

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.
00:00:19	Jesse Thorn	Host	It’s <i>Bullseye</i> . I’m Jesse Thorn. If you’ve been having trouble keeping track of time, kind of feels like every day just blends in with all the others lately—we just lost a lot of the markers we used to rely on. You know that. Days feel like months. Months feel like an eternity. That’s probably what makes Hulu’s <i>Palm Springs</i> the perfect movie for this time. It’s a film about two people who are forced to repeat the same day. The film stars Andy Samberg as Nyles and our guest this week: Cristin Milioti, as Sarah.
			<i>Palm Springs</i> is a romantic comedy. And it’s a movie about a time loop, not unlike <i>Groundhog Day</i> or <i>Russian Doll</i> . It’s a movie that’s almost self-aware. “Yeah,” Nyles says, “It’s one of those time loop situations.” But <i>Palm Springs</i> is more than just a clever premise. It’s a funny and unique film about relationships, about depression, about—honestly? About what it means to be alive. Linda Holmes, the host of NPR’s <i>Pop Culture Happy Hour</i> , talked with Cristin Milioti recently about the complex portrayal of Sarah, in <i>Palm Springs</i> . Also, as you’ll hear, about her roles on shows like <i>How I Met Your Mother</i> , <i>30 Rock</i> , and the Tony Award winning Broadway show, <i>Once</i> .
			First, here’s a scene from near the beginning of <i>Palm Springs</i> . Sarah has just met Nyles. Nyles is smooth talking, weirdly overconfident, and also dating another woman named Misty. He tries to woo Sarah into dancing, didn’t have any luck, but now they’re starting to click.
00:01:52	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:01:53	Clip	Clip	<i>[The distant sounds of other people talking and laughing as well as muffled music.]</i>
			Nyles (<i>Palm Springs</i>): Hey, uh, you don’t wanna maybe go someplace where we could be alone, do you?
			Sarah: Wow. That is very... forward of you. What’s your rush?
			Nyles: Well, it’s just—you know. Your dad and your mom are about—
			Sarah: <i>[Interrupting.]</i> Stepmom. My mom’s dead.
			Nyles: Oh. Yeah. Well, um. They’re about to sing a song and I—I just can’t handle that right now. <i>[Chuckles softly.]</i>
			Sarah: And uh, what would Misty think about us running off together?
			Nyles: <i>[Quietly.]</i> I have a feeling she’d be okay with it.

00:02:25	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:02:26	Linda Holmes	Host	<i>[Laughs.]</i> Cristin Milioti, welcome to <i>Bullseye!</i>
00:02:29	Cristin Milioti	Guest	Hi!
00:02:31	Linda	Host	So, that is a clip from <i>Palm Springs</i> . We're gonna talk about <i>Palm Springs</i> in a second. I wanna ask you, first, I think the question that has to lead off every quarantine conversation which is how is—how's your quarantine life?
00:02:43	Cristin	Guest	You know what? I'm very lucky. I'm in a—I'm renting a friend's house in LA. I'm very, like, safe and healthy and I'm good. I mean, I'm horrified by the state of the world, but my day-to-day, I'm like in a—in a house.
00:02:58	Linda	Host	Yeah. Quarantine B+, I call that.
00:03:00	Cristin	Guest	Oh, I don't even know if I'd—you mean my particular situation?
00:03:04	Linda	Host	Yeah, yeah, yeah.
00:03:05	Cristin	Guest	Sure. Yes. Yeah. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:03:06	Linda	Host	Relatively speaking—I'm, like—I say the same thing about myself.
			You have a dog, right?
			<i>[Cristin confirms.]</i>
00:03:15	Cristin	Guest	I feel like the dogs are important. Dogs are important, I feel like.
00:03:16	Linda	Host	Do you have a dog?
00:03:21	Cristin	Guest	I do! I do. He's a brown, skinny, greyhoundy, whippety kind of thing. Yeah, mine's like a silent film dog. He's like a scrappy terrier, trashcan dog. He's been—yeah. Very, um, very grateful for his presence in my life <u>always</u> , but especially this last period of time.
00:03:36	Linda	Host	Yeah. Where'd you get him?
00:03:38	Cristin	Guest	I adopted him from the— <i>[stammers as she thinks]</i> a shelter in the East Village.
00:03:42	Linda	Host	Oh, nice. Nice. And now—and now he's out in LA being an LA dog.
00:03:46	Cristin	Guest	Now he's out in LA being an LA dog. Although he's from LA, originally. So, he—for him, it's maybe not that different. I know.
00:03:50	Linda	Host	Oh, I see, so he's come home. He's come home.
00:03:52	Cristin	Guest	<i>[Laughing.]</i> He's come home! Yeah.
00:03:54	Linda	Host	So, <i>Palm Springs</i> , for people who are not familiar with it, I'm gonna spoil the premise a little bit just so that we can talk about it. It has been out for a while and if people don't want to have the premise spoiled, you can go ahead and skip ahead a little bit.
00:04:06	Cristin	Guest	I would advise to not. I would advise—skip ahead. Yeah.
00:04:09	Linda	Host	I agree. I agree. I definitely recommend the film, going in not knowing anything. 'Cause I went in not knowing anything. So, <i>Palm Springs</i> is a comedy. You find, initially, Andy Samberg at a wedding and strange things start to happen. He meets you and eventually it turns out that you're in kind of a time loop situation, reliving the same day, day after day, at this wedding. It was part of Sundance this year. And originally was planned for theaters first, right?
			<i>[Cristin confirms.]</i>
			Yeah. But then came out on Hulu in the summer. I think was very welcome to everyone stuck at home.
00:04:45	Cristin	Guest	Yeah. For sure.

