

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.
00:00:13	Music	Transition	<i>[Music fades out.]</i> “Huddle Formation” from the album <i>Thunder, Lightning, Strike</i> by The Go! Team.
00:00:20	Jesse Thorn	Host	It’s Bullseye. I’m Jesse Thorn. My next guest is A\$AP Ferg. Ferg grew up in Harlem’s Hamilton Heights. He calls it the Hungry Ham. He established himself as one of the best MCs in the New York hip-hop collective A\$AP Mob. In 2013, he released his first solo album, <i>Trap Lord</i> , and included the hit single “Shabba”—
00:00:43	Music	Music	<i>[Music fades in.]</i> —which hit #7 on the Billboard Hot 100. “Shabba” from the album <i>Trap Lord</i> by A\$AP Ferg. <i>Sha-Shabba Ranks, Sha-Sha-Shabba Ranks Eight gold rings like I'm Sha-Shabba Ranks</i> <i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue, then fades out.]</i>
00:00:51	Jesse	Host	Since then, Ferg has crafted a voice that is entirely unique and separate from the A\$AP Mob. He’s worked with a bunch of different artists, including Haim, Bone Thugs-N-Harmony, Missy Elliott, and others. Ferg’s songs also touch on all kinds of genres, from trap to house to dubstep to soul. When we talked in 2017, Ferg was out promoting a mixtape called <i>Still Striving</i> .
00:01:18	Music	Music	<i>[Music fades in.]</i> Here’s a single from that: “Tango.” “Tango” from the mixtape <i>Still Striving</i> by A\$AP Ferg. <i>Just found out my daddy died for the wrong reasons Wasn't the kidney that took him, it was the bad treatment Ain't go to court because our heart was still bleeding Family grieving, no money could fix the pain that we feeling Lil' nice, done leveled up, you wouldn't believe it And my momma always reflect when I was younger teething Now his gold grills glisten every time the teeth in</i> <i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue, then fades out.]</i>
00:01:38	Jesse	Host	A\$AP Ferg, welcome to Bullseye. Thanks for being on the show.
00:01:41	A\$AP Ferg	Guest	Hey, what’s up, man? Thanks for having me.
00:01:42	Jesse	Host	Can you tell me a little bit about the neighborhood in Harlem that you grew up in?
00:01:47	Ferg	Guest	One Forty-Third and Amsterdam, between Amsterdam and Broadway, we called it the Hungry Ham. It was a bit crazy at times. One Forty-Fourth was just wild. My mother would never let me walk through that block to go to the store for nothing. Gunshots all the time. Cars with no wheels on them. Crackheads up and down the street. One Forty-Third, my block, it was—it was a lot like a small

community of people that, like—we fought together. We played together. We ate together. You know. Some robbed together. Some sold drugs together. And you know, that was Hungry Ham. Yeah. That—that is Hungry Ham. *[Laughs.]*
It's crazy how it breaks down to the block.

00:02:40 Jesse Host

[Ferg agrees.]

Like, that you can tell me, “Oh, 143rd was like this, 144th was like this.”

00:02:48 Ferg Guest

Hungry Ham is a span of—from, say, 144th all the way to, like, 140th. But it's all, like, broken up into sections. Like, you have 140th. They consider themselves, like, the 40th Boys. You know, like, you got all—143rd, that's really, like, Hungry Ham. Like, my block. Then 144th, they got they own thing going on. And then, like—on and on and on, so forth. So, like, but all together, we all, like—you know, we all kind of is like a small village of people that's on a hill, 'cause we all far away from everybody else.

00:03:27 Jesse Host

Did you leave, when you were a kid? I mean, did you—

00:03:29 Ferg Guest

No. I didn't leave. I stayed. I stayed all the way up until I got my deal.

00:03:35 Jesse Host

I mean, did you leave—

00:03:37 Ferg Guest

Oh, did I leave the block to, like, go play or hang out? Yeah. I was always—you know, spontaneous and curious about, like, other places in other hoods. Like, I wanted to go hang out on other people blocks because they had more girls on they blocks, and you know things is more fluent over there. Like, we'll get—we'll get hip to everything late 'cause we on the hill. And, you know, my dad and my uncle and my—and my father's part of the family was from down the hill. Seventh Avenue, 8th Avenue. So, I used to go down there with my dad. He had a store called Ferg Apparel on 145th between 7th and 8th. I always seen more things and more traffic and more excitement and events and cookouts happening down the hill. So, I always left to go, like, hang out with my dad and his friends and, you know, be around my other family, my other side of the family. So, you went to the High School of Art and Design.

