

50 MPH: EPISODE 44

“HOMESTRETCH GRAB BAG”

Transcript (00:47:39)



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 and, more to the point, welcome to the home stretch. That’s right, after today we have just six more episodes of *50 MPH* before we finally reach the finish line and the 30th anniversary of *Speed*. And after the last two weeks’ focus on *Speed 2: Cruise Control*, I have to say, we’ve pretty much covered it as far as the making and legacy of this action masterwork that I’ve charted for you over the course of the last 11 months. However, we do have some goodies in store as we coast through this final stretch, beginning today, with one more grab-bag episode including bits and bobs from a handful of our many participants. I didn’t want to leave too many gems on the cutting room floor, as it were, so I thought I’d start today with another clearinghouse of that material, beginning with my most recent interview and, actually, someone you haven’t heard from yet. When you read through the list of individuals I’ve talked to for this podcast, I think it’s clear that I’ve been as comprehensive as humanly possible. Sure, a movie results from the work of hundreds of people, but last I looked, we had clocked about 120 of them, so, that’s pretty damn good if you ask me. Which brings me to this guy: Michael Kehoe. Today, Michael is a director in his own right, having won a number of festival awards over the years for his many short films. You want to know what he did on *Speed*? He was in charge of craft service! That’s right, if you need any clearer sign that I’ve gone around the bend on collecting perspectives from the making of this movie, look no further than the fact that I’ve gone and tracked down the damn catering department. Anyway, another Michael, Michael Risoli, the film’s Key Set Production Assistant who we’ve heard from once or twice here, put me in touch with Michael and I sort of just couldn’t resist the opportunity to be this thorough. So, here’s a little bit of perspective from the guy in charge of feeding the cast and crew of *Speed*.

MICHAEL KEHOE

When I started out in the business, I was actually writing, you know? And then, as I was writing, and it was, you know, a little bit too much for an independent filmmaker, I ended up talking to my brother, Jamie Kehoe, and he got me into craft service. And then I started working with Tom Cruise, and, you know, working on some big pictures. I mean, mind you, craft service was not – in the very beginning, craft service were utility people, and if you needed somebody to pull cable, they’d call the craft service person. If you

needed, you know, some set dressers that needed someone, you'd call the craft service person. And then my brother and a couple of other people just started making a change, and I think Jamie was one of the first ones to build a craft service truck, and then it skyrocketed from there. We were in a base camp, but I always had to be mobile, so, I had a Bronco, you know, a bigger one, at the time, and I just opened the back. I had a guy in the back there. He would reach out and start throwing waters to people and snacks to people in the cars, and we'd just go in and out of all the cars. And then they'd say, "Get the hell out of the way," and we'd get out of the way. We'd be on the radio. They'd say, "OK, we're shooting." Bus comes through. "OK, reset." And then we'd go. And it was hard to keep up with, and we went to everybody, you know? We went to every person that was in that line. There was a lot of precision drivers, you know, that worked on the show. Oh, we did, you know, big salads, brown rice, you know? I did Szechuan, you know? And then, you know, a lot of times we had to go out and go get things, and it was running around at the last second to go get second meal, you know, when Ian would say, "Hey, we've got to get something for the crew." And he always wanted to take care of the crew as well, you know? So, I would have to run around and try to find a place to do it and say, you know, "We need food in less than two hours for 300 people," or, "190 people, right away." And, you know, there were some restaurants that actually took care of us. Some of the places that we had ordered from, you know, like, there was a place called Handy Market that was in the – it's in Burbank. I would get trays from them. I always tried to get healthy food or fresh food. It was a marvelous crew to work with. I became great friends with Hawthorne James as well. And I did a picture. I directed a movie that I called him up and asked him if he wanted to do it, and he came in and did it. It was a little movie called *The Art of a Bullet*. But, you know, the great thing about these pictures, when you're spending time, you become a family. When I did my little film, *Second Dance*, which was after that, I had mentioned it to Keanu, never thinking that, you know, he would show up or, you know, would come to the theater. And we screened it at Tristar, and I was standing outside and I was getting people, you know, lining up, and all of a sudden, this motorcycle pulls up, the guy gets off and takes his helmet off, and it was Keanu to come see it. You know, just a great support. I never expected him to be there, and he came out. There is just nobody more grounded and humble that I've met, that's a superstar like that, you know? I've never met a nicer guy.

KRIS TAPLEY

Next up, this is a brief one, but it's another person you haven't heard from yet and I spoke to him years ago, but I've just never had a place for him. Mostly that's because he didn't really have any memories, but I don't want to leave anyone out of the mix here, so this is Giacomo Ghiazza, the storyboard artist for *Speed*. I actually have a notebook full of storyboards for the film that was given to me by Bob Hoffman, *Speed's* unit publicist who has shed a lot of wonderful light on the production in a number of episodes. It's beautiful work and I'll share some of it at our website. I often wish I had that gift, because storyboard artists are so vital in the early stages of bringing a film to life. At least, for those who actually use them. Many directors prefer not to storyboard. Anyway, like I said, Giacomo did not have any memories of *Speed*, but he did have memories of Jan de Bont's follow-up, *Twister*. So, I'll let this kick off a stretch of *Speed-*

adjacent material as Giacomo recounts just a little bit of his memories and experiences doing *Twister*.