00:04:47 Linda Host How did you feel about the fact that it—that it kind of took that route rather than the traditional theatrical first?

00:04:53 Cristin Guest I mean, you know, I would be lying if I said wasn't disappointed at first, just because I think something that we got—we were so excited by with that incredible sale at Sundance was the fact that, like, there was a theatrical release with Neon and Neon and Hulu were like partnering together and—you know, it—also, having seen it with a live audience, it's incredible. I mean, it was like—you know, especially an audience that didn't know anything. There's nothing like that. There's nothing—there's nothing like seeing something up on the big screen and being with a bunch of different people in this sort of, like, communal experience. So, I was definitely disappointed at first.

But then I also was just so grateful to have something to, like, share with the world and also I wonder sometimes if, like, ironically more people probably saw it in quarantine than we ever could have gotten in a theatrical release. 'Cause we would have been up against the biggest movies of the summer. It would have been, like, *Wonder Woman 2*, *Black Widow*, and then like, this film! *[Laughing.]* You know? Which like—and I believe in us! And I believe, like, the people would have found us. But we—you know, we probably wouldn't have gotten as many eyeballs on us for sure. And I think, mysteriously, it also took on this whole different level with, you know, a lot of people at that time feeling like they were repeating the same day over and over.

00:06:27 Linda Host So, it's been a pleasure to sort of have—to be a part of something that, from what I understand, is like bringing people a lot of joy during just an—a relentlessly insane time.

00:06:27 Linda Host Yeah, absolutely. I do wanna ask you—you know, to me, *Palm Springs* when I first watched it. And like I said, I didn't know anything. And I got to the end of it and I thought, "That's a pretty deep movie."

[Cristin agrees emphatically several times.]

00:06:47 Cristin Guest That's a pretty deep—that's a pretty deep movie! What is your sort of take on what makes that a pretty deep movie? 'Cause I have a theory, but I wanna hear your theory.

00:06:47 Cristin Guest I think what makes it a deep movie—I—you know, I thought that when I read it, like when we were—we were doing a lot of press about—for it, over the summer. And everyone kept saying, "Romantic comedy, romantic comedy, romantic comedy." And I understand that there is a romance in it, but to me—even when I read it—it never struck me as that. It was always an existential comedy. I think it's about trying to escape yourself and how that's impossible. And that, essentially, I think something that we all share as humans is I think we are all under the impression that there is just the one piece missing that's gonna finally make everything right. Like, if only this job or this house or this person or all these things. And I think that that's—you know, a universal feeling. And I love how this movie explores that in a way.

[Linda agrees.]

You know, of the, like—it doesn't matter the state that you're in, the situation you're in. You're just with yourself. And what are you gonna choose to do about it and how are you gonna choose to live your life? Um. Yeah. I know—I wish—I wish there were a way to, like, explain that to more people without—like, I remember—like the trailer is so great, but I feel like the trailer makes it look like it's this zany romantic comedy. Which it—there's complete, like, zaniness and there's a lot of comedy in there, but I also urge people to be like, "It's also about bigger, sadder things than that!"

00:08:07 Linda Host

Yep! Because when I saw it, my reaction to it was, "This is one of the smartest movies I've ever seen about depression."

[Cristin thanks her.]

Particularly when you find him—when you first meet him. He's in this place of, "I'm the only person who knows that none of this matters. And none—nobody understands. Nobody sees, has the full vision that I have of—that everything is meaningless and pointless." And so, he can't—he can't snap into the experience that everybody else is having, because he feels like he's the only one who knows that none of it matters, 'cause it's all just gonna be the same day over and over again.

And I thought, "That's a really good movie about depression, about what depression feels like, I think."

00:08:45 Cristin Guest

I—that's music to my ears. 'Cause that's certainly what I felt when I read it. You know. Like, I've been asked so much, doing press, like, you know—like, "Did you feel like, you know, weird that you are Sarah, in life?"

And it's like, "No, I'm a human being that's alive in a complex world." And like, I always thought that it was such a beautiful exploration of depression and shame and regret and all of these things. It's done with a light—you know, there's comedy there for sure. But—

00:09:11 Linda Host

It is funny! It absolutely—it is funny! It is funny.

