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| 00:00:00 | Jesse Thorn | Promo | Thanks for listening to <i>Bullseye</i> ! We'd like to better understand who's listening and how you're using podcasts. Please help us out by completing a short, anonymous survey at NPR.org/podcastsurvey . One word. It takes less than ten minutes. It really helps support the show. That's NPR.org/podcastsurvey . One word. |
| 00:00:22 | Music | Transition | Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue. |
| 00:00:23 | Promo | Promo | Speaker: <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR. |
| 00:00:35 | Jesse | Host | <i>[Music fades out.]</i> I'm Jesse Thorn. It's <i>Bullseye</i> . |
| 00:00:36 | Music | Transition | "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. |
| 00:00:44 | Jesse | Host | Odds are, the first time you saw Christoph Waltz on screen, it was in <i>Inglourious Basterds</i> . Quentin Tarantino's bonkers WWII, action, revenge thriller. He played SS Colonel Hans Landa: a bizarre and diabolical villain. Waltz—who, at the time, was a relative new-comer to American film—played the role brilliantly. Charming, strange, and sometimes really big. |
| 00:01:09 | Sound Effect | Transition | Music swells and fades. |
| 00:01:11 | Clip | Clip | Hans Landa: Ooooh! That's a bingooo! <i>[Laughs.]</i> |
| | | | Speaker 1: <i>[Flatly.]</i> Is that the way you say it? "That's a bingo"? |
| | | | Aldo Raine: You just say "bingo". |
| 00:01:24 | Sound Effect | Transition | Landa: <i>[Delighted.]</i> Bingooooo! How fuuun! Music swells and fades. |
| 00:01:25 | Jesse | Host | The role earned Waltz his first ever Academy Award nomination. Then, a few months later, his first ever Academy Award. Almost overnight, he became an American movie star. So, what's he been up to, lately? His newest project is <i>The Most Dangerous Game</i> —a retelling of the classic short story by Richard Connell. It debuted last month, on Quibi. It stars Liam Hemsworth as Dodge. Things aren't going well, for Dodge. He's in a ton of debt. He's got cancer. But then he hears about a company called Tyrofund. He's told they financially support people in positions similar to his. He sets up a meeting with the president of the fund, Miles Sellers. Sellers is portrayed by my guest, Christoph Waltz. And in this clip, Miles gives him the pitch. |
| 00:02:13 | Sound Effect | Transition | Music swells and fades. |
| 00:02:14 | Clip | Clip | Miles: I just can't loan the kind of money we're talking about to someone who very likely might pass away before he can even think about paying me back. Now, I know that makes me sound like a bastard. I promise I'm not. It's just... I lost family members to cancer. I've seen how unforgiving it can be. |
| | | | Dodge: Yeah, it's okay. I get it. <i>[Beat.]</i> So... what? You still think you can help me, somehow? |

Miles: I do. But I can't do it alone. I need your help. Your participation.

00:02:47 Sound Effect Transition Music swells and fades.

00:02:48 Jesse Host Christoph Waltz, welcome to *Bullseye*. It's great to have you on the show!

00:02:51 Christoph Waltz Guest Thank you! Thanks for having me.

00:02:55 Jesse Host I feel like the dream of every actor is the one that you've now achieved. I'm not referring to the Oscars, but rather to being able to offer someone, on screen, the opportunity to participate in the most dangerous game: hunting man. *[Laughs.]*

00:03:11 Christoph Guest *[Laughing.]* Thank you. Yes. I think you're right!

00:03:17 Jesse Host *[They laugh.]* Like, I truly—now that—now that you've said, you know, like, "Well, you don't understand my plan, Mr. Bond—" Or, I don't know if that was literally your line, in that film, but that and offering someone a chance to participate in the most dangerous game—and possibly playing, like, maybe Hamlet or something—those are basically your—

00:03:36 Christoph Guest I've done that. I've done that, yeeears ago!

00:03:40 Jesse Host *[Laughing.]* So, you're pretty well covered! Congratulations!

[Christoph thanks him, laughing.]