GIACOMO GHIAZZA

I was on location with them for a couple of months. We were in Oklahoma, the land of the tornadoes, first south of Oklahoma City and then in Ponca City. In Ponca City the studio bought a little town, a deserted town, just the main street of a town and they bulldozed it down to show the aftermath of a tornado. *Twister* was an exciting time. I've never seen such huge, scary storms as I did in Ponca City. Hail storms and thunder and lightning. He had a special crew, a tornado crew. They were scavenging Oklahoma to shoot tornadoes and then bring it back to Jan so he could put it in the movie. It was a skeleton crew. They'd be going on their own around Oklahoma shooting all the stormy skies they could find and storms and stuff, just elements. You know, wind and hail storms, just for Jan so he could use it in post-production for all these visual effects. And then after that we were supposed to do *Godzilla* again together at Sony, but unfortunately, halfway through pre-production, they pulled the plug, so, no *Godzilla*. And it was done by another director later on.

KRIS TAPLEY

Of course, he's talking about Roland Emmerich, who took over that project and the resulting film, 1998's *Godzilla*, is an infamous train wreck. I do often wonder what would have been with Jan's *Godzilla*. Anyway, like I said, I just wanted to get Giacomo's voice in here since he took the time to talk to me way back when. Now, let's stay with *Twister*, though, and shift over to composer Mark Mancina. My episode on the score for *Speed*, episode 30, was pretty cool because it was basically my entire interview with Mark laid bare. But I did hold back on this chunk because it wasn't relevant at the time, but I think it would be fun to bring it up here. Mark, of course, went on to do the score for *Twister* as well, and I thought this anecdote about working with guitarist Eddie Van Halen was interesting. Van Halen contributed a number of elements to the film, not least of all the original song "Humans Being," and this story gives you the evolution of how that song was ultimately featured in the film.

MARK MANCINA

So, Jan sends me to Eddie's house, because I had this idea, and I told Jan the idea. It has since been used, but it was my idea then. There's a scene where they're coming up over this hill, they're chasing the tornadoes, they're in a truck, they're storm chasers and they're chasing this thing and then they see it. I put in "We Won't Get Fooled Again" by The Who. I suggested it sounded a little bit like my score, that I could do the opening as an orchestra and you would think, "This is a score piece, but it sounds familiar." And then when you see the tornado, the guitars come crashing in and Roger Daltrey and it's The Who and you go, "Oh, shit, yeah." It would have been awesome. They eventually did it on one of Jerry Bruckheimer's TV shows, but this was *Twister*. So, I gave Jan that idea and he was like, "I love that. We're using Van Halen. Go to Eddie's house. Tell him the idea." Well, here's what I didn't know. Two things. One, Eddie is deaf, for the most part. And two, he's not bright. He's nice. He's not a bright guy. So, I went to his house and I told him the idea and he goes, "Yeah! I know exactly what you mean! Check this

out!” And he played me something, and it was so loud, I will never forget, my pencil that was on the console flew off the console onto my lap. That’s how loud it was, because he was deaf. It was so loud I couldn’t even hear it. But basically, what Eddie was saying was he wanted to write a song to do the same thing. And I said, “Well, Eddie, that won’t work, because the whole idea of this is that people know the song, so, when they hear the orchestra, they’re going to go, ‘I recognize this but I don’t know what it is,’ and then when they see the tornado and the power chords come in, they all know what it is. But if it’s a brand-new song that nobody knows, it’s not going to do that.” And he didn’t understand that. His brother kept trying to explain it to him but he did not understand that concept. So, they ended up just writing a song that I used at the end of the movie and that whole idea kind of went down the drain.

KRIS TAPLEY

And, again, not so much down the drain, as it became “Humans Being,” which Mark had completely blocked. I love the way it erupts in the movie, by the way. It’s probably one of the most exciting sequences in all of *Twister*.

[TWISTER CLIP]

ALAN RUCK (as “Robert ‘Rabbit’ Nurick”)

OK, about a mile up there’s a little detour. We’re going to take a little walk in the woods.

[SONG: “HUMANS BEING”]

BILL PAXTON (as “Bill Harding”)

It gets bumpy here, folks. OK, let’s get you wired.

