

50 MPH: EPISODE 42

“*SPEED 2: LOSE CONTROL*”

Transcript (00:48:01)



KRIS TAPLEY

This is *50 MPH*!

[INTRO MUSIC]

DENNIS HOPPER (as “Howard Payne”)

Pop quiz, hotshot!

DENNIS HOPPER (as “Howard Payne”)

There’s a bomb on a bus.

JEFF DANIELS (as “Harry Temple”)

You’re deeply nuts, you know that?

DENNIS HOPPER (as “Howard Payne”)

Once the bus goes fifty miles an hour, the bomb is armed.

SANDRA BULLOCK (as “Annie”)

Stay on or get off?

DENNIS HOPPER (as “Howard Payne”)

If it drops below fifty...

SANDRA BULLOCK (as “Annie”)

Stay on or get off?!

DENNIS HOPPER (as “Howard Payne”)

...it blows up.

ALAN RUCK (as “Stephens”)

Oh, darn.

DENNIS HOPPER (as “Howard Payne”)

What do you do?

KEANU REEVES (as “Jack Traven”)

You have a hair trigger aimed at your head. What do you do?

DENNIS HOPPER (as “Howard Payne”)

What do you do?!

KEANU REEVES (as “Jack Traven”)

What do you do?

KRIS TAPLEY

I’m your host, Kris Tapley, and you’re listening to an oral history of director Jan de Bont’s 1994 summer blockbuster, *Speed*, straight from the people who made it happen. Now, don’t forget to fasten your seatbelts. Let’s hit the road!

RISA BRAMON GARCIA

Don’t ask me why we ever made *Speed 2*. That was just the stupidest movie on the planet.

KRIS TAPLEY

That’s casting director Risa Bramon Garcia coming in hot with the thesis of today’s episode, and look, a podcast about the making and legacy of *Speed* has to, at some point, wrangle with the darker side of that legacy, right? And so, we come at last to the account of *Speed 2: Cruise Control*, director Jan de Bont’s ill-conceived, ill-fated follow-up to the film that thrust him onto the A-list of action filmmaker talent. Here’s second unit director Alexander Witt with another quick testimonial.

ALEXANDER WITT

I mean, we all had a very good time in the Caribbean and all of that, but unfortunately the film didn’t work and I don’t think that many people want to talk about that one.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah, you get this kind of refrain over and over again when you bring up *Speed 2*. It did not work, at all, and no one – well, almost no one – enjoyed the experience. The film would star a returning Sandra Bullock in the role of Annie, ostensibly the same character as we met in *Speed* but so utterly ruined on the page that she bears almost no resemblance. Actor Keanu Reeves would bow out, leaving Fox to search for another leading man. Enter Jason Patric, son of actor Jason Miller and the star of movies like *The Lost Boys*, *Rush* and *Sleepers* at the time. Patric would play Officer Alex Shaw, a cheap imitation of Jack Traven, and I guess Annie has a type, because he’s her new beau, and he somehow has the same LAPD boss as Jack, but more on that in a minute. Ugh, I really don’t want to go on about this, but to sum it up, Annie and Alex find themselves on a cruise ship where a computer hacker played by Willem Dafoe has broken into the computer system and set the boat speeding on a collision course with a gigantic oil tanker. The film was budgeted at a gargantuan, for the time, \$100 million, with some contemporaneous reports suggesting that number ballooned to as much as \$160 million. The film arrived in theaters on June 13, 1997, and it ultimately netted \$164

million worldwide, so you can do the math on that. Jan would come back to not only helm this disaster but to co-write and produce as well, and so, he gets a lot of the credit for the final result. Therefore, let's start by putting him on the hot seat, and I'm just going to let Jan go on for a while here to give you as full a picture from his perspective as I can.

JAN DE BONT

I was never going to do *Speed 2*, and never had a contract for *Speed 2*. At least, I didn't know I had a contract for *Speed 2*. I said, "No, that's ridiculous. This is a one-time thing. You cannot really..." And then somebody came, "But it's in your contract." I went, "OK." Clearly, I hadn't read that, and my agent hadn't told me that, either. But then, of course, the first thing that came to mind, "Well, we have to get the same actors back." Good luck with that, because they have to be right for that movie. It cannot be always be always the same actors playing the same part in different situations, you know? Then we're doing a TV series, more or less. And, of course, then we found out that Keanu didn't want to do it. He was absolutely not interested in the sequel. Although, later, of course, he did many sequels with *John Wick* and other things. And then we started. We had multiple writers, and they all wanted to – the studio was really setting us, each time, a little bit, on the wrong track, what they wanted. And to me, what I kind of liked in *Speed*, in a way, is, like, it's small. Everything was about regular things, you know, like a bus, a car, an elevator. There's nothing special about all those things. The train. And I don't know who actually came up with the idea of the boat, but there were several writers involved in it. And I cannot – don't ask me what they all were, because I don't remember right now. And then, before we knew, it got bigger and bigger. I mean, of course, nobody also realized how hard it is to work with a God damn ship, no? And a ship that had to be built. I mean, or it had to be adapted from a real ship. And it had to be able to go on land and all those things that ships don't do. And then it became so expensive, so quickly, when people started making a budget. It was, "Oh, shit, man." And then I was really worried about – with that, you need – you really need a star. But then, nobody wanted to – actors – didn't want to really play Keanu's part, because they knew that they were all going to be compared to him, and they would never come out favorably, because that was such a unique character, a unique individual, that it's really hard to compete with something that really worked very well. So, it was really hard to find an actor. I mean, it took a long time to really find, finally, somebody who was willing to do it, and we did some – a little bit of tests with Sandra, if there was kind of a chemistry between them. And it was kind of so-so, but at the same time, the start date was coming closer and closer and closer, and the casting agents, they did their best. And it had to be, also, a young actor, too, you know? In those days there were, like, not that many of them. And it just didn't work and we just had to make it work, you know? And that's difficult. And then we got in so many financial trouble right from the beginning, because, see, what I liked about *Speed* is that it was made for \$35 million, and this was going to be three times as much, which is, like, you know – at that time, it was a lot of money, and it was extremely risky. And I said, "Maybe we shouldn't do the movie." "No, no, we have to. We absolutely want it. Such and such people will really like it." I said, well, with a ship – that's when I talked to some people who had worked on movies that had boats in them, and they all said, "It will be so much more expensive