00:03:45 Christoph Guest On achieving all your life's dreams.

00:03:49 Jesse Host Yeah, I think I can—I can retire.

00:04:03 Christoph Guest What was it like to get a call about being in a movie and then find out that it was a movie that was being filmed to be watched in, you know, nine-minute increments on cell phones?

00:04:03 Christoph Guest Well, the cell phone bit was a liittle bit unusual, for my little mind. I considered cell phones, uh... a plague. But I don't—whether it's in nine-minute increments or nine hours, I don't really do that much different. It's still—the actor's work is the actor's work. And that's one thing. But I'm—I'm interested in circumstances, um... and coordinates and... parameters that go beyond the actor's job. So, in as much as I'm really, really into dramatic narrative as a subject, I was electrified by a new species of narrative. In a drama structure that actually arcs over the conventional whatever it is—90 minutes—but in nine-minute increments, as you put it. And each increment exists in its own right, tying together into an overall dramatic arc. That is fascinating beyond belief, to me!

00:05:56 Jesse Host So, the actor's work is the actor's work, as I said. For director and for producer—and mostly for a writer—this is a new challenge. And since I'm interested in all these subjects, I was immediately, immediately hooked and caught for the project.

00:05:56 Jesse Host Now, I read soomewhere—and I'm not gonna quote directly, because I didn't write it down when I read it—but I read somewhere you describing that, in your work as an actor, you were specifically interested in the narrative beyond simply the parameters of the character—which is kind of what you alluded to, just now.

[Christoph affirms enthusiastically.]

I think that's a relatively—you know, all actors are serving a narrative of some kind or another. Or almost all actors are serving a narrative of some kind or another. But I think it's a relatively unusual position to say that, you know, servicing that narrative is first in the mind of an actor. So, what does that mean for you, like, practically speaking? When you're—when you're acting?

00:06:40 Christoph Guest I think it's a good idea for the sprocket to know the clockwork, in order to function 100% efficiently. And the character, the role, in the total serves a purpose. And that goes beyond this specific individual effect. So, I'm interested in the—in the sum total. I'm interested in what the whole thing is supposed to be, rather than how to shine in it.

00:07:21 Jesse Host Sure. Did you grow up thinking that you were going to become an artist of some kind?

00:07:26 Christoph Guest No. I grew up hoping to become a doctor. And then, somehow—I don't know why—I left that. I think I realized, at least subconsciously, that it would be too much work. And, um, I—

00:07:45 Jesse Host *[laughing]*, I—
[Chuckling.] It does seem really hard! I have a friend who was gonna become a doctor when we were in college. And I remember her—she was real bright, you know? And A hard worker. But I remember her getting—in undergraduate, like her junior or senior year—to organic chemistry and just—just being in tears. Just like, how can anyone do this?

00:08:05 Christoph Guest Exactly. So, that kind of went away. I think it went away when I understood what's involved. And I didn't wanna become an actor, because—you know, that was—I—to this day, I have no clue why I ended up with it. I'm still trying to find out. And I find out that, you know, even though it sounds like a cavalier bon mot, I still think it's a good incentive to stick with it—to try to figure out why I've become it.

00:08:41 Jesse Host *[They laugh.]*
I'm trying to think of something that, coming out of your mouth, would not sound like a cavalier bon mot.

[Christoph laughs and thanks him.]

00:09:02 Christoph Guest You have a distinctive manner. *[Laughs.]* And I feel like if you were at the farmers market and said, “No, not the orange carrots. The purple one.” That might sound like a cavalier bon mot.
Yeah, well, *[laughing]* but have you noticed that the purple ones—speaking of purple carrots—I find them fascinating. They have this orange core, in it. And when you—when you cut them, they are perfectly beautiful. They're really—I buy them just to cut them and to look at them. Because they kind of taste the same. But, um... anyway, that's just to—a little...

00:09:28 Jesse Host *[Christoph agrees several times as Jesse continues.]*
There's a part of me, though, when I make that cut and see that beautiful cross-section, with the orange center spreading out almost like a—not a spirograph, but whatever the thing is where you spin—like a spin-o, where you spin and you pour paint onto it? When I see that, I also have the feeling like I have been deceived.

