

50 MPH: EPISODE 46

“THE BEST ACTION MOVIES OF THE ‘90s” (with *Die Hard on a Blank*)

Transcript (02:02:59)



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!

KRIS TAPLEY

Hello and welcome, everyone. We are in the back stretch of *50 MPH*, and I figured we would just have a little fun as we start to wind down and coast to the finish line. So, you know what that means: a few more spins in the listicle machine. And I thought today we would kick off the summer movie season in style with an assessment of the greatest action films of the 1990s. Very specific, yes, and a canon that firmly includes *Speed*, I think, but let’s not get ahead of ourselves. I’ve invited a couple of dudes onto the show today to help me bat this around who I think could not be better attuned to the action cinema of the ‘90s, and that is Philip Gawthorne and Liam Billingham, hosts of the popular movie podcast *Die Hard on a Blank*, which is a thorough examination of all the action and action-adjacent cinema that came in the wake of John McTiernan’s 1988 classic, and how each of them owes a great deal to that film. First of all, fellas, did I distill that well enough?

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Holy cow, you did it better than we do on the show. That was actually amazing.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

It’s *Die Hard* on another podcast! Now, it was great. Killed it. That was awesome.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Nailed it. Nailed it. Incredible. Love it.

KRIS TAPLEY

fantastic. Well, just for anyone who might not be a listener of *Die Hard on a Blank*, Philip is the Brit, just to be clear.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yes. That’s me.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

You’re British?

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yeah. We're just figuring that out? Yes. Hello. Hello, everyone. Thrilled to be here, Kris. Thank you so much for having us. We are such huge fans of your show, and I have to say, as well, a lot of people, you know, we occasionally ask them, "What's been your favorite episode of *Die Hard on Blank*?" A lot of people genuinely have said the *Speed* episode that you did.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

-that you did.

KRIS TAPLEY

That's awesome.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

So, it's wonderful to be here.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah, thank you for having us. And this really is, like – we talk about this podcast every week. Like, when we're – like, I'll literally get a text that's, like, "Did you listen this week?" And, of course, we've listened by the – if it's been out for an hour, we both have already listened.

KRIS TAPLEY

I appreciate that.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

So, love the pod and, I mean, fucking love *Speed* in case it-

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah, man.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

In case it hasn't been made clear before.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah. Thank you for coming on. And thanks for having me on that show. I mean, I guess *Speed* is probably the perfect specimen for your format, right? So, it was kind of maybe the easiest to sort of talk through.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yeah, absolutely. Although, as I recall, you know, I made the argument that it does *Speed* a bit of a disservice to reduce it to simply *Die Hard* on a bus, because it's also

Die Hard on an elevator and *Die Hard* on the subway train, but actually, it's such a unique premise that it's unfair to just categorize it that way. *Speed* is the best concept ever. It's the best high-concept pitch ever. And you also get, you know, two other movies in there as well. But we'll talk about that later, I'm sure.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

I think *Speed* will come up again.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Two other short films.

KRIS TAPLEY

It may. It may. It may. We'll have to see.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yeah. Will it come up? The suspense is killing us.

KRIS TAPLEY

I would call *Die Hard Speed* in an office building. How about that?

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yes.

KRIS TAPLEY

Alright. So, as I do, I asked these gentlemen to separately come up with their own lists of the top 10 action films of the '90s, as did I, and we're going to spend the next 90 minutes or so chewing on them.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

I love it. A ticking clock. That's what we love.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

This is a dream.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

A ticking clock.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Are you kidding?

KRIS TAPLEY

This is it.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

This is what I wanted to be doing in eighth grade, and no one around me would get into it with me. So, this is the best ever. This is incredible.

KRIS TAPLEY

Who needs a real job, right?

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Absolutely.

KRIS TAPLEY

OK, so, now, before we get to the lists, this sort of presents an opportunity to discuss what exactly an action film is. Because there will be films that are mentioned that not everyone might consider action, or maybe others that, in my opinion – and by the way, totally might be thinking too much about this, but stay with me – are sort of casually-

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Isn't that the fun?

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah, that's the fun – are sort of casually considered action, and I'd like to push back on some of that. But I just – I consulted some dictionaries, guys, including Wikipedia. Both Wikipedia US and Wikipedia UK, in fact.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Wow. I appreciate that. Appreciate that.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yes, yes.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Representation is important.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yes, representation is very important. So, what is an action movie? According to the sources, Wikipedia says it's "a movie genre in which the protagonist is put through a series of events" – and I underlined that – "that usually have violence and physical actions." A "series of events," which might disqualify, I think, movies that have one or two action set pieces, but, let's move on. Wikipedia UK: "a film genre, which," underlined, "predominantly features chase sequences, fights, shootouts, explosions and stunt work." And then Collins Dictionary says, "a film with a fast moving plot, usually containing scenes of violence." Cambridge Dictionary says, "a type of movie in which a lot of exciting things happen," which is my favorite.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

I love that one. Love that one.

KRIS TAPLEY

Dartmouth Library says, “a mode of popular cinema that foregrounds spectacular movement of bodies, vehicles, weapons and special effects.” That one’s pretty deep. And so, those are the end of my sources, and it kind of brings up a few questions. Like, are battle-heavy war movies action movies, or are they just war movies? What about westerns with lots of action? And I’ve come to my central thought, and I’m going to put the question to you. My central thought is this: I think pace is key. I think a sense of propulsion is very much center to action films, and certainly all of this other stuff we talked about. Exciting things, scenes of violence, blah, blah, blah, is part of it. But you tell me. What do you think is an action movie?

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Well, I think, Kris, you’re setting a bear trap here for me for a certain epic crime saga that I’ve included on my list that might not fit the definition of a propulsive narrative, so, I’m not going there. I’m not falling for the trap. I see it. I see where you’re going with it. But no, it’s a great point.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Guys, come on. Let’s just get along. Come on.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

It is a great point, and *Speed* is the ultimate definition of a propulsive movie. But I would submit that *Die Hard* lays a lot of track before the action kicks in. I wouldn’t necessarily call that a propulsive movie for the first 30 minutes, you know? So, it’s been an interesting thing. I’ve looked at all of these definitions as well, and it’s still a little bit slippery. It’s actually quite hard to pin down. And even if you were to say things, like, if I – you know, for myself as a screenwriter, I’m so obsessed with structure and the science of it that, say, a film should have at least three action set pieces to be considered an action movie. But then there are films like *Mission: Impossible* that actually only have two, you know, really action set pieces. They have one – you know, we’ll talk about that when we get there. So, it’s actually, every single time I’ve tried to pin it down, it’s sort of – it’s actually quite elusive. I don’t know what you think, Liam, but I found it quite an interesting thing to pin down. Something that we’ve spent our lives discussing is actually quite hard to nail down.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

I mean, I think, you know, in the formulation of the show, and I mean this in the best way, because Phil’s one of the most deeply feeling guys that I know, but he’s also one of the great sort of analysts and deep thinkers and obsessed with structure. I’m the emotions guy, and so, for me, an action movie is a movie I saw it in the ‘90s where there are guns and I saw it with my dad. That’s, like, literally what an action movie is for me. But, you know, I really think that, for me, it’s all about two really important things. These two things exist in all types of movies, especially good movies, which is character and conflict carried to the extreme of violence or, you know, the propulsive set pieces that we talked about. So, I really feel like when I think about action movies, I think about characters, and that really is, on the whole, listed of – on the whole, that means, you know, thinking a little bit about specific characters that mean a lot to me, you know,

whether it's Martin Riggs or John McClane or, of course, I'm forgetting Harrison Ford's character in *The Fugitive*'s name, but for a preview of my list-

KRIS TAPLEY

Richard Kimble.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah. Whether it's Richard Kimble-

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Dr. Richard Kimble. Put a little respect on his qualifications.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

But I also think that, like, there's a movie on my list that is less character driven, or the characters are sort of complicated. So, it's just, for me, it's character and conflict articulated through kiss, bang, boom, boom, crash, all of the things that we love in these movies.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah. And by the way, I don't want to act like I've got it all figured out. I'm sure that whatever my definition is, one or two of my movies might go against it. But I tried my best and I'm sure you did as well. So, let's dive in. Are you ready? Do you feel good about your lists?

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yes. Yes.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

I do. It's very – I mean, the other thing to ask the question of, you know, is the distinction between, like, best and favorites, right? Because I've gone in the direction of – I'm not necessarily saying these are the best or greatest action films. I'm picking my 10 favorites, coming at it from that angle. And 10 movies-

KRIS TAPLEY

Well, once people hear your number 10, I think that'll be very clear.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Well, yeah, exactly. Exactly. So, just sort of preparing you for that notion. I came at it from the angle of, like, these are the movies that I could throw on and at any time, in any mood, and have a fantastic time, rather than, like, these are the 10 greatest action – you know, I wanted to do something a little bit more personal and a bit more specific.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

And I actually just made a change in reference to what I just talked about. So, it's always evolving and, you know, the big thesis of our show is that, like, people love what they love, and that's the great thing. So, it's, like, I love hearing lists in my head, I'm,

like, “Is that an action movie?” You know, I think it’s just fun, and hopefully there are movies on this list that folks haven’t watched or at least haven’t seen in a really long time.

KRIS TAPLEY

No doubt. That tends to be the case with the ‘90s. So, let’s start with you, Liam. We’ll go Liam, Phillip, me. So, we’ll start with Liam Billingham, number 10, and he cheated right out of the gate.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

I cheated right out the gate. I might cheat a few more times. But, you know, it’s interesting to look at that Wikipedia article and see that the ‘80s are the classical era in action filmmaking and the ‘90s are postclassical, because my two picks for number 10 are what I would consider, like, two great subversions and analyses of the action genre, which is the Sylvester Stallone-starring *Demolition Man* and the Arnold Schwarzenegger-starring *Last Action Hero*. *Last Action Hero*, a little bit of a controversial movie on our podcast. Phil and I have differing opinions about it. I think it’s something of a masterstroke and a deeply, deeply prophetic movie about where Hollywood is going to go in that it’s kind of about this action-movie-obsessed kid who meets Arnold Schwarzenegger, who is actually, you know – his character in the movie. It’s like a great meta deconstruction of action movies and who Schwarzenegger is and a bit of a *Wizard of Oz* movie, so, it really feels rooted in, like, classical Hollywood cinema, and I hadn’t watched it in a long time. I rewatched it for the show and I find myself thinking about it, like, all the time and wanting to revisit it. I just think it’s incredible. *Demolition Man*, I think another movie that sort of deconstructs Sylvester Stallone’s, you know, role in action movie history. By the way, if we were doing the ‘80s, *Cobra* would be on my list. I just want to say that right out the gate.

KRIS TAPLEY

Cobra rocks.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Cobra rocks.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Hell yeah.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

And I only recently got into it, and I watched it and I was, like, “Holy crap, this movie’s amazing.” Anyway, *Demolition Man* is just such a thoughtful deconstruction with an amazing performance from Wesley Snipes, and it has my favorite line in all of action movie history, which is Sylvester Stallone saying, “The Wild West wasn’t even the Wild West,” which is just this great take on how we think about, like, these macho heroes. It’s just a really great movie and both of these movies have aged, like, perfectly.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah, I came very close with *Demolition Man*, for sure. And first of all, I've got to ask you. Did you ever consider these two movies together prior to Nick de Semlyen's fantastic book, *The Last Action Heroes*, because I had never tied them together and I thought it was brilliant how he did so and used that as the kind of end of his thesis.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

You know, I love that book. I love Nick. We're hopefully going to bring him back on the show. He's the best. You're right. I don't even think subconsciously I realized that, but I'm sure that book had a huge influence on my thinking. Yeah, he's – man, people like that. He's so smart. It's a great book.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah, it's the only reason I don't hate you for this, having two at number 10, because they really do couple well together. And I'm with you on *Last Action Hero*, too. I think it's unfortunate that, you know, those involved in making it, Shane Black and John McTiernan, think it's a dog. I think it's better than the original spec script, frankly. I just think that where it ultimately went is everything you said and it's just-

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

You know, I hate that it has hate, and now I want to throw it to Philip, because as I understand it – I listened to your episode on this and there was some definitely some banter about this movie.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

We did a prosecution and defense of the movie, basically, and I generally try to be very, very positive on the show, because as we all know, getting any movie made is something of a miracle. So, something we tried to do on the show is not just, you know, be snarky and just, you know, throw our rotten vegetables from rosette, right? We want to be, like, let's try and understand what the filmmakers and artists were trying to do. That said, this is just a film I could never get on board with, and I'm the biggest Arnold fan, especially at that time. For me, it's such an incredible idea, I just think it's such a messy and confused execution of one of the best high-concept ideas ever. But, you know, if you're interested in the pros and cons of it, you can check out that episode where Liam mounts such a spirited defense of the movie. He almost had me convinced that it was brilliant by the end of it, because he made a great case for it.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Maybe that's because it is?