than you guys think.” And I told the production manager, I said, “You have to really talk to those people, because it’s really complicated.” You cannot move that boat. If you want to quickly go back to one, that takes about an hour to go around. It cannot make a quick turn. And it’s, like, on and on and on. It was, like, really, really, really difficult.

KRIS TAPLEY

Alright, let’s drag the studio into this. Here’s Bill Mechanic, former chairman of Fox Filmed Entertainment.

BILL MECHANIC

I think I’m the one to blame, because I think when I saw that first cut of it on the studio lot, I said we should sequel it. And then when we were getting ready to make it, tried to block it, and there was a change of – you know, Peter Chernin went upstairs, so I went from President to Chairman and actually stopped production for three days or something. There were hurricanes or something going on on *Speed 2*, and we tried to shut the movie down, but nobody wanted to do the write-down on it. I just didn’t think *Speed 2* made sense. But Jan wasn’t, like, uncooperative or anything like that. You know, to me, it was more the issue of, I didn’t think the script made sense vis a vis what worked in *Speed*. And then Keanu, you know, didn’t sign on. Sandy did. But I just thought, you’re making a sequel because you want to make a sequel, which doesn’t make any sense to me, and it lost a lot of money

KRIS TAPLEY

It lost a lot of money. How much money are we talking about?

BILL MECHANIC

A lot. Probably close to \$50 million or something.

KRIS TAPLEY

Holy shit. OK, you look at the credits and you see a lot of the same names, so what went wrong? Funny thing about that. See, that’s how contracts work. Screenwriter Graham Yost gets a credit. Producer Mark Gordon gets a credit. But in the final analysis, they had absolutely nothing to do with *Speed 2*. Here’s Graham.

GRAHAM YOST

I was not invited to a party I didn’t want to go to. Mark and I kicked around ideas. I had an idea that – I didn’t know if it would be the same cast. It would be too convoluted to do it, but that there would be a – one would be a thing with a boat filled with wartime phosphorus-based explosives that can’t get wet or it’s going to release horrible chemicals and explode and all this shit and it’s going through a typhoon in the South China sea. And I was going to call that *Full Speed*. And then the other one was another terrorist-related thing of a plane that can’t come below 10,000 feet, and can’t rise above – and it’s got to go through the Andes. Can’t go above 15.

KRIS TAPLEY

Oh, while we're talking about alternate plots for *Speed 2*, I'd love to bring back someone we haven't heard from since the third episode of *50 MPH*, *Speed*'s co-producer Allison Lyon Segan, who played a huge role in connecting Graham and his original *Speed* script to Mark Gordon in the first place.

ALLISON LYON

Nobody liked my idea for *Speed 2*. OK, so my idea for *Speed 2*, I wanted to do a movie about the Paris-to-Dakar Road Rally, which I was obsessed with, and nobody really liked the idea of turning that into any movie, let alone *Speed 2*, but I thought it would be great if Keanu and Sandra were in the Paris-to-Dakar Road Rally. To me, *Speed* on an ocean liner was like an *SNL* skit. I never saw the movie.

GRAHAM YOST

I only saw it once and saw it in Westwood, and went to see it with Mark and Mikael Salomon, who directed *Hard Rain*. And we were standing outside getting our tickets and a carload of people in a – boys, men, young men in a convertible go by and they say, "Don't see it! It sucks!" And Mark and I looked at each other and we went, "Yeah. Let's go." Really? It's going ten knots? It's the Caribbean. Just jump off and wait until someone pushes out a raft with a Mai Tai on it.

KRIS TAPLEY

Here is producer Mark Gordon.