00:09:49 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Christoph:** *[Shocked.]* No! No!

Jesse: Like you're like, "Oh! Oh, so you're not—you're not a purple carrot, then?!"

Christoph: Oh no, like, I see—

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| 00:09:56 | Christoph | Guest | Jesse: "You're an orange carrot in a purple dress!" Oh, I feel I've been rewarded! You know, that this cut—the purchase and the cut have been made worthwhile! |
| 00:10:05 | Jesse | Host | There was some point when you aspired to opera, rather than the stage and screen. Is that so? |
| 00:10:13 | Christoph | Guest | Yeah, well, opera—if I may say—is also stage. Only with music. Which makes it hard work again, <i>[laughing]</i> and so I avoided that. I studied opera for a short while, because I wasn't sure about which way to go. And then, again, very banal circumstances made the decision for me that I got jobs in acting. Yeah. Why? Because it's easier to get jobs in acting than in singing opera. Because when you want to sing opera, you have to have not only the material—i.e., the voice—but you have the training and the musicality and the... all of that! |

And, by the way, you know—it's a muscular thing that needs to be trained. Like any other high-achieving muscular activity. And it takes years to develop. And I'm not even talking about the artistic side, here. So, that's a commitment. And, look, in all seriousness: these things are all commitments for life. And to do that, without really having the knowledge and the concrete aspects to be considered, and the full scope of... of the actual subject, to arrive at a decision that will—from then on—define and dictate your life, your every detail, fiber, um... aspect of your life, is virtually impossible and it should be! Because if you knew—it's like having kids! If you—if you knew what's entailed, you wouldn't do it.

[Jesse chuckles.]

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| 00:12:23 | Jesse | Host | So, there's a blessing in it, that you don't. When do you think you acquired that taste to the extent that you even considered dedicating your life to it? |
| 00:12:29 | Christoph | Guest | Well, I didn't really make that conscious decision. I tried. What I was describing was the way I see it, today, after—you know, I directed three operas and I, sort of—because this is the closest I can get to it, you know, because I'm not a singer. But I just decided, "Well..." Because I was, I don't know, 19. I said, "Well. I'll give that a try." And I did the audition for the Viennese Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts. And I wasn't aware that it's a big deal. I just did it. And I got in! And I was a little surprised, but not overly. And one of the—one of the jury members, afterwards, said, "Well, we took you. But just to make sure that you know, you didn't sing <u>that</u> beautifully." |
| 00:13:42 | Jesse | Host | <i>[Laughs.]</i> That's messed up! |
| 00:13:45 | Christoph | Guest | <i>[Laughing.]</i> No, it's not! I laughed! I said, "Yeah, well, what difference does it make? I'm in!" And I had a wonderful—a wonderful voice teacher, Otto Adelman, who was—in his time—one of the great, you know, <i>[German]</i> and sang that part at the Met, I don't know how many times. And... but then, you know, acting interfered, so to say. And I got roles in movies, because that's how I started my professional life as an actor, in movies. In Austria. And |

so, I dropped my—not having sung too beautifully, auspices and went into acting. And I—you know, with my—with my past experience in television studios with camera crews and all that, I found movies actually the most fascinating and most interesting medium, as such, that... that I then occupied myself with.

00:15:05 Jesse Host Did you feel like a success when you were a working actor? Which you—I mean, you know, the way I read you describe it somewhere was that you never had to work at the rental car agency.

[Christoph affirms several times.]

00:15:31 Christoph Guest But did you—did you feel like you were a success before you were in American movies? Before the part of your career that I, and a lot of our listeners, probably know you from.

Well, whether I was a success—I don't—I wouldn't phrase it that way, you know. I was successful. Yeah. You know. Not always. There were years that were difficult. And then there were highlights that were, you know, big successes. All within the proportion: the given setup. But I don't know. You know. It may have something to do with literally having grown up in this business, that I—that I, from the beginning, differentiated between having success, being successful, or being "a success". You know. The former is what happens to me. And the latter is me. And I... I take great pains in not overestimating myself, in the context of the whole.

