

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	It’s <i>Bullseye</i> . I’m Jesse Thorn. Our guest this week is actor Alex Winter. He’s interviewed by Carrie Poppy, co-host of Maximum Fun’s own podcast, <i>Oh No! Ross and Carrie</i> . Alex Winter is probably best known for his role as the time traveling teenager, Bill S. Preston Esquire, in the iconic <i>Bill & Ted</i> movies from the late 1980s and early 1990s. I mean, if you are listening to this and you are within the right age cohort, they are intimately familiar to you. <i>[Music fades out.]</i> These two dudes, Bill and Ted, travel back in time to meet historical figures like Abraham Lincoln, Billy the Kid, and Socrates, for their high school history presentation. Then, in the sequel, they go to Heaven and Hell. Then, of course, give Death a wedgie in an elaborate Ingmar Bergman parody. Obviously, these are silly movies. What makes them work, though, is the chemistry and the palpable friendship between Bill and Ted. These are two dudes who could not be more thrilled to be best friends with each other. And with the way that Alex and Keanu Reeves portray them, you really believe it. After the success of the <i>Bill & Ted</i> movies, Keanu Reeves went on to be, you know, Keanu Reeves. But Alex Winter stepped away from acting and transitioned into work behind the scenes. He’s directed documentaries about the deep web, about the music industry. He did a biography of Frank Zappa. His most recent film is <i>Showbiz Kids</i> . The movie features interviews with some of Hollywood’s most recognizable former child stars. It’s a complex and nuanced piece of work that looks at the human cost for child actors, featuring interviews with former child stars like Mara Wilson, Wil Wheaton, and Evan Rachel Wood. It’s also a very personal film for Alex, who was a child star himself. Anyway, you probably heard this, but Alex is back as Bill. He and Keanu teamed up to star in <i>Bill & Ted Face the Music</i> , which is available to rent or buy on a bunch of different platforms. In their latest adventure, Bill and Ted are given a task: write and record a song in 78 minutes. The song must save all life on Earth and the entire galaxy. Time travel and shredding ensue. Naturally. Let’s hear a clip from the new film. Now, in middle-aged life, Bill and Ted are visited by a mysterious woman in a time traveling pod, named Kelly. In this clip, Kelly—played by our pal, Kristen Schaal—has come to convince Bill and Ted to travel to the future with her.
00:02:52	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:02:53	Clip	Clip	Music: Fantastical, inspiring music.

Kelly (*Bill & Ted Face the Music*): Greetings, my excellent friends!

Ted: Do we know you?

Kelly: I'm Kelly.

Bill: Wait... you're Rufus's daughter!

Kelly: I am. And I've been wanting to meet you my whole life!

Ted: It must be very disappointing.

Kelly: Not at all! We have a problem, gentleman. Actually, a very serious problem.

Bill: About the music?

Kelly: About the music. They just wanna talk to you.

Ted: Dude, I got a very bad feeling about this.

Bill: It'll be fine, Ted! They totally love us in the future, dude. Music swells and fades.

00:03:29 Sound Effect Transition

00:03:30 Carrie Host Alex Winter, welcome to *Bullseye*.

00:03:32 Alex Winter Guest
00:03:34 Carrie Host

Thank you. Thanks so much. It's so exciting to be talking to you. I've been watching these movies since I was a kid. The first one came out when I was six. This one is such a fun film and it's loyal to the first two without, sort of, retreading old ground too much. And I wondered what you see as different in the message of this movie, versus the first two?

00:03:55 Alex Guest

I think there was a lot of effort put into digging into who these guys would be in adulthood. And well into adulthood, as fathers to pretty well grown daughters and very close with their wives and very happy with their personal lives, but kind of at odds with where they fit in the world and what they're fate was supposed to be and what has actually transpired. And so, I think that the message is a little different in that it's a little bit more connected to where Bill and Ted are, in their lives. And it's got a more... grounded set of obstacles that then collide with an incredibly non-grounded *[laughing]* set of obstacles.

[Carrie chuckles.]

In typical *Bill & Ted* fashion. That's what kind of sets up all the movies, is these kind of regular guys in these ridiculous circumstances.

00:04:48 Carrie Host

Right, yeah. Were there any tropes—sequel tropes that you were on the lookout for, when you were making this?

00:04:54 Alex Guest

We wanted to avoid the film feeling like a rehash. We wanted it to avoid feeling like a reboot. We wanted it to live in a world between the previous movies and something that would stand entirely on its own.