MARK GORDON

Jan had no experience developing material at all. After *Speed*, he was given the keys to the kingdom. So, he made *Twister*, and then they gave him pretty much complete control over *Speed 2*, which I had nothing to do with. I don't know whether it was personal or just a guy who, after the success of that movie, his head blew up so big and fat that he couldn't get it through the door. Look, here's the truth: I was invited off of *Speed 2*. Our relationship was really not very good, he went to the studio, when they wanted to do *Speed 2*, and said, "I don't want to work with this producer." And I wasn't particularly disappointed because, you know, only in Hollywood, you know, they had to pay me. I wish that I had a better relationship with him and we could have made a movie together, but what I think Jan is good at is directing action. Clearly, what his strength was not was developing material from scratch, because *Speed 2* was one of the worst movies I've ever seen. And not only a bad movie, incredibly ill-conceived.

KRIS TAPLEY

On the point of Mark being disinvited, here's Bill Mechanic.

BILL MECHANIC

I don't know that it was pushing everybody out as much as – you know, the ego was definitely bigger. But, again, he was very cooperative with the studio. It wasn't – you know, I think it's the studio's fault in terms of the, you know – the studio is the one that makes the decision that you're going to make this script or not, and the idea of a boat going fast and you can't get off is not as clear-cut as a bus going fast and you know you

can't get off. They were trying to replicate and I just felt that it just didn't do it. It was not a smart movie.

KRIS TAPLEY

OK, so, obviously, the first big domino to fall here was Keanu Reeves opting out. Here's what he had to say about that when I spoke to him about all this stuff a decade ago.

KEANU REEVES

Yeah, for me, it was about – you know, it was about the script. I was totally fine with doing a sequel. You know, I loved the experience of working with Sandra, you know, who is amazing in the film and is a bright light, and again, the reality that she brought and the vulnerability and I thought we made a great couple and I loved Jan. But, you know, I was at the time working on a show that was also kind of also action-oriented and I was a bit tired. And when I read the script, you know, to me, it just didn't deliver fundamentally. I just – I felt a film called *Speed* on an ocean liner was kind of counter-intuitive. But, yeah, it was just, at the time, just where I was at, I was physically exhausted from this other show and with the script, I didn't think it was quite there, and at the time, I just couldn't – I couldn't get on the boat.

KRIS TAPLEY

Second unit director Alexander Witt.

ALEXANDER WITT

That was the first mistake. When Keanu told him no, he should have said, "OK, maybe I shouldn't do it."

KRIS TAPLEY

Actress Loyda Ramos, one of the bus passengers in *Speed*.

LOYDA RAMOS

Once Keanu said "no" she should have said, "No fucking way." I don't know why you wouldn't get that it was the two of them that worked, you know? And a boat? I mean, really? A boat? She goes on record saying it's, like, the biggest regret of her life, you know? Which must make Jason feel like shit, but oh well, you know? It's, like, it is what it is, you know?

KRIS TAPLEY

Indeed, I wish I had literally any soundbite of Sandra Bullock talking about *Speed 2*, but I don't. It's sort of a running gag with her. Any time you say, you know, "Let's talk about *Speed*," she always comes back with, "Sure, but not *Speed 2*, right?" Anyway, here's casting director Risa Bramon Garcia on the point of Jason Patric.

RISA BRAMON GARCIA

I don't know what we were thinking. And we paid him way too much money. I don't know what that was about. That was nuts. But Keanu didn't leave with a lot of time, you know? I don't know why they made the movie at that point. When Keanu left, like, there

was no script to begin with, and so, why would you make that movie? It was a bad idea. On a ship? And also, Keanu was gone. Like, there was no point in making that movie. That movie was never going to work.

KRIS TAPLEY

By the way, a few other actors from *Speed* turned down the opportunity to star in *Speed 2* as well. Let's start with Alan Ruck. You remember him. Stephens, the gee-golly tourist from *Speed* who found himself getting way more than a morning bus ride in the first movie.

ALAN RUCK

I think he kind of considered me a lucky charm. That's how I got the job on *Twister*. I didn't even have to audition. He's, like, "No, I want you in this picture. I want you in this picture." And so, that was great. And then he did *Speed 2* and I was cast at exactly the same time in *Spin City*, and he's, like, "I want you to come down to the Caribbean. We're going to do *Speed 2*." And I'm like, "Jan, I got this opportunity, man. I'm going to go do a television show." "No! You can't do television show. You've got to do movies," you know? And obviously, I dodged a big bullet, because that movie tanked so hard.

KRIS TAPLEY

So, what was the idea here? Jan want Alan to come back and reprise the role of Stephens, wrong place, wrong time yet again?

ALAN RUCK

Yeah, that was the gag, is, like, everywhere this poor schmuck from Chicago went, the shit hit the fan. You know, "I've already seen the airport," all that funny stuff, you know? And then he's going to take a Caribbean cruise and he's just, like, "What?" I think it would have been good for, like, one good laugh, and then I don't think my presence would have saved that film. They all can't be gold.

KRIS TAPLEY

No doubt. And then there was Patrick Fischler, one of the actors in the elevator at the beginning of *Speed*. He, too, was offered a role in *Speed 2*, as by then he had become part of Jan's stable.