00:16:47 Jesse Host We'll finish up with Christoph Waltz in just a bit. He's sung onstage. He's won an Academy Award, for acting. He's directed operas. What's his next big career move? The answer comes after the break. It's *Bullseye*, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

00:17:03 Promo Promo **Music:** Pleasant, upbeat music.

Ophira Eisenberg: Hey! It's Ophira Eisenberg. So, what happens when the stars from the shows you love, like NBC's *Parks and Recreation*, *Superstore*, HBO's *Silicon Valley*, *Insecure*, and *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* face off in trivia games, on NPR's *Ask Me Another?* Find out by tuning in. Listen and subscribe.

00:17:25 Promo Promo *[Music ends.]*
Music: Bouncy music.

Jackie Kashian: Hi, I'm Jackie Kashian.

Laurie Kilmartin: Hi! I'm Laurie Kilmartin.

Jackie: And we have a podcast called The Jackie and Laurie Show. Who are you, Laurie Kilmartin?

Laurie: Oh my god. So much pressure. Uh, I've—standup, I've been doing standup since 1987. I'm a writer for Conan. I've written a couple books, have a couple CDs out, have a special out. Who are you, Jackie?

Jackie: *[Chuckling.]* Well, I too am a standup comic, since 1984. And I do the road like a maniac and don't have a cool writing job, but I have four albums out. Working on a new album. We talk about standup. We talk about all the different parts of standup comedy.

So, that's The Jackie and Laurie Show and you should subscribe, on MaximumFun, if you wanna hear that.

Laurie: *[Laughing.]* And I would encourage you not to!

[Jackie laughs.]

[Music fades out.]

00:18:09 Jesse Host Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest is Christoph Waltz. Maybe you know him as Hans Landa from the Quentin Tarantino movie, *Inglourious Basterds*. Maybe you know him as Ernst Blofeld in the new *James Bond* movies. His latest project is *Most Dangerous Game*: a new series, streaming now, on Quibi.

00:18:41 Christoph Guest When you auditioned for *Inglourious Basterds*, to begin with, did you think that you had a real shot at getting the part? Or did you think it was a cattle call or a pro-forma thing?
Uh, I thought it was a pro-forma thing. Look, I've experienced that many times prior to that. That American companies come to Europe, especially Germany—because they're—the Germans are very eager to get their foot in the door. Um... to tap the available money pots. And start a pro-forma process that looks like they want to shoot there and take advantage of the facilities and be there and—but what they really want is the money. The subsidy money that they would then be entitled to. So, they start the—on the lowest level, and the lowest level of production is casting. And then they can always claim, "Look, we tried to get the people, but they—but they're not right and they're all Germans and how dare they be all Germans! Because we're looking for Americans. And so—well, we would do it, but, um..."

Okay, but, by then the process is already underway and—okay. So, I thought it was one of these maneuvers that I have experienced since I started. And they sent me the script and I said, "Well, this is a great script. 160 pages. What do they want me to do?"

And they said, "Well, read this part."

I said, "Yeah, yeah, but well—which—I read that part, that's all very nice, but which part would they want me to play?"

00:21:04 Jesse Host And they said, "Well, we don't know." Because I assumed they just wanted to... you know, read that part to get something, because the part that they were considering me for didn't have any lines or something like that. So, you gotta read something. You may as well read that one. That's...
You thought maybe you were up for Nazi Number Four or something.

[Christoph confirms several times.]

00:21:17 Christoph Guest And they're just—there just wasn't enough material for Nazi Number Four to get a good audition in. So, they—so they gave you the main bad guy, just in case.
Yeah, something. Yeah. You know, something with lots of words, yeah. So, I went anyway. It was—it was fun. It was great. I said to

Quentin, after the first audition, I said, “Look. Whatever. It was—it was worth it just for doing it. It was great fun.” And then I left. And then...

00:21:35 Jesse Host

Did you get a phone call from your agent, like, that night or something that said, like, “Hey, maybe they...”

