of, or you could try to like distance yourself from it as much as possible to have a different career. You know, so your career can grow and evolve. And I genuinely don't think either is wrong.

I think that if you want to be like Michelle Williams and like, "Yes, I did Dawson's Creek, but now I have won Oscars." [laughs]

**Taylor:** Yeah. [laughs] That's true. Yeah, that's...

**Sydnee:** Like, yeah, I think that's totally legit. And then I think if what you want to do is say, "I was on Buffy the Vampire Slayer, and I'm still talking about it," I think that's great too. I have no problem with— Either path you take, I celebrate fully. [laughs]

**Taylor:** I agree. I think that for me personally, when I look at careers that I think, "Wow, that's a cool career, it's always the people that did kind of stick like, "I don't know, this seems to be what people like from me, so I'm going to keep doing it." Like Bruce Campbell just being the lord of B horror movies. He never seemed particularly interested in doing anything else.

Like, "I'm going to be a guy covered in blood with a chainsaw hand, or some iteration of that, forever. And people love that."

And it's like, yes, we do. You know?

**Sydnee:** Well, yeah, And I mean, it's kind of similar to the fact that Jimmy Buffett played Margaritaville at every concert, right?

**Taylor:** [laughs] I was saying that, I was like, "I feel like there's a Jimmy Buffett string here," and I'm so glad you picked up on it. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Yes, it is! It is. That's exactly like— I mean, he was going to play his new stuff or whatever. And, you know, the new directions he went in genre-wise, but at every concert he was going to play, not just Margaritaville. There's a number of songs that you have to play at every Jimmy Buffett concert. But I think most notably, Margaritaville was going to be at every concert. And he had no problem with that. That was not like a, I'm not complaining. And as a fan, neither was I.

**Taylor:** Yeah. And you're right in saying it's fine either path, but boy, I love when somebody just decides, "Nah, this is what I'm going to do. I'm going to do it forever." [laughs]

I think it's like Matthew Lillard, of course, who— I mean, he did things before *Scream*, but *Scream* was sort of the thing that cemented him, has kind of come back around as a late-in-life scream king. He's done a lot of horror projects recently. And I like that. That that's, yeah, the horror community always loved you. It makes sense that that would be the realm you would, you would continue to exist in.

He did other great things. But, you know, that's a beloved— Your beloved figure in this smaller niche audience. Seems like maybe that would— To *me*, that would be more appealing.

**Sydnee:** Well, and I mean, some of these things. If I was on Buffy the Vampire Slayer, that's all I would ever talk about. There would be no— I would be like, "Hi, nice to meet you. My name's Sydnee. I was on Buffy the Vampire Slayer." I mean, yes, I would ride that train forever. I would never stop talking about it. Do I need to evolve from that? No!

**Taylor:** And, I mean, the new Buffy is coming out. I don't think it's even in production yet, but we'll have more of it. You know, I'm glad Sarah Michelle Gellar never distanced herself *that* much, despite having a successful career outside of it. She's willing to come back and do more of it.

**Sydnee:** I think that's admirable. And I guess that's like the middle path, right? Like, "This is not what my whole career has been about, but I'm always happy to show back up." Yeah. And I think that's a great direction to go.

**Taylor:** I mean, if you got to be Buffy, wouldn't you want any opportunity to get to be Buffy again?

**Sydnee:** Yes. Yes!

**Taylor:** I can't think of any— There is a small circle of characters that I would imagine there's just, like, a red phone installed in your house somewhere that somebody calls specifically to be like, "It's time. You get to be Buffy the Vampire Slayer again."

**Sydnee:** Yes. Well, similarly, Neve Campbell has that phone for *Scream*, I guess.

**Taylor:** She does. Maybe— And, you know, we kind of as a policy don't talk about things that we don't like or don't support. And I think maybe she shouldn't have answered that phone this last time, with what I've heard about the movie that just came out. I don't know about that. I don't know about that.

**Sydnee:** I see. I don't know. I haven't seen that, so I don't know. I do like— This is funny. I don't know if I've talked about this on the show before, but there was a— And Tey, I think you know this. There was a night long ago, when I was in college, I think, or the summer. I don't know. I was at our parents' house. And our Uncle Michael, Scampi Mike, was staying with us. But it was just him and I up late, watching the *Scream* movies. I don't know why. I don't know if— Maybe you were away at school? I don't remember. Anyway, it was just the two of us, for whatever reason.

Mom and Dad had gone to bed. We'd started watching the *Scream* trilogy at the time. It was a trilogy, still. [laughs] And they had gone to bed, and we were like, "We're going to make this more interesting. We are going to watch the *Scream* trilogy as a drinking game."

