

Still Buffering 494: Ben Folds

Published September 3rd, 2026

[Listen here on Maximum Fun](#)

[theme music plays]

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

Taylor: And I'm Taylor Smirl.

Sydnee: I'm just gonna say briefly, Tey, that my TikTok has not been very fun lately.

Taylor: No?

Sydnee: I don't know what— [chuckles]

Taylor: [laughs] You've drifted away from Brenda Kay and Victor?

Sydnee: Brenda Kay is still very much there. I follow Brenda Kay, so...

Taylor: Oh, alright.

Sydnee: Yeah. I'm getting all those songs. Now, it did lead me to a lot of other independent artists. [chuckles]

Taylor: I have experienced that as well.

Sydnee: And you know, I will say, I'm not gonna talk about any of the other independent artists that I have discovered. Here's what I'm gonna say. I think that it shows that what Brenda Kay is doing is difficult, and she is uniquely skilled at walking that line. Because a lot of people are not as skilled at [through laughter] walking that line. And I don't necessarily enjoy all of the other independent artists I've discovered like I do Brenda Kay.

Even though seemingly they're very similar, there's something missing.

Taylor: Mm. I agree.

Sydnee: You know?

Taylor: There is a— I never want to be laughing at; I want to be laughing with.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: And I think that there is a self awareness. I mean, there's— We've discussed Brenda Kay. There's a *talent* there. I *enjoy*, authentically enjoy, the lyricism [through laughter] of Brenda Kay.

Sydnee: Yes. Yes.

Taylor: But there is a bit. Like, it's clearly like— You know, these are homemade videos. These are not studio produced songs. And in that world, there are a lot of people making music...

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: That Brenda Kay has led my algorithm to believe I want to see. That I'm like, [sighs] I mean...

Sydnee: No.

Taylor: I think this is a— This would only be a laughing-at situation that I don't endorse, so I gotta scroll away.

Sydnee: Well, I—

Taylor: Lightning in a bottle is what Brenda Kay is. [laughs]

Sydnee: I do think it's odd that the algorithm was like, "Contemporary Christian?"

And I'm like, "No— What!? No! Never! I've *never* liked— It doesn't matter if it is the most professional studio recorded contemporary Christian writer, or independent creators. I don't want to listen to contemporary Christian music ever. Period. No!"

Taylor: No. Absolutely. No.

Sydnee: [laughs] No, thank you!

Taylor: And then the secular version of that, like the manifesting white ladies? I don't know how else to describe them. That's a certain—

Sydnee: No, thank you.

Taylor: I got some of that music. And it's just like, I don't... Maybe this is working for you. You're standing next to a Porsche. I don't *know* if that's your Porsche, but you are standing next to it in a parking lot, while you're singing your song. I gotta scroll away. [laughs]

Sydnee: You know, that's kind of— See, my TikTok's been filled with Natalie Harp, and *she* kinda manifested.

Taylor: Oh, no.

Sydnee: She wrote letters to a president obsessively, until she got to be his personal aide. So...

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: Listen. I don't understand—

Taylor: That feels like the ladies that get obsessed with serial killers, and they write to them, and then they marry them in prison.

Sydnee: So I saw somebody interviewing a man who allegedly is her brother. And I don't know— I've tried to not— I very intentionally am not digging. It just keeps coming to me, this information. I've read the letters. I've read the letters she wrote Trump. Hoo. But this man who identified himself as her brother— I think estranged brother. I don't think [holding back laughter] they talk.

Taylor: For his sake, I hope so. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Um, so this is not the first president that she became obsessed with.

Taylor: Oh, no. She's just got a president kink.

Sydnee: She wrote letters to George Bush, too.

Taylor: Oh. She loves a war criminal.

Sydnee: So yeah, so I don't— Here's what I'm saying. You gotta be careful with that kind of obsession. Well, a movie just came out about it. [laughs] Remember? We talked about it a couple weeks ago.

Taylor: [chuckles]

Sydnee: You gotta be careful with that!

Taylor: Somebody get the One Wish Willows away from Trump. [laughs]

Sydnee: She did not get security clearance, according to all these people talking about it, all these reporters. She didn't have a security clearance done.

Taylor: But her letters were really earnest.

Sydnee: She's the closest— Physically, she is the one who's in proximity to him the most, I think.

Taylor: I don't— I mean, I get that like, how to appeal to an aging decrepit narcissist is exactly the way she did it.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: If you had to make a plan, if you were trying to get as close as possible to this president, that is exactly the person that you would deploy. An obsessed, way, way, way too young blonde white lady.

Sydnee: Well, right? But that's what I don't understand, why nobody— I mean, Trump surrounds himself with a lot of morons, for sure.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: But there are also people who work at the White House who predate Trump, or people in secret service— Like, there are people *around* this organization that are smart and know what they're doing, right? They're not all morons. I don't—

Taylor: It's a healthy mix of morons and people with no morals. They're smart, but they're willing to just ignore what's going on. And I think those people are actually kind of important, because they are also the people that probably go, "Oh, yeah, sure. Right away, Mr. President," and they don't do whatever abomination he wants to proceed, because they know it would be bad for everybody.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: Including them.

Sydnee: Well, and I don't think the entire White House staff overturns each president. I think they stay on.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: So they're just people who are just— They're just working there. They're just working for the executive branch of the government, whatever. But how— Have none of them heard of a stan? Do they know what a stan— Like, where that reference comes from?

Taylor: Mm. Yeah.

Sydnee: Has no one seen that music video? I don't— This doesn't always turn out well for everyone. And it shocks me that nobody around the president would be like, "Mm. Mm. This— Look at these letters! Ooh, ahh! Dangerous!" Right?

Taylor: Do we wanna— I don't— No, it's fine! Shh. I don't— No alarm bells. It's fine!

Sydnee: I mean, I'm not calling anyone. I'm just saying, it shocks me that nobody— 'Cause like I said, that kind of obsession, that kind of... I don't know what to call it other than obsession. That's dangerous! That's just dangerous. It's a dangerous— It's not good for anyone!

Taylor: I mean, I think it's— Is it an element of we've jokingly called MAGA a cult— I mean, I don't think jokingly. I think it is, in that kind of...

Sydnee: Yes. It is a cult.

Taylor: "I don't need to think for myself, someone else is thinking for me." That's the bread and butter of cult hivemind. It's scary to think that there are young people that have grown up with this to the point that they've been fully indoctrinated, in a way that I don't think that our age— I don't think the

people that are our age in MAGA are fully indoctrinated the way that, perhaps, her generation could be. Which is really scary!

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Like, this is all they've known.

