

00:00:00	Jesse Thorn	Host	<p>Hey, all. Jesse, here. We're getting near the end of the year. I wanted to thank you for listening to <i>Bullseye</i>. Making our show isn't easy. We've got a very small staff that works tirelessly to book guests and edit interviews and keep things running smoothly. It is hard work that takes time, money, and effort. It's also incredibly rewarding. When I hear it that a guest is an NPR listener, already, it means a lot. And it means something to know that you're listening, as well.</p> <p>So, I'll get to the point. If you wanna show your gratitude, this holiday season, consider supporting the NPR Member Station in your area. Any amount. It's the single most effective way to keep shows like <i>Bullseye</i> going. It'll make a huge difference to public radio in your community. It makes a huge difference to us, too.</p> <p>To get started with your donation to an NPR Member Station, visit <a href="https://donate.NPR.org/bullseye">donate.NPR.org/bullseye</a> or just text the word "bullseye" to the number 49648. We'll send you a text message with a link where you can find your local station and make your contribution. Message and data rates may apply.</p> <p>You can visit <a href="https://NPR.org/smsterms">NPR.org/smsterms</a> for privacy and text message terms.</p>
00:01:08	Music	Music	Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue.
00:01:09	Promo	Promo	<b>Speaker:</b> <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of <a href="https://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> and is distributed by NPR.
00:01:20	Jesse	Host	<p><i>[Music fades out.]</i></p> <p>I'm Jesse Thorn. I want you to think back to when you were a kid. What was that one present you got around the holidays that you remember the best? The one you dreamed about getting and then finally got? We put that question to Micky Dolenz, the drummer for The Monkees. And he didn't hesitate.</p>
00:01:36	Micky Dolenz	Guest	I think it probably was a Lionel trainset. A big one. The original, full-size. And my dad, who was very handy with building stuff, he built me a big platform, in the garage, where the trainset would—you know—be set up. Well, back then, you know—it was still steam powered. <i>[Laughs.]</i> It was—we had to actually put real coal <i>[laughs]</i> in the—in the engine.
00:02:06	Jesse	Host	It's <i>Bullseye!</i>
00:02:07	Music	Music	"Huddle Formation" from the album <i>Thunder, Lightning, Strike</i> by The Go! Team plays. A fast, upbeat, peppy song. Music plays as Jesse speaks, then fades out.
00:02:13	Jesse	Host	This week, it's a very special <i>Bullseye</i> holiday bonanza. You'll hear more from Micky Dolenz of The Monkees about his favorite holiday memories. He'll also talk about the band's Christmas album. Micky grew up listening to Christmas music, but he didn't love it, at first.
00:02:28	Micky	Guest	Yeah, I—not necessarily 'cause I wanted to, but that—
			<i>[They both laugh.]</i>
			—that's what they put on, because when you're a kid, your parents run the machine, right?
00:02:35	Jesse	Host	And we're just getting warmed up! We also got sage Christmas advice from the brothers McElroy.

00:02:43	Griffin McElroy	Guest	You could, uh... toss your <u>keys</u> in with your present! Just have everybody do that! And I think that would probably spice things ups!
00:02:48	Jesse	Host	Plus, soul singer Sy Smith tells us about the holiday song that changed her life. And more, it's all coming up on the <i>Bullseye</i> Holiday Spectacular! Let's go!
			<i>[The music ends with a chorus of cheers.]</i>
00:03:03	Music	Music	Thumpy interstitial music punctuated with jingle bells plays and ends.
00:03:07	Jesse	Host	It's <i>Bullseye</i> . I'm Jesse Thorn. First up, on our holiday spectacular, Micky Dolenz of The Monkees. <i>The Monkees</i> was, of course, a television show. It aired from 1966 to 1968. It was a Hollywood version of <i>A Hard Day's Night</i> . Four lovable goofs in a band playing songs, bumming around Los Angeles, solving mysteries, staying in haunted houses. The band members—Davy Jones, Mike Nesmith, Peter Tork, and Micky Dolenz—weren't a band before the show started. They auditioned for the part and most of them didn't really play instruments.
			<i>[Music fades in.]</i>
00:03:43	Music	Music	But they had some very legit hits.
00:04:02	Jesse	Host	"Last Train to Clarksville" by The Monkees plays. So, it's not a real surprise that the band lasted a lot longer than the show.
			<i>[Music fades out.]</i>
			They learned their instruments, started writing their own songs, the whole deal. When I talked with Micky, last year, they'd just recorded their 13 <sup>th</sup> studio album: <i>Christmas Party</i> . It's a holiday record chock full of standards and covers, even a few originals. It's also got contributions from Rivers Cuomo, Peter Buck, and more.
			Micky Dolenz is the bands drummer and one of the singers, as well. Here's the lead track on the album, featuring Micky on lead vocals. It's called "Unwrap You at Christmas".
00:04:35	Music	Music	"Unwrap You at Christmas" from the album <i>Christmas Party</i> by The Monkees. Upbeat pop/rock with a cheerful tune.
			<i>I can't wait to unwrap you at Christmas I dream of nothing more So dear Santa, when you read my letter Please drop her at my door</i>
			<i>I've been waiting All year now, baby For the snow and You to return So I'll hang the mistletoe...</i>
			<i>[Music fades out as Jesse speaks]</i>
00:05:09	Jesse	Host	Micky Dolenz, welcome to <i>Bullseye</i> ! It's great to have you on the show.

00:05:11 Micky Guest Great to be here! I am such a big fan of you, your show, um—actually all of NPR. I even did a challenge, a couple of years ago. Big challenge. I'm a huge fan. So, it's so nice to be here, with you.

00:05:28 Jesse Host Oh, that's awesome! Thank you for saying that! I have an important question for you. Do you, or—do you like Christmas? Are you a Christmas person?

00:05:36 Micky Guest Yeeah. Yeah, I am. Born and raised in the Valley. LA. Not in a huuuge religious sense, just celebrating the equinox *[laughs]*, I guess. Celebrating, you know, winter and all that. But, yeah. We always had a big, big Christmas.

00:05:57 Jesse Host Do you have fond memories of Christmas, when you were a kid?

00:06:01 Micky Guest Oh, of course. Yeah. Wow.

00:06:03 Jesse Host Was it—was it—was it, in the Valley, was it, like, the most classic—

00:06:07 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Jesse:** Uuh.

**Micky:** Yeah.

00:06:10 Micky Guest **Jesse:** 1950's suburban Christmas imaginable? Yes. Absolutely. Hit the nail on the head. My mom—we had this huge picture window looking out over the backyard. Small house, but nice, big picture window. She would do a incredible painting, and she was quite a great artist. And she would do some incredible Christmas—actually, she did it at Easter, also. And, you know, other moments. And she would do this beautiful, you know—what do you call it? Not graffiti. *[Laughs.]* A big painting! You know? On the window. And then with—you know—poster paint. And then wash it off.

Oh yeah, so we actually had very, very classic *American Graffiti* Christmases. And Halloweens and Thanksgivings and, you know, all that stuff. Yeah. Very Norman Rockwell.

00:07:05 Jesse Host Did you listen to Christmas music at Christmastime, when you were a kid?

00:07:09 Micky Guest Yeah, I—not necessarily 'cause I wanted to, but that—

*[They laugh.]*

That's what they put on! Because when you're a kid, your parents run the machine, right?

00:07:18 Jesse Host I mean, some of that stuff is—some of that stuff is really good! Especially at that time!

00:07:21 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Micky:** Oh, it's wonderful.

**Jesse:** I mean, you can't argue with your—with your Nat King Coles and your, you know, the crooners made some really great Christmas music.

00:07:29 Micky Guest Oh—n-no. And funny you should mention him, because he is one of my favorite—my influences, vocally, musically—were people like Nat King Cole. Johnny Mathis, who I just met, actually. You know. Sinatra, I—who I did meet. Yeah. My influences were, um—were all that stuff. And yeah. I love all that stuff.

00:07:57 Jesse Host What was the best Christmas present you ever got as a kid?

00:07:59 Micky Guest Ooooh, wow. Great question. I think it probably was a Lionel trainset. A big one. The original, full-size. You know. Massive—I don't know what gauge it was, but... and my dad, who was very handy with building stuff, he built me a big platform, in the garage,

where the trainset would—you know—be set up. So, that was probably it: a big Lionel, a full-gauge—I don't know what they're called now, but probably a trainset. That was probably it.

