

00:00:00	Music	Transition	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	Music	Transition	<i>[Music fades out.]</i> “Huddle Formation” from the album <i>Thunder, Lightning, Strike</i> by The Go! Team. A fast, upbeat, peppy song. Music plays under dialogue and then fades out.
00:00:20	Jordan Morris	Host	Coming to you from my house, in Los Angeles, it’s <i>Bullseye!</i> I’m Jordan Morris, in for Jesse Thorn. I’m the cohost of <i>Jordan, Jesse, Go!</i> , here at MaximumFun. And I’m also a comedy writer. I created the fiction podcast, <i>Bubble</i> . I am really excited to be here. My guest, Rob McElhenney, created what is about to be the longest running live-action sitcom in American history. Ever. The name of the show is, of course, <i>It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia</i> —a sitcom about the misadventures of five truly awful but kind of lovable Philadelphians. And while the characters don’t really grow or change as people, the show’s grown in popularity with pretty much every season. So, how do you top that?
			Rob started this new show, <i>Mythic Quest: Raven’s Banquet</i> . It’s a comedy set in a video game studio. The game they make, which is called <i>Mythic Quest</i> , is a wildly popular fantasy game. The only thing is, pretty much everyone at the studio hates each other. Rob plays Ian (<i>eye-an</i>), the creative director. He’s self-important and kind of insufferable. He has a carefully groomed beard and wears lots of rings, too. The cast and crew from the show recently teamed up to do a special quarantine edition, and it’s really something. Let’s take a listen to a little bit from the special.
			In this scene, Ian is on a call with Carol, played by comedian Naomi Ekperigin. Carol, who works in HR, has to relay some negative feedback from Ian’s employees.
00:01:45	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:01:46	Clip	Clip	Carol: I’ve received some reports about bizarre behavior.
			Ian: Well, it is the video game industry, Carol. There are a lot of nuts there, and they’re probably ready to crack. Although, one person in particular that I’m worried about is Poppy. There’s something going on there. I can tell.
			Carol: The reports have been about you, Ian. You can’t send personal videos to your employees with the subject line, “Mandatory Viewing.”
			Ian: Well, those are meant to be inspiring!
			Carol: Really!
			<i>[Carol plays a clip of Ian singing along to “Everybody Hurts” by R.E.M..]</i>
			Ian (Clip): <i>[Singing slightly out of sync to the track.] Sometimes everything is wrong, when your day is night alone. Hold on,</i>

Ian: Yeah. I'm showing people that we're all in this together and that everybody hurts.

Carol: Ian. If you wanna actually help people? You're gonna have to make a sacrifice. Maybe give away some of that money you clearly have.

Ian: Well, I'm happy to do it, but that's not what people want right now. They want hope, because money is not that important.

Carol: [*Frustrated.*] It is to people who don't have it!
Music swells and fades.

00:02:40 Sound Effect Transition

00:02:41 Jordan Host

00:02:44 Rob Guest
McElhenney

Rob McElhenney, welcome to *Bullseye!*

Thank you for having me.

00:02:46 Jordan Host

So, I wanna start—I wanna—I wanna introduce the audience to your *Mythic Quest* character a little bit. And I think the best way to do that is to start by talking about his facial hair and fashion choices. I would love to hear about the character, in terms of his crazy goatee and dozens of rings. [*Chuckles.*] What does that say about this guy?

00:03:12 Rob Guest

I'm not—I'm not sure what it says. [*Chuckles.*] I just noticed that as—in doing my research of a lot of the creative directors, in the industry, they had a very common look. There was a lot of big, thick, bushy beards and a lot of jewelry. So, I thought, "Well, that'd be fun." I'm always fascinated with the people that wear multiple rings on each hand. I just think it's a very specific fashion choice, and it's something that—you know, it's like—your wedding ring, you keep—you put on and you kind of keep on and you don't really think about it. But the idea that—I don't think people sleep with all those rings on. So, I like the idea of thinking about those moments after they've taken a shower and they're getting ready for work and they decide to put on 15 to 16 rings, in the morning.

[*Jordan laughs.*]

I just—I'd like to know what's going through their head as they're doing it, 'cause I find it fascinating.

00:04:04 Jordan Host

Yeah! Talk about the people you researched to prepare for this role.

