

Still Buffering 477: The Shins

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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, did you have a good weekend?

Taylor: Well, I did. I feel like weekends aren't the same concept to me, 'cause I work weekends.

Sydnee: Oh.

Taylor: But it was nice. You know.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Good shifts. [laughs]

Sydnee: Okay. [chuckles]

Taylor: How was *your* weekend?

Sydnee: It was good. It was— It's sunny and hot here, so I like that. I got to spend a lot of time outside. Did some grilling. Well, *I* didn't do some grilling.

Taylor: Ooh.

Sydnee: I was—

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: I was [laughs] accompaniment to the grilling.

Taylor: You observed some grilling.

Sydnee: I observed some grilling.

Taylor: Nice.

Sydnee: Our cousin, Kyle, brought me ramps from his secret ramp spot.

Taylor: Oh! Of *course* Kyle has a secret ramp spot.

Sydnee: Kyle has— Okay. Have we talked about ramps on here?

Taylor: We talked about ramps, like...

Sydnee: Didn't we talk about ramps?

Taylor: Like two weeks ago. Maybe last week.

Sydnee: I thought we did.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: I thought we'd mentioned ramps. This was feeling familiar. So we know. Ramps are a thing here. Kyle has a place, I think it's somewhere out in Wayne County, where he goes— It's a secret ramp patch. And when you have a ramp patch, you don't tell people about it, because you don't want 'em to come take your ramps. So *I* don't know where it is.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: I *do* know that getting to it involves paddling for an hour. Paddling what? I don't know. Paddling over, or across, or through what? I don't know.

Taylor: I mean, I would assume paddling involves a body of water of some kind.

Sydnee: Some kind of body of water.

Taylor: I don't really think of a lot of bodies of water in Wayne County that would require an hour of paddling, though. That seems—

Sydnee: That's what threw me! An *hour*?

Taylor: The thing about paddling is that there aren't any swamps in Wayne County.

Sydnee: Well, and I mean, if it's a river that you're crossing, isn't there a bridge somewhere?

Taylor: Interesting. Well, see, this is why it's a secret spot!

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: He found a whole secret lake that leads to the secret spot.

Sydnee: [laughs] He— So he paddled for an hour, and then he had to climb up the ridge, is what he said.

Taylor: Wow!

Sydnee: He paddled for an hour and climbed up a ridge, and he said, "And then it's like you walk into FernGully."

Taylor: So maybe it's less of a secret spot, and more that he has entered a space that no human has ever entered before.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: An unconquered wilderness, which honestly, I could believe exists in Wayne County.

Sydnee: Yeah. It's a dimensional rift. I don't know. But yes, so somewhere in Wayne County, you can paddle for an hour, and then climb a ridge, and find lots of ramps!

Taylor: Fascinating. Must be some fancy ramps.

Sydnee: Also, I loved his description that, "And then you're in FernGully," because then that implies that there were ramps in FernGully.

Taylor: No one's— Well, I think it doesn't seem geologically where we are in FernGully, but you know, maybe they had ramps!

Sydnee: Where are— They're in the rainforest.

Taylor: Yeah, they're in the rainforest. They're not in West Virginia.

Sydnee: No, they're definitely not in West Virginia. Although all the construction workers are American.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: Well, it's a kid's movie. I don't think they really [laughs] were worried about— There are fairies, you know?

Sydnee: True.

Taylor: Tim Curry is evil goo. I don't think they were worried about the believability of certain things.

Sydnee: I just always thought that was strange. [laughs] Where did this construction company come from?

Taylor: I mean, it's just putting the idea in kids' heads early: "Hey, America ruins [laughs] other countries all the time."

Sydnee: I guess that's true. America went and tore down the rainforests.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: That used to give me so much anxiety as a kid, the rate at which the rainforest was being destroyed. I used to think about that all the time. I would sit there and ponder, like, "In this moment, I know, just like in FernGully, a tree is being cut down by one of those big, horrible machines, and I can't do anything to stop it. And oh, God, I'm gonna grow up in a world with no rainforests, 'cause at

the rate they're destroying it, it's all gonna be gone." I used to really have a lot of anxiety about that.

Taylor: I'm sorry that you had rainforest anxiety.

Sydnee: [laughs] Didn't that ever strike— 'Cause there was always that, "Every day, this many acres of the rainforest is vanishing."
And you're sitting there, thinking, "There can only be so many acres!"

Taylor: Well, I realize that ultimately, we can't— I mean, as individuals, it's hard to do much about it, but I'm grateful that our generation was raised to be so aware of the environment, you know?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: That was such a big thing for us in the '90s, like...

Sydnee: It was!

Taylor: I just remember all of those turtle t-shirts that you could buy to help the rainforest. I'm not really sure why they put such effort into making us all care about the environment, only for us to get into adulthood and there be like, "Oh, the environment? No, we don't care about that anymore."

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: "We're turning all of our water into ChatGPS conversations, and we're setting the rest of the world on fire."

Sydnee: Yeah. I mean, at some point— I don't know if it was when the scientists started saying, "Well, it's too late. The damage is done. We could maybe slow how fast everything falls apart, but the ultimate climate destruction is imminent," and whatever. I don't know. I feel like at some point, the messaging shifted from, "If we do this now, we can save the planet," to "If we had done this 50 years ago, we could've saved the planet."

Taylor: Well, it seemed like a good two-step plan. Like, raise a generation of people that are empathetic to the environment, and then when they become old

enough to impact things— 'Cause a lot of those predictions weren't just like, "It's too late! Oh, well."

