

00:00:00	Music	Music	Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue.
00:00:01	Promo	Promo	Speaker: <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.
00:00:12	Jesse Thorn	Host	I'm Jesse Thorn. It's <i>Bullseye</i> .
00:00:14	Music	Music	"Huddle Formation" from the album <i>Thunder, Lightning, Strike</i> by The Go! Team. A fast, upbeat, peppy song. Music plays as Jesse speaks, then fades out.
00:00:21	Jesse	Host	So excited to welcome Geta Gerwig back to the show. This is her, uh... checking my watch—third time on <i>Bullseye</i> . A rare honor. Probably the greatest honor in all of <i>[laughing]</i> show business. Greta is, of course, an actor. She's starred in dozens of films. Films like <i>Frances Ha</i> and <i>20th Century Women</i> . She also had a regular part on the Adult Swim show, <i>China, IL</i> . In 2017, she wrote and directed the movie <i>Ladybird</i> . It's one of my favorites of—maybe my favorite movie of the past decade. A quiet movie about growth and change, told from the perspective of a high school senior living in Sacramento. <i>[Music fades out.]</i> And her follow-up is <i>Little Women</i> . <i>Little Women</i> , also <i>[laughs]</i> one of my favorite movies of the past decade or so. I think my favorite movie of the year. It's a retelling of the classic Louisa May Alcott book, beautifully shot and perfectly cast. And just incredibly <u>alive</u> . The plot revolves around the March family and their four daughters. It's set in the mid-1800s. The closest thing the movie has to a protagonist is Jo, one of the sisters. She's an aspiring writer. She's coming of age in Massachusetts, and in later scenes in the film, she is in New York, shopping her first manuscript. Let's listen to a scene from the movie with Amy, the youngest March sister—played by Florence Pugh. So, Amy is engaged to a rich guy. She doesn't <u>really</u> love him. And Laurie, who's played by Timothée Chalamet, is trying to convince her not to get married.
00:01:57	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:01:58	Clip	Clip	<i>[The sound of birds chirping in the background.]</i> Amy March: I have always known I would marry rich. Why should I be ashamed of that? Laurie: It is nothing to be ashamed of, as long as you love him. Amy: Well, I believe we have some power over who we loved. It isn't something that just <u>happens</u> to a person. Laurie: I think the poets might disagree. Amy: Well, I'm not a poet. I'm just a woman. <i>[Beat.]</i> And as a woman, there's no way for me to make my own money. Not enough to earn a living or to support my family. And if I had my own money—which I don't—that money would belong to my husband the moment we got married. And if we had children, they would be

00:02:41	Sound Effect	Transition	his, not mine. They would be his property. So, don't sit there and tell me that marriage isn't an economic proposition, because it is. Music swells and fades.
00:02:42	Jesse	Host	Welcome back to <i>Bullseye</i> , Greta. It's nice to see you.
00:02:44	Greta Gerwig	Guest	Nice to see you, too.
00:02:46	Jesse	Host	And congratulations on this movie, which is really great.
00:02:49	Greta	Guest	Thank you.
00:02:50	Jesse	Host	I had to contain my laughter at that quick "maybe the poets would disagree."

[Greta agrees.]

I mean—

[He dissolves into laughter and Greta chuckles and agrees again.]

I think in your two films, you've really dug Timothée Chalamet a hole—

[Greta cackles.]

—for insufferableness. But he is such—he is such a charmer. He pulls it off.

00:03:09	Greta	Guest	I know. I know. He's so game to say whatever. I mean, <i>[holding back laughter]</i> he really does say every single line I give him to say. He—I mean, he says it with the utmost sincerity. I did make him say that.
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[They laugh.]

00:03:22	Jesse	Host	His character, in your first film, was like a—was like a pretentious high school boyfriend.
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[Greta agrees.]

And I was shocked to read, today—and I wish I had read it before, when we talked about that movie—but I was shocked to read, today, that on set you were accused of being more like him than Saoirse Ronan's character.

