

00:00:00	Clip	Promo	<p>Jesse Thorn: <i>[Somber]</i> Hi. It's Jesse, the founder of MaxFun, coming to you from the microphone at my home office, where I am socially segregating.</p> <p>So, we promised you a MaxFunDrive this week, but things... <i>[suppressing a grim chuckle]</i> haven't exactly gone how we expected. So given the pandemic, we're gonna postpone this year's Drive. Events are still fluid, so we're hesitant to give you specifics about new dates. Right now we have late April penciled into our calendars. We'll keep you posted about that.</p> <p>As it stands, a lot of our Drive machinery was already cranked up. So, for one thing you might hear a reference or two to the Drive in our shows, which might have been recorded before we made this decision. And here is some good news: there's a bunch of great bonus content available for <u>all</u> of our MaxFun members. If you're a member and you missed the email with instructions on how to listen, check your spam folder or log in at MaximumFun.org/manage. Also at MaximumFun.org/manage, you can change your membership if your circumstances have changed. We know this is a tough time for a lot of people, and we understand. You can also go to MaximumFun.org/join at any time if you'd like to become a member.</p> <p>During the next couple weeks, what <u>would</u> have been the Drive, we are going to do our best to be extra available to you. We've got some streaming events planned, some social media stuff. We know a lot of folks are isolated right now, and we wanna help provide comfort in the best ways that we know how. You can follow us on social media, and we'll let you know what's up.</p> <p>During this tough time, I have been feeling really grateful for my community of colleagues here at MaxFun. And for you, the folks who make our work possible. Goofy as that work may sometimes be. Stay safe out there. We're thinking of you.</p>
00:02:01	Music	Music	Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue.
00:02:03	Promo	Promo	Speaker: <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.
00:02:13	Jesse	Host	<i>[Music fades out.]</i> I'm Jesse Thorn. It's <i>Bullseye</i> .
00:02:15	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.
00:02:23	Jesse	Host	Jason Segel has had a lot of interesting roles, over the years. He's usually the best friend type: maybe a little corny, always very endearing. He got his start onscreen in his late teens. He starred alongside James Franco and Seth Rogen on the short-lived cult show, <i>Freaks and Geeks</i> . And from there, a bunch of other roles.
			<i>[Music ends in a chorus of cheers.]</i>
			<i>How I Met Your Mother, I Love You, Man, Knocked Up.</i> Just to name a handful. But he's also a very talented writer. He wrote and

			<p>revived <i>The Muppets</i> for a new generation. And his first writing gig was the feature film, <i>Forgetting Sarah Marshall</i>. He also starred in the film. It's sort of a romantic comedy. In it, he portrayed struggling musician, Peter Bretter. The film starts with a breakup and it ends with a musical about Dracula.</p>
00:03:11	Music	Music	<p>Dramatic piano music.</p> <p><i>DRACULA:</i> <i>And if I see Van Helsing,</i> <i>I swear to the Lord, I will slay him!</i></p> <p><i>[Someone laughs in the background. Dracula laughs in time to the music.]</i></p> <p><i>He take you from me,</i> <i>But I swear I won't let it be so!</i></p>
00:03:24	Jesse	Host	<p><i>[Dracula laughs in time to the music again.]</i></p> <p>Jason Segel's latest show is kind of a departure from all that. He's very proud of it. It's called <i>Dispatches from Elsewhere</i>. It's airing right now, on AMC. It follows the lives of a group of regular people who discover a hidden world. It's mysterious and earnest and sometimes a little silly. Jason is the show's creator and the star of the series. He plays Peter—a lonely, complacent man who's been slowly suffocating in the mundanity of his life. This all changes when he stumbles onto a life-changing opportunity offered by the enigmatic Jejune Institute.</p>
00:04:09	Sound Effect	Transition	<p>But before all that, he's just Peter. In this clip, his therapist confronts him on what he really hopes to get out of their sessions.</p> <p>Music swells and fades.</p>
00:04:10	Clip	Clip	<p>Peter: <i>[Muted.]</i> I guess I'm just settling into the idea that this is it. That this is what life is. I don't really have anything to say about that, yet.</p> <p>Therapist: You feel stuck.</p> <p>Peter: I feel nothing, mostly. <i>[Beat.]</i> Maybe, like, a sense of loss, but I don't... know for what.</p> <p>Therapist: <i>[Beat.]</i> Don't you think it's time you found out?</p>
00:04:35	Sound Effect	Transition	<p>Music swells and fades.</p>
00:04:36	Jesse	Host	<p>Jason Segel, welcome to <i>Bullseye</i>. It's so nice to have you on the show.</p>
00:04:39	Jason Segel	Guest	<p>Hey, thanks! I'm really excited to be here.</p>
00:04:41	Jesse	Host	<p>I was thinking about the show as I was watching it, last night, and thinking—you know, you got your break in showbusiness with adolescent emotional crises.</p> <p><i>[Jason chuckles.]</i></p> <p>Kind of rose to stardom on quarter-life emotional crises. And your finally engaging with the mid-life emotional crises.</p>

