

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. <i>PEN15</i> is a show about middle school. Or I guess this might be more accurate: it’s about the middle school experience you might have actually had. There’s the time it’s set in, for starters. The year 2000. There are plenty of songs by NSYNC and Lit and Mandy Moore. The characters wear BB tanks, Roughriders t-shirts, UFO pants. It’s a fun nostalgia trip, sort of like <i>Ladybird</i> . But <i>PEN15</i> also digs deeper into what it means to be 12 or 13: a time in your life when a lot of kids are very, very insecure—asking themselves questions like, “Why is my body changing?” Or “Why <u>isn’t</u> my body changing?” Or “Why don’t I have more friends?” Or “How am I supposed to, you know, talk to people?”
			It’s a show about kids that definitely isn’t for kids. Sex and menstruation come up. We’ll talk about that later in the interview. Last year, I talked with Anna Konkle and Maya Erskine. They’re the creators and stars of <i>PEN15</i> . Its second season is coming to Hulu next week. So, we figured we’d replay their interview, because the show is fantastic and Maya and Anna are, themselves, really great.
			As I mentioned, they’re real life best friends. And on <i>PEN15</i> , they play middle school aged versions of themselves. Maya has a brutal bowl cut. Anna has braces. They’re starting seventh grade at the beginning of the show and... you know, sixth grade wasn’t great, but they have a pretty good feeling that this year is gonna be different.
00:01:52	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:01:53	Clip	Clip	<i>[Maya and Anna speak over the phone. As the scene cuts back and forth between them, their voices are occasionally distorted by the phoneline.]</i>

Music: “Candy” by Mandy Moore.

Maya (PEN15): I’m gonna ask you something and I want you to tell me the truth. Swear on your life.

Anna: Swear.

Maya: Do I look exactly the same as last year?

Anna: Oh my god! Oh my god!

Maya: I won’t be mad! Tell me the truth. I won’t be mad.

Anna: Not at all! Are you kidding me?

Maya: Really?

Anna: Promise!

Maya: What are you gonna wear tomorrow?

Anna: I'm thinking like my blue shirt with, um, the stripes?

Maya: Oh my god, so cute.

Anna: But, like, I'm also thinking of wearing a bra.

Maya: Oh my god, that's like really smart. You need it for your nipples.

Anna: Yeah. I feel like we should make a pact.

Maya: Duh! Let's make—let's like do everything together!

Anna: Yeah, no duh. Like, all our firsts together. Like our first kiss.

Maya: Obviously!

Anna: Yeah, no duh. Deal.

Maya: Oh my GOD! Seventh grade is gonna be so amazing!

Anna: It's gonna be really, really good.

Maya: It's gonna be like the best year of our lives.

[Music ends abruptly. Dialing sounds. A high-pitched dial-up wail.]

Maya: *[Yelling.]* Shuji! Get off AOL!

Music swells and fades.

[They laugh.]

Maya Erskine, Anna Konkle, welcome to *Bullseye*. It's great to have you guys on the show.

[They agree.]

And congratulations on this—on this awesome TV show that you're making.

[They thank him.]

I kind of feel like I have spent the last 25ish years trying to run from middle school. So, how did the two of you come to embrace it so deeply?

I don't know if it's ever *[chuckles]*—if we'll ever fully embrace it, because it's just a time of horror. But we decided to start talking about it and sharing it with each other.

Yeah. It just was—for both of us—the most traumatic time. So, it was—you know—a topic that—Anna and I are very drawn to trauma.

00:02:14 Clip Clip

00:02:47 Sound Effect Transition

00:02:49 Jesse Host

00:03:14 Anna Konkle Guest

00:03:24 Maya Erskine Guest

[They laugh.]

00:03:43 Jesse Host And to talking about it and finding the humor in it and processing it. So, that was sort of where our heads just went for a long time. My mother in law is a marriage and family therapist and she helped found this organization called Girl Circle, where adolescent girls get together to, like, work through their problems together—and emotional challenges.

[Anna and Maya both make sounds of awe.]

She was explaining to me, one day a few years ago, that—like one of the big problems with middle school is that because it's sixth, seventh, and eighth grade—which is, you know, one of the most sensitive times in people's lives where the most change is happening—

[They agree several times as Jesse continues.]

And also, because they're—it's such a small group of ages. There is very little social modeling, so the sixth graders don't have anyone to model for and the eighth graders don't have anyone to model for them. And so, that basically turns it into *Lord of the Flies*.

[They laugh.]

