

00:00:00	Music	Music	Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue.
00:00:01	Promo	Promo	Speaker: <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.
00:00:12	Music	Music	<i>[Music fades out.]</i> “Huddle Formation” from the album <i>Thunder, Lightning, Strike</i> by The Go! Team plays. A fast, upbeat, peppy song. Music plays as Jesse speaks, then fades out.
00:00:20	Linda Holmes	Host	Coming to you from my house, it’s <i>Bullseye</i> . I’m Linda Holmes, in for Jesse Thorn. I’m NPR’s pop culture correspondent and the host of <i>Pop Culture Happy Hour</i> . I thought we’d replay one of our favorite ever <i>Bullseye</i> interviews, this week. Daveed Diggs. Daveed has one of the most varied resumes in entertainment. He starred in the original cast of <i>Hamilton</i> , playing Thomas Jefferson and the Marquis de Lafayette. He’s an actor on screen, too. He’s starring in <i>Snowpiercer</i> , the TV series based on the Bong Joon-ho film of the same name. You might have also seen him in <i>Undone</i> , <i>Black-ish</i> , <i>Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt</i> , among others. He’s a voice, now, in the new animated musical series, <i>Central Park</i> . He’s also a writer.
			<i>[Music ends.]</i>
			He and his friend, Rafael Casal, co-wrote the screenplay for <i>Blindspotting</i> : a movie about police violence and gentrification in Oakland, their hometown. Diggs and Casal also co-star in the film and it’s brilliant. And he’s in clipping.! It’s a rap group he’s the MC for, along with producers William Hutson and Johnathan Snipes. clipping. gets called experimental a whole lot. Their producers build the beats out of weird samples: beer bottles, alarm clocks. They collaborate with noise artists. And Daveed never raps in the first person. Which is—you know—hard. It’s unusual. When Jesse talked with Daveed last year, clipping. had just released an album called <i>There Existed an Addiction to Blood</i> .
00:01:50	Music	Music	Let’s listen to a track from that record. This one’s called “Nothing is Safe”. “Nothing is Safe” from the album <i>There Existed an Addiction to Blood</i> by clipping.. <i>Barely had to summon what was coming It was creeping on a come up, Now it’s right up in your face Face it, let it resonate up in your bone A minute when you shiver Make a silver big enough to for it to have a space Ripped life slipping away, maybe you could Make it out with just a little bit of grace But it truly doesn’t give a [censored] about The fear you feeling It is here to make you understand that Nothing is safe</i> <i>Nothing is, nothing is safe Nothing is sacred Nothing is safe, nothing to pray for,</i>

*Nothing is safe, nothing is
Nothing is*

*Death is coming for you, but you already knew that
Thought the clique up you some safety up in this pack
But that didn't add, back up, stand up, strike a pose
With your gat up, that's what they like, you suppose
They go rack up, stack up that stuff that you stole
But the fact of status wrapped up in black coal
Caskets cannot be ignored, running so fast
You'd have an award
Homies got gas to cash from that score,
Y'all could have make a dash just after one more
So, you put up on the gas and smash 'round the corner
Only one man was sent to the coroner
Wasn't part of the plan, but damn the fast, foreign whip
Was too quick to flip in fast-forward
The past smashed every wall, pillar and floorboard,
Ashes to ashes, dust in the lung
Fire now on everything, gasoline been poured,
Last piece of action 'fore you succumb
Just catch a glance of what could have done this
Something 'bout how he walks reminds you of someone
You look and see a gun, a man with no face,
A golden halo that could be the sun*

*Long ago you summoned what was coming
It was creeping on a come up*

[Music fades out as they begin the interview.]

00:03:05	Jesse Thorn	Host	Daveed Diggs, welcome to <i>Bullseye</i> . It's so nice to have you on the show.
00:03:07	Daveed Diggs	Guest	Hey, thank you so much for having me, man. I'm very excited to be here. <i>[Music fades out.]</i>
00:03:11	Jesse	Host	So, I basically just wanted to start by asking you what kind of records you listened to when you were a, you know, 16-year-old—when it really counts.
00:03:22	Daveed	Guest	<i>[Laughs]</i> When I was 16-year-old. That's—that's good. That <u>is</u> when it counts. Okay, so at 16 I was—so my uh... my mom was a DJ in the—in the 70's and early 80's.
00:03:35	Jesse	Host	<i>[Surprised]</i> Like a <u>disco</u> DJ?
00:03:36	Daveed	Guest	Yeah, yeah. At a little spot that's still in Berkley, called The Graduate. They used to have a basement that she used—used to be kind of, like, where she played. And then at a bunch of other clubs around the bay area, too. But my mom and dad met at—at this place, The Graduate.
			And so, uh—uh, I grew up with her and then my dad's record collection, also. So, I—I—sort of my first love was always, like, Parliament Funkadelic and... anything on the—one the funkier side of that disco stuff. George Duke, um... Herbie Hancock, like, a lot of the jazz fusion stuff. That's—so, I was always listening to <u>that</u> . But, then, at <i>[thinking]</i> sixteeen... <i>[Clicks his teeth.]</i>
00:04:11	Jesse	Host	Wait, I have a further—I have a follow-up question about your mom.
00:04:14	Daveed	Guest	Oh, yeah.

00:04:15 Jesse Host Was she like a dance DJ? Was she like beatmatching and stuff? Was it like—?

00:04:18 Daveed Guest Yeah, oh yeah.

00:04:19 Jesse Host —party forever type of DJ?

00:04:20 Daveed Guest Yeah, yeah. She was a—she was a—in—in fact, like, the—the folklore about it is that... is that, uh, when my dad went up to the—to the DJ booth and asked if she had to stand up there all night or got to dance, she—like—looped the bridge to Kano’s “I’m Ready” and came out into the—into the crowd to dance with him.

[Jesse laughing softly in the background.]

00:04:45 Jesse Host So, like, you know. Uh—that song is, like, 20 minutes long, anyway, right?
[Laughs through words] Y-yeah, it’s like—it’s like one of those ones like “Love to Love You” that—

00:04:48 Daveed Guest *[Chuckling]* Right.

00:04:49 Jesse Host —that you famously put on in the radio booth when you need to go use the bathroom.

00:04:53 Daveed Guest Exactly, exactly. *[laughs]* So, yeah. No, she—she—she was the real deal.

00:04:58 Jesse Host So, you—what—so, what were you listening to when you were 16?

00:05:02 Daveed Guest Um—on top of that stuff... I was obsessed with E-40, of course—obsessed with anything Bay Area. Yeah, The Souls of Mischief, all of—all of that whole crew. The Mystic Journeymen. Like, Grouch and Eligh—all of that stuff. Zion I, anybody from the Bay, I was listening to. Mac Dre, of course.

00:05:32 Jesse Host Yeah, and then also... also big into, like, Cash Money Records, at the time. All of that stuff.
[Teasingly] Would you characterize yourself as “bad about it”, at the time?

00:05:35 Daveed Guest *[Laughs]* “Bad about it.” But that’s No Limit, right? So.

00:05:38 Jesse Host Oh yeah, it was. Yeah.

00:05:40 Daveed Guest Uuuh...

00:05:41 Jesse Host *[Rhythmically]* Would you say that when the light hit the ice, it twinkled and glistened?

00:05:44 Daveed Guest There you go, that’s exactly what I would say, every time I come into *[inaudible]* city.

00:06:09 Jesse Host Um, but uh, it—it—*[laughs]* yeah. But—I was also into No Limit, although if I had to choose, I was probably always more on the Cash Money side. I—I think that always resonated with us more, in the Bay, because it was bouncy. In New Orleans—New Orleans and Oakland have a lot of—a lot of interesting intersection, musically, because they also have a lot of interesting intersection historically. So.