00:09:14 Cristin Guest

Yes! I love—anyway. I love that you feel that way, too.

00:09:19 Linda Host

Yeah. I do feel like I've seen a couple of performances from you. I think Sarah is one, but a couple of these performances where the character that you see in the beginning is a little more sort of like—she's a sweet girl or she is a little more that kind of wisecracking, you know, funny heroine at the beginning of *Palm Springs*. But then it—you know, it takes a turn into these things that are a little more sort of grimy and interesting.

[Cristin thanks her.]

And I'm wondering whether you think you started looking for those kinds of turns more or they started to be available more?

00:09:56 Cristin Guest

I think it was both. I definitely started looking for them, really specifically. And was, like, lucky enough to be able to do that. You know. I did a couple of, like, romantic comedies back to back. And I remember feeling that—I felt like I had done that, and I was getting a lot of offers to just do that and that wasn't, like, what I set out to do, totally. It's not—you know, I love romantic comedies, but I—that's not, like, what I'm necessarily drawn to. And I feel like I

started to really look for things that were different than that and that were more unexpected. I really like the use of—your use of the word grimy. I love that.

[They chuckle.]

00:10:52 Linda Host I really like that! And yeah, and then they did start to find me. I think, as I start to—I started to seek them out more, they also—it was sort of like a—what’s the word I’m looking for? I don’t know.
It sort of matches up. They’re looking for you a little bit more and you’re looking for them a little more. Do you think—I feel like, at some point in the career of a lot of actors, they—there’s a sense that you do a couple things that people like you in and then it’s very hard to persuade them not to keep asking you to do that thing. In the same way that, you know, if you write a successful book or you direct a successful movie—particularly commercial studios and places like that will look for that thing again, from you.

[Cristin agrees.]

00:11:34 Cristin Guest Did you find it difficult to sort of, “No, I’m not gonna keep doing that one thing. I’m gonna—” Did you have to say no things that were hard to say no to?
Yeah, I did! I did. And I—you know. I, uh... again, I was lucky enough to be in that position where I was able to—I was able to, you know, say no enough that I would go, like, eight or nine months without working or—you know, and that was very touch-and-go. But I felt very much like, you know, the stuff that I dreamed of doing as a kid and the stuff that I started off doing, in New York, like—you know, like weird off Broadway plays that no one saw *[laughing]* like, that I loved. Like, that’s the stuff I love. And I’m—you know—grateful for every opportunity I’ve had. But there was definitely, like, a real shift of—yeah. That, um, I... I think people—you said it very beautifully, that I think when something does well or when someone does well in something, they’re like, “Well, great! We’ll just repeat that over and over and over again.”

00:12:39 Linda Host But I mean, that’s—yeah. That’s not why I wanted to act in the first place. So, yes. That’s been a very conscious—I did have to turn a lot of things down. And I was lucky enough to. But yeah.
00:12:42 Cristin Guest Yeah. Why did you wanna act? How did you get started with that?
I don’t—*[laughs]* I don’t know.

[They laugh.]

[Stuttering.] I—I—I mean, I know that, um—I got started with it, originally, in middle school ‘cause I was bullied very relentlessly at this, like, new school that I went to. And the only kids who were nice to me were the theatre kids. And so, it started as this sort of like island of broken toys, you know. They were the only ones who would invite me to sit with them. They were the only—it was the only place I had to go, after school, that wasn’t just like my house, alone in my room. And I started doing plays with them at, like, local competitions and I just loved it so much. And then I did it in high school, too. I did theatre in high school. And, you know, I just—like, there was never, like, a like, “Yes! This is what I’m gonna—!” I