Sydnee: Yeah. I mean, it is. It *is* scary. It is scary, and it is a cult, because there are no set of rules or ethics or values. It's just whatever he says. And so if what he says changes day-to-day, that's fine too. And that is almost impossible to dismantle. But anyway, so I—

Taylor: Mm. [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah. I've been reading her letters, and trying to figure out why that happened. I just— Mm. It's like that system fell apart, too. There's nobody there who's going— Somebody who I guess would be pro-Trump, on his team, who would be like, "I feel like we've set ourselves for a— This is a bad situation that we've put ourselves in here." Nobody has said anything.

Taylor: Well, but that's the nexus of people that are around this presidency, right? It's people that are just as lost in the cult as she would be. So they'd be like, "Yes! This is exactly how we should feel."

Or the people that have no morals and are just there to collect a paycheck, and they're like, "I don't know, sure. Whatever. Could this be bad? Maybe. But what does it matter?"

Sydnee: "Who cares?"

Taylor: So much else bad has happened because of this. I don't think they're [laughs] concerned about the good or badness.

Sydnee: Like, you see those letters, and you're like, "Good, good. I'm glad we have her in charge of his social media presence. Good, good, good. Good. Excellent, yes. Right person for the job."

Taylor: I mean... [laughs]

Sydnee: Is it— [laughs] I mean, okay. I don't know. But that— [laughs]

Taylor: I just wanna— Not for— Just as a fly on the wall – which I'm sure there are many, 'cause from what I understand there's a lot of poop up in there – I want to hear a conversation between her and Melania. I wanna know what *that* looks like. [laughs] 'Cause Melania is the epitome of someone that she's there for the bag, right? We know that.

Sydnee: Yeah. Oh, yeah. No, no, no.

Taylor: She is there for the money.

Sydnee: She made a deal.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: That was— And I mean, she has stuck to it. You can say that. She has not faltered.

Taylor: No. But that's gotta be a weird funhouse mirror of, "Oh, this is the woman that *actually* can love this man. Weird." [laughs]

Sydnee: I don't know how to— I mean, no. But that has been— See, it's nothing fun on my TikTok, 'cause it's been that and then Tucker Carlson trying to convince the world that [through laughter] Pete Buttigieg isn't actually gay. He just says he is for cred.

Taylor: Me too.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: I'll come clean. [laughs] No one's actually gay. Surprise!

Sydnee: Well, it's because the world is so much easier for the queer community.

Taylor: It's so much easier!

Sydnee: It's so much easier, and you get so much more, and you're given more power and privilege. So *obviously*...

Taylor: I— Yeah. Just go into any comment section on any single post involving Pete Buttigieg, and let me know. [laughs] Let me know about the privilege that that man has. That's wild!

Sydnee: He said on a— I don't remember. I don't know if it was his podcast, or if he was on somebody else's. He said that he wants to sit down with Pete Buttigieg and ask him some questions about the logistics of gay sex, and see if he can answer them. [laughs]

Taylor: I think he's got ulterior motives.

Sydnee: That's what I wanna—

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: "So. So, Pete, how... *does* it work? If one were to want to know how it worked... what videos, maybe online, could one watch?" [laughs]

Taylor: "Do you have some personal links you would recommend? Could you introduce me to a friend, for research?"

Sydnee: "What's going on? What are we doing?"

Taylor: "What are we doing, in the bedroom, that's gay?"

Sydnee: “What are we doing? What’s going on?” [laughs] That’s the goal now.

Taylor: [chuckles] I—

Sydnee: [laughs] Also, I mean, obviously Pete Buttigieg is gay. So this is a dumb conversation. But—

Taylor: Yeah. I mean, I don’t like to put anyone in a box, but I don’t think you have to— I don’t—

Sydnee: No, he says he’s gay. Like, he’s gay. He says he’s gay; he’s gay.

Taylor: I mean, that’s a gay man. I trust...

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: I trust that’s a gay man.

Sydnee: Yeah!

Taylor: For a *myriad* of reasons.

Sydnee: Yes. He’s gay. And so that’s that.

Taylor: [wheeze-laughs]

Sydnee: But if he *wasn’t*...

Taylor: You heard it here first.

Sydnee: And your plan to catch him was to ask him to tell you about gay

stuff, and see if you can see if he actually knows, you don't think he's smart enough that he could google that? If he was lying, you don't think he could—I mean...

Taylor: Also, why would you think you were the authority on gay sex that could catch him? Hmm?

Sydnee: Yeah!

Taylor: Eh? Eh, Tuck? [chuckles]

Sydnee: Are you gonna bring a— [laughs] Okay, he's gotta find a gay man that he can bring on as the expert. So he needs somebody who Tucker Carlson believes is gay.

Taylor: Right.

Sydnee: The gayest. Who's the gayest man? [laughs]

Taylor: Who's the gayest man?

Sydnee: That he could bring on.

Taylor: Is there an answer to that question?

Sydnee: I don't know.

Taylor: Could we think of someone in the public eye?

Sydnee: Well, it'd have to be— Yes. I mean, I don't know that the gayest man isn't a celebrity. They might not be, but I feel like that's the only—

Taylor: I thought the nature of a gay man is to *be* a celebrity.

Sydnee: Yeah. So... we need the gayest man.

Taylor: Elton John? Is Elton John the gayest man?

Sydnee: He's a very gay man.

Taylor: He's up there.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Who's the gayest man?

Sydnee: The gayest man.

Taylor: Well, uh... He's no longer with us. And he would have been on Tuck's side in this, but Lindsey Graham has passed, so...

Sydnee: Oh, yeah.

Taylor: The gayest man cannot judge.

Sydnee: No. Hmm. Well, so uh... [chuckles] That has not been as fun on my TikTok as it was last week with Brenda Kay.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] I was able to distract myself and learn more about youth culture with Charlie's 12-year-old birthday party. That was—

Taylor: That's a wild shift there, Syd, but I'm willing to go with it, 'cause I wanna walk away from everything we just talked about. [laughs]

Sydnee: Me too. Me too. That's why I just gotta get away from it.

Taylor: Tell me about a child's birthday party.

Sydnee: Well, I mean, it's always great insight. So you know—

Taylor: Tucker Carlson wasn't there, so we're already off to a good start.

Sydnee: Yeah. [laughs] But to hear what a bunch of preteen girls— Okay, here's where I made my first mistake. It was a movie and self care party.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: So the idea is that everybody is gonna come over— We're not doing a slumber party. Everybody's coming over, we're gonna watch a movie together, and we had like— We bought some of those sheet face masks, you know.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Nothing fancy. You can buy— Get this. So I got them bulk— You know those headbands that you put on while you're putting on your makeup?