PATRICK FISCHLER

I mean, I went on to work with Jan again, because I was in *Twister*. It was right after *Speed* and I was, like, "Yes, yes, yes, whatever." But we saw, like, half a script. And I was on the bad guy team. So, we were told there's going to be stuff to do, and there wasn't. So, I think I was gone for three and a half months and I worked maybe eight days in three and a half months. I just sat in Iowa. You know what I mean? And sat in Oklahoma, and, look who cares? But also, I cared. Like, I wanted to be with my, you know, my life and in LA and I was just sitting in Oklahoma. But we all bonded. That group crazy-bonded on *Twister*. Like, you could do an incredible thing about *Twister*, by the way. Side note. Because there's such incredible – not to dismiss *Speed*, but, great actors in *Twister*. Like, it's weird. And I remember thinking at the time, what a good

group of actors – so, we all really bonded. And then I actually got offered a part in *Speed 2*, and said no. And I think people were kind of angry with me at the time, including Risa, who I would be fine saying that right to her. I think she was pissed. Jan was pissed. But I had such a hard time on *Twister* that I felt like – at that time, I'm 25, and I just thought, "I can't go live on a cruise ship." And I just was, like, I've got to say no, which, all my friends couldn't believe that I was saying no, because, you know, we were all just sort of hungry actors.

KRIS TAPLEY

And, no, he was not going to reprise the role of "Young Executive" here, in case you were wondering.

PATRICK FISCHLER

Mine was not the same part. Mine was, like, a guy who worked on the boat. Honestly, it was one of those, like – and, look, you know, they were all lovely about it, but I just – I was just, like, "I'm good. I've got to stay at home." I mean, I saw it in the theaters. I remember being, like, "Oh, yeah, OK, good." Yeah, because that movie was rough. I just remember the biggest fault of the whole thing – there's so many things wrong with it – but the idea of a boat going at that speed, it was just so not thrilling.

KRIS TAPLEY

And yeah, I don't care if it's repetitive. I've decided I'm going to leave every single instance of that particular criticism in this episode. Anyway, on the other side of things there were a few *Speed* actors, like Sandra Bullock, who weren't so lucky as to dodge the bullet of *Speed 2*. Let's start with Susan Barnes, another actor in the elevator at the beginning of *Speed*. She took a larger, different role in *Speed 2*. No, she's not playing the same lady who was scared to get off the elevator, though who knows? In this one, she's a big smoker. Maybe her nerves were shot after that elevator experience. Anyway, here's Susan.

SUSAN BARNES

He really liked me, you know, enough to just – he just called me and had me do a little bit of improv and then I had the job. But the second film was a difficult film. The egos were up and I don't mean any of the actors at all, but I mean, Jan had hit with two big films. He had hit with *Speed*, the first *Speed*, and then *Twister*. So, you know, he really ran – sort of ran the show, but I don't know. Eventually one – the producer was fired, I think.

KRIS TAPLEY

A bit of a record scratch for me there because I don't think I ever knew about that, so I asked Jan if he recalls a producer getting fired off the project.

JAN DE BONT

Yeah, yeah, I think because – so, when we were filming in Miami, there were illegal financial discrepancies that were not quite taken care of. I mean, that – all that happened behind my back. And I, of course, had nothing to do with it. But that makes it

also hard, and then with the union – suddenly the union all wanted to have more money. They felt like they all could ask for more, and unfortunately, by caving in, they all got it, you know? Which is not a good thing to do. And the producers were all there, and the line producers and the Fox producers were all there. They knew what's happening, and they couldn't stop it, either. Because then they found out for that one ship that was going to go on shore, they had found one that they could rent, but then they found that the captain was a complete drunk, and so he started to blackmail us for everything he had to do. So, each time we had to ask him something, he said, "No, no, I need this and this and this." It was quite often money. Sometimes it was women. It was really ridiculous. It was really, really unpleasant. But at the same time, I had to make the movie. I could not really just give up.

KRIS TAPLEY

Alright, lots to unpack there. And I just – I don't have it in me. I'll leave that to whoever wants to do a *Speed 2* podcast. Call it 10 Knots and do 10 episodes, make it a quickie. I'm happy to help, but I ain't the one. Anyway, back over to Susan Barnes.

SUSAN BARNES

So, there was, like, a discord about it almost from the beginning. But not long after we got there on the island. So, I don't know that anybody liked anybody. I mean, I made friends, you know? I mean, but, it was a whole different atmosphere all the way around. There was a very different dynamic as well, because Keanu is also, you know, a really stand-up and lovely guy, but Jason Patric had a different energy about him. So, the relationship, I felt, that got developed but not acted on in *Speed*, that connection they had, in *Speed 2*, that connection with the actor was not like the people on *Speed*. Film is like dance to me. And that was my first discipline. I was a serious dancer. And it has its own rhythm, its own pace and connection, and if you're not all three, then you're kind of screwed. They were all there with Keanu and Sandra, but by virtue of the script, even – you know, they separated them. They didn't have that connection. But Jason's a different guy from Keanu, too. A very, very, very different guy than Keanu. Jason, his energy sort of infiltrated. And it wasn't – it wasn't Keanu. I'll say that.