00:04:31 Jesse Host

Rest in peace, Prodigy. He went to that school too—Mobb Deep.

00:04:35 Ferg Guest

Yeah, we just found out that he passed as we record this.

00:04:37 Jesse Host

Yeah, we just found out that he passed as we record this.

[Ferg affirms.]

00:04:45 Ferg Guest

Was your idea that you were gonna be a designer like your dad? No, I wasn't trying to be like my dad. It was just something natural to me. Something that I always was into. I actually seen a Selena movie—well, Selena's movie, not the only movie—and what inspired me to start drawing clothes was when I seen her sketch out, like, a dress or something like that or—I think it was she was opening, like, a boutique, a clothing boutique. And I was like, “Yo. I can do that.” But it was like a mere thought, it wasn't like nothing crazy. Like, “I seen the vision...” It was just like, “I could do that.” And then I was just like—I started, like—I started, like, trying to—the first thing I drew was a dress. And I was like, “This is, like, uncomfortable.” Because I used to draw, like, *Dragon Ball Z*-like characters and things like that on my desk, my notebooks. And I started, like, saying, “Man, imma draw things that I could wear.”

So, I started to draw, like, T-shirts, jackets, jeans, and like—yeah. I just started, like, designing things at a young age. The first thing I drew was, like, a dog, though. It was, like, in my father's car. He gave me, like, a bunch of pens and highlighters and like one marker, because I was, like, sitting in the car bored. He was in a barber shop with his friends. And he came out. I was asleep for a long time and then I woke up. When I woke up, he gave me the pen and the book. I started drawing. And then I made all his friends sign it. He's like, "Yo, D, this look real—this is dope. This is—this looks good." And then I just kept drawing after that. Like, it's always been my thing.

00:06:16 Jesse Host Was part of the idea of going to the art and design high school not going to the neighborhood high school? I mention that only because I went to arts high school. The reason I went to arts high school was because I was not trying to be going to the high school—

00:06:29 Ferg Guest

To the ghetto high school? *[Laughs.]*

00:06:31 Jesse Host

[Laughing.]—by my house! It was a mess.

00:06:34 Ferg Guest

My parents always tried to present the best opportunities possible. So I was the kid, like, going to Fresh Air Fund every year. And Fresh Air Fund, those who don't know what it is, is like sleepaway camp but you go sleep at these, like, different people houses. Like, I went to go stay with the McCalls. That's, like, this white family that lives in Butler, Pennsylvania. And, you know, they just show you a different way of living. You swimming in the creek. Like, you—you, uh—

00:07:08 Jesse Host

Wait, literally swimming in a creek? Like, for real, there was a creek there and you swam in it?

00:07:12 Ferg Guest

Yeah, you swimming in the creek. You wake up. You see deers outside the house. You see squirrel bones and stuff from they cats that's hunting on the porch. We drinking milk every night.

[Jesse guffaws.]

You know what I'm saying? For dinner. We're not allowed to drink soda pop. You know, we eating deer burgers. We going to church. It's like a real different way of living. We going to drive-throughs. You know what I'm saying? And it's a lot of land. It's a lot of land.

00:07:42 Jesse Host

You know—do you still know the McCalls of—what was it? Butler, Pennsylvania?

00:07:45 Ferg Guest

Yeah, I just visited them. Like, on this tour. They asked—I hadn't seen them for years, and I actually went over to their house.

00:07:53 Jesse Host

What was it like to go back there?

00:07:55 Ferg Guest

Aw man, brought back so much memories. 'Cause I went there for, like, four years in a row straight. Like, for two weeks at a time.

00:08:02 Jesse Host

Oh, wow.