			<p>just—it was like, yeah, I'm gonna go to New York and I'm gonna be an actor. And I'm gonna act and I'm gonna sing and I'm gonna be in New York.</p>
00:13:39	Linda	Host	<p>Yeah. I have sometimes thought, in the past, that one of the reasons why—you know—stage managers and other crew of high school productions were invented is so people who can't act can still be in that [<i>chuckles</i>]—like! 'Cause there are just people who that's the only world they're ever gonna be comfortable in.</p> <p><i>[Cristin agrees several times.]</i></p>
00:13:58	Cristin	Guest	<p>And that's the only kind of tribe they're ever gonna be comfortable gravitating to.</p> <p>And it is such a tribe. Like, it is such a, you know, like—I'm forever grateful to those—I... it breaks my heart, like, the state of arts funding in this country. I mean, so much about this country breaks my heart. But you know, that was how I was able to stay safe.</p> <p><i>[Linda agrees.]</i></p>
00:14:49	Jesse	Host	<p>Like, you know, I would've—I was not a good student. I was not—you know, I was going—I was really struggling and if it hadn't been for the, like, theatre program at my public school, I would've just fell through the cracks, probably. And I'm forever indebted to that, because it did—it made me a part of a tribe. And whether or not I would have done this for a living, it always would have been in my life. It taps you into, like, a different part of yourself.</p>
00:15:02	Music	Transition	<p>We'll wrap up with Cristin Milioti in just a minute. After the break, how does she feel about watching herself perform onscreen? Can she handle it? It's <i>Bullseye</i>, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.</p>
00:15:03	Jesse	Promo	<p>Cheerful, bright music.</p> <p>This message comes from NPR sponsor, Microsoft Teams. Now, there are more ways to be a team with Microsoft Teams! Bring everyone together in one space with a new, virtual room. Collaborate live. Drawing, sharing, and building ideas with everyone on the same page. And make sure more of your team is seen and heard with up to 49 people onscreen at once. Learn more about all the newest Teams features at Microsoft.com/teams.</p>
00:15:37	Promo	Clip	<p><i>[Music fades out.]</i></p> <p>Music: Discordant, unsettling music.</p> <p>Rodney Carmichael: On the next episode of <i>Louder Than a Riot</i>, how a law meant to control the mob changed the mixtape game forever.</p> <p>Speaker: <i>Gangsta Grillz</i> is the biggest thing arguably ever in mixtapes history! Don't tell me that what we're doing is wrong!</p> <p>Rodney: Listen now to <i>Louder Than a Riot</i>, a podcast from NPR Music.</p>
00:15:57	Promo	Clip	<p><i>[Music fades out.]</i></p> <p>Music: Peaceful, angelic music.</p>

Benjamin Partridge: *The Beef and Dairy Network* is a multi-award-winning comedy podcast, here on the Maximum Fun. And I would recommend you listen to it. But don't just take it from me. What do the listeners have to say?

[Several beeps of a busy signal.]

Speaker 1: Would I recommend *Beef and Dairy Network* podcast? Um... no, I don't think I would.

Speaker 2: Right, let me be very clear about this: under no circumstances would I recommend this to anyone I've ever met.

Speaker 3: No! Absolutely not! No. I couldn't.

Speaker 4: I feel quite sick thinking about the things I've heard.

Speaker 5: Please stop calling me. Please! Leave me alone!

Benjamin: That's *The Beef and Dairy Network* podcast, available at MaximumFun.org and at all good and some bad podcast platforms.

Speaker 6: Literally, just leave me alone.

[Music fades out.]

00:16:42 Jesse Host

Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. Our guest is Cristin Milioti. She's an actor. You might have seen her in *How I Met Your Mother*, *Black Mirror*, and the new movie *Palm Springs*, which is out now. She's being interviewed for our show by Linda Holmes, the wonderful host of NPR's wonderful *Pop Culture Happy Hour*.

00:17:00 Linda Host

So, you did take—at one time, and we're skipping around a little bit, here—you did take at one time what might have been considered an impossible job, which was on *How I Met Your Mother*.

[Cristin affirms.]

00:17:33 Cristin Guest

Which was—made you, I think, the subject of sort of one of the most—one of the biggest, like, casting announcements *[laughing]* that a sitcom probably ever churned out. You played that part in the ninth and final season. What is it like coming into a show like that that's had a stable ensemble for eight years and coming in sort of when it's established and when they're starting to wind down?

Well, you know, thankfully—blissfully, I had never seen the show when I signed on for it. It was like this very—it was like a very mysterious process where I, like, wasn't really told what was happening and it was like a—you know, like a stack of NDAs. And I like—because I didn't know about—I know of the show, but because I didn't know, like, the gravity of that reveal...

[Linda affirms several times as Cristin continues.]

I sort of was like, "Oh! This is to be—this is—this will help me pay my students loans off!" Like, "This is great. I'm, like, up for a job with, like, a bunch of nice people where I'm, like, in nine episodes. This is cool!" And then, as it dawned on me that—uh, what it was, you know, it definitely changed a bit. But it was wild! I mean, you

know, to walk into such a well-oiled machine, too. You know, like, I don't—I don't mean that in a, like—that it was a machine, at all. It was like this beautiful group of people that really cared about each other and had been together for like ten years! But they also were like, you know—it was—they, like, knew exactly what they were doing. They knew exactly what that show was. Everyone was so kind and welcoming to me.

But it was—yeah, it was—it was wild. It was also strange, too, 'cause you know, I'm not in it that much. Like, I'm—so, my memories of it are like—I was on set like one day every two weeks! And everyone could not have been sweeter to me. But it is—it is wild that that was, like, such a big reveal. And in—yeah.

00:18:58 Linda Host

Yeah! I mean, I think that—I think that that—when I rewatch that show, I don't watch that season. And it has nothing to do with you.

[Cristin affirms.]

It's just the—it's just the final season is not the one that I key into the most.

00:19:10 Cristin Guest

You're not the first to say it. I've heard—other people have told me this. It's okay. *[Laughs.]*

00:19:13 Linda Host

[Laughing.] I was gonna say! I was gonna say, I suspect this is not something that you've never heard before.

00:19:18 Cristin Guest

It's—I know. Yeah.