Taylor: Oh, yeah.

Sydnee: The ones with the bumpy thing on top?

Taylor: Uh-huh.

Sydnee: Okay. So you can buy those in bulk, and you can buy in bulk cheap hotel slippers.

Taylor: Oh, cute!

Sydnee: Yeah. So I got those. And then we got some face masks, and then laid out nail polish. You know, there you go. Self care.

Taylor: Beautiful.

Sydnee: It was fascinating. Because that was the theme, a lot of the presents were also self care themed. And those children, the skincare products...

Taylor: Oh, yeah.

Sydnee: The vast array of things that you can put on your face.

Taylor: What— [sighs]

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Taylor: What are we doing? [laughs] What's happening?

Sydnee: [laughs] Here's what they like, Tey. They like Tree Hut scrubs. That's for your body; that's not for your face.

Taylor: Oh, yeah. I've seen those. I've seen those.

Sydnee: Yeah. Tree Hut is big, I've learned. Well, I assume. Everybody brought some. Tree Hut. Bioma.

Taylor: Okay.

Sydnee: Bioma's a big deal. Bubble. Bubble, everyone loves. The Bubble moisturizer.

Taylor: Bubble, just spelled like bubble?

Sydnee: Yeah. Well, it's just Bubble is the product line. And when you push down on the moisturizer thing, dispenser, you push down on it, and then it comes out the middle. And it comes out in a flower, shaped like a flower.

Taylor: Oh, I've seen those.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: They had those at Disney World, the handwashing things.

Sydnee: Yes, yes. So those were all big. And then I also learned that apparently Drizzilicious is a kind of rice cake snack that is so popular that you can—

Taylor: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Sydnee: You might give it to somebody for their birthday. [chuckles]

Taylor: Those are at the Five Below. They have pumpkin spice Drizzilicious right now.

Sydnee: Hugely popular with the youths.

Taylor: I mean, I guess that kind of— If it's like bath gel and scrub, I do have concerns as a parent about the skincare, like the facial stuff. What is a preteen putting on their— What are they treating, when they put something on their face? That's not just like wash it and— Even moisturize it. Do you need to moisturize at that age? I don't know.

Sydnee: I don't think there's—

Taylor: Sunscreen? Sunscreen's good.

Sydnee: Sunscreen. So I promote— They have sunscreen, and they have

obviously face washes. And Charlie's getting to the age where we have one of those little acne sticks, like where you can dot on some— I think this one has salicylic acid in it. So if you get a zit, you can dot it there. And then they love the pimple patches, right? Like, gosh.

Taylor: Sure.

Sydney: Kids love pimple patches.

Taylor: They're cute.

Sydney: I can't see any problem with moisturizing. I couldn't come up with a reason why it was bad. Do you *need* to moisturize when you're 12? Probably not. Now, if you do start getting into issues with acne, I guess then you need to balance oil— Whatever, dryness versus oil and all that. But as a general rule, eh, is it going to do any harm? No. So if they want to... But they do— There are lots of serums sold to children, like with hyaluronic acid in them.

Taylor: Like peptides.

Sydney: And peptides, and niacinamide, and stuff that I use. [chuckles] Because I'm in my 40s, and I have wrinkles. But I don't know why a child would need them?

Taylor: Hmm.

Sydney: I don't know what the point would be? So I actually— If they get like a set— So first of all, when we get them stuff, I don't get them any of that. I don't let them buy it. And then if they get a set that contains one of those, they'll come bring me the little hyaluronic acid or whatever thing piece of it. So...

Taylor: That's good.

Sydnee: Yeah. Or retinol. Like, why— My child does not need to put retinol on their face.

Taylor: Oh, no!

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Well, that's— I don't know. I mean, that seems like such a young age for that to be what the presents are based around. I understand there was a theme, and I also get ultimately that's her birthday, it should be whatever she wants it to be. But is there maybe a moment of sadness about younger and younger girls thinking about their face? Like, "This is the way I look, and I need to look beautiful forever."

I don't think I thought about my face when I was— I don't think I thought about my face until probably like 15, and I had acne, and I went, "Oh, no!"

Sydnee: I don't know— I tell ya, I struggle with this. Because the skincare stuff is very much trendy, and just about, "Oh, everybody likes this product." And I don't even know that it's connected so much to what you're doing to your skin as just, "All my friends have this, and so I want to have it too," you know? So I think that there's some element to it that is just normal kid stuff, and is not harmful.

But I mean, there definitely is— I don't know why all of the sudden, everybody's so concerned with anti-wrinkle creams when they're ten. Where did that come from? And then that goes into the makeup. And this has been a consistent struggle for me, because I don't think anybody *needs* to wear makeup. I think if you like to, you can. And if you don't, then don't.

I don't believe that there is— You know, there was a time where especially as women, I would have been expected to put on a full face of makeup to leave the house. I don't think that we are living in that time anymore. But if they enjoy it, and if they watch videos about how to put on makeup, and then they want to put on makeup when they— Not to school, but hang out with their friends, should I say no? I don't know. I'm really torn about this.

Taylor: That's fair. That's hard to parse, because it's totally fine if that's just an interest. But is it an interest, or do you feel like that's— There's where I—

Like, I remember the conscious awareness of, “I still want to play pretend, and play with dolls, and play fantasy games. And I’m supposed to be into makeup and boys at this point.” And it was a sadness. Like, “If I want to be normal, I have to go here, but I don’t want to be.”

Now, granted, for obvious reasons, I’m sure my interaction with taking on femininity was different than young girls.

Sydnee: Sure.

Taylor: *But* I hope it’s an interest, and not a compulsion. Like, younger and younger, they feel like they have to start thinking about getting older.

Sydnee: I will say, Charlie has— We came to a very quick and easy compromise as we head into middle school. Because the dress code actually has makeup rules in it.

Taylor: Oh, really?

Sydnee: Yeah. And we agreed that lip gloss is fine, and a little bit of blush, she likes that. She has one of those little stick blushes; that’s fine. If she has a pimple, she’ll wear a pimple patch to school, although more than likely she has one concealer stick, and I’m okay with that. But that’s it, and she really isn’t arguing to do more. I was worried we were gonna have some sort of foundation argument, but we didn’t.

Cooper is way more into the full face of makeup, but it’s as— Like, Cooper will walk out of her room completely glammed up, and then the next day she’ll have done a fake— She put wet tissue paper over one of her eyes, and then put makeup all over it to make it look like her face had been smashed in with something.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: And she came walking out of her room that way. It was like special effects makeup, she watched a video about and was trying to mimic. So sometimes— She’s really into the uncanny valley makeup right now.