00:04:51 Anna Guest Like, that part of it, just the happenstance that in, you know, 1867 somebody decided to chop this three years out of the middle of education means that you're just completely flying blind for those three years of your life. Yeah, it's pretty—it's pretty strange. And I think that that's—you know, where for us the humor comes from, in terms of like—your brain, for the first time, changing from child. And actually, like neurologically, more able to process adult things that you actually couldn't before, but that you do not have the skills *[laughing]* to cope with. So, you're just pretending. You're flying blind like you said. And there's a lot of—for us, humor in that type of character where it's like, "I know how to do this!" And you don't know how to do this. You know? Yeah.

00:05:23 Maya Guest *[Anna agrees several times as Maya speaks.]* Right. Right. And also, the—just the straddling between childhood and adulthood or tweendom is, like, such a ripe moment for all these—this pain and holding on to your childhood because you want to still be loved by your parents and you think that's the only way to be loved and yet you wanna also experience sexual things, but you don't know how to do that. So, *[laughing]* it's just a time of a lot of fumbling around.

00:05:54 Anna Guest Yeah. A lot of mess-ups.
00:05:55 Jesse Host Do the two of you have like a familiar or easy to access relationship with that part of your life? Or has it disappeared into the mists of time?

00:06:10 Maya Guest It feels very present for me. *[Laughs shyly.]*
00:06:13 Anna Guest Yeah, me too. And I think part of, you know—Maya and I became, like, real life best friends maybe 12 years ago, and I'm realizing now

how much I was drawn to her because of her honesty. And I'm kind of the same way.

[Maya agrees.]

I think, like, there's an oversharing thing that can sometimes be a problem.

[They laugh.]

But it was so refreshing to me. Here is this woman that is, like, talented and funny and nice and all of those things and then she's also talking about masturbation and it's funny and real and it scared me at the time, too. I was like, "Oh my god, she's talking about these things that other women around me at least aren't talking about." And—and—and it's important. But I guess I didn't even know that it was important at that time. I was just like, "That's funny!"

00:07:04 Maya Guest And I think same here, except for me the way for me to deal with the shame that I had around things that I was going through at the age of 13, like masturbation and getting my period and being ashamed of that—the way that I processed it was by talking about it in a funny way. And that happened in college. And when people didn't run away disgust and throw rocks at me I was like, "Oh, okay. This is okay to talk about!" And—

00:07:32 Anna Guest

This works.

00:07:33 Maya Guest

But I still don't—I think I'm still learning to feel good about it. Like, it's not like it cured it in a year. It's just—

[Maya agrees several times as Anna continues.]

00:07:41 Anna Guest Yeah. And, weirdly, for me I think—and this is sort of like a fateful thing, but my shame of that age with, like, stuff that was going on with my parents and them fighting, that was a secret for me. And then not feeling lovable and that all kind of began at that age. And I also, like, would joke about—I have, like, a dark sense of humor. I would, like, joke about it and talk about it too much. And so, there was something bonding. And that time kind of has been very visceral for I think for us, always.

00:08:09 Jesse Host Did either of you have the kind of middle school where you have to undress in front of your classmates, like in a locker room or something?

00:08:19 Anna Guest

Mm-hm.

00:08:20 Maya Guest

I didn't.

00:08:21 Anna Guest

Where did you undress?! *[Laughs.]*

00:08:22 Maya Guest

I—we had bathrooms.

00:08:24 Anna Guest

Stalls.

00:08:27 Maya Guest

No. Just—not stalls, actually. They were single bathrooms and people would change at different times into their PE shorts and shirts.

00:08:35 Anna Guest

When some—when you had gym class, people—

00:08:37 Maya Guest

We didn't have a locker room.

00:08:39 Anna Guest

Oh. That's peculiar.

[Maya agrees.]

00:08:40 Jesse Host I had—I had the same experience. I went to a very small middle school. The self-consciousness I remember about it was that it was

a private school and all the other kids—I was like the scholarship kid, and all the other kids—you had to buy school clothes to wear for gym, like t-shirts and sweatshirts and sweatpants. And like, my parents could only afford to buy me one set of them.

[Maya makes a sad “aw” sound.]

00:09:08 Anna Guest And all the other kids had, like, a broad variety of them.
00:09:09 Maya Guest Nine. Right, yeah. *[Laughs.]*
00:09:11 Jesse Host Right, right, right, right, right. Different sizes. I wanna go baggy today.
00:09:16 Anna Guest But that seems way less bad than checking out who does and doesn't have pubes.
Yeeeah. I didn't—I never—we never got, like, totally naked that I can remember.

[Maya chuckles.]

