

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 as Jesse speaks, then fades out.
00:00:19	Jesse Thorn	Host	What follows is an interview conducted by Carrie Poppy. Carrie is, of course, the host of Maximum Fun’s own podcast, <i>Oh No, Ross and Carrie!</i> . In the show, Carrie and her co-host, Ross Blocher, investigate spiritual and paranormal claims in the best way they know how: they try them out. That means looking for ghosts or joining scientology or trying out new age home remedies that are slightly too gross to talk about on NPR. One time, my friend Jordan and I went on their show and we vaped essential oils. Did not seem to have an effect on me. A little coughing.
			Carrie’s guest, on <i>Bullseye</i> this week: Julia Sweeney. You probably know Julia Sweeney from her work on <i>Saturday Night Live</i> . She was on the show for the first part of the 1990s. She’s followed that with other interesting work. She’s performed a series of monologues that talk about her life and her relationship with religion in a funny, honest way. “God Said Ha”, might be the best known of them. What’s she been up to since then? Well, she helped created a new show called <i>Work in Progress</i> , which is airing on Showtime. And she’s in the comedy <i>Shrill</i> . In it, Julia Sweeney plays Vera—the mother to the main character, Annie, played by Aidy Bryant.
			Annie a writer living in Portland, who is constantly juggling insecurities in her love life, her family life, and her job. The show also talks a lot about body image problems and how family can exacerbate them. Like in this clip—Annie has gone to visit her parents. Annie’s dad, who is battling cancer, just got some good news about his treatment. And to celebrate, Annie brings him a meatball sub. You know, as a treat. But then, Mom gets home.
00:02:06	Sound Effect	Transition	Let’s listen. Music swells and fades.
00:02:07	Clip	Clip	Vera (<i>Shrill</i>): Are you staying for dinner? Annie: Nooo, no. We already ate. Vera: <i>[Beat.]</i> Oh, tell me you did not bring this crap into our house. Did you? Bill: Honey, come on! Annie: Yeah, relax! It’s a meatball sub. It’s one sandwich, one day, and Dad got good test results, today! Vera: Yeah, <u>today!</u> But that doesn’t mean he’s home free! We still have to worry about our health.

Annie: Okay, you don't have to control every single thing that we eat.

Vera: Okay. Yeah. Well, you know, I read your article and I know I'm the horrible mother who forced you, your whole life, to eat healthy and exercise. And now, all my friends are reading about it. So, that's great.

Annie: Okay, well I feel some of those things, so I wrote them.

Vera: Then why didn't you come to me and talk to me about it first? Instead, you just publish it so the whooole world can see it!

Annie: Yeah, because that's what you actually care about. You can say it's about my health, but all you actually care about is what other people think.

Vera: That is not true, Annie!

Annie: Yes. It is. And you micromanage everything and it's not just me. Now that Dad's sick, you get to do it to him, and you love it. Music swells and fades.

00:03:07 Sound Effect Transition

00:03:08 Carrie Host Julia Sweeney, welcome to *Bullseye*.

00:03:10 Julia Guest *[Laughing.]* Hello! God.

00:03:12 Carrie Host I don't know who to identify with, in that clip. You know?

00:03:17 Julia Guest *[Laughing.]* Oh my god.

00:03:18 Crosstalk **Carrie:** Well, I—but, they're both so sympathetic!

00:03:24 Carrie Host **Julia:** I know! Okay, good! That's good! Yes! I agree! I agree. Yeah, I think your character—in this scene and in the show, at large—is so—she's a—she's a real mix of, like, passive aggressive but also really loving and genuinely concerned. Or that's how I see her. Is that how you see her?

00:03:39 Julia Guest Yeah! It's been, actually, a great Rorschach test for people, 'cause sometimes people will say, "Oh, you play the mother on *Shrill*? She's so horrible!"

[Carrie makes a sound of understanding.]

And I'm like, "Really?! Is she? Am I—is the character?" 'Cause I—it's pretty close to what I—I mean, not totally, but... Um.