00:08:35 Jesse Host Did you get involved in all the mechanics of it? That was, like, the dawn of computer programming, was people who were really into switching their trainsets.

00:08:44 Micky Guest Well, back then, you know—it was still steam-powered. *[Laughs.]* It was—we had to actually put real coal *[laughs]* in the—in the engine. I've always been very, very into building stuff. I have a, actually—a woodworking furniture company, with my daughter, called Dolenz and Daughter's Fine Furniture. And we make handmade, real high-end kind of custom furniture stuff, in a workshop that I have.

I've always been into it. My dad was—and over the years I got into it even deeper and deeper. And now I have this business and I do it for the love of it, you know? I was gonna be an architect. That was my plan.

00:09:29 Jesse Host Really? Because you started acting as a kid. I mean, both your folks were actors—

*[Micky interjects with a confirmation.]*

—if I'm remembering correctly. Did—was that, like, the family business? Or was that something they were trying to keep you away from?

00:09:39 Micky Guest No, quite the contrary, it was the family business. My dad was an actor. Quite successful. My mom was a singer, actress, until she started having kids and then she became a stay at home mom—which thank goodness for us, of course. It was wonderful.

But my dad did real well. Signed to Howard Hughes, of all people, for a while. And I had my first television series when I was ten. It was called *Circus Boy*. It was on NBC—a national, you know, big network show. In the 50's. About 1955. Around that time of *Rin Tin Tin* and *Flicka* and *Fury* and all that. And did very well. We ran two or three seasons, until I kind of outgrew the part. And then my parents, very wisely—and by the way, they had never pushed me into it. We weren't that kind of Hollywood, Beverly Hills lifestyle. Which is fine for some. You know, "Eyes and teeth, honey. Eyes and teeth."

I was brought up in the Valley and in a very rural, suburban environment. You know, I would come home from shooting on the set and my father would say, "You have to clean the pool." Had horses on the property and, you know, things like that. So, he was from Italy. Off the boat from Italy. And my mom was from Texas. So, they were kind of no-nonsense people and didn't let me get away with—well, I was gonna say *[censored]*, but I won't. Because—

*[They laugh.]*

00:11:21 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Jesse:** 'Cause you know what a classy operation I'm running, here.

**Micky:** Just to bleep it. *[Laughs.]*

00:11:24 Micky Guest So, no. They never—I don't ever remember being, you know, pushed and—any sort of pressure, at all.

00:11:33	Jesse	Host	Did you like it? I mean—
00:11:35	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	<b>Micky:</b> Yeah!
00:11:37	Micky	Guest	<p><b>Jesse:</b> Was it something that you really wanted?</p> <p>No. I followed in my father's footsteps, but how could you not like—you know—being—well, now, that series, <i>Circus Boy</i>, it was this kid... the spine of it was that it was a orphan kid at the turn of the century, who'd been adopted by a clown, in a circus. And they took care of him and he turned out being the one that would also solve the—you know, save the day.</p> <p>So, I'm living for three years, basically, I was living as a ten or twelve-year-old kid, in the circus as the <i>[laughing]</i> turn of the century. So, I mean, how can you not like that? I mean, with an—and animals. I learned to ride an elephant. In fact, that was the first thing they said to me. They said, "Okay, well you know you're gonna have to ride an elephant?"</p> <p>And I said, "Okay!"</p> <p><i>[Jesse laughs.]</i></p> <p>"Where do I start?"</p> <p><i>[They both laugh.]</i></p>
00:12:30	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	<p><b>Jesse:</b> <i>[Through laughter.]</i> That's like...</p> <p><b>Micky:</b> It's kinda like when I got <i>The Monkees</i>. They said, "Well, you're gonna be the drummer." I said, "Okay! Where do I start?"</p> <p><b>Jesse:</b> <i>[Laughs.]</i></p> <p><i>[Micky agrees several times as Jesse speaks.]</i></p>
00:12:37	Jesse	Host	<p>We have a clip of <i>Circus Boy</i>. The show in which you starred, as a preadolescent. Or I guess an adolescent. It was, as you mentioned, about a young man whose parents were killed in a trapeze accident. Your character was named Corky. Adopted by Joey the Clown, played by the late Noah Beery Jr. And in this scene, Corky is the water boy to Bimbo, the baby elephant that we've discussed. And in this clip, Corky is there with Bimbo and Joey.</p>
00:13:15	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:13:16	Clip	Clip	<p><i>[The sounds of many people talking, muffled in the background.]</i></p> <p><b>Corky:</b> Bimbo! You gotta brush your teeth after every meal! 'Cause if you ever got a toothache, that'd be too bad!</p> <p><b>Joey:</b> Hey, Corky. Have you—have you seen JoJo anyplace?</p> <p><b>Corky:</b> Gosh, Uncle Joey, is he loose again?</p> <p><b>Joey:</b> Oh, you know, I—he figured out how to open up his cage all by himself. <i>[Laughs flatly.]</i> Ah, half the time I can't tell who's training who. Here I've been trying to make a clown out of that monkey, and he's making a monkey out of me!</p>

**Corky:** Oh, you make a good clown, Uncle Joey. Why aren't we teaching him how to put on his own makeup and your wagon and—

*[The sound of a crash and breaking glass. Music swells. The crashing continues.]*

**Corky:** Uh oh!

00:13:53 Sound Effect  
00:13:54 Jesse

Transition  
Host

**Joey:** Let's go! Let's go!  
Music swells and fades.

Oh, you were so cute.

*[Micky is overcome with laughter. Jesse chuckles softly.]*

I like that—I like your line delivery. I mean, it is the classic-est 1956 child-on-a-television-show line delivery. Like, *[pitching his voice high]* “Gee whiz!”

00:14:13 Micky  
00:14:35 Jesse  
00:14:40 Micky

Guest  
Host  
Guest

*[They laugh.]*  
Y-yeah. Absolutely right. I ended up doing a lot of voice overs in the 70's over cartoons, and it was that same kind of thing. You know, it was—I was, like, always the kid named “Skip” doing Hanna-Barbera cartoons going, *[undulating his pitch up and down]*, “WOOAH! Oh no! Look out! Here we GOOO!”

*[Laughs.]* Tell me where you were, in your life, when you got the part on *The Monkees*.

I had gone back to high school, after *Circus Boy*. My parents, very wisely, took me out of the business. I had been offered another show, they told me, years later. But I was turning 13, going into puberty, and I—they sent me to a child psychologist. They said it was an educational counselor, but looking back now, I know it was a shrink. With Rorschach and all that. And I guess, you know, he must have *[laughs]* said, *[with an exaggerated, cartoonish German accent]* “You must take this child out of the business immediately!” Because, as we've heard, the horror stories—the problems come, with child stars, after the fact. Not during. During the, you know—during the success you're glorified, they love you, everybody loves you, and you're taken care of, cossetted. And then, all of the sudden one day, you're a has-been. You're out of work and you're just entering puberty, which is tough enough as it is. But now, you're not only entering puberty, but you're a has-been entering puberty!

And my parents, I don't know. They just, wisely—I guess with the aid of this child psychologist—said, “No, we're not gonna let him do another show. He's going back to school.” Public school, right off of the set. And I literally, one morning—one Monday morning—ended up back in junior high school—what they called it then—as a ninth grader, with my roots—my brown roots growing out from my blonde, bleached hair from the TV series.

And so, they threw me right back into the real world. And then, after high school, I went to college doing anthropology, psychology, a couple of other—I got into science, you know? I got into electronics and was really getting into science and building stuff and I—you

know, my father then passed away, the year after I got out of high school. Which did present some problems, obviously. And I was at a bit of loose end. I would be doing little guest shots. I had an agent and the agent would get me a little job on *Peyton Place* or *Mr. Novak* or one of these late-50's, early-60's shows. And—but my—but that wasn't my plan, you know. I was doing it kind of for summer money.

And a friend of mine said, "You know, we both like building stuff." Which I—we did, both of us, and I—you know, I had workshop even then. And he said, "Let's be architects! And start a little architectural firm." So, I enrolled into LA Trade Tech. I just got an honorary award. Not award. What do you call it? Honorary degree from them. I did about a year and half—two, three semesters—but in the summers, when I wasn't, you know, going to school, I would do these little TV shows. And, you know, guest shots. And—but I wasn't stupid. I mean, I knew the power of showbiz. I'd had a series. I knew how, you know, valuable and important and lifechanging it can be.