00:04:10 Rob Guest

Well, it started when I went up to Ubisoft—which is one of the biggest game developers in the world, and they have a development studio up in Montreal. And, to be honest with you, I wasn't 100% convinced that I wanted to do a series that took place in that world. They actually approached me, because they were fans of *Sunny*, and they said, "Hey, we're looking to do something in this space. Would you be interested?"

And I just—I said, "No, actually." And I kind of passed.

And then they said, "Well, look, will you just take a trip with us up to the studio and meet some of the people, because it's a really fascinating workplace environment?"

And when I did and I got up there—I think it was about 15 minutes into the—into the tour when I excused myself and I called Charlie and I said, “Hey, I think we have a show.” Because it’s just a fascinating environment.

00:05:03 Jordan Host What did you see in those first 15 minutes that said, you know, “We can make a comedy from a workplace where people are mainly sitting at computer terminals”?

00:05:13 Rob Guest Well, I saw passionate people, number one. And people who really, really cared about what they were doing. And that’s always a fun starting place, because that allows for conflict—especially since everybody is there for the—for the same goal. They have a common goal, which is to make a game, a very specific game. And therefore, they have a love of games. So, everybody that’s there have—has so much in common, insofar as they love video games, they love this particular game. This is the game that they’re all working on. However, everybody has a different role. And there are so many different departments. It’s not unlike our industry, where you have multiple departments coming together for—under the same banner, for the same common goal, yet everybody has different ideas of how to achieve those goals. And nobody’s right. And everybody’s right.

[Jordan chuckles.]

And, especially if you have talented, driven people, you’re going to have lots of opinions. And the clash of those opinions is where you get the best work and it’s also where you get the conflict that drives the comedy.

00:06:30 Jordan Host Before you started making *Mythic Quest*, how much did you know about the world of—you know—gamers and video games and, kind of, all the stuff that’s getting parodied in *Mythic Quest*.

00:06:42 Rob Guest Nothing.

00:06:43 Jordan Host Didn’t even—didn’t even play *Street Fighter* in a pizza place, as a kid?

00:06:46 Rob Guest Oh! Oh, sure! No, of course I always—I played games. I’ve played games my whole life. I mean, we didn’t have a Nintendo. We couldn’t afford a Nintendo when I was kid, but my neighbor had one. So, I remember just coming home from school every day to play, you know, *Mike Tyson’s Punch Out* and *Legend of Zelda* and—and—

00:07:04 Jordan Host Ah, the classics, yes.

00:07:05 Rob Guest Of course. And *Mario Bros.* and *Super Mario 2*. And so, like—and then, as I grew older, getting into PlayStation and playing *Resident Evil*, you I know, for four days straight. And of course, that was always, like—always been a part of my life, but I would never consider myself like a hardcore gamer. And I certainly didn’t know anything about the development or making of the games.

00:07:26 Jordan Host That is such an interesting observation. I’m sure it adds—
[chuckles] we can all remember, when we were kids, the neighbors that had the nicer video game collection. That is a very, like—I think that is a—kind of a through line for people that are kind of around our age.

00:07:41 Rob Guest Well, if you remember the original *Legend of Zelda*, the cartridge was gold.

[Jordan affirms.]

And there was something about, like, “WOAH, man!” Like, “You got gold! You got gold in your house! Like, I’m pretty sure we have, like, rats in our house!”

[They laugh.]

00:08:06	Jordan	Host	“And you have—you’ve got, like, a piece of gold?! In your bedroom?! You are rich!”
00:08:09	Rob	Guest	“And you’re not melting it down and selling it?! What are you doing?!” <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:08:16	Jordan	Host	“Why are you still living in this rowhome, in South Philadelphia? Like, melt it down and go get a penthouse somewhere.”
00:08:58	Rob	Guest	So, you mentioned earlier that you are making this show in conjunction with Ubisoft and, you know, they are one of the most famous makers of video games. They make the Assassin’s Creed games and all sorts of other, you know, things that are now staples of video gaming. But the show does, like, look critically at a lot of aspects of the game industry. And it’s definitely, like, not always flattering. Like, you guys—you know—tackle some topics and you’re, you know, critical about the way the game industry operates. How do you balance, kind of, working with the industry but also, like, pointing out some of its flaws? Well, that was something that was really important to us from the very beginning. And I—and I—and I asked Ubi. And I said, “Look, if you want—if you want me to be a part of this, then we’re going to have to look at all aspects of the industry with a critical eye.”