00:08:03 Ferg Guest

Yeah. And each time I go there, it's just like a new experience. And it's more free. Like, I mean, I'm a city kid. Like, I never experienced going hunting. Like, groundhog hunting or, you know, going to a drive-through where, you know, you had to dial in on your radio to, like, listen to the actual audio of the movie that you're watching on the projector with all of these cars and, like, a vibe that's on the grass. So, all of that's just—you know, was different for me. But that just goes to show you where my mom mind was, 'cause she—I'm her only son. So, to let me go at the age nine, you know, to a complete—she didn't even meet these people, you know. She only

spoke to them on the phone. She's just like, "Man, I want him to see things. I want him to travel and have an open mind towards things."

So... I forgot what question you had asked me, what led to this. But yeah.

00:08:57 Jesse Host Uh, when you went to art school, for college, right? You went to a couple years of college.

00:09:04 Ferg Guest Oh yeah! You were saying about what made me go to a different high school.

[Jesse confirms.]

Yeah, that—you know, that was the reason why. Because my mother and my father was really into like—you know, me seeing the world and just different things. So.

00:09:20 Jesse Host Was high school wild? I mean, like, I remember what the cafeteria was like at the arts high school I went to. It was—

00:09:27 Ferg Guest What was your cafeteria like?

00:09:28 Jesse Host It was something else! Well, for one thing, the cafeteria was not even really a cafeteria, because our high school was built in a—like an old, abandoned school for special needs elementary-aged kids. Like, all the water fountains were, like, 18 inches off the ground and it was very sad. But anyway, you know, I mean it was like goth kids that were full-on music video level production. Like, I'm talking about full-body latex dresses.

00:09:57 Ferg Guest *[Laughs.]* My school was the same way!

00:09:59 Jesse Host Right? Like I'm—all that stuff, right?

00:10:02 Ferg Guest Yeah. Like wearing black hoodies and it's, like—it's, like, 30 degrees outside.

00:10:10 Jesse Host Yeah, and I mean, like, people—

00:10:11 Ferg Guest Coming to school with black nails.

00:10:13 Jesse Host Plenty of folks making their own clothes.

00:10:15 Ferg Guest Exactly. You had, like, the gay kid over there. You had, like, the goth kids over here. You had like, you know, the kids from Brooklyn. That's over here that's trying to act gangster in the arts school. Like, come on, we at art school. And then you got, like, the fresh Harlem kids that's over here that's with me.

[Jesse laughs.]

And then you have like—and you have, like, different shorties from Brooklyn, Queens, whatever, whatever. Everybody's talking to everybody. And that's exactly how my lunch table was.

00:10:42 Jesse Host Did you have bars in high school?

00:10:44 Ferg Guest Have bars? You wanna hear—you wanna hear old rap?

00:10:46 Jesse Host Yeah, absolutely, I wanna hear an old rap!

00:10:48 Ferg Guest I said, uh:

They see Ferg rapping now

You wanna do it too

Rapping, but with a different style

You wanna do it too

We roll like the 2 Live Crew do now

I tell my dudes 'Don't stop,

pop that [censored] and let me see him doo-doo brown'

'Cause he's scared, so he [censored] on his man

*and his man's scared too so he [censored] in his pants
But look, I got a girl, and she don't be playing
She cut [censored] like Diddy in Making the Band
But sure, I can't stand boys
That's why I carry a little deuce-deuce
and it's louder than slammed doors
And the whip the [censored] transformed
[Mimics cocking a gun] Boom!
I mean, they call this [censored] Luther because the van draws
So no matter how you put it man, you're gonna lose
And imma merk you while your girl in the other room
And if she got the heater, imma sneak her like running shoes
Then put the hammer to her head like a [censored] screw
And if you his crew, then [censored] too
'Cause you all walk around like you [censored] cool
But you [censored] said that you ain't [censored] rude
But I am, now what the [censored] we gonna do?
That's pretty good for a teenager.*

00:11:44 Jesse Host

[Ferg laughs.]

Now, I will say, to an NPR audience, that verse you just ripped is gonna sound like ship-to-shore communication. Beep. Buh-beep, beep. Beep, buh-buh-beep. Beep. That's cool.
Oh, you didn't—you didn't warn me.

00:11:56 Ferg Guest

[Jesse cackles.]

You didn't warn me.

00:12:00 Jesse Host

We're alright! We're alright. We're not live.

00:12:01 Ferg Guest

Well, that—but so, that—

00:12:04 Jesse Host

But were you hard like that?!