00:06:11 Daveed Guest Yeah. Not—not least, Master P, himself.

00:06:11 Daveed Guest Yeah. Master P, himself, living in Richmond. But that stuff—his was so much more, like, slowed down—all the No Limit stuff. So, I—I loved the Cash Money side of things that still kept a lot of that New Orleans bounce feel to it. Not that I didn’t love a lot of No Limit records, also.

And then, uh... I was always really into like Freestyle Fellowship and all the—the, sort of, L.A. underground scene stuff. Yeah. Those

were probably the things that I was—I was most into at the time, but I was also just listening to everything. That was—me and—me and Bill who is in clipping. with me, now. But we, like—since we were... I don't know, probably ten or eleven years old, have been, like, going to the record store every Tuesday—back when new things used to come out on Tuesdays—and, just like, grabbing every, you know, CD we—we could get our hands on that we could afford.

[Laughs] Um, like, scrounging through, like, the used bins and stuff to try and, you know. Get stuff that was a little bit old, but that, like, we could still—afford to get.

00:07:11 Jesse Host

Was being from Oakland, or being from the Bay, a big part of your identity as a teenager?

00:07:17 Daveed Guest

It was... certainly, like, the bay at large—I was—'cause at—at—at that point, I think, my mom was living in El Cerrito and my dad was living in Oakland, so I was just kind of, like, this general East Bay kid. And I went to Berkley High School. So, that—that was definitely a—a big important thing, to me. Not as... I didn't shout it all the time, as much as I did, I think, when I left—when I realized, sort of, how different everywhere else was, it became like, "Oh, I actually have to." *[laughs]* "This is a thing I have to say, all the time, and wear on my chest, all the time. And, like, do—"

You know, like—once I went to college, I, like, only wore—and pretty much to this day—will, like, only wear shirts that have some sort of, like, inside joke about the Bay on them. *[laughs]*

00:08:04 Jesse Host

[Laughs.] You're describing an entire drawer with an It's It shirt on top, in my house.

00:08:09 Daveed Guest

Yeah. *[laughing]* Yeah, yeah, exactly, man. Like—just... hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of them. And, like—and everything—everything Oaklandish makes, I have, you know? Like I—*[laughs]*

[Jesse laughs.]

I need—I need all of it. I need people to know. I don't wanna have to tell you. Like, you should know as soon as I walk in the door *[laughing]* where I'm from.

00:08:26 Jesse Host

It's funny, like I—I went to college and, uh, I was doing comedy and college radio, and my two buddies—who were both from Southern California, who I work very closely with—uh, they used to do this character that they called The City Critic, and it was just—one of them would say the name of a critic—of a city—and the other one would say "F minus."

[Daveed laughs.]

And then, like, eight years later, they said to me, "You know that was just our impression of you, right?" *[Laughs.]*

[Daveed laughs.]

[Laughing through words] And I was like, "Sorry! Sorry I like where I grew up!"

00:08:59 Daveed Guest *[Laughing through words]* Y-yeah, I know, right?! It's like, so—I don't know. We get such a bad rap for being haters, 'cause, I guess, maybe we are, but...

00:09:06 Jesse Host Yeah! I think it's fair. *[Laughs.]*

00:09:08 Daveed Guest Yeah, it's pretty fair. I do, like *[chuckles]* still am constantly comparing everywhere to—to Oakland, being like, "Weeell, yeah. It's not—it's not Oakland, but I guess I will live here."

00:09:20 Jesse Host *[Laughs.]*
You know, we were talking about the way that the *[stammering]* living and growing up, especially in—in the Bay, can lead you to ignore subgenre definitions and scenes in—in hip-hop.

[Daveed agrees.]

00:09:48 Daveed Guest And I wonder how you see clipping., which is the hip-hop project that you're best known for, fitting into the broader world of hip-hop? Because it's very distinctive music.

[Thoughtfully] Yeah, I think it's interesting. When we started—when the three of us: me and—and Bill Hutson, uh, who—we've been, you know, friends since third grade—and then Jonathan Snipes, who—he and Bill were roommates their freshman year of college. So, we've all been around each other a very long time. And when we started working on clipping. in 2011, I guess was when I sort of came on board? It was like a noise remix project, before that. We were all just... we really wanted to work together, and we were searching for the way for the three of us to honestly participate in this art form that we loved so much. And we all made music in different ways, and I had been making, you know, rap music of my own for a long time and—and all—all of this other stuff. Bill had been making a ton of, like, experimental and noise music. Jonathan had a great electro project called Captain Ahab.

And... this was, like, sort of an experiment in: well, what do the three of us, who all, you know, love rap music and participate in it in varying degrees—like, what's the way for us to make something together? And, so, clipping. really evolved into this thing that is, like—it's experimental in the sense that we are—we are constantly sort of trying a thing out and being like, "Does this equal a rap song?!"

[Jesse chuckles.]

And if the answer is yes, then I think we can put it on a album, you know? *[laughs]* So that's—that's kind of the hype. Like, we—we decided early on that there'd be no first person—I would never write in the first person. That was the first, sort of, huge experiment, right? If we remove first person narrative entirely *[a cellphone alarm goes off]* from rap music, is it still rap music? Because so—so much of the genre is kind of beholden to that. And to us, it still did.

It also involved, like, sort of using and examining different ways to use a bunch of... essentially, like, rap clichés, right? What are the trappings of a rap song that everybody will recognize? And if we, like, fill this song with no center, with them, will people still recognize it as a rap song? So, it was—*[stuttering]* we had a whole

bunch of conversations like that. What is the, you know—instead of these high hats: these, like, ratchet snares or ratchet high hats, like—

[Music fades in.]

If we roll a ball bearing around in this metal thermos, but it makes something that is rhythmically similar, does that still do the same thing to us, when we hear it?

00:12:18 Music

Music

“Work Work” from the album *CLPPNG*. by clipping.

[I believe a censored version of the song is being used since this is airing on NPR—I've highlighted words that have been censored; I don't know if you want to just not include them or how you want to handle them for the final draft.]

*Holler out your city if you ride for it
Let 'em know why you'd die for it
Same reason all these rides get high so it's
All medicinal, now what you wanna buy, homie?*

*Bye bitch (bye bitch)
Mob shit (mob shit)
Boss talk (boss talk)
Game rich (game rich)
Name game (name game)
Gang signs (gang sings)
Work on the phone, call it base line*

*Line dance like a ho down
Pimps up, daytime
Whole block a ghost town
Ghost ride, ghost face
G's get ghost in a moment
Pour a little for the ghosts of the dead homies*

*Deadpan voice singing tin pan alley songs
Panhandling in front of tourists with the camera phones
Get it how you live
Or live 'til you get it
Get it in*

*When the stash low and it's no cash
Get it in
And you riding no L's no tags
Get it in
And she looking like you ain't gon' smash
Get it in*

00:13:03 Daveed

Guest

[Music fades out as Daveed speaks.]

It was a bunch of things like that and us sort of examining the—the things, other things, in rap that we love *[music fades out]* and figuring out how, then, we do a version of that that feels honest for these three people. And so that's—that's sort of what clipping. always was for us, but I think—in terms of the sort of genre defying aspect of it, it allowed us to just be like, “We should make—we

should do something with this, because we love it.” So, this whole... new album is kind of an homage to horrorcore, right? Which is a—a real, like, *[stammering]* I don’t know. In my mind, is pretty Memphis-centric. Or, at least, you know, Three 6 Mafia being kind of like, the—the giants of it—not that there weren’t also, like, The Gravediggaz out of New York, or whatever.

And—and, to a degree, like, The Geto Boys out of... out of Houston.

00:13:51 Jesse Host
00:13:54 Daveed Guest

I feel like I should say the Insane Clown Posse.
[Laughing] ICP for sure. For sure.