00:18:04 Micky Guest

And so, one pilot season in 1965 comes along. And my agent—I had an agent and I was going to school every day. And he would say, "Hey I got an audition for you, three o'clock on Thursday, blah [*drones unintelligibly*]."

Some I would go to, some I would say, "I'm sorry, I got a test." [*laughs*.] And I didn't. So, the Monkee audition comes along. I did, even at the time, sort of sense this was kind of different. Especially in the fact that you had to be able to sing and play—and act—to get into the audition or get through it. So, clearly they must have had in mind, at the time, that they were going to, kind of, you know—create this sort of, you know, real musical entity, I guess. My audition piece, on guitar, was "Johnny B. Goode" by Chuck Berry. I still do it, to this day. And then there was acting and scene study and improv. And the improv, I had the most trouble with. Mostly I'm uncomfortable. And I am still, to this day, with improv. 'Cause I was raised, you know, to learn the script, read the lines, and show up and do the scene and go home.

And so, the audition process was quite extensive. But my agent calls and says, "You got the pilot!" And I was in school, studying to be an architect.

And I said, "Great!" And I took off ten days, to do the pilot. And then I went back to school! [*Chuckles*.] Because I knew that nine out of ten pilots don't sell! And I wasn't gonna take a chance, so I went back to school, studying to be an architect. And then when we got the order for the first season—the 26 episodes, so the first season—I didn't—then I decided I better quit school.

00:20:03 Jesse Host

More of the *Bullseye* Holiday Special, still to come. Stay with us. Sy Smith, the McElroy Brothers, and other stuff! It's *Bullseye* from [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and NPR.

00:20:14 Music Music

Bouncy electronic music plays.

00:20:16 Jesse Promo

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00:20:51 Promo Promo

*[Music fades out.]*

**Music:** Cheerful music plays.

**Linda Holmes:** We're wrapping up 2019 on *Pop Culture Happy Hour* by looking at everything we saw and heard this year and choosing just 15 favorite things. Could be a song, a moment, a movie. Anything we think is the best of the best of the year. Hear our picks on *Pop Culture Happy Hour* from NPR.

00:21:10 Promo Promo

*[Music fades out.]*

**Music:** Cheerful banjo music plays in the background.

**Biz Ellis:** Hi! I'm Biz.

**Theresa Thorn:** And I'm Theresa.

**Biz:** And we host *One Bad Mother*, a comedy podcast about parenting.

**Theresa:** Whether you are a parent or just know kids exist in the world, join us each week as we honestly share what it's like to be a parent.

**Biz:** These are really hard questions!

**Theresa:** They are really hard questions!

**Biz:** *[Voice getting louder and more agitated]* I don't have any answers for that!

**Theresa:** I don't either!

**Biz:** *[Yelling]* Sack of garbage!

**Theresa:** I know!

**Biz:** *[Yelling in frustration]* Ahhhh! Ughhh! *[Laughs wildly.]* Ahhhh! The end of the show will just be five minutes of Biz—  
*[Theresa giggles.]*

**Biz:** —and Theresa crying and screaming until the outro is played. So, join us each week as we judge less, laugh more, and remind you that you are doing a great job.

**Theresa:** Find us on [MaximumFun.org](https://www.maximumfun.org), on Apple Podcasts, or wherever you get your podcasts!

00:21:54 Jesse Host

Welcome back to the *Bullseye* Holiday Special. I'm Jesse Thorn. I'm here, right now, with Micky Dolenz. He's the singer and



			drummer for The Monkees. When we talked, last year, the band had just put out their first ever holiday album. It's called <i>Christmas Party</i> . Let's listen to another song from it. This one's called "What Would Santa Do?"
00:22:12	Music	Music	"What Would Santa Do" from the album <i>Christmas Party</i> by The Monkees plays. Upbeat rock n' roll.  <i>"Bah humbug!" is the word that I'm hearing on the street Everywhere I go, there's a Grinch taking tinsel off a tree Tell me it's no good, tell me it's passé Tell me anything to take my cheer away Makes me wanna clench my fist and sock 'em in the mouth</i>  <i>What would Santa do?</i>
00:22:53	Jesse	Host	<i>[Music fades out as Jesse speaks]</i> I have a clip from the TV show, <i>The Monkees</i> , and it's from an episode called "The Monkees Watch Their Feet", in which you—Micky—are abducted by aliens!
00:23:06	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	<i>[Micky laughs.]</i> <b>Jesse:</b> In a classic Monkees storyline.
00:23:10	Jesse	Host	<b>Micky:</b> Yeah! So, we're about to hear, either you are on a—you've been beamed onto a flying saucer.  <i>[Micky giggles in the background as Jesse goes on.]</i>  You are then cloned by the blue-skinned captain and his assistant. Then your evil robot double is unleashed back into the world to spy on the other Monkees—Peter Tork and Michael Nesmith.
00:23:29	Micky	Guest	Right.
00:23:30	Jesse	Host	Let's take a listen.
00:23:31	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:23:32	Clip	Clip	<b>Davy Jones:</b> Hey Micky, isn't that a spaceship over there?  <b>Speaker 1:</b> That was the powerfully persuasive argument of the space alien.  <b>Speaker 2:</b> What does a spaceship look like?  <i>[Audience laughs.]</i>  <b>Davy:</b> Well I dunno! I never saw one before!  <b>Speaker 2:</b> Then how do you know it is a spaceship?  <b>Speaker 3:</b> He's right, man. Probably some new drive-in.  <i>[Audience laughs. Banjo music begins.]</i>  <b>Speaker 1:</b> Another way to recognize an alien, is to take note of strange behavior. Takes some notes on this next scene.

00:23:53	Clip	Clip	<p><i>[Audience laughs.]</i></p> <p><b>Robot Micky:</b> I love money. I'm here in enemy <i>[stuttering, voice strained]</i> head—headquarters. They have harmonic destructors here, like we do on Slavig and when they use them, they emit terrible—ah, horrible, sounds! They also have insufferable tortures here, on earth.</p> <p><i>[A phone rings.]</i></p> <p><b>Robot Micky:</b> Whenever a pussycat cries, they tear off its head!</p> <p><i>[Audience lets out some “ooh”s and “oof”s.]</i></p> <p><b>Speaker 1:</b> Definitely not.</p> <p><b>Robot Micky:</b> Then they holler in its ear!</p> <p><b>Speaker 1:</b> Oh no.</p> <p><b>Robot Micky:</b> Then they put the head back on the body. I don't know how it stays alive!</p> <p><i>[A discordant note plays.]</i></p> <p><b>Davy:</b> Micky? Who were you talking to, just then?</p> <p><b>Robot Micky:</b> No one.</p> <p><b>Davy:</b> Well, you're acting very strange, you know.</p> <p><b>Robot Micky:</b> I'm not acting strange; I'm acting perfectly normal. There's nothing strange about me.</p> <p><i>[A metallic screeching sound followed by a phone ringing. The audience laughs.]</i></p>
00:24:33	Sound Effect	Transition	<p><b>Robot Micky:</b> Don't tear off that cat's head again, I can't stand it! Music swells and fades.</p>
00:24:34	Jesse	Host	<p><i>[They both laugh.]</i></p>
00:24:40	Micky	Guest	<p>That is a lot nonsense for a television show in the mid-1960's. Ho-boy! A lot! But, you know, interesting you should say that. If you look back—and I've studied it. I've done lectures, now. People have asked me, you know, for years—you know, what was it? How was it? How did it happen? It wasn't that—if you look back, it really wasn't that—I don't know, what's the word? I guess surprising! Because the producers had made some very clever early-on decisions, when they were doing their bible. Which is the essence of a show.</p> <p>For starters—and funny enough, I was just listening to an interview you did with Eric Idle, who I know—have known for years. And he was talking about <i>Monty Python's</i>, and the mentioned how the humor was not topical. <i>The Monkees</i> humor was not topical. Nor was it satirical. And I think that's one of the reasons why <i>The</i></p>

*Monkees*—and *Monty Python* [laughs], and *I Love Lucy* and other shows—stand up for so long. Because they're not topical. And that was a conscious decision that the producers made. We're not gonna talk about anything in the news, this week. We're not gonna do anything too satirical.

It was another friend of mine—a guy named John Lennon—op! Did I drop that name?

00:26:02 Jesse Host  
00:26:03 Micky Guest

[Amused.] I'll grab it for you.