[They laugh.]

Yes, you know, it's—she is sympathetic. Actually, I really appreciate that they made her so sympathetic. I probably would have made her more of a monster, because my mother and I battled about my weight—I think coming out of the womb, my mother said, "Seven pounds, four—four—four ounces?"

[Carrie laughs.]

00:04:19 Carrie Host "I think you were really hogging down, in there. I think you could—
00:04:21 Julia Guest let's just kind of lay off—"
"We can get it down to seven."
[Laughing.] Yeah, exactly. So, my own experience was with—was
such a not passive aggressive mom. Just aggressive mom, about
weight—that, to me, my character in *Shrill* is very close to what I
would be, I think. I don't know.

[Carrie makes a thoughtful sound.]

00:04:44 Carrie Host That's hard to tell. I try to be very accepting about people's bodies,
but, um—anyway.
00:04:53 Julia Guest Sure. You are a mother, yourself. Do you—do you think that
passive aggression is just sort of inherent to parenting?
00:04:56 Carrie Host Well—okay, let me just stand up for passive aggressiveness.
00:04:57 Julia Guest [Laughs.]
Okay, let's hear it. [Chuckles.]
Passive aggressiveness gave us civilization, okay? You know?
Like, there are times when you don't wanna just be aggressively
telling somebody what you think, so—I mean, of course, yes,
parenting—a big part of parenting is trying to get your message
across without being—putting someone on the spot, putting them in
a defensive position, letting them know what you think without...
you know, putting them in the position where they have to say they
disagree, even.

[Carrie agrees.]

00:05:59 Carrie Host All of that is a subtle art, and the subtle art of parenting. So, it's
within that range, I think, on *Shrill*. But it has been interesting,
'cause some people think she's a horror and some people think
she's sympathetic—mostly the people who are my age think she's
sympathetic, I would say. And I do do some pretty awful things that
I—was really fun to play. But in general, I guess I just appreciate it's
a more nuanced... you know, role than it could have been. It could
have been really awful. [Chuckles.]
00:06:13 Julia Guest Yeah, absolutely, yeah. You kind of frame passive aggression as
the super ego—our way of interacting with the world that kind of
meets in the middle between what society wants from us and what
we might want, ourselves.
Right. And the other thing is, there's some things only a mother can
say. I mean, like, there are some things that I feel like it's your
responsibility to say, because I believe other people would think,
"Oh, I can't say something, but your mother should definitely say
something." [Laughs.] So.

[Carrie affirms.]

00:06:45 Carrie Host You know, like, I—I mean, really, in my situation it isn't about
weight. That's not our issue, but there are certain things. You know,
like, that you wanna let somebody know. I mean—so, it's very
complicated to be a mom. And you pretty much are never gonna
win. You know.
I was just saying to someone—because I don't have kids, myself—
and I was saying, "It seems like the project of parenting is
pretending you don't know better when you probably know better.

