

50 MPH: EPISODE 48

“THE BEST FILMS OF THE ‘90s” (with Guy Lodge)

Transcript (02:01:12)



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

Welcome back everyone. We’ve been cruising through a stretch of episodes meant to sort of contextualize the films of the ‘90s and *Speed*’s place within that spectrum. We’ve talked about the greatest action films of the ‘90s and the greatest directorial debuts of the ‘90s, and today, well, we’ll just go all out with an assessment of the best films of the ‘90s, period. But we’re putting our own little twist on it. Before we get to that, however, let me introduce our guest. I’ve known this guy for about 16 years at this point, if he can believe it. We go way back to a little site I ran called *In Contention* that was not only a force to be reckoned with in the awards coverage landscape, but also just a good hang and a place to talk about and write about movies in general. I think we made a pretty good splash with that brand, which we first took to the *HitFix* umbrella – RIP *HitFix* – and eventually to *Variety*, and this guy was a big part of that endeavor’s success. He’s one of the sharpest film critics on the beat for outlets like *Variety*, as well as *The Observer* and *The Guardian* in the UK, and I’m thrilled to have him on today to really chew on the ‘90s cinema with me. His name is Guy Lodge. Guy, thanks for coming on, man.

GUY LODGE

Thanks for having me, Kris. It’s a real reunion vibe here.

KRIS TAPLEY

Oh my gosh, it’s been great for that. I don’t know if you heard the Anne Thompson episode a couple weeks back, but that was a lot of fun to get back on the horn with her.

GUY LODGE

I remember kind of, yeah, our dialogues with Anne. They were always lively. And I’m still kind of reeling that you just said 16 years. That’s-

KRIS TAPLEY

Can you believe that?

GUY LODGE

We leave that old now.

KRIS TAPLEY

Oh my gosh. We were young once.

GUY LODGE

But I miss *In Contention* all the time, both, you know – both to work for and to read. It was, you know – I’m biased, but I still think it was the best Oscar blog out there.

KRIS TAPLEY

It was fun, and I often hear that from former readers. I don’t know if you do as well, but I just get that note all the time, that people miss that. It was a good time, and it was a different time.

GUY LODGE

It was a whole other era, yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah. But I mean that, dude, you were the – seriously, someone one time, by way of sending a barb my way, said that “he’s outclassed by his own contributor, Guy Lodge.” And I agreed with that!

GUY LODGE

I mean-

KRIS TAPLEY

You were fantastic, and I just want to say at the top here, I’ve been so proud and happy to see your career just take off. You are truly one of the best film critics in the game. So, congrats on everything, man.

GUY LODGE

Oh, that means a lot. I mean, it’s – I owe so much to *In Contention*, because you gave me such a, like, generous platform to write, you know, whatever the hell I wanted about anything, and I really kind of found my voice there, you know? And I hadn’t written anywhere before *In Contention*, so, you know that site really, really, really took us both places.

KRIS TAPLEY

No doubt. Places we didn’t imagine, I’m sure. But it’s been a fun ride. I’m glad to see you’re still doing it and, again, I’m happy to have you here. So, let’s talk about the ‘90s, man. This is our sweet spot. This is when we came up, right? So-

GUY LODGE

Yeah. This is, you know, when I learned that, you know, movies were my whole deal.

KRIS TAPLEY

Was there a moment in the '90s, a movie you saw in the '90s, that was a spark for that? One of the movies on my list – we're going to talk about this in a minute – but one of my movies was that movie. I'm just curious if there was one for you in the '90s.

GUY LODGE

Well, at different stages. Like, a lot of the movies we're about to talk about on my list were ones for me, but the kind of – actually the defining one for me, the one that kind of made me realize I was kind of interested not just in, you know, watching movies, but in how they were made, was seeing *Three Colors: Red*. It was my first kind of arthouse movie, and I realized that they could be a whole lot more than I thought they could as a medium, and that was kind of totally eye-opening. But we'll get to that.

KRIS TAPLEY

From the fascinating and brilliant and wonderful film year of 1994, which includes another film that was pretty good. It's called *Speed*.

GUY LODGE

I loved *Speed* back in the day, actually. I haven't seen it in a really long time and I feel like I should celebrate the end of this project by kind of doing a big *Speed* rewatch, because it's just – I think you said it a while back, that we kind of took it for granted in the '90s that there were, you know, *Speed*-like blockbusters kind of coming out every weekend. Maybe not as good as *Speed*, but it didn't seem like such an outlier back in the day, and now, I mean, if someone brought out *Speed* in multiplexes today, we'd all lose our minds, I think.

KRIS TAPLEY

I was just at a screening the other day. They had a screening here in town, a repertory screening. The first 30th-anniversary screening in LA, I think, of the movie. Packed house. Applause breaks throughout the movie. I mean, it still just plays so well.

GUY LODGE

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

And you're right. I mean, they come out with something today like *Top Gun: Maverick*, and everyone just loses their minds because they don't get it anymore. But that was, you know – I love *Top Gun: Maverick*, and I do think it's exceptional, but it is of a piece with the kind of film that the '90s just gave us every other weekend, so.

GUY LODGE

Yeah, we didn't used to sort of talk about these movies as, you know, "This is – they don't make them like this anymore," because they did make them like that then all the time, every week, you know? Sometimes better than others. But there was a general form for the kind of Hollywood mainstream kind of entertainment that just does not exist anymore.

KRIS TAPLEY

Absolutely. Well, let's talk about the best of it. This is the twist we're putting on our best of the '90s here. I mean, why just do a typical best-of-the-90s thing, right? I mean, it'll probably be the same movies for the most part. I decided with Guy, let's go year-by-year and say, "Here's the best movie of 1990. Here's the best movie of 1991." And we'll bat it back and forth that way. You'll go a little crazy when you start thinking about the best films of the decade. If you just boil it down for each year, I think we'll end up with a nice set of movies that's really indicative of what was so special about the decade, so.

GUY LODGE

Even going year-by-year, because – one, because I think it just was a great decade for filmmaking, and two, because it's so kind of wrapped up in personal kind of associations and affections for me. Picking one per year was hard, too.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah.

GUY LODGE

It was just a feast.

KRIS TAPLEY

I'm allowing us to, you know, speak around our movies as well each time, just whatever was kind of close to making our number one for each year, it's fine. This should just be a smorgasbord. So, we'll just go for it. So-

GUY LODGE

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

-let's start with the turn of the decade in 1990. We'll start with you, Guy. What was your number one movie of 1990?

GUY LODGE

Well, this was another kind of formative one for me, and I kind of thought a lot about, do I go for the movie that I, you know – that the critic in me says is the best of that year, or do I go with the one I saw then that kind of made a mark on me for life And I went with a latter approach, and I went with Nicolas Roeg's *The Witches*, which I still think is one of the greatest children's films ever made, certainly maybe the most terrifying children's film ever made. I was a real kind of Roald Dahl head growing up and it was, I think, my first encounter with, like, an adaptation of his work, which, you know, I knew that book kind of back and forth, inside out. I was seven years old at the time and I just, you know – my eyes kind of popped at how vividly that book had been brought to life and how much of kind of Roald Dahl's humor had been preserved in it, which I still think, you know, no adaptation has managed quite as well since, has got his kind of perverse, dark kind of sensibility in there. And I just think it's, you know – this was seen at the time, I guess, as a kind of weird diversion for Nic Roeg to make because he was such a sort of

avant garde filmmaker and here he is making, you know, a kid's movie, and just the amount of kind of technique and bravura kind of energy that he's kind of throwing at the screen right from the very first sort of shot, which is the sort of a roller-coaster-like tracking shot through the kind of Norwegian and kind of winter rooftops, and it just draws you in immediately. It's just pure cinema. And Anjelica Huston is having the time of her life played the Grand High Witch. It's a kind of big diva star turn that she hasn't kind of scaled down for, like, a kid's movie. She's kind of playing it to adults and kids at the same time, and I think that's kind of indicative of how the whole film works. I think it still plays really well. I've seen it many, many times since, including the – actually, the last time I saw it was with a friend's kid, two kids, were about seven and nine or so. So, around the same time I saw it, and they were also just completely, like, astounded by it. Yeah, I think it really holds up.

KRIS TAPLEY

Maybe I should throw that on our list. We've got a list of movies we're going through with my son, family movie night, and I've never made it through *The Witches*. It just freaks me out. But your point about Nic Roeg is interesting, too, because it's, like – it's fascinating that that guy made a movie that would be Jim Henson's last movie. It's just not two names you expect in the same sort of credit scroll, but a bold choice. I wouldn't have expected it.

GUY LODGE

Yeah, just a collaboration that really, really works. I mean, the effects work that Henson is doing in it is just masterclass. I mean, I think that film was seriously kind of cheated out of some technical nominations that year, both on the kind of makeup and visual effects front, and it just, yeah – and as you say, Jim Henson had kind of, through the '80s, maybe diversified slightly with *The Dark Crystal* and all that, but I think *The Witches* kind of brought him to a whole new kind of level of darkness for his craft.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah.

GUY LODGE

And I think they're two kind of aesthetics and their sensibilities somehow worked really well together.

KRIS TAPLEY

You know, I never did see the remake, which I forgot existed until I was preparing for this.

GUY LODGE

Yeah, no need for that. It's such a misfire. I mean, it seemed like a good idea on paper, you know? For Zemeckis to do that, and the kind of American South relocation of it and the casting, too, was good. And I don't blame Anne Hathaway, who's having a, you know – she's giving it a good go. But just nothing in the film works.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah, that's one of those movies sort of lost in the pandemic, too. It's, like, "Oh, yeah, that happened." For me, I'm going with the film, I'm guessing, you were considering, which is Martin Scorsese's *Goodfellas*.

GUY LODGE

Absolutely. No argument with that.

KRIS TAPLEY

What can you say about it at this point, too, that hasn't been said? Somehow, this guy, who had you know, really defined himself and his craft through his work, redefined himself and his craft through his work here, at the top of a new decade. Which, you know, just the energy in this movie, and it's sort of not a movie that ought to work as broadly as it does. You know what I mean? It's, like, this story of a wiseguy and his escapades and, gosh, it's the verve of the filmmaking, right? I mean, the guy seemed like he was 20 years old making this movie. And it's just – it's like one of those movies that, like, so many people, it's, like, "Oh, yeah, it's one of my favorite movies." It's just so indelible.

GUY LODGE

Yeah, it's just in the kind of cultural fabric and-

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah.

GUY LODGE

-I've never heard a bad word about *Goodfellas*. I mean, it just – it plays, I think, to everyone.

KRIS TAPLEY

And if you do, cut that person out of your life, I mean, it's funny, I sound like I have nothing smart to say about the movie, because everything smart to be said about this movie has been said. It's just, like, it's one of those movies we've chewed on now for, gosh, 36 years.

GUY LODGE

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

No, 34 years.

GUY LODGE

Thirty-four years.

KRIS TAPLEY

I can count. And it's just so good. It's just so good. And we had this episode a few weeks back with Todd Gilchrist, talking about the soundtracks of the '90s, and it has one of the great soundtracks of the '90s, certainly, this sort of – every 30 seconds, there's another banger of a needle drop, and that synthesis with the visuals, and it's probably – is it Thelma Schoonmaker's finest hour? I mean, it's up there. I mean, *Raging Bull* is pretty hard to top.

