

Bluff City Movie Club: Sneakers

Transcriber: Jeff (jth2b #2633) [0:00:00 - 0:22:30], robotchangeling

Introduction	1
Sneakers Synopsis [0:14:00]	12
[0:30:00]	22
Movie Talk [0:52:26]	42

Introduction

Austin: Ok, Time.is.

Dre: Let me restart my recording...

Art: Finish jamming pretzel goldfish into my mouth...

Austin: Hell yeah

Dre: It's important. You gotta eat.

Austin: It is. You *gotta* eat. I have not eaten. It's fine.

Dre: Austin, you gotta eat.

Austin: I'll eat after this. I'm gonna! I'm gonna! I'm gonna go to a diner. I'm gonna get a mimosa.

Dre: Nice.

Austin: It's gonna be fine. And then food, maybe, also.

Dre: [laughs] Ok, yeah, that's technically calories, but yeah, I don't if it counts as food.

Austin: See? There we go.

Art: We saw a good-looking diner the other day, and Jess was just like, “That looks like a real Austin Walker joint,” and I’m like, “He didn’t invent going to diners.”

Austin: Let’s go. I’ll be there in a month.

Art: [laughs] Already? Is it E3 season already?

Austin: No, no, no. [laughs] No, no, no, no. I have a talk at Pomona College on the 15th— er, the 14th of February.

Art: Oh right, I remember. Your Valentine’s Day talk.

Austin: My Valentine’s Day talk. So, I’m just gonna try to come out for that whole week.

Dre: Talk about looove.

Austin: Yeah, talk about love. It’s actually about... [laughs quietly] You don’t know what this is about, Dre?

Dre: [laughs] No, I don’t.

Austin: Oh. It’s a series on failure? [laughs]

Dre: Oh, yeah! Love failure.

Austin: On Valentine’s Day. Love failure. Can’t wait.

Art: Top of the minute?

Austin: Sure.

[all clap]

Austin: Single clap, good clap...[sighs]...in my ears.

Dre: Yeah, no, sounded good to me.

Austin: All right.

Art: Scared the bejeezus out of my wife, but... [Dre laughs]

Austin: Aw. Hi, Jess!

Art: She's trying to sleep in this room. It's a real...[laughs quietly]

Austin: [whispering] Hi, Jess.

Art: Yeah, there you go. [laughs quietly] All right. Welcome to Friends at the Table, an actual play podcast? [Dre laughs] Welcome to the Pusher update for a month from 2018, our catch-up Pusher updates. We are here talking about a number of movies that have influenced us as individuals, specifically in relation to the Bluff City campaign, now that the first season, I guess, of that is behind us. Today, we are talking about the 1992 film *Sneakers*. Sorry, I'm gonna start over. Today, we are talking about, quote, "The greatest sneak in history." [laughs] That is *Sneakers*, a comedy heist film by Phil Alden Robinson that starred...a million people? Like, a million people slightly past their prime and then a couple right in it: Robert Redford, Dan Akroyd, Ben Kingsley, Mary McDonnell, River Phoenix, Sidney Poitier, David Strathairn, Strat-hairn? Strat-airn? I never know how to pronounce it. Strath-ern? Hmm, huh. Strat-hern?

Art: I don't think it's Strat-hern.

Austin: You don't think it's Strat-hern? Strath-ern?

Art: Strath-ern?

Dre: IMDb does not have a pronunciation guide.

Austin: No, no. Uh, the, uh...Stra-thorn? Strath-airn? Strath-airn, says Wikipedia.

Art: Oh, hold on. I'm trying to figure out the...

Austin: Yeah, I'm mousing over the thing, yeah.

Dre: Strat...Yeah, Strath-airn.

Austin: Strath-airn .

Dre: Yeah, cause it's like the "air" in bear, Strathairn.

Austin: Exactly. It's like the "air" in bear, Strathairn. [chuckles] Anyway. Edward R. Murrow from *Good Night and Good Luck*, apparently. I didn't realize that. Which is— I guess, let's talk broadly about what the film is and kind of where we're coming at for it. I know, Art, you'd seen it before. Dre, this was new for you, right?

Dre: Mm-hmm, yeah.

Austin: I saw it on the wall of my dad's VHS collection every Sunday for years. You know, my parents were divorced as kids— as a kid. [laughs] My parents were divorced when they were kids. [Art laughs] Then they got married. Then they got divorced again. And, so, whenever I visited my dad, for as long as he was in...for as long as he was anywhere, he would have a huge shelf of movies or big boxes of movies, and when he finally moved into his house when I was in...when I was like a teenager, I guess, he got married and bought a house. The downstairs basement— he had a finished basement that was, like, his movie zone, and this huge, long wall just covered in VHSes and DVDs. And *Sneakers* always stood out, because it's like a weird, white box that has...if people look at the poster, that's basically the same as the VHS, where it's a white poster with a bunch of names on it, and then it's as if the poster has been peeled up by one of the corners [chuckles] and everyone is in the bottom right-hand corner, [Dre chuckles] all the principal actors, giving you a look. And I was like, "What the fuck is this movie?" Except I was 13, so I said, "What the F is this movie?" And, eventually, we watched it. So, that was my experience with it coming in, and I'd seen it since then a couple of times. You know, maybe once every seven years or something, so it's probably been since I was in grad school since I last watched it. Uh, that's not true. I know the last time

I watched it was when Ello existed. Do you remember Ello?

Dre: Oh, kind of.

Austin: The creators network? It was one of those—it was 2014—one of the competing social networks that never went anywhere. And I know this because there is a shot from this movie—and I will tell you the shot when we get there—that was my header on Ello.

Art: Mm.

Austin: So, let's just start with general impressions. What did y'all think of *Sneakers*? Dre, as the person coming into it fresh, I'm curious about your perspective.

Dre: I really enjoyed the movie a whole lot.

Austin: Awesome.

Dre: Yeah, it was just a very good heist movie, and it was also very cool just watching, like...this movie is like very late '80s, early '90s as hell.

Austin: Yes.

Art: Yeah.

Dre: It is kind— go ahead.

Austin: There's a thing Janine says a lot, which is that the thing that you think is associated with any given decade actually bleeds into the next decade, especially in terms of fashion and aesthetic.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: And, in this, I think like sense of humor and just like...one of the things I kept thinking about with this movie is this is four years before *Mission Impossible* 1, [**Dre:** "Mm"] and those two movies could not be any more dissimilar in style and vibe.

Dre: Jesus, yeah.

Art: Yeah, mm-hmm.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: That's crazy.

Austin: And four years is not a lot of time.

Dre: Yeah, I mean, even in approach to like how technology is shown is like radically different.

Austin: Yes, yes. Totally.

Dre: The other thing that stood out to this movie a lot, just upon watching it, was like: oh, yeah, hey, San Francisco sure has changed a lot.

Austin: Oh my god, yeah. [Dre laughs] True enough.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: True enough, right?

Art: But that shot— I'm jumping way ahead, but the shot of, like, him getting pushed out of that car? That's a killer San Francisco shot.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Which car? The...

Art: When Martin's getting pushed out— like, when he first gets taken to see Cosmo?

Austin: Yes.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. Okay, yeah. Totally, totally. Art, so, you've seen this movie before.

Art: Yeah, I saw this movie for the first time when I had the idea that I wanted to write a heist movie. I was like, "I'm just gonna watch every heist movie to give me ideas."

Austin: Ohhh, sure

Art: It never ended up coming together. I couldn't, like, break my own story. It honestly just occurred to me while I was watching the movie this morning, like, I should just pitch it as a Bluff City story.

Austin: As a Bluff game, yeah. [Dre laughs quietly]

Art: We should just do it in a Bluff game, and then I can have that catharsis, and it puts it out there if we ever...we could still sell it, you know?

Austin: We could still sell it. Yeah, that's true. [Art and Austin laugh] All you'd be doing is giving us a cut, which honestly, I'll take it.