00:09:46 Maya Guest But there was *[laughs]*—but I may have blocked it out. There were showers. People—some people would shower, but like, I was private with it. You know. I would like—I was self-conscious, you know? But I do remember wearing the rip-away pants in—and they were, like, knock-off Adidas—in gym and then, like, boys would pull—like rip them open. And I remember wearing a thong for one of the first times and that being outed.
00:09:48 Anna Guest Damn.
00:09:50 Maya Guest And everyone was like, “Hah-hah-hah!” And the teacher laughed too. I was like, this—this is wrong.
Right. You get really skilled at hiding or maybe you think you're skilled at hiding your body parts as you're changing. 'Cause I do remember I had my period and I would wear—or I created my own pads with toilet paper, that would be these thick books of paper stashed in my underwear.

[Anna laughs.]

And I—you know, it would push it out low to my knees, basically.

[Jesse laughs.]

And so, I would have to—*[chuckles]* I would have to learn how to, in front of girls if we were changing at a store or something, hide that. And, you know. I think I got away with it.

00:10:28 Jesse Host *[Anna agrees with a laugh.]*
When you say you had your own homemade pads, was that because you did not have access to other products? Commercially made ones?
00:10:38 Maya Guest Yeah, I didn't tell my parents. And so—and I didn't tell anyone. I was so—
00:10:42 Jesse Host You didn't tell your parents about Aunt Flo coming to visit?
00:10:45 Maya Guest Nope! I hid it for a year and then I remember telling them as if it was the first time I got it and they took me out to dinner and, you know, gave me a necklace. I was like, the—a cheap one!

[Jesse laughs.]

00:11:02 Crosstalk Crosstalk But I was like, “Thanks, guys! Yeah!” When I felt prepared. But I—my mom still thinks I’m lying to this day that I lied about it.
Anna: Really?

00:11:07 Jesse Host **Maya:** She thinks I’m showing off to friends when I say it. I’m like, “No, I actually lied.” But—yeah, so—
I mean, we’re not technically friends, but I’m pretty impressed.

00:11:11 Maya Guest *[They laugh.]*
I mean, I would roll—yeah, toilet paper, ‘cause it was just my instinct to do that. And—

00:11:17 Anna Guest It’s a good instinct. It works.

00:11:18 Maya Guest I didn’t wanna stick a tampon in.

[Anna affirms.]

00:11:22 Anna Guest I didn’t—I wasn’t ready to learn.
Scary.

[Maya agrees.]

Yeah. I, on the other hand, told my mom—I got my period late, compared to friends. And, like, *[laughing]* once a year—for like four years—I’d be like, “I think I got it!”

[Maya laughs.]

00:11:34 Maya Guest And she—
That’s really funny. That needs to go in the show.

00:11:35 Anna Guest *[Laughing.]* I know. Yeah. And I—she would be—I’d be like, “Still no. Still no.” And then finally I got it and she bought me, like, special underwear at Victoria Secret. So. There’s that.

00:11:47 Crosstalk Crosstalk *[Jesse laughs.]*
Maya: Two opposite—
Anna: Two opposite experiences.
Maya: Yin and yang!
Maya and Anna: Yin and yang!

00:11:53 Jesse Host **Maya:** Yin and yang.
Were either of you concerned with violence of any kind, when you were in middle school?

00:11:58 Anna Guest I mean—within the schools? Or just in general?

00:12:01 Jesse Host Or in—yes, or in general.

00:12:02 Anna Guest My parents fought a lot. Which is in the show. So, I think I was really used to—you know, a home where, behind closed doors, it was crazy and unhappy. But the norm and what they taught me—and I know they feel bad about that, now—is you go to school and you confront the public with a very happy face. And if anyone asks you, “How are your parents?” Or “How’s—” You say, “Great.” But then, with that said, I did start asking to see a therapist when I was like 11. *[Laughs.]*

[Maya makes an “aww” sound.]

So, I would tell my therapist. And they were supportive. Um. But that was—that was the majority of the—of the biggest conflict in my life, probably.

00:12:48 Maya Guest I was never afraid of physical violence. Just mental violence, from the girls. *[Chuckles.]*
00:12:56 Jesse Host I think that’s a—that’s a girl thing that I didn’t have to deal with as a—as a boy. Largely.
00:13:02 Maya Guest It can be pretty vicious.

[Anna agrees.]

00:13:07 Anna Guest And complex, at that age.
Yeah. I’m remembering—and I would—I, oh—I actually—I was kind of like scared of violence, weirdly. Like, when I was in fourth—this has gone something—when I was in fourth grade, there was a fifth grader who told me that all the fifth graders wanted to beat me up.
00:13:26 Maya Guest That’s crazy.
00:13:27 Anna Guest This after school program, which was like this woman whose house we would go it—it was really nice—and she was like, “Yeah, I hate to tell you this but all the fifth graders wanna beat your *[censored].*”

[They chuckle.]