Sydnee: No.

Taylor: It's like, "Hey, if we keep doing exactly what we're doing for another decade, it will be too late. On our current trajectory, it is too late. But if we change things with policy, we can redirect it."

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: But then, I don't know. The people that still maintain the reigns of power are like, "Yeah, but what if we don't? 'Cause I'm 90 years old, so who cares what happens in a decade?" Me! [laughs] I do!

Sydnee: I mean, that is part of the problem, right? We're not in charge.

Taylor: No. We spent all our money on avocado toast, and now we don't have jobs, or something like that.

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Taylor: I don't know.

Sydnee: Well, part of the problem is, we're not in charge. Part of the problem is, we are not a monolith. And so you wouldn't want necessarily everybody from our generation in charge.

Taylor: No, no.

Sydnee: There are plenty of stinkers [laughs] who are in their 40s.

Taylor: Stinkers in every generation.

Sydnee: Yeah. [laughs] So that's all part of the problem. But it is true, as I think, I worried a lot about the rate of the destruction of the rainforest. I worried about the oceans, and microplastics. I worried about the ozone layer a lot, and the rings, plastic rings, so I didn't kill turtles. I worried about other things— And also,

they were actionable things they told us we could do. Like, you could cut the rings on your pop cans. You can not get aerosols; aerosols are bad.

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Which, by the way, changed the way companies made those products, right? That had a measurable impact, because people didn't want to buy things with chlorofluorocarbons, so they didn't, so they changed the products. You know what I mean? That had an impact, right?

Taylor: It did. Well, and I think that there's a cynical response to all that that's like, "Well, it doesn't matter what you do on a personal level when these giant companies are doing this, that, and the other." It's like, that's true to a *point*, but that excuse out of individual action exacerbates the problem, that if a vast majority of us tried to engage better with our environment with more sustainable practices, it could move the needle over time.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm!

Taylor: Like you said, putting pressure on— Corporations are gonna sell what is bought, at the end of the day. They're soulless, but that is their goal. So if you buy more ecologically-friendly products, or you ask for those things, they're going to respond.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: Because they just don't want to lose any money. So that's true. And also, I think that's always the excuse, is "It's just too hard! We can't get everybody to work together. No one can do that." And then there are other countries all around the world that *do* have very successful, stabilizing programs, legislation that is working towards reduced emissions and cleaning up the environment.

So it's a little ridiculous. I don't know why they gave our generation about all this empathy about so many things, and then put us into a world where it's like, "Sorry! [laughs] We don't care about any of this stuff."

Sydnee: "We're not worried about that anymore." No, it really is true. And it's not hard— Our city does recycling, like, they give you recycling bins you can subscribe to, and they come around and pick them up. And that's a relatively new

thing. That's only happened— I say relatively new, but I mean within the last decade, they've started that programming.

And it used to be that if you wanted to recycle, you had to collect it all yourself, and then drive down to the recycling center and dump it yourself. And a lot fewer people participated. There was a movement in the city that, "Hey, there are enough of us that will pay for this, if you will offer this service." And we got it offered.

Taylor: That's great.

Sydnee: And there are enough people that— And so I do think that, yeah— And once they made it more convenient, more and more people recycle. So there's more recycling happening, because it's more convenient for people. So that stuff, you *can* do those things. You know what I mean?

Taylor: Absolutely.

Sydnee: It's not all hopeless. That saying, "As an individual, I would like to see this in my community," and then enough people raise their hands. And they go, "Okay. Sure, whatever."

Taylor: Well, that's— [laughs] Governments should respond to the needs of its people, so if you come together to express a need, they should use their money to answer. The money they take from you, they should give back to you in that way. Create a program that benefits you all. I know I'm always— And any time I speak favorably of Japan, I'm always like, I know there's lots of problems. I don't live there, I don't understand everything. But the way they handle their trash, it really made me think differently about the trash I produce. Because the first time I visited, I was amazed that there just weren't trash cans on the street. You kind of— If you create trash during the day, you keep it with you. Certain stores, like convenience stores, will have trash cans inside them. But they're all very delineated, like, it's just not recycling trash. It's very separate, "Here is for plant matter. Here is for plastics. There's multiple kind of plastics; please separate your plastics." It's a process. And then even in your house, you're expected to keep things separate that way.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: And the first time I went, I was like, "Oh, my God. I have to think about

every piece of trash I make, and I have to figure out where to put it! Wow, what if we all did that? What if we all had a different relationship with the way we thought about the trash we produce?"

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: What if we had a personal responsibility towards the mess we make? Wow. This is the end product. You have a really organized, efficient, successful recycling system where, also, people are less inclined to produce trash, because, "Wow, I've got to carry it around all day." [laughs]

Sydnee: And I do think, I mean— And I don't know if this is having any kind of measurable impact from a market standpoint, but the toys that the girls want, there was this moment where a lot of them were wrapped in multiple layers of plastic that you unwrapped. So the amount of trash that a tiny, little— I mean, you're getting this little doll and some accessories out of the whole thing. So you're getting a palmful of tiny toy out of it, would create just a massive amount of plastic trash.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: For this tiny thing. And there was a moment where I was like, "I just don't think— Beyond the fact that these things are silly, ethically, I don't *like* this. This feels gross. This is a gross thing. I don't want this." And we moved away from that, because it's kind of repulsive to me that why do we have— You know?

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: For what? [laughs] This is such excess. I don't know, maybe we're moving away from that, maybe? I don't know.