Taylor: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Sydnee: Like, she's super into that. So I'll look down the hallway, and she'll be staring around a door frame at me. And I'm like, "Oh, my God!"

Taylor: Oh, God, that's terrifying. [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: That's awful. [laughs]

Sydnee: So I kinda just leave it be. 'Cause with her, I can tell it's way more about, "I can make my face look different ways with makeup, and that's cool and interesting to me." And so I feel like it is that, and not, "I need to look a certain way." You know what I mean?

Taylor: That's good to parse out. Because obviously, you don't want to discourage if it's like, your interest in makeup and fashion is because this is part of who you are.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: Like, this is who you're gonna develop into being, versus you feel you need this because, you know, your peers also feel they need it.

Sydnee: So far, we're not there. And I mean, I don't know. I will say overall, the girls were not mean to each other. There were no fights. There was no leaving people out. Everybody had somebody to hang with. There was no talk about boys, which I was impressed by. Because I feel like by 12, that would have featured heavily at a party I was at. And they chose to watch *Hamilton*.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: So...

Taylor: Okay!

Sydnee: So they were screaming *Hamilton* at the top of their lungs. I had proposed— This is how stupid I was. I was like— Charlie said, “I don’t know if I can let them watch *Hamilton*, because it’s got curse words.”

And I was like, “Well, it does, but it’s also like— It’s theater. It’s kind of a culturally significant—” You know what I mean?

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: I feel like yes, it has profanity, but it’s in that same realm as probably these kids’ parents would let them go see Michelangelo’s David, you know? And not say, “No! There’s nudity!” You know what I mean? It’s a culturally significant piece of art.

Taylor: [chuckles] I like that you just put Michelangelo’s David on the same level as Lin-Manuel Miranda’s *Hamilton*. [laughs]

Sydnee: Well, you know, it’s a big deal.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: I feel like it’s okay. But I was like, “Well, let me come up with some alternatives, if you’re worried about that.”

So I pushed *Mean Girls* the musical, ‘cause she wanted something musical, and she was like, “Oh, they drop a couple bad words in that. Not as many, but a couple.”

And I was like, “Okay. Uh...”

Taylor: Charlie was so much more concerned about bad words than you were.

Sydnee: I know. Well, I didn't think the parents would care if— I mean, it's *Mean Girls* the musical, you know? And I was like, "Well, what about that new *Camp Rock*? There's a new *Camp Rock* out, and it's got a Jonas brother in it. Isn't that cool?"

And you would've thought I suggested New Kids on the Block. She looked at me like I was so cringe. She just like, "Ugh. *Mom! Ugh!*" Like, "Jonas Brothers!?"

I was like, "I don't know! I thought..."

So she took a vote, and then she said, "Is anyone here not allowed to hear curse words?" And a couple of the girls raised their hands. And she was like, "Okay. I'll beep them for you when they come up!" [laughs]

Taylor: And did she?

Sydnee: She just yelled, "Beep!" [laughs]

Taylor: Amazing.

Sydnee: It was adorable. It was adorable.

Taylor: Yeah. That doesn't sound like a [crew?] you have to worry about. [laughs]

Sydnee: No. It was adorable, so...

Taylor: The only man allowed at this party is Alexander Hamilton. [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: That's the boy that we wanna talk about!

Sydnee: There was a small contention that broke off, I will say, led by Cooper to the play room to do aerial silks instead. Because I think they were less interested in *Hamilton*, but the majority, not only did they stay, they

knew every word. I know that, because I could hear them singing at the top of their lungs.

Taylor: Well...

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Taylor: That sounds like a very, very enjoyable party.

Sydnee: [holding back laughter] Yes.

Taylor: Self care, *Hamilton*, and aerial silks.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: That sounds like that is a party that is happening in Bushwick. Not right now, but tonight for sure.

Sydnee: Probably. Well, and a dirty soda bar.

Taylor: Yeah. Oh, yeah, absolutely.

Sydnee: Yeah. They were very into the dirty sodas. That's the other thing kids like now: dirty sodas.

Taylor: That's just like a soda with cream in it, right?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Yeah...

Sydnee: Or syrups, like you know, like the Torani syrups that you can put in coffee.

Taylor: Okay.

Sydnee: Those. I don't—

Taylor: Alright, sure.

Sydnee: Yeah. I don't know.

Taylor: [chuckles] There are worse things.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Drugs, alcohol.

Sydnee: I was like, "Okay."

Taylor: Alright. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: You want a weird, gross soda? That's fine.

Sydnee: I mean, we were making prank calls and sneaking out of the house, so I guess...

Taylor: They'll— That's not a "we." That's a "you."

Sydnee: Okay. Well, yes. *I* was. [chuckles]

Taylor: I was playing with Littlest Pet Shop and [chuckles] eating Fritos.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. No, I'll take this. This is fine. I'm fine with this.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Tey, we have to talk about Ben Folds. [laughs]

Taylor: Yes, we do. We don't *have* to, but we have to. No context.

Sydnee: I thought about Ben Folds [chuckles] because he has been testifying before Congress about the Kennedy Center, and how Trump took it over, made a political— Put his name on the building.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Ran all the artists out.

Taylor: Has he taken the scaffolding *down*, or is it just up permanently? Because that's how much of a little, pathetic baby he is, is that it's like, "Fine, I'll take my name off, but I won't take the scaffolding down, so you can see where it used to be."

Sydnee: I mean, it's either that, or maybe it's just incompetence. Because that's always—

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: These are the twin forces that our world hinges on right now, are, "Are they more evil, or more incompetent? More evil, more incompetent?"

Taylor: Isn't that old quote of like, "Don't contribute to malice what could be incompetence?"

Sydnee: Yes. It's a— Yes, there's— Yeah.

Taylor: How is that...

Sydnee: I don't remember exactly how it goes, but yes.

Taylor: ... everything that our government does these days? It's like, "Eh, it's one or the other." I think it's mainly both. I think it's usually both.

Sydnee: Yeah. It is. I mean, 'cause I thought— I mean, like the reflecting pool, that was just dumb.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: That was just people who— Like, they jumped into a project without thinking it through, without talking to the right experts, without... And then all the paint peeled off. [chuckles]

Taylor: Yeah. That was incompetence in service of malice.

Sydnee: Yes. I can't believe all the paint peeled. I can't believe these are— Anyway. I don't know.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: But everything just keeps getting more absurd.

Taylor: Ben Folds. [laughs]

Sydnee: Ben Folds.

Taylor: Specifically *Songs for Silverman* and *Rockin' the Suburbs*.

Sydnee: Yes. I assume you probably, through cultural osmosis, had heard a lot of *Rockin' the Suburbs*.