00:05:03 Jason Guest Yeeeah. That sounds right. And I think that, in a lot of ways, all that's happened is—like—the same devices that I used to express those things have become [*chuckles*] slightly more sophisticated.

[*Jesse laughs.*]

You know, when I was [*laughing*] when I was 25, all I could manage was, like, the literal version of exposing yourself.

[*They laugh.*]

And now, as I've gotten older, I've sort of delved into metaphor. Does that make sense?

00:05:35 Jesse Host It does make sense! I mean, you did—very literally—I was—I was taking a walk yesterday, with my dog, and listening to a conversation you had with Terry Gross on *Fresh Air*—

[*Jason agrees.*]

—10 or 12 years ago, when the big Jason Segel news in the world was private parts on movie screens.

00:05:54 Jason Guest [*Chuckling.*] Yeah! Well, to me it was like—well, you know, it's actually interesting. I was sort of making a joke, but... so, one: that was me trying to lay myself bare. Like, how honest am I willing to be onscreen. For a 24, 25-year-old, that felt like full-frontal nudity was the answer to that question. Like, "Look. I'll be totally—I'll lay myself bare, onscreen." But the other thing that I wanted to do with that moment—there was some artistic merit to it. And that... one of the things I never liked about romantic comedies is that you know the inevitability of [*chuckles*]*—the guy is gonna end up with the girl on the poster. That's what's gonna happen. And you know it, going in.*

But I thought, when I was writing it, if I open this movie with full-front male nudity, from the lead, you're sort of forced to sit back and say, "I don't know what's gonna happen in this movie. Like, anything could happen." And it sort of does, you know. It ends—we meet, like, the inevitability, but also it ends with a lavish *Dracula* puppet musical, and another dose of full-frontal nudity. Those same sort of throw-you-off-guard techniques, I try to use in *Dispatches*. Where we open with a really, really uncomfortable moment. It's just the 40-year-old version of that.

[*Jesse chuckles.*]

And also, the whole show is an exercise of me trying to lay myself bare, onscreen. And I try to do it for all the characters in a much more—you know, there are scarier things than being naked. That's like—I think, at my age, it's a little scarier to feel like, "Oh, I'm 40 and I have no idea what I'm doing."

00:07:40 Jesse Host Part of what I wondered about this show is that you had had a period of—you know, for an actor or a showbusiness person, generally—you know, relative stability and security. I mean, you had had some successes in films, but more than that, you were the star of a long-running, successful sitcom. Which is pretty much the best job in showbusiness.

[Jason agrees.]