I got it. Um, who said *The Monkees* are like the Marx Brothers. And if you look at *The Monkees* show—the project, the whole thing—as this sort of half hour Marx Brothers musical movie, on television, everything makes a whole lot more sense. If you think of an old Marx Brothers movie, where everybody ran around and danced and sang and had a plot and there was a bad guy and good guy and people were doing silly stuff. And, you know, that scene you just played could have been right out of a Marx Brothers movie!

We were screened Marx Brothers movies, during the preparation process, for instance. So, it was not coincidental. I mean, there was some thought put behind this that the show would not be topical. It would not be satirical. 'Cause that would date it very quickly. And also, a very important point—I think—is that *The Monkees* were never successful. It was the struggle for success. 'Cause that, I think, is what endeared it to all those kids around the world, was that we represented all those kids in their garages and their basements and their kitchens and wherever. In their garage trying to be *The Beatles*.

And that is essentially what *The Monkees* show was about. This band that wanted to be *The Beatles*. And on the television show, we never made it. It was always the struggle for success that I think is, like I said, one of the things that endeared it to so many people.

00:27:38 Jesse Host

Did you want to be... loveable, Marx Brothersian goofballs? Or did you want to be cool rock stars, when the possibility that you actually maybe could be cool rock stars came up?

00:27:56 Micky Guest

In my case, it was—I woke up one day and the—I fell asleep one night as a working actor, entertainer, singer. You know, musician, 'cause I had to do all that. And I woke up in the morning as a cool rock star! [Laughs.] And I hadn't—I was like, "Woah! When did that happen!?"

It's kind of exemplified in a story I've told a bunch of times. During the—the show went on the air in September of '66. [Breaks into startled laughter. Jesse chuckles.] Wh-what—what century are we in, here? Uh. [Laughs.] In the, uh, in September of '66. And we'd been filming since June or July. And recording, of course, all the time. Day and night. I was doing most of the lead singing. So, I would go on the set from seven in the morning to seven at night and then have dinner and then go into the studio and record vocals. Sometimes two or three a night. 'Cause they needed so much material for the—for the television show.

And um, [clears throat] one—and then that, uh—that Christmas. That—this time, that year. '66. They gave us a hiatus to—the show'd been on the air since September. We'd heard that it was

doing very well. We'd heard that "Clarksville" had gone to number one, but we're working 12, 14 hours a day. In those days, of course, without social media and all that other kind of stuff, you know I get in my car in the parking lot and drive home and never see anybody. Never interact. The fans didn't know where we were or how to found—how to find us. You know. You just went home.

And that Christmas, I was gonna drive up to San Jose—where my parents and family lived, at the time—with my Christmas presents and have about a week or ten days, whatever it was, off. And a little hiatus. So, I get my little Christmas list together and I get in my car and I drive down to the local mall, there in the Valley, in Los Angeles—where I'd shopped every year, for decades, with my family. And I get out of my car with my little list, and I walk through the big glass doors. And all of the sudden, people come running at me screaming. And I thought it was a fire! [*Chuckles.*] And I'm holding open the door going, "Slow down! Don't run! Don't panic! It's—"

00:30:30 Micky Guest I literally did think it was a fire! And they were running at me! And I had to leave. I was really pissed off! [*Laughs.*] I had to go and give my Christmas list to my roadie and have him go do the shopping. Got in my car and had to go home. Well, that was the first inkling that I had of what was going on.

00:30:51 Jesse Host I mean, it sounds... neat, but it also sounds hard.

00:30:57 Micky Guest [*Chuckles softly.*] Oh, it was a lotta work! Oh boy. Each episode took three days. And then start the next one the very next day. And then we started rehearsing for the concert tour, 'cause they obviously had in mind that if this thing happened, they wanted us to be able to play or they would not have cast people that could! They wouldn't have bothered. They would have just cast actors and done it all, everything else—you know, kind of old school.

But they clearly had in mind that they wanted—they hoped!—that if the thing happened, if the show went, that we would go on the road and record. I mean, and—so I—and perform. And sure enough! You know, we did! And our first concert was in Hawaii, in Honolulu, at the HIC Auditorium. I don't know how many thousands of people were there. And I think that their plan was, "Well if we do it in Hawaii [*laughing*] and it doesn't work, no one will know!"

00:32:00 Jesse Host We'll have three weeks before news reaches the mainland.

00:32:03 Micky Guest [*Laughing.*] Yeah! That's right! But it did. And it was huge. Mike Nesmith, I think, put it very, very succinctly once. He said, "You know, at that point, Pinocchio became a real little boy."

00:32:16 Jesse Host Micky Dolenz, thanks so much for being on *Bullseye*!

*[Music fades in.]*

00:32:19 Micky Guest It was great to get to talk to you.

00:32:23 Music Music Well I hope that was okay for you guys! Thank you.

"I Wish It Could Be Christmas Everyday" from the album *Christmas Party* by The Monkees plays. Gently upbeat pop.

*When the snowman brings the snow  
Well, he just might like to know  
He's put a great big smile on somebody's face*

00:32:36 Jesse Host *[Music fades out as Jesse speaks]*  
Micky Dolenz. The Monkees holiday album is called *Christmas Party*. It's out now. Here's one more song from it, called "I Wish It Could Be Christmas Everyday"—a cover of the 1973 glam rock holiday hit.

*[Music fades out.]*

It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. It's our annual *Bullseye* Holiday Spectacular, this week. When the holidays roll around, we love to get some pertinent advice from our friends, the McElroy brothers. Justin, Travis, and Griffin are the hosts of the smash hit podcast, *My Brother, My Brother, and Me*—right here at Maximum Fun. They have joined me from their various disparate points across this great nation.

Travis, Griffin, Justin—welcome back to the show! Nice to have you.

00:33:29 Travis Guest Thank you. Thank you so much.  
McElroy

00:33:30 Griffin Guest And you—I treasure this. It's my favorite Christmas tradition.  
McElroy

00:33:34 Justin Guest Mm-hm!  
McElroy

00:33:35 Crosstalk Crosstalk *[Jesse laughs.]*  
**Travis:** Yes.

**Justin:** We've been doing it since we were toddlers, actually. And Jesse—a teenager.

**Travis:** Mm-hm.

**Justin:** *[Laughing.]* A local teen. Would come into our home—that's right. Jesse's 55 years old. He would come to our home.

**Travis:** Yes.

**Justin:** And ask us for holiday advice.

00:33:47 Jesse Host I mean, imagine. I—it's been my holiday tradition for many years, to travel the nation gathering questions for this! Even back when I was a teen!

00:33:55 Travis Guest Yes, that's why they called him Jesse Questionseed!

*[Justin laughs.]*

00:34:02 Jesse Host You just traveled the countryside collecting questions!  
Here's something from I Didn't Keep the Receipt: "So, I got my boyfriend a polaroid camera for Christmas, and it's already neatly wrapped and underneath the tree. However, today he told me he's planning to buy that same camera for himself. How do I convince him not to buy the camera without letting it slip that that's what I got him?"

00:34:21 Travis Guest Uh, last year I thought to get my wonderful niece, Charlie, this little—like—kid's camera. So, I called my older brother, Justin. I said, "Justin. Does she have this?"

And he said, “No, of course not!” And then we arrived at their home for Christmas, she totally did! So now, it’s going to be a future present for my daughter. So maybe you could regift this camera to somebody else. Or—I don’t know. Just say, like, “Hey, don’t buy that ‘cause [*sing-singing*] Santaaa.”

00:34:50 Griffin Guest That’s the traditional approach, yes.

00:34:52 Justin Guest Don’t buy anything, ‘cause Santa.

00:34:53 Jesse Host Have you guys tried using the Santa excuse with your romantic partners?

00:34:57 Justin Guest Unfortunately, Santa can’t bring the one thing my wife wants for Christmas. Which, uh, she—I’ve got her little note to Santa right here. [*The sound of a piece of paper being unfolded.*] It says she wants, “just, like, a second. Please, just one second.”

00:35:10 Jesse Host [*Laughs.*] You’ve only got two, right Justin?

00:35:14 Justin Guest We have two children. Which is so many.

00:35:17 Jesse Host Try upgrading by 50%, my friend. [*Laughs.*]

00:35:19 Justin Guest Now, Jesse, I can’t repeat your mistakes. That’s why the older generation is there! For my generation to learn from them.

00:35:27 Griffin Guest [*Jesse giggles helplessly in the background.*]  
You ever see that movie Misery?

[*Justin breaks into laughter.*]

‘Cause I feel like that could be a great solution to this problem.