KRIS TAPLEY

One thing Susan says she did not mind was 16 weeks in the Caribbean. Also, you might recall the cast was sort of divided into separate disasters in the film. Not everyone is caught up in the same elements, and she counts her blessings on that as well.

SUSAN BARNES

And I appreciated that my disaster did not work in the water or at night. And so, you know, there were all these good things about it, but it was – it just didn't work. It just didn't.

KRIS TAPLEY

Then there was Joe Morton. You might recall he returned in the role of Lt. Herb "Mac" McMahon. Again, somehow Officer Alex Shaw has the same boss as Jack Traven and now, the same girlfriend. But anyway, don't look for Joe in the credits.

JOE MORTON

Speed 2 is, I have to say, was just a terrible script. But I said, "I'll do it, but I don't want my name on the credits." And I did it primarily for the money. They said they just needed some recognizable faces at the top of the movie, so, I said, "Fine, I'll do that." But it was so bad I don't think I even finished reading the script. The money was really good for the few days I needed to be there, but that was it. I mean, it would have been great if Keanu did it because they could have built on the relationship between he and Sandra. The fact that he wasn't there and, you know, it just – I mean, that ending of the boat crashing into the pier. It was just – it just was terrible. It just didn't work. I think they just didn't know how to – if Keanu wasn't doing it, they didn't know how to keep his image, if you will. For me it was an opportunity to make a little – a lot – of extra cash for a few days work, so I thought, well, I'll do that as long as they agree that my name won't be in the credits.

KRIS TAPLEY

But there was one actor from *Speed* who came back for *Speed 2* and reprised his role in a major way in the film's third act. That's right, it's the Tuneman himself, the Jaguar Owner: Glenn Plummer. This time he actually gets a name, Maurice, and he's there on the island living it up when this runaway cruise ship comes barreling into shore. A ridiculous finale has him racing to rescue our heroes amid all the explosions. And Glenn, by the way, was the one person in the whole world who actually had a good time on this movie.

GLENN PLUMMER

I went there in September and we didn't finish the movie until February 24, I think. February 22, we finished that movie. That's how long I was on the Caribbean. Just three months of funning and sunning, because I got there in September. They didn't get there until the end of October. They were stuck out there on the water. You know, Jan de Bont wanted the perfect shot, so they were out there on that cruise ship doing God knows what. And I was on the island living it up!

KRIS TAPLEY

By the way, Susan backs up this account in the funniest way.

SUSAN BARNES

Oh my God, yes. He never showed up on time, ever. Never, ever. First day on, and he kept saying to me, "Hey, we're in the Caribbean," you know? "Come on! Get out! Let's have some fun!" It was, like, "Oh my God." Every night, yeah. And sometimes they didn't know where he was, honestly. And that's a small island!

GLENN PLUMMER

Dude, honestly, my character didn't need to be in the movie. The movie was over when the boat hit the island. The movie was done. It was finished. There was no more movie after that cruise ship hit the island. It was over. But to work on that movie was just a blast. And I always imagine sequels are like that. They don't make sequels to try and

make them better than the first movie. They make them because they're going to be these big spectacles and everybody's going to go see them if they liked the first one. That's all. It's like, "Oh, oh, *Speed 2*, yeah!" Everybody piles in, they put a lot of trailer moments in a movie and you sit there going, "Wow, there's an explosion! Look at the fast cars! Look at the big boat!" You know? You sit there and, you know, you get to have a cinematic experience if it's at the movie theater, you know? And then, if you get to make it, it's great, because, you know, I was in that movie all of five minutes, also. I ain't even going to tell you how much they paid me. And to top it off, when they offered me the job, they offered me a certain amount of money. And I told my agent to call Mark. I was, like, "Nah, man, nah. I'm not doing the movie for that much money. Call Mark. Mark will tell you." So, they called Mark Gordon and Mark Gordon told the business affairs people to pay me whatever I wanted. I swear to you. He said, "Pay him whatever he wants." So, yeah, that's how that went down.

KRIS TAPLEY

I really have to stick with Glenn for a while here. I mean, you know you want to hear this guy talk about *Speed 2* some more. Settle in for this anecdote. It's the longest one I think I've ever passed along here.