00:12:06 Ferg Guest

Yeah, I was. I mean, I come from a battling background, so it wasn't really about us really pulling out guns and, you know, really killing people. It was more like a horror film. Like, we wanted to be, like, the menace. Like, the craziest—say the craziest things to embarrass you in front of a audience. Which was, like, our neighborhood. So, I would go—I was a part of a crew called H-Teen which turned into Harlem Movie where we would go to different blocks and battle different people. So, we had to be very, very disrespectful, because our tongues were swords, you know what I'm saying? We go in there and we gotta represent. So, I couldn't lose. So I'm like, "Yo, I gotta say the most menacing things to embarrass this dude."

So, we rapping real loud. We turning our backs on people while they're rapping. And like, people was looking out the windows and it was just crazy.

00:12:59 Music Music

"Plain Jane" from the album *Still Striving* by A\$AP Ferg.

Tourneau for the watch, presi Plain Jane

*Yamborghini chain, rest in peace to my superior
Hermès link could feed a village in Liberia
TMZ taking pictures, causing mad hysteria
Momma see me on BET and started tearing up*

*Imma start killing [censored], how you get that trife?
I attended Harlem picnics where you risked your life
Uncle used to skim work, selling nicks at night
I was only 8 years old, watching Nick at Nite
Uncle Psycho was in that bathroom bugging!
Knife to his guts, hope Daddy don't cut him
Suicidal thoughts...*

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue, then fades out.]

00:13:31 Jesse Host I wanna ask you something about particularly being a rapper and being from New York. I feel like, for a long time—from the early nineties, for 10-15 years afterward—to be a rapper from New York meant a particular thing. It meant that you had to be hard, basically. Right? You had to—you had to step—there was—there was sort of—there were a broad variety of ways of being that, but that defined what New York was. It was snow on the ground and wearing Timberlands and a snorkel jacket and being hard and, you know. And I think you and A\$AP Rocky and the rest of the A\$AP crew... part of what was remarkable about your success at the beginning was introducing a new—basically a new way to be from New York.

00:14:32 Ferg Guest You know. And I wonder if that was part of your goal. Well, that was definitely how we are, you know, in general. Like, I was always different. You know, Rocky was different in his way. Bari was always different in his way. You know. A lot of the A\$AP Mob members was just, you know—we was just the outcasts, kind of. But we were still cool. Like, we was real popular. Like, you know, we was popular before we made music. So, we just kind of took all of our differences, you know, that people thought was different or just, you know, was like, “Aw man, that’s too different.” Or, you know, scary. And we put them—we paired them together. We got real cool, ‘cause we all—

00:15:07 Jesse Host ‘Cause like, each of you—each of you were the, like, wild, creative guy in your crew.

[Ferg agrees.]

00:15:16 Ferg Guest And you all said, “Let’s Voltron this.” Yeah, we Voltroned it. That’s exactly what we did. And I always said, “Man, Kanye and his friends is cool. Imagine if the world seen my friends.” I always said that. You know. We knew that we was doing—we was up to something, because we came from the hood and there wasn’t no way that there wasn’t other kids that was in the world that wasn’t like us. That was from the hood, that was into art, into fashion, wanted to hang out at cool, fashion parties and the artistic scenes and, you know, wanted to get crazy haircuts and wear skinny jeans and Supreme Timbs. You know, like, we was those guys like finding sample Margiela sneakers at thrift shops and, you know, going—we was really about that life.

So, we knew that we was—we just—when we formed, like, Voltron—like, it just felt like we had a movement and... you could see that movement in our first video. Me and Rocky shot a video called “Get High.” And I was just like, “Yo, we got all of this stuff

going on in New York and nobody sees it. We need to record the history.” And I remember it was my birthday and we shot the video at my bro Jay West’s house. And we invited everybody that was doing something in New York—the socialites and people that had clothing lines and this, that, and the third—and invited them in a video to showcase they stuff. And it was a success ‘cause everybody, you know, started posting it.

My biggest thing was like, “Man, if it make Worldstar without us paying to get it on there, then we lit.”

[Jesse laughs.]

And they did! They posted it in a couple blogs. I remember Mishka posting it and some people from Supreme, I think, had posted it. Yeah, it was cool.