GUY LODGE

Yeah. I mean, there are scenes and set pieces in that movie that have just, you know, become, I imagine, kind of film school kind of staples, as in just exemplary kind of examples of “this is how you – this is how editing works. This is how shooting works.” I mean, that long take through the nightclub is just part of film lore now. Everyone kind of knows it even if they somehow haven't seen *Goodfellas*, you know? And as you said, it was, like, the other film that I was – you know, the sensible part of me was saying, “Well, of course, this is the best film of 1990.” But I knew we were going to be talking about it anyway. And I think it's kind of indicative of the film's cultural status that it sort of stuck in so many people's minds as almost like the quintessential Martin Scorsese film, and that kind of gangster world that he's kind of created in it. You know, that old kind of misconception that people keep bringing up to kind of ding Scorsese when they say, “Oh, he keeps making the same film over and over again. Oh, he only makes gangster films.” Which is obviously so patently untrue. But I think just because *Goodfellas* just looms so large in people's minds that they kind of think that's what Scorsese does. It sort of feels like just the synthesis of his entire kind of art and craft as a filmmaker.

KRIS TAPLEY

And there's just echoes of it continuously. I mean, *Killers of the Flower Moon* has *Goodfellas* DNA all in it, especially the final kind of passage. I was joking you could put “Layla” over that final stretch of *Killers of the Flower Moon*. But yeah, and that nightclub scene, you know, it's worked its way into the lore. It was kind of instantly there, too, because *Swingers*, like, six years later, they're riffing on that and talking about it in the roundtable kind of card game, and then a couple of minutes later, they're doing their version of that shot in the movie. So, it was sort of instantly in the fabric and it's – you don't get that as often anymore, so.

GUY LODGE

And, I mean, the cocaine bust scene, I don't know how many kind of versions of that I've seen in films since. Like, films trying to capture that same kind of manic energy, and no one's done it as well since. It just – yeah, it's completely un-improvable, that movie.

KRIS TAPLEY

So, *Goodfellas*, good movie?

GUY LODGE

Yeah, not bad.

KRIS TAPLEY

Not bad. Not bad. Alright, 1991. What you got?

GUY LODGE

My pick – and this was a hard choice, because I think this was a banner year. There was so much. But *Boyz n the Hood*, John Singleton’s debut, which – I mean, just, the older I get, the more I think that he was 23 when he made it, just makes me feel physically ill, honestly. And I think it’s just – you know, it made such a splash at the time. I remember we were living in the US that year, and I remember it kind of came out that summer of 1991, and, you know, the headlines and the stories, but I also wasn’t old enough to see the movie, and I just kind of heard so much hype and buzz and fuss and controversy around it, and I remember sort of thinking, “God, well, this film must be a big deal.” And then a few years later, I kind of saw it, and I was, like, “Yeah, I get what the fuss was about.” Because, I mean, I think Black America had never been portrayed on screen with that kind of – yeah, that kind of energy and that candor and that-

KRIS TAPLEY

Authority.

GUY LODGE

Authority, exactly. From a kind of young Black filmmaker, just, you know, relaying his world onto the screen with such – yeah, with such kind of vibrancy and such humor and such kind of tension and humanity. I rewatched it a couple of years ago, and it just still seems as fresh as fuck, that film. It’s just – it just pops off the screen. Singleton could never top it, because even if his filmmaking had kind of advanced from that point, just the sheer kind of statement of intent, of its kind of arrival as a debut, I think, can’t be matched by anything he sort of subsequently made. And, you know, the kind of actors that it introduced to us. I mean, you know, Cuba Gooding Jr., obviously, never improved on that. Laurence Fishburne just completely kind of popped off the screen and, you know, rose from then on. Angela Bassett. That film was a kind of cultural moment, but at the same time, it hasn’t kind of dated like one. It doesn’t feel kind of preserved in amber now, if you watch it. It still feels so kind of new and relevant and current.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah, and like *Goodfellas*, it was sort of instantly in the fabric, because-

GUY LODGE

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

-there were riffs on that movie, just, instantly. I mean, it sort of set up a genre that would go through the ‘90s. A couple of years later, the Hughes brothers would make *Menace II Society*, which I think is kind of the peak of that movement of films. I just am so bowled over by that movie to this day. We talked about it last week. But yeah, *Boyz n the Hood* is something to cherish. And he’s gone way too soon, Singleton. And I think, you know, everything he did in the ‘90s was pretty great. I mean, I love *Poetic Justice*. I am one of the people who love *Higher Learning*. I don’t know where that sits on people’s spectrum

anymore, but I've always really been taken with it. And he just came out firing, man. He was he was fantastic.

GUY LODGE

Yeah. And even at a technical level, when you watch it, you'd expect a kind of 23-year-old's first film, suddenly given that budget and platform to play with, you'd expect there to be so many kind of indulgences and missteps, but the film is so tight and so disciplined and so controlled. It's one of the-

KRIS TAPLEY

It's classical.

GUY LODGE

Yeah, exactly. It's one of the great – yeah, one of the great debuts, I think, in film history.

KRIS TAPLEY

It really is something to be 23 years old, to have something that on fire to say and to say it with such classical filmmaking, you know? It doesn't feel like a movie that is, like, on fire, and I don't say that as, like a – you know, like, I'm not putting it down at all. I'm just saying it's, to your point, so controlled and so clear in its intent.

GUY LODGE

Yeah. It's not contriving to be edgy or to be-

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah.

GUY LODGE

Yeah. It's not straining for kind of danger or controversy. It's just kind of telling its truth and putting it out there and letting the audience kind of take it as they will. And they took it very well, so.

KRIS TAPLEY

Best Director nomination. Pretty bold and great-

GUY LODGE

Very deserved.

KRIS TAPLEY

-selection, yeah. Well, my number – or I should say my 1991 film of the year is *JFK* from Oliver Stone. This one has such an ebbing and flowing reputation. It's so fun to kind of watch it kind of come and go as movie a movie that people cherish or don't. And I will always cherish it. I think, to this day, it has the greatest film editing we've ever seen in a movie. Some of the best cinematography we've ever seen in a movie. Whatever one might think of the content, and I will say there are some fun rabbit holes jump down if

you want to read all the work of Jim Marris, who wrote this book, *Crossfire*, who is a bit of a wacko, but, I mean, look, he created this film, Oliver Stone, that – I don't think anybody else could have made that movie.

GUY LODGE

No.

KRIS TAPLEY

Or could ever make that movie again. Like, there's just something about the power of the image and the power of montage in that movie, to just sit inside your brain and just open it up in weird ways. And I'm not talking about conspiracy theory stuff. I'm just talking about the power of the image and how it – the power of the image compels you! It's just – it's so good. It's so amazing. This incredible cast. I can't believe they were able to wrap their heads around what they were doing to deliver on the level that they did. I mean, Kevin Bacon is ridiculously on fire in the movie, just as an example. You know, Donald Sutherland airdropping into that movie for, like, a nine-minute monologue, 10-minute monologue, whatever it is, and just crushing it. The entire kind of crew that Jim Garrison, played by Kevin Costner, puts around him is such a great troupe of actors. I just think, on a technical level, on a craft level, it's one of the most amazing specimens in cinema, and to me, it's just the best film of '91. I love it so much. It's one of my favorite movies of all time. A number of these movies are, but this one particularly is one of my favorite movies of all time.

GUY LODGE

Yeah, I mean, I'm sorry if any listeners are waiting for us to fight over something, but I think *JFK* is amazing and it just still blows my mind how it was put together. As you say, it's got so many – I mean, beginning with that sort of vast ensemble, it's got so many kind of arcs and strands and so many moving parts, and you would expect it to be a mess. And I sometimes love movies that are kind of messes, but it's not even that. It's so – it's got such, yes, such kind of clarity of purpose amid all its kind of spiraling kind of ideas and conspiracies and whatever else. It feels so completely kind of unified as a filmmaking statement, and you say, kind of, no one else could make that, and that's true. Because, I mean, not even Oliver Stone could make that now.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah.

GUY LODGE

I mean, he was just at the absolute kind of zenith of his of his powers and both as a rhetorical provocateur, and just as a craftsman.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah.

GUY LODGE

Yeah. It just all came together for him in that one.

KRIS TAPLEY

And I can't believe there's no, like, you know, *Hearts of Darkness*-style behind the scenes of a movie like this, because this movie, as far as I know, was like a three-month shoot. Nothing very dramatic about the making of it. He went in, he executed, he edited, he got out, he released it. I can't believe – given what this movie is, just the rich, insane tapestry that it is – that there's just not this crazy story about the making of that movie, you know what I mean?

GUY LODGE

Yeah, and especially because it's a movie with, you know, a real kind of lasting legacy, I think not just in the film world, but I think in the media world. I think it kind of changed how people kind of consume news and history, and it kind of gave rise, I think, to a certain kind of brand of tabloid media consumption that, you know, has obviously had quite severe consequences in certain contexts. But, I mean, I think its impact is still with us. And you're right. I mean, it's – you know, you could do you could do a 50-episode podcast on *JFK*, you know?

KRIS TAPLEY

Don't tempt me.

GUY LODGE

And you probably still wouldn't get to the bottom of it, you know?

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah. It's so good. And I just want to pause, too, to give Kevin Costner his flowers, because, first of all, this is one of the great commentary tracks of all time. If you listen to Oliver Stone's commentary track on here, he's got, like, a manuscript of notes that he's – you hear him flipping through it as he's talking. But there's just one point where, I think it's in the scene when Sutherland shows up. Stone says that Costner is one of the great listening actors of all time, and that always stuck with me. But I bring it up because Costner was on fire at this stretch. I mean, coming off of *Dances with Wolves* in '90. I mean, really, *Field of Dreams* the year before that. Coming out of this, he would go into – what did he do next? Oh, the Clint Eastwood film, *A Perfect World. Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* would be obviously a huge, popular hit in '91. I mean, just – I'm a huge Kevin Costner fan. I can't wait for these new movies, *Horizon*, and I just want to shout out him. To be the anchor in this movie is no easy feat, and he's so good.

GUY LODGE

Yeah. And I'm glad that people have kind of – I feel people have kind of come full circle on him, because there was, you know, a long period where he became kind of a punchline for reasons I never kind of understood. I mean, yes, *The Postman* was bad, but it was, you know, an ambitious folly that – lots of other people get forgiven for making those. And I always thought he was just a great movie star and a really kind of sincere kind of advocate of the art form. And, yeah, I think people have kind of regained

some respect for him, and I'm fascinated to see how these films go down in the summer.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah.

GUY LODGE

And as you say, I mean, at this point, you know, he kind of had the world in his hand in the early-90s, and he could have done anything, and he chose to do something as weird and risky as *JFK*.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah.

GUY LODGE

I think he helped sell that movie as a kind of mainstream entity, so, good on him.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah. And *The Bodyguard* was the '92 movie I was trying to remember.

GUY LODGE

Exactly.

KRIS TAPLEY

I mean, just – if there was ever a movie star, you know? Alright, 1992.

GUY LODGE

This is – yeah, I mean, this is a year where I actually think the Academy kind of got it right in terms of what the year's kind of best films were, most of them, at least. And my choice is very much on a different pace from *Boyz n the Hood*. It's *Howards End*, which to me remains the absolute apex of the Merchant/Ivory collaboration. And those were films that, as a kind of young movie geek, they were kind of my gateway into what kind of grown-up cinema was. Because, I mean, the thing about them was, you know, they were movies for adults that were perfectly – you know, there was nothing particularly taboo or adult about them. You could – you know, my parents took me to see *Howards End* when I was, like, nine years old, and it's a perfectly family-friendly film, even if it's not particularly exciting for most kids. But it was exciting for me, because I was a weird kid. And I just – I think it's one of the great kind of literary adaptations. I think it's, you know – it stays very kind of faithful to E.M. Forster's novel, but kind of makes just such precise kind of perfect edits and kind of picks out all the kind of core themes of, yeah, communication and class and, you know, practical relationship politics versus kind of romantic urges. I think it's about so much that's kind of still essential to humanity, even if it's sort of set in Edwardian England, and I think the filmmaking – Merchant/Ivory for a while became a sort of byword for a certain class of kind of fusty, static kind of costume drama, and it was always very unfair to kind of tar them with that brush, and *Howards End* just kind of move so beautifully. The camera in it is so kind of alive and attentive to

kind of light and color and detail. I think it's just a gorgeous movie and the ensemble is, you know, Hopkins, Emma Thompson, Helena Bonham Carter, Vanessa Redgrave – just all completely on top form. I think, you know, they had a really good run, and *The Remains of the Day*, which came out the next year, I love nearly as much, but I think, yeah *Howards End* – it's everything their brand of cinema was supposed to be.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah, here's the only place where we sort of part ways-

GUY LODGE

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

-on the list, my friend. Only because – I actually love *The Remains of the Day*. I think I would prefer that. I kind of wonder. I was going back. I was, like, "What did it win?" Because *Howards End* won, like, three Oscars.