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Which is something I love to do, you know, on the – it's fun to do that on the show. It's good to be challenged. My I sort of feeling is it would have been better if it had been directed by Ivan Reitman, who is a bit more attune to that deft balance of comedy and

adventure and knew how to get the best out of Arnold in other movies like *Twins* and *Kindergarten Cop*, where I think McTiernan, amazing action director, but maybe didn't quite have that lightness of touch that required, you know, the balancing of those two different things. But, you know, people disagree with me and that's fine. The other thing I just wanted to say about why I think it's important in the grander history of action cinema, and why we did intentionally wanted to tie the two of them together and why we brought in Nick, is it's about these two muscle-bound grotesques, to quote *Demolition Man*, reckoning with their own obsolescence in a post-John McClane action movie landscape. You know, the pre-80s archetype of action hero was really embodied by those two guys. They find themselves in the post-John McClane '90s and the paradigm has shifted, right? Now it's more the everyman is the action hero. So, it's sort of where do these two guys go in a new era? So, to me, it was like quite logical that we explored that, and Nick was the perfect guy to, you know, dive into that because he had studied it so extensively in his wonderful book *The Last Action Heroes*.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Can I-

KRIS TAPLEY

I just want to push back on Phillip real quick about Ivan Reitman and the balance of things. I think the heavy hand is the point. I don't know if this was in the script. I can't recall. But I don't know that Ivan Reitman would have shot Slater's entrance as a dude walking on the roof of police cars and dropping down into shot. I mean, there's something about the sort of heavy handedness of it that is part of the satire that works for me. And I don't know that – I guess, in a sense, I don't think that thinking about it too much would have helped, and a guy like Ivan Reitman might have had too much of that touch that you say you wanted for me.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yeah, well, that's it. That's why it's so interesting to discuss. I don't disagree that the muscularity of the film are some of the best moments, and that sequence with the helicopter firing into the skyscraper, that's such a McTiernan-like flourish. There are McTiernan elements that I love in the movie, but I think about, like, *Ghostbusters*, for example, that has an action-adventure element and it's still really funny. It's just a difficult tightrope to walk. But, you know, that's just my humble opinion. I can't get on board.

KRIS TAPLEY

You're probably right. But I think that the fact that McTiernan's handling of it, like, it's almost like he didn't wrap his head fully around the satire or something, and that awkwardness just makes it – it's the alchemy of movies, you know? Sometimes what was not intended is better.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Fuck yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

So, that's sort of my take on *Last Action Hero*, I guess.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Well, sometimes the flaws are what you love the most in movies, and I've certainly got some of the films – my one in particular – in my selection that would speak to that point.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

I love what you just said, Kris. I think you articulated – you both, actually, articulated things better than I did, in my opinion. But I also just want to say that I think Ivan Reitman made what I recently rewatched and was, like, this movie is kind of an action masterpiece, and a deconstruction of the genre, which is *Kindergarten Cop*. I mean, *Kindergarten Cop* is a deconstruction. The first 25 minutes of that movie are *Cobra*, and then it turns into, like, he becomes a domesticated kindergarten teacher, and it's a perfect balance of gritty action movie and amazing, you know, domestic comedy, right? Or, what, a school comedy, and I just think it's almost more fun to speculate on what Ivan Reitman's version of *Last Action Hero* would be, because I love the sort of inconsistency of tone of *Last Action Hero*. It's the alchemy of movies. I think that's so well said.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah. And we're almost reaching an era, by the way, where we could probably be due for a new deconstruction of whatever action cinema has been of late because-

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah. Well, that's the beauty of the genre, you know? is that it? Every genre needs the, like, meta take on it, and that's why I love these movies.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah. Alright, Philip, you're number 10. Can't wait for this.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yeah, so, speaking to movies that are flawed, but you love them, I decided to play my joker, right out of the gate. So, my number 10 is *Harley Davidson and the Marlboro Man* directed by Simon Wincer from 1991. Basically, I thought it would be a fun experiment for this to see if I could destroy my credibility with my first pick, and then see if I can gain it back by the end of my list. There was a review of this movie that I thought was, like, one of the most incredibly withering and concise eviscerations of a movie I've ever read, which was the *Variety* review which described it as, quote, "a dopey, almost poignantly bad actioner about two legends in their own minds." And I just thought that was kind of amazing, but, yeah, this is a movie that I just love. I saw it in a hotel room as a kid, so, it was in that era where if you go on holiday, you go on vacation, and it was, like, hotels would have cable, they'd have Sky, so, you'd get, like, the new-run movies and you'd see stuff you wouldn't necessarily normally see, and I remember just being quite captivated by this film. I love that it feels like an adaptation of an obscure graphic novel that doesn't exist. It's so pulpy. If anyone's not familiar with this film, it stars two icons of

the previous decade, of the '80s, Mickey Rourke and Don Johnson, in a sort of – I think they're clearly going for a kind of Butch and Sundance-type, you know, vibe, but it's sort of almost inexplicably set in the near future. It's made in 1991. It's set in 1996. It's a dystopian future, but it basically looks the same. There's little bits of satire in it, like, Burbank is now an international airport. And it's deeply homoerotic as well. It's weird, because there are certain bits in it where it's, like, wow, these characters hate women. There's literally a scene where they talk about – they're, like, "marriage is for those other guys," you know? They're trying to be very, sort of, I don't know, like, speaking to the old times or something with some of the stuff and it's, like, wow, this is so of its time and really, really, like, difficult. And some of some of is kind of reprehensible. But it's just, like, this mad time capsule. Like, you just mentioned *Cobra*. Like, *Cobra* is a movie, Friday night, you know, you've got all your work done, you want to have maybe have a little, you know, have a little tittle. Relax. *Cobra* is a movie you can just put on because it's not going to be too challenging, and it's just a fun world to live in. For me, this is, like, the same type of thing. This is a movie I could put on on a Friday night, like, four times throughout the year, and just kind of zone out and sort of also get swept away in this weird comic-book world that's not based on a comic. There's also some amazing location work in this film. There's a long sequence with an airplane graveyard where they have, like, these shootouts. The supporting cast is fantastic. One of my favorite actors of the era, Tom Sizemore, is in an early part as the bad guy. You've also got Giancarlo Esposito, Daniel Baldwin, Chelsea Field, who we might talk about another movie, Tia Carrere. It's just, like, really fun seeing, like, these two iconic stars, who – I'm such a huge fan of both Mickey Rourke and Don Johnson – in this kind of breezy, weird, you know, shit show that I just love. So, I, you know, threw it in there.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

How does it compare your number 10 for the 2000s, *3,000 miles to Graceland*? Is it in the same-

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

I love that movie.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

I do, too.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

I've got it on the list! I love that movie. That movie was panned.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

They're brothers, these two movies. They have a relationship.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yeah, that's a great pull. They also – I love movies that are, like, the southwest or, you know, these kind of neo-westerns, you know? I love movies that shoot those kind of – like Vegas and Arizona. Like, I love movies like *White Sands*, also starring Mickey Rourke. And there's sort of been an online conversation about that, like, with movies

like *Red Rock West* and, you know, we talked about it a little bit with *Terminal Velocity*, on that episode.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Post-westerns.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yeah. That's an aesthetic that I just dig, you know? And when you add, like, a slight sci-fi-type element to it, to me, it's just, like, so fun.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Maybe that'll be the next, you know, *50 MPH* pod, *Harley Davidson and the Marlboro Man*, hosted by Phil.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

I would hope so. I want that oral history. Like, there you go. You've got your marching orders.

KRIS TAPLEY

I'm being very quiet because I was going to revisit it and I didn't, and so I just have nothing to say about *Harley Davidson of the Marlboro Man*, other than I remember poster very well, and the poster was always kind of awesome.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Great poster.

KRIS TAPLEY

So, I haven't seen that movie in 20, 25 years, something like that.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Me neither. Dudes Rock cinema, though. It's good stuff.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah, so, you know, everybody go check out *Harley Davidson and the Marlboro Man* and see if Philip is just crazy for this placement.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

What if this is the beginning of the critical reappraisal of *Harley Davidson and the Marlboro Man*?

KRIS TAPLEY

It started right here.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

What if it just happened?

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

I'm flying the flag. It's a lonely road, but-

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Fly your freak flag.

KRIS TAPLEY

It started right here.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Sing the Green Day song and just change the lyrics to be about *Harley Davidson and the Marlboro Man*.

KRIS TAPLEY

Wow. Well, my number 10 – I sort of debated with myself as to whether I was just being defensive on behalf of this movie of late, because I run into haters often and I always have and I've never quite understood what the hell they were talking about. So, I'm starting with our guy, Jan de Bont, his *Speed* follow-up, 1996's *Twister*. We're getting some snap applause from Liam. I have to say, look, we've got this other one coming out this summer. Whatever. *Twister*, to me, is, whatever you might think of the story, what was able to be accomplished and put on screen, to me, has not really been matched as far as a movie like that is concerned. I mean, it's not like you get a storm chaser movie every once in a while to begin with, but, I don't know, I just think that all of the craft involved and Jan's skillset and everything we've talked about on this podcast about what he put into *Speed* and how he wanted to make movies and how that was applied on *Twister*, with the budding sort of CGI status quo – I mean, it was in its sort of infancy with *Speed*, and certainly more robust by the time he got to *Twister*. I just think that's a fantastic film, kicks ass start to finish, it's over before you know it and it's a hell of a ride, by the way, with an incredible cast. I mean, and to be able to have the, you know, whatever, to put Bill Paxton in a leading man role is already just awesome, but then you look at that cast and you've got guys like Phil Hoffman just crushing it and, you know, Helen Hunt, perfect period of time to cast her in something like that, and I think she's great. And I personally like the story between the two of them the sort of underlying drama of, you know, their pending divorce and all of that. And it comes from one of our great writers and authors of the age, Michael Crichton. It's a great film and I think it's one of the great action films of the '90s and, again, I run into haters so often, and I just don't get it. I don't know what movie they saw. Maybe they were just too old to enjoy it when they saw it. But I'm a huge fan, so, *Twister*.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

I totally agree. Love that movie.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Great pic.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yeah, it's fantastic. You know, Cary Elwes is in it as well and Alan Ruck, *Speed* alum, right?

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

You've got a fantastic ensemble cast. It's great, but it also raises an interesting question about, like, the definition aspect of it. Like, it's an action movie, but it's also kind of a disaster movie. But disaster movies inevitably contain huge amounts of action. There's even an argument to say that *Die Hard* is kind of a disaster movie, because it has its roots-

LIAM BILLINGHAM

It follows in the tradition, yeah.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

in *The Towering Inferno*, right? Yeah, and *Die Hard 2*. It follows in the tradition of *Airport* and those kind of movies as well. So, it's quite interesting. I think the thing, maybe why we struggle to define action movies, is because very often they're hybrids, like a war movie or like a neo-western or like a part-disaster movie or a sci-fi movie, like some of the movies that we've already referenced, you know? Or a comedy, like *Last Action Hero*, or satire.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

I'll come back to the character and conflict thing I said earlier. *Twister* is about tornadoes and storm watching, but it's actually about the, like, will they or won't they rekindle the Helen Hunt/Bill Paxton relationship, right? And the obstacle to that is, like, you know, a bunch of things going on in their lives, but also, we have to not die from this tornado, right?

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

So, it's, like, the action is not the point of that movie, but by the same token, like, that makes it feel like more of an action movie. The characters are stuck in this difficult situation. They have to get out. I think *Twister* rules. Also, I forget, weirdly, that Phil Hoffman is in that movie, and he's just the greatest there ever was. So, I'm glad he came up.

KRIS TAPLEY

So good.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

And a lot like *Speed*, and this is a word you've talked about a lot and we talk about a lot, it's experiential, you know? Which is what action cinema can and should be at its zenith.

KRIS TAPLEY

Totally. *Speed* and *Twister* are roller-coaster rides, and that takes a certain skillset to be able to pull that off. And, you know, again, if you didn't have fun with *Twister*, I just apologize, I guess, because every time I watch it, I have a blast. And Van Halen on the soundtrack and just all of that stuff. It just kicks ass. Alright, number nine. Are you still cheating with this, Liam? Or did you see the light?

LIAM BILLINGHAM

I didn't see the light, but there's actually one movie I wanted to talk about more than the other, so, I'll mention the first one as my main focus, and then I'll just throw it to the other very, very briefly. My number nine is the first film ever made by DreamWorks in the year 1997: *The Peacemaker* directed by Mimi Leder starring George Clooney, Nicole Kidman and Armin Mueller-Stahl. I like to say that I was ahead of the curve on this movie. I feel like it came out to, like, middling reviews, right? And it's kind of, like, "OK, cool." I did not see it in the theater, but I loved it when I saw it on video. I had a VHS – I had a DVD copy, excuse me. I have rewatched it in the 2000s probably eight or 10 times and I just think it's like a fine wine. It only gets better with age. And there's a couple reasons. One, you know, one of the things that not only we talk about, but a lot of podcasts that talk about the genre talk about, is in the '90s, everything changes in terms of, like, global antagonism and, like, the villain can't just be the Russians anymore. We're in that end of history era that we talked about, and I think this movie perfectly articulates this worldview that certain characters in this movie have. There's a CIA official, I believe, at one point, who just says, "I miss the Cold War." And then Clooney has this great speech where he's, like, "There's good guys and bad guys and we chase the bad guys." He's sort of the, like, classic, like, "This is how it is." Nicole Kidman plays this, you know, woman who's tasked with tracking down these stolen nuclear weapons. She has a more nuanced view of it. And I think, crucially, the movie introduces a – not a Soviet villain. There is a Soviet general in this movie who's kind of just stealing nukes to sell them to Iran. It's very, like, cynical and capitalist, which is really fascinating. And then you have this, I think, pretty amazing performance of an actor who's from the Balkans and wants to get revenge on the US and the sort of global peacemakers that lead the conflict. I think it's just an incredibly nuanced, smart, insane movie with an incredible performance from George Clooney, who – this is, like, this movie is a little eye into where his career did not go. Because, very wisely, Steven Soderbergh said to him, "You're the most charming man that ever lived. You don't need to make action movies. You can go make *Out of Sight* and *Ocean's Eleven*." He's always been action-adjacent, right? But *The Peacemaker*, I think, is a really – he's great in it. All the performances are great. And he also makes *Three Kings*, which I would say is, like, a post-war action movie that's actually a heist and I love both of these movies. *The Peacemaker* is really number nine, but I couldn't get through the list without giving *Three Kings* a shout-out with its connection to Clooney and also, like, "We're after the war. None of this shit matters. Let's just go steal a bunch of gold," right? It's just very,

very cynical, I think, statements about the state of the world in the 1990s and how we're living with conflict all over the world.