00:17:08 Jesse Host I mean, if you can make Worldstar without getting drunk behind a club...

[Ferg chuckles.]

00:17:19 Ferg Guest With no weaves being torn, then you know you’ve got it made. Exactly, right? We wasn’t even smoking weed in the video. And the song is called “Get High.” And the reason why I told Rocky—I told Rocky. He was like, “Man, how we shooting the video and we ain’t go not weed in the video?”

00:17:44 Jesse Host I was like, “Man, ‘cause I got—I want this joint to play on TV.” So, I was already thinking about it like, “Man, this is finna be—blow up.” Like, you know, at least give it some chance.

00:17:52 Ferg Guest What surprised you about what it was like to be a success when you became a success? What didn’t you expect?

I didn’t expect for it to be this hard to maintain your success, maintain your vision, maintain your humble—your humility. Um, just maintain you, as a person. People lose themselves with success. I think Yams is a testament to that. You know, we could all look at Yams and be like, you know, “We learned the lesson.” And it happens to the best of us. It’s not only people passing, but it’s people that just can’t—they can’t have a conversation with people they grew up with anymore, because they just can’t relate no more. It’s just like, you know, you get pulled into this new world and it’s just like everything that you stood for before doesn’t matter anymore. And that’s what I don’t want success to come to for me.

And that’s why I always, like, remain humble. I travel with my uncle everywhere. My cousin is my assistant. You know, I—it’s like a family business, really.

00:18:58 Jesse Host Even more with A\$AP Ferg still to come. Stay with us. It’s Bullseye, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

00:19:06 Music Transition Upbeat, percussive music.

00:19:07 Jesse Promo This message comes from NPR sponsor Miami Book Fair: online and streaming free and on demand. Robert Hass, Billy Collins, Dean Koontz, Natasha Trethewey, Ben Okri, Jacob Soboroff, and 300 more fiction and nonfiction authors and poets discussing new books and the issues of our day. For adults, teenagers, and kids.

Streaming starts November 15th. Join the conversation. Sign up at MiamiBookFairOnline.com.

00:19:38	Promo	Clip	<p><i>[Music fades out.]</i> Sidney Madden: On the next episode of <i>Louder Than a Riot</i>—</p> <p>Music: Melancholy, resonant music.</p> <p>Rodney Carmichael: We dig into the crimes of GS9 and look at how they affected one family in particular.</p> <p>Speaker: He's making other people think that you can kill someone, then turn around, put it in the song, and blow up off of that.</p> <p>Sidney: Listen now to <i>Louder Than a Riot</i> from NPR Music.</p>
00:19:59	Promo	Clip	<p><i>[Music fades out.]</i> <i>[Radio interference followed by laidback music with a snare drumbeat. A phone rings as the DJ speaks.]</i></p> <p>Radio DJ: Welcome back to <i>Fireside Chat</i> on KMAX. With me in-studio to take your calls is the dopest duo on the West Coast, Oliver Wang and Morgan Rhodes.</p> <p><i>[Click.]</i></p> <p>Go ahead, caller.</p> <p>Caller: Hey. Uh, I'm looking for a music podcast that's insightful and thoughtful, but like, also helps me discover artists and albums that I've never heard of.</p> <p>Morgan Rhodes: Yeah, man. Sounds like you need to listen to <i>Heat Rocks</i>. Every week, myself—and I'm Morgan Rhodes—and my co-host here, Oliver Wang, talk to influential guests about a canonical album that has changed their lives.</p> <p>Oliver Wang: Guests like Moby, Open Mike Eagle, talk about albums by Prince, Joni Mitchell, and so much more.</p> <p>Caller: Yooo! What's that show called again?</p> <p>Morgan: <i>Heat Rocks</i>. Deep dives into hot records.</p> <p>Oliver: Every Thursday on Maximum Fun.</p>
00:20:46	Jesse	Host	<p><i>[Music suddenly gives way to static and a dial tone.]</i> Welcome back to Bullseye. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest is rapper A\$AP Ferg of the A\$AP Mob. His latest record is called <i>Floor Seats II</i>. It's out now. We talked in 2017.</p>
00:21:12	Ferg	Guest	<p>You mentioned A\$AP Yams, who was sort of like a—I don't know. I mean, how would you describe what his role was in the crew? He was like a kind of manager, visionary, chronicler type of thing. I think Yams—and I thought about this a million times. I think Yams—'cause I think about purpose of life. I think Yams' purpose of</p>