Art: Sure. [sarcastic] Yeah, I mean, as opposed to the great paydays that rookie screenwriters get in Hollywood. [all laugh]

Austin: Yeah, totally. I mean, for me, coming to it again...so, I watched it, you know, when I was 13 or 14 and then again when I was 20 and then again when I was 28 or whatever. Coming to it now, thinking about it as a Bluff City game, or thinking about it as like a game in general: one, made me much more ready to forgive some of its structural or character things, of like, here's the smartest hacker, you know, of all time, who believes these two dudes are with the NSA without doing any background check on if the NSA has an office in San Francisco or whatever, right?

Dre: Mm, yeah. [laughs]

Austin: Stuff like that is just like, okay. But very much still the thing that I would excuse

in play or that, like...no one would check. If I had two guys from the NSA show up, no one would be like, "They're not real NSA agents."

Art: Sure.

Austin: You know? [Dre laughs]

Art: It's also the cast you would only think to get in Bluff City too, right?

Austin: A hundred percent.

Art: Because I was like, "Here's this kinda B heist movie, and it has Robert Redford, Ben Kingsley, [Austin laughs] Sindy Poitier, and, at the end, James Earl Jones," you'd be like...

Austin: Uh huh.

Dre: Yeah.

Art: "What did it cost?"

Austin: Also— yeah. River Phoenix at the height of his, like...you know, rest in peace River Phoenix, but at the height of his, like, sexual popularity? [others laugh] You know, people were just like, "That's a hot man."

Art: Yeah.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: "That's what a hot man looks like, River Phoenix!" That's also just the character he is. He's just, like, hot and dirty. That is the entire arc of his character. [laughs]

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Art: Uh huh, yeah.

Austin: And not dirty like naughty. Dirty like he's covered in soot constantly, like a—

Dre: But also dirty as in naughty.

Austin. He's a little naughty. He's like, horny— he's like, the— he knows what horny is. I don't know that he's ever...

Dre: No, 100%

Austin: Do you know what I mean?

Dre: Yeah, that scene where they're spying on the mathematician, [**Austin:** "Yes"] and he and the lady are, like, not even having sex, but just kind of making out and making a lot of noise.

Austin: Yes.

Dre: And River Phoenix's character is like, [imitating] "Come on, let me see it!" in a way that is very much like, "I've never seen this before. I know I should be excited about this, but I'm more confused than anything." [laughs]

Austin: Yes. Those characters—Janek, the mathematician, and the woman who he is having an affair, or not having an affair with, [**Dre:** "Yeah"] is actually just sleeping with, went to Mexico City with—also don't seem to know what sex is.

Dre: [laughs] No, no.

Austin: I was watching that sequence— Janine and I watched this movie last night, and I think she made the case that was the least believable scene she's ever seen in anything ever, [Dre laughs] to the degree that I started thinking, like, is the woman he's sleeping with a spy and she's just putting it on? Because it seems sooo...like, there's a stage element to it. Do you know what I mean?

Art: Mm-hmm.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: It felt like dinner and a movie or a dinner and a stage show show more than a person who wants to fuck. [Dre laughs]

Art: Well, it's like she's more invested in blocking the password than she is in like...

Austin: Yes. [Dre & Austin laugh] Yes! Which I think gets to what this also is, which is there's a degree to which this is a comedy first and foremost, right? Like, this is...this movie was produced by Walter Parkes and Lawrence Lasker who produced, you know, and I think wrote both this and *War Games*. And I think that the *War Games* connection, which is a 1980s Matthew Broderick flick about a person who gets a computer game that is revealed to be connected to the national war system, like the national DEFCON nuclear system, and ends up taking this thing that was supposed to be like a war simulation and nearly driving us into World War 3, because the computer wants to do that, basically. And so it's like, you have to win the game...I mean, also, like, the only way to win is not to play. Anyway, there were similar kind of like, oh, wow, we're at the cutting edge of technology in both of these things, but also, these are both movies that are filled with 1970s and '80s Hollywood tropes that step on some real kind of shitty landmines. I mean, I think we should talk at length about Whistler, who I think [Dre: "Mm"] is both a really interesting character and also where I think that they fuck up a couple of times. There is absolutely a karaoke scene in this movie that would not play today.

Dre: Oh, god.

Austin: When Liz and, um...god, what is the name of the dude they're...?

Dre: Uh, something Brandes. I forget his first name.

Austin: Walter? Winston?

Art: Werner. Werner Brandes.

Austin: Werner!

Dre: Werner, yeah .

Austin: [chuckles] Werner. Werner Brandes go to a Chinese food place, and someone is singing “Bad, Bad Leroy Brown” in Chinese, except they’re still saying Leroy Brown, and so there’s very much a, like, comedic effect happening in that sequence based on mispronunciation or based on, you know, English not being a first language that is like, ugh, this is better than this, you know?

Dre: Yes.

Austin: You’re better than this joke, movie.

Dre: It’s basically the same joke as the Chinese dinner in *A Christmas Story*, right?

Austin: Yes, totally.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: Totally, totally. I think it’s less than that joke, in terms of the focus of the sequence.

Dre: Yeah, that’s true. Yeah.

Austin: But it’s still rough. And then I think that— you know, I just think, in general, it such a ‘70s heist. Like, you’ve got the guy who is good at guns or punching in Sydney Poitier. You have the, you know, weird conspiracy guy. You have the main guy who’s supposed to be, you know, the leading man. You’ve got the youngster. You have the woman. And the movie does a lot with what it has, but it’s very much in that model. Also, it was depressing, because I was like, also, that model is still basically the model for movies. [laughs]

Art: Mm-hmm.

Austin: It's just gotten dressed up better, you know?

Dre: I mean, yeah, they had that same scene in *Fast 5*.

Austin: Yeah, totally. Totally. [Dre laughs] I mean, there's a lot of *Fast 5* in this movie.

Dre: [laughs] Yeah.

Austin: They get the "My name is my passport" thing. They test it out. They're all...just, like, they're hanging out in a San Francisco apartment instead of a big warehouse.

Art: Yeah, uh huh.

Austin: There's even a scene with a truck, you know? [Laughs]

Dre: Yeah.

***Sneakers* Synopsis [0:14:00]**

Austin: Thinking about this as a Bluff City movie, obviously—like you said, Art—the cast already kind of sets it up as being a...wait, you know what? Actually, I'm gonna pause, because we're 21 minutes in, and there's a chance someone is listening to this and has not seen this movie, so let me just give you the very quick high-level, like: what is *Sneakers*, what happens in *Sneakers*. So, in the late 1960s on a college campus, two friends—Martin Brice, "Marty", and Cosmo—are young hackers. They are sneakers, which I guess was a term, at a time, for hacking, presumably back in the '60s, '70s, and '80s. And Marty goes out to get pizza, just after Cosmo hacks into some...was it some conservative...?

Art: It was Richard Nixon.

Austin: It was actually Nixon's bank account.

Dre: Yeah.

Art: I think it was, like, the RNC and then Nixon, but like, it's...

Dre: Sure.

Art: Nixon gave all his money to the legalize marijuana...

Austin: Right. And, so, Cosmo gets busted. And then, we cut forward in time, and Marty, now going under the name Martin Bishop instead of Martin Brice, is running a group of people who are basically, uh...they will— I guess they're, like, security...there's a real word for this, isn't it?

Art: They're white-hat sneakers.

Austin: They're white-hat sneakers, thank you. [Dre laughs] Who break into banks and test security protocols and systems, to see if someone could break them. And they do that, you know, for pay from the people who have those security systems. So, like, a bank will pay them to be like, "Try to steal from us." And so, you know, they do that. There's a great moment where they...like, he gets the check, and what's the receptionist say at the bank? Or not the receptionist, the teller says? He's like, "It pays," and then she's like, "Not that much."

Art: Yeah.

Dre: Yeah, I think he says, like, "It's a living," and she's like, "Not a very good one," or something like that.

Austin: [laughs] Yeah, it's very good, yeah. That's exactly it. And then, they get contracted by two members of the NSA—or who are representing themselves as members of the NSA—who have great names, Dick Gordon and Buddy Wallace, who know who Marty is and who basically leverage that knowledge to make him try to steal for them a mysterious black box made by the mathematician Gunter Janek, that has a

codename, “Setec Astronomy.” And they believe or they’re told that it’s being made for the Russian government and that it’s a matter of national security that they get it. They get it. I don’t have to go over every step in that process. They get it. They determine that what it is is a kind of complete perfect crypto device for American security systems, which means that it is not being developed to break into Russian security systems, which is an important, you know, distinction. He ends up giving it to the NSA agents, just as his partner, one of his partners, Crease— the names in this movie are incredible, by the way.