[Carrie hums in understanding.]

And we were also very cautious about not wanting it to feel like a handoff movie that this is just, you know, we were just showing up to turn the whole adventure over to the next generation down. And we felt that way, thematically, not just structurally. We just felt that, you know, this film—for all of us and especially Chris Matheson and Ed Solomon, the writers who created this idea and brought it to Keanu and myself. I think they felt very strongly that it really be about multi-generations coming together and sort of community and family branching out into a wider community and not a movie about, like, “We’re old now! So, you take the reins!”

[They laugh.]

00:05:48	Carrie	Host	Right, right. I’m glad you brought up those two—the screenwriters—because they invented these characters when they were kids, right?
00:05:56	Alex	Guest	Well, to some degree, yes. I mean, they were in college. They met at—in college, out here in Los Angeles. And they were in film school and they were workshoping these two guys mostly as, like, a standup routine. They would sort of take it out to coffee shops and do it at friend’s houses and it became something that then evolved into a first draft. And I think it was Chris Matheson’s father was the esteemed writer, Richard Matheson, who suggested to them that they actually take this thing and make a movie out of it. And they were young, and we were all very young. We all embarked on a journey together, all of us, quite young and not quite knowing what we were doing, which was part of the fun I think.
00:06:38	Carrie	Host	Yeeeah, definitely. So—I’m kind of curious, as someone who’s not a professional actor, who does the character belong to, then? Once it’s on the page, you haven’t acted it yet. Is there sort of a—I don’t know, like a push and pull about who this—who has the final say on who this character is?
00:06:58	Alex	Guest	Uh, not generally. And I deal with this a lot from the directing standpoint. And I kind of—I mean, I have a whole thing about this, in terms of the auteur theory and who makes these things, anyway. And I came up out of theatre. I started quite young and I worked on Broadway for many, many years. And that’s a very collaborative world.

[Carrie hums in agreement.]

You know, ‘cause you’re doing these shows every single night, eight shows a week, in real time. So, everyone has to have everyone else’s back. And I—Keanu had come up doing theatre, too. And we’re pretty collaborative, by nature. And, you know, while we were trained, we weren’t—neither of us were really acting in a vacuum. And we were very open to the director’s ideas and the writer’s ideas and they were very open to our ideas. So, the films have been very collaborative all the way through. And that worked the same with the third one, which had a lot of the same people had come back. Scott Kroopf, who produced the previous two and Ed and Chris and Dean Parisot, the director, was on for several years before it got made. So, we all had a lot of time to talk stuff through. And when we started shooting, we were all working on the script. I mean, all of us.

There was a huge deference to Chris and Ed. And Ed was there the whole shoot and very, very involved. But Keanu and I worked together on our dialogue every weekend, all weekend *[laughing]*, frankly.

[Carrie reacts in surprise.]

And come back to the next week's work with a lot of stuff. And it wasn't rewriting the script so much as just, you know, sharpening emotional arc or logic or things like that and figuring out a way in and showing it to Ed and to Dean and see what they thought. And they would weigh in. So, the films are very collaborative. They kind of always have been. Ed and Chris and Keanu and I are always pointing the finger at each other over who owns the characters.

[They laugh.]

They're always saying it's us and we're always saying it's them.

[Chuckles.] So, I don't know. I really don't.

00:08:47 Carrie Host

Yeah. So, I always think of the actor as kind of having the final say about what's actually going on in that character's head, 'cause you're sort of the last person handling it by living in it. So, at least in your opinion, what's Bill's inner state like? Does he have a defining emotional condition or life philosophy? What's it like in that head?

00:09:09 Alex Guest

Yeah! I mean, I have a lot of—I have a lot of thought on that, a lot of which, you know, doesn't and shouldn't make it to the screen—just floating around, rattling around in my head as I work. And Keanu and I talk about this stuff a lot. We talked a lot especially for—well, that's—we really have on all three talked about our life circumstances and our pasts and, you know, what our—our mothers are never onscreen and we thought about that a lot when we were younger. We made *Bill & Ted* one and two and who were our moms and where were they? And what was up with our relationships *[laughing]* with our fathers? And, you know.

[Carrie agrees several times.]