00:06:58	Julia	Guest	<i>[Laughing.]</i> Yes! That's true. That's good.
00:07:00	Carrie	Host	Do you find that in your own relationship with our own daughter? Or with our own mother?
00:07:06	Julia	Guest	Wow. Well, with—my own mom is such a different relationship, now, than it was. Because she sort of—she's declining and her memory's going, so she's... it's more like I'm her mom. I—you know, I take care of her money and I talk to the nurses, where she's at. You know, so—but growing up, my mother was very critical of me and how I looked. And was really—and really did only care what other people thought. Well, she'd—I don't know if she knew the difference between what other people thought and what she thought. I think she—I think to be heavy was the absolute worst sin that any woman could ever make.
			<i>[Carrie reacts in surprise.]</i>
			And the reason that you could make—the reason why it was such a big sin was, of course, not for health reasons. It was because you wouldn't get as good of a <u>maaan</u> as you could get if you were thin. And, in her world, that was success—was snaring a successful man and... and in her mind, successful men were looking for slim women, so when I was in high school and started gaining weight, it really was a catastrophe in our family. Like, there were notes on the door and trips to the doctor and diets and, um...
00:08:16	Carrie	Host	Oh! Wow, okay.
00:08:18	Julia	Guest	Yeah. No, very heavy. So, in <i>Shrill</i> ... I'm pretty, like, I feel like, "Wow, this mom's pretty good. She's pretty accepting." Um, I was like—
00:08:28	Carrie	Host	<i>[Laughing.]</i> Yeah! I mean, she's not—she's not saying it outright. What more do you want from her?
00:08:32	Julia	Guest	Exactly! I know, like, where on <i>Shrill</i> to be like, <i>[delicately]</i> "Well, I don't know if I'd wear that top with those pants," my mom would say, <i>[crassly]</i> "You look fat and you look terrible and from the side, it's the worst."
00:08:44	Carrie	Host	<i>[Laughs.]</i> So, then, when you first read this script that is by... or, that is about Lindy West, who may have gone through some of the same things you did, was that a breath of fresh air? To kind of see that reflected?
00:08:56	Julia	Guest	Oh yeah! It really was. And Lindy and I've talked a lot about it, and her mom was, you know, difficult and—you know—her mom's about my age, so—you know, like, there's different generations going on, here. But I mean, her mom was different, I think, because—her mom actually sounded a lot better than my mom, but her mom was a nurse—or is a nurse—so, it was all framed as health. My mother never said the word health my entire growing up. There was nothing about health. It was all about just how you looked. So.
00:09:27	Carrie	Host	Uh, well, speaking of your growing up, you're probably best known as an actor and a comedian, but my—my favorite Julia Sweeney stuff is your writing and your one woman shows. And—
00:09:40	Julia	Guest	Oh! Thank you!
00:09:41	Carrie	Host	Oh! Yes! And in particular, you did this one woman show called <i>Letting Go of God</i> , and it's this personal story about becoming an atheist and it begins with you telling this story about coming into the kitchen on the morning of your seventh birthday. We have a clip, here.

00:09:58	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:09:59	Clip	Clip	<i>[The audience applauds.]</i>
			<p>Julia (<i>Letting Go of God</i>): On September 10th, the morning of my seventh birthday, I came downstairs to the kitchen, where my mother was washing the dishes and my father was reading the paper. And I sort of presented myself to them, in the doorway. And they said, “Heeey! Happy birthday!”</p> <p>And I said, “I’m seven.”</p> <p>And my father smiled and said, “Well, you know what that means, don’t you?”</p> <p>And I said, “Yeah, that I can have a party and cake and get a lot of presents?”</p> <p>And my dad said, “Weeell, yes. But more importantly, being seven means that you’ve reached the age of reason. And you’re now capable of committing any and all sins against God and man!”</p>
			<i>[The audience laughs.]</i>
00:10:36	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:10:38	Carrie	Host	<i>[Chuckling.]</i> Amazing. So, when you were first doing this show, it was—what? 2007?
00:10:44	Julia	Guest	Um, nooo! It was, like, 2004!
			<i>[Carrie reacts in surprise.]</i>
00:10:53	Carrie	Host	Yeah. I think I actually filmed it in 2006 or 7. I can’t remember. Okay, so—back then— <i>[dramatically]</i> back then, in the olden days—
			<i>[Julia agrees in kind.]</i>
			<i>[Chuckles.]</i> Um, it was a little scarier to talk about being an atheist in public. I feel like, today, that’s a little less taboo. So, were you scared, at the time?
00:11:08	Julia	Guest	Yeah! I did not like the word atheist. It was sort of—I felt a little bit like it was coming out of the closet and having a negative feeling about being gay. Like, people I know who’ve experienced that, that was—that’s the closest feeling that I’ve heard from other people. Like, “I don’t wanna be this thing. I’ve had a negative connotations with this word, and yet I just can’t pretend anymore that I’m not that!” And it was further difficult because it was—it wasn’t—like, it would have been easier—well, I’m not trying minimize people who are in the closet and had a difficult time coming out, ‘cause I know—I <u>know</u> that is really hard.
			But, for me, you know—I kept thinking, “You can just decide to believe or you can just—” You can fake belief a lot more easily, I think, than you can fake sexual attraction to, you know, someone of the opposite sex if you’re not attracted to them. I think that’s—you know, nature intervenes. <i>[Laughs.]</i> But with being an atheist, it just seemed like it’d be so easy to fake it. And—or just be like most