00:13:58 Jesse Host Which is kind of *[laughs]*—I was so sensitive, I took it so seriously and for months, every time I just remember being in line in elementary school, ‘cause you’d walk to the art class in line, you’d walk to gym in line, whatever. Like walking in line and then the fifth graders would all walk in line. And in my mind, they were all just like glaring at me, you know? And just wanted to beat my *[censored]*.
00:13:59 Anna Guest Like a prison yard.
Like a prison yard, yeah. And I didn’t know why, and she wouldn’t tell me why and I told my friends, like, “This is what—I don’t know why.”

00:14:12 Maya Guest And then eventually, months later, I brought it up again and she’s like, “Oh! That. Yeah, no, no, no, no. My older sister did that to me when I was in fourth grade. I made that up.”
00:14:13 Anna Guest That’s psychotic. *[Laughs.]*
00:14:17 Maya Guest Yeah. And then someone else told me they were gonna kill me. *[Gasps and then laughs.]*

00:14:20 Anna Guest *[Mimicking flatly.]* “They were gonna kill me or whatever.”
They were gonna kill me and I was a freshman in high school—if I went to prom with a certain person that—she goes, “If you come to prom, you better bring a grave ‘cause you’re gonna die.”

00:14:32 Maya Guest *[Maya gasps and they all laugh.]*
00:14:34 Anna Guest Wow, you got a lot of threats! You got a lot of—
00:14:37 Maya Guest Death threats! I was very scared of that, too.
I mean, they’re—that’s a lot of violence *[laughing]* in your life.

00:14:41 Jesse Host *[Anna laughs.]*
That last one, too, also feels like a riddle of some kind?

[They laugh.]

00:14:48 Anna Guest Like, how do you bring a grave, exactly?
00:14:49 Maya Guest Bullies can be smart, unfortunately.
00:14:51 Anna Guest Yeah! That's what makes them scary.
00:14:55 Maya Guest Yeah. You gotta bring your grave. I know, it's a good line. It stuck
00:14:56 Anna Guest with me.
00:14:55 Maya Guest Yeah, how could not?
00:14:56 Anna Guest Kudos to her.

[Maya laughs.]

00:14:58 Jesse Host More with *PEN15*'s Maya Erskine and Anna Konkle after a quick break. When we come back, Maya and Anna cast Richard Karn to play Maya's dad. Richard Karn, of course, you probably know as Al, from *Home Improvement*. And they'll tell me why they wanted Al from *Home Improvement* for the part. It's *Bullseye*, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

00:15:21 Promo Clip **Music:** Guitar music punctuated with rhythmic clapping.

Chris Haxel: On Facebook, there are these three brothers who love guns—say guns are over regulated, say the NRA is too quick to compromise.

Lisa Hagen: And they're gaining more followers every day.

Speaker 1: They're very in-your-face and offensive, and by god, I love them for it. *[Laughs.]*

Lisa: Listen now, to the *No Compromise* podcast, from NPR.

[Music ends.]

00:15:41 Promo Clip **Music:** Bouncy electronic music.

Graham Clark: Hi, my name's Graham Clark and I'm one half of the podcast, *Stop Podcasting Yourself*—a show that we've recorded for many, many years. And, ah, at the moment, instead of being in person, we're recording remotely. And, uh, you wouldn't even notice. You don't even notice the lag.

[A long beat.]

Dave Shumka: That's right, Graham! And, uh, the great thing about this—

Graham: *[Starts to interrupt and then stops abruptly.]*

Dave: *[Beat.]* Go ahead.

Graham: *[Echoing.]* No, you go ahead.

Dave: Okay, and—

Graham: *[Interrupting.]* Okay, go ahead.

Dave: *[Beat.]* And you can listen to us every week on MaximumFun.org.

Graham: Or wherever you get your podcasts!

Dave: Your podcasts!