[Jesse agrees.]

[Laughing.] Yeah! So, like, Bill and I grew up, like, going to get those Three 6 Mafia tapes from this liquor store in Emeryville. It’s like drive through—like, mixtape/liquor store.

Uh, and so *[laughing]*—so, there’s like a big love of that subgenre of hip-hop. So, a lot of this album was like, “Well, Jonathan scores a ton of horror movies. We’re all genre-heads, like in terms of the art that we consume. What could be our contribution to this, sort of, splinter-sect of rap music that we love?”

So, I think that, uh—for us, like, a lot of it ends up—at least, in the beginning—being a pretty, like, intellectual process. Which makes sense, because there’s a ton of... you know, useless degrees between the three of us.

[Jesse laughs.]

Um... so, like, when you get all three of us in a room, like, there’s a ton of dissecting of a thing that happens? But, ultimately, I think what we’re chasing is that—is a feeling that we feel when we listen to this music that we like. So, I—I—hopefully, at least for the people who really like it, the result is something that you feel and—and if you happen to notice all the, like, dumb, like, technical or referencing things that we’re doing in there, that’s cool, too. But we hope it doesn’t rely on that.

00:15:17 Jesse Host

I’m really interested in the idea of writing rap music without the first person, but I wanna talk a little about aesthetics, first.

[Daveed affirms.]

00:15:31 Daveed Guest

Did you listen to... noisy hip-hop or... noise music, before?
Yeah, so, I—you know, because Bill was always—was, when he moved to LA, sort of started getting into the noise scene. So, I would go to his shows all the time, if he was playing in the Bay or—or down in LA, when I was there.

So, I—I, yes—so, yes, I was listening to noise music through him, and then, like, you know the noisy hip-hop stuff—I listened to all hip-hop, *[chuckles]* so, like, if there was someone rapping on it, I was probably listening to it, you know?

00:15:56 Jesse Host

I remember listening to... I mean, I think, obviously, you could say—you know, Public Enemy was a very—

00:16:03 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Daveed:** Right.

Jesse: —noisy band.

Daveed: Yeah. I mean...

Jesse: Um.

00:16:06 Jesse Host **Daveed:** Bomb Squad is, yeah. It's, uh...

00:16:13 Daveed Guest But, like, I—I remember when I was in my late teens, early twenties, and the Cannibal Ox album came out.

[Groaning enthusiastically] Oh, god, it's so good. It's still good. Have you listened to it, lately? 'Cause I did happen to listen to it, like, a few months ago.

[Music fades in.]

00:16:22 Music Music It's still so good, man.

"Iron Galaxy" from the album *The Cold Vein* by Cannibal Ox fades in.

*Life's ill, sometimes life might kill
Vordul Mega, five digits grab mics,
Mic strike type ill
Is life real? Yo akh' he builds
When life feels like Earth don't spin,
Whirlwinds might blend
Life's at a standstill, dangerous 'cause man kills
And still cats visualize life ghetto, like
One mind, sometimes these cats see life
Street life in complete light and be like*

[Music fades as Jesse speaks.]

00:16:42 Jesse Host The experience that I remember having was listening to it thinking, "That is genuinely amazing. *[music fades out]* That's an extraordinary achievement. I do not ever wish to listen to that again."

00:16:59 Daveed Guest *[Laughs loudly in surprise.]* That's so funny, 'cause I had the total—and I guess this makes sense, right? But I had the total opposite experience. Well, not the opposite. I thought the same thing as you. It was like, "This is totally amazing. This is like—what an incredible thing. I have to figure out how to do this."

[Jesse laughs.]

Which is kind of, I guess, as a rapper—right—that's the first thought whenever I hear anything that I love that I've never heard before, or that I don't know how to do, is like, "I gotta figure out how to do this. This needs to be part of my arsenal of things."

And, like, beyond just like, the—the sort of wild kind of musicality that El-P came up with for that band, there's also, like, the... I love Vast Aire as a rapper. Like, I don't know... there's, like... a lot of technique, but also with a lot of space in it? And I—I remember listening to that album a lot to try and figure out—I don't know, just—how do you say something that is... weird, like genuinely

weird, but also super fly? 'Cause so much about making a good rap song is having a bunch of lines that people wanna say with you. You know?

And he was so good at that. You just wanted to, like, rap along with him all the time.

00:18:14 Jesse Host *[Daveed agrees several times as Jesse speaks.]*
Okay, well let's talk about the first-person part of this. Because... as a fellow over-intellectualizer, I wrote my undergraduate thesis at—I didn't go to Brown, I went to UC Santa Cruz—um, but I wrote my *[chuckles]* undergraduate thesis about identity strategies in hip-hop and identity and the first person is one of the fundamental building blocks of all hip-hop. Like, all hip-hop from, you know, picking a—picking your own rap name—not using your own name, often—is... is an act of saying, "I am this." You know?

00:19:10 Daveed Guest
And... I wonder to what extent you feel like... that act is removed from clipping. in choosing not to speak in the first person?
[Taking a deep breath.] It is, to a degree. And, I think, you know, a big part of that, though, is because... hip-hop relies on authenticity, right? Even if it's the imagined authenticity. Right? We have to, while we are listening to the song—and this doesn't apply to—to real life—like, fundamentally, and I think practitioners tend to understand this. Sometimes fan don't, but I think these days fans are getting more used to it. But, like—while we are listening to the song, we have to believe that Rick Ross knows the real Noriega.

[Jesse agrees.]

00:19:47 Jesse Host Right? We have to believe that.
00:19:49 Daveed Guest Even if he was a correctional officer.
00:19:55 Jesse Host Yeah. Exactly, but that doesn't matter. What matters is: while we are listening to the song, it has to feel so genuine. Um.
Yeah, I think it's like a kind of—it's like a kind of, a hyper-reality. It's different from the fiction of a film, generally.

[Daveed agrees.]

00:20:16 Daveed Guest
But—and it's not literal truth, generally. Um. But it's a—it's a kind of thing that we—that feels purely real as an emotional and intellectual experience.
Right, right. Exactly. I am such a nice person. Like—right? Like, just, *[laughs]* just as sort of a blanket statement. Right? And so are Bill and Jonathan, but we really wanted to make some very angry music. Or some very off-putting music, sometimes.

What is the way that we can get away with participating in that, in this form of art that's not, like... it's—it's different, in a sense, than noise—where, you—you know, because—because there's this lyricist who's going to be storytelling. Like, you—it—it's different than any other instrumental music form, once you put somebody in the front saying things, right? And then, particularly with rap. You're always going to assign the char—so, like—it—nobody, most people don't even notice that we're not speaking in the first person in this band. Like, it doesn't—because we're so used to just assuming—

like, I'll watch people write about clipping. all the time, where it's like, you know, "Daveed is talking about... walking down a hallway in the depths of, like blah, blah, blah!" Like, Daveed's not saying anything. Right?

[Laughing] He's literally just describing a scene, but we still get used to assigning a—a first person narrative to it. So, yeah, I think—I think we do remove some of that, but for us it actually ends up being more honest, in some ways, in that I don't have to pretend that I am these things, and I can be very upfront about the fact that I am a storyteller, in this moment. Because we are only telling stories and most of them are, like... hyperreal to the point where you have to assume they're fictional, unless...

[Music fades in.]

You know, I mean, unless you also are piloting your spaceship into the depths of outer space.

00:21:57 Music

Music

"All Black" from the album *Splendor & Misery* by clipping..

*Something within this one's different
The other died so easily and he is so persistent
He never did bleed out and fever couldn't kill his system
Though it was pumped through all the vents
In the event of a total loss of control
He quotes Kendrick's "Control" verse and spews his vitriol
Into the echoes of the bowels of this floating metal hull
And holds his pillow for dear life while he grinds his teeth at night
And he rarely makes requests, except to say,
"Turn on the lights."
But there is so much more to give*

00:22:21 Daveed

Guest

[Music fades out as Daveed speaks.]