00:03:44	Greta	Guest	<i>[Chuckles.]</i> Yes. I mean, it's funny, just in terms of where authors hide themselves. Which I definitely was playing with a lot, in <i>Little Women</i> , and looking where Louisa May Alcott is in different characters. But, in any case... I have some Kyle-like tendencies, I'd say. His whole paranoia about the government listening and—and "we bought tracking devices and put them on ourselves," that's all me. That's all my paranoias. And every time I gave—I gave Timothée a bunch of reading material for that character.
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And he said, "Why is it all underlined? And who made all these notes?"

And I was like, "Oh, it's—that's me! I'm—I'm *[chuckling]* worried about this." So, yeah. It was a way for me to articulate some of my own anxieties in a character that no one would rightfully think belonged to me. And, yeah. And I do think, for me, when I looked at

Little Women, it—Louisa really breaks herself into a lot of different characters, including their father who—she has him go to war, but in fact it was her who went to war, as a civil war nurse.

It's just—I always like that thing of author's hiding themselves. I think it's interesting.

- 00:04:59 Jesse Host *[Greta agrees several times as Jesse talks.]*
I mean, one of the things about *Little Women*, as a book but especially as a film—and in your film, as well—is it's like... you know, it comes from a time when novels were still figuring out what novels were. And so, it has that quality of blurred lines between what is memoir-ish and what is real. And then, besides that, it is—you know—you've filmed it as a story that is, essentially, about the writing of the book.
- 00:05:56 Greta Guest
And *[laughs]* you know, you're putting all that on film. Like, I was shocked—I was—I was struck, as I was watching the movie, how important the object of the book is, in the movie. In more than just the traditional, like, we're telling a story—here's a book opening and a page turning, like in *Winnie the Pooh*, or whatever.
Or in *Princess Bride*.
- 00:05:58 Jesse Host *[They laugh.]*
Yeah. Which, you know, no shade. Those movies rule.
- 00:06:12 Greta Guest *[Greta agrees.]*
But how did you start thinking about, like, the relationship between real life, the novel, the story you wanted to tell, and the object?
First of all, I can say I am shocked that this movie exists in the form that it does. It was, as a piece of writing—and then as a piece of filmmaking, as an undertaking—incredibly complex and not at all a straight-down-the-middle pitch that you might necessarily think that this would be. And I wrote this script that was kind of collapsed the space between Louisa May Alcott and Jo March, but then also was playing with this idea of... *[sighs]* it's both past and present, then there's this sheen of, "Is that past or is fiction?" And then there as another layer of fiction that gets added.
- But I felt like that was, in some ways, the only way that I could adequately address what I found to be narratively reflexive, anyway, about the book—that there was a kind of meta-ness to the book, in any version. I mean, I grew up reading the book and I love the book. And I loved Jo March and Jo March was the reason that I wanted to be a writer. I thought I could be a writer, but—I had completely blocked out the part of the book where she stops writing! And in the book, she stops writing at the end! She says she stops up her ink stand and becomes a wife and mother and opens a school.
- And I didn't internalize that! Because the very object you're holding—the book—seems to be contrary to that narrative. You're holding something. Someone wrote it. And you, kind of, make the leap of, "It was Jo." Even though you know Jo's not real, but as a kid, that kind of fiction and reality's a little fuzzy, anyway. And then,

when I read it and it—as an adult, and then I started researching Louisa May Alcott and it—and it felt so modern and pressing, and there’s all these ways where I realized I kind of unconsciously gleaned the spirit of Louisa. *[Laughs.]* Even though Jo takes a different path. So, Louisa never got married, never have kids, but she did write that book and she kept her copyright.

So, that’s the thing that you know without knowing you know. And, in any case, it felt like the right way to address all of these multiplicity of authors and this, kind of, complexity of, “What is the thing that happened and how are you receiving it?”—was to create something that was kind of cubist, in nature, and explode the narrative and put it back together.

00:08:43 Greta Guest

I don’t know what anyone really thought I was doing with it.