people I know are, which is they don't even know they're atheists. They're just not religious and don't think about it.

[Carrie affirms.]

That'd have been—that would have been easier, too. So, it was hard to... come out and just say that word. And that word—now I'm comfortable with it, but at the beginning, it was hard to say that word.

00:12:39 Carrie Host Yeah, what do you think the reception would be like if you did that today, in 2020, instead of in 2004?

00:12:46 Julia Guest Well, in some ways it would have been worse, because now that the new atheists have come and there's been a whole movement, there's also been a backlash to that movement—which hadn't happened, either. You know what I mean?

[Carrie affirms.]

So, now I feel like the people that aren't gonna think it through deeply—which, by the way, is most people—but who are generally living in a scientific world and are modern people would probably feel more negatively about me saying that, now.

[Carrie makes a thoughtful sound.]

'Cause they would say, "Ooh... are you like those atheists that are really right-wing people?" Or whatever. Libertarian atheists. So, that—that part might have been harder, actually. I don't know.

00:13:31 Carrie Host That's interesting. Yeah. We did go through this moment, culturally, where all these books came out and all these people were sort of banging the drum of atheism and I would think, in some ways, that opened some doors to this conversation, but you're right—the downside is you accidentally associate yourself with the people speaking the message.

00:13:54 Julia Guest Right. I mean, partly it's my own fault that I didn't push it more, but there's so few women in this that are outspoken atheists. There are some! There's lots of them, but there's not nearly as many as there are guys. So, it's an easy to be harsh about group, and to categorize—I don't know. I feel glad that I didn't have that to worry about, when I did it. It was really a genuine show. I really followed my belief where it took me and where it took me was not to believe, and then that changed my entire life once I realized that. In... really, all positive ways. It's hard to think of one negative way, but it really transformed my life dramatically. And I didn't have to worry about that part of the baggage. Anyway.

00:14:41 Carrie Host What do you think, now, the age of reason is?

00:14:44 Julia Guest *[Cackles.]* 60?

00:14:47 Carrie Host *[Laughs.]* Wow! You just—you just made it! You're finally responsible for your actions! Congratulations!

00:14:55 Julia Guest *[Amused.]* Um, it's so funny because, you know, I have so many—I have a lot of doubts about free will, itself, even though that's misunderstood by so many people. And so, I don't know how responsible anyone is for anything. But... I could say 30. I don't know.

[Carrie erupts into laughter.]

00:15:18 Carrie Host No, you know what?! I'm not saying an age! There is no age!
And speaking of gods—of course, you are—you have a big role
coming up in *American Gods*, season three!

00:15:24 Julia Guest Yes! I'm in, I would say, seven or eight of the ten episodes. And
yeah! I have a very important part and it was really fun! And I... I did
[with a flat accent] drama! I did drama!

[They chuckle.]

I—well, I'm kind of a nutty old lady who owns a store and is a
busybody in the town. But as the season progresses, it becomes
quite serious and I can't really reveal it, 'cause it's all mysterious
what happens, and I can't say.

[Carrie makes an intrigued sound.]

00:16:08 Carrie Host But oh my gosh, I had so much fun doing it. Oh my god. I love it so
much! And I have to tell you that being 60, as an actress, is the
greatest thing that could ever happen, because—

00:16:09 Julia Guest *[Shocked.]* Yeah?
It—oh my gosh, yes! For me! I mean... because the parts I'm
playing, now—I mean, there was just such a—to go back to the
weight issue, there was so much pressure to be pretty and thin and
I was always kind of in between. Like, I was never—I had a
manager once saying, "You would get a lot more work if you'd
either lose or gain 30 pounds."