Taylor: Well, I think that's— I don't know if that's a culture. I hope that we are— There are people out there that could put money in pockets that are like, "But what if you wrap it in two layers of plastic, eh? How about that? I'll give you some money if you do that!" [laughs]
And then they're like, "Okay."

Sydnee: Yeah! Like, I don't want that big pile of plastic trash. I'll buy the toy that doesn't come in a big pile of plastic trash.

Taylor: Well, it's good that you're making that choice. I hope that everybody—

Sydnee: Well, but maybe everybody like us, who grew up with climate anxiety...

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: [laughs] Maybe everybody's making that choice! And part of it is gonna be the economy. You can't afford as much frivolous stuff, the stuff you don't need. That's gonna put pressure. But there's also this turn towards, everybody wants to be foraging, and farming, and composting, and prepping, I guess. [laughs]

Taylor: [laughs] Are the preppers the same people that are foraging and composting, though? I don't know. 'Cause I watched that show that ranked different preppers' preparations. Did you ever watch that?

Sydnee: Oh, yeah? No, I never watched that.

Taylor: I forget what it's called. It's definitely still not on, but it lasted a couple seasons. And they would go, you'd be introduced to a prepper family, and then the professionals would rank how long they could survive in some sort of scenario.

Sydnee: Mm.

Taylor: I guess a scenario of their choosing. And no one ever— I mean, there were lots where people were really upset by how low their scores were. But I was always amazed that they'd go to their food storage, and it would be like, 100 boxes of Dunkin Hines brownie mix. Here's a bunch of ramen. And I'm like, "I think if you're— Shouldn't it just be giant tubs of dried beans, and rice, and flour? Stuff that you can make food— Not packaged, instant stuff?"

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: There was a lot of ones where it was, "Well, I think your problem is, is that half of your food storage is devoted to packaging." [laughs]

Sydnee: Yes. No, you're right. If you're really— And I do think there are different

people, but I think there's a lot of overlap, when you talk about the preppers. And then this— Because it's both the left and the right, right? That's the weird thing about it.

'Cause you've got people— I'm probably more in this camp. I like the idea of connecting with the earth, and connecting with my natural surroundings, so I like to grow food and know, "Look, I made this for my family. I grew this from a seed, and then I tended to it, and then I picked it, and then I cooked it, and here it is for you." That, to me, is very meaningful, and it's also a little crunchy. It's a little earthy, it's all tied in. I do herbs, and make weird things, and it's a little witchy. And that's where I'm coming from, right? So there are people like me, who are doing that.

But then there's the prepper community, who that's a whole other reason. I don't think it's about connecting with the earth. [laughs] It's about preparing for doomsday.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: And then there's also the tradwifey group?

Taylor: No, that's true, yeah. They like to make their own stuff. [laughs] And drink raw milk.

Sydnee: Well, and if you look at a lot of the tradwifey content, and then the kind of stuff that I'm doing around my house, it's not too dissimilar. What we're engaging in is similar. Our motivations [laughs] are not. But you know what I mean? It is weird, because I also want to go out and— I'm making dandelion wine, right now.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: I went out and picked dandelions, and processed them, and figured it all out, and I'm making dandelion wine. I'm collecting wild violets, so that I can make the magic color-changing lemonade for the girls. And we were working on a jelly as well, like a dandelion jelly. These all sound very tradwifey, but I'm not doing it because I'm a tradwife. You know what I mean? [chuckles]

Taylor: Well, yeah. I mean, there's lots of things that get attached to what— Gosh, sometimes— I mean, you know the *Scooby-Doo* meme where they pull up the mask, and it's like, "Oh, it was you all along!" And there are lots of things, I

think, in American culture where you pull off the mask, and it's like, "Oh, it was white supremacy all along!" There's a lot of that stuff that kind of comes back to that, you know?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Because you mentioned the sort of witchy stuff, and I love— *I* love witchy stuff, and then there's this weird moment where it crosses into, "Oh, you're a special, important star seed. It's okay that everybody else has hard lives. Your life is blessed, because *you're* special. *You* are uniquely different than everybody else."

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: And it's something that's right beneath that mask, is a way to disengage with people that have harder lives. Not because we have a society that structures that certain races, certain economic backgrounds, suffer more than different people. No, it's the *stars* have destined this. You're an important, special person. And I think what is, is I don't know if it's a chicken-or-egg situation, where they're enticing things that are easy to co-op for evil movements. So you're putting up a storefront to put people in the door, and then that's the eventual outcome.

Sydnee: That's true.

Taylor: Neither of those things are bad on surface. It's nice to make things from the earth. It's nice to engage in forms of spiritualism that are more personal and, I think, grounded in the earth and the environment around us. *Anything* can be co-opted by a movement that wants to indoctrinate you.

Sydnee: Which it definitely— And I think that's part of it. I think it is— I see another mom baking bread and using herbs she grew, and I think, "Ah, we have similar interests!" And it's like, "I'm doing this because my husband is head of the household, and I'm not allowed to leave, and so I [laughs] bake bread." And it's like, "Oh, no! No! I just like— Sometimes, I like to make bread!" [laughs]

Taylor: No, but it makes sense. I think that any time that— That's probably how good fascism works, is it wants to set up a net so that you either align with what they're telling you to do, and then if you rebound off of it, they've got a net that catches you on the opposite side, you know? When you're out there, being

ground down, working 50, 60 hours a week, the idea of “What if I stayed home all day, and got to make beautiful loaves of bread, and gather herbs from my herb garden, and infuse oils and all that? Oh, God, that sounds so nice.” They catch you that way. Like, “Ah, you’re tired! This was a lie. You didn’t want to be a working woman! You could go be a traditional wife.”