GUY LODGE

Nothing.

KRIS TAPLEY

The Remains the Day won nothing, and I'm, like, did it – was it suffering from, you know, following *Howards End* or something? I don't know. I find *Howards End* a little impenetrable. I tried to watch it again last week, man, when I saw your list, because I was just, like, "Alright, let me go back to this." I don't know. It's just a me thing, I guess. I just can't crack it. I do agree that, you know, his shot selection and stuff is great. He's a great filmmaker. But there's just something about that material that I find difficult to care about. But *The Remains if the Day* is just so beautiful and romantic and, I mean, I I bow at the altar of *The Remains of the Day*. But *Howards End* has never really done it for me.

GUY LODGE

It's – yeah, I think, especially with Merchant/Ivory, I know some people who, you know, don't respond to *Howards End*, but absolutely, you know, regard *A Room with a View* as one of their favorite films. I think it sort of sometimes just depends on when the film kind of hits you. I just don't have any patience for people who kind of write off their entire filmography because I think, you know, if you pay attention, there's a Merchant/Ivory for you somewhere.

KRIS TAPLEY

Absolutely. Well, my '92 movie is Clint Eastwood's *Unforgiven*. I like to say there's been, like, maybe a handful of times where I think the Academy got it, right. Like, they gave the Best Picture prize to the movie I thought was the best picture of the year, and this is definitely one of them. I just love *Unforgiven*. Obviously, I'm a huge westerns fan, as people who know me know. He put this script in a drawer for a decade until he was old enough to do it, to make sense for the role, which was brilliant and perfect, and it's such

a great, like, capper to his sort of streak as a western icon, and that he hasn't made another one since is sort of fascinating to me, that he never got drawn back. And I kind of hope he never does, because why would you want to pick another one to go out on? The way this just inverts all the tropes of the genre in such amazing ways with this cast, you know? You've got Gene Hackman as the antagonist sheriff. You've got, what is it, Richard Curtis? Richard Harris.

GUY LODGE

Richard Harris.

KRIS TAPLEY

Sorry. Richard Curtis would have been interesting in *Unforgiven*. No, Richard Harris as, you know, the gunslinger who's not all that. You know, you've got this creaky protagonist in William Munny that, again, Eastwood was just perfect for. And it's just such a dark, bold vision for that genre at a time when it needed a new vision. And it came two years after *Dances with Wolves*. You know, it's always been interesting. There's only three westerns that ever won Best Picture, and it's one of the best of the genre. I mean, I consider – my favorite western is *Once Upon a Time in the West*. Beyond that, I love *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford*. I love *Shane*. I love *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*. And I love *Unforgiven*. Like, that's my top five westerns right there, so, *Unforgiven* for me.

GUY LODGE

A good kind of canon there. I mean, I think – yeah, *Unforgiven*, it's so funny that, you know, I think at the time when it came out, people sort of talked about it as, like, the culmination of Clint Eastwood's career, and, you know, when he won the Oscars for it, it was like this was almost like this was the end of something, and they were kind of acknowledging and rewarding kind of, you know, his career as a whole, which had absolutely peaked with this film. And then, as turned out, he was just kind of, you know, starting a whole, you know, other era of filmmaking, in which I think he made – you know, has made a number of good films, but has never topped *Unforgiven*. And I think what people also don't talk about that much with *Unforgiven* is, I think it's his best work as an actor.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah.

GUY LODGE

I think his performance in it is extraordinary, and the kind of lean physicality of it and just how controlled and terse he is and, you know, in ways that obviously played upon the, you know, The Man with No Name image that he had defined nearly 30 years before, but here kind of just etching so much kind of emotional pain behind all that. I think it's – yeah, he's never given a better performance, and I think it happens to also be in the best movie ever made.

KRIS TAPLEY

And there was nobody perfect – or as perfect for that role at that time, at any time, than him. So, it's one of those great kind of synthesis moments in cinema.

GUY LODGE

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

And this reminds me, I was going to talk about – we should have been doing this all along. So, let's backtrack a little bit. The other movies I was thinking about from '92. Obviously, *The Player* from Robert Altman, I mean, just one of the greats. I love *Malcolm X* from Spike Lee. I love *Glengarry Glen Ross*. I think that's just such a spectacular and alive adaptation of something that could just sit there on the screen. I quite like *Aladdin*, Disney's *Aladdin*. It's, you know, a part of a one-two punch with *The Lion King* that I think is the absolute peak of Disney's work at that time. And, you know, Michael Mann is my favorite filmmaker. I love *The Last of the Mohicans*. So, those are the ones I was considering for '92. And let me double back to '90 and '91, because I'd just love to hear some others from you as well. For '90, I was thinking about Cinema Paradiso, which I love. *Dances with Wolves*. Everyone heard me talking that one up last week. I happen to consider it fantastic. *Edward Scissorhands* from Tim Burton, arguably his best. Maybe *Ed Wood* is his best. It's one of the two. I tend to lean *Ed Wood*. But *Edward Scissorhands* is certainly his id on the screen in-

GUY LODGE

It's one of the ones with "Ed" at the start of the title, you know?

KRIS TAPLEY

-such a fascinating way. Yeah, there you go. And I'll just shout-out *Dick Tracy*. Just on a craft level, *Dick Tracy* is phenomenal.

GUY LODGE

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

And in '91, the Coen brothers' *Barton Fink*, Richard Linklater's *Slacker*, which we talked about last week, and *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* is just a filmmaker showing you what he can do, man, and I love that movie. So, I just wanted to kind of mention as we go, the movies we were considering, because I had meant to do that. So, what were you thinking about for '90, '91 and '92?

GUY LODGE

Yeah, for '90, obviously, *Goodfellas* was kind of right behind on my list. You know, it was a good year for Scorsese, because he also produced *The Grifters*, which I absolutely love and I think it's probably one of the best examples of kind of contemporary-set noir. Completely on the other end of the spectrum, Abbas Kiarostami's *Close-Up*, which is just so simple, but such a kind of – such a mindfuck in terms of what, you know – what the film image can do. And there was something else

there from 1990, but I forget now. So, 1991, *JFK* would also be right in my list Zhang Yimou's *Raise the Red Lantern*, which I think is just extraordinarily beautiful. And probably the last time I mention Martin Scorsese here, because I love his *Cape Fear* remake.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah.

GUY LODGE

Which, you know, got really dismissed at the time and I think holds up so well. It's, you know – it's genuinely kind of scary and funny and weird and kinky, and he's just playing with kind of form so much. And who was it? Freddie Francis shot it. He shoots the hell out of that movie. Juliette Lewis should have won the Oscar that year. She's just off the chain in it. I love that film. And '92, *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, Francis Ford Coppola's version, which I think is very flawed and there are obviously, you know, some kind of wild indulgences in it and some very bad performances. I mean, I love Keanu Reeves, but I'm not going to go so far as to say that he's actually good in that movie, because he's so wildly miscast. It's just such a vision and it's so kind of grandiose, and I think for the kind of Dracula mythos, that kind of excess is just right. *Husbands and Wives*, which, to me, is the last really, really great movie that Woody Allen made. And on the World Cinema side, Víctor Erice's *Dream of Light* and the Senegalese film *Hyenas* by Djibril Diop Mambéty, which I saw – I think it was one of the first kind of African films I ever saw, and it just made a kind of huge impression when I was a teenager. And then I rewatched it kind of years later, I was, like, "Oh, that was no accident." It's a genuinely amazing movie. *Hyenas*, if you can find it.

KRIS TAPLEY

This is why I'm outclassed by my own writer, as our superfan said once upon a time. Good stuff. Well, let's do '93, and yeah, just kind of throw out any things you were considering-

GUY LODGE

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

-before you name your movie here, and we'll do that going forward now that we've cleaned that up.

GUY LODGE

Yeah, '93. I mean, I thought about Jane Campion's *The Piano*, which I still think is a really, really kind of beautiful and quite daring kind of merge of costume drama and erotica, which, you know, somehow was to the Academy's taste that year, which I still find amazing. *Three Colors: Blue*, the start of the trilogy, which I think is – yeah, I mean, I love the whole trilogy. All the kind of chapters played to me in different ways, but I think that one might be just the most purely kind of beautiful one. It's kind of this sort of shimmering-glass object. *The Fugitive*, which is a kind of Hollywood banger like, you

know, like we were saying, like *Speed*, like, that they just seemed to make so effortlessly back then. And it just still plays so well. It just goes, that movie. It's just bang, bang, bang. Steven Soderbergh's *King of the Hill*, which got really kind of hidden away at the time and I think is one of the great kind of coming-of-age movies, I think. I will never understand why that film wasn't a bigger deal. Because, you know, after he slightly misfired with *Kafka*, he went to kind of purely classical filmmaking with this, I would have thought, very kind of universal and moving story and I think knocked it out of the park, and nobody seemed to notice. But my film of 1993 is Mike Leigh's *Naked*, which is still my favorite Mike Leigh film.

KRIS TAPLEY

Is it really?

GUY LODGE

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

Wow.

GUY LODGE

And it's a very, very different one for him, because it's – he's not doing kind of kitchen-sink realism, you know? It's – he's not really doing naturalism. It's very – well, it's a kind of merging of kind of theatrical and cinematic kind of languages, and it's very kind of not so much dialogue driven as monologue driven, and David Thewlis gives this incredible kind of film-carrying performance as, you know, as this kind of fuckup weaving his way through London over kind of one day and night that captures, I think, Britain at the time on this kind of political brink between kind of left and right and between kind of pessimism and hope, and it's not one of Mike Leigh's most kind of pleasant films, but I think it's the one that hits hardest for me.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah, I was going to say, first of all, bold choice. Second of all, yeah, it's not a pleasant film. I find it difficult to watch. He never did anything like this. It's fascinating to me. Where this came from, I don't know. And I also always loved how the sort of cover art made it look like a romantic comedy or something, because the cover art is not representative of the movie at all. Mike Leigh is interesting for me, man. Like, for every one I love, there's something I just can't get on board with. Like, I love movies like *All or Nothing*, *Vera Drake*, *Another Year*, *Mr. Turner*, but then there's, you know – for every one of those, there's, like, a *Happy-Go-Lucky*, which I can't get on board with, or a – even *Topsy-Turvy*, from the great film of '99. It's a good movie, I just don't like it as much as these others.

GUY LODGE

Same, yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

And *Naked*, like, I can't even really give a value judgment on that because it's inarguable that it's skilled and amazing and David Thewlis is incredible in it. It's just not a movie I really want to watch again, you know?

GUY LODGE

I get that, yeah, and I similarly kind of have gone up and down with Mike Leigh over the years, while, I mean, I always have kind of baseline of admiration for what he does. But yeah, there's some that connect more than others. I mean, in the case of *Naked*, it was because – actually, at university, it was in my kind of theater and film studies module. It was one of the one of the films that we studied, and I had to write a kind of essay on it. And so, I had to watch it about three times in fairly quick succession, and I think the film kind of got through to me in a way that it might not have done otherwise. But yeah, it's a hard, kind of unlovable movie, and I kind of respect that he went there with it, because, as you say, he's never done anything quite like that again. I'm fascinated to see what he comes back with this year, because it's been a long time now. I think – when was *Peterloo*? Like, seven years ago or something?