KRIS TAPLEY

I love *Three Kings* in particular. I don't have a ton to say about *The Peacemaker*. I appreciate all of that. But *Three Kings* is interesting. I don't consider it an action movie, but it is a highly energized filmmaking exercise.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah. It's incredible.

KRIS TAPLEY

I mean, the way everything is captured in that film is sort of keyed up.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

And it was an event when it came out. Like, I really remember that release of that movie and people talking about the bullet entering the guy's liver and, like, it was talked about in these, like, hushed tones. I think it's more of an action movie than a war movie because, with the exception of the opening, the battle scenes are really just the heist stuff, and what I love about it is that these three guys have to put aside their, like, differences, or four guys, really – Cube, Mark Wahlberg, Spike Jonze and Clooney – to, like, do the right thing, which is lead these refugees out. And I that was where it broadens into action for me, is that it sort of gets away from the war element and more becomes about these guys in this extraordinary situation having to do the right thing. I love it.

KRIS TAPLEY

I saw that in a double feature with *American Beauty* in film school.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Wow.

KRIS TAPLEY

So, 1999, a good year to start film school, I must say.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

I don't have too much to add, except that I also started my degree in film in 1999, and I do remember that *Three Kings* was a kind of highly respected aberration in the conversation around film. You know, David O. Russell has since gone on to be, you know, a controversial figure, but, you know, an incredibly talented auteur. So, it's really interesting that he made this film early in his career. It's interesting how George Clooney's career, you know, I remember when he started out, it was almost like they were experimenting different paths. It was, like, *One Fine Day*. Remember that movie with Michelle Pfeiffer? It was, like, let's see a, like, classical romantic comedy, romance movie. But then something really edgy and risky like *From Dusk Till Dawn*. *The Peacemaker* was a little bit more down the middle, you know? Let's see action hero.

And then, yeah, I think you're right, Liam. He actually maybe found his sweet spot with the Soderbergh movies and kind of dialed in on what persona was going to be his baseline, and then he could spike out beyond that and play jazz around the edges.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

But he had this very kind of clear brand as, like, you know, someone that's very cool, guys like him, women love him. You know, he's just very charismatic and could be low key yet deeply compelling. So, it's interesting to look at, like, some of the stuff that was around the edges when he was making that transition from *ER* to one of the most enduring and durable movie stars of the last, what, we're now talking 25-plus years, you know, 30 years. It's pretty amazing.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah. Alright, your number nine.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

My number nine is *Con Air*.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Woo!

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

I picked this just because I think-

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Wait, Phil. It's *Die Hard* on a prison plane!

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Thank you. We're contractually obligated to say that. This is just a film that encapsulates the bombastic madness and excess of the '90s, especially '90s action cinema. It's gleefully disreputable, you know? It's wrong, you know? This film is just straight-up wrong. It makes these incredibly bold, outrageous choices, you know? Doing a film where you put the spotlight on some of the most awful people on the planet and they're all contained in this, you know, tin can flying above the desert. You know, mass murderers, and worse, as well. Some of the other characters, particularly one played by Danny Trejo, you know – appalling, appalling individuals. And the ending of the film, if you remember the sort of little sting, the little coda with the Steve Buscemi character, is just – in a way, just tells you exactly how despicable the film is. But it also has a sense of fun to it. You know, there's a sense of, like, this is just a movie – there's no – this film makes no pretense of sort of taking place in the real world. It almost just encapsulates, in that tin can, the excess and madness and chutzpah of what was going on in action cinema at that time. And it's really, again, going back to the genealogical lines, we'll talk about this later, but it's post-*The Rock*, right? Because *The Rock* defined – Nicolas

Cage was suddenly now a bona fide action star and was really interesting, and then, it was because of that and because of that film's success, it attracts this incredible ensemble cast of actors who probably wouldn't have been caught dead in a movie like this if it was raised maybe five years prior. But you have John Malkovich, you know, as the primary villain of this movie, and then people like Ving Rhames, Steve Buscemi, who is the ultimate, like, indie darling in the Tarantino era. John Cusack act, as well, you know, was also just an indie kind of superstar. Of course, he had been around as a teen kind of icon or more interesting young leading man in the '80s. But it's just wild to think they had that level. That's a cast that you could mount, you know, *Henry V* with, right? Or pick your Shakespeare. That cast could go and do an incredible piece of work in the theater that would be, like, iconic, and yet they're just having fun, but bringing those chops and bringing some of that gravitas to a movie that is just a big bucket of popcorn flying at you at 100 miles an hour.

KRIS TAPLEY

What's fascinating to me about *Con Air*, like *Speed*, a directorial debut.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yes.

KRIS TAPLEY

I don't know how you go from directing the "Never Gonna Give You Up" music video to *Con Air*, but somehow, that's what this guy did. He was a music video director and that's just the one that sticks out to me, the Rick Astley. But, yeah, it's really interesting to me that it's a debut. It's got one of the great climaxes of the '90s, I think. The whole Hard Rock plane crash scene is so awesome. Yeah, we tie things to *Speed* a lot here, and also, I have to mention, Mark Mancina doing some of the score with Trevor Rabin. Simon West directed *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider*, which, Jan de Bont's final film would be the sequel to that movie. I just think that's fun. But, yeah, who doesn't love *Con Air*?

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah, when I saw it initially – I saw it when it came out and I actually did not like it initially, and I think it's Phil, because it felt so bombastic and insane and, like, a giant step away from, like, *The Rock*, for example, actually. But now, I have, like, nothing but love for it. It also has one of the great trailers. I don't know if you guys remember the trailer but it, like, "Cyrus the Virus!"

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

And the sound design around that as well.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah, all the score stuff is so crazy. It's like when I saw *The Killer*, the Fincher film, I was, like, "I love the sound design in this makes me feel like I'm in a stomach being, like, metabolized."

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

The sound design in *Con Air* has that kind of a vibe. It's just really unusual and cool.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

"Put the bunny in the box."

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yeah, and the dialogue is fantastic as well. It's Scott Rosenberg, wrote the script, who had just written a movie that I love from that era, *Things to Do in Denver When You're Dead*. To Kris' point, you know, what Simpson and Bruckheimer would do a lot, you know – and this was post-Simpson's passing – was they would find these, like, music video guys or commercials guys. You know, Tony Scott was one of those guys, too.

KRIS TAPLEY

Michael Bay.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Michael Bay, exactly, who they did *Bad Boys* with. They would find these guys who had an eye, you know? Who just had a great eye for a shot, for lighting, who had had a style and a pizzazz to them, and they'd give them these giant movies and they would get made and make a ton of money and everyone was happy. You know, it was a great time to be alive, guys.

KRIS TAPLEY

No doubt.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

Alright, my number nine, I'm going with *Die Hard with a Vengeance*.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yes!

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Woo!

KRIS TAPLEY

So, *Die Hard* finally gets a mention.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Wait, wait. It's *Die Hard* in New York City! I'm going to stop.

KRIS TAPLEY

That's exactly what it is, although, it's not, really, is it? I mean, it's the least "*Die Hard*" of the *Die Hard* movies – of the first three, I should say. It has more in common with *Speed* than it does with *Die Hard*.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

It's, in fact, edited by the editor of *Speed*, John Wright, who also edited *The Hunt for Red October*, John McTiernan's film as well. This is John coming back to the franchise, giving it, obviously, everything he has to give it, the kind of attitude and swagger that he brings to the movie. But I love these movies – and, honestly, *Godzilla* is kind of in this realm, even though it's a terrible movie – I just love these sort of road-trip-through-the-city movies, and that's what this is. *Falling Down*, you know, 1993-

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Oh, yeah

KRIS TAPLEY

-LA film. Just these road trips through the city, and *Die Hard with a Vengeance*, especially, you know, that full, like, 45-, 50-minute beginning, before things really start to settle into the plot – is just so exciting and awesome. And bringing in Sam Jackson, such a great tandem. I know you guys not long ago covered the movie on your show. But I love *Die Hard with a Vengeance*, and I feel like it didn't have a lot of respect for a while and it kind of seems like it's getting more and more as the days go. Does it feel like that to you?

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yes.

KRIS TAPLEY

Like it's sort of in the Renaissance period?

LIAM BILLINGHAM

This is going come up again, so I'll save it, but, yes, I think that it's only getting more love as time goes on, and more appreciation. Yeah, it's amazing.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

It's one of the best sequels, and one of the things that's so interesting – we did a deep dive on it on *Die Hard on a Blank* with Chris Tilly, who we love, from another show

called Clash of the Titles, and it's so interesting that, you know, our whole show is on the thesis about all of these replicators that imitated the *Die Hard* formula, with varying degrees of success, and one of my next films speaks to that, but *Die Hard*, the gatekeepers of the franchise were sufficiently enlightened to realize we can't keep doing that ourselves. Because now we're getting all of these copycats, we have to reinvent the franchise, so they didn't just do another bad guys-take-over-a-blank formula. They actually busted it open and did something completely different that was, to Liam's earlier point, that was totally about character. That was almost like John McClane's backstory. We learn about who he used to work with in New York City when he was a detective prior to coming to Nakatomi Plaza. These were probably his, you know – this was probably his squad and his boss, and they're an amazing little rep company in that movie. And then you have the buddy element with Sam Jackson, and bringing it all back to the original *Die Hard* with an incredible villain, you know? In Jeremy Irons as Simon Gruber. So, yeah, we love – we're hardcore for that movie.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

So, this is going to come up again, but I'll say it now because we're talking about it, because it's on my list, but one of the things I love about McTiernan is his Shakespearean sense and the fact that he's obsessed with Shakespeare, and I, quite frankly, think his taste elevates every movie he directs.

KRIS TAPLEY

"You killed my brother. Big mistake."

LIAM BILLINGHAM

"Claudius." No, that's one of the best things about that movie. But the fact that he, like, you know – there's this great theater director, Peter Brook who wrote a book called *The Open Space*, and it's – *The Empty Space*, excuse me. And it's a great book. And one of his theories and is that, in Shakespeare, the, like, second lead of the, you know – or, sorry, the, like, servants are as important as the main characters and have their own worlds going on, and I just think McTiernan applies that to the precinct in this movie, and it makes it – it elevates this movie to, like, you know, the next level. The first 10 minutes of that movie, I would watch a 10-season, 22-episode series about McClane's precinct. I just love it.

KRIS TAPLEY

I mean, look, what makes *Die Hard* is the dude grabbing the candy bar.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Absolutely. It's all of those choices. Or the guy getting his-

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Exactly. Or the guy pricking his finger.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Exactly.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

All that – yeah, you’re totally right.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

The guy that sells Al Powell the Twinkies and gives him shit.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Every character speaks to that, yeah, level of, to your – the Rosencrantz and Guildenstern of it, that everyone has a universe unto themselves and their own world. But McTiernan had an incredible eye for that and incredible eye for a face, for an attitude or a point of view or a detail. There’s not a moment lost in *Die Hard*, which is why it has been so enduring, and in so many of these other films that we will look at, it’s rare to have that level of, just, every single character pops. And it’s, “I can’t wait to see this guy. I can’t wait for that moment when he eats the candy bar,” or – all of that stuff, McTiernan was amazing at that.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

And just to your point about needing to get away from the *Die Hard* formula as they moved through the franchise, I mean, part of the maybe unintended brilliance of that is going to – and I guess they did this with *Die Hard 2* as well, but it didn’t start life as a *Die Hard* movie, right?

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yes.

KRIS TAPLEY

It was *Simon Says*.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Right.

KRIS TAPLEY

And it was this other spec that became *Die Hard with a Vengeance*. So, you know, it’s an interesting aspect of the franchise. I think it even happened with the fourth one, right? Wasn’t that another-

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

The fourth one was based on an article-

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah, that's right.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

-about hacking, and *Die Hard 2* was based on a novel called *58 Minutes* by Walter Wager that was also a sort of, no pun intended, airport novel, like, a dime-store kind of novel, and they kind of back-doored it into the franchise, because they were both about, like, cop characters that were not a million miles away from McClane. So, it kind of plugged in quite well. We did a whole forensic analysis of the evolution of the *Die Hard* sequels, specifically with *Die Hard with a Vengeance*, because they had actually explored things like John McClane and Holly McClaine on a cruise ship, which ended up becoming a sequel to another action movie.

KRIS TAPLEY

No, it didn't. It doesn't exist.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yes.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

No, guys, it's on my list. It's number two.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yeah, *Speed 2: Cruise Control*. Let's go. I've got it coming up.

KRIS TAPLEY

By now, listeners will have heard my-

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Don't say its name.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah, it's like Voldemort. By now, listeners will have heard my very deep dive into that film, by the way.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

That was Willem Dafoe's fourth Oscar nomination.

KRIS TAPLEY

We finally crossed that. Alright, number eight, to Liam.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Number eight. I changed 20 minutes – while we were on this call. I originally had one of the great war satires ever made. I'm moving it out of the action list because of my own definition, and I am – this is going to surprise Phil, but my number eight is the Richard Donner-directed film *Lethal Weapon 3*.

KRIS TAPLEY

Wow.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

I love this.

KRIS TAPLEY

My favorite *Lethal Weapon* movie.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Me, too! Me too! Oh, I'm so excited about this change.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

That is fucking crazy that you would say that.

KRIS TAPLEY

Let's go.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Do it. Do it.

KRIS TAPLEY

It's on your list! It's not on mine!

LIAM BILLINGHAM

OK, *Lethal Weapon* is the greatest action movie ever made, in my opinion. I'm obsessed with it.