[They laugh.]

I think they—I think they kind of knew. Definitely Amy Pascal knew, and my actors knew. But I think there was a bit of, um, some shock when I—*[laughs]* when I unveiled what it actually was. I always had the timeline structured the way I did. And I—everything was there, but I think just how clearly it becomes, like, a nesting doll of narrative—I don’t think was totally obvious, until I showed the first cut. *[Chuckles.]*

00:09:15 Jesse Host

I mean, when you started this—like, I think it’s easy to receive this as a natural, period prestige film from an Oscar nominated director that’s, like, the next—the next move in a big career. But you started this—when you started this project, you weren’t even really a filmmaker, as far as anyone that you were trying to convince you were a filmmaker was concerned.

00:09:42 Greta Guest

That’s right.

[They laugh.]

Yeah, no—I was—well, I had written *Ladybird*, but I hadn’t directed it. And so, I—when I tucked myself into Amy Pascal’s office, I... had no credentials, at all, really.

00:10:00 Jesse Host

And the reason that you wanted to be there was specifically because—

00:10:04 Greta Guest

For this.

00:10:05 Jesse Host

—you had, like, just heard, “Somebody is thinking of making *Little Women*, it’s gotta be me.”

00:10:10 Greta Guest

Yeah, no—I had heard, sort of secondarily through my agent—who was talking about something else, and then I had just reread *Little Women*, and I had this idea for how I wanted to do it, but I... but because, as of yet, I hadn’t written and directed something solo, I had no—I didn’t then go figure out how to put that in motion, but then I heard they were, you know, thinking of doing it. Because it had been 25 years or 20 years, at that point. But...

And so, I tucked myself in and I—and initially, they were all—they only said, “Write it.” They didn’t say, *[laughing]* “Kid, go—you can direct this.” That came later. But they did... say that I could write it. And I have to say that that’s—it’s always hard to be the first people in the pool, you know? I’m very grateful that they gave me that opportunity. So, then I wrote—I would say three or four drafts of this

script. And then I went away directed *Ladybird*. And then by the time *Ladybird* was out in the world, then they came back and said, “Would you like to direct *Little Women*?”

So, it was a bit of leapfrogging. It wasn’t like, “Aaah! Now I’ve done this! Now I shall expand!” It was—it—the way it unfolded was slightly different. But I’m glad it unfolded the way it did, because it was a big undertaking with a lot of scope. And I don’t think I would have—*[sighs]* I don’t know that I would have been able to—I mean, I certainly know it would be a different movie. Maybe it would be better. We’ll never know. But...

00:11:43 Jesse Host

Did you go in there and say, “You know how you’re making this movie that necessarily will cost at least tens of millions of dollars—”

[Greta laughs.]

“—just because of the amount of money you have to buy—you have to spend on petticoats, or whatever.”

[Greta agrees.]

“I’m thinking cubist, with this.”

[They laugh.]

Like, was that part—was this structure—was taking apart all these pieces to get at the themes... um, all the narrative pieces, to get at the themes, was that part of what you talked to them about?

00:12:14 Greta Guest

Yes. I did talk to them about this when I initially went in to talk to them about writing it. I would say the thing I *[laughing]* leaned on more heavily, when I was describing it, was this sense of—I wanted to both deliver on the pleasures of *Little Women* that we know, collectively, and it’s—it’s two things. It’s the pleasures from the book, but it’s also the pleasures of all the adaptations. Like, this sense of—it’s been interpreted, so it’s gone into the collective consciousness. So, I wanna make sure, you know, we gotta have Marmee and the girls piled together, reading that letter from father. Because we know that image. We have to see it!