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah, which I never saw, either. So, I'm not sure how that one landed.

GUY LODGE

I didn't love it, I have to say.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah.

GUY LODGE

Yeah. And he's working with Marianne Jean-Baptiste again, so, that's exciting.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah. Well, for me, I was thinking about stuff like *The Remains of the Day*, I do love. *Groundhog Day*. I mean, who doesn't love *Groundhog Day*?

GUY LODGE

Fantastic.

KRIS TAPLEY

I love – I think my favorite Peter Weir movie might be *Fearless*.

GUY LODGE

Oh, wow.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah. I've always loved *Fearless*. I just think Rosie Perez and Jeff Bridges, they're just – it's so good. What else? *Menace II Society* was probably the closest to jumping in here and taking the top spot. And I also just, popcorn side, *Jurassic Park* is, like,

phenomenal. And you can't mention '93 without mentioning *Schindler's List*, I guess. But, at the same time, I don't consider that one of Spielberg's greatest films, which probably just says more about how great he is as a filmmaker. I just think *Jurassic Park* is the kind of movie that, like, really cracked something open for the industry and deserves its notice for that. But for me, it's *Dazed and Confused*, one of my favorite movies of all time, from Richard Linklater. You know, we talked about *Slacker* last week. The DNA of this movie is obviously in *Slacker*, this sort of sprawling, Altman-esque kind of thing. But it's so infused with who Linklater is. I mean, you just really feel like a filmmaker is in there talking to you. And that's what's really fascinating about it, because, again, as sort of seemingly influenced as he might be by the Altman kind of way, you can't really say that the movie is derivative. It's just so purely a filmmaker's voice. And he does something with nostalgia in this movie that I just – I like nostalgia, obviously, given this podcast. I don't think it's something to run away from. And I think he just found something really special and true and beautiful and fun and just everything about nostalgia to work into this movie. And so, I just – I'll watch it multiple times a year. I love *Dazed and Confused*.

GUY LODGE

I love that you picked *Dazed and Confused*, because I remember it – kind of how often it would come up with you, even when we were kind of working at In Contention and what a kind of touchstone film it is for you. And I haven't seen it, actually, in a really, really long time. Like, I think 20 years, and it's obviously kind of due another look. Because I had a really good time with it at the time, but, you know, when I was kind of putting together films for this list, my kind of mind passed over it. But hearing you kind of talk about it, I'm, like, "Yeah, I really need to go back." Because it's – as you say, it's a really kind of fun film, but there's a whole lot kind of more going on to it. And I think it's – I think probably once we're, now we're old enough to kind of experience nostalgia with that kind of distance, it probably hits a little different.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah. There's a little bit of Cameron Crowe DNA in there, too, I feel like. I just – there's a lot of things that are inspirational for me that are in the movie. And yeah, I just – Linklater's a treasure. What can you say? And I also, by the way – speaking of *Blue* a moment ago, *Blue* is my favorite of the trilogy. I love that movie. So, let's make that a segue for your '94.

GUY LODGE

Yeah, '94. I mean, I thought – I kind of had the, you know, had the same kind of choice that the Cannes jury did in 1994. I thought really hard about *Pulp Fiction*, which I unreservedly love. I think it's still Tarantino's best film. I think it – I watch it every couple of years and just get a buzz from it all over again, because it's just so fast and so funny and so kind of – it still feels kind of new and fresh and kind of subversive, despite how endlessly and how badly it's been kind of imitated in the 30 years since. I thought about *Hoop Dreams*, obviously, which is, you know, a totally game-changing documentary. I thought of Wong Kar-wai's *Chungking Express*. I thought of *The Lion King*, which is, I think, you know – may be-

KRIS TAPLEY

Masterpiece.

GUY LODGE

-the peak of that kind of Disney era. It's so kind of beautiful visually and sonically and musically. But I ultimately settled, as I kind of flagged at the beginning of the show, on *Three Colors: Red*, which is my favorite of the Kieślowski trilogy. And I don't know if that's because I saw it first, and maybe as a result of that, it just always made the biggest impression. Because I kind of saw the I saw the trilogy backwards. So, yeah, the initial kind of coda did not make-

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah, that had to be weird.

GUY LODGE

All the other kind of characters coming in, but I think there was – I was living in South Africa at the time, and they were kind of released in kind of the local arthouse cinema almost in a kind of one-block lot. And we didn't necessarily know there was an order to them, and my parents wanted to see one see *Three Colors: Red*, I think, because they had read the review of that one or something. That one was the one that jumped out at them and they were, like, "Do you want to, like, come? It's probably going to be, you know, very grown-up and it might be a bit slow and whatever." I was, like, "Yeah, sure, I'll go." And I was absolutely kind of mesmerized by it, because, as I said earlier, it was not like anything I had seen to that point, and I don't think I necessarily understood all of it at a human level, but I was just amazed by what the camera could do in it. I mean, that initial, you know, very kind of flashy set piece with connecting the kind of the phone call across the channel, where the kind of camera swoops in and all those kinds of effects. I was, like, "Wow! This is this is a trip." And, you know, the kind of color-coding of it, I mean, this was all kind of new to me, that that a film could kind of use language – I mean, use visuals as a kind of language and in such kind of thematic ways. And I go back to it now and I can sort of see ways in which maybe it's a little bit heavily determined or even heavy-handed in some senses, but I'm still just so moved by it now that I kind of also understand more of what it's about, and this kind of story of kind of connection and human isolation between, you know, two kind of souls brought together at random. I am a sucker for sort of stories like that, and I think Jean-Louis Trintignant's performance in it is exquisite and so measured and so kind of stoic, because he could have kind of leaned into something more sentimental there, and he doesn't. And yeah, it just still delivers at every level for me. I think in the 2012 *Sight & Sound* best-films-of-all-time list, I put it on my ballot, and I would happily kind of put it there again. I just – last time, I decided to switch some things out just to – yeah, just for fun, but it's still, to me, one of the greatest,

KRIS TAPLEY

I will always be taken by the cinematography in this movie. As I said in the episode with Anne, where we relitigated the Oscars of this year, I would have given the

cinematography Oscar to *Red*. Framing. Just what it's doing with, as you said, color. It's alive in wonderful ways in that sense. And, look, I don't mind heavy-handed. I mean, one of the movies I considered for this was *Natural Born Killers*. You know, if you're audacious and you have something to say and you have the means to say it, and, you know, sort of undeniable craft, I'm all for it. So, yeah, I mean, that it's so determined and so – that's just the mark of an artist and a craftsman and not somebody just shooting from their hip, you know? So, that's to be rewarded. I do like *Blue* more. But, you know, just on a craft level alone, *Red* really soars. I can't say much against that pic. I feel like I'm falling into a trap for '94 here. I mean, how do I not say *Speed*? It's, I mean – so – and I'm not saying *Speed*. In fact, I haven't, to this moment, made up my mind. So, let's talk about it. *Pulp Fiction* you've talked about? God, how do you not say *Pulp Fiction*? So influential. But we're not talking about what came after a movie. We're talking about what a movie is. What that movie is, is a bold and erratic kind of soup of just new narrative ideas. What it does to reinvent its leading man, put him on a new canvas. Very influenced, but very influential. So, it's sort of hard-

GUY LODGE

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

-not to call it, like, the movie of that year. *The Lion King*, I think, is a masterpiece. I might even put it above *Pulp Fiction*. I mean, I think that it's, like, *Hamlet* distilled in this beautiful story that just works across the ages. I love *Ed Wood* so, so, so much. I think it's the perfect movie for Tim Burton, to do a story of this hugely passionate but just untalented filmmaker, ultimately. I mean, I don't know if "untalented" is fair, but maybe it is. But the passion that pumps in that movie that is a direct kind of corollary with the passion of its subject is just – I've always been taken with *Ed Wood*. *Speed* is such a defining work of this era, in ways that it's just not gotten its flowers for, which is part of why this podcast exists. I mean, not just anybody could have gone out there and made that movie. It took a guy who had, you know, multiple decades in the trenches as a DP, who knew how to pull a crew together to pull off what that was on the page. I mean, there was a reason nobody wanted to make that movie for the longest time. He gets out there and he makes it like it's what he was meant to do. And it's an incredible piece of entertainment. And I don't think that that should be a bad word. I mean, the first episode of this podcast, we have Justin Chang talking about the film being a masterpiece and how that's a word that people might be reticent to apply to something that really aims for nothing more or less than your entertainment. It's fascinating to me that it's a movie that violates all of these screenplay rules, like I've talked about, that it has this protagonist who doesn't learn anything. There's no character arc. You just watch somebody do their job for two hours. You know, Anthony Lane called it the movie of the year. We've read that lede in his review multiple times on here, and everything he says in that lead is potent and speaks to me and is every bit why the movie is so good. And it's not revisionism. In the moment, it was one of the most acclaimed movies of the year. I mean, I've got this list of the best films of '94 according to, like, critics' top 10 lists where this website, like, compiles all of them and does their assessment, and it sits at number seven, above films like *Bullets over Broadway*, above films like *The Lion King* and *The*

Shawshank Redemption. It was acclaimed in its time, and somehow still just is taken for granted. I'm going to say *Speed* is the best movie of 1994. I just think that succeeding on this level – there's something that our old colleague Anne Thompson liked to talk about: degree of difficulty. And so, it kind of comes down to that, and to have knocked it out of the park like this and for it to have been such an unrivaled success, it's lightning in a bottle. So, I'm going to say *Speed*.

GUY LODGE

I think I can't argue with that. I mean, I think it's kind of the apotheosis of that era of blockbuster filmmaking refined to its kind of core essence and beauty. I mean, there is no fat on that movie. And let's remember, also, this begun with a kind of elevator pitch that I think before the movie came out, we kind of joked about it, because it sounded so dumb. The runaway bus movie. And it, one, just instantly sells you on that premise. Like, it just hooks you into that. You're there. You're kind of – you're tense. You're waiting. And just the execution is so tight and so – there's no kind of wink-wink irony to it. It just takes it completely seriously, but not too seriously. It's got just the right level of kind of fun and humor to it as well. That's a fine balance to strike, and it makes it look really, really easy. Because, you know, there could be a kind of jokey version of *Speed* that would be lots of kind of wisecracking, and I think would be a much worse movie for it. I love the kind of tautness of it. You know, obviously, Jan de Bont, you know, was previously someone who could shoot the hell out of things, and he ensured that, you know, that *Speed* just looked and sounded the absolute business. It's a great, great film.

KRIS TAPLEY

And you say it instantly kind of sells you on its premise. Also, it never loses you on that score.

GUY LODGE

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

Like, it had many moments along the way that it could have just taken you out of it, that you would have been, like, "OK, I'm not with this anymore." And it never, never does that. I mean, it never gives you a moment to breathe. You know, I always talk about how, you know, Beth Grant dies, you've got, like, 30 seconds of Keanu consoling Sandra, and then there's a gap in the freeway ahead all of a sudden. Like, it just keeps going, and that, too, is difficult. I mean, this is a movie that my kid loves, right? A 7-year-old. Yeah, I let my 7-year-old watch this R-rated movie. But there's a reason he loves it, and it's because it's unrelenting. There's-

GUY LODGE

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

Like you say, there's no fat on it. Not only is there no fat on the movie, there's no fat in the cutting room. Pretty much everything that they shot is in the movie, which is also,

like, holy shit, you know? So, I mean, God, we give it up to *Speed* every week, but give it up to *Speed*.

GUY LODGE

Yeah, and it's still, you know, despite being such a kind of immaculate technical exercise, it's also a movie kind of powered by movie stars. I mean, Keanu and Sandra are just on fire in it. I mean, this was obviously the movie that made Sandra Bullock into Sandra Bullock, and they've both never really been better, I can't say, you know? I mean, I think they've maybe given more ambitious or more awards-baiting performances, but the heat of their kind of movie-star power there as has never burned brighter.