[Carrie makes a sound of understanding.]

And now, no one cares about that. And it's really just about what I
can deliver, and my characters are quirkiest and oddest, and I feel
really comfortable in my skin. And it's just—I'm so glad I lived to be
this age, because I've had so much fun the last couple of years and
I've done a lot of acting on shows and I just had a nervousness and
a preoccupation with worry about how I looked or if I was sexy
enough or whatever enough. And that is completely gone and it's
like being let out of prison. And it makes me a better actor, too,
because I'm completely doing the part. And it's just a joy.

00:17:19 Carrie Host How new is that? Did it just come with 60?

00:17:24 Julia Guest It really started two years ago, when I first—'cause I took ten years
off, to raise my daughter and be a housewife. My life dream, which I
achieved.

[Carrie chuckles.]

And then, when she went to college, I moved back to LA. My
husband retired. We start—we took up the elder part of our lives.
And I went out and started auditioning and I got *Shrill*. And then
Work in Progress, which is a long story, but I was kind of involved in
the inception of that and I'm so proud to be on that show. And then
American Gods and I did a *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* and I did some
voice over. And I just got a lot of work, right away! Like it was a big
shock! And in some ways, I feel like... Hollywood was waiting for
me to get old.

[They laugh.]

Because I think I had an old person vibe, when I was younger, and it was very confusing! And now I just am old, and I all fit together, now.

00:18:20 Carrie Host
00:18:21 Julia Guest
00:18:23 Carrie Host

Oh, you caught up!

[Laughing.] I caught up!

That's really interesting and I see that, because you have such—such a huuuge, cerebral mind, and it comes through in everything you do. I feel like if you hadn't been a funny person, you would have been a college professor or a philosopher or something like that.

[Julia agrees with a gasp.]

00:18:44 Crosstalk Crosstalk

What do you think? *[Laughs.]*

Carrie: What do you think you'd be?

Julia: I totally think so!

00:18:46 Julia Guest

Carrie: Yeah?

Well, my first—the first thing I wanted to be, so much, was a history professor.

[Carrie makes a sound of interest.]

Because I had this incredible history professor at the University of Washington, where I went to school. And I was his notetaker, so I took ancient, medieval, modern every year for four years. 'Cause the first year I actually took it, and then I was the notetaker and you got—I think you got 50 bucks a class. Or maybe it was 25 bucks a class. But it was nice! You had to write up the notes for the class and then distribute them. And—this is so the old days where you'd go off and type up the notes and then miUmeograph them.

[Carrie laughs.]

And I loved him so much, Dr. Bridgeman, and I took every class he taught—which, he happened to be an expert in German history, so I took a lot—every class that I could possibly take that he taught, which was mostly, you know, the unification of Germany in 1873! How did Bismarck change Germany? Those kind of classes. And, —

00:19:42 Carrie Host
00:19:44 Julia Guest

Classes with semicolons in the title. *[Chuckles.]*

[Laughing.] Yeah! And I wanted to be him. Because he was a performer, you know. He would teach these classes—you know, the survey classes would have 700 people in them, and he was funny and he would strut across the stage and he would deliver his lectures and I was just, like, "That's for me!" And in a way, I wish I had—I got to live another life, so I could have been that also.

00:20:09 Carrie Host

Hmmm.

[Julia agrees.]

Well, that's interesting, 'cause I kind of see the echoes of that in your monologuing—that they're—they are performative. They are

entertainment. But they also have this fundamental aspect of education.