Art: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Martin Bishop, Cosmo, Donald Crease, Irwin “Whistler” Emery, Darren “Mother” Roskow, Carl Arbogast, Liz. Liz doesn’t get a whole name.

Art: Liz doesn’t get a last name.

Dre: Oh my god.

Art: It’s a rough one.

Austin: Which sucks! Because it would be a good last name if they’d fucking put in the work. Just give her a last name.

Art: Well, you can see in the Wikipedia, they note that she was originally the bank teller.

Austin: Oh my god.

Art: And they said it took too long to get her character up to speed, so they just slapped the ex-girlfriend thing on her to just get her in faster.

Austin: Gotcha, okay. Jesus. There’s a lot of that here too. There’s a lot of just, like, “Eh, hand wave it. These people are here, and also they all know what everyone does. It’s fine.” Like, there’s that Christmas party sequence where they are just openly talking about some illegal shit around family members and children. [Dre and Austin laugh]

Which is fine. It's fine. In any case, It becomes clear that the people who were representing themselves as NSA agents were not because of a device where they go back to the NSA office and it's been demolished, which is a thing I am absolutely stealing for a Bluff City game. [Art laughs] And they learn that Setec Astronomy is an anagram for "too many secrets," and they realize that, in fact, the people representing themselves as the NSA are actually working for Cosmo, Martin's old partner from when he was a young college student.

Art: Who Martin believed died in prison.

Dre: Yes.

Austin: Right. Important note. Good catch. They...Marty gets out, or is taken back to the city, and after meeting his old friend Cosmo, comes back to the city, relocates into Liz's apartment from their normal headquarters, which, by the way, is again a very Friends at the Table headquarters. It's like, exposed brick; Christmas lights; a weird, glass room. It's extremely good. And then they go to Liz's apartment, which is maybe a more Bluff City place to have a headquarters, as they just ruin this woman's apartment with shit. She takes it all in stride, which is like, I will say, one of the things I'll say I like about Liz is that, for 99% of the movie, she is hyper competent and completely in control and very much does— like, they're playing into the trope of team mom a little bit, but I don't think she takes any shit and also seems like she is smarter than everyone around her, [Dre: "Mm-hmm"] in a way where the joke is not, like, she's a nag or anything. Do you know?

Art: Mm-hmm.

Austin: In the end, they realize they need to steal this box back from Cosmo...because he's gonna use it to destroy the system of money? Which I would be—

Art: His motivations are never very clear.

Austin: He misses Marty a lot.

Art: Mm-hmm.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: That's one—

Art: But like, he says he's gonna dismantle this thing, and then Marty's just like, "I don't believe you," and we never get an alternate theory of what's going on.

Austin: Yeah. Yes, which is partly why I wish there was maybe a little more of the 1969 stuff, right? Like, is it a situation where Cosmo says he believes this shit but is actually just playing around, is actually just gonna use it to make himself money? It's not clear. If he does the shit that he's promising he wants to do, that seems all right. You know, I'd see what happens.

Art: Well, he also says that he's working for the Mafia.

Austin: [laughs] He does do that.

Art: And like, we never get any of that either.

Austin: Yeah.

Art: Like, that he's a Mafia accountant—

Dre: Well, it's just his day job.

Art: And he needs the thing so no one finds out his Mafia accounting scam, [**Austin:** "Yeah"] and that doesn't sound true either, you know?

Austin: Well, the thing he specifically says is, "I met some connected people in prison, and when I got out, I looked at their books, and they didn't have any books, basically. Like, nothing was organized, and I organized— [laughs] I opened an Excel spreadsheet

for them.” Like, that’s literally the thing he started doing with the Mob was, like, making sure their money made sense, [Dre laughs quietly] was just doing accounting, basically. Which, they had accountants. Come on, Cosmo. And then, yes, being able to hack into stuff and clear names and change files and stuff.

Art: But also, to quote the great philosopher Stringer Bell: Are you taking notes on a criminal conspiracy?

Austin: [laughs] Exactly, yeah. Totally. In the end, they recover the device. They turn it over to the real NSA, as portrayed by James Earl Jones in a great cameo. His voice appearing on the phone in that sequence is also extremely good, or when they first call him.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: And then they reveal that, in fact, they’ve kept the important part of this device, the chip that makes it work, and they use it at the end of movie, the final— the coda is that they bankrupted the Republican National Committee and donated all that money to Amnesty International, Greenpeace, and the United Negro College Fund, which was just wild to hear the movie straight up be like, “Yeah, and then we robbed the Republicans.” [Dre laughs]

Art: It’s a very political movie. It’s a movie that I don’t think would get released right now with how political it is, because it’s—

Austin: No, yeah.

Dre: Yeah.

Art: There’s also, like, when they drive up to the demolished office building, there’s that homeless person outside that’s like, “Can you help me? The government took away my house.” Like...

Austin: Yeah. Well, that happens twice, right?

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Like, that happens the first time they show up to the NSA thing, and the dude points to a campaign poster for George Bush [**Art:** “Mm-hmm”] and says, “Blame him,” or “Ask him,” or whatever, right? And then, the second time, the building is gone. And like, yeah, there is some stuff happening there, that again, is heavy-handed or built with, like, okay, this is also a joke about being annoyed by a homeless guy, which is like, eh. But is modeled in a way that it is not just, like, a throwaway joke. It says something about the way that Martin Bishop sees the world, right? So, let’s talk about— we just went over all of the scenes. What are the scenes that stood out to y’all, either positively or negatively? What were some of the big ones?

Dre: Hmm. Any time Sidney Poitier’s character says, “Mah-tin,” [Austin laughs] in the way that he says Martin’s name is just incredible. It’s just the best.

Austin: It’s true.

Dre: It’s the fucking best.

Austin: It’s so good. Sidney— almost the best thing about that is there is that incredible payoff for how poised Donald Crease is, [**Dre:** “Mm-hmm”] Sidney Poitier’s character, where he says that there’s the— they’re doing the big heist in the final act, and he and...is it him and Mother get pulled out of the car, basically?

Dre: Yeah.

Art: Mm.

Austin: And he’s like, “Mother, have I ever told you why I got kicked out of the CIA? Temper problems,” and then beats the shit out of these two guards. [Austin and Dre laugh] And then what’s he...? Does he say, like... [sighs] I have to find the exact...

Dre: Something like, “If you ever come at me again, I’m gonna split your fucking head open,” or like...

Austin: Yeah. [imitating] “Motherfucker!”

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: He’s like, [imitating] “Motherfucker, if you ever point a gun at me again, I will split your head.” [Dre laughs] And like, phew, okay, Sidney! Get it! Incredible. Yeah, absolutely incredible sequence. I think other standout stuff, for me...there’s like a middle portion of this movie that I think is A+. Like, I think it’s a good movie overall, but I think that there’s— the moment from when they understand what the device is, [**Art:** “Mm”] where the screen garbage and ASCII characters on the screen [**Dre:** “Oh, yeah”] turn into regular blue language, which is a silly way to show that but is also, again, a very good way of showing that and very much one of those things where I can hear myself saying, “So, right now, there’s a bunch of language on the screen, a bunch of weird garbage characters, but then, bit by bit, they all turn into bright white blue, just clear language.” From that point until the Cosmo scene, when it becomes this, like, neo-noir is really fucking good. And so, that is like— the scene at the end of their Christmas party or whatever the— I don’t know if it’s a Christmas party, but there’s Christmas lights everywhere. Through the building being demolished, through him meeting up with Greg, Gregor, the former Russian spy at that violin performance, and like, they go down into the pool at whatever the place is that they’re at, and there’s the foggy pool.

Dre: Oh, yeah.