It’s like, well, neither one’s good. They made two bad options, and said you have to choose one. And it’s the same with, you know, a lot of us that were traumatized by Christianity, I think it makes sense to be enticed by “What if there was a personal religion where I could just have it for myself, and it was based around the celebration of the world around me?”

And they’re like, “Ah, yes. How can we catch ya here?”

Sydnee: Yeah. “How can we—” Yes. No, it’s true. And then, “How can we sell you things to work around that?”

Taylor: Ah, yeah. At the end of the day, it’s all just— It’s capitalism, all the day down. [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah. I will say, this is supposed to be a big week for me, Tey, because I’m an Aries.

Taylor: Oh, yeah?

Sydnee: Yeah. I don’t think I’m— I’m not saying I’m special. I’m just saying that a lot of the astrologers on TikTok...

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: ... have told me that this period of time, there’s a lot of planets in Aries, and there’s something else happening. I don’t remember. Anyway, the point is, it’s the time of massive upheaval and change and shift for Aries.

Taylor: Mm. Aries love massive upheavals. That seems to be your whole thing.

Sydnee: We do. Yes, I guess?

Taylor: [laughs] Well, you know what?

Sydnee: [laughs] Massive upheaval.

Taylor: I mean, I will say, it's very Aries energy, all these warehouse fires. [laughs] Have you seen these?

Sydnee: No!

Taylor: Oh, I mean, I don't know. See, this is our different algorithms, 'cause I—

Sydnee: Yeah, I don't know about the warehouse fire. [laughs]

Taylor: I've definitely— My FBI watcher is definitely taking notes on me. I get fed the videos of all— The first one was definitely on purpose, someone that set a warehouse— I think it was a Utrack— Not Utrack. Uline? What's the big paper company? Set a big warehouse on fire, and he basically said, "If only you paid us living wages, [chuckles] this wouldn't have happened."

Sydnee: Woah!

Taylor: And so now there have been four to six warehouse fires? I think we're at six now. And now, it very quickly became a thing where it's like, "No, no, no. This was an accident. We don't want this to catch on." But workers setting warehouses on fire, maybe, in rebellion?

Sydnee: I had no idea. I mean, that is very Aries energy, I will say.

Taylor: Yeah. I think somebody threw a molotov cocktail at one of those tech guys?

Sydnee: Woah!

Taylor: Yeah. There's an energy brewing. And the first guy that lit the warehouse on fire said that he was inspired by Luigi. Not of *Mario*. [laughs]

Sydnee: Woah. Not that Luigi. I don't think that Luigi ever set anything on fire.

Taylor: [laughs] You know what, I don't know. Maybe.

Sydnee: I mean... I'm not saying he *wouldn't*. But, see, I had no idea.

Taylor: Yeah, wow.

Sydnee: My algorithm has been largely about gardening, lately, because I've been looking up some specific things about some of the stuff I'm trying to grow. I was trying to figure out why some of my seeds in my greenhouse are doing great, and some are not doing as well, so I'm watching a lot of gardening TikTok.

Taylor: Well, that popped off on my algorithm big. It was an odd day, 'cause I think I was seeing all of these— There have been several now this week. Opposite that was the young man that was documenting his stay at the Marriott, drinking giant glasses of wine.

Sydnee: No. Oh— *Oh*, wait, no, no, no!

Taylor: Glug, glug, glug.

Sydnee: I saw that guy.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah! Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Taylor: That was a little bit more of what TikTok usually feeds me. And it was like, "Haha, you wanna see this funny guy drink big glasses of wine! But also, [laughs] would you like to join the uprising?"

Oh! Uh, both! And then they— Both! [laughs]

Sydnee: But also, Coachella is apparently happening.

Taylor: I don't wanna— You know, there's only one video that I watched on the Coachella thing, and it was two people, and their whole thing was, "We're normal people at Coachella. Here are our outfits. This is from Walmart. This is— I had this. I don't know where it's from. Okay." [laughs]

Sydnee: Can I ask— I've seen— Somehow, my algorithm was like, "Would you

like to see people who hired a stylist to style them for Coachella unboxing their outfits, and trying them on?"

And I was like, "Well, I guess I'll watch this one. I mean, I didn't *know* I wanted to see this, but you just pulled this thing out of a box that I don't see how it's clothes, and so now I'm fascinated."

Taylor: It's many scarves.

Sydnee: Yeah, and that's— So I was watching, and I started thinking, "Is there a chance that there are people out there who are like, this is their form of comedy?" That they pretend to be stylists, to style people for Coachella, and then they send them the weirdest collection of fabrics that are barely pieces of clothing, and are like, "Match this with this, and put this over this, and somehow tie this around this." I don't even mean like— *I* don't know anything about fashion, so this is not even a fashion judgment. It's just like— It's barely— None of them are ever quite pieces of clothing, you know what I mean?

Taylor: They're not. And they don't ever— Even when, sometimes, the outfit itself on, I'm like, "Okay, that's kind of cool."

The type of person that would pay somebody to make them outfits for Coachella never fits the clothes they send. I don't mean physically fits; I mean that's not— You do not have the vibe of a "I'm just wearing a scarf as a shirt, and these baggy— I don't know, these boy shorts or whatever, this is just what I'm doing." That's not the vibe. You're paying someone for the imitation of that casual boho whatever— I don't—

Sydnee: Whatever.