KRIS TAPLEY

We’re going to stay with the rockers, and stay *Speed*-adjacent, with this next story. You’ll recall hearing from guitarist Steve Stevens back in episode 32, which detailed the soundtrack for *Speed* and, most especially, the title track from Billy Idol, featuring Steve on guitar. In that episode, we talked about how Steve’s work has been featured in a number of other areas outside the Billy Idol realm, including Michael Jackson’s “Dirty Diana,” Richard Donner’s *Assasins* and, most iconically, Tony Scott’s *Top Gun*. For that film, Steve contributed the soaring “*Top Gun* Anthem,” which I think by now is seared onto the pop culture consciousness.

[SONG: “TOP GUN ANTHEM”]

KRIS TAPLEY

That’s good shit. Anyway, Steve has told this anecdote to the music press, but I haven’t seen it pop up in the movie press, so, maybe you haven’t heard the story of how the “*Top Gun* Anthem” became the “*Top Gun* Anthem.” Here’s Steve with that story.

STEVE STEVENS

Yeah, I mean, once again, all things lead to Billy Idol. We were working on the third record, *Whiplash Smile*, and our producer, Keith Forsey, brought in Harold Faltermayer to play keyboards on it. They were all part of working with Giorgio Moroder previously. Originally, they were in Germany. Keith move to Los Angeles and Harold flew in from Munich and we were working on *Whiplash Smile*. And Harold said, "I want to show you something." And this is the days of Betamax. He put in the video and showed me a bit of, you know, the aerial footage for *Top Gun*, which was, at that time, state of the art. Now, it's – you kind of laugh at it, because so obviously little models, but wow, you know? And he said, "I'm working on the score for this and would you play guitar on this theme?" And I guess he was in another room at the studio. I didn't witness this, but he was in another room and trying to figure out the theme. And I guess there was a theme that he had for *Fletch*, the Chevy Chase movie, and Billy walked by and knew that Harold was looking for the theme and heard this little segment of music and said, "Oh, that's your *Top Gun* theme." And I think Harold went, "Oh!" It was right under his nose, kind of thing. And then, so, he developed that and we said, OK, on a weekend, on a Saturday, after working on *Whiplash Smile*, we'll, you know, put up the multitrack. This is the days of tape. And I think the whole tracking session took a couple of hours. I played the theme and then the solo. What was great is I was already set up for my guitar sounds and everything for Billy records, so, we didn't have to waste any time miking up the guitar and the amps, which back then used to take sometimes days. So, it's like I just kind of slipped into this mode. And yeah, I kind of forgot about it afterwards. Because like I said, it was after an Idol session. A couple of hours. And lo and behold, you know, the film is a big success and then we got nominated and won a Grammy and, you know, I always tell people that sometimes the things that you don't really put that much thought into turn into the biggest successes. And, you know, like I said, it was kind of an afterthought.

KRIS TAPLEY

I mean, that's just awesome. I guess we all owe Billy Idol a thank you on that one. Alright, finally, you might remember our visual effects episode where I dragged in guys like Jake Braver and Todd Vaziri, two of today's top visual effects artists, to just wax lovingly on *Speed*. I had a ton of material from those conversations that I ultimately didn't use, so, I thought I would use a little of it here in the form of this aside from Todd. Just to set it up, we were basically talking about the sort of shaggy-dog quality of *Speed*, how it utilizes the movie magic of its era in sometimes imperfect ways that don't really affect things because they don't draw your eye. I tee'd him up with the thought that, often, today's CGI status quo is largely a pursuit of perfection, even though there is an art to sort of throwing some dirt on it, so to speak, and making it look not so perfect. Anyway, Todd responded with this, which I quite liked.

TODD VAZIRI

Well, we absolutely, positively have these discussions in visual effects all the time. I mean, ostensibly, our job is to sell the fact that what you're seeing on screen was captured on the day, with cameras, with actors, to the point where we will have long, in-depth discussions of, "OK, this is a stunt." A shot that we're creating. "This is a stunt that is logistically impossible or unsafe to do in live action. That's why we're doing it. But if