00:35:32 Crosstalk Crosstalk [*Jesse laughs.*]  
**Justin:** [*Strained.*] What?!

**Travis:** Like tie your boyfriend down, break his legs so he doesn’t go buy a polaroid. But Griffin, you’re forgetting about one thing.

**Griffin:** Hm?

00:35:39 Griffin Guest **Travis:** [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com).  
Also, he kills her at the end.

[*Everyone laughs.*]

00:35:42 Travis Guest So don’t.  
[*Through laughter.*] Okay! Well, I guess you’re forgetting about two things, then.

00:35:45 Griffin Guest Yeah.

00:35:46 Justin Guest Return the camera. Get a tiny scanner, so—like—he can make those pictures relevant to this year in which we live, 2018 A.D.

00:35:54 Travis Guest Oh no, but Justin! What if the question asker returns the camera and gets the tiny scanner, but then the boyfriend doesn’t buy a camera and instead, I guess, also gets a tiny scanner?

00:36:05 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Jesse, Griffin, Justin, and Travis:** Ooooooh.

00:36:07 Justin Guest Oh, Henry!

00:36:09 Jesse Host [*Laughing.*] Okay, here’s something from All I Want for Christmas is Tunes, in Texas: “I love Christmas music—”

00:36:14 Justin Guest [*Interrupting.*] “I want a Zune to go with my polaroid camera, and…”

00:36:19 Jesse Host [*Laughs.*] And I hope they got the woodgrain. “I love Christmas music and I broke out my Christmas playlist at 12:01 AM on November 1<sup>st</sup>, this year.”

00:36:28	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	<b>Travis:</b> Wooow.
00:36:30	Jesse	Host	<b>Justin:</b> Wow. “My girlfriend, however, does not like Christmas music, because she’s worked in retail for so long and had to hear it all day, every day, during the Christmas season. How do I convince her to get onboard? Or at least to tolerate my Christmas jams?”
00:36:44	Justin	Guest	I have found, if you are willing to dig a little deeper—there’s a great movie about this called <i>Jingle Bell Rocks</i> —about the vast loads of Christmas music that have not become wildly over-played, over the years. And if you dig a little deeper? There’s some fantastic Christmas music—holiday music, however you wanna slice it—that is out there, that has not been, just like, done to death. That’s still very excellent, it’s just, like, not completely, 1000% overplayed, like some of the classics.
00:37:14	Jesse	Host	The director of that film is a past <i>Bullseye</i> guest! You can listen to a past <i>Bullseye</i> holiday special to hear more.
00:37:20	Justin	Guest	Here he goes. <i>[In mock frustration.]</i> Oh, god Jesse. Just, like, one segment without it. Come on, man.
			<i>[Jesse laughs.]</i>
			Come on. You know what I want for Christmas? Less wild self-promotion!
00:37:30	Travis	Guest	I want you to mindfully present in <u>this</u> segment!
00:37:34	Justin	Guest	Thank you!
00:37:35	Griffin	Guest	I tell you what they’re not blasting over the PA at Barnes & Noble, is traditional, nearly ancient Christmas hymns! Get some of those going, in there! I’m talking about these five stanza babies.
			<i>[Justin and Jesse laugh.]</i>
00:37:47	Travis	Guest	Oooh, yeeeeeah!
00:37:48	Justin	Guest	<i>[Through laughter.]</i> You can also go deeper into the classics, to get to some of the verses that maybe we don’t always get to. Do you know—this is an actual verse—I was recently reading the lyrics of “Jingle Bells”. This is an actual verse—
00:38:00	Griffin	Guest	Oh, it gets buck wild.
00:38:01	Justin	Guest	<i>[Singing “Jingle Bells”]</i>
			<i>A day or two ago, The story I must tell, I went out on the snow, And on my back I fell! A gent was riding by—</i>
00:38:09	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	<b>Travis:</b> <i>[Interjecting.]</i> What?!
00:38:10	Justin	Guest	<b>Justin:</b> <i>In a one-horse open sleigh. He laughed as there I sprawling lie But quickly drove away!</i>
			<u>WHAT?!</u>
			<i>[Jesse and Justin laugh.]</i>
00:38:15	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	<b>Justin:</b> <u>Excuse</u> me?!
			<b>Jesse:</b> Yeah, this is cruel!

**Justin:** You had an *America's Funniest Home Video* in the middle of "Jingle Bells" all these years, and nobody knew!

**Travis:** Anyways, Merry Christmas, I guess!

00:38:23 Griffin Guest  
*[Justin giggles.]*  
*[Seriously.]* That's how Dr. Atkins died. That's not funny.

00:38:30 Crosstalk Crosstalk  
*[Justin erupts into laughter, causing the others to chuckle too.]*  
**Travis:** Apparently it is to Justin.

**Justin:** *[High-pitched and strained.]* That is how Doctor—

**Griffin:** *[Amused.]* It's kinda funny.

**Justin:** *[Squeaking with laughter.]*—died!

00:38:35 Jesse Host  
*[Justin makes a long, breathless "oh" sound as he pulls himself back together.]*  
Here's something from Santa's Future Stepson: "Was Mommy really kissing Santa Claus, or was it just their partner dressed as Santa?"

*[Justin lets out a short laugh.]*

"Last year, I listened to the holiday classic, 'I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus' and had a realization that the reason Daddy didn't see Mommy tickle Santa was because Daddy was Santa. When I brought my finding to my friends, they said I was wrong, and it really was Santa that Mommy had smooched 'above his beard so snowy white.' Who is Mommy kissing?!"

*[Griffin laughs.]*

00:39:08 Griffin Guest  
00:39:09 Justin Guest  
00:39:10 Griffin Guest  
"Is Santa real and a homewrecker?! Or is Mommy just into Santa-play?"  
Aaah.  
Are they kidding?  
No, I—you can't say definitively whether Daddy is Santa. But I think we can all agree *[his voice drops to emphasize the innuendo]* that Santa is Daddy.

00:39:21 Justin Guest  
*[Everyone laughs.]*  
Thank you. Griffin has hit upon the possible third option, here.

*[Griffin giggles in the background.]*

00:39:27 Crosstalk Crosstalk  
Santa Claus is your dad!  
**Travis:** Yeeeah!

**Justin:** In this song, this person figures out—

**Griffin:** Oh, I was doing—I was saying it in the—I was saying it in the internet sex way, but yeah.



**Justin:** Yup! I—

**Travis:** In a sex-ual manner.

**Justin:** That—in a sexual manner. That’s possible. That—Santa’s a major daddy, we can all agree on this. There’s no argument here.

**Travis:** Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Justin:** I’m saying that maybe this song is from the perspective of a Fred Claus.

00:39:44 Travis Guest

Or an Arthur Christmas!

00:39:45 Justin Guest

Or an Arthur Christmas, thank you Travis—who finds out that he is, in fact, Santa’s son.

00:39:50 Travis Guest

Oooh, okay. Okay, here’s the pitch: call the movie *I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus*. Uuuh, a boy doesn’t know his father. His father’s never been around. Oh, what’s that? His father’s Santa. Greenlight, greenlight, greenlight. I’m thinking, uh, 15 mil. Uh, get back to me and let me know what you think.

00:40:09 Jesse Host

Was “greenlight, greenlight, greenlight” a series of greenlights in different media?

00:40:13 Travis Guest

*[Hesitating slightly.]* Yes.

00:40:14 Jesse Host

Film. Television. Full-motion videogaming.

00:40:16 Travis Guest

It was *[laughs]* film, television, and McDonalds toys.

00:40:20 Justin Guest

Did you all know that a live action version of this film was adapted in 2002, starring *[cracks a laugh]* uh, Connie Sellecca and Corbin Bernsen?

00:40:30 Crosstalk Crosstalk

**Travis:** What?!

**Justin:** Swear to god!

**Griffin:** Alright!

**Justin:** Hand to god!

**Travis:** Woah.

00:40:33 Justin Guest

They did a whole movie!

00:40:34 Travis Guest

It blows my mind to even consider that this song—

*[Justin cackles.]*

00:40:39 Justin Guest

That it’s not the person’s dad.

*[Voice strained from trying not to laugh as he reads the synopsis.]*

“After a boy sees a man in Santa Claus suit kissing his mother, he thinks that the real Santa wants to replace his father. So, he goes to prank war with him.”

00:40:48 Griffin Guest

*[Distantly, in the background.]* WHAT!?!