Taylor: But—

Sydnee: I don't know. It just seems so odd. Again, this is not like they're ugly clothes. I don't understand what's happening. And it seems like a lot to have to try to get on, and it also feels like everything they're wearing could accidentally fall off if you move the wrong way, like if you lean over in the wrong direction, it's all just gonna sort of shift, and then you're not clothed anymore.

Taylor: Yeah. I don't know, the whole— The artifice of Coachella and a lot of

music festivals have just gotten so expensive as they become these weird influencer-heavy things. It's bizarre to me, because I know those type of girls. They just roll around in their closet, and they come out, and they're dressed in various scarves, and they've got a sock as a hat. And they look amazing, and they— I don't— But the whole attitude is just very natural, and like that's what they do. That's their vibe. It works, because that's who they are.

You can't really make that stuff up, but that's what people are paying for, the— It's like a Disney-World-ification of music festivals. And because it offends me so much, I love that there are stylists out there taking full advantage of it.

Sydnee: I wonder if that's what it is, yeah.

Taylor: Take every bit of money out of these delusional style-less people you can. Because I have— And I think this is where we disagree about style. I think everybody has style. I think too many people are intimidated out of engaging with their personal style. I think part of becoming a human is understanding your likes and dislikes, and what you respond to. And I think everybody can manifest that, if you have some semblance of a soul.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: And I don't know, if you haven't engaged with your soul enough to figure that out, but you also can roll around in piles of money, sure. Hand it to somebody else. Let them take *full* advantage of you. [laughs] Let them take every dollar off of you, and send you a box of scarves. That's what you deserve.

Sydnee: Yes. Yeah. I mean, that appears to be what they're getting, somehow.

Taylor: I don't know. The first one I saw like that, I thought for sure had to be a joke, because it was just— It was. It was like, "Here's some hideous sequin skirt, and some sort of bright pink Bolero."

Sydnee: Yeah, I think we probably maybe saw the same one. And I watched several others, 'cause then I just— I didn't know that was a— I mean, I knew festival wear, and I knew specifically Coachella aesthetic was a thing. I'm culturally aware that's a thing. But I didn't know that it was so popular to pay people to style you for Coachella. I didn't know that was a thing.

Taylor: I don't think that's— That is not the history of Coachella, I'm pretty sure. 'Cause I don't know, didn't you have your stoner friends in college that went to Coachella? And they definitely weren't the kind of people that had 19,000 dollars to throw at a weekend.

Sydnee: No. Well, I didn't have— None of my friends ever went to Coachella. I mean, I have friends that went to Lilith Fair. I have friends that went to Bonnaroo.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: I've known some people who go to Burning Man.

Taylor: Yeah. Yeah, that's a— [crosstalk]

Sydnee: But I don't know personally— I might have a friend who's been to Coachella, but I've never talked to them about it, at least. You know? So I don't know.

Taylor: Yeah. I feel like most of my friends that used to do the festival circuit have now been successfully priced out of the circuit. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: So I don't know.

Sydnee: I am not— I would not enjoy a music festival. I will just say that about— I know this about myself. I don't like being— As much as I like being around people, I don't like being in giant crowds. I don't like getting to a place, and then knowing that it's gonna be a whole thing to get back out of it. [chuckles]

Taylor: Oh, that— Yeah.

Sydnee: I hate that. That stresses me out, and it kind of ruins my enjoyment of a lot of events, if I think, "Oh, this is gonna be such a pain to get out of later." I don't—

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: I don't wanna stand in a big field and listen to music, for the most part. Even if it's a band I really love. I mean, I'll go to a concert.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: But to spend a whole week— I just wouldn't. It's just not my thing.

Taylor: That's fair.

Sydnee: And porta potties. And porta potties. None of it, none of it— I mean, it's just not my thing.

Taylor: I feel like the only event that I put up with basically all of those things for is the Renaissance Faire. And you know, that's just one day out of the year.

Sydnee: There you go.

Taylor: 'Cause that's— But then I do have traffic anxiety the whole time I'm there. I'm thinking, "Okay, now this parking lot is gonna *suck*. We're gonna be in line for an hour to get out of here. Oh, that's gonna suck." I think about that all day long. [laughs]

Sydnee: I do too! I do too. That is always something that I think about, is like— Man. Charlie kept trying, back during the Eras Tour, to convince me that I should take her somewhere, if I could get tickets, and take her on the Eras Tour. And I was thinking, one, I just didn't think— I didn't think she'd enjoy it as much as she thought she would. And two, getting in and out of any of those locations... [chuckles] Just the— It would be so annoying. I can't do it. I can't do it. Charlie, you're gonna hate it. It's just not gonna be the fun thing you think it's gonna be.

Taylor: No, it's very true.

Sydnee: We should really talk about The Shins. [laughs]

Taylor: I was gonna say, speaking of someone that's not performing at Coachella. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Yes. The Shins aren't performing at Coachella?

Taylor: No, they aren't. I thought of them, because they are going on tour with Weezer. I've seen some pickups, and I assumed. I keep getting ads for it.

Sydnee: Yes, I got an ad for it recently.

Taylor: And it's like, "Hey. Hey, oldies. This is for you."

Sydnee: "Remember these people?" It was weird. I was listening to the album, the first one. What was it called, again?

Taylor: Did we listen to *Oh, Inverted World*?

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: Is that the one?