Austin: Which includes the moment where Gregor goes like, “You have to trust me,” and then steps into a shadow, which is exactly what you’re supposed to do. And then it end— that whole sequence gets to the, like, one of the big questions of this movie, which is like: in a world where the Cold War is over, who do you trust? What is the new model? All of these people have all of these skills built around knowing who the enemy was or at least knowing that there were two major superpowers and that their

relationship was the axis on which the world turned. And now, with one of those superpowers in recession or changing or the Cold War simply moving on, there are all these people who don't know who to trust and don't know where anyone's enemies are, because suddenly it is, you know, U.S. intelligence agencies nipping at each other. It is big business. It is, you know, independent operators.

And I think that's a fairly potent anxiety, not just for security operatives and intelligence, you know, agents, but for the world at large in this moment, and I think part of what the movie wants to get at is that we need to be quick enough to move past the old model and realize that George Bush is the problem. Like, you know, they don't necessarily say that directly, but part of the thing that the hackers are able to do or the sneakers are able to do is move with agility, in terms of, like, moving money where it's supposed to be to fix things, and that's a thing society isn't doing quickly at all. And I mean, in some ways, that's what Cosmo wants to do, right?

Art: Mm-hmm. Allegedly.

Austin: And— go ahead?

Art: Allegedly, that's what Cosmo wants to do.

Austin: Allegedly, right.

Art: Again, we never— I don't really think we ever really know what Cosmo's about.

Austin: No, right? Well, I think you get a little bit of it when he's like, "The world changed, Marty, and without our help," because it feels a little egotistical, a little bit like, "we were supposed to be the ones who changed the world, but actually, it was just the world." And I think that sequence really peaks at the thing that I have my Ello header as, which is the shot in the tunnel, where they pull Marty out of the car and then they kill Gregor inside of the car.

Art: Oh, yeah.

Austin: And it is just this, like, unbelievable gorgeous shot of...and I want to say that's an LA tunnel, not a San Francisco tunnel, but I could be wrong. Just, like, the bright lights up top and the blues and reds of the car lights. It's just, like, the silhouettes. Marty's been pulled out and thrown over to the side. I need to just pull this image over. I don't know how to do that, because it's my Ello background, and I can't seem to access my Ello. [Dre laughs] So, I'm just gonna link you to my Ello account, [laughs] which is a very funny thing to do! Oh, yeah, there it is. That just worked. It pulled the image in Discord.

Dre: Oh, nice.

Austin: So yeah, that shot is just impeccable.

Art: Mm.

Austin: One perfect shot. And that whole sequence, for me, is just the standout, like, 25 minutes of this film. I wish I could capture and bottle that degree of intensity. Or I think, maybe, when I've done some of the more intense stuff in Bluff, that 30 minute sequence is what I'm pulling from. Art, do you have any big standout sequences?

Art: Um, yeah. Er, this is a little more granular, but I know that you, like, you cut it off at the first Cosmo scene. I love that first Cosmo scene.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Art: I think, in general, and it's like, this is the most basic film analysis in the world, but I think the movie's pretty good when Ben Kingsley is in it. [all laugh] But he's so good at taking up oxygen in a scene, and like...

Austin: Yeah.

Art: In that, like, perfect way. Like, the sequence where Werner figures out that the date

is fake and...

[0:30:00]

Austin: Oh, yes!

Dre: Oh, yeah.

Austin: Yes, yes, yes.

Art: And, like, takes her down, and like...

Austin: The dog knocks over the purse, **[Art: "Mm-hmm"]** revealing that she's using a fake name.

Dre: Not just any dog, but his weird remote-controlled voice-activated toy dog that he has invented.

Austin: Yes.

Art: [laughs] His controlled robot toy dog. And...

Austin: That is a great failed roll, if there's ever been one. [Dre laughs] She rolled to sneak away and make a phone call, failed, and I said, "Yeah, no, you can totally make that phone call." [Austin and Art laugh] And I was like, "Then the camera lingers on your purse, as the dog walks into it."

Art: But he takes her on, like— is like, "Let's go for a ride," and it's like, I guess one of the most unbelievable things in this movie is that, on a first date, this woman is just like, "Okay! I went to your house, and now I'm gonna get in your car."

Austin: So, I think this is— I think that's the second date.

Dre: Yeah, I think so too.

Austin: That's an important thing that I think [**Art:** "Mm"] this movie does not make clear is time gets weird in the back half, because, you know, they're setting up shop and watching this dude come in and out of the office multiple days in a row. They, like...I don't know how long the final heist takes from conception till execution, but I think the Chinese food date and the at-his-house date— because he's cooking at his house.

Art: Sure.

Austin: When the camera first shows up, he's talking about how much he pounded the breasts.

Art: Mm-hmm.

Austin: The chicken breasts, because he's that guy.

Dre: Get it?

Austin: Get it? Huh?

Art: But I thought it was direct, because at the end of the Chinese, he was like, "Uh, do you want to have breakfast? [Austin laughs] Should I call you, or should I nudge you?"

Austin: Yes. [Austin and Dre laugh]

Art: Like, that's why I thought it was a continuous evening, but you're right, it could be...

Austin: Yeah. I thought she was like, "I gotta go," and then came back around, but you might be right. You might be right. In any case, you're right: that is one of those things, regardless, that felt not 2019.

Art: Yeah, I mean, my— Jessica will often say that one of the biggest risks she took while dating me is, on our second date, she got in my car.

Austin: Right. Right. Totally.

Art: And, you know, that made her very nervous, and I did not murder her.

Austin: Good job.

Art: Yeah, thank you. But then, like, he takes her to the office, and there's the confrontation with the guard, and then, like...

Austin: Yes.

Art: And then Cosmo shows up, and they have that conversation, and then, like, she mentions that they met on a computer dating site, [Austin laughs quietly] and that's when he has the realization, like, "No computer would match you, an attractive woman, and this man."

Dre: This schlub. [laughs]

Austin: The algorithm would never! [Dre laughs]

Art: Yeah, the algorithm would never, which is sooo funny right now.

Austin: It is. I mean, that's one of the things that I think works so well, actually, about this movie, is the degree to which there's, like, proto-San Francisco here, you know?

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Art: Mm-hmm.

Austin: You know, like, proto-venture capital tech bro shit, and also just like, some of the jokes around things like computer dating or around "The NSA would *never* spy on American citizens!" [Austin and Dre laugh] Like, hmm, okay. Okay. Huh, interesting.

Dre: Yeah, I mean, there's even that scene at the beginning when the fake NSA agents are meeting with Martin, and he's like, "Oh, so you're the voice I hear on the other line." Like, "No, no, no. That's the FBI. [Austin laughs] They do all the bad stuff domestically." He's like, "Okay, so are you the guys who, like, overthrow governments and install

dictators?” Like, “Oh, no, no, no. That’s the CIA. They’re the bad guys.”

Austin: Not us!

Dre: “We’re the good guys.”

Austin: Yeah, exactly. God.

Art: Oh, but also, Stephen Tobolowsky is very good in this movie as Werner Brandes. He’s, like, a...

Austin: Yeah.

Art: He’s someone you know and you don’t know you know him.

Austin: Yes.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Art: He’s the, like...the friend in *Groundhog Day*.

Austin: Mm, okay.

Art: The insurance salesman.

Austin: Right.

Art: He’s done that kind of, like, “I’m a goofy kind of older bald guy,” for like, I don’t know, 10, 15 years. He had that, and now he’s probably too old, and...

Austin: Right, right.

Art: I hope he saved his money.

Austin: That’s how it goes, unfortunately. He is— I know him as Sammy Jankis from *Memento*, the dude from the flashback that he— [**Art:** “Mm”] that, like, has the memory

condition that the lead character has.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: That Leonard is always talking about, “Remember Sammy Jankis.” He does a good job in that.

Art: Oh, apparently he’s still in Silicon Valley and hosts a monthly audio podcast, “The Tobolowsky Files”. [Art and Austin laugh]

Dre: Oh, boy.

Austin: Oh, boy. Oh, boy. You know, do you, Tobolowsky.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: I also really, really love both Timothy Busfield and Eddie Jones as Buddy Wallace and Dick Gordon, the fake NSA agents, who are just slimy as shit.