00:16:24	Jesse	Host	<i>[Music resumes and then ends.]</i> Welcome back to <i>Bullseye</i> . I'm Jesse Thorn. My guests are Anna Konkle and Maya Erskine. They co-created and star in the show <i>PEN15</i> . It's a brutally honest comedy about middle school. Its second season is coming later this week to Hulu. Maya, Anna, and I talked last year.
00:16:59	Maya	Guest	Let's hear another clip from <i>PEN15</i> , the new show from my guests Anna Konkle and Maya Erskine. So, in this clip Maya is going to ask out one of two boys that she thinks has a crush on her. Turns out, they don't have a crush on her, and they just called her—
00:17:00	Jesse	Host	<i>[Quietly.]</i> UGIS.
00:17:02	Sound Effect	Transition	—UGIS, which stands for the ugliest girl in school. Music swells and fades.
00:17:03	Clip	Clip	Maya: <i>[Distraught.]</i> I <u>am</u> ugly. I'm a fucking freak. Like— <i>[through tears]</i> I'm a UGIS. <i>[Maya sobs.]</i> Anna: <i>[Gently.]</i> Maya. If UGIS means beautiful unicorn, then yeah, you—you—you are UGIS. Then yeah, you are. Yeah. Maya: <i>[Through tears.]</i> No. No—do you understand, like—I'm the ugliest girl in school! Do you get that in your skull?! Like, to love me is the biggest insult. Like, that's what it means! <i>[Sobs quietly.]</i> Anna: Then I guess... you know, I've been insulted the greatest. Music swells and fades.
00:17:42	Sound Effect	Transition	
00:17:43	Anna	Guest	<i>[They chuckle.]</i>
00:17:46	Maya	Guest	Aww, poor lil' May-May. That line makes me laugh.
00:17:47	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	Anna: <i>[Laughing.]</i> Which one? Maya: "Then I've been insulted <i>[laughing]</i> the greatest." It's just—such an Anna— Anna: I mean it! Jesse: I mean, what— Maya: —way to take it. What's amazing about it, to me, is obviously the two of you are playing middle schoolers, here. And you have to balance as actors—as adult actors—the depth, the sincere depth of feeling that middle schoolers bring to anything.

[Maya and Anna agree several times as Jesse continues.]

Watching cartoons after school. Anything. With this just... painfully inelegant and ineloquent—you know, there's a—there's a *[laughing]* point in the first one where Anna, you say to—you say to Maya that she's the rainbow gel pen and everyone else is a black or blue writing implement.

[They laugh.]

And, like, that's about as close as it gets to a jokey-joke in the show. But that said, like, the—what's amazing about it is that it is such a deeply sincere feeling expressed—

00:18:54 Anna Guest
00:18:55 Jesse Host

So poorly.
So inelegantly.

[They agree with laughter.]

00:18:59 Anna Guest

Yeah, I think that something that I continue to rediscover is how not far away from that I feel now, at 31. And how I get better at faking it, essentially. I know—you know, if I slouch too much in the wrong place, like, I'm gonna look more insecure or I'm gonna look as insecure as I feel or whatever. And I think by the—I was really afraid of playing 13 because of it being an inauthentic and feeling like a big sketch and being silly and blah, blah, blah and not wanting it to go that route. But by the end of going like, "Oh, I—right or wrong, this feels very close to who I am now." Unfortunately. And fortunately.

And I think that, you know, Maya and I—in real life—are extremely close and share just about everything there is and so, you know, that's a huge gift to be able to act with her in the show and express, you know, "I wanna protect you and I wanna be there and vice versa." I mean, there were so many, like, helpful layers in the show. You know?

00:20:11 Maya Guest

Oh yeah. Without even trying for us, because our friendship is so deep and complex and beautiful and supportive and yet—you know, so *[laughs]* just doing a scene with you, our dynamic comes through very easily, I feel like in each scene.

[Anna agrees.]

00:20:32 Jesse Host

How does it look to have adults standing next to children pretending to be children?

[They affirm.]

Like how does that look and feel? How do you address... kissing? How do you address the fact that you're probably bigger than children? Like, all these just regular things? So, how—what have you learned about those regular things in making a season of the show?

00:20:58 Maya Guest

I mean, I think there's also a difference with men around kids as opposed to women. So, there is a slight advantage I think in that way, of—but we still had to talk at length about the scenes where, you know—'cause Anna, Sam, and I really wanted to show middle school as it was. So, that does mean kissing. That does mean

sexual hookups. But we don't want to ever do that with kids or put kids in that situation, of course.

[Anna agrees.]