00:08:09	Jason	Guest	As far as jobs go. You know what I mean? [Chuckles.] Like—
00:08:12	Jesse	Host	Yeah, yeah. No, it's hitting the lottery, for sure.
			Yeah, like, it pays good and it's regular and if it's the kind of show—like <i>How I Met Your Mother</i> , the show that you were on—that is successful enough that it feels like a success most of the time, you know, it's stable in a way that almost no other showbusiness work is. But, you know, that ended eventually. And I wondered if you having had this job that everyone would reasonably tell you is the best job in showbusiness—and having had, you know, artistic successes that were, you know, dream jobs—making a <i>Muppet</i> movie and stuff like that, as well, during that time, were there—when that ended, it led you to evaluate, “Uh oh. What do I do with my... with my calendar [chuckles] when I don't have a read-through every Tuesday?” Or whatever.
00:09:08	Jason	Guest	[Chuckles.] The crisis was bigger than what I do with my calendar. If, you know, like—I mean, truly. It was a—it was a really interesting moment, because I think one of the things that you're forced to evaluate after—all of the things that you described are true, about doing a job like that. So, then... then you're left with, like, a question. The stability continues. Like, you've made a bunch of money. You know? So, you don't, now, have to—you're not scared about paying your bills. And you get to choose what you wanna do next. And you're sort of faced with the question of, “Am I going to make choices about trying to stay famous or popular or any of those things? Or am I going to now use this amazing gift I've been given of stability to be brave and try stuff I've never tried?”
			Try to be—try to be the same guy who ended <i>Forgetting Sarah Marshall</i> with a lavish <i>Dracula</i> puppet musical where I was like, “I don't know if this is gonna work, but I sure think it's cool. And I think other people might think it's cool. And let's try it and see what happens.” I guess—I don't know that artistic bravery is built on stability. You know what I mean? I think it's—there's a—there's a really great clip called “David Bowie, Advice to Artists”. It's like two and a half minutes long. You just google it. And he says that when you're operating out of your comfort zone, you're probably not making anything interesting. But if you walk a little bit further into the water, so your feet aren't touching the ground anymore, that's maybe when you're gonna be in some territory that might—I don't know—that might be art.
			And, for me, I was—like, the whole time I was making <i>Dispatches from Elsewhere</i> , there was a little part of me that thought, “Oh! I mean, this might not work!” And that was really exciting. It was—it made me hungry to make sure I was really thinking about what I was trying to accomplish and how to execute it best.
00:11:25	Jesse	Host	Were you afraid that it wouldn't work?
00:11:27	Jason	Guest	Yeah! Of course. Absolutely! The thing is that when you—I created it, and so you have to believe more than anyone. Because, I mean, there's just a million “no”s along the way, anytime you're trying to make something. It's hard and it's expensive and all of these things. So, publicly, I'm just like, “Yes! I know. Trust me. Believe me.” But, yeah. In my—in my guts I was—I was definitely scared that it might

not work. And I watched the ten episodes—it's the thing that I'm most proud of that I've done in a decade.

And there are some people for whom it won't work. Some people are going to, I think, die-hard love this show and think, like, "Oh, this is what I've been looking for." And then other people will think, "Oh, this is silly." And I don't know. I'm, like—I'm okay with that. I'm pretty excited about that, actually.

00:12:31 Jesse Host
00:12:36 Jason Guest

What was the consequence that you were afraid of, if it didn't work? The same thing everyone's afraid of. That people are gonna make fun of you. That's the culture that we live in, is that if you try something earnestly and boldly that you might be embarrassed. Somebody might embarrass you. Luckily, I... I don't seem to have a very highly developed sense of pride or shame around things like that.

[Jesse laughs.]

And I'm, like—I'm happy to act as a surrogate *[laughs]* into those territories, you know?

00:13:13 Jesse Host

[Jason agrees several times as Jesse speaks.]

I wanna play—so, the first thing that you did on television, and the thing that established your career—you'd acted in a few films already, when you were in high school. But the thing that really made your name and career was the television show *Freaks and Geeks*. And on one of the DVDs, there was the—you know—camcorder footage of your audition for the part of Nick Andopolis, which you played.

00:13:41 Jason Guest

Oh! Okay. I didn't know that.

00:13:44 Jesse Host

Yeah. *[Chuckles.]* Yeah. This is a scene that is him explaining to a girl he likes—

00:13:54 Jason Guest

[Softly, with dread.] Oh no.

00:13:55 Jesse Host

—about the drum set that he has in his basement.

[Jason makes a sound of relief.]

And again, this is like—this is audio just from a prosumer video camera in the audition room.

00:14:05 Jason Guest

Got it. Am I improving this, does it sound like? Or is it scripted? I guess we'll find out.

00:14:10 Jesse Host

It sounds like you might be adding a little flair, but it sounds like it's scripted.

00:14:13 Jason Guest

Okay. Okay.

00:14:14 Sound Transition

Music swells and fades.

00:14:15 Clip

Nick Andopolis: Lindsey, I brought you here because, uh, I want—I wanna show you something.

Lindsey: What is it?

Nick: *[Takes a deep breath.]* Alright. Check it out. Uh... this is it. 14 manic tongs, 6 floor tongs, 10 cow bells, 4 rise, 5 snares, man, with roto-tong system. It's all mounted on the, uh, patented Ken Miller quadric kicker on this system, man.

[Someone laughs.]

Lindsey: Wow, Nick! That is amazing!

Nick: Nice. 6 more pieces and I'll have a better—I'll have a better than Neil Peart in Rush.

[They laugh.]

Nick: You know, the king?

Lindsey: Wow.