KRIS TAPLEY

Absolutely. Well, we could keep talking about it, but let's just move to '95.

GUY LODGE

Onto '95, yeah, '95 five was a weird year. I kind of feel like this great decade kind of had kind of a dip in '95, and not because – there are plenty of films made that year that I love, but it just, I don't know. It sort of felt like there are lots of kind of odd films in there that are sort of either the beginning of one era or the end of another, but I thought about Kathryn Bigelow's *Strange Days*, which I think holds up so beautifully and I think it's such a kind of propulsive, weird, sexy kind of blockbuster that still feels genuinely futuristic, even kind of nearly 30 years later. I thought about Oliver Stone's *Nixon*, which is, you know – we were talking about *JFK*. It's a much messier kind of more bloated movie than *JFK*, but I still find it such a kind of thrilling angle on the historical biopic. I think-

KRIS TAPLEY

I love it.

GUY LODGE

-the range of kind of perspectives and the kind of critical viewpoints that he finds in it without making it a kind of dull hagiography. I think it's a brilliant film, driven by two amazing performances by Anthony Hopkins and Joan Allen. I thought about *Babe*, which is, you know – it was kind of the little film that could that year, and the weird kind of outlying charmer that somehow kind of crept into the Oscar race and I still think is a complete delight and has this kind of purity of soul to it that still plays so well. I thought about *Crimson Tide*, again, on the blockbuster side. Just an absolute banger. But I ended up choosing very much not a blockbuster in Todd Haynes' *Safe*, which is such a bold, audacious and kind of disorientating kind of indie arthouse statement in which, you know, Julianne Moore basically finds that she's allergic to modern living and gradually kind of retreats from life as she knows it, and as we know it. And I think it's a film that, you could take that script and scarcely change a detail and shoot it today and people would say that it, you know, captured the zeitgeist. I think it's amazing. I love the kind of eerie, alien sparseness of the filmmaking. I think his, you know – he's obviously, Todd Haynes, is always kind of formally on fire, but he's so minimalist and ascetic and

controlled here, compared to kind of, you know, big kind of visually kind of extravagant and expressive statements that he'd make later in, like, *Velvet Goldmine* and *Far From Heaven*, and I think the sparseness of this, which is absolutely right for a story of a woman who's gradually kind of pairing her life down to the absolute kind of barest elements of it. And Julianne Moore is just insane in it. I mean, she's astonishing. And, I mean, if she had been more famous at the time, I think she, you know – she would have walked that Best Actress race. Yeah, I love *Safe*. I think it's-

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah.

GUY LODGE

It's a stunner.

KRIS TAPLEY

I think he's never made anything really like that, either, you know?

GUY LODGE

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

As much as, like, you know, his DNA is all in it and, like, you know, other movies call back. I just feel like it's his most like Lynchian movie or something, for lack of a better word. Just in that opening shot, you know? Like, following the car through suburbia. And when is such an interesting choice, too. You know, it's set about eight years prior, in the '80s. And you're right, I mean, if it played today, people would, like, say, "Oh, he nailed it." It's just – it has not lost anything because of just how he plays with those themes. And yeah, she's amazing. And my favorite Todd Haynes film, he made last year, actually, *May December*. I've never been a big Haynes guy, infamously so, in some quarters. But I did love *May December*, and it's kind of the closest he ever got to that sort of – not that there's anything Lynchian about *May December*, but there's just something else going on with tone in that movie.

GUY LODGE

Yeah, I agree. I kind of said it after I saw *May December*, that it's sort of a counterpart to *Safe* kind of within his within his filmography, and I love *May December*, too. But, yeah, there's something just so unsettling about *Safe* kind of all these years later/ I kind of – you kind of recoil from it, slightly, as a film, because you kind of feel the cold coming off the screen.

KRIS TAPLEY

The way he frames everyone is fascinating. I mean, I don't think there's a close-up in that movie. I mean, I'm sure there are, but, like, you don't remember them, because everything is at a distance. Willfully so, obviously.

GUY LODGE

Yeah, he kind of plants people in the frame, like they're in some kind of observing lab, you know?

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah. Well, for me, I thought Hollywood had a pretty good year in '95, specifically Hollywood. I thought about *Crimson Tide*. I think it's Tony Scott's finest hour. I think that movie – the color theory going on in that movie is really fascinating. Go watch *Crimson Tide* again and pay attention whenever there's red on the screen, whenever there's blue on the screen and whenever there's green on the screen, because it's all saying something. And people think that's an action movie, and it's not at all an action movie. You know, it might get lumped into, like, a list of action movies, right? But it's not. It's a play, but just so alive cinematically. I love that movie. I love *Seven*. I think it's Fincher's best movie to this date.

GUY LODGE

Wow.

KRIS TAPLEY

I just really do. I think that he came out strong with that one. As hard as it is to watch now for reasons, I love *The Usual Suspects*. It's one of the early movies that kind of grabbed me and said, "Oh, movies can really spin your head." And, you know, I just – the cast is so good in it. I thought *Apollo 13* was great. I thought *Toy Story* was great. I went with my favorite movie of all time: *Heat* from Michael Mann. We've talked about it a little bit on the show before with, like, our LA movies episode with Katie Walsh and whatnot. Mann is my favorite filmmaker. *Heat* is the movie that made me interested in pursuing movies professionally, specifically the final minute of heat, which, Blake Howard's done an airdrop on the show before, and his podcast, *One Heat Minute*, I was able to go on there and discuss the final minute of Heat. There's something that just happened to me when I watched this movie. I saw it – had to have been, like, December '96, like, well, after it came out, because I saw it on HBO. My dad happened to be traveling for work at the time and I watched *Heat*, because it was De Niro and Pacino and a movie together. I'm, like, "Wow, this is interesting." And something happened to me in that final moment where I was just, like, "Holy shit. I feel something different watching a movie than I have before. That something can rile me like this emotionally." Anyway, so I call my dad, or I talked to my dad, like, a day or so later. And I was, like, "Oh, by the way, I watched this movie the other day. It's called *Heat*. It was on HBO." And he was watching it at the exact same time in his hotel, wherever he was, at the time. He was, like, "Oh, yeah, I watched it, too." And I always just think that's interesting, because he's not a guy that would just, like, watch a movie in a hotel room.

GUY LODGE

Wow.

KRIS TAPLEY

And he just happened to watch Heat at the same time it was on HBO as I was. And it just moves me to this day. I watch it multiple times a year. I just think that it's clearly, to

me, Michael Mann's best movie. Has everything that's great about his sort of tendencies and thematic interests, and talk about a great cast. I mean, God, it's an epic crime saga, as it says on the tin. And I just think it's one of the GOATs.

GUY LODGE

Yeah. I feel suddenly stupid that I didn't mention it in my runners up. I mean, I was – I have to admit that I, for a long time, when I was kind of younger, I was sort of agnostic on *Heat*. I'd seen it – I think I first saw it, like, on home video. I didn't see it in the theater at the time, like you. I think I must have been about 13 or so, and I kind of thought it was overstretched and dull and I didn't get it. And I sort of let that perception stay with me for far too long. And then I went back to it 10 or 15 years ago, and was, like, "Well, OK, I was young and stupid and wrong," because it's astounding. And in terms of what Michael Mann does, I mean, we've been saying this about a lot of filmmakers, but it's the absolute sort of essence of what his filmmaking is about, both kind of visually, formally and kind of spiritually in terms of the kind of character that he creates and the stories that he wants to tell. You know, there's all this kind of technical bravado and kind of storytelling tension going on, yet so much comes down to this this one kind of human scene of that, you know, the final kind of confrontation between, you know, Al Pacino and De Niro, where they come kind of face to face, which was obviously such a, you know, such a big deal. I mean, these two actors who everyone kind of, spoke of in in the same breath, who always kind of got compared to each other or in some cases kind of confused for one another, you know, finally kind of sharing the space. And obviously they had been in *The Godfather Part II* beforehand, but never together. And you still feel it when you watch it now. It's this kind of seismic, historical moment that, you know, where they're kind of sparring together. There are only a few of those moments in the movies and it has one of them.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah, and it's rewarding to know that the final moment of the movie, he sort of worked backwards from there. I mean-

GUY LODGE

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

-he wanted the movie to end there and he crafted something that would build to it. So, just to know that it was as potent as that and that's what hit me so hard, you know, it's just nice to know that that was clearly the goal for him. And he nails it. I mean, it's a beautiful, beautiful movie, and I can't wait for the sequel. I mean, the book, *Heat 2*, is really good, and I was terrified when I read it. I was, like, "Please don't ruin this thing that I love." And it's so just pulsating with his voice, and I'm just, like, "OK." He's aiming to make it. I hope he makes it. And I think he'll crush it, because this stuff has lived with him for a long time.

GUY LODGE

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

And it's, you know – the specificity, the attention to detail, his level of research, you know, he's well-known for that, and this movie is just brimming with, you know, that labor. So, anyway, love *Heat*. So, '96.

GUY LODGE

Ninety-six, yeah. I thought about a few things here. Never quite making it to the top of my list, but I really want to shout-out *The English Patient*, because, you know, thanks to Seinfeld, in particular, it sort of became such a punch line for a long time, and I still think it's just this ravishing movie, and I still love it. I thought about John Sales' *Lone Star*, which I think is kind of one of the great kind of contemporary neo-westerns. I think it's – again, like it sort of seems a kind of quintessential '90s indie, and then it plays still so kind of freshly today. There's so many kind of layers and intricacies to it. I thought of Jane Campion's very unpopular *Portrait of a Lady*, which, you know, kind of went down like cup of cold sick at the time, and I think it's beautiful, and a really kind of bold, kind of adventurous, kind of, yeah, feminist re-rereading of that text. And, you know, the kind of modern flourishes that she brought to it and the occasional sort of surrealist dips in it were kind of all used to kind of mock it at the time. And I think it just, today, looks like such a – yeah, such a gutsy statement of intent, and I think it's one of Nicole Kidman's best performances, even still, given all she's done since. And I thought of David Cronenberg's *Crash*, which obviously was a whole narrative unto itself that year, and so often, with those movies, they kind of, you know – once all the kind of noise dies down and the smoke clears, those movies don't tend to last very long. And I think that movies still has real impact, real daring, real something genuinely kind of exciting to say about desire and urge and taboo and I think it's still brilliant. But my final choice was Lars von Trier's *Breaking the Waves*. I'm a von Trier guy, even through all his maddening kind of personal missteps and his occasionally maddening movies, like *The House That Jack Built*, but I still think there's no one like him on the planet, both probably as a person and as a filmmaker, and that's probably for the best, but I'm very glad we have one of them. And I think *Breaking the Waves* is – I mean, in a way, it's his kind of simplest and most kind of human film. It's basically a relationship drama that eventually kind of builds out a fairly kind of extreme relationship quandary, which, you know, ends in this kind of sexual choice that Emily Watson's character must make, but I think he brings such kind of scope and scale to this sort of strange little domestic story, and I think the film has such a sense of kind of atmosphere and place and weather. I think of *Breaking the Waves* and I can still kind of, you know, hear that kind of wind howling and I can see the kind of, you know, rainy color palette in it, and it's the film of his that I probably just think of most often. And I think Emily Watson – in a debut performance, which is just mind blowing – takes this impossibly difficult character and makes her make sense, and I think she's devastating at it. You know, she's done a lot of good work since. She's never topped that, because almost how can you? Yeah, I love it.