00:21:27	Anna	Guest	So, it was—oh, yeah. <i>[Interrupting.]</i> And then—but we also didn't want it to like—just piggybacking—be a sketch and have it feel like, “No, this is the joke! Of, like—” Yeah. Keep going. Yeah.
00:21:34	Maya	Guest	Right. We wanted it to feel real, not take you out, but also keep the audience feeling safe that they're not taken out 'cause they're worrying about the kids' safety. So, we talked at length about different ways cinematically—how to capture for example, Anna's first kiss, without it feeling like a joke or—
00:21:58	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	Anna: Wrong. Maya: Y'know, wrong.
00:21:59	Maya	Guest	Anna: Mm-hm.
00:22:10	Jesse	Host	Um. So, it was a risk, but doing in closeups and having a body double—which actually happened to be Anna's boyfriend—and— For our at-home listeners, Anna smiled fondly.
00:22:14	Anna	Guest	<i>[They laugh.]</i> <i>[Dreamily.]</i> Alex Anfanger.
00:22:15	Maya	Guest	<i>[Anna agrees several times as Maya speaks.]</i> Alex Anfanger, who I went to high school with. And he's a brilliant creator and actor. That seemed to work and I think when we go on for future seasons, if we get that hopefully, we're going to try to encounter other sexual, more advanced situations and that's where we'll most likely either use adults in those roles or find some other way we can tackle it without making kids uncomfortable.
00:22:48	Jesse	Host	What about as actors? Like, one of the things that I find most impressive about the show is that you... each of you neither feel like you are doing a sketch comedy character nor like you are doing a... what I would broadly describe as a “one man show character”.
00:23:17	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	<i>[They hum in agreement and then laugh.]</i> You know, that kind of thing where you're like, take—I mean it's—it can be a remarkable type of thing, you know. Jesse: Anybody who's seen Anna Deavere Smith can see how remarkable it can be that she can transform herself with a few signifiers, almost like a caricaturist. Anna: Right! Yeah! Unreal. Maya: Lily Tomlin, yeah. Anna: Totally.
00:23:26	Jesse	Host	Maya: Right. But that feeling of like—of theatricality or mannered falseness is absent. And it also doesn't feel like you're just doing a bit.

[They thank him.]

00:23:53 Anna Guest So, what do you have to do as an actor to achieve that when you're standing next to actual, awkward children?
[Chuckles.] I feel like so much of the work was just—like, they did—just being in that environment and the proper clothes and the proper makeup and, you know, the extra hairs on the—on the eyebrows and taking all the makeup off instead of putting it on, which is what we're so used to.

00:24:10 Jesse Host You said extra hairs on the eyebrows?
00:24:12 Anna Guest On the eyebrows and the moustache.
00:24:13 Maya Guest And my head. Yeah. Adding to mine. Yeah.
00:24:14 Anna Guest Moustache hairs. And then we strapped our massive—
00:24:17 Jesse Host What—how did they—I'm sorry, I'm still on this eyebrows—

[They laugh and agree.]

00:24:23 Maya Guest How do you add hair to your eyebrows?
Like—they're almost like... they're tiny little hairs that are cut up and with glue—sort of like how people put on false eyelashes. They would just one by one place them on...

00:24:33 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Maya and Anna:** Our eyebrows.

Anna: Yeah.
00:24:34 Maya Guest And they painted my moustache, which blended well with—I grew mine out as well.
00:24:39 Jesse Host Like Groucho Marx.

[Anna laughs.]

00:24:40 Maya Guest Mm-hm! 'Cause I have a furry face. Or I did. I don't anymore. Wink, wink. Um. *[Laughs.]*
00:24:47 Jesse Host Wait, like, they painted your natural moustache? Like they colored your hairs to stand out more?

[They laugh.]

00:24:52 Maya Guest No, no. So, I had some short stubs coming out and then they—
00:24:57 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Anna:** That are real.

Maya: That are real.

Anna: Okay. Just clarifying.
00:24:59 Maya Guest And, um—and then they—she used brown paint and just, you know, painted my—
00:25:05 Anna Guest Extenuated them.

[Maya agrees.]

00:25:07 Maya Guest Yeah.
I think, also—and Sam, Anna, and I approach—try to approach everything with as much honesty as possible. So, every scene—as an actor—would be approached with just being as honest and truthful as possible, in the moment. And I think—you know, that is a way in to not gear towards sketch or caricature or making fun of it.
00:25:30 Anna Guest Yeah, and I don't wanna speak for you in saying this, but I know that—like, I felt like a hack while we were doing it.

[Maya agrees.]

00:25:45	Maya	Guest	Because who am I, at 31, to play a 13-year-old <i>[laughing]</i> and honestly and authentically. But we decided to do it. Right! But I almost felt like I was playing my own age, in a way. Like, I was being myself without any of the adult—
00:25:52	Anna	Guest	<i>[Interrupting.]</i> Secrets.
00:25:54	Maya	Guest	—uh, façade. Like, it was really just our true selves. <i>[Chuckles.]</i>
00:25:59	Anna	Guest	Yeah. I relate to that, too.
00:26:01	Maya	Guest	But yeah, I definitely was questioning our acting at every moment.
00:26:06	Jesse	Host	I wanna play another clip from <i>PEN15</i> . So, in this clip, Maya's dad—who's played by Richard Karn—tries to teach Maya how to play drums on a laundry basket.
00:26:14	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:26:15	Clip	Clip	Fred Peters: Okay! So. Start playing.