And, also, we need to subvert it. Because I can’t—you know, this is how—this is my idea. So—but I was like, definitely it will be a little—we will see all the things we love. But then I’m gonna do this other thing. But I think in some ways, because I was not hired to direct it at that point—and even though I really wanted to direct it, I think I had a lot of freedom in my writing, because part of me thought, “No one’s ever gonna let me do this. Like, they’ll never—this will never come to me.” Which is a—I think a good state to be in when you’re writing, because it makes you not worry at all about people saying yes if you just assume no one’s gonna say yes, so you can do what you want. *[Chuckles.]*

And that’s how I wrote it. So—but I think if I had had a—in a way, maybe if I’d known, I would have—I would have done something quote, unquote “safer”.

[Greta agrees several times as Jesse talks.]

00:13:53 Jesse Host I think there is also a pleasure that is promised by the film's title that is delivered in the movie, which is purely aesthetic. Like when you're making a period film, part of what you are typically offering is a rich aesthetic experience that is, like—you know. There are period films where part of it is about how miserable the past was.

[Greta chuckles.]

00:14:35 Greta Guest Which it mostly was, as far as I can tell. But, like, generally—you know—you want to look at—I want to look at beautiful dresses and quilts and *[chuckling]* fireplaces.
Yeah, no, I—it's true. I actually did an interview yesterday with Der Spiegel and—which is the—the journalist who interviewed me was wonderful and, you know, I often find people who—for whom English is a second language, they just use the exact right word. But she said something that I was like, "Oh! Well, that's—that's great and I'm gonna steal it from you."

She said something about the abundance in the movie. And that was exactly what we were going for. Like, this abundance of dresses and food and locations and love and emotion, that it kind of is overflowing. And I think, you know—I mean, with the movie, one of the reasons I wanted to shoot on film, which we did, was to answer that thing of what you want when you sit in a film that you know is gonna be a period film.

I didn't want it to feel nailed to the floor. I didn't want it to feel heavy. But I did want it to be deeply pleasurable and overflowing. So, it was kind of finding this lightness, but this fullness of the world. And that was the—what—with my incredible costume designer, Jacqueline Durran and Jess Gonchor, who did my sets, and Yorick Le Saux, who was my DOP—creating that kind of—that bigness and then the—also, the ability to move through it with something like a pizzicato feeling.

00:16:03 Jesse Host Yeah, I mean that is something that impressed me a lot about the movie, which is when you get this kind of richness or abundance, to borrow Der Spiegel's—

00:16:15 Greta Guest *[With a mild German accent.]* Der Spiegel!

[They laugh.]

00:16:16 Jesse Host Shout out to Der Spiegel! And all our friends in Europe. But, did Le Monde have anything to say about this at all?

[He laughs as Greta answers.]

00:16:24 Greta Guest I don't know. I didn't really—*[stammers]* I don't know, I mean I should check.

00:16:30 Jesse Host But like, with that abundance often comes a formality and stiffness.

[Greta agrees.]

And it feels like you were making choices at every turn to avoid the formality and stiffness, which is particularly interesting, because the script—like the language in the film is not only representative of the time, but often literally drawn from the book or from other writings and stuff.

00:16:58 Greta Guest That's right. Yeah. A lot of the language is verbatim from the book—or from her letters or other books. I wanted to, as much as I could, treat the text like something sacred that we don't—we don't unnecessarily mess with and that, you know, I've had the privilege of seeing a lot of really wonderful productions of Shakespeare. And there are times when you listen to it, and it's just—it flies off the stage. Like, you can't believe how modern it sounds. And suddenly you understand it. It, like, it clicks. It's like a light goes off and then when you see, you know, maybe a not so great production you're like, "I literally have no idea what they're [*breaking into an airy laugh*] talking about! I don't know what's happening."

And I felt like when I was looking at this text and this book, so many of the lines, I just thought were so modern and believable that I wanted to hear them, sort of, in a—in a way that felt electrifying. And then other lines are so famous and are written, you know, embroidered onto pillows and every, you know, women from so many generation know them. So, I wanted the girls to move through them with this speed and alacrity, which was—it was the excitement of life! Of being a teenager! Of being the first person in the world to say these words.

And I think that that was how, in a funny way—I wanted to find the—what was modern and fresh and alive about it by not altering it where I didn't need to. It was almost—by being classical about it, I was able to find what was—what was new. Because it's eternal.