life was he was a godsent angel who brought all of these collectives together. Which is us, the A\$AP Mob. And that was his purpose: to bring us together. And then I felt like when—I think God took him back when—once he achieved the mission of putting the whole A\$AP Mob together. That’s my belief. He was definitely a visionare. You could even say prophet, I think. Like, he’s like a angel. Like, he came, and he was a vessel from God, ‘cause honestly if it wasn’t for Yams, I don’t know where I would be or what I would be doing. I know that I—like, I wouldn’t be strung out or doing like nothing crazy, like—you know, but I just know it’d be really, really hard or tough.

He was definitely the godsent hand that kind of lifted me up. And all of us.

00:22:17 Jesse Host
00:22:19 Ferg Guest

How did you meet him?

I met Yams on the train. And he was familiar ‘cause I’d seen him around and I was like, “What up?” It was just like a head nod. “What up?” Like, I wanted to talk to him or say more things to him, but I didn’t know him, so. And then later on, I find out that we have the same friends and, like, I went to go hang out with like Bari and Illz and Yams wind up being there. And I got introduced to them and I finally got a chance to say hi. *[Chuckles.]* Like, a real hi and a conversation and we started building from there. Yeah.

00:22:54 Jesse Host
00:22:56 Ferg Guest

What kind of guy was he?

Yams was very quiet. He laughed a lot. He was a thinker. Um. Strategist. Fun, fun guy. He wasn’t like the playboy guy, like, with all the girls and like—he’d be like the first dude who’d be like, “Maaan, *[censored]* them girls.” *[Laughs.]* “Let’s get to the work. Let’s do this. Let’s do that.”

00:23:20 Jesse Host
00:23:23 Ferg Guest

How did you find out that he passed?

I got a call from Bari, A\$AP Bari, when I was on tour with YG. I was in Philly. It was nighttime. I think it was around, like, 10:30. And actually, I got a text from Frank Ocean and it said, “Man, sorry. I send my condolences.” And I’m like—I’m lost, really. And then Bari calls me like, “Yo, you know, Yams just died.”

And I’m like, “What?!” So, it all made sense—like, what Frank was talking about. And then, yeah, I kicked everybody off the bus and like—I didn’t even tell the guys ‘cause I didn’t know how to tell them. I didn’t know how to tell my friends. Then I was on the bus for about, like, a half an hour to 45 minutes. Like, I didn’t say nothing to them. I just went to the back and thought to myself.

It was crazy at that moment, but then I was like, “Man, I told him it would happen if you continue.” You know what I’m saying? Like, he was, like, really abusing himself with, like, you know, the drugs and everything like that and really going hard. You know, it just took him. Like, I remember having, like, one last conversation with him. The last conversation that I had with him, like, on the phone, was trying to get him to come move with me. And like how we was gonna work out and how he was gonna get his *[inaudible]*, my Uncle T-Nice, and how he gonna do his pushups and I remember telling him, I was like, “Man, we can’t have no deaths in the camp, man. We gotta—we gotta straighten up. You gotta drink this alkaline water. Like, we gotta go in!”

			He's like, "Yeah, man, we're gonna do it. Like, I'm gonna move in." But, like, you know. Yams wanted everybody to be happy, so it's just, like, I knew he wasn't really... You know. It's like pulling teeth to get him to do anything. You know what I'm saying? Like, you would think he's in the Bronx with his mom, but he'd be in London. You know what I'm saying? With Skepta and them, or something like that. So, he'd just—he was just all over the place.
00:25:26	Jesse	Host	How did it change the way that you thought about your life? 'Cause he had been such a... you know, he was the person who—as you said—connected this group that changed everything for you.
00:25:38	Ferg	Guest	I would say it just basically—it just let me know to keep doing what I was doing, honestly. It wasn't like it was like a wakeup call or nothing like that, 'cause I was—I was never the type to go hard with drugs or nothing. Like, I never been addicted. You know what I'm saying? Never smoked cigarettes. Like, I'm not that person. But it just let me know, like, you know—it could be all taken away from you. And it's still so surreal to me. Like, when I think about it. It's just like, "Damn." Like, "For real?" Like, you know, like Prodigy passing today and I'm thinking like, "Damn. Like, he was here and now he's not here." I still think of like—I still—I still think of Yams like that.
			Like he was here, like, vibrant, like, the birthmark, the swag, everything. And it's just not here no more.
00:26:32	Jesse	Host	I wanna play a really happy song of yours.
			<i>[Ferg laughs.]</i>
00:26:41	Ferg	Guest	Um, from your last—from your last LP, <i>Always Strive and Prosper</i> . "Strive"?
			<i>[Music fades in.]</i>
00:26:42	Jesse	Host	"Strive," with Missy Elliott.
00:26:43	Ferg	Guest	I love "Strive."
00:26:44	Music	Music	"Strive" from the album <i>Always Strive and Prosper</i> by A\$AP Ferg.