KRIS TAPLEY

But is it an action movie? No, I'm sorry. Just kidding.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

It is in my definition, which is character and conflict and kiss, kiss, bang, bang, boom, boom, crash.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

I didn't feel like it was fair to have a conversation about the greatest action movies, even of the '90s, without mentioning *Lethal Weapon 3*. You know, Phil, you said something earlier about playing jazz. I think this is the *Lethal Weapon* movie where they figured out how to play jazz, which is, you have that opening scene between Glover and Gibson, and Gibson cuts the wrong wire. And he's, like, "Rog. Run!" And then from that moment on, you're, like – you're in such good hands. The movie foreshadows what I think is the

somewhat cartoonish nature of *Lethal Weapon 4*, even though I also enjoy that movie, but I think the sort of cop killer bullets and the sort of gang violence that the movie takes on is, like, really in keeping with the fact that all of these movies take on a serious issue at the core of them, whether it's, you know, Vietnam, that's in 1, South Africa and Apartheid in 2, you know, 4 has the illegal trafficking – all of it, it's just, it's so great. There's no greater chemistry combo than Glover and Gibson. I love it. I think Stuart Wilson? Is that his name?

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yeah.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Is a great villain. And I think that one of the characteristics, key characteristics, of *Lethal Weapon* for me is when Riggs gets really, really pissed. Every movie he gets really, really pissed at someone and he kills them.

KRIS TAPLEY

This one, he eats an onion!

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah. It's just a great, we've figured out the formula, we're making another movie. The score rocks. Joe Pesci is great, even when he shoots himself when he's on the ice. He's, like, "I'm cold! I'm cold!" And Danny Glover is, like, "You're on the ice." It's really enjoyable.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yeah, I'm just laughing remembering it, yeah.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

And I can't – I couldn't get through this conversation without bringing up *Lethal Weapon 3*.

KRIS TAPLEY

Well, to your point about them figuring out the formula, that's why it's the best *Lethal Weapon* movie to me. It's why *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, in my opinion, is the best *Indiana Jones* movie. I think *Lethal Weapon 3* is the most "*Lethal Weapon*" *Lethal Weapon* movie. I think *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* is the most "*Indiana Jones*" *Indiana Jones* movie.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

I hear that. Yeah.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

I think it's the most fun, you know, of all the movies, because the first one is super dark, you know?

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah. It kicks ass. It's amazing.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

The second one is also super dark and deals with a social issue that's very, very, like, serious. And the third one also does deal with some social issues with the gang violence and what have you, but there is a deftness to it and a lightness of touch in terms of the perfect balance, that adroit balance of bombastic action and really hilarious humor, and it actually just, as we're talking, is making me wonder and muse on the idea of what would Dick Donner's *Last Action Hero* would look like. Because maybe he's even more closer to – you know, Ivan Reitman, brilliant at comedy, brilliant at satire and can do action-adventure stuff, but Dick Donner would, like, walk that tightrope so perfectly with the *Lethal Weapon* franchise, and it's no accident that he was the guy that directed all four of those movies, you know? Which is quite rare. Look, that hasn't happened with the *Die Hard* series, you know? There was multiple directors who had shots at it.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Are we going to get a fifth?

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

There has been talk of it.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Mel Gibson was going to direct it.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yeah, that was rumored at one point.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

It would be interesting.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

I remember a while ago there was a rumor that they were going to reboot it with Jeremy Renner. That never happened. When he was super hot post-*Hurt Locker*.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

I can't see that.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

I can't see it either. I think it's difficult, for obvious reasons. Would Warner Bros. throw that kind of money at, you know, this movie? I don't know. But I agree with you. *Lethal Weapon 3* is my favorite of the franchise. I think it's absolutely fantastic. And also, it has *Die Hard* connection through the music as well

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Michael Kamen?

KRIS TAPLEY

It has a *Speed* connection. Shall we mention, the director of photography of *Lethal Weapon 3*, the last movie he shot: Jan de Bont.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

I should say, he shot something in, like, 2007. He came back. But, you know, before he became a director, the last movie he shot was *Lethal Weapon 3*.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

I also just am obligated to talk about seeing this with my dad and how hype we were. Like, we went opening night. It was, like, such an event. Like, it was just so, so, so key. Like, *Lethal Weapon* was on constantly in the house.

KRIS TAPLEY

And there's a director's cut of *Lethal Weapon 3* on VHS and I own it.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Wow. I might need to borrow that.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

And there's a *Lethal Weapon 3* poster in Sandra Bullock's office in *Demolition Man* as well-

KRIS TAPLEY

Yes.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yes.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

-as an embodiment of, like, her love of the '90s. Of course, there's the Joel Silver connection. But I think that's also kind of worth noting. There's something about that. They picked that movie, you know, which is interesting.

KRIS TAPLEY

Well, because it's a Warner Bros. movie.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yes. There are practical reasons why.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

It's not so interesting as reality, right.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

But it also does summarize something about the era, encapsulates something about the era.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah. Somehow, we're still just on number eight. What's your number eight? Let's see if we can go faster.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yeah, yeah. It's me, is it? OK. *Under Siege* is my number eight, from 1992-

LIAM BILLINGHAM

It's *Die Hard* on a battleship!

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

-directed by Andrew Davis.

KRIS TAPLEY

I'm going to cut all of those out.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Just one of the earliest and best "*Die Hard* on a blank"-type films. Michael Wilmington at the *LA Times* helped coin that phrase. It was described in a review as "*Die Hard* on a battleship," and they later used that for their marketing campaign for the home video.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah, thanks for that.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

So, we based our lives on that. Andrew Davis is just such a fantastic director and his talent really shines through in this movie. And the movie works in spite of Steven Seagal, you know? It works because of Tommy Lee Jones and Gary Busey as two of the most charismatic villains. They should have their own, you know, sitcom. They are incredible together. Tommy Lee Jones, for me, is, like, one of the all-time best, like, you know – other than Gruber, the GOAT – like, one of the best action movie villains ever. So much fun in that movie.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

I'm not going to bat for Steven Seagal, but this is his best performance.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yeah, Davis got things-

LIAM BILLINGHAM

I'm just saying. He's very good in it.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

-out of him in this. You know, he actually has moments of charm and levity and seems almost like a human being, as opposed to just playing himself. We just recently covered a sequel, which was really, really, like, tough trucking, apart from Eric Bogosian. But you really see, like, Andrew Davis, this is the movie that got him *The Fugitive*, right? And you can totally see why. The direction is sensational, and it's just a terrific action movie. Great stunts, great characters, a lot of fun and, again, just a movie I could put on in any mood and have a fantastic time.

KRIS TAPLEY

I love *Under Siege*. I mean, it's – what can what else can you really say? I mean, and honestly, I think that was, like, my first real exposure to Tommy Lee Jones. If I really think about it.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Totally. He's amazing.

KRIS TAPLEY

I mean, this was before *The Fugitive*. And imagine that being your first exposure to Tommy Lee Jones. He's not done anything like that before since. Like, the look.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yeah, it's wild.

KRIS TAPLEY

The character.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

That's what's so cool about it.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Well, he and Davis are clearly pals, right? Like, they have some kind of relationship, because-

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

They did *The Package*.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

-they did *The Package*, then *Under Siege*.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

It was before. Yeah.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah, I wasn't watching *Coal Miner's Daughter* when I was a kid, OK?

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

You weren't watching *Black Moon Rising*. Like, I would have put that in my list if it was the '80s.

KRIS TAPLEY

My number eight is from Jan de Bont's favorite action director: John Frankenheimer, 1998's *Ronin*?

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yes!

KRIS TAPLEY

Hell yeah. I'm sure people will recall back in the set-pieces episode I did with the *Light the Fuse* guys, I mean, the greatest car chase of all time is in this movie, in my opinion. I mean, the Paris car chase in *Ronin* is just balls-to-the-wall amazing. It's from this David Mamet script, which I guess he was rewritten and then took his name off of it, right? Something like that. I can't remember.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yeah. That's right.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yes, that's true. Yep.

KRIS TAPLEY

But the Mamet is very clear in this movie as well, and there's just something about that marriage with, like, the John Frankenheimer, practical kind of stuff. I mean, this is the man who made *The Train* in the '60s, which you might consider the first modern action movie if you really think about it. I love *Ronin*. I didn't love *Ronin* when I saw it in the '90s. It's been a journey for me with *Ronin*, and today, I just – I watched it not long ago. I just think it's an amazing action film, so-

LIAM BILLINGHAM

It's a masterpiece.

KRIS TAPLEY

-it had to go on this list.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah, no doubt. Yeah.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

And it's the most '70s, '90s action film.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah, good call.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

You know what I mean? Like, the Frankenheimer of it all. The fact that it's set in Europe. The kind of gray palette to the movie. And it's also, like, just, how fucking cool is it that, like, Robert De Niro, you know, kind of in his '90s sort of peak, like, post-*Heat*, *Casino*, you know, like, just, is the lead in an action movie directed by John Frankenheimer? It's, like, what a gift.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Well, not to mention-

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

What a gift that this movie exists.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

-that, but the supporting cast. Sean Bean.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Oh, yeah.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Stellan Skarsgård and-

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Can I do my Sean Bean impression? "Oh, for fuck off!" That's my Sean Bean impression.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

"Two shooters! Shoot across. They shoot each other dead!"

KRIS TAPLEY

Oh, wow. The references are flying.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

"I fuckin' ambushed you with a coffee cup." So good.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

So great.

KRIS TAPLEY

Alright. Where are we? Number seven? Number seven.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

I'll be brief. We talked about this movie for a long time. My number seven is the Curtis Hanson-directed, Meryl Streep-starring film *The River Wild*. Just an amazing movie. Saw it when it came out. Important, historically. It's the first "*Die Hard* on a..." to feature a female as the sort of McClaine stand-in. Kevin Bacon absolutely kills in this movie and Joseph Mazzello is amazing. The action is really, really special. Just an all-around banger and a great time, and I think key to it is the marital discord between Meryl Streep and David Strathairn getting resolved over the course of the movie. It just it just really, really works. I love it.

KRIS TAPLEY

I'll allow it. I thought about this when I saw it on your list. I was like, "Is that action? Yeah, maybe." I mean, it's, like, the way that – it was difficult to shoot this movie, and it looks really good.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

To get those shots of, you know, the rapids and what's going on, I mean, that's a whole production to pull that off.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

We had a long conversation with Gaylyn Fraiche, who was Curtis Hanson's assistant on the movie, and she talked about shooting this movie. Yeah, and just how cool it was to be around Meryl Streep figuring out how to be an action hero must have been really amazing.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

And, again, it's experiential, that movie. I remember sitting – we did an episode about it with Blake Howard. I saw it with my parents and I it was, like, you felt like you were going to get splashed in the theater. It was, just, you were there. It's fantastic. It's so classy. It's such a classy – and it does meet the definition of a "*Die Hard* on a blank," because it's bad guys taking over a blank, taking over, like, the boat and/or the river. And there's, as you just said, marital discord between the two main characters, and it's a relationship drama, but it's moving at the same time. It's a fantastic movie that's a little bit slept on, but people are starting to kind of catch up to how great that movie was.

KRIS TAPLEY

I saw it for the first time not long ago, actually. It would be a fun watch in 4D, to your point about feeling like you're going to get splashed.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

A little mist coming at you.

KRIS TAPLEY

Like the *Mummy* ride or something?

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Totally.

KRIS TAPLEY

Alright, number seven for Philip.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Well, I'm wearing the T-shirt.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yes.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

This is kind of, like – this next movie is a kind of Venn Diagram of everything I love. It's *The Last Boy Scout*, directed by Tony Scott from 1991. This has everything I love. You know, behind the scenes, you know, it's a Shane Black script. Of course, it's Tony Scott, who is arguably my greatest hero as a director, as a filmmaker. Bruce Willis, of course, in the leading role. It's about football, which I also love. It's an LA noir. In our episode, we sort of looked at it from that standpoint. It's *Die Hard* in an LA noir. You know, it's a private-eye movie. It's just – I think this movie also has the best – it's the best dialogue of any movie in the '90s in the action genre, you know, with that Shane Black script. The dialogue is absolutely sublime. The infidelity confrontation scene at the beginning of the film, where Bruce Willis as Joe Hallenbeck comes back home and his wife, played by Chelsea Field, he thinks she's having an affair, and he, like, diagnostically works out, like, what's going on as a detective, because the toilet seat is up in there's steam in the shower and he looks under the bed, and that whole sequence and the suspense and tension of it, like, that's one of the best-written scenes ever in any movie. Just absolutely fantastic. I also think it has the best henchmen in the history of movies with-

KRIS TAPLEY

Milo?

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

-Taylor Negrón as Milo. Like, for me-

KRIS TAPLEY

So good.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

-that line when he says, you know – the cop goes, comes up to them and says, “Good morning, gentlemen. Is there a problem?” And he comes back with-

KRIS TAPLEY

Oh, God.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

“Uh, yes, officer. As a matter of fact, there is a problem. Apparently, there are too many bullets in this gun.” That’s my favorite line ever.

KRIS TAPLEY

Outrageous.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

I love, love, love, love this movie.

KRIS TAPLEY

I will say I hated – I don’t hate, but it’s just so lazy and weird – the, “Let’s just say Milo’s in a highly enlightened position.” Come on.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

I say that all the time, though.

KRIS TAPLEY

My God.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

I say that all time.

KRIS TAPLEY

I love last *The Last Boy Scout*. I also love the relationship between Bruce and Damon in that, you know, he was his hero, and to see him doing what he’s doing in the bathroom with the drugs in that one scene and just that it’s anger and heartbreak, I’ve always found that dynamic really cool and interesting. Just a bleak movie in a lot of ways, too. Just that sort of early-to-mid-90s, like, ooh, wow. Just the violence and just kind of the dark-heart nature of some of the stuff going on. But I love it, and I love how the bad guy gets his comeuppance at the end. It’s just so good.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

It’s like if *Chinatown* were an action movie.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yes.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

That’s one of my favorite things about it.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

And Tony Scott's stylings offset the bleakness of the tone for me.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

You know, because it's so visually dazzling and slick and stylish and has, like, great colors and it doesn't feel gloomy or pessimistic, even though the world of the film absolutely is. It still feels, like, a fun action picture, in spite of the nihilism that's inside the story.