And they said, “Of course. Of course.” And, you know, what’s really been wondering about them is that they recognize the truth that is... we have to stop pandering. We have to stop pretending that something is all good or all bad. We have to stop this... very strange notion that if we’re presenting something or somebody with flaws and honesty, that it’s going to detract from an overall macro-message. And I actually think that that works to our disadvantage, just as a—as storytellers, certainly. Because people can smell *[censored]* from a mile away. And I think it’s clear that, in the macro, this show is celebrating the gaming industry. And, by far, that’s the overwhelming response that we’ve gotten from everyone—that this is something that is celebrating the industry with all of its triumph and all of its foibles.

00:10:32	Jordan	Host	Because it’s human beings, and that’s what human beings are. And if you present human beings as just being these, you know, stereotypes of heroes and villains, then people are gonna smell it and they’re gonna turn it off.
00:10:43	Rob	Guest	Is there something that you’ve tackled on the show that was, kind of, particularly difficult or, kind of, challenging to wrap your head around? <i>[Beat.]</i> Um. <i>[Sighs.]</i> From—well, no. Not really. I mean, I would say—with <i>Sunny</i> , <i>[chuckles]</i> <i>Sunny</i> , we swim in very dangerous waters from time to time. And I think we take real big risks, with that show. Although, you know, our heart—we believe that our heart is always in the right place and we’ve made a lot of mistakes, over the years, in terms of—in terms of, like, how we approach certain subjects. And then we’ve, over time, tried to ameliorate

some of those. But, like, with *Mythic Quest*—to me—because of the nature of the show and the tone of the show and what we’re going for, it doesn’t feel—to me—as though we’re wading in those same waters.

Even though—I mean, honestly, sometimes it—what’s really interesting is sometimes the writers on the show or the actors are—they’ll be like, “Oooh, I—this is crazy. Are we really gonna say that? Are we really gonna get into that?”

And, like, I’m like, “Wait—what do you mean?”

And they’re like, “Well, that’s like—that—that seems like really out—out there.”

And I’m like, “Oh. Right.” Like, my governor—my internal *[chuckling]* barometer for, like, what’s pushing the limits of what people will accept in a—in a comedy has just been, like, demolished by *Sunny*. Like, I feel like on *Sunny*, we got so far—and that’s the nature of the show—that sometimes I forget, like, in a civilized—like if we’re—if we’re—if we have, like—if we’re going for a certain audience, they’re gonna be clutching their pearls a place where I would have no idea what anybody’s talking about. *[Chuckles.]* Is there something from *Sunny*—it’s interesting that you mentioned, kind of—now that the show’s been going on for as long as it has, like, you have an opportunity to kind of like... you know, correct some things that you wish you had said differently or done differently. Can you think of any specific ways in which the show has done that? And, yeah, I’d just love to hear a little bit more about, kind of... looking at your past work and either revising it or commenting on it.

00:12:21 Jordan Host

00:12:52 Rob Guest

Yeah, well one thing we—*[sighs]* we have a character that we introduced in the first season, who is a transgender person. And we were referring to her—and, by the way, that—we always went out of our way to make sure that it was very clear that we were always the bigots. We were always the transphobic people, the homophobic people, the racist people, the—because these people are sociopaths. And that, in the end, they always lose. And that when we were presenting any characters—any characters, really, but mostly characters from marginalized groups, that the joke was never, ever on them and that we were, like, bullying anybody—whether on the show or from the show’s perspective, on a macro level. That doesn’t mean we didn’t make mistakes along the way. It just means that, from my perspective, our heart was in the right place, but we were just ignorant about the specifics.

And that’s no excuse. We needed to educate ourselves and we didn’t for various reasons. But over time, we started to recognize certain things. And I—one of the specifics was realizing that we were referring to her with a word that we did not think was a slur, that it turns out is and was. And there’s just no excuse for that, other than we were ignorant. So, we can’t retroactively—nor should, I think—nor do I think we should retroactively go back and change anything. It is what it is, and it was what it was. What we can do is, as we move forward—and I think it was, like, I don’t know, five or six seasons ago, we started using the proper

pronouns and the proper—where it made sense—and the proper way to address that particular character. Because there was a difference between the characters themselves using slurs and the intention behind it. Because, again, these are homophobic, racist people and they're going to do that from time to time. But that it was understood that the filmmakers were not recognizing those words as appropriate to say.