*[Justin laughs heartily.]*

00:40:49 Travis Guest

Wait, what?!

00:40:50 Griffin Guest

*[Cackling.]* Hell yeah!

00:40:51 Justin Guest

*[Through laughter.]* Excuse me?!

00:40:52 Travis Guest

How does that last longer than, say, one prank?

00:40:55 Justin Guest

Are you kidding me?!

00:40:57 Jesse Host

That’s a verse of the song I hadn’t heard!

00:40:59 Justin Guest Yeah! Apparently *[crumbling into laughter]* it's a prank war with Santa!

00:41:02 Griffin Guest Man. I will say this: Santa Claus, when he does his job in your house, makes himself vulnerable pretty much the entire time he's in there.

00:41:10 Travis Guest Yeah. I mean, his ingress is a, like, pit of fire! There's a lot of easy ways to kill Santa. I've thought about this a lot.

00:41:18 Griffin Guest Strange note to end on, but...

00:41:22 Justin Guest *[Jesse laughs.]*  
Here we are.

00:41:23 Jesse Host *[Recovering from laughter.]* Here's something from Distressed in DC: "Last year, when flying home, I was stopped at airport security because I had a wrapped gift in my carry-on bag. After being cleared as no threat to national security, I remarked to my girlfriend that it was weird they stopped me for that. She said, 'Everyone knows you can't bring a wrapped gift through security!' I disagree! My question is, why aren't wrapped gifts allowed? Surely they can still see through them with their x-ray machines."

*[Travis laughs.]*

"Emphasis, mine. I'm not using lead-lined gift wrap. Please, help me understand so I can put this behind me."

00:42:01 Justin Guest Are they checking it? Are they checking the wrapped gift?

00:42:05 Griffin Guest It's carry-on. They explicitly do say that.

00:42:07 Justin Guest Okay, good.

00:42:08 Griffin Guest I mean, this is the same sort of organization that thinks the pouches of apple sauce I try to bring onto the plane is actually two guns.

*[Justin and Jesse laugh.]*

00:42:19 Travis Guest So, let's not start bringing reason into it, now.  
I think the reason that the TSA doesn't like it is they see it and they think, "Oh, a present for me!"

00:42:25 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Griffin:** *[Gutturally.]* Awwwww.

**Travis:** And then you're like, "I'm taking this with me." And they're like, *[cartoonishly disappointed]* "Nooo."

00:42:29 Justin Guest Awww, gosh.

00:42:31 Jesse Host *[Laughs.]* Here's something from No Jolly in This Holly, in Tacoma, Washington: "Every year, we do a gift exchange on Christmas. But it's the same, boring draw the numbers, pick a gift deal. Every year. Any suggestions on how to mix up a holiday gift exchange—"

*[Griffin lets out a sudden, airy laugh.]*

00:42:52 Griffin Guest —so, people don't just fall straight to sleep when it's announced?"  
Well! You could, uh... toss your keys in, with your present!

*[Travis and Justin laugh.]*

00:43:00 Travis Guest Just tell everybody to do that. I think that would probably spice things up!  
Here's what you do: everybody brings two gifts. One gift is worth a lot of money.

*[Griffin hums in agreement.]*

And one gift is worth very little money. And then you build a big bonfire in the middle of the room. And everyone has to pick one of the gifts and the other one—at random—gets thrown into the bonfire.

00:43:16 Crosstalk Crosstalk

**Griffin:** *[Conspiratorially.]* Yessss!

**Travis:** And only the person who brought the presents knows.

**Griffin:** Ohh, that's good.

00:43:20 Jesse Host

What about something with an element of danger?

00:43:23 Travis Guest

*[Sing-songing.]* Ooooh.

00:43:24 Jesse Host

And what about a deadly creature, for example?

00:43:26 Crosstalk Crosstalk

**Griffin:** *[Softly.]* Yeah. I mean—

**Travis:** I like that. What about just a fight to the death? Where, say, you have 30 people and you only have 29 gifts?

00:43:33 Griffin Guest

That could be fun!

00:43:34 Justin Guest

You could go with a classic that our Nonny used to try to employ:

*[sing-songing rhythmically]* lott-o tick-ets!

'Cause you don't know how good of a gift it is, or how bad, it's just a scratcher!

*[Griffin hums in agreement.]*

00:43:45 Crosstalk Crosstalk

You don't know! Luck of the draw!

**Jesse:** *[Struggling for words]* Just—

**Griffin:** Schrodinger's gift!

**Jesse:** Justin, it sounded like you were trying to start a chant at a sporting event. *[Laughs.]*

**Justin:** Yeah, it didn't catch on, though.

**Jesse:** *[Sing-songing.]* Lott-o tick-ets!

00:43:55 Griffin Guest

*[They clap to match the rhythm of the chant.]*

Ummm, I like Jesse's idea! I think just load these things up chock-a-block full of asps. And I know a guy.

00:44:01 Jesse Host

*[Through laughter.]* Is it Mark Antony?

00:44:03 Griffin Guest

I can get you five asps, by the afternoon.

00:44:06 Crosstalk Crosstalk

**Justin:** You got a guy?! You gotta have an asp guy.

**Griffin:** Well, I got—yeah, I got a guy.

**Travis:** You gotta have an asp guy. Come on!

*[Justin laughs.]*

00:44:11 Griffin Guest

He prefers—he's more of an asp man.

00:44:15 Jesse Host

*[Laughs helplessly for a few moments before he pulls himself together.]* Okay, here's something from Sad Weeb, in San Diego:

00:44:29 Griffin Guest “Every year, my parents ask my siblings and I to make Christmas lists. My problem is, I’m a very big anime fan and all I really—”  
*[Interrupting loudly.]* End of question!

00:44:31 Jesse Host *[The other three laugh.]*  
 “And all I really want for Christmas is anime merchandise.”

00:44:36 Griffin Guest *[Justin giggles.]*  
 Hell yeah.

00:44:37 Jesse Host “However, one year I put an anime figurine on my list. My mom just glanced at it and said, “You don’t need that.” And then didn’t buy it. BOOOO!

00:44:44 Griffin Guest Boooo! Mooooom!

00:44:46 Justin Guest “Ever since then, I keep putting figurines on my list in hopes of them getting it for me, but to no avail. Help me, brothers: how do you convince my parents that a tasteful figurine of Victor Nikiforov from my favorite anime, *Yuri!!! on Ice*—”

00:44:47 Jesse Host *[Griffin laughs in surprise.]*

00:45:07 Griffin Guest “—is more important than socks or an ugly Christmas sweater?”  
 Now that—the title of that show is stylized with an exclamation point in there and, Jesse, I have to thank you for really voicing that.

00:45:14 Jesse Host I’m a professional, Griffin. *[Chuckles.]*

00:45:17 Travis Guest I think that what you do is, when you hand over the list, it’s only got one thing on it, and that’s the figurine of Victor Nikiforov. And then when they’re like, “No,” you just stand your ground and you don’t take the list back. And if they try to get you anything else, you build the bonfire.

00:45:31 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Griffin:** Mmm! Yeah.

**Travis:** And you throw it in the bonfire!

*[Justin laughs in the background.]*

**Griffin:** Get some asps.

**Travis:** Get some asps.

**Justin:** That’s a terrible idea, Travis. I don’t know how he’s supposed to play pretend with just one of the *Yuri!!! on Ice* figures.

*[Travis cackles.]*

**Justin:** He can’t make them do any—reenact any of their great  fights. Or, *[breaks on a laugh]* uh—ice skatings...

**Travis:** Or dance.

**Justin:** Dances.

**Travis:** Dances.

**Justin:** That are—any—here’s the thing. My email address is [justin@mbmbam.com](mailto:justin@mbmbam.com).

*[Griffin explodes into startled laughter.]*

**Justin:** Email me *[laughs]* and I will buy you whatever anime figurine you want. Don't rely on your family anymore. Rely on me, Justin McElroy.

00:45:59 Justin Guest **Travis:** Justin's your family, now. I'm your family, now, and I'm gonna buy you an anime figure this year. Congratulations. [Justin@mbmbam.com](mailto:Justin@mbmbam.com). Email me. I will buy you—and this goes for anybody who sent in this question that is this person!