Maya: *[Nervously.]* Okay, just don't say it like that.

Fred: I'm—I didn't say it like anything.

Maya: Yes, you did. Can you just shut up for a second? 'Cause I was about to play and you're messing me up.

Fred: Maya! Just, come on. Calm down.

Maya: *[Getting upset.]* I am calm, Dad! I'm just trying to play for you, so can you like stop? Don't look at me like that. It's gonna mess me up.

Fred: *[Sighs.]*

Maya: Look away. Don't look at the drum! Literally look at that wall over there. And listen. Da-a-d! Okay.

Fred: *[Stammering.]* Al-alright, I—I—I gotta stop you. You're holding the mallets wrong.

00:26:53	Clip	Clip	Maya: Ooooh my goood. Fred: No, lemme show you. I—
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Maya: Da-a-d! *[Yelling.]* This is why I didn't wanna do this with you!

Fred: If you can't play for me, how are you gonna play it for everyone else?

Maya: *[Shouting.]* I don't know! Because not everyone's in like a professional, Steely Dan cover band, Daaad!

Fred: *[Shouting.]* And they never will be if they don't know how to practice!

Maya: *[Screams.]* NOW I'M GONNA SUCK TOMORROW NIGHT, JUST FOR YOOOU!

Fred: Oh, fine. It's all because of me!

Maya: GET OOOOOUT!

Fred: Fine! I—I—I looked at you wrong!

Maya: YEAH, YOU DID!

00:27:17 Sound Effect Transition

Music swells and fades.

00:27:18 Maya Guest

[They chuckle.]

00:27:21 Anna Guest

Oh, that Maya.

00:27:23 Jesse Host

I love that.

00:27:31 Maya Guest

Aw, that's just—it's hard to listen to, much less watch. Because it reminds you of the overwhelmed that you feel as an adolescent.

Mm-hm. Or if you had a sister growing up, the whining and the tantrums from—*[laughs]*. I feel like a lot of people on set were like—like, Gabe Leidman, our showrunner, he was like, "That is—I heard all of those screams all the time growing up and it's just PTSD, right now." *[Chuckles.]*

00:27:51 Jesse Host

Your parents on the show, Maya, are played by your mom.

[Maya confirms.]

And Richard Karn.

[Maya confirms again.]

The star of *Home Improvement*.

[Maya and Anna confirm in unison.]

00:28:13 Crosstalk Crosstalk

That is a very—two very particular acting choices. They're both wonderful on the show. But I imagine that they didn't come from cattle calls. *[Chuckles.]*

Anna: No.

Maya: Absolutely not.

00:28:15 Anna Guest

Anna: No.

I read recently—someone called it a Karnaissance.

[They laugh.]

Which I loved.

[Maya agrees.]

00:28:21 Maya Guest

He's so good in it.

00:28:27 Jesse Host

He is. That was an offer and I'm so glad that he accepted and did it.

00:28:28 Maya Guest

That's—Richard Karn? Or your mom?

00:28:30 Jesse Host

Richard Karn. My mom was straight up offered, too.

00:28:31 Maya Guest

Your mom had to audition. *[Laughs.]*

She had to audition for the pilot presentation and, you know, I made about 30 tapes with her in her living room, directing her. And—

[Maya and Anna agree several times as Jesse talks.]

00:28:39 Jesse Host But, Maya, in—outside of whether they auditioned or got offers, you’re making two very particular choices there, in casting your own actual parent and casting—you know, one of the things about being on a hit sitcom is that you carry with you this television friend that everyone had for the rest of your life, as a performer. He’s a very gifted actor and also a very gifted host—which is what he’s done at least as much of, since those days—but you know, it’s... if you have—if—you’re making a show set in 2000 and you cast one of the stars of *Home Improvement*, you know what I mean?

00:29:23 Anna Guest I mean, I think that—you know, once he was willing to—we, like, begged him to come in and read for us and he eventually did. But there were two things going on where it was like he reminded us of Maya’s real dad, ‘cause we were trying to like recreate these memories. And then, on top of that, see him in a role that we hadn’t seen him in. So that—as opposed to, you know, casting from a place of, like... you know—

00:29:55 Maya Guest We didn’t wanna stunt cast with a celebrity just because they were a celebrity. There was something—

00:29:59 Anna Guest We wanted to cast the right person.

00:30:01 Maya Guest He had—there was an essence there that reminded us of my real dad.