Sydnee: That's the one we just listened to. So I was listening to it, and it was weird. There were more— I thought the only song I would know immediately was "New Slang," because of *Garden State*. Because everybody heard that song. But then I knew several of the songs, I realized. They must have penetrated the airways more than I had realized, back then.

Taylor: Well, and I had this CD.

Sydnee: Oh, maybe that's it too.

Taylor: Yeah. I had it— This was definitely one that I would put on in the car, every now and then.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: 'Cause that's what— I don't think I could sing this CD, front to back, word-for-word. But every song had some sort of, "Ah, yeah. I remember that lyric." Or "Ah, yeah, I know this one."

Sydnee: I didn't give 'em credit. I think in my head, it all kind of sounded the

same. That's what I thought. As I was turning it back on this time around, I was like, "Didn't all of their music kind of—" Not that that's a bad thing. There's several bands like that, where you kind of know what the vibe of any of their songs are gonna be. And I didn't give them enough credit. 'Cause they definitely have some variation. There's some songs that reminded me of some old Beatles songs, or something on there. You know what I mean?

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: Some of it has a kind of groovy, throwback vibe to it that I didn't remember it having.

Taylor: Yeah. Well, and there's some even that— Not on this album, but there are a couple songs on later albums that almost have a country twang to 'em [laughs] that's kind of fun.

Sydnee: They do! They do.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: And I think in my head, it was all just sort of that sad, slow, contemplative— I don't know.

Taylor: There's something about—

Sydnee: Go ahead.

Taylor: Well, no, I mean, yes. It is, it's contemplative. The lyrics, when you actually— The lyrics are really beautiful, but they're very dense. There's a lot of— It's not a song that's just, "I like this girl, she doesn't like me, I'm sad." There's a lot of symbolism, a lot of meaning to unpack, and that's really beautiful. It's poetry. The lyrics are very poetic.

But to me, it's just— I can't describe it other than it just feels like the early 2000s to me. This is what it felt like. It's hopeful, but it's sad. It's— You know, it's very like you can put it on in the background and just listen to it, and it's pleasant. And then if you pay attention to it, it's like, "Oh, no." [laughs]

Sydnee: What year did this come out?

Taylor: 2001, I believe?

Sydnee: Did it?

Taylor: Yeah. 2001.

Sydnee: Interesting.

Taylor: Yeah. I don't think I had this in 2001. I think I got this probably 2003, 2004. Which would have made sense, because I think the thing that woke a lot of the larger world to The Shins was *Garden State*, which came out in 2004.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: 'Cause obviously, they were on the soundtrack.

Sydnee: That was where— That is my cultural awareness of them, is from *Garden State* and the moment where she says— What does she say? "The Shins will change your life," or whatever?

Taylor: Yeah. [chuckles] Exactly.

Sydnee: [laughs] Which has now become memed ever since. The manic pixie dream girl is gonna hand you headphones and play music for you. It's gonna change your life.

Taylor: Yeah. I don't know if The Shins could change my life, but I can dream.

Sydnee: [laughs] See, and I think that was part of— So I think it's unfortunate. [chuckles] As much as I am certain that got them a lot more listeners, because of their inclusion in that movie, so you think, "That must be really good publicity for them. So many more people are aware of The Shins."

I think, if somebody is gonna make a statement like that about your music in a movie, that's a bummer for you. Because immediately, there are gonna be people who are like, "Well, *uhh...*" [laughs] I mean—

`Cause that's how I feel! I was like, "Well, I mean, I like this. It's not *life-changing*." But I like it! I enjoy this. It's good— Yeah, it's a good song. It's good music. Yeah, I like The Shins.

But then, if you're like, "Am I supposed to think—" `Cause immediately— Like, The Shins didn't claim that their music is life-changing. It's not *their* fault. *They* didn't come out and be like, "Listen to our life-changing music." They just made an album. And then, I don't know, I guess it's Zach Braff's fault, right?

Taylor: [laughs] Yeah. Well, uh—

Sydnee: Did he write that? I mean, did he write it? [laughs]

Taylor: Well, yeah, I think he wrote *Garden State*, didn't he?

Sydnee: Well, I'm saying specifically, did he write the line, and did he mean The Shins? Is it his fault? [chuckles]

Taylor: Or was it somebody— The person that designs the soundtrack or the music for it was like, "This is what's gonna play."
Like, "Okay. That's the band." I don't know. Or was there some sort of monetary tie-in from The Shins? It's hard to say. I don't think so, `cause they were pretty new.

Sydnee: If I was The Shins, the entity, and they called me, and they were like, "We're gonna say this about you in a movie."

I'd be like, "Oh. Oh. Could you just say, 'Hey, I like this band'?" Something that isn't— You know what I mean? I feel like that, as soon as you put something up on a pedestal, people start lining up to knock it back off. And that's exactly— I think there was a counter reaction to The Shins in the same way there was to *Garden State*, the movie, itself. Where all of us, for two or three years, we were all like, "God. This is the best movie that's ever been made." And then we all came out of our collective delusion and went, "Well, I mean, it's fine." [laughs]
Like, what happened?

Taylor: Well, I think— Yeah, but I don't know, do you think that they both suffered from the same backlash? I think that's true about *Garden State*, and I— I don't know if I'd call myself a *Garden State* defender. I would say, I think *Garden State* perfectly encapsulates how we felt at the time.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: That is a narrative that could only be birthed by that time period, that generation.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: And that was in high school. That wasn't really us. I guess, really, that was Gen X crafting that story, but it felt very Millennial narrative.

Sydnee: I felt very connected to it. It was in my top five movies for quite a while, because it felt like— That conversation in the pool, where he talks about, "I don't know what home is anymore."