Yeah, so, I think there's a lot of that going on there with us—was like, not wanting to front, because you can't in this artform.

[Music fades out.]

00:22:43 Jesse

Host

You really can't. And so... you know. It was a—it was again, for us, like, a way of honoring—we're kind of traditionalists in a lot of ways. And, like, literally the most radical thing we do is removing the first person from—from the—from the writing.

00:22:57 Daveed

Guest

Do you think that part of the reason that it's a useful technique for you is that it can be hard to... make room for being a nice, sweet boy... in hip-hop?

Maaaybe. Or maybe I haven't found a way to do it in ways that I like, right? Like... uh, Chance has found a great... way of doing that, right? Chance is—

00:23:07 Crosstalk

Crosstalk

Daveed: Chance is so—

Jesse: Although, I mean...

Daveed: He is—

Jesse: *[Stammering.]* I am a huge fan, but I think the reaction to his most recent record, the negative reaction to his most recent record

reflects the peril in doing that. Which is, like, either you get it perfect or people are really gonna come at you.

- 00:23:23 Daveed Guest **Daveed:** Right. No, it's true. It's hard. Uh, yeah. I'm not saying it's not hard. Although I—I agree. It's a—it's a tricky line to walk. And I—but I think some people are—are figuring it out in ways that work for them, and I think certainly as—as time goes on and we get a little bit... you know—I am of an age, and I would assume so are you, and, like... where I'm from, like, really matters a lot in—in both my taste in rap music and, like, the way that I listen to it and the way that I identify with it.
- That's just not true for kids, now. You know? *[Laughs.]* Um, because—because the internet. And so, like, I think that is one of those things that... is also going to change, I think? As, just like, there are more and more participants in the genre who are making things where they're really nice, you know?
- Like, but, probably because I'm a little older, like, my taste in rap music tends to be stuff that skews a little darker, I think. But that is certainly, like, the—the world that—that clipping. wants to inhabit, because it was part—part of what we were trying to do, was make, like, really aggressive, scary stuff. And so, I think it does—it does help with that... uh, because no one's going to believe me—just rapping as myself, in that same way.
- 00:24:44 Linda Host Even more with Daveed Diggs after the break. Coming up: Daveed Diggs is on Sesame Street. Truly a Renaissance Man! And we'll talk about it when we come back. It's *Bullseye*, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.
- 00:24:56 Promo Promo **Music:** Quiet, ominous music.
- Sam Sanders:** This week, on *It's Been a Minute*, I talk out the news with my aunt Betty.
- Aunt Betty:** I'm more concerned about the Black men that I love than anything in the world, because I just don't wanna get that call.
- Sam:** Also, parenting in the age of Black Lives Matter and the history of police reform. Listen and subscribe to *It's Been a Minute*, from NPR.
- 00:25:17 Promo Promo **Music:** Faint, suspenseful violin music in background.
- Justin McElroy:** We're the hosts of *My Brother, My Brother and Me*, and now—nearly ten years into our podcast—the secret can be revealed. All the clues are in place. And the world's greatest treasure hunt can now begin.
- Griffin McElroy:** Embedded in each episode of *My Brother, My Brother and Me* is a micro-clue that will lead you to 14 precious gemstones, all around this big, beautiful blue world of ours.
- Travis McElroy:** So, start combing through the episodes—eh, let's say—starting at episode 101 on.

Griffin: Yeah, the early episodes are pretty problematic, so there's no clues in those episodes.

Travis: No. No, not at all.

Griffin: The better ones—the good ones? Clues ahoy.

Justin McElroy: Listen to every episode repeatedly in sequence. Laugh if you must, but mainly, get all the great clues. *My Brother, My Brother and Me*: it's an advice show, kind of, but a treasure hunt, mainly. Anywhere you find podcasts or treasure maps, *My Brother, My Brother and Me*—the hunt is on!

00:26:10 Linda Host

Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Linda Holmes, in for Jesse Thorn. We're replaying Jesse's interview from last year, with Daveed Diggs. He's an actor, writer, and rapper. He was in the original cast of *Hamilton*. He won a Tony award for that. He's also the MC for the experimental rap group clipping.. His latest project is the TV show, *Snowpiercer*, which he's starring in. It's a post-apocalyptic drama based on the Bong Joon-ho film of the same name.

00:26:37 Jesse Host

I had a listener—sometimes I will post, "So-and-So's coming on the show, what should I ask them about?" on twitter.

[Daveed chuckles.]

And, generally, what I'm just trying to do is just, kind of, get a sense of what people are interested in about their career. But I had a listener named Pamela Council who replied to my tweet and she said something that I thought was so... beautiful and insightful. She wrote—and it could also be interpreted as insulting, but I don't think she meant it as insulting—

[Daveed laughs.]

—so, I'm just going to say that ahead of time. But she said, "Let's talk about the merits of authentic, feel good corniness, because he's a little corny, but yet we stan."

[Daveed laughs.]

And *[laughs]* and I was like—I feel like that really captures that feeling of... finding a place to make art that is true to yourself and complex and rich and reflects the experience of, not just yourself, maybe, but your community, as well, while also honoring values of, like, wanting to be a good person and nice *[beat]* in spaces where sometimes that is not encouraged.

00:27:45 Daveed Guest

Yeah! That's a good... no, that's a—that's a really—that's a very sweet tweet. Although, I—I—like, my immediate reaction was, like, "*[Censored]* you mean, corny?"

[Jesse cackles.]

00:27:55 Jesse Host

Uh, so, hey.

00:27:57 Daveed Guest

You're right to have that reaction!

00:27:59 Crosstalk Crosstalk

You know. And then I listened to it for real and saw—

Jesse: But on the other hand...

Daveed: —saw—saw the other side of it.

00:28:02 Daveed Guest **Jesse:** Yeah, you're on Sesame Street. *[Breaks into laughter.]*
00:28:04 Jesse Host Oh! For sure!
00:28:08 Daveed Guest I think that's the kind of corny she means. I think she means it with—with very deep love.
Oh, no, I—I—I—I would assume so. I hope so. I'm gonna—I'm gonna live with that. I'm gonna say that that's the case. But no. I think that, um—I—you know what's wild? *[Laughs.]* Um. I went to a—I went to a Mozzy concert in LA, aaaand—who is just among my favorite rappers, maybe ever, but for sure right now. And me and Bill went to this Mozzy concert and afterwards, my friend Dhage, who was DJing the whole night and is from Oakland, you know, was there. And he—he came off stage and we're talking, and this dude comes up—he, like, everyone's sort of leaving the club and he walks up to me and he's like, "Oh, hold up—hold up, I know you. You on TV, right?"

I was like, "Yeah, yeah."

He said, *[Sucks teeth.]* You Mr. Noodle."

[Jesse laughs.]

I was like, *[laughs]* "Uh—huh—y-yeah!" And just, like, lost it, right? It happened at a Mozzy concert. You know what I'm saying? Just, like, among the more gangsta rap of gangsta raps you can get in 2019. And he started calling his friends over! You know, like—'cause he has kids! He was like, "I look at your face all day, man. My kids love you."

Uh... and that—*[laughs]* that, to me... there's just so many weird moments like that, in my life, that have—that have—have happened that I just... you kinda gotta love it, right? I grew up watching the BET cypher and being like, "I gotta be in one of those." The one I was in was with all the rest of the cast of *Hamilton*.

[Jesse chuckles.]