Nick: You know what I'm saying?

(I've flagged the things I'm most worried about but with the combination of my complete void of knowledge about drums, the bad audio, and the way he mumbles, I'm not really all that confident about anything in this clip.)

00:15:01 Sound Effect Transition

Music swells and fades.

00:15:02 Jesse Host

It's really sweet. You do a great job. You can see why you got the part.

00:15:05 Jason Guest

I—yeah, I also hear—I hear Paul Feig—that's Paul Feig laughing and he's being—that's being so generous. *[Chuckling.]* You know what I mean?

[Jesse laughs in surprise.]

00:15:18 Jesse Host

Like, I'm okay. It's not that funny, but he's really—he's really making me feel comfortable.

00:15:19 Jason Guest

He's such a sweet man.

00:15:22 Jesse Host

Yes, he's such a sweet man.

What I like about watching that audition clip is—you know, there are a few moments—and it's hard to hear, in the audio of it, but you can see it very vividly in the video. You're playing to the house a little bit. There's a few moments where you kind of milk laughs.

[Jason agrees.]

00:15:49 Crosstalk Crosstalk

But the overall vibe is that sort of deeply, almost painfully—**Jesse and Jason:** Earnest.

00:15:51 Jesse Host

Jesse: And sincere.

And it's like watching—it's like watching the show, the version of that character that ended up on the show, but—like—before somebody said to you, like, "Don't do any jokes at all." *[Chuckles.]* You know what I mean?

00:16:03 Jason Guest

Yeah, yeah. Well, that's—yeah, that's the thing about auditioning, which is what I never loved about it, is that you're like—you're specifically trying to impress people. And, to me—to me the real challenge of acting, I've learned as I've gotten older—and this is just from being around people who I think are really good at it and watching people who I really admire—the big challenge is when the camera is looking at you, not to give in to trying to impress it. That's—that, to me, is everything. It's like, "Are you willing to just be

00:16:49 Jesse Host honest when the camera is asking you to do something? Don't do it." Does that make sense?

00:16:52 Jason Guest Yeah! I mean, it's a terrifying prospect.
Yeah, because the—without like—all of the sudden, when somebody was just taking a picture with their camera phone, *[laughing]* you do, like, this weird face! Like, this smile that you don't do in life. Or you do a weird pose. Like, you know, all of that instinct is going through you when the camera's on you, like, "I should—I should be... this is forever! You know, I should be trying to impress whoever's watching this." And the people who I really, really admire who I watch are able to resist that impulse to show off.

00:17:24 Jesse Host Was that a lesson that you had to learn as an 18-year-old or however old you were when you started making *Freaks and Geeks*?

00:17:31 Jason Guest Yeah. I think that the big challenge that Judd presents you with is how honest are you willing to be onscreen. And I've, like—what is the most honest version of a teenage guy singing to his girl, in the basement? Don't give me the sketch comedy version, give me the painful one. You know? The one that makes you so uncomfortable, because you're like, "That's me." I've sort of taken that lesson throughout my career. I'm just trying to do the most... st-stripped down version, maybe!

00:18:07 Jesse Host More with Jason Segel still to come. When we come back from a quick break, we'll talk with Jason about how he works humor into the tone of a show like *Dispatches from Elsewhere*. It's *Bullseye*, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

00:18:19 Promo Promo **Music:** Upbeat music.

Speaker 1: This week, on NPR's Invisibilia, we take you to a summer program for teenagers—with sleepovers, marshmallows, and racial confrontation.

Speaker 2: I want you to all line up by skin tone. Lightest to darkest.

Speaker 1: That's up next, on NPR's Invisibilia.

00:18:39 Jesse Host *[Music ends with a clash of cymbals.]*
Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest, Jason Segel, starred for years on the TV shows *Freaks and Geeks*, *How I Met Your Mother*, and more. He created and stars in a brand-new series. It's called *Dispatches from Elsewhere*. It's airing now, on AMC.

You know, when I was listening to that interview from a decade or so ago that you did with Terry Gross, one of the things you talked about was that—at some point, I think on *Freaks and Geeks*—Judd Apatow told you that what was special about you, as a performer, was that you read as—I'm paraphrasing, but that you read as sweet enough that you could really go really far toward the line of being creepy.

[Jason agrees.]