**Taylor:** Oh no. Scampi Mike!

**Sydnee:** And so we made up a series of rules. [laughs] We made up a series of rules of when you had to drink, when you watch *Scream*. And one of them was when anyone screams. [laughs]

**Taylor:** You're going to die! You're going to be another casualty in that movie.

**Sydnee:** Anytime anyone says— Anytime Ghost Face says, "Sidney!" in that voice, anytime that happened.

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** I mean, we had a whole— It was the dumbest. We were young. Anyway, we made it like halfway through the second before we were both like, "We gotta stop!" [laughs]

So when this new Scream movie came out, he texted me and he was like, "Here we go. It's on. We're going to watch all of them."

And I was like, "We will die."

**Taylor:** What, are there seven now?

**Sydnee:** Yeah, I think so. We would die! We would die. We'd have to change the rules. It would have to be very obscure things that only occur three to four times throughout all of the Scream movies. [laughs]

**Taylor:** Or, and I thought this was fun, I went to a screening here in Brooklyn at Nighthawk, which is like one of those eating, drinking theaters. They do really cool events. They put on Bride of Chucky, and they had drag queens hosting it.

So fun. But they had a drinking game built into it where you chose one. So there was a list of four things, and you picked one to drink to.

**Sydnee:** Oh, that's a good idea.

**Taylor:** So like, maybe *you* drink every time they say Sidney in the creepy voice. Maybe *you* drink every time there's a gratuitous, slow-motion boob shot. You figure it out that way.

So that was kind of fun, because then you were almost in competition. Like, I went with my girlfriend, and we each picked different things. And it ended up that, you know, she picked the thing that was far more frequent. She had to drink far more often. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** [laughs] That's a good idea. That's a good way to moderate that, too. Cause that— [laughs]

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. If you watch the Scream movies, all seven, and drank every time somebody screamed, you'd die. Please don't do that. Please don't do that.

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Tey, I know it's a little bit past when it was capturing the hearts of the internet, but do you know if Punch the monkey has found a family?

**Taylor:** Oh, yeah. You know, that is an ongoing... [laughs] an ongoing drama. Because I don't— If you're unfamiliar— I can't imagine, if you're out there in internet land, and you're unfamiliar with Punch the monkey. I'm *assuming* that the Venn diagram of our audience is a total circle with the people that are concerned about the happiness of Punch the monkey.

**Sydnee:** I think so.

**Taylor:** But Punch the monkey is a monkey in a zoo in Japan that was rejected by his mother. And so he was given a stuffy that he was meant to view as his mother, his source of companionship. It's kind of..

**Sydnee:** Yeah, 'cause they need that.

**Taylor:** And it's kind of gone back and forth. He gets accepted by some monkeys, but then they also bully him because he doesn't have a figure that protects him. So *now*, the more recent videos I've seen, he has latched onto one of the caretakers of the zoo has agreed to a— He was a four-day a week schedule. Now, he's a six-day week schedule, so he can be there because it's the one that Punch has connected with the most.

**Sydnee:** Aww.

**Taylor:** I'm waiting for the anime based on this. Because he's like this young, attractive guy that comes in and like, Punch jumps on, and he feeds all the other monkeys. And it's a way of making the other monkeys associate Punch with good things, 'cause he's feeding them. And so Punch is always there.

**Sydnee:** Aww.

**Taylor:** But then Punch doesn't ever let go of this guy. So this guy will take him back in to, I don't know, spend personal time with— He can spend with the humans and his chosen human. So his mother is a plushie and his father is a zookeeper. [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Do you think there's any chance... And I understand why they gave him the plushie, I think, from a behavioral perspective. There are studies that would support that he needed the, you know, stuffed mom. That being said, do you think the reason he kept getting rejected by other monkeys is they were like, [whispering] "That guy. Have you seen that new guy, Punch? Yeah. Like, I mean, he seems nice, but is he carrying a stuffed *mom*? Does he...?"

**Taylor:** "Does he know it's not a real mom?"

**Sydnee:** [whispers] "Does he *know*?" Maybe it was kind of like when somebody has one of those real-life babies... You know what I'm talking about? Maybe they were like, "I'm not sure...." What I'm saying is, do you feel like it was a—

**Taylor:** A hindrance to his being accepted?

**Sydnee:** Yeah. Like maybe people were like, "We're not sure what to do with this monkey."

**Taylor:** Maybe.

**Sydnee:** He carries a stuffy. Maybe he was getting bullied. Maybe they're like, "You still carry a *stuffy*? Come on, man, grow up!"