we could film this in live action, how would we do this?” And it affects how we craft the shot together in digital effects. We look at, like, how cars are rigged up to blow. How explosions happen in special effects land. We analyze all that stuff. We talk to the special effects people. We will do, to certain extents, almost to the detriment of, potentially, the storytelling, to try to sell you that this was filmed. I mean, we have long discussions, philosophical discussions, about the artifacts of filmmaking. Lens flares, camera shake, those are not real things. In the days of the studio system, they would reshoot a take if there was even the semblance of a lens flare. Now we understand it as part of the visual vocabulary of these types of films, cinema vérité. It is acceptable to have the camera shake if something crazy happens on screen. Those types of things are the things that digital effects should be striving for, based on the visual vocabulary of the era, because the vocabulary changes throughout the years and certain things become acceptable. For example, we would always talk about, in the ‘80s and ‘90s, one thing that would always throw you off in a movie, in an action movie, science-fiction movie, that’s got a lot of crazy camerawork and all that stuff, when it cuts to that lock-off of something that is probably an optical visual-effects shot, it can subconsciously throw you out. You’re like, “OK, there’s something artificial about this.” It doesn’t necessarily throw you out, but there’s something about that. Well, you can’t get away with that kind of stuff nowadays. You have to move with the times. And then, certain films went overboard with the “camera of God”-type thing. You’d have a movie extensively shot live action with the limitations of camera cranes and Steadicams and stuff like that, and then you’d get this effects shot where the camera’s going 100 miles an hour, twisting, turning, going through things, coming out and then reemerging with a live-action shot, and it throws people out. Well, the visual vocabulary of what we know of nowadays as content and movies and short-form video, drone photography is becoming the norm. That “camera of God” situation is becoming a little bit more acceptable, because we can see real-life photography that are cameras of God that we would previously deride as completely synthetic. Things change. Fashion changes and all this other business. So, that was my longwinded way of saying movies are of their time. *Speed* is of its time. It advanced upon everything, all the Joel Silver movies that are that era of American action movies, and I think it pushed it to the next level. It’s just such a wonderful ride.

KRIS TAPLEY

OK, next up, and I’m doing this partly to be a completist, but back in the midway grab bag in episode 25, you got to hear from my son, Foster. He gave you his energetic review of *Speed* which, yes, I let my 7-year-old son watch this R-rated movie. Sue me. But he loved it! And honestly, I’m happy to fossilize him at this age in these proceedings. Well, we just spent two episodes kind of beating up on *Speed 2*, so, I figured, why not show him that movie and get his thoughts on the sequel? I’m sure you’re all dying to know. And I think he even mentioned wanting to see the movie when we last heard from him, so, screw it. Here is a 7-year-old’s take on *Speed 2: Cruise Control*.

KRIS TAPLEY

OK, I’m here with Foster again. He’s ready to tell us all about *Speed 2*.

FOSTER TAPLEY

Speed 2.

KRIS TAPLEY

What did you think about *Speed 2*, bro?

FOSTER TAPLEY

Well, I kind of liked it, but kind of not.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah?

FOSTER TAPLEY

I liked it because I like the song that was, like, [sings to the tune of Mark Mancina's "Cruising"]. Do not play that song near me or else I'll go insane.

KRIS TAPLEY

What does that mean? Like, you'll dance a lot? Yeah. So, you liked the song? What did you not like about it?

FOSTER TAPLEY

It barely has bombs! It's just a bad guy that's trying to make a boat run into another boat. It's barely even like *Speed*.

KRIS TAPLEY

That's true. It's barely like *Speed*.

FOSTER TAPLEY

And it said, "Love *Speed 2: Cruise Control?*" On the TV. And then I say, "Rate it zero stars because it's barely even like *Speed*."

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah, so, we watched the movie on Starz, the app, and it lets you rate it afterwards, and he told me to rate it one star. What else? Anything else to say about the movie?

FOSTER TAPLEY

Oh, I remember one that's going to be the most hilarious thing. This guy is, like, "There's no little girls around here! Just big woman!"

KRIS TAPLEY

Wow. OK, so, he's talking about the scene where the guy is, like, trapped with all the other people, and I think Annie comes to the door and says, "Is there a little girl in there?" Because they're looking for the little girl.

FOSTER TAPLEY

Who's stuck in the elevator.

KRIS TAPLEY

She's stuck in the elevator. And the guy goes, "There's no little girls in here, just big women." Not a very nice thing to say, was it?

FOSTER TAPLEY

No.

KRIS TAPLEY

A very 1997 joke. What else is there to say? Did you like that it was on a boat instead of a bus?

FOSTER TAPLEY

Actually, the boat looked very cool. I would love to make myself get sucked into there without the bad guy.

KRIS TAPLEY

I don't know what that means.

FOSTER TAPLEY

I'm meaning I want to make myself get sucked into the movie, but the bad guy is not there and no bad things happen.

KRIS TAPLEY

OK, meaning you just want to go on a cruise. Is that what you're saying?

FOSTER TAPLEY

Yes.

KRIS TAPLEY

You want to go to the Caribbean on a cruise. You know, there's a movie about a kid that gets sucked into a movie. You know what it's called?

FOSTER TAPLEY

What?

KRIS TAPLEY

Last Action Hero.

FOSTER TAPLEY

Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa.

KRIS TAPLEY

We should watch that movie one day.

FOSTER TAPLEY

Wait a second.

KRIS TAPLEY

He's watching an action movie and he gets sucked into it.

FOSTER TAPLEY

Is it *Jumanji 3*?

KRIS TAPLEY

It's kind of like *Jumanji*. Yeah, sure. Except it's an action movie.

FOSTER TAPLEY

Ah.

KRIS TAPLEY

What else, man? Did you like when the bus, like, slams into the island at the end? What did you think of that part?