What kind of, you know—had—pain had these guys endured when they were younger that had kind of manifested in a way that turned them into who they were as they got older? And that backstory was really helpful to us, moving into three, 'cause we really didn't wanna play these guys as cartoon characters. We really wanted to imbue them with a lot of life experience. And, you know, it's—there are little—they've, you know, this movie they're a little—they're impacted by the world. They're not oblivious to it. Bill has always been a little bit more of the eternal optimist and Ted—you know, Bill will sort of drive into—headlong into a circumstance with the best will in the world. Ted will be a little more wary and a little bit more expectant of not necessarily a fantastic result, but very happy when there is *[laughing]* a good result.

Which is—which is very Keanu, in this role. It's not how he is, offscreen, but it's very funny to watch him do that thing. So, we really—we wanted to play with that in this film, as well. And—but the stakes were way higher for us, emotionally. And I'm only telling

you this 'cause you asked. A lot of this stuff is, you know—no one will watch the movie and have any idea what I'm talking about.

[Carrie laughs.]

Which is—which is good. Believe me. I mean, we're not making *Terms of Endearment*. But it was fun to play. It was fun to play finding ourselves at this age with some disappointment and some fear about our future and how do Bill and Ted respond to that, given who they are?

00:11:07 Carrie Host

Yeah. I would also say that it reads that Bill is fundamentally optimistic and I wondered, as I was watching it, what's it like to play someone who's so optimistic, you know, now that you've been on this planet a few more decades than when you first created the character? Is it hard to maintain that optimism in such an authentic way?

00:11:29 Alex Guest

It isn't. There's a—there is a part of my personality that is that way despite, you know—just like anyone in live, having had some pretty intense things happen. And Keanu and I became really close friends on the audition process, from the first audition. And, you know, it's been talked about, so I don't mind talking about it, but we both had had fairly intense childhoods. So, we didn't come to *Bill & Ted* as these doe-eyed, you know, fundamentally optimistic guys. We had had some stuff happen to us already, in a pretty significant way. And so, both playing those characters and then finding that joy within ourselves to play the characters was very satisfying.

[Carrie hums in understanding.]

And we really enjoyed each other's company and we made each other laugh, but I think we also both enjoyed putting on the clothes and just disappearing into *Bill & Ted* land. And so, that was—that was something that I enjoyed, coming back to for this one was I believed that Bill was someone who, whatever has happened to them, he's aware of the pain of what's gone on, but he really does believe that everything's gonna end up okay.

00:12:39 Carrie Host

Mm-hm. Mm-hm. Yeah, he's optimistic but he's also smart in this way that's sort of unexpected. I feel like you both play these characters to the top of their intelligence and... yeah. I guess I also feel like they couldn't be immoral if they wanted to. They're kind of almost compelled to do the right thing all the time. Is that how you see it?

00:13:02 Alex Guest

[Carrie agrees several times as Alex speaks.]

I see the guys as moral. I don't see them as preachy or even, you know, ideologs. They don't have the sophistication for that. But I do see them as moral. And I do see them as having a—that both of them have a kind of a faith in each other and in the world through that relationship of friendship. And that's something that we both played on when we first met. I was drawing on childhood—I had had some extremely close childhood friendships, as everyone has, and we really lived in this imaginative universe when we were, like, 8, 9, 10, 11 years old. It was very hard to get us out of that universe. And, you know, we were strong together and then we faced the world sort of in unison.

And that's something that I really love about what I think—I do think Keanu and I kind of brought to these characters, even in the early audition days, was were just playing them like the very, very best friend you ever have when you were a kid. And you just soldiered whatever hardships you were dealing with—and there were some. You soldiered them together and faced the world together with a sense of optimism and morality. And we really wanted to keep that for playing them as adults. And, you know, Chris and Ed—I thought—did a really good job of creating a family that even though these movies are so heightened, it has a believability. The daughters, as heightened as they are, are believable. And the wives, as heightened as they are, are believable. And you can kind of—you kind of go, “Oh yeah. I kind of see how this works as a *[laughing]*—as a family.” You know.

00:14:41 Carrie Host

Oh, totally!

00:14:42 Jesse Host

Even more with Alex Winter, up ahead. His most famous character is, of course, Bill S. Preston Esquire. And here's something that our interviewer, Carrie, always wondered: what does the 'S' stand for? The answer, believe it or not, comes after the break. It's *Bullseye*, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

00:15:00 Music Transition

Upbeat, brassy music.

00:15:01 Jesse Promo

Support for *Bullseye* and the following message come from Green Chef.