Art: Mm-hmm.

Dre: Oh, yeah.

Austin: You know? Love it. So good.

Dre: Uh, Donal Logue—is how you say his last name—as the math professor almost made me spit out my water.

Austin: I know! [laughs]

Dre: Because I had never seen that dude not just be a, like...either just a schmuck or just a down-on-his-luck kind of rough dude.

Austin: [laughs quietly] Yes.

Dre: He plays Gordon on that new Batman show on Fox.

Austin: Oh!

Art: Mm.

Austin: That's where— okay. He didn't—

Dre: Oh, no, he doesn't play Gordon. He plays, uh...

Austin: Oh.

Dre: He plays Gordon's, like, detective partner.

Austin: Okay.

Dre: I forget what that guy's named.

Austin: He looks good. He's 52. He looks good for his age.

Dre: Yeah.

Art: He looks so '80s in that part, though.

Austin: Oh yeah.

Dre: Oh, god, yeah.

Art: That's the, like, "this isn't the '90s yet" look, of the long hair. It's like a cream, like a tan jacket, like the...

Dre: Yeah.

Art: The coat he's wearing in that, like, reception, is...

Dre: It's like a cream coat and a cream turtleneck.

Austin: It's so much. I'm putting it in chat again, because it's so much.

Dre: Yeah.

Art: It's like—

Austin: And it's like, the math is being projected onto him.

Dre: Uh huh! [laughs]

Austin: [laughs quietly] It's so funny. Janine made the note that it's amazing, because this came out before Ted Talks existed, but he is—

Dre: Oh, it's 100% a Ted Talk.

Austin: It's absolutely a Ted Talk. [Dre and Austin laugh] Because it's like, they go to this place for the fucking...to hear a big math— to hear him, like, do a math lecture, and this is why, of course, Marty gets back with Liz, or like, you know, says, "Hey, Liz, I need you to come explain this thing to me." [Dre laughs] And so, in my mind, I expected this to be, like, they'd go in and he'd be talking about, I don't fucking know, some math shit. But instead, what he says— one of the quotes is like, "It would be a breakthrough of gaussian proportions and allow us to acquire the solution in a dramatically more efficient matter." You know, math shit. [laughs]

Dre: Yeah.

Art: [sarcastic] You know, math.

Austin: It's so good.

Dre: I mean, that whole speech is basically like, "What if numbers, but big and fast?"

Austin: It's so good. God. I'm actually just gonna link everyone to this, uh, cyberpunkreview.com archive of screencaps of this movie. Thank god to static.anarchivism.org for having archived the Cyberpunk review, because this just has

a bunch of great screenshots in it, including the one where Whistler's glasses—

Dre: Oh, where he's wearing the sunglasses? Fuck yes!

Austin: Reflect the codebreaker on the screen, which is an extremely good moment. I would like to take a minute to talk about Whistler, because he's a character who I think is right on the edge of being what we would think of today as decent representation, but they fall into some of those traps. Like, you can see the writers trying to be conscientious and also still playing for laughs occasionally. So, for instance, there are all of these things that are done fairly early on that make you— where it looks like they're gonna do the classic, "Oh, he's blind," bit, like joke, and instead, they pivot. So like, oh, he's reading something in braille, and it's like, oh, it's Playboy. Ha. There's the great bit early on where they are trying to find where the box is in Janek's office, and he goes, "Don't look; listen," as they're rewatching this video tape over and over again, and I was like, "Ugh, this is gonna be the bit where they go, like, 'He can hear something in the room that makes him understand where a box is or something, like the echo or whatever.'" But instead, he just means, like, pay attention to what these people are talking about.

Art: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Because his lover says, "I called and left a message with your service," which means that there shouldn't be an answering machine in his room, because he has a call service or he has an answering machine service. And it's like, oh!

Art: Although it's very old-fashioned now.

Austin: It is.

Art: It's like, what the...?

Austin: [laughs] Yeah, none of that makes any sense.

Art: There are people listening to this who have probably never seen an answering machine in their life, let alone dealt with an answering service. Like...

Austin: Yeah, totally. Totally. But like, that's one of those good things, where it's like, okay, this is not just "he has super senses," it's he's a person who pays attention to detail, right? There's the bit where he's dancing bad, which is like, is he just doing a Ray Charles bit there, with the big glasses and his bad off-beat claps? Ehh? And it ends with the needless "he's gonna drive a car" segment, and I say "needless," because he moved the car, like, two feet, and in that time, Crease and Mother had the situation under control, and one of them could have gotten in and driven the car. And it's like, it's such a heist movie moment of just put the person who is blind in the driver's seat and go, but like, ehh, I don't know. It was a little tiring, you know?

I'm not offended, but I am like: what is the punchline here? What is the thing I'm laughing at? Or where is the intensity supposed to be coming from? Because I know this isn't gonna end with him crashing and dying, you know? And so it's just supposed to be, like, a little spice. But that's the representation in 1992, right? Like, there's a degree to which it's like, wow, this movie has a blind character who is competent, who does not need to be taken care of, who is hacking. Like, all of the sequences with him just using the braille terminal—because that's real technology that exists—is fairly effective at being like, yeah, he can do his job. He doesn't need other people to— you know what I mean? Like, there's a degree to that that I think worked for me.

Art: Yes. And yeah, that driving bit is just to sort of, like, break up the two Cosmo moments. It's just to, like, give you...

Austin: Yes. Yes.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Art: Because there's two different moments where Cosmo decides he's gonna threaten

Marty, and they just needed something to keep those apart, so like, “I don't know, this.”

Austin: Yeah, totally.

Art: And I guess the first choice was that Mother bit with Mother and Crease.

Austin: Who I just want a side movie about, honestly.

Dre: Yeah.

Art: [laughs] Yeah.

Austin: I just want them annoying each other forever, please.

Art: Well, I mean, if you check the Wikipedia page, you might be in luck.

Austin: What? What?

Dre: What?

Art: Because NBC is developing a TV series based on this film.

Austin: Are they?

Art: I mean, as of 2016, so it probably doesn't exist anymore.

Austin: It doesn't exist anymore, unfortunately, probably.

Dre: Oh, yeah.

Austin: That's a good— I'd watch that show.

Art: Sure.

Austin: It depends on who's in it, though. I mean...who do you cast today for these roles?

Art: I checked, because I was like, “Man, these are kind of older than you would think people would be as leads in this,” and...

Austin: Oh, yeah.

Art: George Clooney is basically exactly as old as Robert Redford was in this movie.

Austin: He’ll never do TV. Come on.

Dre: Oh, yeah.

Art: You don’t know.

Dre: [doubtful] Mm...

Austin: [laughs quietly] For NBC? Not for NBC!

Art: NBC, the network that gave him his start as whoever he was on *ER*?

Austin: Let’s see if we can think of his name. What was the character’s name on *ER*? Don’t look it up.

Art: Um...

Austin: Robert. Robert, uh, Grayson.

Art: Robin’s dad, he’s playing?

Austin: Yeah, uh huh. [laughs] He was a doctor in this. It’s an AU, instead of being an acrobat.

Dre: I just had to double check when that *Scorpion* TV series came out, because I had this horrible thought—

Austin: Oh no!

Dre: “What if they just made that into *Scorpion*?” But don't worry: it came out two years. It came out 2014, so that...

Austin: Right, right. And then ran for four years?

Dre: Holy shit.

Austin: That show got four seasons?

Dre: I watched the first episode of that show, and...

Austin: Fucking, who...? Is this NBC?

Art: You can't get canceled on CBS, I think, is the real thing.

Dre: Oh.

Austin: CBS, call us. [Art laughs] Like, come on! *Scorpion* got four seasons. That show got, like, a hundred episodes!

Dre: Jesus.

Austin: Those seasons are 22 episodes each or more! Unbelievable. We don't even have one.

Art: Yeah. *Criminal Minds* is going off the air, so that's our spot. That's the spot we gotta take.

Austin: That's our spot. We're in. Zip right in there. Any other notes people had? In terms of connections to Bluff, technology, anything like that. I really love— there's a lot here that is, like, one of the things this movie made me think of a lot is the ways in which you do complicated sci-fi stuff for a wide audience.