KRIS TAPLEY

Big fan of *Breaking the Waves*. Big fan of Lars. He's – you're right. There's no one like him there. There couldn't possibly be someone else like him. That movie – I'll think

about the final beat of that movie for the rest of my life, too. I mean, it's fantastic. You know, I love particularly, sort of, I guess latter-day Lars, although not really, because I haven't seen these last couple. The one you mentioned I haven't seen. I didn't feel like I had a reason to, I guess. But I love, you know – *Dogville* was my number-one movie of 2004 which, my God, I can't believe *Dogville* is 20 years old.

GUY LODGE

Wow.

KRIS TAPLEY

Antichrist, I loved. *Melancholia*, I loved. I just think he's a special filmmaker. So, you know, a fine choice there. For me, you know, I thought about stuff like – kind of a mishmash, really. I mean, I said I'm a big Cameron Crowe guy. *Jerry Maguire*, I think, is great. I love that movie to this day. I love *Swingers*. I wish *Swingers* was a debut so I could have talked about it last year – I mean last week.

GUY LODGE

I keep forgetting that it isn't, actually.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah. I mean, there's something – I love the way *Swingers* looks. I don't know how they shot it, if it was Super 16 or what, but there's just a quality of the look of that movie that I think is great. And I just love the movie. It's a big movie for me when I was moving to LA and everything, too. I quite like – this might raise some eyebrows – Jim Jarmusch's *Dead Man* I consider it one of the best westerns, which is – it looks funny on a list with *Shane* and *Unforgiven* and stuff, but I just, you know, as so-to-speak acid westerns go, I love that movie. Hollywood again: *The Rock* is fantastic. I'll always go to bat for *The Rock*. I love *Scream*. As I've said before, there was a period of time where, catch me on the right day, I would have said *Scream* was the best movie ever made. I mean, I just loved *Scream*. I went with *Fargo* from the Coen brothers. Kind of hard to escape it. You know, for many people, it's probably their best movie. I think their best movie is *A Serious Man*. But this is way up there. I mean, just potent Coen brothers voice, you know? I watched *Blood Simple* again the other night, and it's just, like, these two movies together are just the best double feature, you know? Because it's almost like they were making *Blood Simple* and they had *Fargo* deep in their bones waiting to come out at some point, then *Fargo* finally came out. And I remember when it came out, too, it was, like, in the middle of that year where – what was it? It was that, *The English Patient*, *Shine*. It was sort of this, like – these sort of like indie-ish movies, and then Jerry Maguire was, like, the Hollywood representative, and then the next year, in '97, like, the Academy totally would turn that on its head and it would just be, like, all these Hollywood movies. But *Fargo* was just this movie that I would read about in *Entertainment Weekly* and stuff, and I would always see that one shot of William H. Macy, who I did not know as an actor yet. And I was just, like, "What is this movie?" And then I finally saw it and it just sort of blew my mind. Great, great flick, and, again, one of those movies that's sort of just instantly in the fabric.

GUY LODGE

Yeah, and I think it's probably the film that most successfully kind of merges their comic, they're kind of – yeah, they're kind of screwball comic, and their – yeah, their kind of darker dramatic side. I think it's a very, very funny film, but it hits hard, as you say. I mean it – and it leaves you with this kind of feeling of – yeah, of kind of despair for the human race, because it's just about base human impulse and greed at its absolute worst, with Frances McDormand as its – I wouldn't say – I mean, moral compass sort of makes the character sound much more kind of dull-

KRIS TAPLEY

Willful.

GUY LODGE

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah.

GUY LODGE

She's sort of, you know – she's this kind of anchoring sense of decency, who's nonetheless kind of powerless to change any of what's going on around her. I think she's wonderful in it. I mean, people can debate about, you know, which of Francis McDormand's three Oscars they might want to take away, but I don't think anyone's taking away the *Fargo* one.

KRIS TAPLEY

That moment when she's in the car driving and Peter Stormare is in the back, you know? And she's just, you know – just boiling it all down. That just sinks in your gut. I mean, yeah, it's incredibly dark, but incredibly, just, true, in ways that just come right to the edge of ick.

GUY LODGE

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

Where it's uncomfortable. But it doesn't ever cross that. Like, it's always entertaining. That's a tricky, like, balance to strike, so.

GUY LODGE

And shout-out to Roger Deakins, as well, who shoots-

KRIS TAPLEY

Oh, yeah.

GUY LODGE

-it so beautifully, without really bringing any kind of visual beauty to it. He kind of revels in the ugliness and kind of plainness of this kind of very wintry corner of America, but the images that he – and the kind of framing that he conjures from it are amazing.

KRIS TAPLEY

Totally. Nineteen ninety-seven.

GUY LODGE

Ninety-seven. What have we got? I thought about going back to Quentin Tarantino. I thought about *Jackie Brown*, which was such a kind of revelation at the time, because everyone was, like, “Oh, see, he can make quiet, focused character studies as well,” and I love him in that mode, and he’s never quite gotten back to that mode, but it really proved he wasn’t a one-trick pony, and I think it’s still one of his best. I thought about *The Wings of the Dove*, which is, I think – you know, we were talking about *Merchant/Ivory* earlier, and this kind of took the baton from that generation of English costume drama and I think brought something a little bit younger, a little bit sexier, a little bit more perverse to it. It’s an incredibly beautiful film, and I think Helena Bonham Carter is off-the-charts good and I think she should have won the Oscar that year. I thought about Wong Kar-wai’s *Happy Together*, which is, I think, you know, still one of the absolute kind of essential queer films of the era, and he shoots this incredibly kind of sad story with such life and such verve, and it never feels maudlin or kind of self-pitying, that film, and I think it’s wonderful. And I thought about Kasi Lemmons’ *Eve’s Bayou*, which I think still – I rewatched it, actually, I think a year ago or so, and I was just caught up in it all over again. Just a – it was a good decade for kind of coming-of-age films, and I think that brought that kind of new perspective to the genre that we hadn’t had.

KRIS TAPLEY

A debut, too.

GUY LODGE

A debut as well, yeah. And I thought about *Titanic*, because how can you not? I was kind of – I might have been a snob about *Titanic* back in the day, but, you know, I saw it again a couple of years ago at the Royal Albert Hall. They did a live score with it. And it’s-

KRIS TAPLEY

That’s cool.

GUY LODGE

It’s just dazzling. You know, I think there are plenty of kind of flaws in that movie, I think, mostly in the modern-day section, which I think is pretty badly written and really badly acted. But the scale and spectacle and grandeur of it is, just, you know – there’s nothing like it.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah, it’s, like, you go try to make *Titanic*, you know?

GUY LODGE

Exactly.

KRIS TAPLEY

The movie's amazing.

GUY LODGE

And I just, you know, remember, you know, I was, you know, in high school at the time, and I think it would be hard to explain to someone who wasn't around then just what a huge deal it was and how obsessed people were with it. I mean, every girl in my class had, you know, pictures of DiCaprio in *Titanic* kind of pasted across their binders or whatever. I mean, he was just kind of a supernova at that point, and the chemistry between him and Kate Winslet – I mean, I can't argue that *Titanic* was not the film of 1997, but if I you know, am choosing the best film of 1997, I have to disagree with the Academy on this one and go with *L.A. Confidential*, which is just a perfect movie. It's a bit like you were saying about *Goodfellas* earlier. I have no insight into *L.A. Confidential* because it just so plainly and visibly works, every element of it. It's this noir pastiche, basically, that never feels kind of pastiche-y. It never feels like they're playing kind of dress-up. It's completely immersed in the style and the rules and the tropes of that genre and plays by them kind of perfectly, but surprisingly, still. I mean, it looks like a dream. I mean, it sort of feels like you could reach out to the screen and kind of your hands would kind of touch varnish or something, because it just feels so tactile and so glossy and so beautiful. And that ensemble is just insane, and so inspired at the time, giving Guy Pearce and Russell Crowe those kind of breakout roles that completely changed their careers and how they saw them. Yeah, it just fires on all cylinders, that movie I watch it every few years. It was one of my late dad's favorite films. I would watch it – I think I watched it several times with him and he just – it brought him so much joy every time. And me, too. I cannot think of a thing I would change about that movie.

KRIS TAPLEY

I've seen it a lot and I feel like I still don't watch it enough. I think I need to add it to my Christmas movie rotation, you know?

GUY LODGE

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

It feels good for that. I love *L.A. Confidential*. I agree with you. This was the first Oscars I actually sat down and watched, and same thing, I was snotty about *Titanic* and I was pissed off that *L.A. Confidential* wasn't going to win. And I actually, ultimately – I like all of the best picture movies that year. I quite like *As Good As It Gets*. I quite like *Good Will Hunting*. I like *Titanic*. I like *L.A. Confidential*. What's the other one?

GUY LODGE

The Fully Monty.

KRIS TAPLEY

The Full Monty! Oh my gosh, I remember watching that with my parents and not understanding it at all. Needing the captions for that one. But *The Full Monty* is great.

GUY LODGE

It's a delight.

KRIS TAPLEY

Big fan of those movies. *L.A. Confidential* would be my kind of runner-up here, actually. The closest we've come so far to crossing streams – or, I guess *Goodfellas*. But, you know, I love *Boogie Nights*. How can you not love *Boogie Nights*? Just on fire. Paul Thomas Anderson was just getting warm with *Heard Eight* and then he came with this and it was just blistering. My favorite David Lynch movie is *Lost Highway*. That's a hot take, I know.

GUY LODGE

Well-

KRIS TAPLEY

But I love *Lost Highway*. That one just gets inside me in weird ways, just seeps in. It's so good. *Wag the Dog*. You know, I don't know how many people really like that movie, but I quite like it. Barry Levinson.

GUY LODGE

Yeah, no one talks about it these days. But it's a really fun film.

KRIS TAPLEY

I've mentioned before on here, I wrote this oral history about *Wag the Dog* at *Vanity Fair* back on the 25th anniversary a couple years ago. People should go check it out. I mean, it was like – it's an interesting behind-the-scenes story on that movie, but I love it. And, ultimately, I'm going with the movie that I talked about last week, that I'm sure was an eyebrow-raiser then, and maybe it is now, too. I have just an unyielding love for Andrew Niccols' *Gattaca*. There are just few movies that make me feel the way that movie does, and just give me goosebumps the way that movie does. And, you know, the final moments of that movie, I am always in tears. I remember when we were at *HitFix* together, like, 10 years ago or whatever, we were doing some list, some collective list of, like, biggest tear-jerker movies or something, and I threw out *Gattaca* and everybody was, like, "What?"

GUY LODGE

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

And I'm just, like – that movie reduces me. Thematically, it's so potent and beautiful and powerful, and when they're out there swimming, and Vincent beats his brother, and he says, "How are you doing this?" And he says, "I never saved anything for the swim back." I'm almost in tears right now. I mean, thematically, that movie just really works for me. It has something so beautiful to say about, you know, just doing more than what you were meant to do, and to couch that in this, like, sci-fi noir that really works aesthetically and formally and all of that as well, and to be a debut. And I just thought he was such an exciting voice at that time in his career. He would also write, obviously, *The Truman Show*. I've been saying I want to go back and watch *S1m0ne* again, because I bet that hits different nowadays. I love *Gattaca* and it's just my favorite movie of '97.

GUY LODGE

I love *Gattaca*, too. I mean – along with *Boogie Nights*, another one that I just forgot to put in my honorable mentions. They were not left out for any reason. I mean, I think – yeah, *Gattaca*, as you say, I mean, it's the epitome of smart Hollywood sci-fi, and it's kind of impossible to imagine a studio making that movie now. I mean, I think these days, if a *Gattaca* were to be made, it would be, like, you know, on an *Ex Machina*-type of budget, and it would still be good, but it wouldn't have the same – yeah, it wouldn't have the same kind of scale and beauty that it does. Beauty is kind of a key word with that film, because it looks so kind of pristine and immaculate, every frame of it. I mean, it got that production design nomination at the Oscars, which I know they used a lot of, you know, existing locations, but it's just-

KRIS TAPLEY

That's the funniest thing about that, yeah.