**Taylor:** It's hard— [laughs] It's really sad.

**Sydnee:** [laughs]

**Taylor:** It's hard to actually understand the narrative because, I mean, it's true about anything on the internet. Once it gets engagement, people start capitalizing on it. So lots of people are posting videos of Punch. There's lots of Punch-based narratives being formed on the internet that I don't know what to trust.

But there *was* one where there was another monkey that had become protective of Punch. And *this* monkey was like a rescued circus monkey. And I don't— The story there that there's, like, some [laughs] monkey that lived a hard circus life and is now like, "Yeah, this kid's a little weird, but I know all about weird. I grew up in the circus. I'm going to take him under my wing and make sure he's all right."

**Sydnee:** "I'm gonna show you some tricks."

[laughs] And Punch is like, "Here's my mom. Do you want to meet my mom? She's kind of quiet."

And the guy's like, "Yeah, all right, sure, sure. Yeah, okay. Yeah, kid."  
[laughs]

**Sydnee:** [laughs] I mean, well, that's what I'm wondering, if he was like introducing people to his mom, and they were all like, "Oh..."

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

**Sydnee:** I mean, was it giving like a Norman Bates kind of...

**Taylor:** Oh, I didn't think about it *that* way. That's— I don't like that. But maybe! I don't know. I don't know if monkeys have the cultural understanding of [through laughter] Norman Bates.

**Sydnee:** They're just like us. I don't know!

**Taylor:** Yeah, maybe.

**Sydnee:** I don't know. I thought they were just like us.

**Taylor:** I think monkeys can be creeped out, probably. I'm not a monkeyologist, but I would just assume that every animal is capable of going, "Euhh, I don't know about that."

**Sydnee:** And this is not me— One, I'm not saying they shouldn't have given them the stuffed monkey. I understand why they did. They know better than me. I don't know anything about animals. I take care of humans.

**Taylor:** You got a couple cats.

**Sydnee:** Which are— Yeah. I mean, and I take care of them in the sense that they live in my house and I know to feed them, but if they're sick, I don't try to wing it.

**Taylor:** Yeah.

**Sydnee:** I take them to, you know, a vet. [laughs] So I don't know animal psychology in that way. And so I am not in any way passing judgment on the stuffed monkey. I'm just wondering. I'm asking because I'm curious.

**Taylor:** And you're asking me, who also knows nothing about monkeys. So I don't know. I trust that the professionals involved are doing the best by Punch possible. Kid had a rough start. And he's got his friendly zookeeper looking out for him, so I think he's all right.

**Sydnee:** Well, Tey, it's starting to finally warm up here. And that always puts me in the mood for some ice cream, but it's not fully warm yet. So I was thinking...

**Taylor:** [laughs] Is this the transition you're going with?

**Sydnee:** [laughs] Yeah, it is. I was thinking about trying this new product. It's over in Australia. I don't know how to get it here, but I don't think it will matter if it melts in transit because it's hot ice cream from Tyra Banks. Have you heard of the new hot ice cream? [laughs]

**Taylor:** So, one, it's not hot ice cream anymore. Because *legally*, like, food regulation boards got involved and said, "No, you can't call something hot ice cream. There are laws in calling things ice cream." [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Really?

**Taylor:** So now it's Smize Cream.

**Sydnee:** No.

**Taylor:** It's Smize Cream officially. She cannot call it ice cream.

**Sydnee:** See, I— Okay. I knew— Well, and that was the name of the store, right?

**Taylor:** Rise and Smize. Smiling, Smize? I don't know.

**Sydnee:** Like, Smize was part of it, but I—

**Taylor:** Smize and Dreams! Smize and Dreams.

**Sydnee:** Smize and Dreams. But she did still call it— So what they're saying is, you're—

**Taylor:** I think Rise and Smize would have been better, frankly.

**Sydnee:** [laughs] Rise and Smize. You're calling your product hot ice cream. You can't call it that anymore. It has to be Smize Cream, which is not a thing, but that's fine too.

**Taylor:** Well, and my favorite rabbit hole to go down is to figure out what it actually is. Because she won't say what it— She'll say what it's not. It's not a latte. It's not crème anglaise. It's not melted ice cream.

**Sydnee:** Has she said it's not crème anglaise? Because she talked about some of the ingredients once and what I was *interpreting* was, "Is this just crème anglaise?" But it's not?