00:29:37 Jesse Host You know what I'm saying? Like, that was how I ended up on a BET cypher. After having made rap music—
00:29:39 Daveed Guest *[Chuckling.]* Your musical theatre friends.
Yeah! Me and my musical theatre friends did a BET cypher, after making rap songs since I was... 15 and never having done a musical! Until—until I was in *Hamilton*. *[Laughs.]* You know? Like—that was what it took to get me on the BET cypher.

00:29:56 Jesse Host *[Breaks into laughter again.]*
I was so moved by your movie *Blindspotting*, which you co-wrote with Rafael Casal, and also co-starred in with Rafael Casal. And I think I was watching it as that tweet about the merits of corniness came in.

[Daveed affirms several times as Jesse continues.]

And it described something that I felt very powerfully, in the film, which is—you know, I... interview a lot of people, on my show, who are from y-you know, [*stammers*] tough, urban worlds. And I, myself, am as well. And one of the things about, uh, being an artist—or even, just, aspiring to be an artist—is that it is fundamentally corny.

Like there is a corniness to saying, “I want to make art about—” It’s very—you’re very vulnerable in—in doing that. And one of the things that I hear stories about—and I’m very interested in hearing stories about, from guests on my show—especially ones who grew up in situations where corniness was even, potentially, dangerous is—everyone has their own way of getting themselves the space to be an artist. Even if you’re a rapper who became a rapper to be—to launder drug money. Everyone has a way to, like, make some room for themselves to be outside of the—the stream of—of danger in doing this thing that is, you know, not always super welcome.

And in some ways, as I was watching *Blindspotting*, I found myself looking at this story through that lens: that your character—though he is a convicted felon, um, who’s, you know, been convicted of a felony because he beat the crap out of somebody—that, like, what he is trying to do in the story, is within the system and within the community that he grew up in, he is looking for a way to be a little corny, like, be an adult, grown up, nice person. Which is really tough, sometimes.

00:32:10 Daveed Guest

Yeah. Yeah, that’s a great lens through which to watch that show, and that—what’s interesting—what’s so interesting about you know, spending years with Rafael writing that film, because it took us ten years to—to make it. Uh, we—[*stammering*] we were—we’re both people who at some point in our—in our formative years, like in our teenage years—became enamored with language, and that, and the various different ways of using that, was sort of the—the way... that we found that space for ourselves, you know? Along with a lot of other—along with having very supportive parents who were also weirdos. And like, all of these other things, you know?

[*Jesse affirms several times.*]

Uuum—and along with also being in—which, uh, of the—of the, like, sort of tough places you can grow up, the Bay Area is a—is a special one, in some sense. Senses, right? Because, like, everybody’s smart and everybody reads. And everybody, like—you—you know what I’m saying? Like, a lot—there are things that are dangerous in other places that aren’t as dangerous there, I think?

00:33:17 Jesse Host

Yeah, I mean, I think of—you know—I—grew up across the street from the most dangerous housing project in San Francisco, but I also grew up... within walking distance of the, you know, the Mission Dolores and, uh, legit rich people. [*Laughs.*]

00:33:31 Daveed Guest

Right. Right, right. Exactly. It’s always all on top of each other, and so—and with the history that it—that is woven through—you know, we’ve always been in the the—like, the Black Panther Party, right? With—that is literally woven into the bones of Oakland and, like, they put such a premium on education.

Like, there's a reason that we get a lot of really interesting, exciting artists from—from that area, is because I think we're all used to living with those dichotomies. But, I—I think also, you know, some—back to the language thing, we both were using that as a tool to find—to find our way out of these things. Or to—to—to muscle our way through these moments, right? Where, like, "Well, I have to—I have to—of course I'm an artist. Like, I'm—I make rap songs. Or, um, you know. Or I'm doing this poetry slam thing, and that's like a cool thing to do, here, so I can be cool, and you expect me to be a little bit weird. But I also—but you—you're gonna accept it, because of this virtuosity, right?"

I say this all the time. Like, virtuosity trumps everything. *[Laughs.]* And so, if you're really good at a thing, people will sort of let you do it, no matter how weird they think you are.

[Jesse affirms.]

But I... you know, Miles and Collin don't have that language that we do. They—they are good with words, but they don't have... you know. They're not—even though they're the ages we are, they're not at the point that we are, now, having done so much analyzing of our childhood and stuff. They're still living in the—in the moment, where the—where the danger and the threat it so real. And so, that was always an interesting thing to try and navigate while writing that film, is like—just sort of trying to remember what it was like to feel that way, but then also put it into the... heads of people who, like, have not traveled as much as we have and whose worlds are significantly smaller than ours are.

00:35:22 Jesse Host

I was very grateful in watching *Blindspotting* to see... the subtly of the way that race is depicted and described, in the film. You know, in that struggle for corniness, I often think how lucky I was that I was white, because while being white, in some ways, alienated me from the community around me, it also gave me the opportunity to hide in that alienation. Like, I think I learned very quickly that as long as I didn't look like I was trying to be down, everybody would think I was just *[laughing through words]* wandering through. You know what I mean?

[Daveed agrees with a laugh.]

[Laughing] I was just lost or whatever. And if I could get enough chin-up, eyes-straight, you know, enough shoulders-back—nobody would think I was the kind of lost where I should get jumped. I figured that took me a little longer. That took me 'till I was—'till I was 16, but...

00:36:18 Daveed Guest

Right, but same, you know what I'm saying? Like, I used to—I used to wear—I went from—from, when I was, you know, 13 all the way through high school, I only wore, like, loud colored pajama pants. That was my thing.

[Jesse laughs in surprise.]

Right? That was it. To school. All the way through high school, you know what I'm talking about? And like—

00:36:34 Crosstalk Crosstalk

Jesse: *[Through laughter]* And you're telling me—

Daveed: —I would wear these...

Jesse: —and you're telling me, Daveed, that you had musical theatre friends?!

Daveed: Yeah, right?

Jesse: Yeah?!

Daveed: *[Laughing]* Exactly.

00:36:41 Daveed Guest **Jesse:** *[Laughing]* The pieces just start fitting together! Yeah, right? And I, like, and I'm wearing all these crazy colored hats and stuff. Like, I—I—I looked like an insane person, but part of that is—is the costume of it, right? People can't—because you don't have to say anything, then. And I am terribly shy. Still. To this *[laughs]* day. And so, uh, I—I think when you—when you put all of that on display, uh, and you do feel like it's a representation of yourself—because I loved those clothes, you know? And I could afford—it was a way for me—I could wear these wild things that I—that were seven dollars.

[Jesse affirms.]

At Target. You know what I'm saying? Uh—when you put all of that on display, you don't—no one really asks you to explain yourself. They assume everything they're gonna assume. And, like, again, virtuosity. I was, like—I—was—I was doing school plays, at the time. I was pretty good. I was also, like, winning poetry slams and making rap songs and doing that. And I was on the track team and I was winning a lot of races. So, I was jock, too. You know? So, like, I could put on this, sort of, wild show all the time that didn't require anything from me, except the costume, and allowed me to just walk through the world as who I was, in a lot of ways. Um. And not—not have to confront it, so much. *[Laughs.]*

00:37:50 Jesse Host You've lived away from the Bay Area for most of your adult life.

[Daveed confirms.]

Uum—how has your experience of the Bay Area and, particularly, the East Bay, where you grew up, changed with time away? What does it feel like to go back?

00:38:10 Daveed Guest Yeah well, it's a trip, you know, and I go—my family's all still there, so I go back often. But it is—witnessing a place that changes so rapidly—and I think also not being in the middle of it while it's changing? Like, the changes just feel so drastic and so fast, to me. Um...

00:38:30 Jesse Host It's kind of like a—it's kind of like having a niece or nephew who's going from toddler to preschool, to—

00:38:37 Daveed Guest Yeah, exactly. You're just like, "Yeah! *[wistfully]* They grow up so fast."