So, those are, like, the lines that we're always kind of like making sure that we're crossing as characters to make a point—because it is a satire—but not crossing those lines as filmmakers or as a show, because then you're not making any point. You're literally just making a show that's homophobic or racist. Or in this case, transphobic.

00:15:23 Jordan Host

More with Rob McElhenney in just a minute. Coming up, how do you make an episode of a TV comedy with everyone in quarantine? It's not easy. Stay with us. It's *Bullseye*, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

00:15:36 Promo Clip

Music: Intense sci-fi music.

Narrator: We've all made mistakes in book club, right? You drank a little too much, you don't actually read the book. And, if you're under the bubble—in Fairhaven?—your individual will get subsumed by the collective.

Speaker 1: Hey. Maybe I just let him go and whip us up some guac?

Speaker 2: *[A chorus of voices speaking in unison.]* We do not require guac. We require only nutrients and expansion. You will become book club. You will eat, pray, and love with us! Join book club!

Narrator: *Bubble*, the sci-fi comedy from MaximumFun.org. Just open your podcast app and search for *Bubble*.

00:16:20 Promo Clip

[Music fades out.]

Music: Relaxed, percussive music.

Sam Sanders: Actress Tracee Ellis Ross is used to people talking about her age. A lot. And she's okay with whatever people say.

Tracee Ellis Ross: I'm 47 years old and I'm the most comfortable in my skin I've ever been. Want me to go back to being 22? No thank yooou!

Sam: The Black-ish star, on confronting an ageist world. Listen and subscribe to *It's Been a Minute*, from NPR.

00:16:42 Jordan Host

[Music fades out.]

Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jordan Morris, in for Jesse Thorn. I'm talking with Rob McElhenney. He's, of course, the longtime star and cocreator of *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia*, which just got picked up for its 15th season. He also produced the show *Mythic Quest*, which is streaming now on Apple TV+. Let's get back to our interview.

I would love to talk about the quarantine episode of *Mythic Quest* that is now available there, on Apple TV. So, talk about how this episode came together and kind of where you were in making the season when “safer at home” happened.

00:17:21 Rob Guest Um, yeah. So, we were [*chuckling*]*—*we were in the middle of shooting the first episode of season two. And it was—I believe it was a Wednesday, and it was becoming clear that there—that we were going to have to shut down at some point, even though that that was not the messaging we were hearing from our leadership. We still felt like this was important and it felt like—I can’t—we had a scene, on that Thursday, that was supposed to—that was supposed to be in a theater, where Ian and Poppy are addressing 2000 people. And we were gonna have about, I don’t know, 500 extras there. Or back—500 background actors there. And I just thought, “Well, that’s just... socially and ethically irresponsible. So, I’m making the call.” And we just—we just shut the whole thing down. So, that was it. We went in—we went home thinking, “Okay, I guess—you know, in a couple weeks we’ll just wait it out and then we’ll just return.” And obviously that’s not what happened.

So, then as the months went by, we were just brainstorming on ways in which we could just get the crew paid for a few weeks. And that’s really what we were going for, more than anything else, which was just get everybody paid. So, how do we do that? And then, we just started brainstorming and an idea that we—you know, we could do—we could do an episode in quarantine. We had seen a couple other shows that were doing it, and thought, “Alright. Well, they’re first, so we have to make sure that we—we wanna do something that feels, like, of the show and also feels like, you know, we elevated it and could make sure that it felt like a premium episode of the show.” So that, if you were to watch it—you know—five years from now, it wouldn’t seem like we shot it in quarantine. And that we use this interface of the—of the telecommunications device to—as a creative choice, not as a limitation. Not because it was a limitation.

00:19:30 Jordan Host I would love to hear about how you wrote the episode. I’m kind of assuming that, like, pre-quarantine *Mythic Quest* had a—you know, a fairly typical, what you think of when you think of a TV writer’s room. You know. People around a table with whiteboards and La Croix and things like that.

[Rob agrees with a chuckle.]