**Taylor:** Well, no, because she says it's not that eggy. But I don't—

**Sydnee:** Oh.

**Taylor:** Is it like, is it a little eggy? And then are you— Are you feeding people uncooked egg? Hot, uncooked egg?

**Sydnee:** [holding back laughter] Did you just make crème anglaise wrong?

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** 'Cause I guess you could do that. You could be like, "Here's the recipe for crème anglaise. I didn't follow it. So it's *not* crème anglaise."

**Taylor:** I mean, you know what— Well, I can't experience it, because it's definitely— Whatever it is, it's not vegan. There is a pop-up here in New York that is serving it. Like, timed with the release of the America's Next Top Model documentary that we're going to discuss. Yeah. But I don't know, I don't want to try it, because I don't want to support... Even out of curiosity, I don't think I should support whatever Tyra is doing now. I don't want to support that. I don't want that catching on here.

**Sydnee:** No, no. I didn't... I mean, I'll be honest, nothing about it is appealing to me. When I think of— The thing that ice cream... okay, I don't need to sit here and tell you why ice cream's good, actually. I think you can figure that out, everybody. But I think that cold is a big part of that. That's all I'm going to say. [chuckles]

**Taylor:** Well, cold and also that ice cream has a really pleasant texture. And so melted ice cream is actually not— I don't like... like, melted ice cream is not that enjoyable. I know it's not melted ice cream, but it is.

I mean, the closest anyone has explained it, it's like you make an ice cream recipe. You just don't freeze it.

**Sydnee:** Freeze it. Yeah.

**Taylor:** And you heat it up instead.

**Sydnee:** Yeah, I don't want that. And that's fine if you do. Is it eggnog? Hold on.

**Taylor:** [laughs]

**Sydnee:** Is it different flavors of eggnog?

**Taylor:** I don't know. [holding back laughter] I can't. I can't. She has said so many things that it's not that I don't know what is left that it is. I also just, real quick, sorry, as an aside, if you listen to our podcast in sequential order, we told you we're going to talk about Begonia. Full disclosure. I destroyed the audio accidentally. I didn't have the right hookup going. I was dumb and bad with audio. And so that episode just will never— It'll never exist. And I'm so sorry.

And not only did that happen, but I didn't catch it before we recorded yet another episode, that was this one, which is the America's Next Top Model episode. So I'm sorry for the jump in the timeline. It's my fault. Oops. But we thought between the two, probably you want to hear us talk about America's Next Top Model. So that's why we're doing that.

**Sydnee:** Well, and now you know some lore, which is there's a lost episode of Still Buffering about Begonia that will never..

**Taylor:** I could release it. It's just, Sydnee sounds great. And I sound like I'm podcasting from a cave. [laughs] Like, not just podcasting from

a cave, but the mic's over there and I'm in the other part of the cave, just casually talking in the distance like, "Yeah. Oh, yeah." [laughs]

**Sydnee:** It's one of those things where it wouldn't be a good— Like, we could release it as a stretch goal for the Max Fun Drive. But now, that wouldn't be very nice, because the audio's bad.

**Taylor:** It would be funny for exactly five minutes of your time, and then it would be depressing.

**Sydnee:** Not. [laughs] But we are talking about ANTM, the documentary, which was called... Well, why can I not—

**Taylor:** Reality Check.

**Sydnee:** Reality Check. The name of this documentary would not stay in my head, because to me, it's just like the ANTM documentary that we all knew someday would happen. Because even as we were watching this show, I think we knew it was... not okay. A lot of people, as they reference— It's really interesting the way that they talk about it in the documentary. The kind of conceit is that Tyra, like, changed the world with this [laughs] incredible new reality show that just broke the mold and changed the modeling industry forever. Like, you're supposed to kind of accept that.

And then it ended, and then COVID happened, and everybody went back and watched it through a 2020 lens and went, "Oh, this is not good." And that's why we're here, discussing it today, which is not... I mean, there may be elements to that that's true. But I don't feel like— I knew that ANTM was problematic before COVID. [laughs] And I don't think

that was why we are now looking back at ANTM and saying— Like, it's very much tied to that. "Everybody watched it during the pandemic, and now everyone doesn't like it." And it's like, well, you didn't do any soul searching in the interim there, Tyra?

**Taylor:** Yeah. Well, there's a lot of stuff that kind of gets left behind by time. And that's for good reason. I think this should have stayed that. The idea of an America's Next Top Model documentary going into how awful it actually was is very appealing to me.