Green Chef is a USDA certified organic meal kit, offering plans for every lifestyle—including paleo, plant-powered, keto, and balanced living. With Green Chef, everything is hand-picked and delivered right to your door. So, meal planning, grocery shopping, and prep is done, week after week. Go to GreenChef.com/bullseye80 and use code “bullseye80” to get \$80 off your first month.

00:15:35 Promo Clip

[Music fades out.]

Music: Gentle, upbeat piano music.

Helen Hong: Hey, J. Keith.

J. Keith van Straaten: Hey, Helen! Hey, you've got another true/false quiz for me?

Helen: Yep. Our trivia podcast, *Go Fact Yourself*, used to be in front of a live audience.

J. Keith: True. Turns out that's not so safe anymore.

Helen: Correct! Next, unfortunately, this means we can no longer record the show.

J. Keith: False! The show still comes out ever first and third Friday of the month.

Helen: Correct! Finally, we still have great celebrity guest answer trivia about things they love on every episode of *Go Fact Yourself*.

00:16:02 Promo Clip

J. Keith: Definitely true.

Helen: And, for bonus points, name some of them.

J. Keith: Recently we've had Ophira Eisenberg, plus tons of surprise experts like Yeardeley Smith and Suzanne Somers.

Helen: Perfect score!

J. Keith: Woo-hoo!

Helen: You can hear *Go Fact Yourself* every first and third Friday of the month with all the great guests and trivia that we've always had. And if you don't listen, well then you can *Go Fact Yourself!*

J. Keith: That's the name of our podcast!

Helen: Correct!

J. Keith: Woo-hoo!

[Music ends on a bright chord.]

00:16:25 Promo Clip

Music: Soft, plucky string music.

Guy Raz: I'm Guy Raz and on NPR's *How I Built This*, how a simple splash of color accidentally launched Sandy Chilewich into a 40-year career as a designer, entrepreneur, and creator of the now famous Chilewich placemat. Subscribe or listen now.

00:16:43 Jesse Host

[Music fades out.]

Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. Our guest is Alex Winter. You probably know him best as Bill from *Bill & Ted*. Along with Keanu Reeves, he starred in *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure*, *Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey*, and the brand-new movie, *Bill & Ted Face the Music*. Alex is also a director who's made several documentaries. His latest just came out a couple months ago. It's called *Showbiz Kids*. It features interviews with former child stars about how their time working in the entertainment industry affected them. Let's get back to the conversation.

00:17:14 Carrie Host

There's a lot in this—in this movie also about parenthood and the, you know, the ties that bind there. And in particular, how children kind of actualize the dreams of their parents in some ways, for good and bad. I saw that theme, also, in *Showbiz Kids*—your documentary—that made me wonder if you saw a parallel there. Do you find that particularly compelling?

00:17:39 Alex Guest

You know, I was raised by two artists. My parents were modern dancers. My mom had a company in London, which is where I was born, and my dad ultimately had a company in the Midwest, which is still going. And we moved to the states when I was quite young. I started out as a child actor, professionally, by like nine or ten. I was working professionally. By 12, 13 I was in two long running Broadway shows back to back. Took me all the way into college. So, my relationship to my parents and to my family and the complexity of that and this idea of—I wouldn't call it destiny, 'cause that's the sort of grandiosity of the movies *[laughing]* that we make, but you know, this idea of expectation and, "What is your life supposed to be?" And of course, it's never going to be that. And it shouldn't be that. And how do the children affect the parents? How do the parents affect the children? And of course, now I'm a dad. And so, how—now it's a triple layer cake, right?

[Carrie agrees.]

And those are all—those strands are fusing together in crazy ways. And I had really wanted to make a film that allowed people who had experienced this first hand, meaning people who had come up as child actors—I wanted them to be able to express the very nuanced layers of that experience, intimately. And I just had not seen that done and I hadn't... you know, obviously had done it myself in private, but I'd never kind of attacked it publicly. So, you know, that was very satisfying to be able to make. And it was really odd to be—'cause I tried to make *Showbiz Kids* for the first time about ten years ago, and I couldn't find financing. And it was exactly the same concept. So, it was very, very strange to—and lovely, but strange to start making the film, shoot a bunch of interviews, go away, make *Bill & Ted*, be dealing with—you know—Ted's problems with his dad and our issues [laughing] with our daughters and our wives and our destiny that didn't end up the way it was supposed to and how did that impact everybody. And, you know.