GLENN PLUMMER

There's a scene in that movie where the ship explodes and me and Sandra and Jason Patric are in the boat with the girl, my girlfriend, and we're driving away. The first time we did that, he blew us up. When I tell you he blew us up, he blew us up to the point where the boat flipped over – it didn't flip over over, but it flipped up and Sandra and Jason ended up in the water. The only reason I didn't end up in the water is because I was holding the steering wheel, and the only reason the girl didn't end up in the water is because she had her arms wrapped around my neck! It was that big of an explosion. I had to drive that boat. They didn't give me any time to learn how to drive a boat. I told them I had never driven a boat before. On *Speed 2*. I had never driven a boat. They gave me a boat with a prop on it. It didn't have a rudder. It only had a propeller. The difference between driving a boat with a prop and a rudder is like driving a car with power steering and driving a car with no power steering. It's like un-tightening a valve on a pressure tank on a ship. It's, like, "Urrrr! Urrrr!" That's what it's like. If the car is not moving, the steering wheel is really hard to turn, because you don't have anything helping you turn the wheel. With power steering, you've got that thing helping you turn. "Oh, yeah, this fucking thing turns with my finger." Woo, woo, woo. wame thing with a rudder and a prop. If you have a prop on a boat, it's like turning a '57 Chevy with no power steering, because the prop has to propel the boat in the direction you want it to turn, so once you get the prop kind of turning a little bit, it'll make the tail end of the boat move around how you want it to move. Once you put a rudder on it, right? A rudder, that thing, you can just turn it sideways and it'll make the boat flip around. You know, like, "Vuuhh!" So, when they first gave me the boat, it only had a prop on it. It was stuck at customs the first day we had to shoot. Six AM, we're getting ready to shoot, I have to do a scene where I pull up on this thing and, you know, I do a 60-degree thing and I turn this thing, and plus, they gave me a lake boat. I was filming in a lake boat on the ocean. So, it wasn't a scarab. It didn't have that "V" in the front to cut the waves. It just went,

“urrrnnn, boom, boom,” and, just, up and down the waves, right? And it had a 308 Chevy engine in it, so, it was pretty fucking fast, and it was just a nightmare. That day after filming, they had a barge we had to go to that took us back to the shore, and I got on that barge and literally, my whole body was shaking. My hands were shaking. My body was shaking. I couldn’t stop shaking because I had never driven a boat before, and I told them that. And I told them, “I need time to practice with the boat,” and they didn’t give me any time to practice. They brought it at, like, 7:45 and we were supposed to start filming at six, as soon as the sun came up. They brought it around 7:45, so, everybody was waiting on the boat to arrive. So, as soon as the boat arrived, we had to start filming. Well, I just got in the boat and drove it out into the ocean. I just went and drove around for, like, you know – just drove it around, because I had never driven a boat before. I’m, like, “It can’t be that hard.” So, I go drive this boat around and I’m realizing, “OK, I got this. I got this. I got this.” And then when we came back, they go, “OK, Glenn, here’s the shot.” They had these – I don’t know what you would call them. These outcroppings from a barge, these steel outcroppings from a barge. There was a camera and a guy at the end of this outcropping, and then there was another outcropping and there was a camera and a guy at the end of that outcropping. And then there was a camera over by the boat, over by the oil tanker, and I had to go in between these outcroppings and make a 90-degree turn right at the boat, but I had to come in fast, right? And the boat didn’t have a level on it, right? Like, regular sea scarabs, they have a level on them. You get on it and it stays on the water and cuts through the water. This lake boat didn’t have a level on it, so, it just stood straight up in the air as soon as I got on the gas. Right around 40 knots or whatever, it would lay down. The front end would lay back down. So, when I first take off, I’m on the steering wheel looking over the side of the boat to see where I’m going, because the front of the boat is in the way. Can’t see over the front of the boat. It’s up above my head. I’m looking over the side of the boat. Got to make this 90-degree turn, grab Sandra out of the water, grab Jason out of the water and then take off. I literally drove that boat around more than anybody else on that set. So, we went home Christmas, came back New Year’s, and they had switched the boat. They put a 505 Cadillac engine in it and they put a rudder on it. So, I’m thinking this boat’s still got this 308 and it’s got this prop on it and I get in this thing and I take off and I go to turn it and the motherfucker just goes, “Zuuuuuu!” And literally, the boat made a 90-degree turn right there where I started turning. I almost killed everybody in the boat, bro. But I got used to it. I drove the boat so much, and I learned how to drive that boat so much, that there were times in the movie where they were filming the airplane, and the scarabs couldn’t keep up with the airplane. They needed the speed boat to keep up with the airplane, so, a couple of those shots in *Speed 2* where they’re chasing the plane? That’s me driving the boat. That’s how cool Jan de Bont is. He was, like, “Glenn, you drive this boat better than anybody. How about you drive while we film?” I was like, “OK, let’s do it, dude.” And I wasn’t even supposed to be at work, bro, and I would be out there driving that boat – “uuurrrnnnn” – chasing the fucking thing. Drove everybody back in to the dock and everything. They all rode with me, dude. Man, we had such a good time, bro.

KRIS TAPLEY

I don't know about "we," Glenn. But I love all of that because it's such a great bookend to his story about the Jaguar and the stick shift and all of that. One more from Glenn before we move on because I really just can't help myself.

GLENN PLUMMER

Jason Patric crashed in *Speed 2* on a motorcycle. Execs was afraid to go down and check on him, because he went off a cliff somewhere in the Pacific Palisades, Marina Del Rey or something. Like, they were up on a road and he had to drive around this corner, and he was driving too fast and the motorcycle went over a cliff with him on it. And it was by the grace of God that he didn't get hurt, because there was nothing down there but rocks. And there was one area where there was, like, this 6-foot-by-8-foot kind of, like, bush, and he landed on the fucking bush. If he would have landed anywhere else, they say he would have been dead. They said it was like 30 feet or something like that, doing, like, 60 on the motorcycle and he went off a cliff and flew 30 feet in the air.