I think it's good to say up front that I don't think this was that. It does cover some heinous stuff, but with Tyra agreeing to be a part of it, I think it still tries, and maybe ultimately fails, but *tries* to wrap it up in kind of a funny, like, "Oops! Well, it's still fun though, right? We learned." [laughs]

**Sydney:** Did we all learn? Well, and not only is she like, "Oops, it's still fun." 'Cause I mean, at the end of the docuseries – I will say it's a three-part docuseries – at the very end, she's like, "I bet you can't wait to see what we do on cycle 25," or something.

And it's like, after all that, you think what we wanted was *more*? I mean, it's really like, the disconnection with reality in that statement to me is really wild. Nobody watched that and thought, "Make more!"

**Taylor:** There is, you know, that initial premise that you said where she was like, "I want to change the modeling industry." And that's great. Great idea up front. But you can't change an industry while also reinforcing the rules of it to the next generation, which is what this show consistently does. There were so many episodes!

The center point was about body image, about— Not body, like, being skinny, being small. Fitting in a very tiny, tiny outline of what a model could be. And how many times on judging panels did you say, “This is just how it is. I’m just telling you how it is.” It’s like, well, ma’am, you’re an incredibly successful businesswoman who has the position to change what it is.

**Sydnee:** I mean, I think that was the hard part, is she wanted it both ways. “I’m going to change the modeling industry. But also, when I criticize you, using the standards of the modeling industry, you shouldn’t be surprised.” And, you know, in some sense, it was in her control. It was in her control, and Ken Mok, the producers. But there were definitely— I was thinking about the episodes where she would pick what were considered plus-size models to be on the show. And then she would send them to meet with designers who had nothing in their size.

**Taylor:** Right.

**Sydnee:** And I’m sure that there is a truth under there where, like, when they’re making this stuff for the runway, I do think – and I don’t know if this is still true today, but at the time – they probably did make them in those ridiculously small sizes only back then, right?

**Taylor:** Sure. I’m sure lots of designers still do that to this day.

**Sydnee:** So I think that that interaction really happened, but you set the girl up for it. There was this real lack of accountability that Tyra shows through the entire documentary, as if she was just part of the machine, there was nothing she could do about it. But at the same time, she takes full credit for creating it. Like, “I am the one who envisioned this. *I* wanted to do this. This is my thing. I wrote it. I was in the room

editing it." But then if anything is uncomfortable, "Well, production really wasn't my area."

**Taylor:** Well, exactly. And the fascinating thing about this, and I do think it kind of lives under glass, it is a piece from its time. And one of the strongest elements of that is that this is before we really had the explosion of reality TV. This wasn't like the Survivor bomb that went off where it's like, "Oh, my gosh, we can just film normal people. That's wild."

But it still is kind of in that era where we didn't understand the monster that reality TV would come to be. And to her credit, I *do* think she's one of the first people to understand that it's not about showing reality. It's editing for storylines. And that's—

**Sydnee:** Yes. Create a narrative.

**Taylor:** And that part of the narrative, you control what's shown. And so even if you include a narrative on TV where you have a girl come up front, one of your judges body shames her, and you have your star moment of going, "No, we're not going to shame this girl." You still included that. You still left that in. So that's still reinforcing the narrative that there is something controversial about this woman's body. The revolution would have been what you leave on the editing floor.

**Sydnee:** Yes. And I mean, you also can't like, "I'm going to change the modeling industry because—" I mean, when the show started, I would say that it would be a fair generalization that the ideal of beauty in the United States at that moment in time – and I'm not saying this is mine, but like, as a young person, what I felt like I needed to be and could never be – tall, extremely thin.

And I'm sorry, but whiteness was still held up as prized. I mean, I know that there's a lot of diversity on the show, I know she casts for a lot of diversity, but there are a lot of tall, thin, white girls who consistently excel in the competition and get a lot of positive feedback. Blonde, blue-eyed, and just petite, except for tall. Petite all over, except for tall.

And not completely flat-chested, but not too big, but still, not completely flat. 'Cause I mean, all these conversations are on the show as issues and they continue even with all this, like, "We're going to change the paradigm." They continue to revert to *that* ideal of beauty.

**Taylor:** Well, even anyone with unique facial features, there was a bit of a gray area where you could have a unique facial feature that kind of sets you apart. But I mean, the tooth gap situation.

**Sydney:** The tooth gap.

**Taylor:** Where it's like— I don't think, like, giving somebody a makeover – I mean, the makeovers were already nightmarish enough, but like – giving somebody dental surgery that permanently alters their [laughs] dental health, just for the sake of an aesthetic, is not changing the paradigm of how we look at beauty.