00:46:09 Crosstalk Crosstalk

*[Griffin cackles.]*

**Travis:** Well...

**Griffin:** *[High-pitched and strained.]* Oh nooo!

**Justin:** I will buy you an anime figure of your *[breaks into wheezing laughter]* choice.

**Travis:** Hey, what happened to Justin? "Oh, he's broke, now!"

**Griffin:** Yeah.

00:46:18 Justin Guest **Travis:** "Broke now. Brought—bought 10,000 *Yuri!!! on Ice* figures!" No! Just this one person! If someone else has this exact same problem and sent in this exact same question, letter-for-letter, I will also buy them an anime figurine. I don't wanna leave anybody out.

00:46:27 Jesse Host Justin, I had the same problem, but it was with the original *Yuri*, before they put it on ice.

00:46:32 Justin Guest *[Snorts a laugh.]* Okay.

00:46:33 Griffin Guest *Yuri on the Rocks.*

00:46:34 Jesse Host *[Laughing.]* Yeah.

00:46:35 Griffin Guest I'll tell you—I think you can do a limited list but put your *Yuri!!! on Ice* figure on it and then the only other thing on the list is a big bag of drugs.

*[Travis hums sagely in the background.]*

00:46:52 Justin Guest It can just say, "Two pounds of any drug of your choice, Mother." And then it's up to them about the path you're gonna walk. Get it—get two thing. One, an anime figurine. The second thing you want is grandpa poison.

00:47:02 Jesse Host *[The other three erupt into laughter.]* Well, Justin, Griffin, Travis, I sure appreciate you taking the time to answer all these questions on the *Bullseye* Holiday Special. Have you guys got big holiday plans, this year for *My Brother, My Brother, And Me*?

00:47:13 Justin Guest This is actually it. This is kind of the capstone, for me.

00:47:16 Travis Guest I mean, I think that maybe Justin and I—and Griffin and I—might see each other, this year. Exchange presents. Ummmm... I think a few of our closest friends are gonna come to our *Candlelights* show, in Huntington. But I think that's about it. I think that's about all we have planned.

00:47:34 Justin Guest We're gonna—we're doing our annual charity fundraiser, [MBMBAMangels.com](http://MBMBAMangels.com), if you wanna help buy gifts and items for people in our area. Less fortunate folks in our area, we would sure appreciate that, too.

00:47:47 Jesse Host So, you can find that at [MBMBAMangels.com](http://MBMBAMangels.com)?

00:47:51 Justin Guest That's right!

00:47:52 Jesse Host Well thanks, guys!

[Music fades in.]

00:47:53 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Travis, Griffin, and Justin:** [Slightly out of sync.] Thank yoouu!

00:47:55 Music Music "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" from the album *Christmas Piano* by Brent Weinbach begins to play under Jesse. Slow piano music.

00:47:59 Jesse Host The piano music you're hearing right now is by our friend Brent Weinbach, by the way. He is a professional standup comedian. One of the funniest there is. A genuine, brilliant genius of standup comedy. He also, for many years, was a professional piano player. In fact, I think that he was one of those piano players who plays the giant grand piano in the Nordstrom department store?

Anyway! He has a collection of Christmas songs that he recorded on his piano, at home. It's called *Christmas Piano* and it's available to listen to pretty much anywhere you go, streaming-wise. So, here's comedian Brent Weinbach tickling the ivories in a distinctly not funny manner.

00:48:43 Music Music "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" continues uninterrupted for several moments, then fades out.

00:48:55 Jesse Host More from the *Bullseye* Holiday Special after the break. Stay with us! It's *Bullseye* from [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and NPR.

[Music fades out.]

00:49:05 Music Music Bouncy, percussive music plays.

00:49:07 Jesse Promo Support for this podcast and the following message come from *Behind The Irishman*: the official companion podcast for Netflix's new film, *The Irishman*. Co-star and comedian, Sebastian Maniscalco pulls back the curtain on how the film was made with director Martin Scorsese and co-stars Robert De Niro, Al Pacino, and Joe Pesci sharing their experiences filming the crime drama. *Behind The Irishman* is available now on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Stitcher, or wherever you listen to podcasts, with new episode drops every Monday.

00:49:41 Promo Promo [Music fades out.]  
[Music.]

**Paula Poundstone:** Hi, it's me, Paula Poundstone!

**Adam Felber:** And it's me, Adam Felber!

**Paula:** We have a podcast called *Nobody Listens to Paula Poundstone*. It's a comedy podcast where we bring on experts to teach us stuff we need to know.

**Adam:** Aaand by the way, the guy who came to tell us what to do when you encounter a bear never showed up.

**Paula:** Anyway! It's fun. You are guaranteed laughs in every episode.

**Adam:** You can't really guarantee laughs. What if somebody doesn't laugh? We'll get sued.

**Paula:** Join us for our next episode, when we have an expert in consumer law explain to us how to defend ourselves against one humorless litigious shut-in with enough time on their hands to sue us over our unfulfilled claim of guaranteed laughs in every episode!

Here at [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org).

*[Long pause as the music plays.]*

**Adam:** The cat of the week is Mabel from Green Bank, West Virginia.

*[Music stops.]*

00:50:26 Jesse Promo

Hey, it's Jesse. The year is drawing to a close and remember that now is the perfect time to give to your local NPR Member Station. You can make a difference in your community, keep public radio going, by giving at [donate.NPR.org/bullseye](http://donate.NPR.org/bullseye). Again, that's [donate.NPR.org/bullseye](http://donate.NPR.org/bullseye). And thanks!

00:50:49 Promo Promo

**Music:** "I'll Be There for You" by The Rembrandts plays.

**Sam Sanders:** The NBC sitcom *Friends* turned 25 this year and it's still here. Right now, it's one of Netflix's biggest shows. But does it hold up?

*[Music cuts out suddenly.]*

**Speaker 1:** The greatest failure, I think, of the show is that it's not funny.

*[Music floods back in.]*

**Sam:** What our enduring relationship with *Friends* says about us, next time on *It's Been a Minute* from NPR.

*[Music ends.]*

00:51:08 Jesse Host

It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. One more treat for you on the *Bullseye* Holiday Special: a segment we like to call "The Song That Changed My Life". It's a chance for musicians, artists, and other creators to tell us about the music that makes them who they are.

*[Music slowly fades in.]*

00:51:27 Music Music

This time, we're thrilled to welcome Sy Smith. "Perspective" from the album *Sometimes A Rose Will Grow in Concrete* by Sy Smith. Smooth, grooving R&B.

*Your love takes me higher  
I don't wanna zoom out  
I wanna keep it in perspective  
Your love feels like fire*

*I don't wanna burn out  
I'll keep it calm, cool, collected*

*Seems like every time we touch...*

00:51:51	Jesse	Host	<p><i>[Music fades out as Jesse speaks]</i> Sy Smith is a brilliant singer, songwriter, and producer who lives here, in Los Angeles. She's been recording soul records for over a decade and she's collaborated with folks like Kamasi Washington and Thundercat. She's also an incredibly talented backup singer.</p> <p><i>[Music fades out.]</i></p> <p>Name a great, she's sung with them: Sheila E., Chaka Khan, Usher, Whitney Houston.</p> <p>When we talked with her, last year, she'd just dropped a fun seasonal EP.</p> <p><i>[Music fades in.]</i></p>
00:52:17	Music	Music	<p>It's called <i>Christmas in Syberspace</i>. "Christmas Time is Here" from the album <i>Christmas in Syberspace</i> by Sy Smith. A slow tune with a deep beat under high vocals.</p> <p><i>Christmas time is here Happiness and cheer Fun for all that children call Their favorite time of the year</i></p>
00:52:36	Jesse	Host	<p><i>[Music fades out as Jesse speaks]</i> That's "Syberspace" with an S, by the way. Like Sy. Sy Smith.</p> <p><i>[Music fades out.]</i></p> <p>When we asked her about the album and if any of the songs on it had a good story we could talk with her about, on the show, she talked about "My Favorite Things". And, boy, she did not let us down. So, we won't waste any more time before we get into it. Take it away, Sy.</p>
00:52:55	Sy Smith	Guest	<p>The first time I heard "My Favorite Things" was in the movie <i>The Sound of Music</i>, of course.</p>
00:52:59	Clip	Clip	<p><b>Maria:</b> Raindrops on roses and whiskers on kittens.</p> <p><i>[Music cues in.]</i></p> <p><b>Maria:</b> <i>[Singing.]</i> <i>Bright copper kettles and warm woolen mittens Brown paper packages tied up with strings These are a few of my favorite things!</i></p>
00:53:13	Sy	Guest	<p><i>[Music fades out as Sy speaks]</i> I think the first time I saw <i>The Sound of Music</i>, I was about six or seven years old. I was in my mother's bedroom, watching it on TV in our apartment, in Hillcrest Heights, Maryland.</p>
00:53:25	Clip	Clip	<p><b>Maria:</b> <i>[Singing]</i></p>