00:20:24 Julia Guest Yeeeah! I mean, I do... even though, right now with COVID and staying home, and I'm so happy to be home—in spite of all the horrendous stuff that's happening in the world—that keeps me up at night. But in the day, I'm feeling happy to be home. But I do—and I'm thinking I'm gonna stop performing and just write, 'cause I've been doing a lot of writing and I'm really loving it, and it's—takes a lot of energy to perform. You have to get a theater. You have to get an audience. You have to sell tickets and, ugh, it's just a lot. But the ideas—I keep having ideas for shows. Like, I wanna do a show called, *The Bible is Fascinating: Believe It or Not*.

And I would love to—I was thinking I would love to do a show just called *Androgyny*, just talking about the difference—biological differences between men and women and what we know right now and what we don't know and how different cultures have handled those differences and perceived those differences in people, how different cultures have—some matriarchal some patriarchal—attacked that difficult question of nonbinary stuff so differently. And I've done lots and lots of reading about that, and there's a lot of interesting and funny stuff about that! I—it just seems like that would be a fun show to do. *[Laughs.]*

00:21:47 Carrie Host Yeah. Is that something you would do with a nonbinary performer, then?

00:21:52 Julia Guest No! I think it would be me, like a teacher. You know, like, I would be explaining what I'd learned and what was funny about it and how we could maybe think of it—things differently. Because it wouldn't be just about nonbinary people. It would be about all of us and our sexuality and how it's reflected in culture and so forth. But I'm saying that, and while I'm saying it, I'm thinking, “Don't say that Julia, 'cause you're never gonna do that show.”

[They laugh.]

00:22:22 Jesse Host More with Julia Sweeney still to come. Another new show she's appeared in is called *Work in Progress*. In it, she plays a fictionalized version of herself, who has to answer for the damage done by one of her most well-known *Saturday Night Live* characters, Pat. More about that after the break. It's *Bullseye*, from [MaximumFun.org](https://www.maximumfun.org) and NPR.

00:22:44 Promo Clip **Music:** Slow, tonal music.

Shereen Marisol Meraji: Until recently, Edmond Hong says he didn't speak out against racism, because he was scared.

[Scene changes. The sound of traffic and horns honking.]

Edmond Hong: My parents told me not to speak up! Because they were scared! But I'm tired of this!

[Scene changes.]

Gene Demby: Listen now, on the *Code Switch* podcast from NPR.

[Music fades out.]

00:23:03	Jesse	Host	Welcome back to <i>Bullseye</i> . I'm Jesse Thorn. Our guest is Julia Sweeney. The comic actor and writer is starring in the TV shows <i>Work in Progress</i> and <i>Shrill</i> , which are airing on Showtime and Hulu, respectively. She's being interviewed by Carrie Poppy, the host of the podcast <i>Oh No, Ross and Carrie!</i> . Let's get back into the conversation.
00:23:23	Carrie	Host	Julia is, perhaps, best known for her work on <i>Saturday Night Live</i> , in the early 1990s. Her most recognizable character from that time was Pat—a shy, insecure person who sparks confusion in most people they meet, due to their androgynous appearance. In recent years, there's been more vocal criticism of the character. Actor Abby McEnany was one of those people who didn't care for Pat. She created the TV series <i>Work in Progress</i> and wrote a fictionalized version of Julia into the show, where she would meet and be confronted by a fictionalized version of Abby. In this clip, Abby is on a date at a restaurant when she sees Julia. Abby is overcome with anxiety about confronting her and passes out at the restaurant.
00:24:13	Sound Effect	Transition	When she comes to, she and Julia meet and talk about Pat. Music swells and fades.
00:24:14	Clip	Clip	<p>Julia (<i>Work in Progress</i>): Do you think maybe you should have some water?</p> <p>Abby: Oh, no—I have Miller Lite. It's mostly water.</p> <p><i>[They chuckle awkwardly.]</i></p> <p>Julia: Well, uh, again—I'm so sorry.</p> <p>Abby: You know, you don't have to be sorry. We're good.</p> <p>Julia: No, I do feel—I feel terrible.</p> <p>Abby: I just, it's so weird to meet you in real life and be with you, 'cause your character, like, Pat—was just part of my life for so long, and in a—in a pretty bad way. So, it's just...</p> <p>Julia: Oh god.</p> <p>Abby: Look. People suck, right?</p> <p>Julia: Yeah. They do. I'm so sorry.</p> <p>Abby: I'm fine with it.</p> <p>Julia: I'm not fine with it. I feel terrible. I didn't mean it to be mean. I think I was really naive—</p> <p>Abby: We all were.</p> <p>Julia: I think I was—and—but now, I'm like—ugh.</p> <p>Abby: Uh. Don't you mean, <i>[drawn out and dramatic]</i> "Uuuuugh!"</p>