00:19:54 Rob Guest Like, how was the writing of this one different?
Well, from conception to delivery—final delivery—was three weeks. So, it was—it happened incredibly fast. Once we got—once I kind of pitched out to Apple what we were doing, we shot a little test and then kind of proved to them that we could—we could make this episode. They gave us the green light and we—I think we wrote it in three days. And that was over a Zoom call with my other executive producers, David Hornsby and Megan Ganz, and we were just on Zoom and broke the story and then we each just took a scene and went in order and I think we executed the first past off it that next day. And then—and then the final script was executed the day after that and then we just got to shooting.

00:20:42	Jordan	Host	<p>The episode is really, like—is very funny and very, like, packed with jokes. Like, the show itself—like <i>Sunny</i>—is very, like, joke intensive. But—and this is a mild spoiler, but in the—in the episode there’s a really, like, quiet, emotion scene and it really stands out. It’s a really striking scene. And you don’t have to talk too much about what happens in it, but I’d love to hear about why you wanted to include a scene with that tone and—just in general—how do you approach injecting, like, genuine emotions into a very joke-dense comedy?</p>
00:21:23	Rob	Guest	<p>Well, when we were approaching this particular episode, we thought—at the very least—we wanted to give people, you know, 25 minutes of something that made them laugh and brought a little joy into the world. But if we could also possibly make people feel a little bit less alone and then end with optimism and triumph, that was sort of the—that was—that would be, like, the ultimate goal. So, we had to come up with a couple of different sequences to achieve that. And the jokes—the jokes are always, like, the easy part. Because we have a lot of funny people and a lot of funny actors. But when you’re—when you’re navigating some of the more emotional stuff, especially when you’re working with a very specific interface of, you know, Zoom calls, essentially—it get a little bit—it gets a little bit trickier.</p> <p>And we knew that—we knew that we wanted to be socially responsible and ethically responsible and not suggest that it was just okay to break quarantine and to approach that from a cavalier perspective. We wanted to make sure that if we were going to tell the story of someone breaking quarantine, it was for a very specific reason. And that was that there was a character in crisis—a friend in crisis. And, you know... we all recognize that physical health is of paramount importance, but it supersedes mental health. And in the story, there’s somebody who’s in real crisis—there’s actually two people who are in real crisis, that are just handling it in different ways. And one of them goes to the other one to do a—to do a health check, a mental health check, to make sure that that one—that person is okay. And they’re both struggling, but they both needed that moment. And then they go back to their respective homes and contend the quarantine.</p>
00:23:19	Jordan	Host	<p>Yeah. It’s something I think the episode does really well—that you kind of touched on—is, like, it is showing how different people are dealing with this very weird, intense thing that’s happening. Like, you know, you have a character with kids who are driving her crazy, but you also have—you know—Poppy who is, like, alone and, you know, she is a recent immigrant, so her parents are in another country. And I would just love to hear how you, personally, are doing with this? Have you—you know—have you—are you doing the quarantine hobbies of, you know, bread baking and starting a podcast? Or are you coping in other ways?</p>
00:24:08	Rob	Guest	<p>Yeah, I mean, look—this is something that we wanted to address in the episode, and to make—and just run at it, headfirst. Which is that, you know, I—some of us, and I’ll just speak for myself, I’m incredibly fortunate. Because I have had a television series for the last 14 years and then—and then this one—that it’s afforded me, you know, some luxuries that the vast majority of people don’t have. And when you’re in these kinds of circumstances, having a little bit, like, more space, having a yard, having the kind of home</p>

that allows for us to be able to shelter in place and shelter at home and in a more comfortable manner, right? Like, that has allowed—and we’re not—and we, obviously, recognize that and have a tremendous amount of gratitude for it and are respectful of the fact that not everybody is in that position.

And so, I just thought, you know, as we were approaching this, I’m like, “You know, I’m gonna be showing my house.” Right? Like, on this television show. And do I want to expose my level of privacy and does that—what is the message that I’m trying to send, and what is that gonna say? And I think that we just decided to just go headfirst into it. And that, if we could tell the story of someone who is very fortunate but doesn’t realize it—because that’s what we’ve been seeing a lot of. *[Chuckles.]* I’ve seen a looot of people of great privilege and affluence complaining on social media, at least prior to the last few weeks. Complaining about, you know, cleaning—having to clean their toilet.

[Jordan chuckles.]