FOSTER TAPLEY

No, it's not a bus. It's a boat!

KRIS TAPLEY

Oh, did I say bus? Oh, wow.

FOSTER TAPLEY

Yes.

KRIS TAPLEY

You're right. What did you think about the boat slamming into the island?

FOSTER TAPLEY

I love how that guy was, like, "Whoa, what the heck? How did that happen?"

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah, there was a little kid there that was, like, "Mom, there's a boat coming," or whatever. And I think that little kid is Jan de Bont's son. You know who else was in the movie? Remember the guy from the first movie?

FOSTER TAPLEY

Oh, that guy who gets the car stolen by Jack Traven.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah, he gets his car stolen by Jack Traven. He shows up for just the last, like, 20 minutes of this movie, and he gets to be in a boat in an awesome boat chase scene.

FOSTER TAPLEY

Yes.

KRIS TAPLEY

You know that guy that plays that character? He loved working on that movie. He's, like, the only person who loved working on that movie.

FOSTER TAPLEY

Wait. Is he a real person?

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah, his name is Glenn. I've talked to him. Yeah, Glenn Plummer. He's an actor.

FOSTER TAPLEY

He's a plumber?

KRIS TAPLEY

No, he's an actor. He's not a plumber.

FOSTER TAPLEY

But it's Glenn Plummer. His last name is Plummer.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah. What do you think of the bad guy in *Speed 2*?

FOSTER TAPLEY

I think he was even badder than the one in the first movie.

KRIS TAPLEY

Hmm, that's a good point. He was a little more unhinged, somehow. He just wanted to plow the boat into a boat and he was mad that he got fired by the guys who made the boat or whatever. It was very convoluted. I don't know. Who's worse? John Geiger or Howard Payne? See, Howard Payne was also mad that he was fired, basically. Or that he couldn't be a cop anymore because he blew up his thumb whenever he was on the bomb squad, so, he wants to go get money and hold these people ransom. I don't know who's worse.

FOSTER TAPLEY

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

I mean, the bad guy in *Speed 2* just seems kind of goofy. He's got those leeches that he puts on him to, like, suck copper out of his blood or whatever's going on there.

FOSTER TAPLEY

The only thing that Howard Payne wants is just money. The thing that the bad guy in *Speed 2* just wants, he just wants to rule the world. He just wanted to rule the boat.

KRIS TAPLEY

It seems that way. I think he wanted some diamonds or something, too, because there was this whole part where there's – you might have missed it. I barely caught it. I think there was something with diamonds going on there.

FOSTER TAPLEY

Yeah, we should probably go back to the movie and see that part, because I did not see that.

KRIS TAPLEY

What did you think of the new hero? You remember his name?

FOSTER TAPLEY

Alex?

KRIS TAPLEY

Alex, yeah. He's a different person than Jack Traven. What did you think of him?

FOSTER TAPLEY

I liked how he was in love with Annie again.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah, everybody falls in love with Annie, I guess, huh?

FOSTER TAPLEY

I wish there was a *Speed 3*.

KRIS TAPLEY

You wish there was a *Speed 3*?

FOSTER TAPLEY

Yeah.

KRIS TAPLEY

Man, I wish there was a *Speed 3*. I wish there was a *Speed 3* with Jack Traven back. Jack and Annie, back again. Wouldn't that be cool?

FOSTER TAPLEY

What about if they made – it would be crazy if they just made *Speed 3* the same thing as *Speed 2*.

KRIS TAPLEY

Just a boat again?

FOSTER TAPLEY

Yes. That would be funny.

KRIS TAPLEY

What would be a cool story for *Speed 3*? We did a bus. Then we did a boat. Where could we do *Speed 3*?

FOSTER TAPLEY

On a plane!

KRIS TAPLEY

On a plane? So, what's the what's the story, then? Is it the plane can't slow down? The plane can't land?

FOSTER TAPLEY

The plane stops going and then everyone falls, and then it lands at the airport, making a big explosion.

KRIS TAPLEY

You've got to have a big explosion.

FOSTER TAPLEY

Yes, it has to have one. Like what happened when the bus ran into the airplane.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah.

FOSTER TAPLEY

It has to have one way bigger than that.

KRIS TAPLEY

You know, the guy who wrote *Speed* told me that he had an idea for *Speed 2* once upon a time that took place on a plane, and his idea was that it couldn't go above a certain altitude or something like that. Then it was going to crash into the Andes, which is a mountain range.

FOSTER TAPLEY

Oh.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah.

FOSTER TAPLEY

Cool.

KRIS TAPLEY

But, yeah, an airplane would be cool. What else? I don't even know what else. There's really no other ideas, are there?

FOSTER TAPLEY

Yeah. Huh.