And then of course, like, acting for the first time again. 'Cause I left the acting business after doing *Bill & Ted 2*, really. And very consciously. And so, I'm acting again and I'm making a movie about child actors and about parents and their children and it was—it was like, "Oh, did this all really need to happen at once? Was that necessary?" [Laughs.] You know.

[Carrie agrees and laughs.]

"Oh my gosh! Do I have process every aspect of my entire life, like, right now?! Okay, I guess I do." So, yeah. It was lovely and heavy. Yeah. [Chuckles.] Frankly.

00:20:13 Carrie Host

Yeah. Tell me about that decision to kind of just—I think you said, "Disappear for a minute," and then come back and be doing more behind the scenes work than acting.

00:20:24 Alex Guest

I mean—well, we talk about it in *Showbiz Kids*. And it's really not uncommon. It's—you know, I started acting. I had a very, very public life from around 10 years old to about 25. Nonstop. Even through college, I was still acting and on TV and doing commercials and TV shows and... nonstop. And after *Bill & Ted 2*, I made another film called *Freaked*. I was just—psychologically I was just worn out. And I knew that I was not—I had some friends around me that were crashing hard. I had a couple that actually died. It was a pretty heavy scene for a lot of us that had come up—'cause we were all around the same age. So, a lot of us that were trying to transition from, you know, sort of youth in the business to young adult in the business were not having the best time of it.

And at the same time, I had gone to film school and was very, very committed to my work as a writer/director. But it, you know, for me I needed to make a conscious decision to get out of the public eye and just go live some normal life. And I didn't feel like I'd really gotten to do that through pretty formative, you know, adolescence and post-adolescence.

[Carrie agrees.]

And I mean, Evan Rachel Woods speaks about this really well, in the movie. So does Wil Wheaton. I mean, actually, they all—they—everyone had the same experience. I was sitting across from Diana Cary, the 100-year-old woman who was baby Peggy, and she literally laid out my entire life’s story. It was completely jaw dropping.

[Carrie chuckles.]

And that’s what had happened to her. You know. And she had to really figure her life out and she had to get away from the business and just be in the world. And that’s what I did. I left LA. I left my acting representation and I moved, and I started a production company in London. And I just shot commercials and wrote scripts and had a kid and lived like a regular Joe and got my head together and did some growing up. And when I felt comfortable again, I started training again to act. That was a while ago. I just wanted to act for myself. I didn’t wanna act and have to worry about it for a paycheck. And I trained for a long time. And it was just coincidentally *Bill & Ted* then started to kind of rumble back into life. But it was really lovely. It was a great way to come back. Keanu and I are—he’s, like, one of my very, very dearest and closest friends in the world. And everyone on that set was family. And if they weren’t, they were really gracious and very happy to be there. So, it was an extremely sweet environment to step back into. But yeah, it was fun. But I’m—I guess I needed the 25-year break, ‘cause I took it.

[They laugh.]

00:22:55	Carrie	Host	My guest this week is Alex Winter. Alex is probably best known for his role as the time traveling teenager, Bill S. Preston Esquire, in the iconic <i>Bill & Ted</i> movies from the late ‘80s and early ‘90s. These days, Alex is an accomplished director and his most recent film is a documentary called <i>Showbiz Kids</i> . <i>Showbiz Kids</i> features interviews with some of Hollywood’s most recognizable former child stars and examines the upsides and the downsides of young fame. In this clip, actor and former child star Evan Rachel Wood talks about how, as a child, she felt immense pressure from the adults around her to continue acting, even when she was unsure about her own desire to act.
00:23:39	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:23:40	Clip	Clip	<i>[In the background, the sounds of birds chirping interspersed with the occasional soft murmur of a child’s voice.]</i>

Music: Slow guitar music.