KRIS TAPLEY

I mean, it ends up with a dude on horseback in the middle of a football game. I mean-

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yeah, there's a sense of fun to it.

KRIS TAPLEY

-this is an action movie.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

There's a fun to it, right? You know – and it's also so different from the original script, which was even more dark. Anywho, I love that movie.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah, I attribute all of that darkness to Shane Black, for sure.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

I love that his daughter is watching *Lethal Weapon*. I think that that is such an inspired choice when you think about, like, just action movies.

KRIS TAPLEY

Is *The Last Boy Scout* a Warner Bros. movie?

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yes.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

There you go. They made sure they were pushing those *Lethal Weapon* movies. Very good. What are we on? Number seven.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Your seven.

KRIS TAPLEY

So, my number seven is *Last Action Hero*. So, we have covered it, and I will just say, again, Philip is wrong. OK, on to number six for Liam.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

My number six is *Ronin*. We've covered it. And I'll just say-

KRIS TAPLEY

Oh, man.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

-Kris is right.

KRIS TAPLEY

We're moving right along now. How about that?

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Alright. We're cooking now. We're cooking now.

KRIS TAPLEY

Alright. We're going to bog down here now, though, is what we're going to do.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Uh-oh.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

OK, so, this is a controversial choice, because my number six is *Heat*, written and directed by Michael Mann in 1995. A controversial choice to describe it as an action movie instead of an epic crime saga, which is what it's usually described as, but I would submit to you, to the jury, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, that this would make the definition. It contains four incredible action sequences, including the most realistic urban shootout sequence ever committed to film, which goes on for about 10 to 15 minutes. But in addition to the bank heist and aftermath, the downtown LA shootout sequence, you also have that opening heist sequence where they ram an armored car, you know, with a juggernaut to tip it over. You have the shootout sequence in the drive-in movie theater, which involves some really pretty incredible action stuff. Like, Val Kilmer is, like, sniping a guy from, like, 100 yards away and, you know, De Niro shooting through the windshield of the car. And then the airport, the final showdown at the airport as well, you know? So, it does contain more set pieces than *Mission: Impossible*, for example, which barely has two, you know?

KRIS TAPLEY

Wow. Somebody's putting me on blast.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

No, and that's not to say-

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Dads.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

I would consider *Mission: Impossible* an action movie and an action blockbuster because the finale of it is so action-packed. But actually, mostly, it's kind of a suspense film. But the other thing, and in our recent episode – we just covered it on the show with Katie Walsh – and she said that she had no problem calling it an action movie. So, you can take it up with her. The other thing-

KRIS TAPLEY

I'll delete her episode of *50 MPH* from history.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Oh, that's a really good one, though.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Also, I've seen *Heat* literally 60 times, and I get something new out of it every single time. So, while its definition as an action film is controversial, I believe I can make that case for it. For me, it's also, there is a case to say that it is genuinely one of the greatest films ever made that I would put against *Citizen Kane*, you know, *Godfather*, any of the AFI top 100. Tell me that they are better than *Heat*. *Heat* is a perfect movie.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Masterpiece.

KRIS TAPLEY

This is the only reason I'm not going to beat you up too much, because what we're doing right now – even though I know this is a podcast about the movie *Speed*, and clearly, I love *Speed* – what we're doing right now is we're talking about my favorite movie, *Heat*, and my favorite filmmaker, Michael Mann. And you're right, it's an incredible movie. This is the movie that made me want to pursue film professionally, specifically the final minute of this film.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

I mean, I hear all of that. It's not an action movie. It's a drama with some great action sequences in it. I, in fact, put the bank heist on my action set pieces list when I did that with the *Light the Fuse* boys. So, I hear all of that. I just – I can't go there on calling it an action movie because of the point I made at the beginning. I just think that pace,

propulsion, is very much key to an action movie, and *Heat* just doesn't cut that, albeit a movie that has great, dynamic, unusual, creative action sequences. Although the finale is a little bit of taken away from *Bullitt*, interestingly enough.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Interesting.

KRIS TAPLEY

I've always thought that was kind of fun. But, yeah, I mean, I'm not going to sit here and argue negatively about *Heat*. I'll just say I don't I don't think it's an action movie, but you're free to do it, Philip. It's your list.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

You know, for me, the action is the juice.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

There you go. There you go.

KRIS TAPLEY

That's almost a checkmate right there. But I just – I can't go there on this. It's one of those movies that you just would see in the action section of the video store, and it's, like, well, where else were they going to put it, I guess? I feel that way about – well, similarly – about-

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Well, there isn't an epic crime saga section of the video store, you know, necessarily, so.

KRIS TAPLEY

They should just put it in the best movies section.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yeah, exactly. Yeah, I mean, who cares what it's called, as long as we all love it, you know?

KRIS TAPLEY

Yes.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Who cares what, like, nebulous definition we slap on it. Like, this is a – to make something that elaborate and that complex and be perfect-

KRIS TAPLEY

Totally.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

-you've got to just bow down.

KRIS TAPLEY

Which is a little bit where I came to things on my number six, because I hear everything about this movie not being – well, maybe not being an action movie. Maybe being more suspense. I'm talking about *Mission: Impossible*. Brian De Palma, 1996. Yeah, I hear all of that. I kind of came down on this one to, this movie is just so good. And the action elements of it are sort of interwoven in such a way that it lets me feel like it's action, even though it is suspense. And certainly, that finale and all of that. And what you said a moment ago about *Ronin* being kind of the most '70s, '90s movie, I feel a bit of that in *Mission: Impossible* as well, frankly. This is like applying a Hitchcock kind of sensibility to action. You know, Brian De Palma obviously worships at the altar of Hitchcock. I think his movies are just vibrating with that energy. And, I don't know, does the first *Mission: Impossible*, like, rate pretty highly whenever they do these rankings every time a new one comes out? Because I get the vibe-

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah, I think so.

KRIS TAPLEY

It does? OK, good. Because it should. I mean, my favorite one is Brad Bird's *Ghost Protocol*. But number one is my number two every time. I just love it.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

I always fall on *Fallout* and this one.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

They really, really – probably this one is my favorite. I think this is a great movie, and it is an extraordinarily, like, important movie to people who grew up in the '90s.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

And, you know, it's amazing how long it's lasted, and how much it's changed, but nothing comes close. And I think this De Palma run of this and *Snake Eyes* in the late-90s is incredible.

KRIS TAPLEY

Snake Eyes is so good, by the way. And to my point about pace, I mean, this movie kind of – even though it seems like it might have a languid pace – it really doesn't. Like, it keeps moving forward, even if there's not a lot of action going on here or there, sometimes. It just seems like the plot keeps pushing forward. You owe that to guys like

Robert Towne, who know how to put together an exciting screenplay, right? But, yeah, so, *Mission: Impossible* for me. Number six.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

I love that choice. I love that movie. It's my favorite *Mission: Impossible* movie, and I think one of the things that's also so incredible about it, Tom Cruise never fires a gun in that film, you know? They made an action blockbuster in the spy genre where the hero never fires a gun. There's, like, no car chases. There's none of the conventional tropes of an action picture, really, you know? It's an incredible achievement. It's, like, a deceptively brilliant achievement of storytelling and film craft. I absolutely love *Mission: Impossible*, and I would say it absolutely is an action movie, even though it only really has those two bookended action set pieces, and then you have the heist in the CIA in the middle. But it's just such a satisfying, amazing movie. I love that movie.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah. Alright, number five. Liam.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Number five is a little esoteric. Not a lot of people have seen it. But it's really important to me. It's the film *Speed*, directed by Jan de Bont.

KRIS TAPLEY

Wait-

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

I've never heard of that.

KRIS TAPLEY

Let me write that down-

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Is it supposed to be good?

KRIS TAPLEY

-so I can track it down.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

S-P-E-E-D.

KRIS TAPLEY

OK.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

I-

KRIS TAPLEY

De Bont? D-

LIAM BILLINGHAM

De Bont. Yeah, de Bont.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

It's a little confusing. Look, I've talked about this movie a lot. You've talked about this movie a lot. Like, talk about pace and propulsion and a great lead and a great romantic comedy, in my opinion, and just an absolute banger of an LA movie. Amazing. A masterpiece. I will never forget seeing it for the first time. It changed my life, probably. You know, it's up there in terms of maybe *Terminator 2* and this as movies that made me, like, really want to go become a film person. This movie rocks. Oh, and *Batman*. I'd say *Batman*, *Speed*, *Terminator 2*. Really important to me.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah, I've seen this movie. It's good. Fine choice. I might have put a little higher, but fine choice.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Well, speaking of Mr. Reeves, my number five is a *Point Break* from 1991.

KRIS TAPLEY

Is it? Did you make a change in ranking?

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

No, I don't believe so. Or maybe I did. I don't think so, but-

KRIS TAPLEY

OK.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Is this going to be a-

KRIS TAPLEY

I think you did.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Is this going to be a problem?

KRIS TAPLEY

No, it's not a problem at all.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

OK.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

“I caught my first tube today, sir.” Sorry, I had to.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Look, this movie – my love for this movie – and that raises an interesting point. My love for this movie is absolutely unironic, right? And there’s a lot of people that sort of have an ironic love for *Point Break*, almost. I don’t get it. This is a truly amazing movie by one of my other filmmaking idols, Kathryn Bigelow, who’s made so many movies that I love, including my favorite horror movie ever, *Near Dark*. One of the rules I made for myself, by the way, in making this list, is that I would only pick one director – one movie per director, because I could maybe make an argument for something like *Strange Days* or if I had more than one Cameron movie or more than one John Woo movie or more than one Tony Scott movie, who made tons of amazing movies, but that was one of my rules. This, for me, is just such a truly exhilarating experience from start to finish. Again, there’s some incredibly – almost defines the term experiential, with the skydiving stuff, and has one of the best foot chases ever filmed, in that pursuit through all the houses and the way that that’s filmed in a really innovative way, that Bigelow would double down on with *Strange Days* in terms of literally making a fully experiential film that’s, like, heavily point-of-view-driven. The skydiving stuff is incredible. It’s actually Patrick Swayze doing it. You can see that it’s actually him diving out of the plains. He did it, like, tons of times, got really, really good at it. I think that paved the way for some of the stuff that we see Cruise doing. And those guys were, you know, homies back in the day in the days of *The Outsiders*, when they were all part of that up-and-coming group. In the Swayze documentary, I think Rob Lowe says it’s no accident that Tom Cruise does that stuff. It’s actually, it’s all – he’s still in some kind of friendly competition with Patrick Swayze, who is just another amazing icon in the action genre and beyond. It’s also just such an amazing story. Like, the story of it is incredible. And I will never forget – spoiler alert for *Point Break* – when Gary Busey as Angelo gets shot, I’m watching this at home on TV and I was, like, “Nooooo!” I was so caught up in it because I loved his character so much. And then you’ve got, like, John C. McGinley as the boss cop. “No, no, no, no, no, no. Let me tell you what you do have produced during the last six months. You’ve produced exactly squat! Squat!” Like, the performances are so alive and bi and I just adore everything about this movie start to finish, and it’s a very special film for me that is a completely unironic admiration for this fantastic movie.

KRIS TAPLEY

I love *Point Break*, too. I love it unironically. I had a similar debate that we’ve been having here about whether it’s an action movie, believe it or not. I think I’ve maybe talked myself back into it being an action movie.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yay!

KRIS TAPLEY

Part of it is I just want *Speed* to be the beginning, the roots, of Keanu’s action career, which is – obviously he’s very much an action star to this day. *Speed* is way more of an action movie than *Point Break*, I think we’ll agree, in terms of, you know, specific

characteristics. And there is a lot of great action in *Point Break*. I just – I had this argument with author Alex Pappademas on the show. He wrote this great book, *Keanu Reeves: Most Triumphant*. You should check it out if you haven't. It just distills his whole career and goes through everything. And I just said, you know, I sort of don't consider it an action movie in the same way I don't consider *Heat* an action movie. But I think the extreme sports aspects of the movie sort of pushes it further, you know, into that realm. And I'm not going to say a bad word against it. I mean, I love *Point Break*. Awesome movie. Awesome '90s movie, period. Just, like-

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Point Break is vibes. It's great.

KRIS TAPLEY

It's full vibes.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

And the music as well. The music in some of those scenes is so evocative of, like – the love story with Keanu Reeves and Lori Petty-

LIAM BILLINGHAM

And Patrick Swayze, you mean.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

-and they're in the ocean and he's surfed for the first time. It's transcendent for me, that movie.

KRIS TAPLEY

Starring Anthony Kiedis of the Red Hot Chili Peppers.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yes.

KRIS TAPLEY

Is Flea in there, too?

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah, I think he is.

KRIS TAPLEY

OK. Where are we? Me.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

You.

KRIS TAPLEY

My number five.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Number five.

KRIS TAPLEY

True Lies.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yay!

KRIS TAPLEY

James Cameron. 1994. I mean, God, *True Lies* kicks ass, period, end the story. Why did they make this series or whatever they did? Just, don't go back to the well on that. Jamie Lee Curtis should have been nominated for an Oscar, OK?

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Hell yes.

KRIS TAPLEY

I mean, I love that movie. It's just the peak of what Cameron was up to all through the '80s, and obviously, he takes a turn with *Titanic* and makes what he makes there. "Makes what he makes." Only the biggest movie of all time.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

I think this is James Cameron's best movie. I really, really do, for me, personally. And I know that that's controversial. But, like, I just-

KRIS TAPLEY

And yet that's not on your list?