Julia: I think you mean, *[weak and nasally]* “Uu-uu-uugh.” *[Laughs.]*

00:25:08 Sound Effect Transition

Abby: *[Cackles.]* Oh man. Oh no.
Music swells and fades.

00:25:09 Carrie Host

Uh, so how were you approached about this project? Was it already on the page or was it a conversation?

00:25:14 Julia Guest

It was just a conversation. Abby came to my—I was working on a one person show in Chicago, at Second City. I was doing shows every Sunday night, and she came to the show and we met, and I loved her so immediately. And she told me that she had also done a one person show about her life and her friend, Tim, who was with her at my show, was filming sort of some vignettes from it. And we—it wasn’t even a pilot, then. It was just, like, “Oh, here’s a scene.” They just kind of described the scene. And I was like, “Oh, of course I’ll do it.” And they were so happy. And we mostly—I mean, to me, I just remember how much we all bonded, and we had such a similar point of view about everything.

Anyway, we filmed that scene. They filmed other scenes. They cut it together. It became a pilot. Like—they were saying it was gonna be webisodes. When I shot it, I thought it was just gonna be webisode of something.

[Carrie expresses surprise.]

I didn’t even understand. Then they submitted it to Sundance. It got in. And—which is crazy. ‘Cause they—you know, they take pilots, now, but only—like—12. And so, I went to Sundance and I think... Lilly Wachowski was on board, by then. And we—I pounded the pavement, ‘cause I was the only name in it. You know. And I got some attention and the—but the main thing is the show itself was so good. I mean, they actually didn’t need me or anybody. I mean, the show was so good. And yeah, Showtime bought it. So... that’s how I kind of ended up an executive producer on it. But—‘cause I was there at the beginning.

00:26:52 Carrie Host

That’s amazing.

[Julia laughs and agrees.]

So, you thought you were making a web series and you end up at Sundance, as an EP.

[Julia confirms enthusiastically several times.]

00:26:59 Julia Guest

For this Showtime show. *[Laughs.]* Amazing.
Yeah! I know! I know! It was really—it was amazing. It was amazing. I’m so proud of that show, because I love Abby. I think it’s a really different show. It’s—you know, like—I think it’s the—it’s just what I know of that—of the... gay community. It’s—it rings true to me, from my own experience and from Abby and her friends. And compared to a lot of other gay themed shows, it seemed... like, so much more real. And I just—I’m so proud to be associated with it. And I have a little part in it. And, you know, I’m an executive producer, but really it’s more of a title. I really just kind of am happy to be around it. That’s like a Hollywood story that almost never

00:27:58 Carrie Host happens, something like that. And it's just—I'm just so happy that happened to Abby and I'm so happy that it happened to me! Yeah, that strikes me as—I mean, a little bit brave. I'm sorry to use the word. But [*chuckles*] a little brave, to sort of face your—the criticism of your own character head-on, in that way. Um.

00:28:11 Julia Guest [*Carrie affirms several times as Julia speaks.*] Well, for me it was an opportunity, because I had started hearing the grumblings about Pat and I—of course, I felt really defensive. And I'm still somewhat defensive, because I think people misunderstood the character. But I also think... I misunderstood the community, also. Like, I get—everything negative that I've read, except for when people think that I was trying to humiliate people who were androgynous—that's absolutely not what I was doing. That was completely not what I was trying to do, in any way. But I'm—but I would say, of all the criticism I've read, I just read it and think, "I agree with you 100%!"