*You can be you today
You can be you tonight
Know you're feeling really great
It's gon' be alright
I can see it in your face
And I know you wanna fly
So, get off your [censored]
And create your life*

*'Cause you're missing opportunities (opportunities)
I know you're rich in opportunities (opportunities)
And you're missing opportunities (opportunities)
I know you're rich in opportunities
Oh, oh, oh*

*Working in Ben & Jerry's, it was scary
My life vision was blurry
You got talent, why's you here?
I'm thinking, "Yeah, plus I am getting a belly"
I remember mama screaming*

*"You ain't gon' be like your uncle Terry"
Uncle Terry on the corner selling rocks
He don't care...*

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue, then fades out.]

00:27:31 Jesse Host I heard—when I heard that record when it first came out, I thought, “What?! A\$AP Ferg made a full-on house record!”

[Ferg agrees.]

You're from New York! You're not from Chicago!

[They chuckle.]

00:27:45 Ferg Guest How did you end up making that record?
It was something I felt, man. Like... I made a record, when I first came out before I got signed, I made a song of Bob Sinclar's *[singing]*, “World Hold On.” Like, that beat was crazy to me. I grew up like hearing Crystal Waters and things like that. You—as a kid, you hear things and you know, it gets into your body and your vibrations and you never know how it's gonna come back out. So, I guess that's my way of it coming back out.

00:28:15 Jesse Host Did you record that song with Missy Elliott?

00:28:19 Ferg Guest No, I didn't record it with her, but I had a chance to meet her and that was the first song I ever played her. And Timbaland introduced me to her. And 30 seconds into the song, she stopped the music, and she was like, “Timbaland, this is the music I wanna make!” And that lit my whole body up, warmed my heart, melt me down. ‘Cause I was like, “Man, this is my icon saying she wanna make music like this!”

And I was like, “Please, could you bless this?”

And she said, “Without a doubt.”

And, you know, I'll play the same record for Madonna. Madonna called me in to work on her album. You know, the song that I did for her, it didn't wind up making the cut, but I got a chance to play her some music and that was one of the songs she said she loved. And I was just thinking, “Man, if I could've got Madonna and Missy on the same track, that'd have been crazy!”

[Jesse laughs.]

00:29:21 Jesse Host Yeah, I was woorking!
I cannot even imagine standing in a studio with Timbaland and Missy Elliott. How could it ever get any better than that?

00:29:29 Ferg Guest Man, you tell me! And then me and Jay Z, the next day—you know, I'm having a conversation with him and me telling him, “Timbaland last night told me that you put him onto my music.” That was crazy! Timbaland—I asked Timbaland, “Yo, so how did you discover me? Like, how did you hear my music?”

I'm a very humble cat. I'm not assuming that everybody knows my music. I still introduce myself. “Hi, I'm Ferg.” You know what I'm

saying? I'm not full of myself. But he's like—you know, "We were sitting here one day, me and Jay Z."

And I'm like, "Jay Z?!"

He was like, "Yeah, we was just going through your videos and listening to your music."

And I was like, "Woah." And then having to see Jay Z at Kanye's fashion show, the next day, Yeezy Season 1. Asked him. We spoke about the whole thing. He was like, "Yep." I was like, "Wow." Now, I feel like it's one thing for an MC to come in here and tell me how much they love Missy Elliott, who's a great MC and such a brilliant, amazing performer. Not that many folks come in here talking about Madonna.