00:19:19 Linda Host

But they—that you—you became involved in what turned into a very sort of, you know, much discussed and much talked about direction for the—for the—

00:19:28 Cristin Guest

Hotly debated! Yes.

00:19:29 Linda Host

Hotly debated! Hotly debated. Got to—got to drop into the least fun part of any show. *[Laughs.]* Which is people arguing about the last season.

[Cristin agrees.]

So, when you were finished doing that—and that was obviously, as you said, you did several episodes. That's a kind of a sitcom experience. It gives you a look at what—what a kind of a high functioning network comedy—how it works. What did you take away from that in terms of, "This I liked about it, this I didn't like about it," in terms of steering your own career at that point?

00:20:03 Cristin Guest

Well, I did another network comedy right after that. They were sort of back to back. But I remember feeling like I loved everyone I worked with so much, but I felt very limited by what networks would allow one to do. Like, I remember, you know, just sort of feeling like I wanted to be—you know, I grew up watching *30 Rock*. I grew up wanting—like, I wanted to be... I wanted to be like a mess. I wanted to have jokes. I wanted to—and a lot of times I felt a bit just put into a pencil skirt and, you know, there's that *Simpsons* episode where Marge Simpson gets shot with a makeup gun and she's like, *[imitating Marge]* "You had it set to whore!"

[They chuckle.]

That one. Like, I felt like—you know, I was like coming in every day and getting blasted—like, airbrushed into oblivion and put in a tight pencil skirt and that's nothing on the—you know, the people I

worked with were fantastic. I'm still friends with them. But I felt very limited and I felt like I was being put in a box. That I, you know, wasn't allowed to really show—I remember a couple times I would do scenes and there'd be—you know, they're—in these things there's always a lot of people making decisions and a whole group would come over and be like, "Well! You know, remember, she's sad but... she's also, like, someone you'd wanna have fun with!"

And I was like, "Well, I don't know if I'm... your gal!" *[Laughs.]* You know what I mean? And like, I—sort of after that—but that's also the—or it was at the time, just sort of how the networks worked! Because you're essentially—you're working for a giant corporation. And—

00:21:44 Linda Host
00:21:46 Cristin Guest

Yeah, that Scheinhardt Wig company stuff is real. *[Laughing.]* Absolutely! It's absolutely real!

[Linda laughs.]

And like, you know, I think—and obviously there are so many examples of people getting through that. Like *30 Rock* is a perfect example. *Parks and Rec. The Office.* I mean, there's countless—*Seinfeld!* Like, there's countless examples of that not—of people, you know, finding their own way in that system. But I felt like I couldn't necessarily find mine. And so, then I took a real big pivot, and I did *Fargo*, next. And I remember that that felt—like, I remember being like, "Yes. This is—this is what I want. Ambiguous aliens, a lot of bloodshed." *[Chuckling.]* Like, I love this. A lot of, like—you know, uh... sort of subtext and I remember they painted bags under my eyes, and I was like, "Aw, I'm in the right place. This is great."

00:22:36 Linda Host

[They laugh.]

Do you think that the—do you think that the difficulty getting kind of what you wanted out of acting on network shows was exclusively that they didn't want that kind of thing at all? Or do you think it was a matter of what they thought they wanted from you? Because you were sort of in that kind of sweetheart wasteland that kind of exists where there's a—do you know what I'm talking about?

00:23:00 Cristin Guest

I—yeah, I do. I would imagine that it's both. That, like, I don't think—you know, I think that... something that I'm, like, very interested in as an actor is, like, exploring pain and the sort of, like, grey parts of someone. How someone can be a complete dichotomy. How you can feel one thing and act a completely different way and—even though, like, I'm a huge fan of network sitcoms. Like, I—you know. I rewatched *30 Rock* in lockdown. I love *The Good Place*. Like, you know. But again, those are examples where I think they explore more of, like, human vulnerability stuff and—you know, *How I Met Your Mother* did that, too. Like, they were able to exist in their own realm.

I don't think it's—I don't think it's the norm. And I think that—yeah. And maybe too it was because they—you know, sort of to what—do your point earlier, they'd seen me do something and they were like, "Yeah! More of that." And, you know, that was like a specific role and that was like one thing that I can do. And I also have like these 800 things that I want to explore. And yeah.

00:24:13 Linda Host Do you think that the—do you think that the expansion of sort of streaming services—you also were in *Modern Love* on Amazon—do you think the sort of expansion of places like that is gonna make those kinds of roles that are interesting more plentiful? Or do you see it—is that changing anything?

00:24:33 Cristin Guest Um, I think so, in a way. I mean, I'm also in my 30s now, and the roles have just gotten so much better. Like, you know, I think that—I remember auditioning for things at like 25, 26 and a lot of it is like, *[nasally]* “Oh my god! How am I gonna be a DJ!?” Like, you know what I mean?

[Linda laughs.]