00:30:06 Anna Guest Yeah, exactly. And then—and then it was just like an added bonus that there was maybe this nostalgic feeling with him, as well, that you—maybe you wouldn’t be able to put your finger on. Is that—is he reminding me of my dad? Is he reminding me of that time—? Or whatever. And then—and then on top of that, he’s just a really talented actor. And so, it all lined up so serendipitously. That was a really hard part to cast.

[Maya agrees.]

00:30:28 Jesse Host We’re so lucky we got him.
One of my most vivid memories of middle school is the girls in the back of a van doing *Seventeen Magazine* quizzes with each other. And I—we loaded up this quiz, “Are You Really Best Friends?”, from *Seventeen Magazine*.

[Maya gasps.]

00:30:46 Anna Guest Oh my god.

[Maya laughs.]

00:30:48 Jesse Host So, the first question is: You know that your friend’s crush isn’t interested in them, but they still plan on asking them out. What do you do? Your choices are: Say nothing, you don’t wanna risk your friend getting mad at you. Or explain why it might just end up hurting them in the end.

00:31:04 Anna Guest I’d tell my friend.

00:31:05 Maya Guest I—I would tell my friend slowly but surely.

[Anna agrees. Jesse affirms.]

That happened to me, but they said the exact words which was, “Would you go out with Maya?”

“Hell no! That ugly *[censored]*?”

00:31:20	Jesse	Host	And she reported it back word for word.
00:31:21	Maya	Guest	Seems like it could have used some softening. Exactly! I think so.
00:31:23	Jesse	Host	<i>[Anna laughs.]</i> Your bud wasn't invited to the biggest party of the year, but you were. You: Ask if they can come with. Or refuse to go without them.
00:31:35	Maya	Guest	This sort of happened recently.
00:31:36	Anna	Guest	Yeeah. I feel like, as a kid, it would have been B. And as an adult it's A.
00:31:42	Maya	Guest	It's ask to go out with—yeah.
00:31:44	Jesse	Host	As you're leaving to meet your bud for a movie, your crush calls. They wanna hang with you at the arcade next door to the movie theater. You: Text your friend and ask if you would—if they would be chill with you bailing for your crush. Or tell your crush you already have plans.
00:32:01	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	Anna: I would do C.
00:32:07	Anna	Guest	Maya: As an adult, tell your crush you already have plans. But as a kid, I might be like, "Byeeee." <i>[Laughs.]</i> I would do—I would do C. Which is: try to see if my friend would come with me to the arcade. Yeah.
00:32:13	Maya	Guest	Yeeeah. There you go.
00:32:15	Anna	Guest	I don't know what that says about me, but that would definitely be my way.
00:32:18	Maya	Guest	I like that.
00:32:20	Jesse	Host	You're third-wheeling it all the way. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:32:21	Anna	Guest	<i>[Maya agrees with a laugh.]</i> Yeah, exactly. I'm all about a third wheel.
00:32:24	Jesse	Host	You're hanging with your friend on the couch and the conversation dies down, so you: Try and think of something to say so no one gets bored.
00:32:37	Maya	Guest	<i>[They giggle.]</i> Or enjoy the silence; you're fine just chilling quietly together. Enjoy the silence.
00:32:41	Jesse	Host	<i>[Anna agrees.]</i> We don't need to talk always. Maya and Anna, because you answered mostly with the right, "You're <u>the</u> best friend in their life. You constantly make the effort to show how much you value your friendship. You're honest with your friend and are there for the ups and downs. You both plan to make this friendship last a lifetime, so you might as well start looking into joint retirement packages, now."
00:33:04	Anna	Guest	<i>[They laugh.]</i> That was so amazing.
00:33:05	Maya	Guest	That was really great. I love that.
00:33:08	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	Maya and Anna: Thank you.
00:33:09	Jesse	Host	Anna and Maya, thank you so much for joining me on <i>Bullseye</i> . It was really nice to talk to you and I really loved your show. Congratulations on it.

[They thank him.]

Maya Erskine and Anna Konkle, everyone. *PEN15* is a fun, moving, totally unique show. Its second season comes to Hulu September 18th. Now's a great time to binge watch the first season if you haven't seen it already.

00:33:30 Music
00:33:32 Jesse

Transition
Host

Bright, thumpy music.

That's the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye* is produced out of the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California—a city which has turned orange. Uh, and burns your lungs when you go out of doors. My understanding from the *New York Times Wirecutter* is that a pretty decent substitute for an air purifier, if you haven't got one, is to just take an HVAC filter and tape it to a box fan. So, that's our recommendation to anybody who doesn't have an air purifier, right now, here on the West Coast.

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 great band, 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 *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn*. And I think that's about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature sign-off.

00:34:40 Promo

Promo

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

[Music fades out.]