Dre: Mm.

Austin: The ways that you, like...things that don't make any sense when you think

about this when you play it straight. So, like, the anagrams sequence when Marty realizes that Setec doesn't mean anything, because it's S-E-T-E-C, Setec Astronomy. "Setec doesn't mean anything. It must be an anagram," and so he just ruins their Scrabble game [laughs] and uses Scrabble tiles to put together— to figure out that it means "too many secrets." And I think that's a really effective visual play of moving stuff around. The other words, the other phrases he finds: "Monterey's coast," "my Socrates note," and "cooty's rat semen." [laugh quietly]

Art: And that was also the opening titles, did that anagram thing.

Austin: Yes.

Dre: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Art: And it's like, someone thought that anagram thing was great, and then they only had, like, one little bit for it in the movie. [Dre laughs]

Austin: Yeah. Yeah. Totally.

Art: Like, their anagram consultant must have been, like, someone's cousin or something.

Austin: [laughs quietly] That guy got paid. There was also— you know, in terms of the technology, one of the things I have said so many times in Bluff is like, the...I mean, and now we know a little bit more about how Bluff City's history and shit works, because we finished doing the *Lacuna* and *Technoir* combo game that I just ran.

Art: Have those aired?

Austin: Not yet, but they will be around these kind of. But in mainline regular-ass Bluff City—you know, *World Wide Wrestling* Bluff City, *Fiasco* Bluff City, you know, *Action Movie World* Bluff City—I've always hit this thing of like, oh, there's like big, bulky, old '80s technology, but often it can do future shit.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: And so, like, I love— this movie is a big touchstone for me, in that respect, both in terms of just, like, phone phreaking and stuff like that, where like, you put phones onto big weird blocks, and then you, you know, the noises do stuff. But also in terms of the, like, big computer terminals, the kind of bright white text, lots of— the motion sensors are incredibly, you know, effective, but they're just these big weird black and red cylinders. And I think the chief focal point on this is the “my name is my passport.” [Art chuckles] That entire plot point, but especially just like, the idea of the— you swipe the identification card, then you have to say, “Hi, my name is Austin—” you know what? I almost just fucked up.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: I almost just gave you the “my voice is my *blank*, verify me.” [Art chuckles]

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: I'll never say my name again. [Dre and Austin laugh]

Dre: Shit, we gotta go scrub a lot of podcast. [all laugh]

Austin: I love that thing with the fucking tape recorder, and it's all— it's just stitched together in the worst way. [Dre sighs] You know, today, it would have come out, they would have made it so they pass it through a thing to try to make it sound more natural. I'm so glad they don't in this.

Art: No, that's in the *Mission Impossible* franchise.

Dre: [crosstalk] He actually turns on his Talkboy with the fast talk. Oh, sorry, Art.

Austin: Wait, do they do that—? Yes, yes, the fast talk is very funny, Dre. And then, yeah, Art, do they do that?

Art: I think in *Mission Impossible 3*?

Austin: Uh huh.

Art: Is that the one with, uh, Phillip Seymour Hoffman? Doesn't matter. The one with Phillip Seymour Hoffman.

Dre: Is he in those?

Austin: He's in 3.

Dre: Okay.

Austin: He's good in 3.

Art: Where they have to, like, they need his voice for some fucking lock, where it's like, "My name is Phillip Seymour Hoffman. My voice is my passport. Verify me." Like, that's in that.

Austin: Wait, do they straight up do "my voice is my passport"?

Art: No.

Austin: Oh.

Art: But it's like that thing. There's a voice lock, and it's like, "We need to get him to say all of these phrases," but it's not the exact— they get to completely clone his voice.

Austin: Yeah, there—

Art: There's a list of things they need him to say to, like, get every speech sound, [sarcastic] because that's how that works.

Dre: Mm.

Art: [sarcastic] You could do that in several minutes.

Dre: They need all the morphemes.

Austin: The difference is, in that movie, it seems the strategy was tackle him to the ground while wearing a mask of his own face and then hold a card up that he has to read.

Art: Yeah, uh huh.

Austin: I'm watching that scene now.

Art: Yeah, that's, uh...

Austin: So, that's...they should have just had him say, "My voice is my passport. Verify."

Dre: Jesus. Keri Russell was in *Mission Impossible 3*?

Austin: *Mission Impossible* movies are weird, man.

Dre: Yeah. I should— I remember liking those movies, but it's been so long since I've watched the older ones.

Art: Don't watch them all in a row.

Dre: Yeah, no. Don't worry. I won't.

Art: Or even, like, close to each other, because they're not...they share no tonal similarities.

Austin: No, each one is different.

Art: I guess now there's some cohesion, but like, 1, 2, and 3 might as well just be completely different movies.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: And then— are there six now, or are there five now?

Dre: Uh...I think six.

Austin: So then like, yeah, 4, 5, 6 feel closer, at least, right?

Dre: Yeah, totally.

Austin: I want to rewatch all those movies.

Dre: Which one was the— was 3 or 2 the one that was directed— that had John Woo on it? Was that 2?

Austin: 2. 2. 2.

Art: That was 2, and it is a lot.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: Yeah, I don't...I hope you love masks. I still think someone's gonna pull another mask off. If someone in my life— if one of you revealed that you were Tom Cruise, I'd be like, "Damn, John Woo, you got me again!" [Dre laughs]

Art: No, like, John Woo saw the first movie, isolated the most interesting thing in it, those completely impossible masks.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Quick print masks, yeah.

Art: Yeah. Quick print exact face masks, and was like, "Yeah. I'm gonna do this 20 times." [Austin and Dre laugh]

Austin: Here's the thing, too: it doesn't work, because your face is already a face in

size.

Art: Mm-hmm.

Austin: So if you put a mask over that, it would have to be your face plus the size of another face! It's too much face! I just think that he should have made it where you have to take the first face off.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Anyway.

Art: Are we doing this? [Austin and Art laugh quietly]

Austin: I don't know, are we?

Dre: Actually, he—

Austin: Oh, that's also a John Woo movie!

Art: Yeah, I thought you were doing that on purpose. [Austin and Art laugh]

Austin: No! I didn't.

Dre: But if you made a modern *Sneakers*, Nic Cage would be a pretty good Cosmo.

Austin: Oh, Nic Cage would be a great Cosmo! Especially because— and I love Ben Kingsley, but he does four or five different accents as Cosmo. [Austin and Dre laugh]

Dre: Yes, he does.

Austin: And Nic—

Art: He's trying for, like, a Brooklynny accent the whole time.

Austin: He's trying for Brooklyn, yes.

Art: And he misses.

Austin: [laughs] He misses it! But he still has presence, and I love that. Which is, again, I said this to Janine last night, [laughs] was, no, you have to understand: that's Ben Kingsley playing me playing Ben Kingsley trying to do an accent. [all laugh] That's why it's so inconsistent. Oh my god.

Art: They would have gotten into that in the sequel, where it's like, he's not really from Brooklyn. It's still...

Austin: [laughs] Right. He just—

Art: I guess that's the weirdest thing about that movie is that at the end, they're like, "Well, everything worked out," and it's like, isn't Cosmo still gonna kill them all?

Austin: [laughs] Yeah, I don't know, I guess.

Dre: Yeah, he just goes away.

Austin: Probably? He just goes away.

Art: They just drive away, and it's like, "Well, he'll never find us again."

Austin: I adore one of the other bits of the final sequence, which is everyone asking for stuff to James Earl Jones like he's Santa Claus. [laughs]

Dre: Yes!

Austin: Because they all decide, like, "Oh, this is gonna make us \$150,000. What are you gonna do with your cut of the money?" And so when they finally go to James Earl Jones to turn over the thing, it's like, "I'm gonna do it, but only if you give me what I want," and for Marty, it's like, "Clear my record," and blah blah blah. And then very quickly goes to like...is Crease second or is Mother second?

Art: Mother is second, yeah.

Dre: It's Mother.

Austin: Mother.

Dre: Asking for the Winnebago.

Austin: He's like, "I want a Winnebago." We have not talked about Akroyd in this role at all.