KRIS TAPLEY

You know what we're basically deciding here is that they should never have made a *Speed 2*, right? *Speed 1* was so good they didn't really need to make another one.

FOSTER TAPLEY

Yeah. There's, like, *Speed 2* should just be called *Cruise Control*. It shouldn't even be a *Speed 2*. It should just be called *Cruise Control*. It shouldn't be an additional *Speed* movie.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah. Why call it *Speed 2*? Just make a movie called *Cruise Control*. I think, in fact, it was previously another movie and they just turned it into *Speed 2*. I might be wrong about that. Who can keep track? But anyway, what do you like better, *Speed 1* or *Speed 2*?

FOSTER TAPLEY

Speed 1.

KRIS TAPLEY

Yeah, that's a good answer.

FOSTER TAPLEY

[hums *Speed* score]

KRIS TAPLEY

Alright, man. Well, that's been Foster Tapley once again with his review of *Speed 2*. Say goodbye to everybody, man.

FOSTER TAPLEY

Bye!

KRIS TAPLEY

I'm guessing that's the first-ever second-grader review of *Speed 2: Cruise Control*. Finally, today, let's pivot to, what else? Fan mail and reviews! Once again, thank you to everyone who has sent me a note or written a review to tell the world how much you love *50 MPH*. Thanks especially to the many listeners who reached out in the wake of my mother's passing with a show of support or to just let me know I was in your thoughts. All of that went a very long way at a very tough time. And, again, if you haven't written a review for us at Apple or anywhere else, please take a moment to do so! We may be approaching the end here but I'm hoping *50 MPH* has a life far beyond

the scope of these 50 episodes, so, make sure you bang the drum so new listeners can discover us in the future. With that, here are a few emails.

This first one comes from Ben, who says: “Loving the podcast. While listening I’ve remembered back to my teenage years with a *Speed* poster on the back of my bedroom door. One question I often thought about back then, with no one to ask, was how come Sandra Bullock had her name above the title next to Keanu and Hopper? Episode 10 touches on Bullock’s representation really working to get her a great deal with net points, but getting top billing wasn’t mentioned. I’ve been loving the podcast so far, for a million different reasons, and just had to write.”

Well, thank you for that, Ben, and thank you for writing. And you know what? I don’t have an answer for this, other than the simple fact that she was the co-lead and it makes total sense for her to get that placement. Particularly coming off of *Demolition Man*. She was basically a nobody, sure, but she was landing on radars. Also, having said that, I could have sworn I’ve seen posters in the past that only had Keanu’s name at the top, but I could be wrong about that.

Next up, this one comes from Erin, who writes: “I’m an LA-born kid who has moved around a lot but spent big chunks of my life in the city. When *Speed* came out, I was living in Los Feliz right after college going to movies after my bookstore day job, reading aloud the LA Weekly and Manohla Dargis’s reviews with my roommate to figure out what to see, hiking by movie sets in Griffith Park on weekends and crushing on Keanu. I thought the movie was perfect – fast-paced, well-cast, deliciously over-the-top and a showcase of the perils and, yes, successes of public transportation in the city. And little did I know that eight years later I would spend the next decade taking first the bus and then the Gold Line/Red Line to work downtown and writing about my experiences. I was teased mercilessly about Keanu and championing the movie. It eventually became a joke with my roommate, friends, boyfriends and later, my husband, who simply didn’t get it. I’m one of those movie goers who can’t help but stage whisper ‘That’s Caltech!’ or ‘There’s my old building!’ every other minute. So, *Speed* was amazing. Venice! The 105 freeway! Downtown! I loved hearing all the location details you’ve covered so far in the podcast. Some of the actors we’d see around Los Feliz included Margaret Medina. I think she worked for a time at one of the restaurants. And Simone Gad. And I always swore I’d get to one of Dogstar’s shows someday. Anyhow, all I can say after learning about your pod from *Pop Culture Happy Hour* is bravo. What a fun project to geek out on, and what a cool way to explain moviemaking way back then and showcase all kinds of voices. It’s clear it’s a lot of work. Thank you for it. Finally, I feel vindicated! There’s someone else out there who views *Speed* with the awe it deserves.” An awesome note, Erin, and thank you for it. And I wanted to read it in part to shout out NPR’s *Pop Culture Happy Hour*, as Erin does here, because way back in September of last year, NPR’s Linda Holmes actually gave us a nice boost by recommending *50 MPH* to her readers and listeners. At the time, Linda wrote: “I’ve started listening to *50 MPH*, which is – yes – a planned 50-episode podcast about *Speed* from film journalist Kris Tapley. Does this sound wildly unnecessary? Yes. Am I extremely excited to hear the many voices promised across the series? Yes. Do I think you should get super-pumped about it and

throw yourself into a long story of craft and culture? I do.” Linda, I hope you’re still listening. Thank you so much for those kind words. I’ve heard from a few people, like Erin, who started listening to *50 MPH* thanks to *Pop Culture Happy Hour*. So, I appreciate that so much and I hope you’re still enjoying the show.