LIAM BILLINGHAM

No.

KRIS TAPLEY

Interesting.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

It was on the list. I think I really wanted to sort of – even though I did double up in one point – I really wanted to talk about *Last Action Hero*.

KRIS TAPLEY

The Peacemaker is better than James Cameron's best movie, according to Liam Billingham.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

We're having a good time.

KRIS TAPLEY

Let it be said.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

We're having a good time.

KRIS TAPLEY

I love this story. It's such a great plot. I mean, you know, the dynamic between the characters and what this is, what this is a story about, the blend of comedy and, Tom Arnold is just crushing it in this movie. And, you know, that whole action sequence at the end, I almost put it on my list for the action set pieces episode. The big Seven Mile Bridge-

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Oh, yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

-sequence is so good.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

My soul came out my bodily watching that in the in the theater, you know? It was one of the most exhilarating, again, experiential, because you're, like, in the helicopter, and then you have the propulsive feeling of being with the Harriers as they launch the assault. Like, the way that it's filmed and Cameron's positioning of the camera makes it, like – pushes it over the top into something that's just, like, you can't believe what you're experiencing. It's so thrilling. And the only reason this isn't in my list is because I made that aforementioned rule of one film per director, and I have another Cameron coming up. So, for me, this is-

LIAM BILLINGHAM

I also take it back. *Aliens* is James Cameron's best movie.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

I would put this in the best movies of the '90s. It's just, I just haven't put it on my list for-

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah. It's amazing.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Because I totally agree. It's a masterpiece.

KRIS TAPLEY

I did not abide by that rule. I think I've got, like – yeah, I've got three directors-

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Well, you wanted to put *Speed* for all 10, and we had to talk you out of it.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah, that's right. That's right.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Well, no, no, it was *Speed* for the first five and then *Speed 2: Cruise Control* for six through 10. But we just talked him out of it.

KRIS TAPLEY

So, where are we? We're into our fours now.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Number four. My number four is the Andrew Davis-directed, Harrison Ford- and Tommy Lee Jones-starring *The Fugitive*. Talk about pace and propulsion. Amazing movie. Incredible performances. Taught direction. Harrison-

KRIS TAPLEY

It is a drama with one action scene.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Harrison Ford – shut up – Harrison Ford means so much to me. He's the greatest puncher in movie history. He's the greatest tackler in human history – movie history, not human history. That would definitely not be him. And it just – this movie was, like, an event in my life. I saw it twice in the theater. I love it. I love Harrison Ford. I had to think about what movie I wanted to have represent him here. I toyed around with *Clear and Present Danger*, which I love, *Patriot Games*, which I love, *Air Force One*, which I really, really enjoy as well.

KRIS TAPLEY

That would be my pick-

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

-if I was trying to get one of those in there.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

I think that this is my pick for Harrison Ford, and it's just, you know, it's one of the few action movies ever nominated for Best Picture. It's amazing. It's an amazing movie.

KRIS TAPLEY

Not an action movie, but-

LIAM BILLINGHAM

OK.

KRIS TAPLEY

I mean, I love *The Fugitive*. I do. And this gives me a chance to talk about some movies that, you know, are called action often, and I just didn't put them on my list. I don't consider them that. Such as this, such as *The Hunt for Red October*, such as *In the Line of Fire*. You know, is *The Professional* action? I don't really think so. Sticking with Luc Besson, borderline action, something like *Nikita*. Love the movie, but it sort of didn't crack it for me. And even something like *Jurassic Park* I toyed with putting on here.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

That's an adventure film.

KRIS TAPLEY

Well, what the hell does that mean, by the way?

LIAM BILLINGHAM

I think it's because it's less about, like – it's the fact that they're exploring this new place. There are these giant vistas. Like, it's – and there's not, like, a classical antagonism, right? Like, the dinosaurs are the bad guys, but you're not really like fighting a dinosaur. You're running away from a dinosaur.

KRIS TAPLEY

They should have been shooting the dinosaurs with a gun.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah. Then it's a different movie. I think *The Lost World* might be more of an action movie.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

It's also science-fiction. It just, vibe-wise, doesn't feel like science-fiction, because it's set in the present day, but it would meet the textbook definition of science-fiction, I would say, *Jurassic Park*, right?

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

You know, it just doesn't feel like a sci-fi movie. But it's also, like, you get into the semantics of, like, just blockbuster, you know? Versus categorizing, putting them in these boxes of, you know, genre. But, you know, to me, it's sort of, like, they're whatever you want it to be, you know?

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah, if all we do at the end of this is just dismantle these lines, then that's fine. Because I thought about *Saving Private Ryan*. We talked about the war movies. I can't remember if I brought this up, but, like, yeah, that's got one of the greatest action sequences of all time for the first 20 minutes, right? But is it an action movie? Would it be considered one of the greatest action movies of the '90s? Should it be? I don't know. It's just a war film.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

It's also a history, you know? It's history as well, isn't it? You know, you could make the same case for *Black Hawk Down*, which is almost walls-to-wall action, you know? But I wouldn't consider it-

KRIS TAPLEY

That's an action movie to me, though.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah, I think that's an action movie.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

I don't know. I mean – I don't know.

KRIS TAPLEY

That's, like, the Normandy sequence for two hours, you know?

LIAM BILLINGHAM

It's a banger, banger movie. That's what we can say.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

That's why it's hard to pin down. Anyway, I love *The Fugitive*. We did an – I literally have a T-shirt that has Tommy Lee Jones' entire speech on the back. That is my favorite – one of my favorite characters ever.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

So, like, you're really popular at the bank, right? You're just standing there in line.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yeah, there's very few occasions where people-

LIAM BILLINGHAM

You turn around and some dude our age who looks like us is just shaking.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Most people think it's a concert T-shirt, yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

High on your list. Very good. Very good. You're number four.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Is it me next?

KRIS TAPLEY

Yes.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yeah, it's a little mumblecore, independent film called *Speed* from 1994. Look, enough said. Three action movies in one. Elevator, bus, subway train. The perfect three-course meal is how I talked about it when you came on our show. You have a starter, you have a main course and you have a desert. Incredible characters. The emergence of Keanu as an action icon. Incredible chemistry between Keanu and Sandra Bullock. Amazing romance at the center of it and just a pretty much perfect action picture.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah, it's pretty good. You definitely changed your ranking, though. Because your former number five I think is about to be your number three.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

OK.

KRIS TAPLEY

I think you did that.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Harley Davidson and the Marlboro Man again?

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah, yeah. Part two.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

The sequel. The sequel I'm writing.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Harley Davidson and the Marlboro Men.

KRIS TAPLEY

Oh, wow. With, like, a – the dollar sign thing with *Aliens*, you know? OK, my number four is *The Rock* by Michael Bay. 1996. This movie is GOATed. I mean, it's – I mean, we're getting to the cream of the crop here. This movie has one of those elevator pitches, like *Speed*, that just fucking crushes. You know, military dudes take over Alcatraz. They're holding San Francisco hostage. You've got to get a Navy SEAL team to break in there and we're going to take the one guy that was able to escape from Alcatraz with us. I'm there. Are you fucking kidding me? I'm there. I'm sold.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

And he's James Bond.

KRIS TAPLEY

Oh, and he's James Bond, yeah. And he's accompanied by, you know, erratic, scattered Nicolas Cage. I mean-

LIAM BILLINGHAM

I bow at the altar of this movie, man. I bow at the altar. Michael fucking Biehn in this movie.

KRIS TAPLEY

Oh my god. By now, I think people will have heard – yes, they will have heard Guillermo del Toro on this show going very long on *The Rock* and, just, he's a big fan as well. The dynamic of the characters, again, is just what really makes this. Just, Cage losing his shit throughout the entire movie regarding – what's his name? Mason?

LIAM BILLINGHAM

"Mason!"

KRIS TAPLEY

It's just so good. "I'll go kick the – out of a bunch of," what does he say?

LIAM BILLINGHAM

"I'll take pleasure in guttin' you, boy."

KRIS TAPLEY

Oh, there's that. "I'll take pleasure in guttin' you, boy." OK, yeah.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Brilliant.

KRIS TAPLEY

I could sit here and quote lines from *The Rock* all day, but *The Rock* is fucking great. And, let me just say, one of the greatest actors of all time who deserves an Oscar and still doesn't have one, some-fucking-how, is Ed Harris.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

He's amazing in this movie. He's amazing in this movie.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

I'm being quiet only because I'm tabling this for – I'm sort of holstering my sidearm for when we get there.

KRIS TAPLEY

This might come up again.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yeah. But I agree 1,000% with everything both you guys just said.

KRIS TAPLEY

Liam. Number three.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

[hums "When Johnny Comes Marching Home"] Number three is *Die Hard with a Vengeance*. I sang that little tune because this is a symphonic masterpiece, especially for its first hour and 15 minutes.

KRIS TAPLEY

And podcasts are, you know, audio, so-

LIAM BILLINGHAM

And they're audio.

KRIS TAPLEY

It helps for people to kind of pass the time.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah. I love this movie. I think it's amazing. I want to spend all of my time with the precinct, as I said before. Jeremy Irons walks away with the movie. My soul leaves my body when it cuts in that van, police van, to Hans Gruber falling from the top of Nakatomi Plaza. It's one of the great-

KRIS TAPLEY

That's good shit.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

-reveals in movie history, in my opinion.

KRIS TAPLEY

"The name Gruber mean anything to you?"

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Chills. Literal chills.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah, literal chills every time.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Just now! I'm not kidding!

KRIS TAPLEY

Cue the Kamen. Is it Kamen in that.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yep. It is.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah, it is Kamen. It's amazing. And I just – I think – God, Bruce Willis. Just the greatest. And, a great hangover – the Great hangover movie of all time.

KRIS TAPLEY

That's a good call.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

And also, just a very, very, very, very important New York City movie to those of us who spent a lot of our time on the 3 train. This is an incredible fucking movie. It's amazing.

KRIS TAPLEY

Hell yeah.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yeah. I have nothing to add. We already discussed it, so-

KRIS TAPLEY

Alright.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

-yeah. An absolute banger, for sure.

KRIS TAPLEY

You're number three.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

My number three, sir, is *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* from 1991. You know, this is my only sci-fi, like, hybrid, sci-fi/action movie that I picked. Just the definitive action blockbuster of the early-90s. A series of incredible sequences. I used to watch – I had this on video with both the original *Terminator* and this one, and the escape from the mental hospital and the subsequent truck chase, I would just watch that part, like, that 20 minutes over and over and over. I had the soundtrack on cassette, you know? Also, don't sleep on, like, Sarah Connor's assault on Miles Dyson's home. Like, the sound of that silenced machine-gun fire and that whole bit, like, is incredible. Her transformation from the sort of, you know, everywoman, you know, young waitress, so likable in the first movie-

LIAM BILLINGHAM

It's kind of tragic.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

-to what she becomes in this, just from a character and mythology standpoint, it's tragic, but from an acting standpoint, it's just unbelievable, you know, of what a badass she is. The heist at Cyberdyne and that whole sequence then with the helicopter, and then the helicopter chase. For me, like, we talk a lot on *Die Hard on a Blank* about my obsession with helicopters. If you want me to go to a theater, just put a helicopter in it. Unfortunately, every movie of the '80s and '90s had a helicopter in it by a Joel Silver mandate. He literally insisted that every movie have at least one moment with a helicopter in it, if he produced it.

KRIS TAPLEY

There are helicopters in *Speed*. Helicopters.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yes.

KRIS TAPLEY

Just saying.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

And the way that's shot as well, like, the way, I mean-

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Heat has a couple helicopters. Just saying.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

It's incredible. But that sequence where the helicopter is flying for real, like, under bridges in pursuit of the truck, I mean, are you kidding me? And it still looks unbelievable today because it was all practical, and then within the context of the movie and the emotion of the story, just, you know, it doesn't get any better. There are things that you could say are as good, certainly in Cameron's repertoire. It doesn't get better than this for sci-fi, action, blockbuster cinema. Just the gold standard, to this day.

KRIS TAPLEY

I will continue this conversation by saying my number three is *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*. Yeah, dude. I mean, when I was in film school, I had a guy, my cinematography teacher, would tell this story about how there was a period of time in LA where you could not get cable, because they had all the cable – like, stingers and stuff, extension cords – for the freeway chase.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Oh, wow.

KRIS TAPLEY

You could not get cable. Like, I love the fact that there are multiple occasions where James Cameron made the most expensive movie of all time, up to that period. *Terminator 2*, *True Lies*, *Titanic*, every time, he's just, like, "I'm going big and it's going to kick ass," and it kicks ass every time. And *Terminator 2* is just – it's, again, to be a 1991 movie and to be doing some of the digital effects stuff it's doing, and obviously what he learned on *The Abyss* is what led to the liquid metal kind of effect that they do. And if you've ever seen the ILM documentary *Light & Magic* on Disney+, I mean, it's – you should check it out. It just kind of traces things from *Star Wars* all the way through, and just the innovations in that realm were sensational. Unusual for a sequel to be this much better than the original, you know? And for the original to still be a banger. You know what I mean?

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah. Total banger.

KRIS TAPLEY

I just love *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*. What else can you say? Number two, Liam.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Guys, if I were to send you flowers, where would I – just kidding. My pick is the John Woo-directed 1997 film *Face/Off* starring Nicolas Cage and John Travolta. Woo at the height of his American powers making the movie closest to the glory days, I'd say, of his Hong Kong cinema. He is just an indisputably important presence in action filmmaking. One of the greatest ever. And I think that this is sort of, like, along with *Crimson Tide*, the most exciting acted action movie ever made, you know? It's just so fun to watch these two guys go for it. They're both incredible. The supporting cast is amazing. Especially, I love that Nick Cassavetes is in this movie. It just does it for me as a Cassavetes head. I love this movie. Iconic imagery. Incredible action. Really silly, but also weirdly emotional in the same beat. And I would just say that Joan Allen gives one of the great underrated action-movie performances. She's amazing. I love this fucking movie. The boat chase, guys.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

The airport sequence at the beginning. The airport sequence. The way that is shot is, like, oh my God.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Cage diving out the door with a gold-plated .45.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Sparks flying, you know? And the cop cars everywhere and they literally have, like, a Humvee pursuing a jet on a runway. Again, it's, like – for me, it's, like, in that *Con Air* bucket of sheer '90s bombastic, like, excess. Double down. More is more. More is more. More is more. Two big movie stars, you know?