And I’ve, like, reached out to people like, “Yo. Hey. Shut the *[censored]* up. You know? Like, everybody cleans—everybody cleans their own toilet! Everybody! Everybody in the world except for one—like, .001% of the world cleans their own toilet. Do not complain about that. Shut the *[censored]* up.” And I thought, “Wow, that’s—maybe that’s a way in.” Maybe this guy, right, like has all of this privilege and opportunity to actually experience this in a—in a much easier way than everybody else and doesn’t know it. Doesn’t realize it. And is just—is just completely tone-deaf as he—as he talks to the—to his employees.

00:26:38 Jordan Host

Yeah. I think the clip we played to start the episode *[chuckles]* has a really funny kind of parody of the inspirational social media stuff that celebrities have been doing. I think your character thinks he’s helping the world by—what—what song does he sing, in that?

00:26:56 Rob Guest

“Everybody Hurts”.

00:26:57 Jordan Host

“Everybody Hurts”, yeah.

[Rob confirms.]

00:27:04 Rob Guest

Yeah. How—what is it like seeing that stuff come out? And—So, it’s—it’s born out of—I mean, look, if you break it down, what the guy is saying is, “I’m trying to say, ‘Look, we’re all in this together.’” Right? So, your heart is in the right place, right? Like, of course it’s the—there’s nothing—there’s nothing evil about that. It’s just—it’s just he’s also doing it in conjunction with not really recognizing that, “Yeah, everybody hurts, but you’re hurting a little bit or maybe a looot less than everybody else.” So, maybe there are alternatives. And he just, you know, as a character, is not really recognizing that and hasn’t made a sacrifice—a true sacrifice, and that’s kind of the journey he’s on for the episode.

00:27:50 Jordan Host

I’m Jordan Morris. You’re listening to *Bullseye*. My guest is Rob McElhenney.

So, recently I think that *Always Sunny* was named the longest running sitcom in American history! Did you know that milestone was coming up?

00:28:04 Rob Guest *[Interrupting.]* Well, it wasn't—it wasn't named that. I mean, give us a—give us some credit.

[Jordan agrees with a laugh.]

00:28:10 Jordan Host That's a fact!

00:28:11 Rob Guest Sure. It is that! Yes.

00:28:12 Jordan Host That's a straight-up fact, yes.

00:28:15 Rob Guest It was named that because it is that.

Because it is that, yeah. Well, it will be that.

[Jordan agrees.]

We were picked up for season 15, which—once we shoot that—it will be the longest running sitcom, live action sitcom, of all time. Yes. But there—of course, there's a caveat to that, that—you know—we don't like to talk about too much. Which is, back in the day, they were doing 22 to 25 episodes a season of a show?

[Laughs.] Which is infinitely more—harder than doing ten, which is what we do. That said, y'know. Been doing it a long time.

00:28:47 Jordan Host Yeah. Did you—yeah, how—how did it feel when that—when you knew that was going to happen?

00:28:54 Rob Guest I don't know that I really think about it in terms of, like, records or whatever. I just—it's just fun. I love making it. I love making it. I love that people watch it. Our audience grows every year and has since season... four? Or something like that? Season three? Like, it is—it has grown—it has grown. And I kind of can't believe that. It's just that—it just continues to get exposed to more people through the various platforms and our feeling is, if we're still having fun, FX wants to keep making it, we can still stretch and grow creatively and do weird, different things and not feel like we're just rehashing the same *[censored]* year after year, and the audience is there and they still love it—why would we ever stop doing it?

00:29:46 Jordan Host The characters on *Always Sunny* don't change a lot. They're *[chuckles]* you know, they started the show as bad people and they are still bad people. Is that a challenge or an asset, when you're writing a new episode?

00:30:01 Rob Guest I would say it's an asset, because it allows for us to reset each individual episode and start from scratch. And because they never learn or grow or change in any way, they're just basically just clay. *[Chuckles.]* And they will—they will always, at the end of every episode, crush themselves back into whatever they've built up, into another piece of clay to be molded again. And then smashed again *[laughing]* at the end.

[Jordan laughs.]

'Cause they'll always lose! They'll always lose. They have to lose. Otherwise the show deviates from what we believe is, like, its touchstone. And that's how we're able to address a lot of the things that we do. And it's clear—I hope it's clear—that we, as the filmmakers, are changing and growing and learning and trying to be better and do better. And that the characters don't, and that allows us to have this—sorry to keep using, like, mixed art metaphors, but like—a new canvas, each week, that we can paint

and then destroy and then paint and then destroy. And its just allowed us this opportunity to do it for 15 years.