Dre: Oh, man, yeah.

Austin: Which is a mistake, because, one, it is very much Dan Akroyd playing Dan Akroyd, [**Art:** "Mm"] who is a conspiracy theorist. Two, I guess this is Hector Hu? Whoops! Like, all of his conspiracy theories are...they're just slanted in the exact same way I try to do when I talk about Hector Hu, where it's like, no, it's not that he believes that JFK was killed by the FBI. It's that he believes there's a second JFK. Or what's the Hector—the Hector Hu one that I use is, like, there is a second Obama. [laughs] The first Obama was killed. The second one was pretty good, but now there's a third Obama, and he's not as good. That is, like, extremely the style of "take a conspiracy theory, twist it a little bit to make it kind of precious," that they do with Mother throughout this entire movie.

Movie Talk [0:52:26]

Art: I'm gonna go ahead and say: this might have been Dan Akroyd's last good movie.

Austin: Is that true? That's a bummer.

Dre: Mm.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: '92, yeah, I guess that might be right. Are you looking at a list?

Art: I'm looking at the list right now. It really depends about how you feel about the movie *Tommy Boy*, because *Tommy Boy* is still in his future.

Austin: Yeah.

Art: But, like, *Coneheads*, *My Girl 2*, *North*, *Tommy Boy*...

Austin: Wait, *My Girl 2* exists?

Art: I mean, it's on this list.

Austin: What?

Art: No, I also can't imagine what happens in *My Girl 2*.

Austin: Is it a sequel?

Art: Yeah. That's what the "2" means.

Austin: But is it a sequel? The answer is yes.

Art: I mean, Macaulay Culkin isn't in it.

Austin: Well, yeah, because of the first movie.

Art: Mm-hmm.

Austin: [laughs] Spoilers for *My Girl*. [Dre laughs] It is. It is. It is a sequel. Anyway, continue.

Art: Uh, *Tommy Boy*—

Austin: [cutting in] Do you remember when they used to just make movies called things like *My Girl 2*? [all laugh] They just put a "2" on that.

Art: That still happens, right?

Austin: Name it. Name one.

Art: Uh, *Rage 2*.

Austin: [laughs] That's a video game that I'm going to see tomorrow. It's not a movie, and I don't know that that made the Clapcast. It might.

Art: I wasn't recording yet.

Austin: Oh, well, see? It didn't make the Clapcast. [laughs]

Art: I guess this isn't either. Uh, *The Lego Movie 2*.

Austin: Yeah, but that has "movie" in the title.

Art: *Happy Death Day 2*—the number 2—*You*.

Austin: No. Because that's the thing: they get around it, because they're doing "2 You."

Dre: Mm. Mm.

Art: Mm.

Austin: I'm gonna type the word "sequels."

Dre: So you're not counting, like, *The Fast and the Furious* numbering conventions here.

Austin: I think that they— that series literally showed us not doing that anymore.

Art: Well, but the...but 6 was just *Fast & Furious 6*, right?

Dre: Well, it's *Furious 6*, right? It's *Fast 5* and *Furious 6*?

Austin: It was sold as Furious 6.

Art: No, it's *Furious 7*.

Austin: Oh, you're right. You're right.

Dre: Oh, you're right.

Austin: I thought—

Art: It was supposed to be Furious 6, and they wimped out on it, and then they were like, “Yeah, we can do it for 7.”

Austin: And then they did it. Yeah, you're right. But now it's like, *The Fate of the Furious*, right, was the last one.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Art: Mm-hmm.

Dre: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: And now it's, whatever, Calvin and Hobbs for the next one.

Art: Uh huh, it's Calvin and Hobbs. Oh my—

Austin: [laughs] For the next one.

Art: *John Wick: Chapter 3 - Parabellum*.

Austin: But that's “Chapter 3.” That's my point. They couldn't do—

Art: *Creed II*? *Creed II* was *Creed II*.

Austin: *Creed II*. There you go. *Creed II*.

Dre: Ugh. I need to see that.

Austin: But that's because *Rocky 2*. I still haven't seen it yet. Is it bad?

Dre: No, I've heard good things.

Austin: Oh, okay!

Art: It's not as good as *Creed I*. It's good.

Austin: Okay. Okay.

Art: They really decide they don't want women in these movies anymore.

Austin: [displeased] Oh. Great.

Dre: That's a bummer.

Art: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Ugh. I'm just saying, *My Girl*— specifically that type of movie.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: I might be— I'm wrong, but it doesn't happen as often, which I think is what I'm right about. Any other Akroyd stuff? Yeah, *Coneheads*.

Art: *Blues Brothers 2000* is, like, enjoyable but bad. It's certainly not as good as *Blues Brothers*.

Austin: Oh! This is not true. You're wrong. You're wrong about this. There's one other good one in here.

Dre: Oh shit.

Austin: That is, again, a super good Bluff City movie that we should watch: *Grosse*

Pointe Blank.

Art: Oh, sure. Okay, yeah.

Austin: And he's good in *Grosse Pointe Blank*, and then that might be it, because after that, you're right. And also, *Grosse Pointe Blank* is such a slight film that just sneaks in there. No one knows what that movie is.

Art: He was in *Pixels*.

Austin: Yeah, he sure was.

Art: He was also in *Legends of Oz: Dorothy's Return*, which is the second worst movie I've ever seen in a theater.

Dre: Hmm. Oh, he was in *Pixels*. There you go.

Austin: Wait, what's the first most worst?

Art: *Norm of the North*. These are both just very bad animated movies.

Dre: What? Oh.

Austin: Norm of the—

Dre: What?

Art: I wrote a bad review of *Legends of Oz: Dorothy's Return*, and I was accused of being, like, a studio plant in the comments of it.

Dre: Hmm.

Art: It was amazing.

Austin: Wow!

Art: Because it's an objectively terrible movie, but like, I think there's some sort of scam behind it, like a Gofundme or a Kickstarter or something, ["Mm"] because there were like a thousand producers on it, and so it makes me wonder if...

Dre: That is a fun game, though, to think of what's the worst movie you've seen in a theater.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: [sighs] My answer—

Dre: I think mine's probably *Master of Disguise*.

Austin: Oh, that sounds terrible.

Dre: Not the turtle part.

Austin: My answer is— see, the thing is— oh my god. [Dre laughs] Ah! It's the only part anyone knows about.

Dre: Yeah!

Austin: The thing that I...my worst viewing experience in a theater is different than the worst movie I've seen in a theater, maybe, which is *300*. [Art laughs]

Dre: Mm.

Austin: With Art and Pilot.

Art: Oh my goodness.

Austin: Pilot is a great writer. They briefly worked, actually, with me at Vice. We tried to get a podcast off the ground, and it was shot down for literally no reason. I'm in a good place with my day job right now, in this particular moment, but I still carry a grudge about the podcast that didn't get off the ground, featuring me, Pilot, and Larry

Fitzmaurice, because it would have been great. Anyway, Pilot and Art and I decided to go see *300*, and we were all, like, excited about it, right?

Art: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Austin: Like, we were all genuinely hyped on it, and we saw it in a group of uh...packed, packed, packed theater.

Art: A hundred percent full theater, yeah.

Austin: To the degree that we were in the first row, which already is not a good place to watch a movie from. Those seats shouldn't exist is my official policy, because it's too close. You can't see the whole screen without craning your neck for two hours. And I think there was something about the degree to which everyone else— one, I think we were so close that any of the majesty of the wide shots just didn't work, and we were close enough to see a bunch of goofy shit constantly happening in the background [laughs] during, like, weird party sequences. And also, we were in front of a crowd of, like, Hofstra frat bros, who were just eating it up in a way that made it impossible to enjoy except as a comedy. And so, we were just holding back laughs for two straight hours.

Art: And sometimes not holding back laughs.

Austin: [laughs] A hundred percent not. In some inappropriate scenes, I'll add.

Art: Isn't there, like, a scene where someone...it's like some lavish banquet, and there's like a dude with an elephant head? Like...

Austin: Yeah! [Austin and Dre laugh] Just out of nowhere!