00:18:44 Jesse Host [*Greta agrees several times as Jesse talks.*]
I feel like you having broken the timeline into pieces and mixed everything together, deemphasizes the grand sweep of story. It felt, to me, like it emphasized the feelings and themes in the, like, moments. You know what I mean? In a—in, like, the—both the, like, overarching themes and the feelings of seconds.

00:19:19 Greta Guest And I wonder if that was part of your goal, in breaking it up that way?
Yeah. Well, I mean there are a few plot things about *Little Women* that, you know, you must hit—which I, you know, did. In the kind of—when it goes in one direction of, like, Beth's illness. Two times—she gets sick, she gets better, she gets sick... and doesn't. The rejection of Laurie, you know, where they go—actually, in the book, the first ten chapters have no... underlying plot. They're all episodic. They're episodes from their childhood. And then it isn't until chapter 11 when this kind of undertow of a plot starts to kick in.

And part of that has to do with—speaking back to, you were saying they were trying to figure out the form of the novels—Louisa wrote the first ten chapters, sent them to the publisher and said, "Mm, I don't know. [*Chuckling.*] I don't think these are good." Which I took and put in the movie.

And then he was like, "No, no, no." His nieces read them. At first, he was—he didn't think [*laughing*] it was very good, either.

And then his nieces read them, and it was like—they were like, "What—this is great! Like, I want more of this!"

So, then he said, “Okay, keep writing.” And then she—you can see the plot kick in.

Or, like, the bigger plot that’s gonna be the plot of the book. And that’s—that kind of undertow starts happening, but what I thought was... [sighs] I mean the difficulty is—[chuckles] and this is why—and I feel like every answer I have is so long and complex, but that’s how I feel about this text. Because it’s satisfyingly, obviously constructed. Like, you can see the hand of the author. You can see where she was like, “Okay, I’ve gotten chapters which are episodic, now I’m gonna start doing the plot.” And then, because it was published in two parts, the—you know, the first part is 1861-1862, Christmas to Christmas. And then the second half of the book—it skips many years, which is where I start in my narrative and go back to that first part. And then you can see her being like, “I have to marry Jo! [Chuckles.] So, I’m gonna invent this semi-awful German man to have her marry.”

00:21:30 Greta Guest

But... I like, you know—unlike certain works of art which feel like they’re utterly seamless. I mean, there’s some novels that feel like that. When you read it, they feel like they were, kind of... delivered whole. *Little Women’s* not. And I like that sense of seams. Which is another reason why I was... able to sort of explode it and put it back together and feel good about that.

But that sense of this episodes and then it—the plot undertows—I think sometimes when you try to make a, you know, another thing out of it—whether it’s a movie or something else—that the plot to hang your hat on is the marriage plot. That’s the one! That’s the thing that you can say, “Well, as long as we know that the marriage plot is going on, then we can let these girls fall on the ice and stuff.”

And so, what I wanted to do with the—this kind of putting the publisher scene up front, and he says, “If there’s a—you know, the main character’s a girl. I want her married or dead by the end.” It kind of, it kind of allows me to call attention to the fact that we’re gonna do the marriage plot as a device, but then what actually is happening is that these episodic moments of childhood become this rush of almost Proustian memories that then she’s reconstructing. That’s all to say, yes the plot is tricky in this. But yeah.

I think sometimes what you end up doing is you want it—you wanna Jane Austen-ify it and make it just the marriage plot. And that feels like not why girls love it.

00:23:21 Jesse Host

We’ll finish up with Greta Gerwig when we come back from a quick break. Stay with us. It’s *Bullseye*, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

00:23:29 Promo Promo

Music: Upbeat music with a steady drumbeat.

Guy Raz: What’s it take to start something from nothing? And what does it take to actually build it? I’m Guy Raz. Every week on *How I Built This*, I speak with founders behind some of the most inspiring companies in the world. NPR’s *How I Built This*: listen now.