Taylor: I knew pretty much every song on that album. Less so with *Songs*

for *Silverman*. And very different tonally, I will say.

Sydnee: Very different. It was weird for me— So like, I was not an early adopter of Ben Folds. Of course, everybody had heard “Brick” by Ben Folds Five. Like, that song was ubiquitous when I was in probably middle school, probably? Long time ago. When Ben Folds went on his solo career, I was not as attuned to what he was doing. And then when I started dating Justin, he was a giant Ben Folds fan.

Taylor: Right.

Sydnee: So that’s when I got back into it. And the album that came out around the time that we started dating was *Songs for Silverman*. And so I think that one really caught me, just because it was brand new at that moment, and so Justin was listening to it a ton, so I was listening to it too.

Taylor: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: So probably that’s part of why I love it so much, is I associate it with that. But it is very different tonally. I went back and listened to *Rockin’ the Suburbs*, and of course some of those songs I had heard. But I don’t know, it is a lot more fun. *Rockin’ the Suburbs* is more listenable, and for parties and stuff, you know? It’s a lot more fun. But *Songs for Silverman*, I think, just really— I don’t know. It moves me more.

Taylor: I feel like— And I enjoy both albums. But *Songs for Silverman* sounds like the music that Charlie Brown would write and/or listen to.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: It’s Charlie Brown music. [laughs]

Sydnee: I can see that. It is—

Taylor: Like, it’s a little— It’s somber. It’s a little sad. It’s hopeful, but then

it's kind of sad again.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: And then oh, and then you're gonna be young, but then you're gonna be old. And relationships are gonna start, but they're gonna end. And oh, now there's a baby. Oh, but that baby's gonna get old.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: It's, you know... [laughs]

Sydnee: It is. It's a little more melancholy. I don't know— I mean, the thing about— I believe Ben Folds has been divorced three times?

Taylor: *Five* times.

Sydnee: Five!

Taylor: Five. 'Cause I was like— Both albums, I was like, "Woah, okay. He's working through something." Like, "Oh, he's working through something again. How many things did he work through? Mm, a couple. Quite a few."

Sydnee: Yes. So you never know, I guess, as you're listening to these songs, where he was on one of those roller coasters. [chuckles]

Taylor: Yeah, that's fair.

Sydnee: And I mean, would go through again. So...

Taylor: I mean, you know, all of those divorces, it still seems like he's pretty amicable divorces. He seems like a pretty well-revered guy, both publicly and privately, so...

Sydnee: I mean, you think if you heard that, somebody who's had five divorces, you would think, "Oh, they must secretly be kind of a jerk," right? You would kind of suspect that. But I've never heard that. That stuff, usually you get that sort of vibe. Like you know, everybody always said that Val Kilmer was a jerk, which is such a bummer.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: But people used to say that. I don't know; I never met him. But that rumor was what— I mean, it was a well-known thing in Hollywood. I've never heard that about Ben Folds.

Taylor: Well, he's got that what, that one song, "Sentimental Guy"? [laughs] Is that it? He just has a lot of feelings.

Sydnee: He does.

Taylor: You know.

Sydnee: A lot of big feelings. Maybe he just moves quickly in relationships, and then gets in too fast, and then is like, "Oops!"

Taylor: Well, and a lot of—

Sydnee: "Oops!"

Taylor: There were so many songs, I mean, on both albums, but on *Songs for Silverman* that seem to be around relationships that failed.

Sydnee: Uh-huh.

Taylor: Be it that they got involved too young, or it couldn't be salvaged. So it seems like he does a lot of processing in his music.

Sydnee: He does. He relates a lot of it too, like he references his redneck past.

Taylor: Mm.

Sydnee: Like his roots, where he comes from. Like Southern redneck. And I think I connect with that, and appreciate that. I'm trying to be something—I'm trying to outpace my raisin'. [chuckles] You know.

Taylor: [laughs] Wait, what?

Sydnee: My raising.

Taylor: Oh, wait. My raising. I thought it was like, you outpaced your raisin? And like...

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Taylor: Is this a euphemism that I don't understand?

Sydnee: You know.

Taylor: Like there's a—

Sydnee: Like, run faster, like a raisin is sliding— No. [chuckles]

Taylor: No. I was gonna say, what's that theoretical thing of you can live forever, but there's a snail that is always trying to find you, and if it catches up with you, you die? There's a raisin that's always—

Sydnee: That's a terrifying thought! Why is there a snail?

Taylor: Clearly you're not familiar. I don't know where this thought exercise came from, but I've heard it quoted enough that now it's like, "Oh, that's the

eternity snail that's following you."

Sydnee: So do you just keep moving?

Taylor: You just have to keep— It's always out there, it's always coming for you. But it moves very slow.

Sydnee: Mm.

Taylor: And it can't touch you. So you just have to keep moving. I thought maybe this was akin to that, like there's a raisin on your trail. [laughs]

Sydnee: That was like that movie.

Taylor: The STD analogy movie?

Sydnee: Oh, well, yeah. *It Follows* was like that.

Taylor: *It Follows*, yes. Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah. And so was— There was that other one about like, you can summon your death. A death whistle.

Taylor: Oh, that's right. Okay, that's one more. Yes.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: Yeah. There's a raisin that's following you [laughs] that's— You gotta outpace it!

Sydnee: And if it catches you, you die.

Taylor: Okay, but to be fair, Syd, if you're talking about redneck raising, that sounds like something that would be a weird old Appalachian thing.

Like, [with Southern accent] "Well, you gotta outpace your raisin."

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: "There's a raisin out there." [wheeze-laugh] "It's after ya!"

Sydnee: "That raisin's out there, waiting for ya. It's out there in the woods."

Taylor: "That's not a California raisin. That's an Appalachian raisin!"

Sydnee: "That's why you gotta close your blinds at night!"

Taylor: [laughs] "It's the raisin!" That's what's [???].

Just a giant raisin. Just, "Hello."

Sydnee: If you hear a whistle, no, you didn't. It's just the raisin.

Taylor: That's his whistling!

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: See, that's what the California Raisins are. They're the cryptid raisins that escaped, and pursued a career of musical interest that perhaps involves whistling every now and then.

Sydnee: Mm!

Taylor: They're using their musical powers for good. Not to lure you to your fate.

Sydnee: They're out there in the woods.

Taylor: [chuckles]

Sydnee: Well... [laughs] I remember he did some videos. I think it was during COVID times, when people were making more— You know, just content like that about— Was that when it came out? Maybe it was a documentary. I was watching something about him talking about song construction, and he is such a perfectionist.

Taylor: Really?