[Laughs.] But...

00:38:41 Jesse Host But it's like the combination of the—of the—of the speed of the change and that there is, like, a little—that you're checking in intermittently, in a way.

00:38:48 Daveed Guest Right. Exactly. And—and I think... [*clicks tongue*] it's, uh, some of—uh, you know, it's hard to deal with—you know. So much of *Blindspotting* was about that, too, right? About, like, trying—these two guys trying to—uh, everybody, really. Everybody in that film is trying to find space for themselves in a—in a place that is changing under their feet, that they don't really have any say over.

Yeah, so, you know, that speaks a lot to—as somebody who, like, wears Oakland on their chest all the time, you know—to come back to Oakland to find a place that is so drastically different from the one I grew up in, in a lot of ways, is hard. And I find myself, when I'm back there, walking a lot, because when you walk through neighborhoods, when you don't just get from where you are to where you're going, you—I actually get to see the things that are the same? And that there's some comfort in that, you know? So, I'll, like... you know, instead of driving a car or taking a Lyft, or whatever, I'd, like—will just walk as much as I can from—because then you get—then it does feel gradual, in some ways. “Oh, well this—this block is really built up, but all these houses are the same, and like, some of the same people still live in them.”

So, it—but yeah, it's—it stresses me out and, like—you know, just changes plans. I had always thought I would, like, raise kids in—in Oakland. And maybe I will, but I don't know. It's—it, like, it's—it's hard to get a sense of that place, now, for me. Not that I don't still love it and—I think the thing that keeps me most grounded, too, is I still work with a lot of kids, there. You know? I'm try—I try do, like, fundraisers at high schools, there, whenever I can and I—and I'm working with Turnaround Arts at Vincent Academy—which is right in West Oakland and—and, like, the... the kids are still the kids, you know? They're the same... sort of, like, wild, intellectual, curious... y-you know, just like—unable to sit still. Like, it still feels—that's where I still feel the energy. I mean, it's where hyphy came from, right? Like, I—you still feel that, when you work with kids. And so, that—that keeps me feeling very connected to the place, I think.

00:41:01 Jesse Host My experience is—both my parents still live in San Francisco, where I grew up. And my mother still lives in the neighborhood that I grew up in. And she's still my mother, and she's lived in the same flat for 30 years. And she has my name on the lease, because she thinks that her rent control is my inheritance.

[Daveed laughs and affirms.]

[Beat] But I feel like I've gone through so many extraordinary emotional changes over just being in that place—where there was a time where I almost, like, I could—felt like I couldn't be outside because it was so upsetting, to me. And I don't—and I'm not trying to be histrionic about it. Like...

00:41:49 Daveed Guest No, no. I—I get it, 100%. And San Francisco, also—you're from San Francisco—where it's even—it's even crazier. I—I—you know. And I didn't—I never lived there... That's not true, though. For a little while, my dad lived in—in like the Castro area. Just for, like, a few years. And I was already in college, by then, but I—yeah. San

00:42:16 Jesse Host Francisco... you know. I don't know, like—what—what—whoooo lives there, anymore? I don't—? *[Laughs.]*

00:42:17 Daveed Guest Yeah. Very rich people.

00:42:18 Jesse Host Your mom!

00:42:22 Daveed Guest Actual rich people and my mom and no one I went to high school with.

00:42:23 Jesse Host Yeah. Literally no one. You can't.

00:42:32 Daveed Guest Everyone I went to high school with left for Oakland... ten, fifteen years ago and left Oakland... for Vallejo—

00:42:34 Jesse Host Right. Exactly—oh man. That's exactly it.

00:42:38 Daveed Guest —five or eight years ago and—and now have all just left the Bay, forever.

Right. Yeah. Both of my parents live in—in Richmond, now. Uh, so, they didn't quite make Vallejo. They're on this side of the bridge, still, but—but yeah. Yeah. It's... it's—it's wild and it is... it is, like, sad. Most—not even mostly, but for—one of the reasons it is sad is because, like, you know—you loved this place so much and now everybody's coming here and taking away everything that you love about it and telling everybody else to come here. And we don't get to experience these nice things, either, right?

[Jesse agrees sadly.]

Because, like, we can't afford to live—so, it's like, it's not that I wouldn't have also enjoyed, you know, an organic grocery store when I was, like, *[laughing]* growing up in Oakland. We probably would have used that, but we didn't have access to it, then. All these new people have access to it, but we don't have access to it. Uh, and you change—you culturally changed the place so much that, like, I—I don't know if I even wanna live there, right? Maybe I should go to Stockton, where all of my friends live.

00:43:43 Linda Host So, yeah. It's tricky.

00:43:57 Promo Promo We'll finish up Jesse's talk with Daveed Diggs after a quick break. Still to come: Daveed tells us what it was like starring in one of the biggest musicals of all time, *Hamilton*. It's *Bullseye*, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

[Radio interference followed by laidback music with a snare drumbeat. A phone rings as the DJ speaks.]

Radio DJ: Welcome back to *Fireside Chat* on KMAX. With me in-studio to take your calls is the dopest duo on the West Coast, Oliver Wang and Morgan Rhodes.

[Click.]

Go ahead, caller.

Caller: Hey. Uh, I'm looking for a music podcast that's insightful and thoughtful, but like, also helps me discover artists and albums that I've never heard of.

Morgan Rhodes: Yeah, man. Sounds like you need to listen to *Heat Rocks*. Every week, myself—and I'm Morgan Rhodes—and my co-host here, Oliver Wang, talk to influential guests about a canonical album that has changed their lives.

Oliver Wang: Guests like Moby, Open Mike Eagle, talk about albums by Prince, Joni Mitchell, and so much more.

Caller: Yooo! What's that show called again?

Morgan: *Heat Rocks*. Deep dives into hot records.

Oliver: Every Thursday on Maximum Fun.

[*Music suddenly gives way to static and a dial tone.*]

00:44:42 Promo Promo

Music: Quiet, muted music.

Ramtin Arablouei: As protests sweep the nation, the subject of policing is once again being hotly debated.

Rund Abdelfatah: This week, on *Throughline*, how police forces developed in the North and the South, in the 19th century, and expanded their power in the 20th century.

Ramtin: *Throughline*, from NPR: the podcast where we go back in time—

00:45:03 Jesse Host

Rund: —to understand the present.

Welcome back to *Bullseye*, I'm Linda Holmes, in for Jesse. We're replaying Jesse's interview with the great Daveed Diggs. He's a rapper who fronts the group clipping.. He's also an actor who's appeared on *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmitt*, *Sesame Street*, *Undone*, *Snowpiercer*, and lots more. He also starred in and co-wrote the movie *Blindspotting*, which is great. And his debut role? Thomas Jefferson and the Marquis de Lafayette in the original cast of *Hamilton*.

00:45:30 Jesse Host

When you started workshopping *Hamilton* with Lin Manuel Miranda, who wrote the show...

[*Daveed chuckles.*]

And you had never—you had never done Broadway in any capacity...

[*Daveed confirms.*]

What led you to believe that it was something that you should... put your heart into and not something that you should keep at arm's length?

00:45:52 Daveed Guest

[*Sighs*] It's so funny. So, like—Tommy Kail, who directed the show, told me about the idea. We were doing a *Freestyle Love Supreme* show—we were in New Orleans, rapping at the Superbowl. We were doing this, like, Live on ESPN, like, sort of—This is Your Life—style game with sport celebrities. So, [*laughs*] we're down there doing this, uuh, indisputably corny thing.

But, again, like, framing is everything and—one thing *Freestyle Love Supreme* does very, very well—and this is... [*stammers*] woven into the bones of this show, is that, like—that is another space where corniness is—is okay, in some ways. In—in all ways,

as long as it's real. As long as it's honest and as long as it's virtuosic, right?