Evan Rachel Wood (*Showbiz Kids*): There was a part of me that just really wanted to play and it was really apparent, early on, that you would get in trouble if you wanted to play. It would be very disappointing to people if I didn’t want to do this, because I was talented. I just, at a very young age I guess, connected to something and was able to communicate through this medium in a way that—if I didn’t wanna pursue it—the vibe was, “What a—what a waste. Like, what a waste. I can’t believe you won’t—you won’t do

00:24:21	Sound Effect	Transition	this. You won't pursue this. You're so good at it." And so, I didn't feel like I could stop, because I was good. So, I just did it. Music swells and fades.
00:24:32	Carrie	Host	<i>[Sighs sadly.]</i> It feels like one of the themes of this movie is that there really is no such thing as wasted potential—whatever we want to be is good enough. Is that kind of what you wanted to relay with it?
00:24:40	Alex	Guest	<p><i>[Carrie hums in agreement several times as Alex continues.]</i></p> <p>There are a lot of ideas that I wanted to try to convey. Certainly, no central theme. But other than—and I didn't really wanna ram this down anyone's throats, but other than the humanity of these people and the frailty of childhood—which, obviously is not specific to child actors. And I was really interested in the universality of these experiences beyond just child actors and into the world of every child, especially in Western culture, given the pressures that put on everybody in Western culture but especially kids, because of their frailty. So, yeah. I think that the—that idea sort of as you stated it, the way I had thought of it was that you end up really—there's a lot of—there's a kind of an aggressive—a feeling that you have to aggressively keep moving all the time. And you have to aggressively keep improving all the time.</p> <p>And you have to—I mean, the one thing that Evan said, right around this spot, that really hit me between the eyes when I was doing the interview was she said—you know, she—'cause I—Evan was one of those people who I thought actually had <i>[laughed]</i> you know—you really don't know when you walk into these things. I thought, "Evan's gonna give me that great, 'I just—I just shouldered my way through this whole thing and came out great' interview." You know.</p> <p><i>[Carrie affirms.]</i></p> <p>And she had that one statement about, you know, coming up and just—and just how, you know, she had great parents and great management and great representation and great people around her, but no one had ever asked her if she was okay. And that was 100% my story. And I had—it's one of those things—Mara Wilson had talked about it. Like, you—it's such an isolating experience that you really think no one else has experienced what you experienced. And it's very liberating when you discover that everyone has experienced <i>[laughing]</i> what you experienced.</p> <p>And so, yes. I feel like, you know, kids in this world aren't allowed—even by accident, oftentimes—to just, in a very subtle, nuanced way, develop as who they are, whatever that's going to be. And I don't think it's done intentionally, a lot of the times. I don't think it's completely fatal—I mean, to your actualization, not to you as a—in your life. People can make it through those periods and get well and have fantastic careers and fantastic lives. It's not always a disaster. But it—I do believe that you don't come out of it unscathed. I don't believe you or your family come out of it unscathed.</p>
00:27:17	Carrie	Host	Mm. Yeah. It seemed like you made a deliberate decision to make sure there were people in this who could speak to the good parts of

being a child actor, so it wasn't just this—you know—one note or—you know, this downer representation of child acting. That there were people who clearly just had mostly a great time. Did you seek that out intentionally or did that just happen?

00:27:42 Alex Guest It just kind of happened. The—I was—and I kind of always look for interviews like this in all my docs, unless it's a very specific reason why not. I generally tend towards finding people who are going to be first and foremost, willing to speak and speak honestly. People who feel they have a story to tell, which is on them in a sense, to—you know, in terms of when they respond to my request to talk to them. And then people who have some grip—some rational and articulate grip on their circumstances or their narrative. Even if I don't agree with it, which you—you know, this isn't a case—this doc wasn't a case and point, but there have been—there were several times I was sitting across from someone thinking, "They're either lying or I really fundamentally don't agree with their worldview."

But it's a great interview. And it's purposeful for the narrative. And in this case, I was really looking for people who I felt—not necessarily were okay, but that had really processed what they'd been through and would be able to speak to it emotionally and honestly. And that was what I sought.

00:28:47 Carrie Host Yeah. I think that this film and also your film *Deep Web* have an element of arguing for nuance—that there isn't all good or all bad to anything that we—*[laughs]* anything in life, really.

[Alex agrees.]

You know, whether it's the deep internet or child actors who we often talk about as if their experiences are entirely fabricated and negative. That, no, there are upsides to all these things.

00:29:14 Alex Guest There are. And also, life is hard for everyone. And I—you know, I felt really grateful for the life that I was able to build, despite some really intense early challenges. And that, to me, is a—primarily an incredibly positive story for myself. So, I did walk into these interviews, regardless of whether I agreed with everyone or their story was identical to mine, and I had an enormous amount of empathy for these people. And also, I wanted to convey their humanity to people. That, you know, it's—these aren't freaks and they are, you know, human beings who were just little kids just like any other little kid and they had to deal with this world in this way.