This next email comes from Neil, who writes: “Just wanted to drop you a line and say how much I’m enjoying the *50 MPH* podcast. It’s fascinating stuff and you’re doing great work on it. Many thanks, and at last I know what an anamorphic lens is!” Neil, just to note, is a motoring journalist for *The Irish Times*, which should put this next bit into context. You’ll have even better context if you go back and listen to actor Glenn Plummer talk about his *Speed* experience back in episode 21. “By the way,” Neil says. “On the Jaguar XJS maybe having a stick-shift? Definitely not. In 1990, Jaguar updated the car with a 4.0-litre straight-six engine and stretched the old V12 engine to 6.0-litres. You could have the 4.0 with a five-speed manual, but in the US market that would have been pretty rare. The V12 came only with a three-speed automatic. I’ve rewatched the sequence and you can clearly see a V12 badge on the back of the car. So, unless the stunt team modified it to have a stick... Also, when Keanu is driving, he seems to have both hands on the wheel at all times.” Look, I only bring you the gold here, folks, OK? This is deep dive, forensic shit. Thanks for the verification, Neil.

Alright, this one comes from Andrew: “I found your podcast by way of the *Speed* episode of *Die Hard on a Blank*.” Shout-out! “I love oral histories and the idea of doing one as a podcast was intriguing to me, so I decided to give it a listen. I am so glad that I did. I just today got up to episode 25, which prompted me to write you. It also prompted me to look up Anthony Lane’s review of the film. By chance, I work at a university and was able to read a physical copy in the library. What a wonderful piece of writing! It really made me nostalgic for long-form criticism. My first *Speed* memory is not of the movie itself, but of a week-long camp that my public school system sent its fifth graders to. Fifth grade was ‘94 to ‘95 for me. I had heard of *Speed*, but hadn’t seen it. On the first day, my camp group did ice-breakers and we were asked what our favorite movies were. I was the only one in the group that didn’t answer “*Speed*.” Mine was *Top Gun*, to which the counselor responded, “Oh, an old movie.” When I finally did watch the movie, I, of course, loved it, for all the reasons you and others have mentioned on the podcast. I’ve been surprised at just how well the movie holds up, too. I recently purchased the 4K Blu-ray and showed it to my wife for the first time. She loved it, too. Thank you for this Herculean feat of putting this podcast together and giving a voice to those who brought *Speed* to life, especially those in roles not often featured in traditional making-of material.” Well, thank you, Andrew, and how about that? The most popular film amongst fifth graders. I was a couple years ahead of you. I believe ‘94 was eighth grade for me, but I love hearing how much of an impact it clearly had. And hey, *Top Gun* was a pretty sweet choice, too.

Next up, from Greg: “I’m a big fan of your podcast. I love great behind-the-scenes histories like Mark Harris’ *Pictures at a Revolution* or Julie Salomon’s *Devil’s Candy* or Lillian Ross’ *Picture*. Your podcast is very much in that league. Excellent, deep reporting and first-class film appreciation. Thank you.” My goodness, no, thank you, Greg. That’s

incredible company to be included in, and I'll just say this. I hope this podcast has maybe established a viable format for anyone willing to put in this amount of work, and yes, it has been a ton of work. Probably more than is necessary. But I do think the oral history format ought to extend out of books and into podcasts more, because it's just so much better to hear everyone in their own words.

On that note, this last email comes from John. He says: "I just wanted to say thank you for the podcast, which I have been loving ever since episode one. I don't think I've ever heard or read such a detailed insight into the making of a motion picture before. As my now-defunct Twitter handle was UKFilmNerd, I've read and seen a lot of behind-the-scenes material and your podcast is up there with the best of them. I've loved *Speed* ever since I first saw the film at the cinema and I have upgraded my physical copies of the film as the years have progressed: widescreen VHS, imported the 'Five Star' US DVD special edition, the Blu-ray and finally this year I picked up the 4K that looks wonderful. I think your mother would be proud of the podcast and the hard work you've put into it." Wow, John, thank you for that. I think of her constantly when I'm doing this and I always wonder what she would have thought. She liked *Speed*. As I've said before, it's the last movie we watched together. She loved learning new things and I think that's been the central goal with this whole podcast. To open eyes to processes that, at least for me, when I was a kid, pulled back the curtain and opened up a whole new world. And by the way, that "Five Star" special-edition DVD you mentioned was excellent for that kind of thing. Great behind-the-scenes material on there.