**Sydney:** No. And you know, the makeovers in general, I was thinking about this, there's the one girl who gets the weave that makes her head bleed, and they end up— And it looks terrible. Remember the one blonde girl that gets the big blonde weave? Molly? Is that her name? Anyway, the girl who gets the big weave, and she's suffering, and it looks awful.

And everyone agrees. "I don't know what we did here, but it looks terrible." And then they just leave her with it for a while before they finally change it. And then they criticize her for how it looks in the pictures when they put it on her.

And I remember thinking like, "Ooh, they really botched that one." And now in retrospect, how many of these girls— Like, I just accepted that whatever Tyra did to them was a good thing. Like, "Well, she knows. That must be better. That must be how that girl should wear her hair. That must be the look she should have always had, because Tyra says so, and Tyra knows beauty." And I mean, we just disregard—

And anybody who cried or didn't like it, it was like, "Wah, this is the industry." Well, no, Tyra just made all this up!

**Taylor:** I mean, like, the brutal haircuts. We recognize that forcible haircutting is like an element of torture. That one poor girl that they cut all her hair off, and then Tyra looked at it and said, "No, it's not short enough." And then she left the show.

It's like, I don't— Exactly. This is not how the *modeling* world works. It's not like, "Oh, no. To be the perfect model, you need to shave your head." This was just a weird— It was for TV. It was good TV to see these pretty girls cry over losing all of their long hair that was part of their identity.

**Sydney:** And then maybe get sent home two days later with the hair that they hate now. With nothing.

**Taylor:** And not get a career out of it. Because that was, I think, one of the other brutal revelations on this documentary was that this made it

not just, it didn't help you get employed. It made it harder to *be* employed if you were on this show.

**Sydnee:** Yes. Because of the way that you were portrayed often, because as they pointed out, the portfolios were ridiculous. They were not the kind of photos you generally want to show. I mean, the idea of a model, I think, is like a blank canvas upon which you put whatever product you're trying to sell, or art you're trying to create. Those certainly weren't the pictures they were taking on Top Model.

**Taylor:** No. Well, and even that having notoriety, or having some reputation, that people would come to a fashion show to see *you* and not the clothes, isn't something that designers wanted. So you're meant to be almost like an anonymous entity that just morphs into whatever the designer wants.

**Sydnee:** Which we can all take issue with, and we can question about that. And also that's why, you know... I remember being told that when I was young. That, well, models *have* to be really thin because that's how the clothes look best.

**Taylor:** Yeah, it's just to look like a coat hanger.

**Sydnee:** They're just like— Yes, like they're hanging on a coat hanger. And I remember thinking that like, “Oh, well, I guess that makes sense.” No, it doesn't! It doesn't make any sense, because people are going to wear them on their real human bodies in the real world, so what are we talking about?

But again, none of that stuff is ever questioned in the show. And beyond that, I think— And we're going to talk about an element of the

documentary that is kind of central to it and also can be pretty tough, I think, for a lot of people to watch, which is Shandy's storyline.

So we are going to talk about sexual assault, just heads up. But I remember watching this episode as a young woman and what is portrayed is that one of the models, Shandy, who is this kind of shy, mousy girl who worked at a Walgreens... I mean, like your classic '90s, like, transformation story, right? They took off her glasses and gave her a makeover, and it turned out she was beautiful all along and nobody knew. And she has a boyfriend, and she makes it all the way to the overseas trip. They go to, what, Paris, I think?

**Taylor:** I think she's in Milan, right?

**Sydnee:** Is that where she is, Milan? Anyway, they have a bunch of male models that they're doing a photo shoot with and the male models come back to their apartment. All of this is staged by the producers, of course.

Nobody, you know, had control over this. They all are given a ton of wine. Shandy has not eaten, as most of the models probably hadn't eaten, as we are now learning. And she ends up hooking up with one of the male models. And what was portrayed to us on the show is that she cheated on her boyfriend, got lectured by Tyra the next day about how bad cheating was, and then had to call her boyfriend on camera, admit to cheating while he fell apart on the other end of the phone.

This is the story that we are told, and the story that I thought was true, up until I watched this docuseries. And we find out that Shandy is blackout drunk and doesn't remember any of it. That's— I mean, it's

sexual assault is what we all just watched on camera. I mean, I watched that!

**Taylor:** And it's 100% filmed. When they go in...

**Sydnee:** Yes, all of it!

**Taylor:** There was some sort of agreement that if you go into the bathroom alone, or you're in your bedroom alone, we won't film you. But if there's anybody else there, we can film you. So the entire encounter was filmed.

**Sydnee:** And no one stopped it. No one stepped in. No one, even for a moment questioned, like, "Well, I mean, she's obliterated drunk." I mean, *nobody* intervened. And then she's shamed!