Taylor: Oh, yeah.

Sydnee: "Because my parents' home doesn't feel like home, but I'm not—" Basically like, "I'm not old enough to make my own home yet," you know? Like, "When do you get to a point where you make a home?" At that moment in your life, you're like, "Yeah, man! Yeah!" [laughs]

Taylor: That's particularly cruel. Similar to the environmental empathy. Give us a movie to care about where we contemplate home, and then we can never afford houses! Yeah, thanks, world!

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: But no, I mean, I love *Garden State*. But I think The Shins haven't aged the same, in that they made several bigger albums after this one. And they put out a lot of good music that I don't think— I think because it's not— I don't want to say it's not earnest. It's a little bit more impenetrable, that it can withstand the time a little bit better.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: That earnest quality in *Garden State*, I think, is the epitome of what the younger kids make fun of us for.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: The cringe of it all. That we, I don't know, have hope, seems to be a center part of it?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: But The Shins was sort of early, to me, an introduction into that era of what eventually became what I call indie sleaze. Where everything sounded vaguely British, even though largely the bands were American. And everybody sounded deeply cool, and deeply poetic, but they weren't trying very hard.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: You know, that whole era from the early 2000s to, like, 2010?

Sydnee: Yes. You imagine, somehow, these bands just accidentally wandered into a studio, and were like, "Well, as long as we're here, we'll just record some stuff. No big deal. Don't be all weird about it."

Taylor: Just smoking an American Spirit, and drinking a PBR, and wearing the tiniest scarf.

Sydnee: [laughs] Exactly. Exactly. "We'll just make this music. If everybody could just chill out."

Taylor: Well, I don't think that— It would have made more sense if the band that was in the headphones for the spirit of that movie was something far more emotive, and desperate, and sad, and kind of pathetic. But it's The Shins, which are pretty cool. [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah. But I do think there was a moment where everybody was like, "Well, I mean, The Shins are good. But if it isn't changing my life, either there's something wrong with me, or you're wrong. So you're wrong." [laughs]

Taylor: That's probably fair.

Sydnee: Yeah. No, but I enjoy— It was nice. I was listening to it while I was

working on some stuff. I was updating a PowerPoint on my computer, and I was just kind of sitting there, shuffling stuff around and changing some dates and picture and stuff. And it was very nice. It's very ambient, you know? Very pleasant to have on.

Taylor: Well, and I think that's the way most of us listen to it, is sort of— I don't know. To me, it was one of those albums that I would put on when I was feeling melancholy. And I didn't want to feel more, I didn't wanna be sadder. I just wanted to have music that sustained me in that state. 'Cause that's how it all feels! It feels a little nihilistic.

Even if you look at the lyrics, it's a lot of heavy— Their breakup songs aren't just about a breakup. It feels about an inevitable ending of like— There are a lot of songs about being outsiders, and not feeling like you have a place to belong. It's not as straightforward in the narrative, and it's not being screamed at us. It's like the *feelings* are there, the emotions are absent, if that makes sense.

Sydnee: Yeah. No, I know what you mean. 'Cause it falls short of being cathartic, for me.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: 'Cause you're right. I don't experience those emotions any more deeply, you're right.

Taylor: [chuckles] If you just exist in that state, and just want to move around in that space of being sort of sad, sort of at a loss, it's great music for that.

Sydnee: Which is— You know, we talk about that time period. I actually think that's pretty apt. I think there was a while there— And I don't know, there are all the historical reasons that this happened, but the world didn't end in 2000 like they told us it was going to. Which, good. I mean, we were happy about that. But it also was like, well, that was the biggest thing that I thought was gonna happen. [laughs]

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: And then it didn't. And I don't know how to— You know? It's good, but also, now what? And then 9/11 happened, and it was like, "Oh. Okay. I don't—

Now what?" It was just kind of a series of, "Oh. Well, now what? Now, what do we do?" And we were just kind of in that state where you felt kind of sad and unsure. And I don't know how to feel more about this, but I also don't want to feel less. I'll just sort of hold really still for a while, and see what happens, 'cause I'm not really sure where we're going anymore.

Taylor: I feel like "Now what?" is the epitome of the Millennial [laughs] generation.

Sydney: Yeah.

Taylor: 'Cause I don't know! You grew up thinking that there were supposed to be things that fell into place for you. You work hard, you get rewarded, you advance, things get easier. You have time to develop interpersonal relationships, romantic relationships. You walk this path that every generation ahead of you has walked, and that's what you're supposed to do. And again, for lots and lots of reasons, largely related to economic reasons, that just didn't happen. And it was like everyone was in a holding pattern of, "Okay. I mean, life's gonna start soon, right?"

Sydney: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: And you get to your mid-20s, and then you get to your mid-30s, and now you're in your 40s, and it's like, "That just never happened for me. That's weird."

Sydney: You know what's weird, Tey, though? I will say— And I know I'm coming from a place of privilege in that I do have a house, you know. I have the things that they told me to have. I did the things. I followed the rules. And I still find myself waiting for adulthood. And I don't mean in the "I can't adult today!" I don't mean like that. I don't mean in— That is cringey, and I don't mean in that cringey way. I keep waiting for that feeling of certainty, or confidence, self-assuredness. That sense that I know the right things to do now, I know what the instructions are, and I know how to take us to the next place.

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Sydney: I don't know when that happens. I don't feel that. And by all rights, I feel like I *should*. I'm a parent, I'm a professional. I— You know, I drive a car. [laughs]

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: I don't know! All the things— You know what I mean?