KRIS TAPLEY

Alright, moving onto the crew, Jan ended up using a number of different department heads this time around on *Speed 2*. The cinematographer was *Twister* DP Jack Green. The production designers were Bill Kenney and, also from *Twister*, Joseph Nemecek III. The costumes were designed by Louise Frogley. The film was edited by Alan Cody. But one guy stuck with Jan, the guy who got his big break on *Speed* thanks to Jan: composer Mark Mancina.

MARK MANCINA

The only time I really had a hard time with him was on *Speed 2*. Because it was a strange thing. *Speed* was so successful, and then a couple of years later we did *Twister*, and that was great, and I kept asking him, "How come you're not going to do a *Speed 2*? It just seems like a no-brainer," you know? And he kept saying, "We've got to find the right script. I don't want to take that franchise and do something stupid with it. I want to find the right idea, the right concept." So, you know, of course, I would think about it, and think, "Well, it could be on a spaceship or it could be...", who knows, right? When he came to me and said, "We have the idea and it's amazing and you're going to write another opera," I went to go see it at his office, and it was a ship. And I went, "Ships are slow. How's it going to be *Speed*?" I was, like, "It's taken five years and they came up with a ship?" Like, that would be, like, the first thing you would say and you'd say, "Well, that will never work," you know? "Let's try a motorcycle. Let's try a...", you know? And so, I was in this weird place, because I love Jan and he gave me my break and I love his work. He's an unbelievable cinematographer. So, I wasn't going to say, "No, I'm not doing it," you know? Then he told me Keanu wasn't going to do it. And I went, "Holy shit," you know? "Now what do I do? I mean, I can't not do it, but I don't know how I'm going to make this ship feel like it's out of control, musically." And so, I really struggled on that score. I don't think the score was that good. It was so difficult. He had a scene – he finally cut it, but it was 11 minutes long. It was 11 minutes of people getting off the ship in rafts, and I had to score that scene so many times because he just felt it wasn't exciting. And I was going-

KRIS TAPLEY

It's not the music.

MARK MANCINA

-but Jan, I can't – you know, people are walking on the deck, getting lifejackets on. You know, I'm doing the best I can do." And he goes, "Well, it's got to get better. Got to get better." But he never said, "You know, I should cut the scene shorter." He never said that. So, we didn't clash. Like, I wasn't, you know, upset with him. I was just frustrated. And I'm sure he was frustrated, too. Because I think he was hoping that the music would really make you go, "Oh, this is incredible," regardless of what you're seeing, you know? And I just couldn't – I couldn't pull that off. I think it was one of those things where they had started it and they had put money into it and the wheels had already been going for too long and then once I got on board, it was already going to go in the tank. But it was, like, well, you know, let's try to save the ship.

KRIS TAPLEY

A few more things here. I asked Jan if there was a moment when he realized things were completely out of hand during this production. After all, there were reports as early as February of 1997 suggesting a disaster on the horizon.

JAN DE BONT

I think the budget was out of hand, yeah. And then, also, in the middle of the movie where I think we were in Florida and we had rented this cruise ship, and with the whole crew, and did a lot of the interiors on that and exteriors, a little bit in the harbor and then in the ocean, and we were just outside as a hurricane came through in Florida, and we got really stuck in that hurricane, which made so many people so sick and everybody wanted to get off of that ship so quickly, but we had just left. It was a horrible experience for everybody.

KRIS TAPLEY

I also asked him if there was one major thing he would do differently if he were faced with *Speed 2* today.

JAN DE BONT

Well, one is that you have to get the cast absolutely set before you start the movie. Number one, no? And that you don't have to really keep casting until two days before shooting. That's really bad. There's nobody, no producers, who had experience with ships. We should have hired somebody who had done movies with ships and who would have experience with how that – I mean, our producers were fine. They did great. But they were never ahead of the curve, you know what I mean? They never could foresee what might happen, you know, might go on next morning, or two days later, or problems with the ship. It was learning while working, which is not a good idea to make a movie. It was, physically, completely exhausting, because it was so long and then there was so much physical work to be done on that movie. And then the effects, and then all the difficulty with actors. I don't remember all the issues. There were scenes where the actors were arguing about things and they didn't want to come to the set or

because they couldn't get along with each other. Normally, things that you never even think about, that this might happen. But I think, still, with what we had to do and with all the endless restrictions, and with the fact that there was really not that great of chemistry between the two cast members, it was, I think, the best we could do. I mean, I think that the studio should have canceled the movie. That's my opinion. I suggested it multiple times, but unfortunately, it didn't happen. They still made money with it, by the way.

KRIS TAPLEY

Sorry, another record scratch. We already heard Bill Mechanic say the movie lost \$50 million. Jan de Bont is saying *Speed 2* is in the black?