[Jesse affirms.]

Um... So. We're doing that and Tommy describes to me this show Lin's working on. Oh, he's writing this, like, you know—rap musical about Alexander Hamilton.

And I—the first thing I said to him was, “That’s a terrible idea. Continue.”

00:46:51 Jesse Host
00:46:53 Daveed Guest

[Laughing.] Also, my first reaction.

Everybody's first reaction! It's a horrible pitch for a show. Um *[laughing]* and, especially if you know anything about rap music, right? It's like—it's even worse then. Because all you can hear, in your head, is the, like—the advertising for—is the, like... “History through hip-hop!” Right? It's just, like...

00:47:11 Jesse Host
00:47:12 Daveed Guest
00:47:16 Jesse Host
00:47:19 Daveed Guest

Exactly!

It's this stupid ploy to try and get kids to read books.

“You thought Shakespeare was the original rapper!?”

Right. “Turns out—!” *[Laughs.]* You know.

But I—he—he was like, “Well, will you come up to Vassar and do this... a—a workshop of it?”

And I asked him if he would pay me and he said, yes. And so, I said, “Absolutely! I don't have any money, what are you *[laughing]* talking about?”

[Jesse laughs.]

“Send me the stuff!” And then Lin sent me all of his demos, which is all him doing every part of every song, uh, with, like, beats he made—this is before Alex Lacamoire had—had fully orchestrated everything, so, like, a lot of them were just, like, sort of kick-snare and, like, horrible piano sounds—style beats he had made on Garage Band. And they... were so good. The music was so good and... it is because it was honest. It was because Lin—who is an incredibly virtuosic writer and performer—didn't pretend to be anything that he wasn't. He is a—a—a man who is a nerd about history and a nerd about rap songs. And this was both of those things stuck together with as many historical references that I didn't catch as there were hip-hop references that I did. You know?

And so, because that one—even when listening to those early versions of these—those songs, it was just like, “This is so—it's so good! Yeah! I'm totally down to be part of this terrible idea!”

[Jesse laughs.]

And I didn't think anybody else would like it. Like, I—you know, you do a lot of things with your friends that you're like, “This is brilliant!” and no one cares. *[Laughs.]* So, this was like a—gonna be another one of those things, for me. Like, “Yep, I'm totally down for this ride. Imma do this... this really dumb idea for a show, with my friends,

00:48:59 Music

Music

because it's a good show that should exist and they want me to be in it and that's amazing." And then it was *Hamilton*. [Laughs.] "Guns and Ships" from the Broadway show *Hamilton* fades in.

[COMPANY]
Lafayette!

[LAFAYETTE]
*I'm takin this horse by the reins makin'
Redcoats redder with bloodstains*

[COMPANY]
Lafayette!

[LAFAYETTE]
*And I'm never gonna stop until I make 'em
Drop and burn 'em up and scatter their remains, I'm*

[COMPANY]
Lafayette!

[LAFAYETTE]
*Watch me engagin' em! Escapin' em!
Enragin' em! I'm—*

[COMPANY]
Lafayette!

[LAFAYETTE]
I go to France for more funds

[COMPANY]
Lafayette!

[LAFAYETTE]
I come back with more

[LAFAYETTE AND ENSEMBLE]
*Guns
And ships*

00:49:17 Music

Music

And so, the balance shifts
[WASHINGTON]
We rendezvous with Rochambeau, consolidate their gifts

[LAFAYETTE]
*We can end this war at Yorktown, cut them off at sea, but
For this to succeed, there is someone else we need:*

[WASHINGTON]
I know

[WASHINGTON AND COMPANY]
Hamilton!

[LAFAYETTE]
Sir, he knows what to do in a trench

Ingenuitive and fluent in French, I mean—

*[WASHINGTON AND COMPANY]
Hamilton!*

*[LAFAYETTE]
Sir, you're gonna have to use him eventually
What's he gonna do on the bench? I mean—*

*[WASHINGTON AND COMPANY]
Hamilton!*

*[LAFAYETTE]
No one has more resilience
Or matches my practical tactical brilliance—*

*[WASHINGTON AND COMPANY]
Hamilton!*

*[LAFAYETTE & COMPANY]
You wanna fight for your land back? (Hamilton!)*

*[WASHINGTON & WOMEN]
I need my right-hand man back! (Hamilton!)*

[Music fades out as Daveed speaks.]

00:49:41	Daveed	Guest	You know, the thing that—that drew me to it <i>[music fades out]</i> was that there weren't any lies in there. It was just—it all felt super authentic coming from my friend, who I knew pretty well. Yeah.
00:49:55	Jesse	Host	What was it like to be the first rap music that... 70% of the people sitting in the theatre had ever experienced in a—in a deep and meaningful way?
00:50:11	Daveed	Guest	Pretty... <i>[laughing]</i> I guess if—if I'm being honest, like, pretty frustrating, at—most of the time, for me. I will say, like—hopefully, and what I think did happen to some degree... and we get this with clipping., too—like, to some degree, like, I—hopefully it's a gateway drug, right? It's kind of a good— <i>Hamilton's</i> a good gateway in both ways. It is good—it's—it's good if you're a hip-hop head who has never been into musicals and it's good if you love musicals and have never listened to rap songs.
00:50:42	Jesse	Host	For real. Like, I feel like I wanna stipulate, having said that 70% number, like—I don't think... Busta Rhymes was out at the, you know, revival of <i>Thoroughly Modern Millie</i> , or whatever.
			<i>[Daveed agrees.]</i>
00:50:58	Deveed	Guest	And it must have been awesome for him to see that, in that context, too. Oh yeah! I mean, and he's—he—when we did it at the Public and he sat in the <u>front row</u> the—the first time he came. Which, you know, there were—they would of course gotten him <u>better</u> seats. That's not a great place to sit, necessarily, in the theatre. And it was so nerve-wracking for us, 'cause here's this hero of ours with, like, 20 gold chains on, uh, sitting right in the—in the very front, where the stage lights are actually hitting him as much <i>[laughing]</i> as they're hitting us.

[Jesse laughs softly in the background.]

Uh... and so, you do the whole show for Busta Rhymes, and they asked him if they could move him to a better seat, at intermission, and he said no. You know, he wanted to be right up in it.

And then he would just come back to the Public and hang out with us, like, throughout that run. And so, that—that was amazing! But yeah, I think... so you got validation from things like that. From— from people who are, sort of, uh, revered in the hip-hop community kind of being like, “This is really great to see us, up here, finally. To see us represented in a way that doesn’t feel corny to us, but also— you know, is crossing these lines.”

So, that was—that was dope, but I think... you know, it’s hard for me to take compliments, in a situation like that. When there was that whole thing going on about me being, like, the fastest rapper on Broadway. Like? Cool, I’m the only rapper on Broadway?

[Jesse laughs.]

Uh—what do you mean? That’s not... that’s not an honor?
[Laughs.] I don’t—? Like, what are you talking about?

[Jesse and Daveed laugh.]

00:52:19 Jesse Host
00:52:23 Daveed Guest

Twist is—Twist is not doing *Into the Woods*.
Yeah. That’s what I’m saying. Like, what are you talking about?!
The words per second, that you’re quoting, don’t matter! That’s not a thing!

And I can point to—and also, that’s that song! Like, “Guns and Ships” is light work for me, right? I’m from Oakland. We’ve been rapping fast—I’ve been rapping fast since I was a child. Like, this is—you know. So, like, things like that, where people are giving you compliments on things, I can’t—I don’t know how many times I had to hear, “Oh my god, what I love about this song—I don’t like rap music, but I love this, because I could follow the story and I understood every word.”

And I just—it makes you wanna strangle an elderly person.

[Jesse giggles.]