Taylor: Well, I think—

Sydnee: We have savings. You know what I mean? [laughs]

Taylor: I mean, I think that was the turning point of our generation, that moment in history. You noted 9/11, I think that was the first little Jenga piece pulled out of the tower. There was a fallacy, but it was nice and warm and cozy, a way that we thought life was supposed to go. I think it was also before we really had a larger view of the world, where you weren't inundated with what was *actually* going on around the world. That was kind of the last time period where we could believe the lie that this is great, everything's great, everything's gonna work out. Bootstraps, blah-blah-blah, American Dream.

And we still haven't gotten to the point where we've all understood the truth and we've moved forward in the light. It's like that period— We're in the terms of civilizations. It sucks that it's our entire lifetime, but that's how long it takes for everyone to go, "Oh. That was all bullcrap. So what is to come?" [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah. No, I think you're right. And I would say, for me, even before— Like, when you think about the Jenga pieces, I feel like we don't currently talk enough about the fact that from Columbine to where the discourse is now about school shootings has unraveled to the point where it is just part of the American experience.

And that that moment, to me, when it happened, I remember thinking, "Oh, we're not safe. Nobody can keep us safe." And I remember thinking that as a child. "My teachers, my parents, they can't keep us safe. We're not safe." And then you reinforce that with 9/11, like, obviously. Nobody. The military, the government, the president. *Nobody* can keep us safe. Nobody's safe. And then just like, "Okay. Now, go get jobs."

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: "Now, have some kids. Now, open a bank account."

Taylor: And it's a quick hop, step to the cynicism of it's not that nobody can keep me safe, it's that it doesn't make the money to keep me safe, so they won't care. There are people that actively make money by *not* making my world safer. And what am I supposed to do about that? The machine that I feed is actively— Is evil. Is bad! I don't know. What do you do? What do you? [laughs] You turn on The Shins, and you exist in a liminal space of feelings. [laughs]

Sydnee: That is exactly the— And there we go. I was gonna say, "We gotta bring this back around to The Shins," and that's where it is, is The Shins is music that you can turn on and just— And you're not ignoring. It is not enough to take you out of that. It's not a distraction. But it's also not indulging. It's just existing. It is. It's just existing.

Taylor: Well, it's like, you know when you've had, in relationships past, we've had some big knockdown drag-out— You're just airing your truth, and they're airing theirs, and it's awful and sad, and you're both crying. And then after that, you just feel numb. Everything is forever changed. Nothing will ever be the same, and it's so deeply sad. But you just *can't* feel anymore. You just feel empty. That's— Everything is true, everything is bad, but you just can't act anymore. That's what this album feels like to me. [laughs]

Sydnee: You know what?

Taylor: And that's what the state of the world feels like to me.

Sydnee: You know what? I think the whole problem is that in *Garden State*, when she said that this would change your life, the whole point of that album, of The Shins' music in my mind, is that it's not changing anything. [laughs]

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: It's just— It's helping me hold still in it, for right now. That's what it's doing.

Taylor: Well—

Sydnee: It's the opposite of changing. It's maintaining.

Taylor: All of it feels— And again, if you look at the lyrics, it feels like acceptance, and like someone that's processed their feelings, they just still don't feel good about them.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: It's very— I don't know. Which is a good— I mean, that is a valid— That's an important place to reach.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: But it's an uncomfortable truth, or a comfortable lie. This is a kind of uncomfortable truth feeling.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Yeah, most things fall apart. Most things are sad. You leave one home, and you don't find another, 'cause that whole idea of home is sort of forced upon you, unless it's something you decided for yourself.

Sydnee: Well, I don't think this has been an— It doesn't sound like we're recommending The Shins, but I do. [laughs]

Taylor: Oh, no. Absolutely, I am.

Sydnee: Yes. But I do want to reinforce, it is good. I enjoy their music. And it's just that. It's not going to make you sad or happy.

Taylor: It'll allow you to feel, which is something that I don't think we let ourselves do. Not feel in an overemotive way, you know? It just lets you exist in a feeling, which I think— As we become an increasingly automatized, capitalized society, we are told not to have those moments, those moments waste time. Yeah, waste the time! That's the one little act of rebellion you can do. Waste time.

Sydnee: Waste your time, yeah.

Taylor: [laughs] Don't feed it to the machine.

Sydnee: Well, Tey, thanks for suggesting The Shins. I think it was a good one. You're right, it's interesting to think about not just The Shins, but what that moment in history was like, and how The Shins— I think you're inextricably linked with that now.

Taylor: Absolutely.

Sydnee: So for next week, I know you've finally started watching *The Pitt*.

Taylor: Yes.

Sydnee: And I would like to talk about it.

Taylor: I would as well.

Sydnee: Alright, excellent. 'Cause I love it.

Taylor: The Wario to the *Scrubs* [laughs] we talked about last time.

Sydnee: It is. I'm looking forward to it. And in the meantime, really, I know that this sounded kind of like, "What are they saying about The Shins?" If you haven't listened to The Shins, you should check out The Shins. They are good. It is good music. You would like it.

You should also go to MaximumFun.org and check out a lot of great podcasts there that you would enjoy. You can email us at stillbuffering@maximumfun.org. And thank you to the Nouvellas for our theme song, "Baby You Change Your Mind."

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: [unintelligible]

Taylor: Oh! Alright.

Sydnee: [unintelligible]

Taylor: [unintelligible] I will.

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