00:19:27 Jason Guest And people would still accept it and be on your side. *[Chuckles.]*
Yeah. It's—it has been my sweet spot, *[laughs]* unfortunately or fortunately, for better, for worse—is this fine line between charming

and creepy. Where, like—I mean, there are parts in—this is just being self-aware, but like there are parts in *Forgetting Sarah Marshall* that could veer into, “Oh, get away from this guy.”

[They laugh.]

00:19:53 Jesse Host You know? Like, Mila Kunis should run!
And, in some ways, that is, like, in dialogue with romantic comedy, which is a genre that is about—that is substantially about guys that women should *[laughing]* get away from!

00:20:03 Jason Guest Yeah! I think somehow, *[chuckles]* I managed to project some—*[laughs]* version of, like, “Oh! Eeh, it’ll be fine!” *[Giggling.]* Like, “No, give him a shot!” You know, meanwhile I’m like, doing this lavish *Dracula* puppet musical in a weird voice and crying hysterically. But I guess, you know, for some reason it seems like, “Oh, take care of that guy!”

00:20:33 Jesse Host *[Chuckles.]* That lavish *Dracula* musical is maybe the signature moment of *Forgetting Sarah Marshall*—which is a great movie.

[Jason thanks him.]

00:20:43 Jason Guest And I say that as somebody who hates Draculas.
00:20:47 Crosstalk Guest You hate—? Wait, Draculas, plural?
Jesse: Yeah.

Jason: You hate vampires.

00:20:49 Jason Guest **Jesse:** ‘Cause they’re dangerous.
00:20:50 Jesse Host You hate vampires.
00:20:51 Jason Guest I hate Draculas, yeah.
No—*[laughing]* Dracula’s an individual. Vampires—vampires are the—
00:20:57 Jesse Host Type of guy. No, it’s a type of guy and they have fangs.
00:21:02 Jason Guest *[Laughing.]* Those are vampires! Dracula’s just one guy. Count Dracul.
00:21:07 Jesse Host *[Beat.]*

00:21:10 Jason Guest *[Brightly, as though not getting the joke.]* Yeah, he’s a Dracula.
00:21:14 Jesse Host *[Laughing.]* Oh, man. We’re gonna have to agree to disagree.
So, it’s a—it’s a beautiful movie. It’s one of my faves.

[Jason thanks him.]

And this song at the end of it is—grew out of—in the film, it is this quixotic project that this guy is—has been working on, to write this very sincere and intense musical about Draculas.

[Jason stutters into a laugh.]

00:21:40 Jason Guest It is, at the end—
00:21:41 Jesse Host Yeah, alright.
00:21:42 Jason Guest S-sorry? No, go ahead.
00:21:45 Jesse Host No, it’s Dracula. It’s just one Dracula.
No, you’re right. The musical is just about the one.

[Jason chuckles.]

And, so—like—it occupies this strange space at the—in the conclusion of the movie, which is like—if it's not—if it's not good enough or earnest enough, it can't feel like a triumph for him to do it.

[Jason agrees.]

But if it's too good and too earnest, it's not a triumph for him to do it unless it's so good that it's extraordinarily good. You know what I mean? Like, the triumph here is that he's doing it even though, maybe, it's not that good.

00:22:19 Jason Guest

Yeah. See, I think—so here's what I think the recipe is. And I think that this really plays into *Dispatches* as well, and I'm not trying to segue. I just think there's a parallel.

[Jesse agrees.]

That... I actually think that you can and must go full earnest. Like, that is the real challenge. Because that is where real discomfort lies. And then, where I agree with you is modulating how good something is. Right? Because that's what makes it funny. But the discomfort, I think, comes from... what if I present this to you—discomfort/magic—with no sense of irony? And so, that area is really, really interesting to me. *Muppets* I did with no sense of irony. Like, I am not commenting on *The Muppets*. I'm—I love *The Muppets*. That's why I devoted two years as a grown man—right after *Forgetting Sarah Marshall*—to *The Muppets*. And there's something about that that is, like, "Oh! Woah! That's, like, kind of... why?!" You know?

00:23:34 Jesse Host

Well, that—I mean, that is also, like—that is also the nature of *The Muppets*, is that *The Muppets*—*The Muppets*, in a way, like, ironize this classic—these classic Hollywood tropes by approaching them sincerely, but also being puppets.

[They laugh.]

00:23:56 Jason Guest

Yeah. Well, Draculas, yeah.

[Jesse giggles.]

I think that there's something about... hm. We're really uncomfortable when the other's shoe's not gonna drop. Like, we're waiting for it.