JAN DE BONT

Ultimately in the black, yeah. I still get checks from them, which is, like – not right away. It took a long time. Those studios are really good at splitting responsibility, you know, where the money comes from. Of course, they could have done a lot better. In those days, you could really sell movies, still, to many countries. You've got this and you've got three or four, you know, lesser movies at the same time, and then it basically makes those lesser films come into the black, too. So, it takes a longer time to make money, because you share the income with, like, three or four of the packaged movies that they sell to all the different countries.

KRIS TAPLEY

Okie dokie! Anyway, as we approach the end here, let me throw former Fox exec Jorge Saralegui into the mix, because he shouldn't escape this grinder. Yes, he was at the studio and he was on the movie. Here's what he had to say about it in our initial conversation.

JORGE SARALEGUI

That movie, obviously, as you would imagine, has 8 million stories and they're all sad. The person that I feel the worst for is Jason Patric. I just remember that was his, "OK, I'm going to step away from the indie, arty, you know, moody kind of things and go for it. And this is the one I'm going to do it with." And he talked to me about it, and he actually never got pissed off at me, I mean, partly because we were, you know, trying to do rewrites to make it better. But he was, like, "Can't you do something? This is a really bad script." Of course, I'm thinking, "Yeah, it's a horrible script." And he was just sitting there. But he was actually pretty professional, I mean, given how problematic the whole thing was. But anyway.

KRIS TAPLEY

That was all I got out of Jorge at the time, and so I reached back out to him later on in the hopes of getting a fuller picture of *Speed 2* from his and the studio's perspective. Alas, I committed a cardinal sin: I told him exactly what I wanted to talk to him about rather than casually saying, you know, "Hey, let's hop back on the phone for a *Speed* follow-up!" Still, I think his emailed response is as instructive as any interview could possibly be. He wrote: "Actually, Kris, I'll be skipping the *Speed 2* conversation

altogether. A failure like that boils down to a long line of pointing fingers, with no heroes (including me) other than Sandra Bullock. I don't see any upside for me to engage in that." Well, fair enough. There is an upside, though, of a sort. And it's the fact that *Speed* is such a great movie that it overshadows any and all of the sequel's failures. Frankly, I would wager that most people simply forget that there was ever a *Speed 2*, and thank God for tiny miracles. Here's Bill Mechanic.

BILL MECHANIC

People forget, yes. There's no question. You don't forget when you're the studio, because you know it's a sequel and the decision to go ahead was, if it just does what a sequel does, so it's not as good and it does two thirds, or whatever the rule of thumb was, and will still come out. Which, that's just not true. Because if it's not good, you don't do anything, which is what happened. But in terms of public perception, if you ask people about *Speed 2*, they go, "Oh, yeah, maybe. I forgot." You know? Versus *Speed* is, you know, if it's on, you're going to watch it.

KRIS TAPLEY

Unlike *Speed*, *Speed 2* was not, alas, an Oscar-winning movie. It was, however, a Razzie-winning movie, and look, I despise the Razzies and find them to be a blight on the industry. So, I'm breaking my own rules by even invoking them, but I guess it's worth mentioning that this movie was nominated for eight Razzies: Worst Picture, Worst Director, Worst Actress, Worst Supporting Actor, Worst Screenplay, Worst Original Song – "My Dream," by Shaggy – and Worst Screen Couple, and it ultimately won Worst Remake or Sequel.

[SONG: "CRUISING" FROM *SPEED 2: CRUISE CONTROL*]

KRIS TAPLEY

Truly, it's one of the worst movies of all time. I really don't know what else to say. Watch it if you feel you must. Take from it what you might. But I think it's best for all involved to leave *Speed 2: Cruise Control* in the past.

JAN DE BONT

I haven't given it much of a thought afterward. We did the best we could.

[OUTRO MUSIC]

KRIS TAPLEY

Next week on *50 MPH*...

KRIS TAPLEY

We made it through *Speed 2*, so let's pause to bask in the funk of other franchise misfires.

KRIS TAPLEY

Join me and *Rotten Tomatoes* awards editor Jacqueline Coley as we dig in and discuss our most disappointing movie sequels of all time.

JACQUELINE COLEY

The second one felt like a bad rip-off of *The Craft*, and this was one of those ones where it's, like, well, we want to make a movie for the fans, but we just don't think that much of them.

KRIS TAPLEY

I had hope that with more resources, with more goodwill, that she would turn something special out, and then I see the movie, and it is utterly ill-conceived.

JACQUELINE COLEY

It was just terrible. People really underestimated the chemistry of Robert Redford and Paul Newman.

KRIS TAPLEY

This was, like, a letdown that was not on the heels of, like, "Eh, I hope this doesn't suck." It was on the heels of, "This is going to fucking rock." Because I loved the trailer, but I just – I didn't understand it, ultimately. I was, just, like, "What are we doing? You're getting way too meta."

KRIS TAPLEY

All of that and more next week right here on *50 MPH!*

KRIS TAPLEY

Thanks so much for listening. *50 MPH* is written, produced and edited by yours truly, Kris Tapley. You can find us on Twitter @50MPHPod. I'm @kristapley. That's Kris with a K. You can also catch every episode and more at our website 50MPHpodcast.com. If you dug the show, please like and subscribe and do all the things. We'll see you next time.