Like, it's like—which, by the way, there's nothing wrong with that! *[Laughing.]* But it's like a different set of *[censored]* now, which I love! Now, it's very much like, “What have I done with my entire life?!” You know, like—*[chuckles]* I wish I—

00:24:59 Linda Host You should do that movie, by the way. Where you wanna be the DJ.

00:25:01 Cristin Guest Right, where I wanna be a DJ.

00:25:02 Linda Host I would watch that.

[Cristin affirms.]

00:25:04 Cristin Guest “How am I gonna be a DJ!?”
“Yeah, I live in this big fancy apartment! Eugh! And I have bad dates and, like—blueh!”

But, you know. Has it—has streaming expanded those things? Uh, yes. Oh, I think yes for sure it has. And I think also people's tastes have also, you know, expanded more as well. But I do feel like—I mean, this is such a, like—you know, at this point like the golden age of television idea is really true. Because people are able to take more risks. You're able to sit with a character longer. So, you're also sort of able to be like, “Oh, well what if this happened?”

I mean, that was something I loved so much about that season of *Fargo* that I did was that, like, there's a whole plot with aliens that they just never resolve and it's awesome that they never resolve it.

00:25:50 Linda Host Yeah, they sure don't!

00:25:51 Cristin Guest They sure don't!

[Linda laughs.]

But like—and but—and the whole time you're sort of like, “I—I mean I guess, I'm—right?! Like, we just don't know!” And it doesn't, like, take away from it. It's like—adds this like beautiful, weird color to it, which is—I imagine—maybe what it would be like to have a brush with aliens. Like, where you're just like, “Did that happen!? Is that real?! I don't know.” Like, stuff like that—like, this creative license. It's very exciting!

Weirdly, though, it also feels sometimes like, with all these streaming giants, we've gotten back into a version of, like, the old network model of just, like, “Oh, wow. There's, like, the big seven!”

00:26:27 Linda Host Mm-hm. I do wanna talk a little bit about Broadway. You were nominated for Tony Award for the stage adaptation of *Once*, which

is a wonderful movie that many of us love very much. Tell me a little bit about how—because you had done a little bit of TV, right? Before that.

[Cristin affirms.]

Then you did—and you had certainly done other stage stuff. But did a little bit of TV and then went and did that. Can you talk a little bit about the decision to sort of get involved in a long stage kind of commitment when you were also kind of—you know, had been working on television and other stuff?

00:27:03 Cristin Guest

Sure. I mean, the answer is I had no choice. I signed a very *[laughing]* strict contract that was, like, you're in this for a year. Also, it was like a pleasure. And I also—right now I'm thinking about something I just said minutes ago where, you know, I was sort of saying that roles in your 20s are a lot of, like, "How do I be a DJ in this fancy apartment?" But that was such an exception to that rule, to the rule, because that role—that's also why that show... you know, changed my life in so many ways. And I mean, beyond actually, like, what it did for, like, the career side of things. Like, you know. I played a character that, like, you wanna talk about ambiguous? There's a real ambiguity there. And there's a lot of joy there. And there's a lot of pain. There's, like, a lot of—she was very human even when you didn't think she may be, at first.

You know, like she has such a sort of... joyful presentation and wallop. And then, as you get to spend more time with her, you begin to see, like, what's actually roiling down there without ever, like, really getting to, like, exactly what has happened or exactly what is happening. And I mean, that show just—it was such a—even when we were doing 11 show weeks on the holidays and I was crawling out of that theater, it was always like—just such an honor to do. I'm—that was one of the most deeply special experiences of my entire life. Yeah.

00:28:28 Linda Host

Yeah. So, when you are doing... this is just sort of a fun question for my own curiosity, when you are doing a show like that that is really busy and doing well, from sort of the time that you leave your apartment to go to the theater and the time you get back to your apartment after you perform, what is your favorite part of that sort of span of time? Is it beginning of the show? End of the show? Getting a break?

00:28:57 Cristin Guest

Oh my god, it depended on like when in the run it was. I lived like a monk during that whole process. 'Cause I'd never done a musical before and I'd never done a run that long. And so I would get to the theater really, really early and spend like a lot of time warming up and playing through the songs on piano and—I mean, you know, there were things that cast—we spent so much time together and we also were a band, together. You know, we could—I could sense people's energies from 20 feet away. And we breathed together as like a company and as a band. And some of my favorite parts during that whole run was just being onstage with those—that group of people and... like, I don't know. Either we'd—like, something weird in the audience would happen, or like an instrument would break and, like, us coming together as a group—you know, laughing at something, getting really emotional when certain cast

members would leave. Like, it was just—I think those were moments, actually, more than like an actual moment in the show.

Although, I did always love the song “When Your Mind’s Made Up”. That was a scene in the show that I always looked forward to every night, because it’s like their one shot! And every night, almost without fail, we would get through that number and there would be silence in the theater. And in the play, they’re—it’s silent because they’re recording. And then the audio engineer would, like, click stop. And people would go—I mean, I’m getting goosebumps talking about it. People would go insane! And it was like they had been rooting for this, like, little band the entire show and that was always one of my favorite moments, every night, for all 13 runs.