[Jesse agrees.]

As an audience, culturally. Maybe it goes back to that thing we were talking about, about that you're afraid of being made fun of, right? You're just... what if it's just nice? Or what if something is just beautiful? It's a very uncomfortable territory. And so, in *Forgetting Sarah Marshall*, to watch this guy up there who really believes in this thing is uncomfortable. And I think—I think that's really interesting. I think there's something about *Dispatches* that is very challenging. Because I just mean it. Like, I think, "What if there was magic and what if it required us to make it and what if we started just making this world better by taking it into our own hands and

using art and community and magic as an act of defiance? And I mean it, and I'm not making fun of it. Come join me."

It's challenging. I found—I found the real experiment that I'm—you know, it was—this thing actually happened that I'm profiling in *Dispatches from Elsewhere*, in San Francisco in—like—2012. Where this guy—this group was the exact opposite of *Fight Club*. As oppose to handling this feeling of dissatisfaction with society by beating each other up, they chose to make magic [*chuckling*] in the secret of night. Like this clandestine organization committed to beautification. And I found the whole thing, like, really challenging and uncomfortable. When is someone gonna make fun of you? Or when is someone gonna try to sell you something? Oh, they're not?!

I don't know, it's—I think there's something really interesting there.

00:26:02 Jesse Host

[Jason agrees several times as Jesse talks.]

When you do your Dracula song in public, which you do on occasion...

[Jason chuckles.]

00:26:33 Jason Guest

You know the audience finds it hilarious, because it's from a movie that was very funny. It requires you to commit pretty fully, emotionally, to the song. And it's a song you wrote. Is it—do you ever want to just be like, "Hey, can we just do this one straight, guys?" [*Laughs.*] Like, to the crowd?

Yeah, do you know why—you know why that all works, ultimately, in *Forgetting Sarah Marshall*? Or why it's interesting for me to sing? Because I didn't write it for *Forgetting Sarah Marshall*. I wrote it when I was out of work, from 22 to 25, trying to figure out what to do with my career. And I believed that I had cracked it. [*Laughing.*] That what I was gonna do was write a lavish *Dracula* puppet musical and it was going to be, like, really, really successful.

[Laughs.] And I believed it to my core! And I wrote it! I wrote the thing! And I went and I played it for Judd, and he listened respectfully and then said, "You can't ever show this to anybody. Ever."

[They chuckle.]

He was very protective of me! And then it was later, when I got to put it into a comedy, that it made sense. But what—the reason it works is because when I sing it, it's true that I believed that that thing was really great. Like, I still do! I think it's great.

00:27:38 Jesse Host

[Jason agrees several times as Jesse speaks.]

That's the part that I'm getting at, here, is I know that if you worked that hard on something that means as much to you as those *Dracula* songs meant that even with the benefit of the 15 or 20 years that have passed, since, and the knowledge that it was a great, you know, capper on a movie you made that was a comedy. And it was a comic capper. You still have to be up there with a part of you being like, "But, guys! It is a pretty good song! I wrote it!"

00:28:19 Jason Guest It's a—it's a good song! It's really about how hard it is [*chuckles*] to be—
Yeah. Yes. I mean, 100%, yeah. I have some level of self-awareness that what feels vital to me feels funny to others.

[*They laugh.*]

00:28:37 Jesse Host [*Jason agrees several times as Jesse talks.*]
So, when you're making *Dispatches from Elsewhere*, how do you manage the funniness? There is some funniness in the show. But how do you manage the funniness so that you—'cause it—the earnestness of *Dispatches from Elsewhere* is real! And it's yours. Like, personally as a human being and artist. You're not presenting it as, "Isn't it funny that I—that I really believe this?" Much less, "Isn't it funny that this is dumb?"

00:29:17 Jason Guest So, how do you—how do you manage the tone? Like, was that something you had to figure out in writing and making it?
Um. I think that the approach that I take, in general, for comedy is, "I am you." So, what would it be like for any average Joe to be thrust into this crazy circumstance? I hold a fundamental belief that we are generally hopeful, even if we're embarrassed to say it. And... that we want the best for each other. And so, I have to, like, have an act of faith that that's true and—for people who it's not true—they probably won't like the show. But I think a lot of people feel like they would like to feel hopeful.

00:30:11 Jesse Host You have such a special cast, in the show. And I'm often hesitant to ask, like, "Where did you get these people from and how did you get them to be on your show?"