Sydnee: Yeah. He's very— I remember being fascinated with the way he writes and then puts his songs together. It is not just like it comes out, and then he's like, "Oh, yeah, I like that." He is— It is all very intentional. Every piece, every instrument, every moment. It is very carefully constructed music.

Taylor: I can believe that.

Sydnee: Yeah. It was cool. He really is like— It makes sense, 'cause he's a — You know, he makes pop music, but then he got put in charge of the Kennedy Center. And it totally makes sense, if you watch him work. He's a genius.

Taylor: Sometimes, you're working on a song, and you think, "What this really needs is Weird Al backing vocals."

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: [laughs] It's on one of the *Rockin' the Suburbs*, right? One of the songs.

Sydnee: Uh, what does he do?

Taylor: Uh, oh, gosh. It's on... Is it— I don't know. I don't know which one—

Sydnee: I don't remember.

Taylor: He sings on a song. Or no, it's on *Songs for Silverman*, isn't it?

Sydnee: I don't remember him being on there.

Taylor: Is it "Time"? Does he sing backup on "Time"?

Sydnee: Does he?

Taylor: I think that's it. There was definitely one song where it is— If you didn't know it was Weird Al singing backup vocals, you might think it's just— Well, it's not— 'Cause a lot of times, Ben Folds does his own backup vocals. You can tell that he's rerecorded it.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: And it's clearly a different voice, but that voice is Weird Al.

Sydnee: Well, I mean, talk about unassuming musical geniuses.

Taylor: That's true. That's true.

Sydnee: But you know, Weird Al is as well.

Taylor: It makes sense that they're two sides of a very strange coin.

Sydnee: It's interesting. 'Cause I would say that They Might Be Giants is the same. Their music is genius, but it's novelty music, a lot of it. And that's a fascinating crossroads, where you're like, "I am a musical genius. I can do anything I want, I'm gonna do. Like Weird Al or They Might Be Giants, I'm gonna do fun novelty stuff." That's interesting.

Taylor: This is a genre that's like green flag white guy music. Does that

make sense? [laughs]

Sydnee: It is. It is! And I would put Ben Folds in there, too. Because nothing about it is self-aggrandizing, or like— Even the cool stuff, it's cool because it is, not because he's trying. You know? And then he's often saying, "I'm not cool." I don't know.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: It is! If a guy's into this music, he's probably okay.

Taylor: He's probably alright. Well, the titular *Rockin' the Suburbs*, after reading on it, I realized he was writing about the new rock Korn music—

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: That was the music he was referencing. I always thought he was being wildly self-deprecating. And to be fair, maybe that is a level there. Because I do think this is, in fact, the music that rocks the suburbs. [chuckles] This is that.

Sydnee: No, he knew. I mean, I do think he knew.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: I think it was— I mean, you look at that era of— I don't know, I always think of Fred Durst [through laughter] in those khaki shorts.

Taylor: Yeah. [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] I like— There's the hardcore guy.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah. And so it is that, but then I do think the other level of that is like, "And me."

Taylor: That's— You can't— Yeah. You have to get a little self aware.
[chuckles]

Sydnee: Yes. I love that. I love "Army" from that; that's one of my favorites. "My Philosophy," those are good ones. I mean, the whole album is really great.

Taylor: How many first dances of weddings in the early 2000s do you think was to "The Luckiest"?

Sydnee: I mean, I have *attended* weddings where that was, so I know that happened. [laughs]

Taylor: Yeah. And that's not said with judgment.

Sydnee: No.

Taylor: It's one of those songs you're like, "Ah, that would be a perfect first dance at a wedding."

Sydnee: Yes. Yes. *Beautiful* song. It really is. It makes me cry.

Taylor: I always liked "Still Fighting It."

Sydnee: Yeah. That's a good one.

Taylor: It always makes me think of Dad. I think that's a Dad song.

Sydnee: It is a very Dad song, yeah. That's one of those, too, where I liked it when I heard it and I was younger. And now, as a parent, [chuckles] it's like it's a whole other experience when I hear that song.

Taylor: I do think it's sweet, 'cause he wrote that one for his son. And then on *Songs for Silverman*, he has a song "Gracie," that's for his daughter.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: And I like that it's Jimmy Buffett kind of— You know, like that's like, "Oh, I gotta—"

Sydnee: It is.

Taylor: "I gotta write a song for all my kids. They gotta know what their song is." [laughs]

Sydnee: It is! It is a very Jimmy Buffett kind of thing. And they're so different, too.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Much like "Little Miss Magic" and "Delaney Talks to Statues" are very different, yeah.

Taylor: Mm-hmm, yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah. That's a very Dad thing. I think on *Songs for Silverman*, I thought "Jesusland" was just a very lovely— I don't know, it sounds like it's the perfect song if you're on a car trip.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Like, it feels like you should be driving in a car. [chuckles]

Taylor: It was on the soundtrack of, what, *Religulous*? That documentary about American Christianity?

Sydnee: Oh, was it? I remember that documentary; I don't remember it, but that makes sense.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: I like, uh... I'm forgetting the names of the songs. "I've Got You To Thank," that's what I'm thinking of. I love that one.

Taylor: Yeah, yeah.

Sydnee: I think that's a really good song. That was always one of my favorites. And then the bad word song. I can't say it, I guess, on our [chuckles] podcast.

Taylor: The bad word song?

Sydnee: The B-word.

Taylor: Oh, yeah.

Sydnee: Can we say that?

Taylor: No, I don't think—

Sydnee: Is that a word we can say on here?

Taylor: Well, see, you can say that. You can't say the word, but you can say the B-word, but there's multiple B-words. The masculine B-word. Is that...?

Sydnee: The masculine B-word. [chuckles]

Taylor: The B-word, masculine.

Sydnee: The masculine B-word!

Taylor: B-word, feminine. They're different. I really like that one. He's got a lot of songs! This is not— But it's like, "You're young, but you're gonna be old." "You're old, but you were once young." [chuckles]

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: But always love a song like that! [laughs]

Sydnee: And "Landed." "Landed," that was a great one for me and Justin.

Taylor: Well, that was definitely the hit off of that, right?

Sydnee: Yeah. That was a big deal for us. And then there was uh— Did yours have— What you listened to, did it have the bonus track?

Taylor: Oh. Uh, "Hiro's Song"? No, that's off—

Sydnee: The feminine B-word. [laughs]

Taylor: Oh. Really? No, I didn't— I'm thinking of the bonus track off of *Rockin' the Suburb*. No, I did not listen to [holding back laughter] the feminine B-word song.

Sydnee: "B's Ain't S-Word"? [laughs]

Taylor: No!