[Linda agrees.]

00:30:39	Linda	Host	That—sorry, one more. And “Gold”. Absolutely! No, no, no, no! Oh, “Gold” is—“Gold” is—in the movie, “Gold” is one of my favorites, in the movie.
00:30:43	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	Cristin: Oh, it’s beautiful in the movie.
00:30:48	Cristin	Guest	Linda: And I think it’s under—and I think it’s under—it was underappreciated in the movie, when the movie came out, I felt. Yeah. Oh, it’s—that song is unbelievable. And to this—you know, that—my—what I did during that scene was that I walked through the entire company and then, as people started slow-dancing with their instruments, we would all like look at each other and it was just—every night! It was—it was magic. You know? Even on nights where, like, you really are wondering how you’re gonna get it up for two and half hours, basically? <i>[Laughs.]</i> Like, you know, I would walk through that scene and it would just be... it was beautiful.
00:31:19	Linda	Host	Yeah. Do you—do you want to do that again? A big show like that again?
00:31:24	Cristin	Guest	Oh my god, yes. I don’t know if I could handle a run like that again.
00:31:30	Linda	Host	That—that’s pretty—really separates—
00:31:31	Cristin	Guest	It’s grueling! Right? It’s grueling. It’s grueling. And it really separates the men from the boys, I gotta tell ya. Like, when I’m on film sets and people are like, “Oh my god, these hours!”
00:31:57	Linda	Host	I wanna be like, “Try doing this scene and just this scene for 13 months.” <i>[Laughs.]</i> And like, no snack breaks! No, like, sitting down! Like, you just—once, like, the curtain is up, it’s just you. And it’s exhilarating and it’s incredible, but it is grueling. And you have no—you have no life. You don’t see anyone. Yeah, well, it’s always—it’s always interesting, because when shows do reach a point where people are kind of paying attention to who’s in them, obviously most recently with <i>Hamilton</i> , people—when people leave the cast, there’s often a feeling of like, <i>[sadly]</i> “Oh, the person is leaving.”
00:32:12	Cristin	Guest	And it’s like, “They’ve been doing this—!” For so long.
00:32:13	Linda	Host	“—same <i>[laughing]</i> thing!”

[Cristin agrees.]

Many times a week.

[Cristin echoes her.]

00:32:25 Cristin Guest For a year. There's only so many times—there's only so many times, I would think, that you can do the same thing. You know, I left that show at just the—at the perfect time. Me and two other cast members were the first to leave. Like, after our contracts were up. And at that point, I'd been doing it for 13 months, uptown. 3 months, downtown. And a month out of town. And so, I think when all was said and done, I'd performed it over 500 times. And I left at the most perfect time where, like, I mean—I bawled like a baby. I couldn't—I could barely get through those last couple shows. But I left missing it and being like, "What an incredible time and holy *[censored]*, how lucky am I?" As opposed to being like, *[gutturally]* "Get me outta here! I'm exhausted!"

[Linda chuckles.]

00:33:09 Linda Host Like, you know, I was exhausted but, like, it was—it was joyful. Yeah. Well, and you don't wanna—I suppose you probably don't wanna get to the point where you're not sort of—not paying attention to it. Do you know what I mean?

[Cristin affirms.]

00:33:20 Cristin Guest You're not sort of—it doesn't feel like an alive experience. Well, and also—I always felt such pressure, because—you know—Broadway is so expensive. You know. And I would be like, "These people have paid hundreds of dollars to go on a—to have an experience, tonight, and to be like taken on an emotional journey." And, like, you have to—you can't phone it in.

[Linda agrees.]

00:33:42 Linda Host You just can't! When I—when I have been at Broadway productions, it struck me—I remember sitting in the audience of one and thinking—it is so expensive to be here, but at the same time, you realize how many people are working that night and how many people are working in that show and you are the only ones for whom that thing is.

[Cristin agrees with a laugh and continues to agree intermittently as Linda talks.]

00:34:19 Cristin Guest And it's like—on the one hand, it's like—it's a lot of money. But on the other hand, what do you expect? It's—it's a finite group of you and it's a lot of people putting on a large performance just for the people that you can see from where you're sitting, unlike—you know—making television or making a film or something like that.
00:34:22 Linda Host Yeah, it's just for you! I love that. Yeah. That's very true. It's also—
00:34:24 Cristin Guest So, it's kinda—yeah.
I mean, that's also one of the things I miss the most about theatre, obviously. Or any live performance. Music, too. You know. There's nothing like sharing a bunch of molecules with people in a dark

space for two hours and going on a journey together. I mean, some of the other—some of my favorite moments of doing *Once*, for that year or—and some odd change—was that there were moments where I would be in the character, you know, so bereft that this relationship was coming to an end and the audience would be crying and it really felt like osmosis or communion or something. That, like, we were all thinking of people that we'd lost or people that we—you know—I don't know. You can just—I don't know how to say it without sounding like woo-woo, but you could—you could, like, feel everyone thinking of all the things that had brought them to this moment.