[Music fades out.]

00:23:47 Promo Promo

Music: Gentle, upbeat piano music.

Helen Hong: Hey, J. Keith.

J. Keith van Straaten: Hey, Helen! I hear you have a true/false quiz you want me to finish!

Helen: I do! Here we begin: We host a trivia gameshow podcast on the MaxFun network called... *Go Fact Yourself!*

J. Keith: True!

Helen: Correct! The show is all about celebrity guests answering trivia questions about things J. Keith enjoys.

J. Keith: False. We sometimes don't talk about baseball or cats.

Helen: Thank god. It's questions about things they enjoy! Next, we bring on surprise experts every episode.

J. Keith: True!

Helen: Correct! Final question: It's just the two of us sitting alone with these guests.

J. Keith: False.

Helen: Correct! We have a live audience at the Angel City Brewery!

[Audience cheers and claps.]

Helen: See?

[A bell dings.]

Helen: You can hear *Go Fact Yourself* every first and third Friday of the month, and if you don't listen, you can go fact yourself!

J. Keith: True!

[Music finishes.]

00:24:34 Jesse Host

Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. I'm talking with Greta Gerwig. She is, of course, the writer and director behind the great films *Ladybird* and *Little Women*. *Little Women* is up for six Academy Awards, this year—including Best Picture, Best Actress, Best Supporting Actress, and Best Adapted Screenplay. She should have been up for Best Director. Let's get back into our conversation.

So, you have Meryl Streep in your movie. I'm gonna play a Meryl Streep scene.

[Greta agrees and laughs.]

00:25:05 Greta Guest

Meryl Streep, for people who don't know, is the best actor. *[Chuckling.]* If you've been living under a rock.

[Jesse laughs and agrees.]

Yeah.

00:25:09	Jesse	Host	<i>[Greta agrees several times as Jesse talks.]</i> So, Meryl Streep is Jo's aunt. And she is independently wealthy and lives by herself. And her, you know—she seems to spend a—some of her time not being sure what to do with herself and some of her time getting into fights with Jo that she seems to get a kick out of.
00:25:30	Greta	Guest	They like it.
00:25:31	Jesse	Host	Yeah. So, anyway—this is the two of them, together.
00:25:36	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:25:37	Clip	Clip	Aunt March: Is there a reason you stopped reading Belsham? Jo March: I'm sorry. <i>[A thump.]</i> I'll continue. Aunt March: <i>[Beat.]</i> You mind yourself, dearie. Someday you'll need me, and you'll wish you had behaved better. Jo: <i>[Flatly.]</i> Thank you, Aunt March, for your employment and your many kindnesses; but I intend to make my own way in the world. Aunt March: <i>[Laughing airily.]</i> Oh, well! No, no one makes their own way. Not <u>reeeally</u> . Least of all a woman. You'll need to marry well. Jo: But you're not married, Aunt March. Aunt March: <i>[Interrupting.]</i> Well, that's because I'm rich. Music swells and fades.
00:26:06	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:26:07	Jesse	Host	<i>[They both laugh.]</i> There's just a couple of Meryl Streep scenes. <i>[Greta agrees.]</i> I understand that she inserted herself into the film on the basis of having the same kinds of strong feelings about <i>Little Women</i> that you have.
00:26:21	Greta	Guest	That's right!
00:26:23	Jesse	Host	When you have Meryl Streep in your movie in a supporting role, how do you make a movie that is not a <i>[laughing]</i> Meryl Streep movie?!
00:26:35	Greta	Guest	I know, it's really hard. No, I mean— <i>[sighs]</i> I mean, she's the greatest actress of all time, perhaps, because... she is never not a star, but she can also serve exactly what you need in the moment. So, you know... it was exactly the right amount of Aunt March. It was what she needed to be for the movie. And it's completely impactful. And it was funny, actually, the first time I watched—you know, I work—when I edit, I edit straight through. I start—I will sit down—I was in the editing room the day after shooting, and you sit down and I say, "Alright, put up—let's see that first image! Let's start cutting from the beginning!" And you cut all the way through and you—and I don't really go back.