And speaking of mothers and five stars, I'll close today with one of our most recent five-star reviews. This one comes from a user named Yammies95. In a review titled "Nostalgia Galore," Yammies writes: "I was 17. I just got my crappy car. *Speed* was in the theater. Instead of taking a friend, I asked my mom, which blew her away. That's just one memory of many I have of this movie. It cemented my mom and me watching movies the rest of her life and exclaiming 'oh darn' if either of us swore. I still own the VHS I bought 29 years ago. When I saw this podcast, I loaded up the VCR expecting to be disappointed, but man oh man, quite the opposite. Movie holds up. I was still glued to my seat. I still want to marry Jack, be friends with Annie and never ride a bus. This podcast is amazingly detailed and includes drama and so much backstory. I'm only on episode 18 and so far, no current Keanu or Sandra interviews. That's not the podcaster's fault but it's slightly disappointing. Listen anyway. The you from 30 years ago would demand it!" Thanks for that, Yammies, and first of all, I hope you actually dug out a VCR to check the tape on this movie. That's awesome. And it's wonderful to hear that the movie is such a key part of your history with your mom. I, again, can very much relate to that.

Now, regarding your note about current interviews with Keanu Reeves and Sandra Bullock...

I know that we have been lacking fresh takes from Keanu and Sandra along the way here, though I've done my best to repurpose those interviews I conducted with them 10 years ago where applicable, and I think I've also shown that the story of this movie is

robust and worthy regardless of the participation of its two principal actors. With that said, I'm afraid I have some incredible news. Three weeks ago, the day of the solar eclipse, in fact, I finally landed these interviews with Keanu Reeves and Sandra Bullock that I have been chasing for a year. What's more, I talked to them together for what is, I have no doubt, the most thorough shared interview the two of them have done, perhaps on any subject, but certainly about *Speed*. It was an absolute treat and their chemistry and dynamic will be on full display. And you won't have to wait long, because that, my friends, is how we're going to kick off the summer of 2024 next week, right here, on *50 MPH*. That's right. You deserve it.

And while I'm in the preview spirit, I might as well lay out how the final episodes are going to go here. After Keanu and Sandra, I have three weeks of listicle fun in store for you. First up, on May 13, I'll be talking to Philip Gawthorne and Liam Billingham, hosts of the popular *Die Hard on a Blank* podcast, which is this great show that analyzes the films that came in the wake of *Die Hard* and owe a debt to it. The three of us will be discussing and debating the best action films of the '90s. After that, on May 20, I have *Variety* film critic Owen Gleiberman, although more to the point, former *Entertainment Weekly* film critic Owen Gleiberman, because Owen is the first critic we've had on the show who was writing about movies contemporaneously with *Speed*'s release, and that's apt, because Owen and I will be counting down the best directorial debuts of the '90s. Maybe you're picking up on the pattern here. Then on May 27, Memorial Day here in the States, I'll be connecting across the pond with a longtime friend and colleague, *Guardian* and *Variety* film critic Guy Lodge as we chart the best films of the '90s, period. But we'll be adding our own little twist to that. You'll have to tune in to see if, how and where *Speed* might figure into those lists. Then, something completely ridiculous but kind of fun for our 49th and penultimate episode as I present to you the official *50 MPH* commentary track for *Speed*. That's right, two hours of me talking about *Speed* while watching *Speed*. That felt like a neat way to sort of recap all of our shenanigans over the last year. And finally, of course, June 10, the 30th anniversary of *Speed*, we have our big finale. That will be a rather laid-back affair as we pop the champagne, hear a few more choice soundbites from the more than 120 interviews I've conducted for this project, put a bow on *50 MPH* and raise a glass to one of GOATs of action cinema

But before all that, again, you are in for such a treat next week as we turn the corner into May. For now, here's a taste.

[OUTRO MUSIC]

KRIS TAPLEY

Next week on *50 MPH*...

KRIS TAPLEY

With the summer movie season upon us, finally, Keanu Reeves and Sandra Bullock: The *50 MPH* Interview!

SANDRA BULLOCK

The audition, I remember pretending I was holding onto a steering wheel.

KEANU REEVES

No, you had a plate. We got you a plate.

SANDRA BULLOCK

Was it a plate?

KEANU REEVES

Yeah, we got a paper plate or a plate or something.

SANDRA BULLOCK

Oh my God. I took that paper plate and I made it sing!

KRIS TAPLEY

In their most in-depth *Speed* interview to date, the film's stars look back on an exhilarating production and the electricity they generated on screen.

KEANU REEVES

I think we had an affection, you know? And the characters themselves have an affection. But I think we played off of each other and, you know, I think it was just fun.

KRIS TAPLEY

They also reflect on the film's success and the moment their careers took flight.

SANDRA BULLOCK

We decided to drive down past the Chinese, and I didn't want to look, and they went, "Oh my God." It said "sold out."

KEANU REEVES

And a bus pulled up to the side and there was a *Speed* poster and they had me with the short hair and I was, like, that guy on that poster, and I was, like, "What?"

KRIS TAPLEY

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

KRIS TAPLEY

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