00:21:40 Christoph Guest

No. Yeah, it took a day or two and they said, “Well, you know—” I was on my way to Italy to take a vacation. And they said, “Well, maybe you don’t go right away. They wanna see you again.”

00:22:01 Jesse Host

And I said, “Okay, fine. It may be worth it. I don’t know.” *[Chuckles.]* Was there ever a point in that process where it dawned on you that, actually, you were being considered seriously for a lead in a Quentin Tarantino movie?

00:22:11 Christoph Guest

Yes. But, you know, I didn’t—I didn’t—I didn’t let that idea impress me in any way or manner. I just blocked it out. I did not—I did not ever, you know—literally, not once, did I let that very distant, vague idea enter my mind—the forefront of my mind. That’s what made it fun! You know. Had I—had I—had I let that influence me, it would have become stress and pressure and, you know, wanting it. And of course, I wanted it, but...

00:23:00 Jesse Host

I’ve talked to a lot of actors about auditioning and, when I was acting, I just couldn’t bear auditioning.

[Christoph agrees several times.]

And even now, as a person who has, you know—those—the few acting jobs I’ve ever had, in my life, were mostly ones where, just, like somebody I knew wanted me to do it. But you still have to go and audition. And even in that situation, it’s like my worst nightmare.

00:23:25 Christoph Guest

I totally agree with you.

00:23:27 Jesse Host

But the actors that I’ve talked to about auditioning who have the best and most incredible, to me, attitude about it say—and I think mean it. I mean, they’re actors. So, they could be faking it. But I think mean when they say—they say something like, “Well, look. I’m an actor. I became an actor because I like acting. So, I go to the audition and I make my choices and I act—which is a thing I like doing—and maybe they’re looking for somebody that does it the way I do it and maybe they’re not. And if they are, then I get cast. Great! I get to do more acting. If I didn’t get cast? Well, I did some acting. That’s what I like to do. I’ll go do some more at a different audition.”

[Laughing.] And, like, the first time somebody broke that down for me, I was—I was astonished that anyone could bring themselves to that point. Because, for me, it’s just like—you know, I’m just there and I’m like, “Oh great. All these people are here to judge me. I can only fail.” *[Laughs.]*

00:24:31 Christoph Guest

I have to tell you something that may really disappoint you.

[Jesse affirms.]

These friends? These hyper-professional friends of yours? They are all lying.

[Jesse laughs.]

They are lying through their teeth. There's no such thing as, "Oh, I just go to an audition, doing—exercising my craft, and see what comes of it." Come on. Really? No. I didn't do that in this case, either. I just—I just, you know, didn't let the notion that I may be considered for more than Nazi Number Four. I didn't—I did not let that enter my mind, on purpose. It was an effort that I made. And that's what made it fun, you know. Because frankly, Nazi Number Four would not have interested me very much. But all of the—all of these, you know, retrospective speculations are futile. It was—it was a very, very special situation. And that's because... the man is very, very special. And has a unique talent in not just writing these incredible situations, but actually creating them on the spot, even in a situation like an audition.

So, it—it really would have been worthwhile doing it, you know, just to spend time with the guy for an hour or so. And he takes his time, you know. He does his, *[in an American accent]* "Hey, okay. Well, fine. You know, that didn't sound like I wanted it to sound and I don't like his aftershave. Out! Next one." No, no, no. This is serious stuff. You know. This is—this is how it's supposed to be, and this is how it rarely—very rarely comes to pass.

00:26:42 Jesse Host

You speak a few languages. Obviously I'm speaking to you in English and your native language, growing up in Austria, was German.

[Christoph confirms several times.]

You speak some French. I don't know how strong your French is. I couldn't evaluate it, as a non-French speaker. But you've worked in multiple—you've worked in all three of those languages, to some extent. Do you think you work differently in those different languages?