[*Jason agrees.*]

00:30:26 Jason Guest But I am gonna do that, because of how special the cast is. The show—
Oh, cool. I did not discover Sally Field.

00:30:29 Jesse Host [*Laughing.*] No. That's true.

[*Jason agrees, chuckling.*]

00:30:40 Jason Guest She was discovered by, uh—by a community of nuns who could fly, I believe!
Yeah. She was well established. Sally Field I just begged. I mean, I told her—

00:30:45 Jesse Host [*Delighted.*] Uh-huh.

00:30:46 Jason Guest I mean, I—I'm not even joking, like—I got her to take a meeting with me. I had written that part for—as a love letter to my mom. You know, I wanted to draw four different main characters, who were in moments of existential crisis: life transitions, a sense of something being missing. And I wanted to draw four really distinct characters, from each other. So that, in each episode, I challenge you. I say, "Think of this character as you." I think, at the beginning, we'll all pick the character that we most see ourselves in. And I'm hoping that, by the end of the series—my goal is that you see yourself in all of them.

00:31:34	Jesse	Host	<p><i>[Jason agrees several times as Jesse talks.]</i></p> <p>When you say, “see yourself”, I mean, you mean at the beginning maybe literally. Like, I’m a straight, white dude. I’m gonna identify with the Segel character. And, you know, you have people at different points in their lives and from different cultural contexts in the story. And, like, the first episode being about your character, you think, “Well, congratulations on presenting a 40-year-old, directionless straight, white man as a—as an everyman.” <i>[Laughs.]</i></p>
00:32:07	Jason	Guest	<p>Like—</p> <p>Yeah, we start easy. Yeah.</p> <p><i>[They chuckle.]</i></p>
00:32:10	Jesse	Host	<p><i>[Jason agrees several times as Jesse speaks.]</i></p> <p>The innovations of—the innovations of 18/24 media have been absorbed.</p> <p><i>[Jason laughs.]</i></p>
00:32:35	Jason	Guest	<p>But then you immediately jump into asking the same thing of the audience with the other characters. So, Sally Field—what—did you—had you just, like, watched <i>Smokey and the Bandit</i>, or something? I watched <i>Smokey and the Bandit</i> recently and she’s so good in it! Oh my god!</p>
00:32:37	Jesse	Host	<p>Yeah, no. She’s—she’s unbelievable.</p>
00:32:39	Jason	Guest	<p>She’s so funny and great. Yeah.</p> <p>Yeah. It’s unbelievable. And I felt like the story I wanted to tell for that character was of someone who had dedicated their life, committed their identity, to one thing. Two things. Being a wife and mother. And now, with 20 years left of their life, realizing those two kind of fundamental things they associated themselves with were no longer relevant to what was happening in their lives—“Who am I now? What am I if I’m not an active mother, active wife, and I have 20 years left? What do I do?”</p>
00:33:32	Jesse	Host	<p>And I just knew she would be perfect for it. And she is. And I got really lucky. I’ll be thankful to Sally forever for doing the show.</p> <p>What about André Benjamin—who is in the show and, you know—he’s worked as an actor in the past, broadly, but relatively less in the last decade or so.</p> <p><i>[Jason agrees.]</i></p>
00:33:50	Jason	Guest	<p>So, like, did you <i>[laughs]</i>—did you have to fly down to Atlanta and beg him?</p> <p>You know what? All I was told was that there was no way I was gonna get André. And I really wanted André. Bad. I felt like—even when you just listen to Outkast... I know it’s a—an entirely different medium and genre, but this guy was bringing themes back from the realm of metaphor, into our reality. You know? And that’s very much what’s happening in Dispatch, is I just felt like—I had a hunch that this would align with his taste. But I just kept being told that it would be impossible. But we got the script to him, and really quickly he and I got on the phone and he said, “I’m all in.” And I tried to pitch him more and he said, “<i>[Chuckling.]</i> I don’t think you heard me. I’m all in!”</p>

And it was—I think that André and I ended up being—I mean, this is the premise of the show—but I think André and I ended up being way, way, way more similar than we could have ever anticipated, in terms of some of the questions that we were asking ourselves. We're of similar ages. We both had success and then, kind of, got older and were posed with the question of, like, "How do I... how do these creative impulses age up? You know, as I'm getting older, what do they become?"

So, that's how André happened. Eve, I had a casting call. Eve came in and auditioned and—from the moment she read, it was very much like when Russell Brand auditioned for *Forgetting Sarah Marshall*. I was just like, "Oh. This is it." And I rewrite everything for this amazing actress and, uh...