Sydnee: No? They do— [laughs] That was a bonus. *That* one was one that came out and was like a big— That man. Every party I went to in college, somebody was—

Taylor: I think I even know that song. I guessed yeah, I know what song

you're talking about. [crosstalk] on this.

Sydnee: Well, it's Dr. Dre.

Taylor: Okay, yeah, yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah. But he covered it in a Ben Folds way.

Taylor: That's wild.

Sydnee: It's a wild cover of that. It was kind of like the cover of "Gin and Juice" that uh... Who did the cover of "Gin and Juice"? Not Phish.

Taylor: Wait, who— I know...

Sydnee: Who did the cover of "Gin and Juice"? Justin and I used to sing that at parties. I don't... Who did the cover of it?

Taylor: I feel like this is a... [laughs] Not Ben Folds covering somebody, but somebody covering Ben Folds. I didn't realize how intrinsically involved with the soundtrack for the motion picture *Over the Hedge* Ben Folds was. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Oh! I didn't know that, either.

Taylor: He wrote a lot— 'Cause William Shatner does a cover of "Rockin' the Suburbs" that came from that soundtrack. And I thought, "Wow, that's wild." And then I looked at the soundtrack, I'm like, "Oh. Ben Folds is involved with like half of these songs." So little side project.

Sydnee: Well, hey. There you go.

Taylor: William Shatner, controversial figure, but I do love when he does a cover. His cover of "Common People" is maybe one of my favorite [chuckles]

covers. Top ten favorite covers.

Sydnee: He's great at covers.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: The Gourds, that's who it is.

Taylor: Oh, okay. See, I know I've heard of an awkward cover of "Gin and Juice," but I can't think of who did it.

Sydnee: Well, it was that time where everybody was getting everything off Napster.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: And so if it was a song that people didn't know who played it, half of them were listed as Phish.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] I had so many songs downloaded that were not by Phish, but were attributed to Phish on Napster.

Taylor: I think this is a unique experience you had. I was on Napster a lot; I did not have the Phish not-Phish.

Sydnee: I think "Crazy Game of Poker" was the— That was the one everybody had, and it was not by Phish, but everybody thought it was by Phish. I don't know. But I had multiple songs that were— I'm like, "No, that was not by Phish, but LimeWire thinks it is," or Napster thinks it is, or whatever.

Taylor: This is sort of random, but it is a Napster memory. I remember

downloading “Tired of You” by Foo Fighters.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: And I thought I got the whole song, and it just was the “I won’t go get—” But that on loop.

Sydnee: Oh, no.

Taylor: But that on loop for like three minutes. So it was about the length of what a song was. And I thought, “Wow, this song was really repetitive, but people really love it. I don’t get it.” And it was probably a decade before I heard the actual full song that goes beyond that. [laughs] I was like, “Oh! Oh! *That’s* the song!” It’s the Wild West of music listening. [laughs]

Sydnee: It really was.

Taylor: You thought everything was by Phish. I thought the Foo Fighters were just not all that. [chuckles]

Sydnee: It really was. I mean, there was a moment there where it could’ve gone so well, because you were like, “Oh, my gosh. I have access— I can find all this new music. I can discover—” And I actually did go on to buy CDs.

Taylor: Yeah!

Sydnee: Based on hearing a track that I downloaded questionably legally. But I did make purchases based on that.

Taylor: Oh, yeah.

Sydnee: But then it all fell apart. But— [chuckles]

Taylor: It did.

Sydnee: I'm not saying we should steal someone's creation. I'm not saying that we should steal music.

Taylor: No... I don't know— But was it better where we stole a little bit, and then we went and gave them money, versus now where we stream everything, and then the artists don't get *any* money? Or they get pennies?

Sydnee: I mean, that's worse, I think.

Taylor: That's definitely worse.

Sydnee: Yeah. I mean, that's what happened, is we all figured out kind of a janky way to steal it. And then the big music companies were like, "Oh, okay. We could steal much more efficiently."

Taylor: Yeah. [laughs]

Sydnee: "We'll be better at stealing." [chuckles]

Taylor: They can steal forever.

Sydnee: Yes. We were stealing one download at a time. And back then, that took like— You want that whole MP3, or that whole WAV file, whatever it is? Listen. You're six hours for that song.

Taylor: Oh, yeah.

Sydnee: You're working for it.

Taylor: I remember waiting hours for a single JPEG of some Sailor Scouts to download.

Sydnee: [chuckles]

Taylor: Like, watching it appear [through laughter] bar by bar. Like, “We’re going to get to see the Outer Senshi in two hours.” [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: And then you’d print it out, and you glue it in a notebook. [laughs]

Sydnee: Kids today, they don’t know how good they have it.

Taylor: Nah, that was better.

Sydnee: Any time I’ll ask the girls something, they’ll be like, “I don’t know. Let me google it up.”

Taylor: Don’t do that.

Sydnee: “Just google it up. Google up.”

Taylor: Use your brain. Think it through first. I don’t know.

Sydnee: It’s better— It’s that, or they’ll ask Alexa, which I think is worse.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: I’m like, “Don’t do that. Don’t ask the robot. At least google it.” [chuckles] Google it, and then I’ll help you find a reputable source among your searches, but don’t ask the robot.

Taylor: Actively search, not passive.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Well, thank you for listening to Ben Folds. I know we've talked about a lot. [laughs]

Taylor: Well—

Sydnee: I've seen Ben Folds in concert a number of times. He's incredibly impressive to watch perform, which I think is cool when some of those are him and a piano.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: He has the kind of artistry and performance skills and charisma to pull that out, which is tough.

Taylor: That was a really impressive thing I was reading. One of the big differences between the two albums is that on *Rockin' the Suburbs*, he was playing— Pretty much every instrument you hear, he is playing it. On *Songs for Silverman*, he brought in a lot of talented studio musicians, a lot of well-established musicians, to kind of beef things up, back things up. Which, you know, I think there's a reason that that album— I called it Charlie Brown music, but it felt more mature. It felt a very mature album, and maybe part of that maturity is, "Yes, I can do all this. But also this is your whole thing, and you do it like a god, so I'm gonna bring you in." [chuckles]

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. And I do think it's part of that like, it's why he's not your typical pop artist in terms of his musical ability and his understanding of music theory. Obviously, it's elevated, because he's doing different things. He's trying like, "I could do this on an album, I could do this, I could approach it from this angle. Make music with this many people, where it sounds like this, or I'll do my own backing vocals, or maybe I'll get somebody else." Somebody who's trying all that different stuff, that's an artist that will continue to evolve and change and contribute to the musical landscape in a really cool way.