Art: And I'm not sure if it was supposed to be, like, the...like, is that Ganesh? Or is that just, like...they have elephant dudes? Like, what's...?

Austin: They have elephant dudes! Oh my god, we laughed a lot. It was very good. But

I think the worst movie I ever saw in theaters was *Robin Hood*, the Ridley Scott *Robin Hood*, [Dre: "Oh"] that's actually like a Tea Party parable? It's bad. It's just a bad movie to watch. It was the only movie in recent history that I wanted to get up and leave.

Dre: Is that the Russell Crowe...?

Austin: It is.

Dre: Okay. All right.

Austin: Yes, yes, yes.

Art: But yeah, top three worst movies I've ever seen in a theater: *Norm of the North*; that one, *Legends of Oz: Dorothy's Return*; number three, *Jack and Jill*, the Adam Sandler twin movie.

Dre: Oh boy.

Austin: Oh boy. Was that all your Box Office Democracy year?

Art: No, I went to see *Jack and Jill* with Pilot.

Austin: Oh, great, good.

Art: Just before I left New York, we just got real drunk and saw that really bad— we knew it was gonna be bad. I didn't know it was gonna be that bad.

Austin: Yeah.

Art: I didn't know Al Pacino was gonna have such a big part in it.

Austin: I didn't know that that happened either.

Art: Yeah, Al Pacino—

Austin: I wish I could—

Art: Adam Sandler's male character is an ad executive who wants Al Pacino to do a Dunkin Donuts ad for Dunkaccino. Dunkaccino, Al Pacino.

Dre: Hmm.

Art: And to get him to do this, they have him fall in love with Jill, which is Adam Sandler's twin sister, also played by Adam Sandler.

Austin: ...Okay. Weird.

Art: And hijinks ensue.

Austin: Right. Of course.

Art: I think the weirdest part of that movie is that there are a lot of jokes about how fat Jill is, when it's just Adam Sandler again. There's no, like...

Austin: [groans] Oh my god.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: This is one of the things that I remembered, watching *Sneakers* last night, was like, I liked this movie a lot. I still really like it a lot. It's very— there are things about it that have not aged extremely well. We, you know, talked about the Chinese food scene and some other stuff. The music feels very of its time. Again, the *Mission Impossible 1* comparison is so on point, because that is a movie that never has any goofy clarinet playing or sharp piano hits, and I say that knowing that the composer for *Sneakers* is not just, like, a good composer. The composer for *Sneakers* is James Horner, who has won countless awards for his score for *Aliens*, *Field of Dreams*, *Apollo 13*, *Braveheart*, *Titanic*. He wrote or cowrote "My Heart Will Go On," and he also wrote the soundtrack to *Sneakers*, which includes so many times that it feels like someone with a piano found new piano keys. Like, "Ooh! These make high pitched noises! Bing bing bing!" [Dre

laughs]

And, like, that stuff...the reminder was just, like, oh yeah, movies don't have to be good for me to like them. And there's a huge range between "bad movie," like *Jack and Jill*, and like, "great film," and I like playing in that middle-of-the-road area quite a lot, and I think *Sneakers* falls dead in the middle there. I feel like it is of its time in so many ways and also ahead of its time in so many ways, and that blend is really interesting to me, because it tends to mean that those are the films that will find an audience that otherwise wouldn't care because something is a little too avant garde, you know what I mean? Like, this movie is just trying to be a good time for you to go in the theater, and it ends with the heroes robbing the Republicans [Austin and Dre laugh] and giving that money away. It ends with you realizing that maybe the NSA is not necessarily a force for good. Even though it's the real "good" NSA, they are still maybe shady as shit.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: And playing in that, like, pop culture space, instead of in the kind of independent space or the big picture, like, "future of film" space is, I think, effective.

Dre: I mean, it very succinctly puts all that on the table, like, amongst when James Earl Jones is being very indignant about all these ridiculous requests and arguing with Crease about whether or not Tahiti is a part of Europe.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: Whistler says, like, "All I want is peace on Earth and goodwill towards men," and James Earl Jones very indignantly says, [Austin laughs] "We're the United States government. We don't do that sort of thing!"

Austin: [laughs] It's so good.

Dre: It's like, oh, okay, yeah. All right.

Austin: Whistler says, “Well, try.” Like, yeah, okay. Yeah, we’ll see about that. Honestly, what if you tried less, NSA? [Art laughs] I’m talking to you, listening right now.

Art: Yeah, and not even when this releases. Right now.

Austin: Right now. Right, not even our fans in the NSA. [Austin and Dre laugh] We must have one.

Art: The people in the NSA listening right now, 10:28 a.m. January 20.

Austin: Uh, two thoughts. One, we must have a fan who works for the NSA.

Dre: Sure.

Austin: Two, I bet that fan doesn’t support us at the Pusher level, at which point, you’re mishandling NSA property by hacking into our Patreon to get the Pusher update. [all laugh] I’ll tell your boss. All right, I think that that should probably do it for us. Any final thoughts here on *Sneakers*? [pause] Sounds like no.

Dre: No, I...

Art: No, I think we did a good— we did good work here.

Dre: I really liked the film.

Art: Yeah.

Dre: I had a good time.

Austin: Me too. Me too. All right. [clears throat] My voice is just disappearing, and I don’t have water nearby, because I forgot to get it before we sat down.

Dre: Mm.

Austin: Because I thought I had some over here already, and I just didn’t. So, as always, thank you so much for subscribing at the tier that you do. It means a lot to us,

obviously. It means a lot to us in two different ways. One is: it's money, and it means that we can do things like rent the movie *Sneakers* on YouTube and be like, "Yeah, that doesn't hurt my bank too much."

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: "I don't have to worry about— I don't have to eat instant ramen tonight in order to do this." But also, I do just think, like, emotionally, supporting us at this level means a lot, because it helps us to think about the show as something that matters that much to people. It is easy when you're just making things in life to be like, "No one cares about this," or like, yeah, someone cares about this, but we know that on a monetary real level, it is not nothing to give us 50 bucks a month, and that that represents something about what the show means to you and about what we and our work means, and I don't take that for granted. Like, I very much— that helps conceptualize so much for me and helps me stay focused on this show needing to be good, like needing to be a thing that we give a fuck about.

You know, it's funny, because I'm like, "Oh yeah, I like *Sneakers*, because it plays in that pop culture wide audience space," and we know that *Friends at the Table* does not really do that. [laughs] We make a show that only gets made because lots of people are willing to put up with, like, extremely long episodes and extremely high-concept, you know, ideas and which is not trying to be kind of a lowest common denominator show. And that is not even a diss at shows that are doing that, because like I just said, I enjoy that space. But that space just wouldn't exist without your support, so thank you so much for that.

Thank you for listening to a year of Bluff City. I haven't announced— I don't think we've announced it quite yet, but the next Bluff City episode or one of the upcoming Lives or Bluff Citys is going to just be us doing, like, a Bluff City season one post mortem, slash "look at all these maps," slash "let's build a map of Bluff City and make it make some sense," because now we have enough things in the air where, like, I want to

put them on a map. I want to know where the zoo is. I want to know where the various casinos we've talked about are. So, maybe that's two things. Maybe that's one thing. I'm not sure.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: But look forward to that sometime in the near future. All right, we should do a clap.

Art: Yeah.

Dre: Yeah.

Art: Let's get out of here.

Austin: Uh, 55?

Dre: Sure.

Art: Yeah.

[they clap, out of sync]

Austin: Yikes!

Dre: Not as good.

Art: I heard the clap before I clapped, which is usually a bad sign.

Austin: Uh, 5 seconds.

[they clap, even worse]

Austin: I forgot. I forgot. I got distracted! [Dre laughs] I was almost about to say, "Did you guys know it's 2:32 a.m. in Beijing?" because it says that on this screen, but that's

just how time works! [all laugh] Let's do 25 and call it there.

[they clap, still not great]

Austin: Ugh. Sorry, Ali.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Deal with it. [laughs]

Art: I hope the first one was good.

Dre: First one was great.

Austin: The first one was great, but she uses the back one. It's fine. Don't worry about it.

Dre: Oh. Aw. [Austin laughs]