And then—and then I go back and then I refine. Anyway! The first time I watched it all the way through, she’s a huge impact in the movie! In a very economical amount of space, which is why she is the greatest.

00:27:39 Jesse Host *[Greta agrees several times as Jesse talks.]*
It’s like she comes in and, you know, hits an oil drum with a baseball bat, is what it feels like. Like, it leaves a dent.

00:27:46 Greta Guest No, she’s, um—she’s definitely the designated hitter. She’s—

[They laugh.]

00:27:54 Crosstalk Crosstalk She’s not—she doesn’t need to field.
Greta: She’s just coming and clocking that over the green monster!

00:27:59 Jesse Host **Jesse:** Comes in—right!
Really good extended metaphor.

00:28:00 Greta Guest Uh, thank you. But she—yeah. You know, she loved the books. She had a very strong feeling about it. She knew we were working on it. She said she wanted to be Aunt March. And she was very helpful to me, as a mind to bounce stuff off of, because I would—I met with her, I—we had lunch and we talked about the book and we talked about women and we talked about what it should be. And she’s so smart! I mean, she’s just so smart and some of the things she said, I just stole directly and put in the movie.

00:28:51 Jesse Host I will say, as a writer, having great actors is the thing you—you can never give them enough credit for a thing working. *[Chuckles.]*
Because they clarify—they clarify what you’re trying to do for yourself.

00:28:51 Jesse Host Every actor in the film—including, like, Timothée Chalamet, whose character is a little bit of a dissolute dope for much of the film.

[They chuckle.]

00:29:28 Greta Guest All of the film. But, like, every character—the quality that I would say they all share, every one of the performers, is incredible warmth. And I wonder if you chose these people—I mean, I guess maybe Bob Odenkirk wouldn’t be the first person I thought of for that. Uh...
Interestingly, *[slowly dissolving into laughter]* it was the first person I thought of!

00:29:32 Jesse Host You—*[laughs]* you were—you were just thinking of that “Teaching by Billiards” sketch from *Mr. Show*.

00:29:37 Greta Guest Yeah, exactly. No, I mean I always knew I wanted someone who was like an—

00:29:43 Crosstalk Crosstalk *[Jesse laughs loudly in the background.]*
Greta: —had something comedic, deeply in them.

Jesse: Sorry, I’m thinking about that—thinking about that bit “Teaching by Billiards”.

Greta: Oh my god. He’s amazing. *[Laughs.]*

Jesse: I just thought of *[barely able to speak through his laughter]*—“Mr. Fasthorse! Not like his name at all. Real slow-like.”