00:27:07 Christoph Guest

Nah. Not really. To tell you the truth, people—sometimes actors, here, in German or Austria, say, "Well, I couldn't do it in a foreign language, because the connection to the essence of my being and, you know, to my subconscious and to my—would be—would be severed or would be not as direct and not as original or authentic. I find working in a different language liberates me. Because it frees me of all these burdens of the mother tongue. And, as much as you feel at home in your mother tongue, there are lots of heavy weight connotations that you—that you lug around. And to actually work in a language that—where the approach, the linguistic approach needs to be more deliberate, it—I find that liberating. I find—I prefer that. I prefer working in English, French to a degree. I haven't done that many things in French—four or five movies, I don't know.

But I find it—I find to actually put that little distance between the mother tongue immediacy and—as opposed to the mother tongue immediacy. Put a little—a little distance between yourself and the language you're working in, is helpful to me.

00:29:13 Jesse Host

Is your internal monologue exclusively in German?

00:29:17 Christoph Guest

No. Its' in—exclusively in gibberish.

00:29:21 Jesse Host

[Laughs.] Like a classic cartoon gibberish? Like a hibbi-duh-hubba-duh?

00:29:29 Christoph Guest

No. No. That's a language. No, no, no. Real confused gibberish. You know.

00:29:39 Jesse Host Is there something that you wish you had known, going into being a movie star, that you maybe have gotten to know or learned now that you've—you know—you've had your ten or twelve years or whatever it is in the—in that part of your life?

00:29:57 Christoph Guest N-no. You know? Because it's not a—it's not a finished product. It's still—believe it or not—a living process. And it still has ups and downs of different kinds. And it depends on what you choose to take seriously. Is it you? Or is it what you do? And I make a very strict distinction between the two, because if it's me that I take seriously, I get bored very quickly. And if it's what I do that I take seriously, I stay alert. And so, I much, much prefer the latter.

00:30:53 Jesse Host Do you think there's a chance you'll slip into another profession, accidentally?

00:30:58 Christoph Guest Well, I started directing. And I wanted to do that for a long time. But I never—you know, maybe my respect for proper—not for directors, please, mind you, not for directors at all. But for what directing should be. Maybe that sort of put a little bit of an obstacle between—in my approach, there. You know. So, I was always a little hesitant to just go and claim and say, "No, I'll direct. Thank you very much. You move over and I know what to do." Because I've been on the receiving end of bad directors for so many times that I—that I actually have some form reverence for the ideal of the profession. And I had the immensely good fortune to get jobs, as an actor, with people who deserve that reverence. That, sort of, took the time and didn't allow me to pursue, you know, the directing on my level.

And I was so lucky to work with literally the best. And... that then put, you know, the bar so high for me that I—that I chickened out. But I do it anyway. You know?

[They laugh.]

00:32:51 Jesse Host I do it anyway. Because, you know, most of what you do, you do despite—despite of whatever it is that wants to keep you from it. Well, Christoph Waltz, I've so enjoyed your work. I'm so grateful that you took the time to be on *Bullseye*. It was really cool to get to talk to you.

00:32:58 Christoph Guest Thank you so much for enduring my meandering.

00:33:03 Jesse Host Christoph Waltz, from his home in Berlin. *Most Dangerous Game*, his newest project, is streaming now, on Quibi—which is short for Quick Bites.

00:33:14 Music Transition Thumpy, upbeat music.

00:33:17 Jesse Host That's the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye* is produced at the homes of me and the staff of MaximumFun, in and around Los Angeles, California—where my colleague, Jesus, captured—in his house—a shiny Pokémon! Now, a shiny Pokémon—my notes indicate—is a lot like a regular Pokémon, but in rare, different colors. This particular Pokémon was yellow instead of brown. So, congratulations to Jesus. Hopefully he won't get a big head and quit his job. We're all on a journey.

The show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our producer is Kevin Ferguson. Jesus Ambrosio is our shiny associate producer. We get help from Casey O'Brien and Jordan Kawling. Our interstitial music is by Dan Wally, also known as DJW. Our theme

song is by The Go! Team. Thanks to them and their label, Memphis Industries, for letting us use it.

We're also on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Just 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.

00:34:27 Promo Promo

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

[Music fades out.]