LIAM BILLINGHAM

But the performances of those two guys are so good that, like, it transcends its goofiness, right? Like, you kind of feel for Travolta, for Cage, in the second half of that movie, right? But it also, like, takes place in, like, a moon-boots prison where you can't lift your feet off the ground.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Well, it started as a straight sci-fi movie. That's what's kind of interesting about it, is that it was supposed to be a sci-fi picture, and then John Woo decided, when he came on board, decided to root it in present day, but there are still these echoes of like sci-fi ideas in it. Yet it's ostensibly, like, a contemporary piece. But it works on just this mad wavelength of that John Woo operatic – but it's sincere as well.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

That's what I mean.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

That's why I think it works.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Earnest, yeah.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

It doesn't feel – it's not cynical. Like, you really feel – like, even though the emotion is sort of demented, you feel like it's coming from a sincere place, which makes it kind of beautiful. So, that was also very close to being on my list. But, again, the only reason it isn't is because of my one-director rule. So, this would flow quite elegantly into my choice. But I want to – I don't want to – I want to give Kris a chance to weigh in if-

KRIS TAPLEY

Oh, I'll just say I hate *Face/Off*. I know that I'm in a minority. I hear everything you're saying. I've never been able to get down with that movie. I just haven't. I watched it again recently. And I was just, like – I don't know what to say. I really don't know what to say.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Interesting.

KRIS TAPLEY

It's just never hit me right.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

That's fair.

KRIS TAPLEY

And in fact, I'm not much of a John Woo guy. I'm going to let Liam – I mean, I'm sorry, I'm going to let Philip get to his number two before I really go on to this whole spiel. I

feel bad that I don't really have any Hong Kong cinema on my list. I've seen them all. My favorite is probably *Bullet in the Head*, actually.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah, that movie rules.

KRIS TAPLEY

I think that movie is a masterpiece. But I'm probably more of a Ringo Lam guy as it comes to Hong King cinema.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Look, there's nothing wrong with Ringo Lam. He's incredible.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah, I mean, I just think – I mean, Tarantino ripped off his whole kind of vibe from him, frankly, not just with, you know, the whole story or whatever about *Reservoir Dogs*, but just, there's a certain swagger to Ringo Lam that I think Tarantino really dug, and it's infused in his movies. It's even in stuff like *True Romance*. But, you know, maybe if, for instance, *Police Story* had been a '90s movie, that might have made my list, because I'm more of a Jackie Chan guy than I am a John Woo guy. I just – I've never been into the gun fu of it all and the fucking doves and just all that shit. I just – it's never really landed for me.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

I wonder if – see, I'm a sentimentalist, right? And, you know, Liam said earlier that I'm, like, a deep-feeling guy. Maybe that's partly why John Woo works so powerfully for me, you know? There is a sort of intense emotionality that maybe isn't for everyone, you know, necessarily? I don't know if that's part of the reason for it or not. I mean, you referenced, you know – *Speed* is a very emotional film. *Terminator 2* is a very emotional film. But it's a different kind of emotion. It's one of the reasons I was going to, you know, just talk about-

KRIS TAPLEY

Go into your next one-

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

If I may.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah, go ahead.

KRIS TAPLEY

Well, my number two, and this came very, very close to being number one, is John Woo's 1992 masterpiece *Hard Boiled*. For me, this is pure fucking cinema. Like, this is cinema. When we watched it recently, or a year or so ago, to cover it on the show, I just couldn't – it was a deeply, deeply emotional experience for me, because it was just so

inspiring for what could be accomplished, especially in this genre, but in cinema in general. It was just a pure vision. They gave this guy – and it wasn't even made for that much money! But it's just a vision on screen that was, like, beamed to us from another universe by someone that I think is also a very deep-feeling person. Even though this is one of the most elaborately-staged and intricate, spectacular, like, shoot-out movies ever, for me, what makes it – like, puts it over the top? It's not just that. For me, it's the soulfulness of the film. It's the lyricism of the film, the music in the film, in the way that that evokes this sort of sadness, and to me it's incredibly beautiful and sincere and soft-hearted, beyond the fact that it's ironic that it's such a soft-hearted movie and it's called *Hard Boiled*. It has this super hard, tough shell, but inside it's, like, very delicate and graceful and sensitive. I love the characters so much, as well. Particularly, I think – other than John McClane, this is my favorite action hero ever – Chow Yun-Fat as Inspector Tequila Yuen. Arguably, just one of the greats – certainly he is one of the greatest movie stars ever, period, with no qualifications required, but that character is, to me, just everything. I love this movie so much. Have it tequila slammer, kick back and watch just a visionary genius unfold before your eyes. For me, number two, *Hard Boiled*, and very, very close to being number one.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Where is the steelbook? Where is the steelbook? These movies need physical releases, like, desperately,

KRIS TAPLEY

I go back to Ringo Lam. I feel like Ringo's movies have, like, more personality in them to me, John Woo's movies just feel like museum pieces. Like, they seem almost enamored with themselves. And it's everything you're saying, but-

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Wow.

KRIS TAPLEY

-it just hits you differently than it hits me.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Interesting.

KRIS TAPLEY

It's just – I mean, I'd go so far as to say *Hard Boiled* is not even the best Hong Kong action movie from 1992.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. What? What?

KRIS TAPLEY

I almost put *Full Contact* on my list. *Full Contact* kicks ass.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Full Contact is very good.

KRIS TAPLEY

I love that movie. So, anyway, I'm not trying to – I don't want to slag on John Woo here. Who the fuck am I? And my list is full of American movies, so, sue me, but, you know, I just think – again, is *Bullet in the Head* an action movie? I mean, maybe I should have put that on the list. It's – have you seen it?

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

I have – that's a blind spot for me, but I'm familiar with a lot of John Woo's stuff. But the other problem is that so much of John Woo's stuff, it, almost inexplicably, is not available

KRIS TAPLEY

It's hard to find a lot of stuff, yeah.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

I've tried to watch it.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

It's, like, held by some company that doesn't have any interest-

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yeah.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

-in putting stuff out.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Even the mainstream American stuff is hard to find. Some of it.

KRIS TAPLEY

Sometimes you can find stuff on the Internet Archive, by the way, if you feel like watching something on your computer. But, yeah, again, I'm more of a Ringo Lam dude. I guess it's just a taste thing. And, like I said, I'm clearly in the minority. I mean, *Hard Boiled* is, like, holy and I get it, but-

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

But that is also, that's the word, because there's also a spiritualism to it, and to him, you know? That isn't going to be for everybody, right? To each their own, you know? Like, I get it. Like, there are certain filmmakers, just, everyone that acclaims them, I bounce off them, right? But, for me, it's, like – it's an arrow into my heart and soul, this movie. It's a bullet into my heart and soul, but a nice bullet.

KRIS TAPLEY

A soulful bullet.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

Well, my number two owes a huge debt to Hong Kong cinema. I'm a little surprised it wasn't on either of your lists: *The Matrix*. Do you not consider it action?

LIAM BILLINGHAM

That's a tough one. I have it in my, like, the very top of my honorable mentions.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Me, too.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

I love it. I think it's amazing. No question. And I revisited them all for when four came out, which is a movie I fucking love. And, yeah, it was on there in the long term. I think I – there was just – there were movies I really wanted to talk about, more than even just necessarily say are the 10 greatest. But I love *The Matrix*. I mean, that's a formative movie.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yeah, ditto for me. It was top of my honorable mentions. Unquestionably, if it was the greatest action movies of the '90s, it absolutely has to be in the list. It's just not necessarily one that I would-

KRIS TAPLEY

The favorite thing.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

-I would put on, because it's kind of a bruising experience, and it's almost, like, too real nowadays, sometimes. So, it's, like, *Harley Davidson and the Marlboro Man*? Light lift. *The Matrix*? Like, ooh, this is heady. This is challenging, you know? But as a piece of action cinema, imperious. Unparalleled.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah. That lobby sequence is-

KRIS TAPLEY

Oh, it's so good.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

-amazing.

KRIS TAPLEY

Innovative as hell again, even with that debt owed to Hong Kong cinema. I just think it's, you know – what it owes to wire fu and everything, it's just Keanu Reeves kicking ass and it's from that great year of cinema, and it's certainly one of the top three movies, probably, of that year, too, which is saying something.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

If it had been released a year earlier, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* would have been on my list, just to say. I love that movie. But it's 2000.

KRIS TAPLEY

Alright. Number one. You guys have it for your number ones, because you share a number one.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Phil?

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

You want me to go first? You're first. You go first.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Let me just say, if this movie is not on your list, you're a loser and losers always whine about their best and winners go home and fuck the prom queen. It's *The Rock*. Just a formative experience seeing this movie for the first time. I saw all of these movies in the same theater on Cape Cod, I think it's worth saying, because that's where we would go for the summer, because we're the most Massachusetts people that ever lived.

KRIS TAPLEY

A very action-movie location, yeah.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah, definitely. For yachts. No, it is an incredible movie. Incredible action. It is the sort of, like, pinnacle, to me, of action movies. Michael Biehn is absolutely incredible. I don't know why I keep saying that. The shower scene. The chase, the car chase. The creative kills on the bad guys with the rocket and the VX poison gas. And I think that what is so powerful about the movie is Ed Harris being one of the most compelling and sympathetic villains, and there's a way that you can view this movie as really pulpy, and I think him and David Morse's performance as these, like, conflicted generals, transcend summer silliness and turn this movie into a piece of actual, like, legitimate, kind of, in ways, political cinema, and Michael Bay has never and will never do better than this movie, in my opinion. It's the perfect combination of action and I think it's kind of brainy in a way that we didn't appreciate when it came out.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yeah. I mean, I would echo all those sentiments and then some. For me, this is a movie that truly elevated the action genre and took it to new heights, particularly with the level

of actor. You know, Sean Connery is the ostensible lead in this film. He doesn't even show up until, like, well into the movie, you know? But he still carries-

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Is he first-billed?

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

-the mystique. He's first-billed, yeah.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

You had Nic Cage, who had just won an Oscar for *Leaving Las Vegas*, who was just a force of nature at this point in his career. I mean, he always has been, but bursting with ideas, creativity, choices, you know? Adds this zaniness and humor to the movie that was really unusual and innovative. And then Ed Harris, as you just said, as General Francis X. Hummel, the best quote, unquote "bad guy" in modern action movie history, because he's not a bad guy. He's also the protagonist of the movie. It's the best-ever illustration of the idea that the bad guy should be the hero of their own movie, you know? Every scene is memorable. Every scene is, like, a brilliant short film in its own right. There are scenes in this film that would be the best scene in any other movie, and they're, like, throwaway. Like the scene where they're trying to defuse the bomb, the baby doll bomb at the beginning. That's, like, one of the most intense scenes ever. and that's, like, the third scene in the film, and we don't even think about it

LIAM BILLINGHAM

You want me to shove this in my heart. Are you fucking nuts?

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Exactly. Like, Xander Berkeley's just in that scene, you know? Then there's, like, the heist on the weapons facility at the beginning. The movie begins with a guy, like, getting their face melted off. And it's, like-

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah, that's real good.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

-viscerally, you know, chilling. You've got one of the most wild and elaborate San Francisco chase scenes ever filmed. And, as you were saying, it sort of adroitly balances-

KRIS TAPLEY

"I'm only borrowing your Humvee."

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Exactly. It balances this, like, operatic grandeur with real gravitas, especially with those scenes with Ed Harris and David Morse.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Also, the chase scene is so he can meet his daughter, which I just think is quite great.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Well, that was the point I was going to come to, because the final thing I was going to say about it is that it's also – for me, this is really important with action cinema, and with cinema in general, is that it's actually deeply emotional in places, particularly in that scene with Connery and his daughter and the way that Cage protects his honor and dignity in that scene by-

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

-pretending that he's, like, part of the team and they're not there to, like, arrest him and stuff, is just so touching. And the relationship between Connery and Cage at the end, and when he ultimately decides to let him go, and that little music cue, to me, it gets me choked up just thinking about it.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

It's amazing, the score.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Michael Bay, for all of his incredible visual aesthetic and rock 'em, sock 'em style and kinetic energy that he captures in his movies and eye for a shot and all of that stuff, actually doesn't ever lose sight of the emotional heart of the story, you know? We love *Ambulance*. We talk about it a lot. You know, *Armageddon*, a different kind of movie, but, like, that's a very emotional, you know, movie towards the end. He is quite skilled at doing that, so, for me, like, the combination of all of those things – acting, set pieces, concept, unbelievable imagery and that, like, just that special sauce of the fact that it's actually quite moving in places. Just a perfect, Titan action film. So, for me, like – and also because the bad guy – this was what tipped it for me with *Hard Boiled*. The bad guy in *Hard Boiled* is good, but he's not, like, great. It's not one of the greatest villains ever. This-

LIAM BILLINGHAM

The henchman, the sidekick is a better villain.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yes, the sidekick. Absolutely. Mad Dog is a better villain than the main villain. But in *The Rock*, not only do you have two incredible heroes with Connery and Cage, but you also have one of the best bad guys ever. So, for me, that was what tipped the scales to be, like, it's *The Rock*, is number one.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah, but is it an action movie? No, I'm just kidding. The complexity of the villain is a big-

LIAM BILLINGHAM

It's a prison movie. Everybody knows that.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah. The complexity of the villain is a big part of all of this, as you've been talking about. I mean, just that he's got to just cause. You know, the whole Michael Biehn spiel, you know, "God knows I agree with you." All of that stuff, and the fact that he's, like, "Of course I'm not going to kill these people. You think I'm crazy?" Like, all of that, like, it's just – that's a tough one to pull off. A tough needle to thread, if you will. And just the fact that Ed Harris fucking hated Michael Bay and there's you know, behind the scenes shit where they're at each other's throats.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Oh, I didn't know that.