00:29:56	Greta	Guest	<p>No, he's—he's incredible. And I—but I always knew I wanted someone like that for Father, because I wanted it to be that <u>thing</u> when Father comes home—I wanted it to be like, "Oh, your dad is Bob Odenkirk?! Of course, you miss him!" And also, it allowed me to do the thing that I always inherently felt, with Mr. March, which is that he is—in that Jane Austen way of being one of those fathers that's like a little checked out about the proceedings of the goings on in his own house, but also likes his daughters a <u>lot</u>. But also, is kind of, you know—when he checks in, it's a bit like, "Oh, you've missed the <u>entire</u> plot!" But it's slightly—it's, yeah, it's slightly comedic. And I always—I just, I thought he would be perfect. It just made me so happy every time I thought about it.</p>
00:30:45	Jesse	Host	<p><i>[Greta agrees and says, "I know," several times as Jesse talks.]</i> I—but, I mean like, Chris Cooper—you could hardly find a warmer, sad actor than Chris Cooper, in the history of the world. Uh, Laura Dern. Like, all you—when you look at Laura Dern onscreen, all you want in the world is for her to just, like, put your—put her arm around your shoulder and, like, nod and smile a little <i>[laughs]</i> at you. You know what I mean?</p>
00:31:22	Greta	Guest	<p>But it all—it all reinforces that feeling of home and hearth—that, like, pile of girls reading the letter feeling that is so essential to the film.</p> <p>Yeah. I mean, I think—it's funny, I never thought about it as there's no real antagonist, until people started bringing that up to me. And I was like, "Oh, yeah! They're... right. There isn't." I guess, for me... I don't know. With all movies, but particularly with this story, it felt like the thing was—I wanted people to want to crawl inside the screen and live there with these people. And... I don't know. All—directors are all different, but for me, like, I need to love my actors. Like, I need to feel like I—I mean, because <u>I'm</u> spending all this time with them, too. And so, um—I pick people that I love and then I hopefully shoot them lovingly. And then everybody gets a big warm feeling!</p>
00:32:21	Jesse	Host	<p>I mean, it's not the only thing I'm interested in, but certainly with this story, it was a big part of it.</p> <p>It's <i>Bullseye</i>. I'm Jesse Thorn. I'm talking with Greta Gerwig.</p>
00:32:38	Greta	Guest	<p>So, as you mentioned—the structure of the film and the structure of <i>Little Women</i> hangs on the question of marriage.</p>
00:32:39	Jesse	Host	<p><i>[Greta agrees.]</i></p> <p>And you set that up right at the—right up top.</p> <p>Yeah, married or dead.</p>
00:32:48	Greta	Guest	<p>Yeah, married or dead. Do you intend the story in your film to end ambiguously? In terms of marriage?</p> <p>I do the end of the book, on the one hand. And then I do the end of life, on the other hand. I always find that question actually—sometimes I'm asked, you know, in Q&As they're like, "But what <u>really</u> happened?"</p> <p>And I'm like, "<u>This</u> is all fiction!"</p> <p><i>[Jesse agrees.]</i></p>

I don't even know what the ontological reality of that question is, in terms of—you know—I mean, I definitely had an idea behind it of real and fiction, but the fiction is just as real as the real, because it's all constructed anyway. But, you know, maybe it's my—like—*[chuckling]* Christopher Nolan spinning top, at the end. Like, was it a dream? I don't know. *[Laughs.]*

00:33:27 Jesse Host

Greta Gerwig, I have so loved both of your movies and I'm so grateful that you came back here to talk about this one. It's a real—it's a real achievement. And, uh...

00:33:37 Greta Guest

Thank you.

00:33:38 Jesse Host

It's really something.

00:33:39 Greta Guest

Thank you! It was so fun to talk again!

00:33:42 Jesse Host

Greta Gerwig. *Little Women* is so great! You have to go see it! It's still in theaters! It's also nominated for six Academy Awards, including Best Supporting Actress, Best Actress, Best Adapted Screenplay, and Best Picture. Will it win?! You can find out! Sunday, February 9th on ABC, on a television show called: *The Oscars*.

00:34:03 Music Music

Laid back, jazzy music.

00:34:07 Jesse Host

That's the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye* is produced at MaximumFun.org world headquarters, overlooking McArthur Park in beautiful Los Angeles, California—where the city of Los Angeles is planting some new plants! And they appear to be mostly native! So, hey. Shout out to the city of LA. And while we're at it, shout out to the county of LA! They do good work, too.

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 are Jordan Kauwling and Melissa Dueñas. Our interstitial music is by Dan Wally, also known as DJW. Our theme song is by the band The Go! Team. Our thanks to them and to Memphis Industries, their label, for letting us use it.

And, one last thing. We have decades of interviews on this show. We've had three very different conversations with Greta Gerwig. Why not go back and listen to my conversation with her about *Ladybird*? Or! Go back a little further and listen to my conversation with her about her acting career. She is a cool lady.

We're also on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Just search for *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn*. You can find it on any of those platforms. All the interviews on this show and all of our interviews from the past few years are on YouTube, if you wanna go browse around our YouTube channel.

I think that's about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature sign off.

00:35:34 Promo Promo

Speaker: *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn* is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.

[Music fades out.]