00:30:22 Jesse Host

00:30:37 Ferg Guest

I love Madonna, because Madonna was a movie. You know what I'm saying? Madonna, for the culture, she just—you know, when I think about Madonna, I think about, like, Grace Jones, Rihanna, like, these strong woman staples in the game that just dares to be different and dares to be themselves, really. To be unique. And that's what she was to me. She was artistic. She is what you see in Lady Gaga and what you see in RiRi, really. You know. In her time, like, dating Michael Jackson, same person that dated Michael Jackson, dated Tupac, and dated Basquiat. Like, come on. That—where's her head at? You know what I'm saying?

00:31:19 Jesse Host

Do you think about the fact that when you're an entertainer, especially in hip-hop, the peak of your career has a limit to it? That there's gonna be a part of your life—I mean, you will always make art.

[Ferg confirms.]

But there's a point in your life where you'll be Big Daddy Kane in 2017. I'm sure Kane can still write a verse. Um.

00:31:48 Ferg Guest

Shoutouts to Kane.

00:31:49 Jesse Host

Yeah. I mean, one of the greatest of all time.

00:31:52 Ferg Guest

Man, me—for me, I don't think so. Because like... you know, I feel like I'm just now starting. I feel like a new artist. Even though I've been out for a long time, you know, a lot of the years was like—you know, playing passenger side with Rocky and, you know, with the Mob and—you know, you've seen Ferg with the Mob, but Ferg by himself is a whole 'nother person. You know what I'm saying? You get to dive more into that character of who Ferg is. So, we gotta get through that first. And then secondly, the entrepreneurial side. You know, the clothing lines, the—you know, the lifestyle. You know. Other things. I'm into culinary arts. Not me cooking but, like, just into—you know, the whole art of it. Into art. Painting. You know. Um. Curating different events. So, it's just—there's a whole 'nother world and I could dive into different parts of my brand as I get older. As I see Dr. Dre doing, now. You know. He's gonna live forever. You see Jay Z doing it. You see Diddy doing it. And these is like—these is who I—these the people I look up to when it comes to colossal empires and, you know, their legacy living beyond them.

00:33:14 Jesse Host

Well, A\$AP Ferg, thank you so much for taking all this time to talk to me. It was really great to get to meet you.

00:33:17 Ferg Guest

Aw, likewise, man.

00:33:19	Jesse	Host	A\$AP Ferg, everybody. From 2017. His newest album is called <i>Floor Seats II</i> .
			<i>[Music fades in.]</i>
			It's got features from people like Tyga, Nicki Minaj, and Diddy. The one and only.
00:33:30	Music	Music	"Hectic" from the album <i>Floor Seats II</i> by A\$AP Ferg.
			<i>I don't care if you're white I don't care if you're black (One, two, ooh ooh ooh) Who's side you on? (Oh)</i>
			<i>Wrote this while I was in quarantine From the hood, I'm used to horrid things Back to the basic, no diamond rings Just you and—</i>
00:33:43	Music	Transition	<i>[Music cuts out suddenly to be replaced with transition music.]</i>
00:33:45	Jesse	Host	Cheerful, brassy music with light vocalizations. That's the end of another episode of <i>Bullseye</i> . <i>Bullseye</i> is created out of the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California—where, after much consideration, I decided to buy a French door fridge even though it does not fit into my cabinet. I'm gonna have to move a bunch of stuff around and there will not be a waterline to the French door fridge, but a family of five deserves space to store their yogurts.
			The show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our producer is Kevin Ferguson. No relation to A\$AP Ferg. Jesus Ambrosio and Jordan Kauwling are our associate producers. We get help from Casey O'Brien and Kristen Bennett. Our interstitial music is by Dan Wally, also known as DJW. Our theme song comes from the band The Go! Team. Thank to them and their label, Memphis Industries, for sharing it.
			Now is a great time, of course, to buy any kind of music to support musicians who can't tour. But The Go! Team are a particularly wonderful act that we hope you will run out and buy some records from.
			If you wanna hear the latest about what we are up to, you can keep up with the show on Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. We post our interviews there. And I think that's it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature sign-off.
00:35:00	Promo	Promo	Speaker: <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.
			<i>[Music fades out.]</i>