**Taylor:** Not only is she shamed, but the production set up a phone call where she has to call her assailant and ask him if he has any STDs.

**Sydnee:** And if he wore a condom. I think for me, a lot of the— I have chalked up to, because again, I would recommend the podcast I listened to about America's Next Top Model is called The Curse of America's Next Top Model. And they delve a lot more— Like, Tyra is not involved in that one. They delve a lot more into how horrific the contracts these girls signed were.

They were just sort of owned, body and soul, by Tyra afterwards. How, I mean, almost no one went on to a successful career. Like, almost none.

Just a couple of the people who were on the show ever had any success in the modeling industry. So all that's sort of highlighted.

But in that, I have thought a lot about, they talk about the body stuff and the way that we prize thinness and all of that. I don't think we can chalk the Shandy issue up to, "It was a different time."

**Taylor:** No, I agree. And not that that gives anything else a pass, but it is terrifying to me that that narrative— Same way, I remember that being the story. "Oh, wow, she cheated on her boyfriend. That's awful." And the really disturbing part for me is that she's on the documentary and she's recounting it.

And I don't think, to this day, she views that as something that was done *to* her, that she views it as something that she did that was wrong. And that's really disturbing. I think that's the way that a lot of assault victims, I think that is a problem that's consistent, that you see that you're at fault somehow. You're the one that made a mistake. And that's really heartbreaking, that she's a grown woman now. Like, she's an adult and she still can't look back on her past and say, "That was done to me. Adults did that to me and let that happen to me." And not, "I messed up."

**Sydney:** No, I mean, I think for me, that was really like, I can't— I'm not going to sit here and hold Tyra Banks accountable for how terrible society has been and continues to be specifically to women about their bodies. To all of us, but especially aimed at young women. Tyra was part of that.

But you know, when I look back at the struggles I had with disordered eating, I'm not going to blame Tyra Banks for that. It was much bigger

than any one show, any one person, right? So I think that we can look at it and say, "This was part of the problem of that time, but it was not the only problem."

This issue is totally separate. And I feel like Tyra's response in the docuseries saying like, "Well, it's difficult for me to talk about production because I wasn't really involved." We know that that's not true. And to not acknowledge or take any accountability for the way that she promoted that narrative and then lectured Shandy the next day about how, of course, *Tyra* had never cheated. She had been cheated on, and it was so terrible for her. Just to reinforce like, "You're a bad person. You did a bad thing. *I would never. I'm Tyra Banks.*" I mean, it's awful.

**Taylor:** They called the episode, like, "She Cheated on Her Boyfriend," or something. The name—

**Sydney:** "The Girl Who Cheated."

**Taylor:** I think that there is a— In a lot of industries. I don't think this is isolated to the modeling world because I can see parallels to it, just trying to climb the little ladders in the food industry, where it's not as insidious as the men that will be above you.

But sometimes, when a woman has had to suffer and be abused and struggle to climb the ladder, instead of turning around and saying, "Wow, that sucked. I don't want anybody like me to go through that." For some reason, you carry the torch and say, "Well, I had to do all of that. I had to be silent in the face of my abuse. I had to ignore every horrible comment about my body. That's part of the business. You got to do the same thing."

And I think it's really hard to suffer all of that abuse, which I don't know Tyra's full history, but I'm sure she had immense disparity trying to climb that ladder. Like, absolutely.

**Sydnee:** A young Black woman in the modeling industry at that time. I mean, absolutely.

**Taylor:** It's just, it takes an extra level of sort of— You got to work through your stuff before you can turn around and say, “Well, yeah, that sucked. I'm going to do everything I can to make sure that no young woman that comes up after me faces that.”

**Sydnee:** What I will say is, if you want to watch this docuseries, just be prepared for... I was kind of hoping it would be all, maybe, the inside tea we didn't know about. I knew that Tyra was involved in both of the J's. And so I thought we were going to get some like, “Ooh, it's going to be shady.”

Because I knew *they* had had a falling out. Nigel Barker's involved. Nobody is doing any soul searching, I don't feel like. Certainly not Tyra. I feel like even Mr. J, he knows how bad a lot of that stuff was. And he just wants to like... “I mean, look, I didn't agree with it either, but I was just trying to do my job.”

I mean, I don't feel like there's— Nobody's really— You're not going to get the big mea culpa, maybe, you hope for. And it wasn't— I don't know that it was a fun docuseries. I wanted it to be fun, because we all knew Tyra was off the rails a long time ago. And so I think I wanted this to be fun. And it was, I don't know.