00:31:20 Jordan Host

I think we have time for one more question, and I just—maybe—this is just a little bit more of an observation. As someone who plays a lot of video games, what I—something I appreciate about *Mythic Quest* is that the game that they're making looks fun. Like, I want to play the game that they're making. And I think that's— that's really important for its authenticity. Yeah. How much—how much time did you spend, you know, making sure that the game looks like a game?

00:31:53 Rob Guest

A lot. A lot. Yeah. We really—we really—I knew that once we got into this world and agreed to do this show, that we needed it to feel authentic. You know, I think everybody recognizes that nobody wants to see a show about actual video game development and the minutia of it on a day-to-day basis. It would just be tedious—to your point earlier about, like, people staring at a screen. What we care about are human beings. But, that said—and their relationships, the power dynamics, working together, all those relationships—but that said, we know—we knew that it needed to feel authentic. And that people in the gaming industry would smell *[censored]* from a mile away, so how do we do that? Well, at every turn, we had as many people and members of the community come in to speak with us, in the room, and to consult with us.

I mean, we even have people who have worked in the dev industry on the writing staff, and people who work in the gaming industry on the writing staff. And we have a consultant with us every day, all day, to make sure that we're getting everything right. And I don't mean just, like, tech jargon—which, again, is just—that seems like surface level. But really, like, culture. Understanding, like, "Oh—this really wouldn't happen in the way that you're portraying it, but it would happen this way. And I think that's when something can really start to feel authentic: when it's not just, "Let's just use a bunch of buzzwords!" We're really—what we're trying to do is make it feel like it feels everyday at a dev studio.

And, so far, we've gotten a really good response from that community.

00:33:36 Jordan Host

I'd love to hear a specific example of that. Like, how having someone in the room who has worked in that industry led to, you know, something you wouldn't have had in the show, otherwise.

00:33:48 Rob Guest

Yeah, well, I mean—like, the testers, for example. So, there is a certain amount of stretch there. Like, if you go to those rooms—in the real dev studios—the testers... it's not siloed in the exact way that we've siloed them in our office, and so—but I knew we wanted to have them nearby and we knew we wanted to make it clear that they are kind of in their own little box and own little world. Because that is what it feels like, right? So, that would be an example of, like, having the consultant there—even as we're constructing the sets—and say, "Look, I know that this isn't... *[sighs]* I know that this isn't technically accurate, but will it resonate as true?" Like, that's what's important, right? When you're building a story, is like—it's all fake and made up, but is this gonna resonate as *[censored]* or resonate as truth?

			And the consultant said, “I believe this will resonate as truth. These people are siloed away. Yes, it’s not technically in a box right in the middle of a bullpen of an office. But, that being said, it creates the feeling of what the environment really, truly is.” And that’s what we’re trying to extend, throughout the entire process.
00:35:04	Jordan	Host	Well, Rob, thanks so much for talking with us here on <i>Bullseye</i> .
00:35:08	Rob	Guest	Thank you for having me and for your support. I really appreciate it.
00:35:12	Jordan	Host	Rob McElhenney. <i>Mythic Quest</i> is now streaming on Apple TV+. You can watch the first season there, along with the quarantine special.
00:35:20	Music	Transition	Electronic, percussive music.
00:35:23	Jordan	Host	That’s the end of another episode of <i>Bullseye</i> . <i>Bullseye</i> is produced out of the homes of me and the staff of MaximumFun, in and around the greater Los Angeles area—where there is a guy on my street, now, that I see when I’m out taking a walk who is a very handsome man who also is constantly juggling. He’s just a delight to see. And I don’t know his name, but I call him Juggle Hunk. And yeah! I guess I just never thought that jugglers could be so attractive! You learn something new every day.
			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 and Jordan Kauwling. Our interstitial music is by Dan Wally, also known as DJW. Our theme song’s by The Go! Team. Thanks to them and their label, Memphis Industries, for letting us use it.
			You can also keep up with the show on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Just search for <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> . And I guess that’s about it! Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature sign off.
00:36:30	Promo	Promo	Speaker: <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.

[Music fades out.]