[*Laughs.*] I think I—I totally agree! And in a way, though, it's such a wonderful sign of how America has changed. 'Cause it's kind of like—actually, I just read this in a notebook. I was going through—'cause I write my journal, I'm a big journal writer—and I was going through one—I was looking for standup ideas for something, last week. And I saw a thing that Michael had said to me—my husband, Michael was saying this: "The day that Pat is not funny at all is the day that America has finally grown up."

[*Carrie chuckles.*]

00:29:38 Carrie Host Which is true! That's absolutely true. And I thought that was such a good insight. It—the fact that it was so popular shows you the problem. [*Laughs.*]

I mean, fair enough. It's just—it's very modest of you to see it that way.

00:29:42 Julia Guest Well, I—I mean, part of it was that I was trying to do something that no one realizes I was trying to do. Because to me, Pat isn't nonbinary. Pat is male or female but is oblivious to how Pat comes off to other people.

[*Carrie hums an affirmation.*]

That's what I thought the joke was. So, to me, that was funny. I actually still think that's funny. But—and then—and then, of course, the laughing was people seeing other people who are as confused as them and uncomfortable and then that Pat was so oblivious to that uncomfortableness. That's where I found the comedy. But, of course, that's kind of getting into the weeds of the comic, you know, construction of it. It is true that it was, you know, laughing at somebody that you couldn't tell if it was a man or a woman. You know. Like—and that's also true. You know. And that is... a terrible biproduct of what I understood of what I was doing. But I didn't really understand.

So, I've had my own education. [*Laughs.*]

00:30:42	Carrie	Host	Yeah, I feel that there is a way to see—in particular, <i>It's Pat</i> , the film—a way to see that as making fun of society's preoccupation with gender.
			<i>[Julia agrees emphatically.]</i>
00:31:30	Julia	Guest	I mean, one of—one of the characters literally goes insane because he can't figure out Pat's gender. And Pat, of course, doesn't care. As Pat shouldn't! And I—and I totally see that point of view and that intention in there. I wonder, then, if some of the problem is that comedy can be used in so many ways. It can be used as a cudgel, it can be used as satire, it can be used to uplift, it can be used to bring down. So, it kind of hands this tool to anyone who will take it. Yeah! I think it's one of those things where it worked on many levels. Like, looking back on it, I think—well, now I understand so much more about the patriarchy. I mean, like, I did not understand cultural history like I should've. But—when I was doing it. And so, I had an instinct for it. Like, for me, I don't really care if people are men or women. I mean, I don't—I was shocked that people <u>cared</u> that much, whether Pat was a man or a woman.
00:32:05	Carrie	Host	So, in some ways, I was on the side of, “Who cares? Who. Cares.”
00:32:07	Julia	Guest	<i>[Chuckling.]</i> Julia Sweeney, thank you for coming to <i>Bullseye</i> .
00:32:09	Jesse	Host	<i>[Amused.]</i> Thank you so much, Carrie. Julia Sweeney. Catch her on Hulu's <i>Shrill</i> or Showtime's <i>Work in Progress</i> . You can see her on stage when stage performances are again a thing.
00:32:20	Music	Transition	Triumphant, bright music with heavy synth.
00:32:25	Jesse	Host	That's the end of another episode of <i>Bullseye</i> . <i>Bullseye</i> is produced from the homes of the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California—where the Maximum Fun team ordered a Cameo for our colleague KT Wiegman's birthday. The subject of that Cameo video message? Eve, the cow star, from Kelly Reichardt's <i>First Cow</i> .
			Our show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our producer is Kevin Ferguson. Jesus Ambrosio and Jordan Kauwling are our associate producers. We get help from Casey O'Brien. 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. You can also keep up with the show on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Just search for <i>Bullseye</i> with Jesse Thorn.
00:33:21	Promo	Promo	I think that's about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature sign off. Speaker: <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.
			<i>[Music fades out.]</i>