00:52:59 Jesse Host
00:53:02 Crosstalk Crosstalk

Which is not a good feeling to have, right? But like...
An elderly person who’s doing their best to be nice to you, but’s just—
Daveed: Doing their best!

00:53:05 Daveed Guest

Jesse: —just doing a terrible job!
And you recognize it and so you calm that immediate instinct and you don’t strangle anybody, and you say, “Thank you so much.”

But—a lot of my time there was a lot of that, right? A lot of this... sort of, frustration with not even being able to enjoy other people enjoying the work, because I don’t think they know enough *[laughs]*

to enjoy this for the same reasons that I enjoy it, which is so dumb. Like, what a horrible way to think about something, but I couldn't help it. You know?

00:53:39 Jesse Host

So, yeah, it was—it—it was a lot of that, a lot of that element of it was really frustrating.

More than anything, I mean, like with Lin Manuel Miranda, who created this show, like, he's a man so passionate. I've only met him in real life one time.

[Daveed agrees.]

But he's a man so obviously passionate about everything in the world that's he's passionate about.

[Daveed agrees with a laugh.]

You know, *[laughs]* like he's got a nuclear reactor inside of him that's always pushing him forward and—and I can see that combined with the fact that this is his—his creation, you know? In some ways it's like a magnum opus... I see that driving him through any obstacle in carrying this show.

You are—you know, his buddy who's in it. And, while, I—you have a great investment in it, having been part of it for quite a long time and, you know, through the development of—of it, and so forth, and—and being onstage, you're not the creator of it. And you're not—also not that guy. And that sounds like a lot of work to do—

[Daveed laughs.]

00:54:56 Daveed Guest

—in addition to the work—like in addition to the—I mean this very sincerely—in addition to the work of being on Broadway, which is really hard work. Like, the work of, you know... the emotional work of knowing the different ways that your work is being received—that your art is being received and having to accept some of the ones that you're less comfortable with, in order to go on, the next day. Yeah, what, uh, what a very astute observation and what a—I don't think anyone's ever said that to me or acknowledged that, to me, and that is so real, um, for everybody involved, right?

Uh, and that is... you know, I mean, you—you navigate that with—with anything that you're work—as an actor, with anything that you're working on that's not—that you didn't write, yourself. You know, or that isn't something deeply connected to you from its inception, but, yeah—so, that—part of that is inherent, in the job, right? You are a vessel. You're—you're creating with somebody else's words and ideas and funneling that through all of your experiences, and that's what you put out, onstage.

Um, and so—then another part of the job is interacting with the public, as they relate to that. For most things—most things aren't *Hamilton*, so most things don't get that much attention, so the job is way less. When something gets that much attention, it's great. It's wonderful. It's good for everybody, when it does, but it is a lot of work to, sort of, navigate all of—all of the attention that it gets, on it.

Uh, my brother—for a little while—was living in New York, my younger brother, and even the—and I—I was still doing the show. This is, like, close to Tony Awards time and, like, we—you know... I—still, I chose—we—we finally found a time to—to go just get lunch. And we go somewhere and just get some sandwiches or something, to go, and we're walking around the street, like, around the—the... like, uh, Flat Iron area and we got—you know, I was getting stopped, like, every—every thirteen seconds by people being like, "I never do this, but *[laughing]* can I take a picture with you?"

00:56:40

[Still laughing] Or like, "I'm so sorry. I know you must hate this, but—" Which is a funny way to start that interaction, but everybody does it and I guess I would probably do it too, you know: with an acknowledgement that you must hate this and then also the admission that you're gonna do it anyway.

But, my brother, after we had been hanging out—and I didn't even notice it, anymore, at this point. My—after we'd been hanging out for, maybe, an hour, he was like, "This is awful. *[Laughs.]* Like, being with you on the street is awful."

[Laughs.] And it was kind of a moment, for me, where I was like, "You're right! You're right, it is." But I am, you know, I'm out here as—as an ambassador of this show—also, like... none of this is—is about me? As much as everybody thinks it is, right? None of the acclaim felt like it had anything to do with me, really, because, for me, performing this character was a—was a pretty weird, like, off-shoot of all of the things I thought I was doing with my life.

And it's just like, not to be ungrateful for it—it changed my life in all of the right ways and, like, I had a wonderful time doing it—but, again, like, accepting accolades for it were—particularly at the time, and I'm—I'm—I'm learning, more, to cope with it, now. With some distance, I can understand more, um, sort of the importance of that—of—of the moment, but it was—it was hard in a lot of ways to—to receive all of that for a thing that felt like had the least to do with me of any of the art I had ever made, in my life. *[Laughs.]*

00:58:12 Jesse Host

Daveed Diggs, I'm so grateful to you for coming on *Bullseye*. I—I so enjoyed the chance to get to talk to you.

00:58:20 Daveed Guest

Me too, Jesse. I'm a huge fan of the show and have been listening for a long time, so it's—it's really great to get to be on here.

00:58:26 Jesse Host

[Music fades in.]

[Scoffs] Pssh, you're playing, dude. That's not true.

00:58:27 Daveed Guest

Nah, man. No, it is. That—I—I got you—I got your—your episodes downloaded on the phone, bruh.

00:58:34 Music Music

"Blood of the Fang" from the album *There Existed an Addiction to Blood* by clipping..

fifty years 'bout enough, time to come back

They want to call the bluff

Ok then, time to come back (what up)

Hail King Huey, do it for fluid, you knew it was movin' forever

Knew it, the truth is, the movement was really too clever

Who is the newest to do it, pursuing a useless, polluted, agenda

00:58:54	Linda	Host	<p><i>[Volume decreases to play underneath Linda as she speaks.]</i> Daveed Diggs, folks—clipping.. Their album from last year, <i>There Existed an Addiction to Blood</i>, is available to buy and stream. You heard a little bit about it in this interview, but Daveed also starred in and co-wrote the movie <i>Blindspotting</i>. It's a gripping, really human story about police violence and gentrification. You can rent or buy it digitally, or stream it on HBO, now.</p>
00:59:15	Music	Music	<p><i>["Blood of the Fang" increases in volume.]</i></p> <p><i>They tried to take out every military leader but He was born to be a martyr and it doesn't mean a thing because that body really meat Fill it up, you history is when you might consider killing folk This ain't the shit they taught you when you went to kindergarten What you need to know is in the (blood) Queen Angela done told y'all, grasp at the root So, what y'all talkin' 'bout, "Hands up, don't shoot" Look back, blood on the ground Look straight, they still shootin' Jump back, still here Now what that tell you 'bout death? Death ain't shit, you got to</i></p>
00:59:47	Linda	Host	<p><i>[Music fades to play under Linda's dialogue.]</i> 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 various parts of the country. The show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our producer is Kevin Ferguson. Jesus Ambrosio is our associate producer. We get help from Casey O'Brien. Our production fellow is Jordan Kauwling.</p> <p>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.</p>
01:00:29	Music	Music	<p>You can keep up with the show on Facebook, Twitter, 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. Mine is, "Thanks, Jesse."</p> <p><i>[Volume increases.]</i></p> <p><i>Run track to the red Black suit, black hair, black wings, black stare Black all for the (blood)</i></p>
01:00:32	Promo	Promo	<p><i>[Volume decreases for the ad.]</i> Speaker: <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.</p>
01:00:38	Music	Music	<p><i>[Volume increases.]</i></p> <p><i>If you knew the passion that grew, what I'm askin' 'Cause they would never see in the basics Surround 'em all, Eric or Gregory, but they faces</i></p>

*And every book, record, or CD, even made the MP3s laced with
(blood)
Brother Malcolm done told y'all, "By any means"
So, what y'all talkin' 'bout, "All on the same team?"
Look back, blood on the ground
Look straight*

[Music fades out.]