*Cream colored ponies and crisp apple strudels  
Doorbells and sleigh bells and schnitzel with noodles  
Wild geese that fly with the moon on their wings  
These are a few of my favorite things!*

00:53:40	Sy	Guest	<p><i>[Music fades out again]</i> You know, that melody caught my ear because it was such a distinct melody. As a child, that melody just sounded like a dance, to me.</p> <p><i>[Maria continues singing in the background.]</i></p> <p>It just sounded like—<i>[singing along with the tune]</i> la dada, dada—it just sounded like a dance.</p>
00:53:59	Clip	Clip	<p><i>[Laughs.]</i> If a dance could sing, that's what it would sound like. <b>Maria:</b> <i>[Singing.]</i> <i>These are a few of my favorite things! When the dog bites, when the bee stings, when I'm feeling sad, I simply remember my favorite things, And then I don't feel so bad!</i></p>
00:54:17	Sy	Guest	<p><i>[Music fades out again]</i> Even on paper, when you look at it, it looks like a dance. You know? And the things that she was singing about were quite abstract, to me. You know? Cream colored ponies and, you know, like—I didn't know anything that she was talking about. I didn't know what a schnitzel was. But that melody made me wanna know, you know? <i>[Laughs.]</i></p>
00:54:36	Clip	Clip	<p><b>Maria:</b> <i>[Singing.]</i> <i>And then I don't feel so bad!</i></p>
00:54:46	Sy	Guest	<p><i>[Music swells to a conclusion.]</i> So, the next time that I heard "My Favorite Things" and it really, sort of, changed my life was when—I might have been about eight or nine. I had an aunt—my aunt Bobbi in Teaneck, New Jersey. She had a little radio in the kitchen and the Coltrane version came on the radio.</p>
00:55:03	Music	Music	"My Favorite Things" by Coltrane. An instrumental section that's slower and jazzier than the original.
00:55:15	Sy	Guest	<p>I didn't recognize it as "My Favorite Things", but she began singing it on top of the Coltrane version. And that's when it, sort of, resonated with me. That's when I went, "Wait! That's that song from the movie."</p> <p><i>[A long beat as the music plays.]</i></p> <p>I hadn't seen the movie repeatedly, so I didn't walk around singing the soundtrack of—you know, <i>The Sound of Music</i>. But when she sang it, it just reminded me of that song and all of the sudden—I don't know, like, it made sense to me. You know what I mean? Like all of a sudden, all of those, sort of, abstract concepts made sense. Like, "Oh, wow, I can just think of something that I really like and anything that's frightening me will go away."</p> <p><i>[A long beat as the music swells.]</i></p>

I wasn't listening to jazz, at all, when I was kid. And that was the thing—when she started singing this—on top of this? It made, all of a sudden, jazz accessible to me. I think, at that point, jazz was just, sort of, you know. Music that—that older people listened to. It wasn't something that I would go and put on the record player, you know? But when she started singing it, I was like, "Oh! Jazz is something that you can sing along to. Jazz is something that, you know, you can sort of interpret songs that you already know. Jazz is a—can be a template." That was, sort of, a new understanding, for me. Like, it was also—it was a discovery.

*[A beat as the music plays.]*

Everything about that song made me curious. The melody made me curious. When I started listening to really what those words were? That made me want to sort of embrace my own writing a little more. And so often I would replace those lyrics with my own, long before I did this. You know. My current project. I would always just, sort of, make up my own lyrics in that same pattern. Because I thought it would be cool to sing something that really resonated with me.

00:57:48 Sy Guest

Things that really were my favorite things, you know?  
*[Singing]* Jumping on something, swinging on playgrounds, la-dada, dadada, hanging a-around.

*[Speaking again.]* Like, it was probably really silly *[laughing]* like that. There was always something like that. Things that I really liked to do. *[Laughs.]*

00:58:24 Music Music

*[A long beat as the music plays and then fades out to be replaced by Sy Smith's version.]*

"My Favorite Things" from the album *Christmas in Syberspace* by Sy Smith. Gentle, tender piano playing in a way almost reminiscent of a soft, scattered rainfall under airy vocals.

*Raindrops on roses and whiskers on kittens  
Bright copper...*

00:58:35 Sy Guest

*[Music fades down as Sy speaks]*

So yeah, when I decided to do a Christmas project, I knew I wanted to record "My Favorite Things". It had been on my mind for 20 years. *[Laughs.]*

00:58:43 Music Music

*[Music increases in volume]*

*... with string*

*[Under the next line, a chorus of "la, la" begins]*

*These are a few of my favorite things*

00:58:49 Sy Guest

*[A steady beat joins in as the vocals become complex and multi-layered. After a moment, song fades down again]*

To finally sit down and record this song—it was the easiest thing to me, because I felt like I've been thinking about this for so long. So, it didn't take me long to, sort of—even rewriting the lyrics, that was, like—I did it in the car on the way to the *[laughs]* studio.

00:59:04	Music	Music	<p><i>[Music gets louder again]</i></p> <p><i>Shoes with fat laces and oversized glasses</i>  <i>Watching my people rise up from the ashes</i>  <i>Sharing a smile with that guy on the train</i>  <i>These are a...</i></p>
00:59:18	Sy	Guest	<p><i>[Music fades down again]</i></p> <p>And I didn't have to think too hard, because I think those items had been, sort of, running around my head on and off for the last 20 years.</p>
00:59:25	Music	Music	<p><i>[Music gets louder]</i></p> <p><i>Sun shining down on my sisters and brothers</i>  <i>Ladies and gentlemen...</i></p>
00:59:31	Sy	Guest	<p><i>[Music fades down]</i></p> <p>It—you know, whenever I sing this melody, I just immediately am transported back to my childhood. That—just because the melody, you know, Rodgers and Hammerstein, they just created something so beautiful, with that lilting melody. It just lilts, like a—like, I don't know, what <u>lilts</u> in nature? <i>[Laughing.]</i> You know?</p> <p>It just <i>[singing]</i> dadada, ba-da-la—it sounds like a stick figure just sort of becoming curvy, all of the sudden. You know what I mean? It just sounds like air all of the sudden becoming a form. You know? It sounds like magic. And I—and so when you sit at the piano and sing this, it's just liberating. It's just a lot of fun. I can't describe it any other way. <i>[Laughs.]</i></p>
01:00:30	Jesse	Host	<p>Sy Smith on the song that changed her life, "My Favorite Things". Sy's new Christmas record is called <i>Christmas in Syberspace</i>. You can stream it, now. In New York City, you can see her live. She's performing with the trumpeter, Chris Botti, every night at the Blue Note, right up until Christmas.</p>
01:01:07	Music	Music	<p>Piano music replaces "My Favorite Things".</p>
01:01:15	Jesse	Host	<p>That's the end of another episode of <i>Bullseye</i>. <i>Bullseye</i> is produced at <a href="http://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> world headquarters, overlooking McArthur Park in beautiful Los Angeles, California—where we want to take this holiday opportunity to thank everybody who has made life for people who live in and around McArthur park better. Folks like the LA Regional Food Bank, the Dream Center—who are out here giving out food, every week—LAMP, our friends at Art Division, around the corner. All the folks at Charles White Elementary School. All—everybody out there who's taking care of our friends and neighbors, this holiday season and all year long.</p> <p>The show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our producer is Kevin Ferguson. Jesus Ambrosio is our associate producer. We get help from Casey O'Brien. Our production fellows, Jordan Kauwling and Melissa Dueñas. Our interstitial music is by Dan Wally, also known as DJW. Our theme song is by The Go! Team. Our thanks to them and their label, Memphis Industries.</p> <p>And one last thing: there are <u>many</u>, many, many interviews in our archive, at <a href="http://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a>. Including conversations about the holidays with folks like Rob Halford of Judas Priest, Andy Richter</p>

from the *Conan Show*, Jane Lynch, the Polyphonic Spree, many more. We're also on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Just search for *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn*. You can keep up with the show there.

And I think that's about it. Happy holidays and remember: all great radio hosts have a signature sign off.

01:02:46    Promo            Promo

**Speaker:** *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn* is a production of [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and is distributed by NPR.

*[Music fades out.]*