00:35:47 Jesse Host She really is. Her name's Eve Lindley. I think she—it might be, in the episodes that I saw—the strongest performance on the show, in an incredibly strong cast.

00:35:56 Jason Guest You know, I asked of my actors to really use the opportunity to express things they wanted to express about where they are in their lives. And Eve took that to heart and just—her performance is fearless.

00:36:13 Jesse Host I was wondering, as I watching it—she's a trans woman, and I wondered if you were casting for someone trans or whether—and the fact that she's trans plays into episodes I saw somewhat, but isn't the central question of them—and I wondered whether you were casting for someone trans or whether, when you saw her audition, you—you know—worked that part of her life around, in to make sense in the context of the show.

00:36:46 Jason Guest Um, yeah—the part was written for a trans woman. I was really interested in telling a... a really beautiful love story between Peter and Simone and not making Simone's gender identity her defining characteristic. Because I don't make Peter's gender identity his defining characteristic, or André, or Sally. And I tried to do that same idea with each character. What we are—you know, we're in this moment where we're told to, like, categorize and label and it's no wonder we all feel such separation from each other. And so, one of the things that was interesting to me in terms of the visual diversity of the cast is then to... not make what you're instinctive, primary observation about them be what their storyline is about.

I wanted to treat all of the characters as fully rounded human beings.

00:38:01 Jesse Host *[Jason agrees several times as Jesse speaks.]* You also have Richard E Grant in the show. And he plays the shadowy figure who both narrates the show and is leading whatever the game/mystery/drama/magical experience that the characters are going through are going through. And he is maybe best known for his work in a very deeply beloved cult comedy called *Withnail and I*. Though he was also pretty—he's been spectacular in many things, but he was very spectacular in, um—*[frustrated]* oh, good gosh! What was the movie in which he was a—with Melissa McCarthy that came out two years ago?

00:38:41 Jason Guest Yeah. It has "sorry" in the title. I'm losing it now, too.

00:38:44 Jesse Host Yeah. It was a—it was a very good movie, and he is spectacularly good in it.

[Jason agrees.]

00:38:54 Jason Guest And, like, how do you cast for “enigmatic figure”? [Laughs.] Heh. Yeah. Well. I had the benefit of... the real... originator of that “role”, quote-unquote—the Octavio Coleman Esquire, from the real experiment. So, I did have some image, in my mind, of what I was looking for. *Withnail and I* is one of my big influences, as an actor. I think his performance in that is as good as a performance can be. And so, he was the first person I met with for it. He was the first person cast in the show, I believe. Um... I sat down with him and he asked me a lot of personal questions about what the show was about, why I wanted to do it, and... he signed on pretty quickly, too.

I got—I got really, really lucky. You know, when I talk about the show—even when it—when it didn’t exist yet and was just an idea, it’s something that I really, really believe in. And I think that that probably come across, when you’re—when you’re describing to an actor what you hope to accomplish.

00:40:07 Jesse Host I think you might have missed your calling. You should be selling encyclopedias or something. You’re a closer.

00:40:11 Jason Guest I don’t believe in them! I don’t believe in encyclopedias!

[They laugh.]

00:40:19 Jesse Host Encyclopedias are for Draculas, bro. Oh, wow! This is big news! [Laughs.] You know how to close an interview on a bang! Holy cow! Jason Segel, I’m so grateful to you for taking the time to be on *Bullseye*. I’m glad to get to talk to you and I’m so glad for all your wonderful work.

00:40:36 Jason Guest Oh, thanks, man. I had a real blast. This was a great conversation.

00:40:40 Jesse Host Jason Segel, folks! *Dispatches from Elsewhere* is airing right now, on AMC.

00:40:46 Music Music Upbeat music plays.

00:40:48 Jesse Host That’s the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye* is produced at MaximumFun.org world headquarters, overlooking MacArthur Park in beautiful Los Angeles, California—where McArthur Park lake is overflowing from the recent rains. And overflowing with fish. We saw somebody out the window catch a very big carp.

The show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our producer is Kevin Ferguson. Jesus Ambrosio is our associate producer. We have help from Casey O’Brien. Our production fellow is Jordan Kauwling. 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, for letting us use it.

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. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature sign off.

00:41:38 Promo Promo **Speaker:** *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn* is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.

[Music fades out.]