KRIS TAPLEY

Like, just fun stuff where he's off-camera and Michael Bay says, "Alright, let's do it again. Don't fuck it up." And Ed Harris is pissed. But he's – Michael Bay is getting him to the point he needs him to get to, too. So, it's kind of fascinating to watch it unfold. But yeah, they did. It's kind of like at Ed Harris and James Cameron. Like, he did not like this guy.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

But yet, Ed Harris worked with Michael Bay again on *Pain & Gain*. So, I think it's, like-

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah, it's kind of weird.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Some guys are OK with being, like, hey, look, it can be brutal and we can piss each other off. If it gets it – it's on the fucking screen. You know, who cares? So, some people have got tough enough skin that they can, like, deal with that. If it gets them there, and it gets the result on screen, so, for me, I love the fact that they worked together again.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

They can't have hated each other that much, but I know exactly what you're talking about. Because those behind the scenes are, like, almost terrifying to watch. And the tension.

KRIS TAPLEY

I mean, *Pain & Gain* was a while after *The Rock*.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yeah, true.

KRIS TAPLEY

So, that just tells you everything. I just – I love that character. And this was a big dad movie for me, by the way. Like, I remember – I actually I don't remember. I mean, I remember a lot of movies and where I was when I saw them, who I saw them with, blah, blah, blah. I remember this one. It was late at night. It was, like, a nine o'clock one or something, and it's just a special memory for me.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

And I just I just love that in this movie, somebody Interesting killed Kennedy.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Right, totally.

KRIS TAPLEY

As you find out in the end with the microfiche. I think that's a fun little MacGuffin going on in the movie.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Well, you can imagine, like, a sequel, like, *National Treasure*, essentially.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Like, that's the same kind of like thing, in a weird way, where it's, like, these alternate histories, right?

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Also really fun. Certainly not greatest, but really fun movies that Cage would go on to make after this.

KRIS TAPLEY

Totally. My number one. Alright, so, when I did my best LA movies and most disappointing sequels, I didn't want to bring up *Speed* there. I didn't want to bring up *Speed 2* to here. But *Speed* is the best action movie of the '90s. I believe it wholeheartedly. I don't know what else I could possibly say about the movie in this space that I haven't said for a year. I just think there is a beauty to this film in its conception, in its execution, in the way it landed. I mean, the popularity that it achieved. The fact that we do not get movies like that anymore. I guess we never will again. I don't know how you would make that movie again unless you made it exactly the way they made it, because why would you bother shooting visual effects plates to go in LED volumes? Why not just go shoot the fucking movie the way they shot it, right? Like, it sort of determined how it was going to be made in its premise, and it's just perfect. It's a perfect movie. But I love this film, and, to me, it's the best action movie of the '90s I bookended my list with Jan de Bont?

LIAM BILLINGHAM

I mean, I hate it. I'm just kidding.

KRIS TAPLEY

I mean, let's be honest. I kind of hated it. Didn't want to tell you.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Why does the bus go 50? What's the deal with-

KRIS TAPLEY

Why didn't he just shoot out the tires before it got to 50?

LIAM BILLINGHAM

I think, in a weird way, this is the platonic ideal of a '90s action movie. That's just what I'll say. I don't disagree. I think this movie is amazing. I mean, it's so arbitrary, these lists, right? But it's just amazing.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

The distinctions are so subtle, because so many of these films, again, you know – several of these films, I would say, are perfect. You know, I think *The Rock*, *Terminator 2*, you know, you're not on as on-board with *Hard Boiled*.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Harley Davidson and the Marlboro Man.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

True Lies, you know? *Point Break*, *Heat*. These are all perfect films. So, it really just becomes more, like – the distinctions are so subtle as for personal taste, you know? There's no daylight between them, you know, in many cases, and certainly *Speed* is an

undeniable masterpiece of the genre and absolutely epitomizes everything that we love about it and we love about movies.

KRIS TAPLEY

And you talk about propulsion and pace, I mean, this movie doesn't give you a second to breathe, and to be able to achieve that, that's – there's fat on movies, OK? Inevitably. To be trimmed. You can point to so many things in movies and say, "That could go. That could go." *Speed* is so lean. I mean, Helen dies, you get a minute for Keanu to kind of console Sandra, and then you've got Norwood on the phone saying there's a gap in the freeway up ahead and now we're on to that.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Holy shit, yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

There is just no time to catch your breath in this movie. And, you know, we've talked, in the past, about how the subway sequence is maybe the weaker element if you're going to find a weak link. But even within that, I love the filmmaking techniques on display there.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

It's also – and we talked about this when we did the episode – that sequence is crucial to the Bullock, Reeves dynamic and the love story that is in the movie, because he doesn't leave. Which, of course he wouldn't. But, you know, it's the way he hugs her three different times and how that one is so specific.

KRIS TAPLEY

What do you say? *Speed* is good.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Speed, good.

KRIS TAPLEY

Speed. Good movie.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Speed: Cruise Control. Good?

KRIS TAPLEY

Eh. Probably should have stayed away from that one. But, you know what we should get? We should get *Speed 3* directed by Jan de Bont featuring Keanu Reeves and Sandra Bullock. I've told him this!

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yes! Yes!

KRIS TAPLEY

Like, dude, you would have so much goodwill. Let's just figure it out.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Oh my God. Do you – oh my God.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yes.

KRIS TAPLEY

He says he's received, like, plenty of like pitches and stuff. And he's just, like, "No, no."

LIAM BILLINGHAM

But, you know, maybe that's better.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Speed with a Vengeance.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

We will hold this in our heart. You know what I mean? It's like how sometimes movies win Oscars and then, like, you're, like, "Oh, I can't believe, you know, X part didn't win this Oscar." And then, 25 years later, it's, like – it's still top of mind.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

It's tough to go back, but, like, if you look at, like, *Top Gun: Maverick*, you know, sometimes you can go back and it can work and it can be a bullseye. But it has to be, yeah, the right – the reasoning behind it has to be right. Not just a cash grab. Not just an IP milking. You know, it has to be, like, there's an idea here that is more meaningful than just, you know, trying to reactivate something from your IP library.

KRIS TAPLEY

My reason would be redemption after *Speed 2*.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Right. Yeah, yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

So, there we go. I don't know what else we could say. We're probably sick of each other's voice and faces. But – I mean, I'll just speak for myself. I'm sick of both of your voices and your faces.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

OK.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

I mean, you know how much I listen to this guy's voice.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah, you guys are a married couple at this point. I think we've put together a pretty good list. If anybody wants to go, like, rock out in awesome '90s action film festival. Maybe we ought to talk about throwing one of those in LA here. It's a repertory world. Why not?

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Oh, yeah.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Sign us up.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Let's do it. I also want to get to your point about sort of, like, the list not feeling international, and I think a lot of this is just written in the nostalgia of the things that stick out to me, you know? Like, there's so many great Hong Kong movies that I saw later in life that I love and appreciate, but, like, I'm working so much here from the things, like – again, the movies I saw in the theater with my dad. And that, for me, is just, it can't be separated, right? It is nostalgia. It's hopefully nostalgia with a critical modern lens. But I wanted to highlight the things that really hit me as a 15-, 16-year-old boy and made me fall in love with this genre. But, I mean, I love international cinema and I don't want it to go unheralded. But there are people who could speak to it better.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah. And let's blow through some honorable mentions real quick. I had *Total Recall*, was close. Paul Verhoeven, 1990. *The Last Boy Scout* was close for me. *Demolition Man* was close for me. *Independence Day*. Big fan of *Independence Day*.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Oh, yeah. Dude, that movie rules.

KRIS TAPLEY

And *Air Force One*. Those were sort of the other five that I was looking – oh, and also Ringo Lam, *Full Contact*.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Mine was *The Matrix*, *Kindergarten Cop* – which, controversial but I just rewatched it and I'm in love it – *Terminator 2*, *True Lies*, *Starship Troopers* – which was on my list and then I substituted it out for *Lethal Weapon 3* so we made sure we talked about that – *The Last Boy Scout*, *The Executive Decision*, *Blade-*

KRIS TAPLEY

The? I think it's just *Executive Decision*.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Executive Decision. Alright, thanks.

KRIS TAPLEY

Cleaner.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Batman Returns, *The Rocketeer* and *Under Siege*.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Two. *Under Siege 2*, right?

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah, *Under Siege 2*.

KRIS TAPLEY

Dark Territory.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Eric Bogosian forever.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yeah, some good stuff. My honorable mentions where – we touched on some of them – *True Lies*, *The Matrix*, *Face/Off*, *Hard Target* – another John Woo-

KRIS TAPLEY

Hard Target.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Absolute banger. I love *Hard Target*.

KRIS TAPLEY

Punches a snake.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Indeed. *In the Line of Fire*, which, yeah, to your point, is more sort of – more of a thriller, really, than an action film, but was one of my favorite films as a kid.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Great movie.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

And *G.I. Jane*, which is a film that a lot of people might sort of snicker at, but I feel is, like, a really amazing movie. It's Ridley Scott's most Tony Scott movie and it does feature, in the last sort of 20 minutes, it's, like, the *Top Gun* kind of storytelling paradigm of training and all of that. It's like a military training movie. But then there is actually a real-world conflict at the end and the way that that's shot-

LIAM BILLINGHAM

It's a little like *Top Gun*.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yeah, that's exactly what I'm saying. It's structured exactly the same way, which, of course, was directed by Tony Scott. So, I love *G.I. Jane* and I think there's some amazing stuff in it. It's a really fun, unusual movie in Ridley's repertoire. But, ultimately, yeah, it didn't make the cut. But what an era, guys. What an era.

KRIS TAPLEY

And I did a fun exercise, by the way. Very briefly here. I looked up the *Rotten Tomatoes* scores of all these movies. What do you think was the most acclaimed movie that we brought up today?

LIAM BILLINGHAM

It's not *Die Hard with a Vengeance*, because, weirdly, that's in, like, the 60s.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah, that's – they need to rethink that, redo that.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

The Fugitive?

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Heat?

KRIS TAPLEY

Yes. It's *The Fugitive*.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Oh, really?

KRIS TAPLEY

Ninety-six percent.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

Guess what number two is.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

The Peacemaker. Sure.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah. No, it's actually *Harley Davidson and the Marlboro Man*, which-

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

Yay!

KRIS TAPLEY

-honestly, that's the worst one. That's at 29%. Number two is *Speed*, 95%. Critically acclaimed, folks. People forget. Well, that is it. The greatest action films of the '90s. Throw them all together on a playlist and watch them. You're bound to have a blast and I can't thank you enough for-

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Oh my God, are you kidding?

KRIS TAPLEY

-coming here and talking to me for over two hours at this point.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

I should probably check on my kids. Just kidding. They're fine.

KRIS TAPLEY

But thanks, guys. I really appreciate it. Check out their podcast. It's *Die Hard on a Blank*. What day are you?

LIAM BILLINGHAM

We drop Wednesdays. We drop Wednesdays. Every second Wednesday. We do two episodes a month currently. By the time you hear this, we will have just covered *The Executive* – sorry, excuse me – *Executive Decision* and *Broken Arrow*, which is a great '90s action movie, speaking of John Woo. We'll be coming out then, and we have a very large back catalogue catalog with guests like Kris, Bilge Ebiri, Paul Scheer came on to do *Home Alone* and *Clear and Present Danger*. Sean Fennessey did *Striking Distance*. Katie Walsh did *Heat*. And then there's just some episodes that are Phil and I just riffing.

KRIS TAPLEY

Awesome.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

So, it's a really fun show and you can find it at DieHardOnABlank.com or wherever you get your podcasts.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

And, of course, the *Speed* episode with Kris Tapley himself. But honestly, this was such a delight to do. It was so much fun.

LIAM BILLINGHAM

Thank you. Yeah.

PHILIP GAWTHORNE

The whole process was a delight and we're truly, you know, honored to be on your wonderful podcast.

KRIS TAPLEY

Thank you, fellas. Thank you. That's Philip Gawthorne and Liam Billingham of *Die Hard on a Blank*.

[OUTRO MUSIC]

KRIS TAPLEY

Next week on *50 MPH...*

KRIS TAPLEY

We're still coasting with another list. This time: The greatest directorial debuts of the '90s!

OWEN GLEIBERMAN

There's this wonderful form-follows-function quality of *Clerks*. The film does have a certain documentary-like quality. You really feel like it's capturing something real.

KRIS TAPLEY

I'm joined by *Variety* chief film critic Owen Gleiberman, formerly of *Entertainment Weekly*, who had the perfect perch to watch all of these exciting voices develop in real time.

OWEN GLEIBERMAN

I thought David Fincher in *Alien³* made a remarkable choice. He went back to the mood of the first film.

KRIS TAPLEY

It's so cool to see all the style that they're going to apply to *The Matrix* applied to something this boiled-down.

KRIS TAPLEY

And if you're wondering if and where *Speed* might rank on the list, you'll have to listen to find out.

OWEN GLEIBERMAN

The greatest action films ever made are films where I believe on a moment-to-moment level in the reality I'm watching. That's what almost no action films are like, but that's what *Speed* has.

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.