And it's to this date, like, some of the most beautiful moments I've had of being with a group of people. Just all—our phones off, our attention in the same place, thinking about what it means to love and to lose and to be alive in this world and to let go of people and to let new people in. And it was wild.

00:35:32 Linda Host

And every one of those performances—this is the other thing I always love about it when I go—is that every one of those performances is a separate thing. So, you can't—

[Cristin agrees.]

You can't have anyone else's experience of going to that show. You can only have your experience of seeing it. So, even when people say, "Oh yeah, I saw that show." They saw a different thing than you saw. Because—

00:35:49 Cristin Guest
00:35:52 Linda Host
00:35:53 Cristin Guest

They saw a different thing. And—yeah.

You know?

And it's also—I mean, I love getting into like the—you know, it depends on what happened to you that day. Like, the New York of it all. Like, what happened to you on the subway when you got there? Or like, who were you on the phone with in the—in the cab? But it's amazing to be transported as a group. And I would be transported just as much as I hoped the audience would be, too. Like, it really was communal.

00:36:12 Linda Host

Yeah. Yeah. You know, you mentioned that you were rewatching *30 Rock*. You are in an episode of *30 Rock*!

[Cristin confirms.]

As you know.

[Cristin agrees with a laugh.]

Are you the kind of person—do you watch your episode? Can you watch it as an episode of *30 Rock*? Are you the kind of person who will watch your own stuff? Or do you not wanna watch your own stuff? Would you skip that?

00:36:31 Cristin Guest

I skipped it. In fact, I remember the night it happened. It was early on in *[laughs]*—in the pandemic. And I was watching that season and then it—you know, when it asks you, like, "Are you still watching?" And it was like, "Next up: 'TGS Hates Women'" and I was like, "Nope! Skip it!" I don't think I've seen that episode—I will—I do a combo. Like, I remember when that episode aired, I watched it with some friends, that night. And this was in real time!

[Linda laughs.]

This was before [laughing], like—you could just say that you wanted to watch it! You had to show up to a place at the right time! Um. But we, like, all watched it a friend's house in Bushwick. And I think that was the last time I saw it. You know. I don't like to watch myself, because usually all I can think about is what I've done wrong. And I'll definitely watch things like—you know, I watched the premier of *Palm Springs*, at Sundance, and I'm like so glad I did. Because, like, who knew that that was gonna be the last time I was in a movie theater with people. But you know, I certainly watched a lot of it through my fingers being like, "Oooh my god. Ooh my god, why did you say it like that. Ugh. That was—you—you—y-you messed up!"

But then there's other things. You know. I've watched most of what I've done. And then there's been some stuff where I've sort of left and been like, "I don't think I need to see that. I don't need to do that to myself." I think it'll just be out there and that's fine.

[They laugh.]

00:37:55	Linda	Host	Yeah.
00:37:56	Cristin	Guest	Don't have to relive—don't have to relive every single one.
00:37:57	Linda	Host	Oh my god, I'm not gonna relive it! Yeah!
00:38:00	Cristin	Guest	Nope! Don't have to.
00:38:03	Linda	Host	But I do try to avoid it when I can.
00:38:07	Cristin	Guest	Well, Cristin Milioti, thank you so much for being here on <i>Bullseye</i> .
00:38:11	Jesse	Host	This was a delight.
			Thank you. It was such a pleasure to talk to you, truly.
			Cristin Milioti, interviewed by Linda Holmes. If you haven't seen <i>Palm Springs</i> , you're in for a treat. It is a delight. Just a really enjoyable film. Linda Holmes, like we said before, is the host of NPR's <i>Pop Culture Happy Hour</i> . And guess what?! <i>Pop Culture Happy Hour</i> is now daily! It is a wonderful show, a lot of really fun and smart conversations about popular culture on that program. Give it a listen on NPR.org or wherever you get your podcasts.
00:38:39	Music	Transition	Thumpy, upbeat music with a steady drumbeat.
00:38:41	Jesse	Host	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 another round of refrigerator semi-failure has led me to question my role in the domestic drama that is life in the Thorn home. I'm thinking about whether to get a French door style or a side-by-side style refrigerator? Neither of them will fit in the hole in my cabinets where a refrigerator goes, though. We might put the portable dishwasher there. Also, apparently you can't buy refrigerators right now? I don't know.

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 and Kristen Bennett. Our interstitial music is by Dan Wally, also known as DJW. Our theme song is by the band The Go! Team. Thanks to them and to their label, Memphis Industries, for sharing it. Great band! Great music! Go get some.

If you wanna hear the latest about what we're up to, you can keep up with the show on Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. We post our interviews there.

And I think that's about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature sign off.

00:39:57 Promo Promo

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

[Music fades out.]