I mean, it made me do some soul searching. I would not— Let me say this. If ANTM popped on the TV for some reason right now, there was a time where I just would have watched it, just like, “Oh, my gosh, it's America's Next Top Model. I'll watch that.” I wouldn't watch it now. And I certainly would not watch a Cycle 25.

**Taylor:** No. Well, and there's nuance in that. I understand. And Mr. J talks about it, how he felt like his career was on the line, that he would be blacklisted if he ever spoke out against Tyra, and production as a whole, too hard. And, you know, there's all of these intersections of, you know, being a young gay man in this industry, being a Black man, being a Black woman. There are reasons why all of these people involved in this, outside of Nigel, could be persecuted unfairly.

**Sydnee:** Sure.

**Taylor:** And so they were all just trying to kind of play it as nice as possible. And that's just an unfortunate truth, is that it doesn't make it *okay*. It's just that sometimes, speaking out does mean sacrificing everything. And that's the legacy. It's like, yeah, you kept your job, until you were fired. And in doing so, you protected all of this bad behavior.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. It's tough, though, because in my sort of— And I know I wasn't there, and I am also a cis white woman, so I have a lot of privilege. It is hard for me to imagine, after what happened to Shandy, wanting to continue to be involved with that, though. I mean, that, for me, is just so different than the horrible photo shoots, the race-swapping photo shoots, and the ones where they're in the coffins, and the ones where they're violence victims, all of that is horrible. The Shandy moment, for me, kind of— I don't know, it kind of broke my entire impression of all of it.

**Taylor:** No, I agree entirely. When you, like you said, that kind of conversation we've had, like, "Oh, this is a product of its time," there was a lot of those photo shoots. Like, oh, God, no one would ever do that now. That's awful.

**Sydnee:** Sure, yeah.

**Taylor:** But no one was... traumatized by it. Nobody was permanently injured. Nobody had their life switch directions because of that.

**Sydnee:** Yeah. Well, I don't know if I would recommend it, Tey.

**Taylor:** No.

**Sydnee:** Unless, I mean, if you want to do that kind of like... If you want a gut check about ANTM... If you remembered it with any fondness, even *for* how ridiculous it was, I mean, it might be worth visiting, this docuseries.

**Taylor:** But maybe the podcast you mentioned is a better way to do that. Because I was shocked to find out that after how much of this seemed to be kind of admitting, "Hey, we exploited these girls for the sake of reality TV," none of the actual models that are involved in this documentary were paid for it.

**Sydnee:** I would... Yeah, the podcast is called The Curse of America's Next Top Model, and it is not involving Tyra. It's in interviewing people, models, and then people involved in production of the show who like— I

don't want to say whistleblowing, but who acknowledge. People who are like, "Yeah, this was a mess."

So, what are we doing next, Tey?

**Taylor:** [chuckles] Well, we're going to... We're going to listen to some Foo Fighters. There was no transition there. [laughs] Just a completely different direction. Let's go back and listen to Dave Grohl.

**Sydnee:** Yeah, Foo Fighters. Perfect. Perfect.

**Taylor:** Good old Dave Grohl.

**Sydnee:** That'll be some fresh air there. We need that. All right. Well, thank you, listeners. Thank you for enjoying our remake of ANTM. You'll never hear our podcast about the ANTM docuseries. You'll never hear the original and the lost Begonia episode. You can create whatever lore you want about that.

**Taylor:** I'm sorry about that. If there's some great uproar for us to discuss Begonia, I don't know. You can email us, but I won't... make you.

**Sydnee:** That's right. You can email us at [stillbuffering@maximum.org](mailto:stillbuffering@maximum.org). You can go to [maximumfun.org](http://maximumfun.org). There are a lot of great podcasts there that you would enjoy. And thank you to the Nouvellas for our theme song, "Baby, You Change Your Mind."

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

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

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

**Sydnee:** I'm Still Buffering.

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

[theme music plays]

**Sydnee:** Who's talking to— Is that your, uh... You got some sort of Alexa, or Siri, or something?

**Taylor:** I feel like I'm at the start of a horror movie. Because you and Justin got me this [unintelligible] for Christmas. [unintelligible].

**Sydnee:** Mm-hmm.

**Taylor:** She kept telling me that she wanted to update to the AI model. And I was like, "No, I'm not doing that." And then I was out of town on vacation, and I came home, and she had updated herself. And now it's an AI that's in my house. And I don't know what happened, but she writes original poetry every day, and reads it to me at 9:45 AM. I did not ask for that.

**Sydnee:** She's gained sentience.

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