GUY LODGE

Yeah – indicative of just the kind of overall impression that the film makes. I guess they sort of felt, you know, "Well, we have to acknowledge it." And, I mean, the three – those three stars, all at, you know – three of the most beautiful people we've ever seen on the screen, all at their absolute kind of apex of beauty as well. It sort of feels like it's a time capsule that you could, you know, show someone, like, "This was kind of '90s Hollywood cinema at its – both at its coolest and at its sexiest," you know?

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah.

GUY LODGE

And all of that with kind of emotional impact as well. Yeah, cannot argue with that.

KRIS TAPLEY

And Jude Law and Ethan Hawke's relationship, I mean, it's one of the most unusual relationships in movies. I mean, God – so good. I'm going to watch it again soon. Sławomir Idziak was the DP, by the way.

GUY LODGE

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

Shot the hell out of *Black Hawk Down* as well.

GUY LODGE

And *Three Colors: Blue*.

KRIS TAPLEY

That's right. Yes. So, big fan of *Gattaca*. Nineteen ninety-eight.

GUY LODGE

Ninety-eight. This was an interesting kind of year where there were quite a lot of odd or flawed films that I kind of love just the same. But, like, I thought of Todd Haynes' *Velvet Goldmine*. I thought of Steven Soderbergh's *Out of Sight*, which kind of reanimated his career at that point and I think still is such a kind of slinky little entertainment. I think it's so kind of effortless. Its touch is so light. You know, JLo and George Clooney are both absolutely kind of burning up the screen together in it. I love it. I can't remember if *Run Lola Run* is '98 or '99.

KRIS TAPLEY

It's '99 here.

GUY LODGE

I think – yeah. It was '98 somewhere. Anyway, great film. Love it.

KRIS TAPLEY

I think it played Venice or something like that.

GUY LODGE

Yeah, maybe that's it. Jonathan Demme's *Beloved*, which I have come around to over the years and I still think is very flawed and messy, but has just real kind of emotional heft to it, and the last time I saw it, I was really quite – yeah, quite struck by it in a way I hadn't been previously. *The Truman Show*, which you just mentioned. I sort of think of that movie as kind of exemplifying the sort of era where we all weren't so online and we didn't know so much about every movie before it came out, and I went in to see it with some friends, kind of, you know, one weekend at the mall. And I think I knew the basic, you know – whatever I'd seen in the trailer or whatever, and then just not being prepared for anything that was coming. And it's sad that, you know, we generally don't get to see movies that way anymore, because it knocked me out. And then my hottest take is that I actually like Gus Van Sant's *Psycho*, which I think of as a kind of crazy art installation rather than a movie, but I find it endlessly fascinating for that reason.

KRIS TAPLEY

I think someone asked him why did he do that, and he said, "So no one else had do."

GUY LODGE

Exactly. Yeah. And it kind of feels that way. But I like the guts and humor of it. But this was easy. I mean, this – of all the years, this was one I didn't even think about in terms of, I didn't consider any other titles for this because it's *The Thin Red Line*, Terrence Malick's, you know, World War II film, which at that point seemed – you know, coming 20 years after *Days of Heaven* – sort of seemed like a kind of a miracle that it had happened at all. And that once it had happened, and once it was on screen, that it was so staggering and so immaculate. I mean, this film could have been, you know, a huge folly, and I think it's, instead, one of the – maybe the greatest war film ever made. I mean, it's this kind of perfect fusion of Malick's kind of spiritual and natural and kind of ecological interests, fused with the, you know, the war narrative of James Jones' novel, which I think, you know, puts – and that combination kind of puts humanity and earth in kind of dialogue with each other. I think it's so – every time I watch it, I see something new, and obviously, you know, this was the year of *Saving Private Ryan*, which, you know, pipped *The Thin Red Line* to all the awards it should have won at the Oscars, aside from Best Picture, which obviously *Shakespeare in Love* took. And I get why people went nuts for *Saving Private Ryan*, but it's never done much for me personally, and I always thought – the two side by side, I always thought there was no contest. One was just a much vaster, more poetic, kind of richer anti-war statement. And, yeah, I think it's one of the greatest movies of all time.

KRIS TAPLEY

The Truman Show would have been my number two here, by the way. I love *The Truman Show*. Just incredible. Also, emotional in its way. I mean, when he walks up those steps, it kind of hits me every time. I also thought about *Out of Sight*. The editing in that movie is unbelievable.

GUY LODGE

Yeah. Anne V. Coates.

KRIS TAPLEY

One of the GOATs there, Anne V. Coates, yeah. But when I walked out of *The Thin Red Line*, I turned to my friend, and I was 17 years old, and I said, "I think I might have just seen the best movie I've seen in 10 years." So, this is the point where we agree on this list.

GUY LODGE

At last. Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

I mean, *The Thin Red Line* is indeed one of the best movies of all time. It would be on my top 10 movies of all time. To have this battle between *Shakespeare in Love* and *Saving Private Ryan*, which by the way, I think the Academy, between the two of those, got it right.

GUY LODGE

Agreed.

KRIS TAPLEY

I don't know if that's a hot take.

GUY LODGE

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

But, either way, it's just not – it's not the battle to me. The battle is over here with *The Thin Red Line*, because *Saving Private Ryan* is not even the best World War II movie of 1998.

GUY LODGE

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

And yeah, *The Thin Red Line* was a mess of a production, and, you know, poor Adrien Brody, you know, thought he was going to be the leading man in Terrence Malick's new movie and he's, like, in a couple of shots, ultimately. But, you know, Terrence Malick can do what he wants to do with his movie, and if it turns out something this beautiful and poetic and amazing, more power to him.

GUY LODGE

Trust the process, as they say, you know?

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah. I talked last week about, you know, this kind of tone poem cinema. There's just these certain movies, and I was bringing it up then regarding *Daughters of the Dust*, but there's certain movies that just lull me into a certain state of mind. There's movies like *2001*, *Aguirre, the Wrath of God*, *Apocalypse Now*, *The Fountain*, and this is one of those movies. It just – it puts me in a state-

GUY LODGE

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

-that few movies can do. And anytime I watch it, I mean, there's long passages of this movie. It's not like there's a bunch of things that happen in this movie. It's kind of like *2001*. There's a handful of very long passages that happen in this movie, and so, you can't just kind of put it on and watch some things happen and then move on – it kind of sucks you in to whatever is going on for that 20-minute stretch. I mean, I will always think about Nick Nolte on that hill screaming down at Elias Koteas. I will always think about – I will always think about Woody Harrelson's just tragic moment-

GUY LODGE

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

-that is both strangely funny, because of what he says. "I blew my butt off!" But just, to me, there's just something more human and just vibrant about that than, say, in *Saving Private Ryan* – although this is an amazing moment, too – when, you know, the guy's about to get stabbed, and he's saying, "Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait." That's a very compelling moment in that movie, but *The Thin Red Line* is full of those moments and I just think it's amazing.

GUY LODGE

Yeah. And the fact that he made this incredibly kind of – I would still say it's kind of an avant garde movie, and it's definitely a kind of anti-Hollywood version of the war movie. That he made it with this cast that had everyone in it. I mean, every time I watch it, I'm, like, "Oh, yeah, I'd forgotten that, you know, John Travolta is in it, or that George Clooney is in it." It just blows my mind that he assembled that ensemble for that movie, and then, you know, as Adrien Brody learned, treats them so kind of casually and so kind of offhandedly and never let them kind of dominate. It's such a flex. Yeah, it's wild to me that the film exists, still, and that a studio kind of allowed it to be made, because-

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah.

GUY LODGE

-how would that movie be made that way now? I don't know.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah, I mean, at the time – the latter-day Malick is getting a little tiring, I think. But at the time, you haven't made a movie in 20 years. You're the guy that made *Days of Heaven* and *Badlands*. It's, like, "Hell yeah. Let's get it." So, that's how you get all those people in that movie, too. I think of Travolta a lot, too, because I think of that scene with the Nolte voiceover where he's sort of taking him to places around the ship and pointing to things. It's, like, what were they shooting there? Because I know that's not a willful moment that that Malick sort of scripted and shot, like – because that's not how he works, as we know. But I think of that moment a lot and just how he was able to pull something like that together out of what he captured out in the wild. And, I mean, there's no filmmaker like Malick, and there's certainly a lot of pretenders, but that's peak Malick to me. I think it's his best movie. And I know there's something more controlled about *Badlands* and something maybe more soulful about *Days of Heaven*, but I just think *The Thin Red Line* is – given the chance to watch the three of them, I'd watch that one every time.

GUY LODGE

Yeah. It's another one that kind of reveals something new to me every time I watch it as well. There's always some image that kind of strikes you new or some kind of performance note in it. Yeah. It's – yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

And that score from Hans Zimmer-

GUY LODGE

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

-is amazing. Nineteen ninety-nine. The end of the decade. This is a tough choice.

GUY LODGE

Oh my God, this year. I mean, I think it's sort of become kind of more consensus recently that 1999 is maybe Hollywood's last truly great year. I mean, it was – or certainly of American film. It was just off the chain. I mean, I had a shortlist, you know, as long as my arm for this year, and so, I mean, I'm going to throw out a couple, but I'm leaving out so many as well. But I thought about *All About My Mother*, you know? Pedro Almodóvar's film that I think – he had been doing good work before, but I think this sort of vaulted him to the kind of arthouse elite, and obviously he won an Oscar for it, which kind of brought him a whole new audience. And I think it's still such a warm, sad, kind of funny, beautiful film. I thought about *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, which really did not get its due at the time, and-

KRIS TAPLEY

So good.

GUY LODGE

You know, it was it was Anthony Minghella's best film and it plays like gangbusters. It's so tense and nasty and alluring.

KRIS TAPLEY

One of the greatest shots of all time, that piano shot.

GUY LODGE

Yeah. It gets under your skin. I thought of *Boys Don't Cry*, which was a, you know, real landmark in queer and trans representation, which I think people might underrate these days. But I think it's hard to kind of underestimate, or overestimate, rather, just what a clear new voice that film sounded. I thought of *Summer of Sam*, actually, which I still think is maybe Spike Lee's most kind of underrated movie. I think it's just got such humid heat and energy to it. I still think it's amazing. I thought of *American Beauty*, which, you know, is not fashionable to say these days, but I think is still really wonderful and still a really, really amazing debut. I mean, I wrote a piece about it for – an anniversary piece about it for *The Guardian* a few years back, in which I kind of, you know, acknowledge the kind of flaws and subtleties of that movie, but I think there's

still a kind of formal grace to it that keeps kind of pulling me back. And I got so many replies to it, saying, "I also still love American Beauty and feel like I'm not allowed to say so," so, you know, we exist. *Being John Malkovich* is just such a dive into the rabbit hole that's still so kind of wild and untamed and funny. And I think my number two was *Eyes Wide Shut*, which, you know, in the middle of this insane year, we just casually had, you know, Stanley Kubrick's final masterpiece that people felt they could be sort of casually dismissive of, and I loved it then and I love it now. But I finally settled on *Magnolia*, Paul Thomas Anderson's second film, which I mean-

KRIS TAPLEY

Third film.

GUY LODGE

Third film, sorry.

KRIS TAPLEY

It feels like feels like his second, because you forgot about *Hard Eight*.

GUY LODGE

Yeah, to go from *Hard Eight* to *Boogie Nights* to *Magnolia* in the space of, like, three years is, I mean – we just – you don't often see a filmmaker kind of grow incrementally like that, and it's – I still think it's just a staggering movie, just the canvas and scale of it. You know, it was obviously, you know – the late-90s and early 2000s, we had this kind of plethora of multi-narrative movies, which, you know, it became a really sort of overworked kind of structure, and I think, you know, in the worst example, we had the sort of sense of a whole lot of short film scripts somehow being sort of strung together. But *Magnolia* has such a kind of driving kind of design and architecture to it, and every strand of it kind of informs another. And, yes, it's kind of chaotic and undisciplined, but then, it's also, you know – it's an LA movie. So, it kind of should be, I think. It matches the energy of its kind of time and place and the people in it. And it just takes such big swings. I mean, you know, obviously, everyone remembers the, you know, the frog storm, which was so, so wild and so unhinged and such a gamble that it sort of became a joke, even though it did pull it off.