Taylor: Well, that makes sense that that's the person you would have in charge of the Kennedy Center. [chuckles]

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. If you cared about music, or art, or culture, or literally anything but yourself. But if you don't, then I guess you would want that guy to quit. [chuckles]

Taylor: Just gonna put whoever made the AI viking hip-hop "Kings and Queens" song in charge? That's about the sonic equivalent of the current administration.

Sydnee: I don't know. Yeah, I think that's about right. Whoever would be worst for music, that's who you need to put in charge of it, and it would make sense in the Trump administration. Because, like, you put RFK in charge of health.

Taylor: Yeah. Well, I enjoy— There's one account on TikTok that's dedicated to exposing AI musicians. Which isn't really hard. I think every time I hear an AI song, I'm like, "Oh, that's AI, and I hate it."

But he runs it through filters, and makes a definitive case for, "Hey, this artist is AI."

And these people get *really* mad about being called out for being AI musicians, and it's kind of— It's wild to see all the people in the comments that are like, "Well, I don't care! I like it." It's like, but it has no soul. [chuckles]

Sydnee: No.

Taylor: Art should have a soul. Oh, no! Where are we going?

Sydnee: Again, it's bad for our souls, it's bad for our culture, it's bad for society. And also, all the water. [chuckles]

Taylor: All the water!

Sydnee: The *water*!

Taylor: Think about the water.

Sydnee: What is *wrong* with you? Just go check out Brenda Kay. Which, according to our AI detector, is not AI. God, I hope that's true.

Taylor: That's— It's weird that you don't really appreciate things until you see the opposite side of it. Because a lot of the maybe less talented musicians that have found their way to my FYP because of Brenda Kay, I still have a moment of appreciation for, because I'm like, "Well, the thing I know is this is not AI."

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: This was *not* made by a machine. [laughs]

Sydnee: This is its own thing. [chuckles]

Taylor: You are fully in this, and I like that. Even if I don't like anything else about it, I like that you're a human out there making it.

Sydnee: I think at the end of the day, AI cannot win. I think about, a lot, the guy who wrote the song about Punxsutawney Phil, when he found out that Punxsutawney Phil gets a pill that makes him live forever, and his wife Phyllis doesn't. Remember that?

Taylor: [wheeze-laughs] No?

Sydnee: You didn't see that song?

Taylor: You said that like that's something that everybody should have experienced.

Sydnee: Aw. I'm gonna send it to you.

Taylor: Okay.

Sydnee: He writes a song from—

Taylor: It sounds like it's gonna make me sad.

Sydnee: It is. It makes me cry every time I hear it! But—

Taylor: Oh, I don't wanna think about a—

Sydnee: It's just a piece of a song. But it's like he started just earnestly writing— I mean, I don't know if he's ever gonna make it a musical, but he *should*. 'Cause it's this incredible idea of this creature that is forced to live forever to predict the weather.

Taylor: And watches his wife die?

Sydnee: Well, and that's the thing. The way their lore works is that Punxsutawney Phil has always been the same groundhog.

Taylor: Right.

Sydnee: But Phyllis, his wife, has not. And so I guess there's just a series of Phyllises.

Taylor: [sighs] Groundhog Day.

Sydnee: I know!

Taylor: Wow.

Sydnee: It's kind of devastating.

Taylor: I didn't think about that. You're right, a machine could never do that.

Sydnee: No.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: And all these people collaborated with it to make Phyllis' part of the song to complement it, and stitch, you know, and did— Or what is it, dueted him? You know what I mean? To sing along with him, or harmonize and sing their part— It's beautiful. It's a whole beautiful thing. I'll send it to you.

Taylor: Alright.

Sydnee: It's beautiful. Yeah.

Taylor: Well, I'm glad that art prevails.

Sydnee: Art prevails. Ben Folds prevails. With or without the Kennedy Center.

Taylor: Oh. Just, you know, get through until *that* day, and then maybe he can go back to his job.

Sydnee: We'll see.

Taylor: [chuckles]

Sydnee: Uh, what are we gonna do next, Taylor?

Taylor: [laughs] So we're gonna go back to movies.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. A movie you had suggested to me, and I finally watched.

Taylor: Yes. And it's— We're spooky-adjacent. We kind of took a break from doing endless spooky stuff. Gotta work some stuff in for the normies. But back to spooky. We're gonna watch *Forbidden Fruits*.

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: Which is a like, *Mean Girls* meets *The Craft* movie. It's streaming on — I watched it on Shutter, I believe?

Sydnee: Yes, yes.

Taylor: Really fun, really kitschy.

Sydnee: We will talk about that next week. In the meantime, there's lots of Ben Folds music. I think you would enjoy it. Or you could watch *Over the Fence*? [chuckles]

Taylor: *Over the Hedge*? *Under the Hedge*?

Sydnee: *Over the Hedge*? *Over the Hedge*, not the fence.

Taylor: *Beside the Fence*?

Sydnee: Yes. That one.

Taylor: [chuckles] I guess so.

Sydnee: Yeah. But thank you. Thank you for listening. You should 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 Taylor Smirl.

Sydnee: I'm still buffering.

Taylor: And I am, too.

[theme music plays]

Sydnee: That's the one with— It's like *Avatar*, but with groundhogs, right?

Taylor: [chuckles] Is that a— You have kids. I would assume you were familiar with this.

Sydnee: I'm pretty sure that's what— It's a cartoon, it's an animated one. And you can enter the mind of a groundhog, like *Avatar*.

Taylor: Is that really the concept? *Over the Hedge*.

Sydnee: I think so. Yes. Isn't that what it is?

Taylor: I have no idea. You could totally be making this up.

Sydnee: No, I'm like... I didn't see it, but I think the girls have seen it. I'm pretty sure that's it.

Taylor: I'll take your word for it.

Sydnee: No, maybe that's not true. There's one where that's true. [laughs]

Taylor: Are you thinking of— What was that, *Hoppers*? That was more recent.

Sydnee: *Oh*, that's what I'm thinking of.

Taylor: Okay.

Sydnee: Yeah, that's the *Avatar*, but with animals.

Taylor: I— Alright. High concept.

Sydnee: Is *that* what he did the music for?

Taylor: He did the music for *Over the Hedge*.

Sydnee: Okay.

Taylor: I can guarantee that.

Sydnee: That was from 2006.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: That was a long time ago.

Taylor: That's true. You didn't have kids yet.

Sydnee: I didn't even have kids. So I don't know *anything* about it.

Taylor: Oh.

Sydnee: I gotta go back now!

Taylor: You gotta watch it.

Sydnee: [laughs] Gotta watch it! Alright!

Taylor: [laughs]

MaximumFun.org.
Comedy and culture.
Artist owned.
Audience supported.