00:29:57 Carrie Host Yeah. Uh, well before we let you go, Alex, I've gotta ask. Did we ever figure out what the 'S' is for, in Bill's name?

00:30:07 Alex Guest *[Chuckles.]* I think Ed told me it was "Stanley," but they may have been messing with me, so I don't even know for sure.

[Carrie makes a sound of interest.]

But I believe when I asked them, on *Bill & Ted 1*, Ed's answer was, "Stanley."

00:30:18 Carrie Host Okay. What do you think, when you're living inside his head? See, I'm saying! You're the only one who knows!

00:30:24 Alex Guest Yeah. I—I have a different name for that.

[Carrie gasps.]

Um. Than Stanley. Which did not seem like something that Bill's family would have—would have done.
 00:30:35 Carrie Host *[Conspiratorially.]* What is it?
 00:30:36 Alex Guest I—it's actually my real-life brother's name, Stephen.
 00:30:41 Carrie Host Oh, okay. Bill Stephen. Mm.
 00:30:43 Alex Guest Yeah. It's just more—it's more grounded.
 00:30:46 Carrie Host It's a little bumpy. Bill Stephen?
 00:30:47 Alex Guest Well, I'm not saying it.
 00:30:48 Carrie Host William Stephen. Okay. *[Laughs.]*
 00:30:50 Alex Guest Yeah, it's William Stephen. Yeah.

[Carrie agrees with a laugh.]

I don't have to say it to anyone! Yeah. *[Chuckles.]*
 00:30:53 Carrie Host *[Giggling.]* Fair enough. And when you're walking down the street, what do people shout at you? It seems like there are so many different lines people could shout from the *Bill & Ted* movies. What do you hear the most?
 00:31:03 Alex Guest I mean, I get—I absolutely get them all. I've had people slide up to me on their knees playing air guitar.

[Carrie laughs.]

I've had, you know, entire chunks of dialogue from both movies recited to me verbatim. I've had little kids get—just mangle the lines and get them horribly wrong. It's incredibly cute. You—I mean, you name. The thing I will say is it's, you know—having been saddled with this amongst sort of the rest of one's life, it's a pretty joyful character. And so, the fans tend to be pretty sweet. And that's a really nice thing. And, you know, you can be known for playing villains and they're not as nice to you. So—I was walking down the street with Alan Rickman once and someone came up to him—and this is probably pre-*Harry Potter*, 'cause they were busting on him for *Die Hard*. And they kind of—they sort of sneered at him and like—and gave me a hug. You know.

[Carrie giggles.]

And he was like, *[laughs]*—he was like, *[doing a deep Alan Rickman impression]*, “You're lucky, son. My fans hate me.”

And I was like, “Weeell, you know.”

[They laugh.]

[Amuse.] You know.
 00:32:02 Carrie Host Should've thought it through!
 00:32:04 Alex Guest Yeah, exactly. Yeah.

[They laugh.]

Alex Winter, thank you so much for being on *Bullseye*.
 00:32:06 Carrie Host
 00:32:09 Alex Guest Yeah, thank you.
 00:32:10 Jesse Host Alex Winter, interviewed by our friend Carrie Poppy. *Bill & Ted Face the Music* is available to rent or buy right now on a bunch of different platforms. His documentary, *Showbiz Kids*, is streaming now on HBO as well, if you wanna check that out. Our thanks to

Carrie Poppy for conducting that interview. Carrie cohosts the podcast *Oh No! Ross and Carrie*, where she and her cohost Ross Blocher investigate spiritual, paranormal, and religious ideas—often getting a lot more than they bargained for. Like, for a while they joined scientology. They became members and took classes and everything. I love *Oh No! Ross and Carrie* and Carrie and Ross are a delight.

00:32:51 Music Transition
00:32:54 Jesse Host

Synth-heavy music.

That's the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye* is produced from the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California—where our coworker, Kira, just installed fun disco lights in her bedroom. And now, all of her video conferences totally rule.

The show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our producer is Kevin Ferguson. Jesus Ambrosio and Jordan Kawling 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 keep up with the show on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Just search for *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn*. I'm on Twitter [@JesseThorn](#). I think that's about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature sign off.

00:33:45 Promo Promo

Speaker: *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn* is a production of [MaximumFun.org](#) and is distributed by NPR.

[Music fades out.]