KRIS TAPLEY

I wish I could watch it for the first time again-

GUY LODGE

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

-for that.

GUY LODGE

And again, it's another case where, you know, I saw that movie, you know, the weekend it came out in South Africa, not knowing what was coming. I just knew that it was a big

LA ensemble piece with a whole lot of actors that I liked, and yeah, it just keeps delivering moments like that. You know, the Aimee Mann “Wise Up” kind of sing-along, which, on paper, sounds like such a bad idea, and it pulls it off so kind of movingly and I think – yeah, it kind of just wrenched my heart like that. And yeah, the frog storm. I was, like, “What the fuck is happening?” And even now when I watch it, even though I know what’s coming, it still takes me out every time. I think it’s – yeah, it’s staggering.

KRIS TAPLEY

I think it’s his best movie.

GUY LODGE

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

I mean, I do. I miss that Paul Thomas Anderson. And it’s not to say that —I quite liked *Phantom Thread*. I was not a *Licorice Pizza* fan, I have to say, but I do miss this guy, and that movie, *Magnolia*, is – I watch it every once in a while, just to be sure. Like, do I really think this is his best movie? Because he’s got some – he’s got a pretty good filmography, that PTA. And, you know, everybody’s probably got a different favorite. But *Magnolia* always just stands above all to me. Definitely something I was considering. I’m just going to read out some movies, because – this is not just me reading movies. I love all of these movies. Doug Liman’s *Go*. Martin Scorsese’s *Bringing Out the Dead*. David Lynch’s *The Straight Story*. Mike Judge’s *Office Space*. Tim Burton’s *Sleepy Hollow*. Tom Tykwer’s *Run Lola Run*, which we talked about a moment ago. First contemporary movie that I ever reviewed-

GUY LODGE

Oh.

KRIS TAPLEY

-by the way, for like a little local rag my first year of film school. Oliver Stone’s *Any Given Sunday*. David O. Russell’s *Three Kings*. Brad Bird’s *The Iron Giant*. *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, which we talked about. David Fincher’s *Fight Club*. *Eyes Wide Shut*. *The Matrix*. My God, this year. *Magnolia*. *Being John Malkovich*, which came up last week with our debuts discussion. Unbelievable that that’s a debut. And not just a stylist at work. I mean, it’s a guy that’s coming from music video. So, you expect a certain level of just flash, but the depth of that movie is unbelievable, obviously owed to Charlie Kaufman. But that was a just an incredible marriage. So, yeah, I’m not just rattling off the movies of the year. I love each and every one of those movies. So, an impossible task, but really, not so much for me, because I do feel like Michael Mann’s *The Insider* is always going to be, always has been, my favorite movie from that year. I’ve already talked about him here. I mean, he’s my favorite guy, and this movie shouldn’t be compelling. This movie shouldn’t be compelling! I mean, it’s a movie about courtrooms and corporate malfeasance, and not the exciting kind. It’s about tobacco scientists and, you know, news guys, and it’s crackling, this movie. Coming off of *Heat*, and he chooses to do this with this incredible script that he worked on with Eric Roth. I

will watch *The Insider* multiple times a year for that last moment alone, for what it does to me. I guess I'm talking about final moments a lot on this, and I think that that's something to say about movies, is where they leave you. And this movie really just leaves you in a place of just intense emotion and feeling for this character that you followed the whole time. And his sort of crusade and the integrity that he has maintained throughout the movie, and that entire final stretch, really, the last 20 minutes, when he's finally getting his story out there, finally pulling all the pieces together. It's such a just propulsive piece of work. And, you know, this is a year, I've often said the Academy could not have dropped the ball worse, in their kind of vision of what the best of the year is. I mean, so many of the movies that I just mentioned to you weren't even in the mix at all. *The Insider* was in the Best Picture, Best Director mix, but, like, where was Christopher Plummer? I mean, goodness, you know? Where was John Malkovich? Where was that nomination? He should have been in a supporting actor mix. It's just – *The Talented Mr. Ripley* should have been in more places that year. *Fight Club* should have been in more places that year.

GUY LODGE

But we needed to recognize *The Cider House Rules*, you know? Which-

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah, my God.

GUY LODGE

-who talks about that movie now?

KRIS TAPLEY

Who talks about that? Who talks about Michael Caine in that movie? I mean, due respect to a legend, but, like, he didn't need that Oscar.

GUY LODGE

Right.

KRIS TAPLEY

He didn't even show up to get it. I mean – so, anyway, *The Insider* is really perfect to me.

GUY LODGE

It's my favorite Michael Mann movie, I have to say, actually. And it's kind of, as you said, it doesn't sound interesting on paper. I remember, you know – I remember that year. I mean, I had such a long kind of catch-up list of things to watch. Because, you know, given that list you just read out, there were so many kind of must-sees. And that one was kind of languishing on my list a bit, because I was, like, "Do I really care about the tobacco lobby and this and that?" And I sort of dragged myself off to see it, like, as sort of, like, homework, and then was just enthralled. Again, because his filmmaking is just so kinetic and it just, yeah, draws you into this story that you might not know much about, but it kind of lays out the kind of facts of this case for you in a way that never

feels kind of pedantic, but you're never lost in it either. You immediately have both a kind of practical and a moral sense of what the story is. And, I mean, Russell Crowe's performance is just insane. I mean, he was robbed of the Oscar that year. I mean, obviously, he got his makeup Oscar the next year, sort of triggering this whole-

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah.

GUY LODGE

You know, the kind of weird, kind of, yeah, rollover set of kind of Best Actor consolation prizes. But, yeah, he's astounding in it, and even though, you know, we didn't know him that well as an actor at the time, there was still a sense of just how transformative it was for him. I mean, it was – I couldn't quite believe it was the same guy who was in *L.A. Confidential*. He was just staggering in it.

KRIS TAPLEY

Totally. Alright, so, that's the '90s. But how about a lightning round? Bonus round? Because they were making the movies of 2000 in 1999, '98?

GUY LODGE

Fair enough. Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

So, they're very much products of the decade. So, if you had to pick a number-one movie from 2000, what would it be?

GUY LODGE

I would go with – and it's a good year, I think. But I would go with another one that, I mean, I think it premiered in 1999, but it was released in 2000, and it's Claire Denis' *Beau Travail*, which has kind of had a creeping ascendancy in the film canon over the last kind of 20-odd years. I mean, it placed – you know, in the last *Sight & Sound* poll – it placed in the top 10, which, you know, took many people off-guard, but I think it's indicative of a kind of generation of film critics that has kind of grown up having seen that film in sort of their formative college years and have sort of since regarded it as a kind of, as a bar, because I think it's one of the most kind of amazing studies of kind of masculinity and of human kind of movement and of kind of collective action, all within the kind of – yeah, there's this kind of study of military community that kind of takes real kind of liberties with inaction. I mean, it's this very dream atmosphere film that nonetheless is sort of situated in the real world. There's a lazy sensual energy to it, but it completely kind of hooks me in and suddenly I'm on the film's – working at the film's pace and at its wavelength. I've said before, but I think she's the greatest kind of working filmmaker, and she goes up and down. I mean, she's had, you know – especially his century – she's made some real kind of oddities and some absolutely kind of masterful kind of clear-eyed films as well. But I think *Beau Travail*, it's the kind of synthesis of all her kind of interests both as a kind of sensual filmmaker and as a political filmmaker.

KRIS TAPLEY

I need to go back to that one. It's been a while. You and Barry Jenkins are the Claire Denis people in my life. Yeah, I need to go – I need to watch that again. I don't have a lot to say about it, because it's been so long, but a lot of the images have stuck with me over the years, for sure. For me, I've mentioned his name a couple of times, so we might as well get to – I'm going to use a word you used a minute ago, because it's one of my favorite words – apotheosis of Cameron Crowe's work, which is *Almost Famous*, or his preferred title on the director's cut, *Untitled*. I love that movie so much. I wish it had been nominated for Best Picture. I mean, this is obviously back in the days of five nominees. It would clearly be a nominee today. But it was sort of shafted. Just the movie he was destined to make, obviously. I mean, it's semi-autobiographical, but I don't think anyone else could have really put you in the world of a young music journalist in the '70 like Cameron Crowe does in that movie, and it's just – it's a beautiful flick.

GUY LODGE

I love *Almost Famous*. You know, it's one of those movies where if you turn on the TV and are channel hopping and it's on, you'll watch it until the end, because it's just irresistible. It's so kind of lively and funny and warm, and there's such a busy sense of kind of community to it, and it puts you in this time and place and world that I think no other film has quite captured that scene with, you know, with that kind of, you know, authenticity, as we were saying earlier on, and authority, given his own experience. And it kind of makes sense that it was all kind of downhill for him after that movie, because he put all of himself into *Almost Famous*. So, I mean, really, what movies were left for him to make after that? It's – yeah, it's the essence of Cameron Crowe.

KRIS TAPLEY

Totally. Well, what can you say? I mean, that's about a thorough look at the cinema of the '90s as you're going to get anywhere. If you had to pick one movie on this list, somebody said, "What's the best movie of the '90s?" Can't say *Beau Travail*. I know that was on your *Sight & Sound* list.

GUY LODGE

Yeah. Wow.

KRIS TAPLEY

So, what would you say?

GUY LODGE

I think I'd probably go to *Three Colors: Red*-

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah?

GUY LODGE

-in a kind of squeaker over *The Thin Red Line*. I mean, it's, yeah. God, it's hard. But, yeah, I think I'll say *Three Colors: Red*.

KRIS TAPLEY

It comes down to *The Thin Red Line* and *Heat* for me. Both would be – if I had a *Sight & Sound* list to fill out, both would be on there. But you know what? This is a *Speed* podcast. *Speed* is one of the best movies of the '90s. I think we can at least say that.

GUY LODGE

Absolutely.

KRIS TAPLEY

So-

GUY LODGE

And that makes it one of the best movies of all time, so.

KRIS TAPLEY

Absolutely. So, let's bring it home with *Speed*. I think it fits interestingly and well within this canon of movies, so, there you go. That's the '90s in a big two-hour nutshell. Guy Lodge, man, thank you so much for coming on and chewing on all this with me. I really appreciate that.

GUY LODGE

It's been a genuine pleasure.

KRIS TAPLEY

And I think everyone has a nice little playlist if they want to go relive the '90s. Just fire up the old Letterboxd, slot all these movies into place and start watching, because they don't make them like this anymore.

GUY LODGE

Just don't get mad at me if you watch Gus Van Sant's *Psycho*.

KRIS TAPLEY

Alright, well thank you Guy. I appreciate it.

GUY LODGE

Oh, any time.

KRIS TAPLEY

That is Guy Lodge, everyone.

[OUTRO MUSIC]

KRIS TAPLEY

Next week on *50 MPH*...

KRIS TAPLEY

No soundbites this week, because the end is nigh. That means it's time for a recap of *50 MPH*. For that, something special. Settle in with the official *50 MPH* commentary of *Speed*. That's right, follow along with your host, me, as I watch the film and throw out choice facts and figures for the film's full two-hour running time. It's the best way to look back on a year's worth of content and the insights of the 120 voices you've heard from along the way. I'll point you to our various episodes while we watch for deeper dives into the discussion as we finally reach the singularity at *50 MPH*: me, talking about *Speed*, while watching *Speed*. What else could you possibly ask for?

KRIS TAPLEY

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

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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.