

00:00:00	Jesse Thorn	Promo	Hey, gang. It's Jesse. We're getting close to the end of the year: a time to think about what we're thankful for. A time to share joy and give back. Let's be honest, 2020 has been a challenging year for all of us. Public radio stations are no exception. During this time, please consider supporting your local public radio station. Every day they bring you the news you need to know—election coverage, the pandemic, everything else. They also bring you shows like <i>Bullseye</i> . We're incredibly grateful for that. Show your gratitude and support your local members station now. Go to Donate.NPR.org/bullseye and give whatever you can. And thanks.
00:00:38	Music	Transition	Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue.
00:00:40	Promo	Promo	Speaker: <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.
00:00:51	Jesse	Host	<i>[Music fades out.]</i> I'm Jesse Thorn. So. It's December. I'm here in my home office, in Los Angeles and—hold on, let me open up my weather app, here. It is 65 degrees and slightly breezy. Not exactly a winter wonderland. You know, there are those of us who pine for snow and ice this time of year. Maybe that's me. It's definitely not Andrew Bird, though.
00:01:14	Andrew Bird	Guest	I was wondering when I moved out here if I would start to lose—I mean, I spent 36 winters in Chicago. I figured I've got enough adversity to extend into other places.
00:01:25	Jesse	Host	From MaximumFun.org and NPR. It's <i>Bullseye!</i>
00:01:28	Music	Transition	"Huddle Formation" from the album <i>Thunder, Lightning, Strike</i> by The Go! Team.
00:01:36	Jesse	Host	This week, it's the <i>Bullseye</i> Holiday Spectacular: interviews with Andrew Bird, Anika Noni Rose, the McElroy brothers, and much more! It's all coming up on <i>Bullseye</i> . But first, the news!
00:01:52	Music	Transition	<i>["Huddle Formation" ends in a swell of music and cheers.]</i> Jazzy transition music interspersed with festive jingle bells.
00:01:57	Jesse	Host	It's <i>Bullseye</i> . I'm Jesse Thorn. There are singers that you expect a holiday album from at some point in their careers—just kind of like fits with their brand. Dolly Parton or John Legend or Mariah Carey. Bruno Mars hasn't made one yet, but y'know. Give it time. One artist you might not put on that list is Andrew Bird, the singer-songwriter and violinist is a perennial favorite among critics. He's made music that touches on folk, swing, even classical sometimes. And now, on the holidays. <i>HARK!</i> is Andrew Bird's first ever Christmas record. And as far as Christmas albums go, <i>HARK!</i> is pretty unique. It has a few originals, some covers of songs that aren't exactly holiday tunes but evoke that holiday feeling, and of course, a few standards.
			<i>[Music fades in.]</i>
00:02:49	Music	Music	For example, here's Andrew Bird doing "White Christmas". "White Christmas" from the album <i>HARK!</i> by Andrew Bird. <i>I'm dreaming of a white Christmas Just like the ones I used to know The treetops glisten and children listen To hear sleighbells in the snow</i>

*I'm dreaming of a white Christmas
With every Christmas card I write
May all your days be merry and bright
Oh, and your Christmases be white*

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

00:03:05	Jesse	Host	Andrew Bird, welcome to <i>Bullseye</i> . It's so nice to have you on the show.
00:04:07	Andrew	Guest	Thanks for having me. It's good to be here.
00:04:09	Jesse	Host	So, when you decided to make a Christmas record, do you just like, make a list of every Christmas song you like and start circling and crossing out?
00:04:20	Andrew	Guest	Not exactly. I wasn't—I wasn't that intent on making a Christmas album. I just started getting obsessed with the Vince Guaraldi tunes—the <i>Peanuts Christmas</i> — <i>Charlie Brown Christmas</i> tunes and I thought I do a few of those. This was like two years ago. And I just put out a few of those and then I just—it kind of got away from itself and next thing I knew, I had recorded a whole Christmas album.
			But um, no, I was—I figured if I'm gonna make a Christmas album, I wanna try to make some new entries into a fairly let's say overplayed canon of songs. So, that "White Christmas" was one of my only familiar offerings.
00:05:09	Jesse	Host	Those Vince Guaraldi songs are so beautiful and like every year, you know, you're at the drug store or something and—like, you recorded the "Skating" song, from that special.
			<i>[Music fades in.]</i>
00:05:21	Music	Music	"Skating" from the album <i>HARK!</i> by Andrew Bird.
			<i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]</i>
00:05:30	Jesse	Host	And like, you'll hear that song—its Vince Guaraldi version—and you just think, "Wow, this is a beautiful and heartbreaking thing to hear in this CVS."
			<i>[Andrew agrees.]</i>
00:05:41	Music	Music	<i>[Volume increases.]</i>
			<i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue, then fades out.]</i>
00:05:50	Andrew	Guest	It is. They're some of the best things you can hope to hear in that time of year. He had his own kind of melodic language. Like, I got into his non- <i>Peanuts</i> material too and it's just—he had his own sense of melody.
00:06:07	Jesse	Host	Were there Christmas songs that you look forward to hearing, at Christmas?
00:06:11	Andrew	Guest	I listen to about—to three albums. Only three, at Christmastime. And that's the Vince Guaraldi Christmas record, the Bing Crosby—you know—I don't know what it's called, but it's the one with the Andrews Sisters on it. It's the classic. And Handel's <i>Messiah</i> . And I don't feel much need to look into others.

[They chuckle.]

But uh, Christmas music has a certain utility this time of year. You put on the record and it is one of many sensory things that you have going on to create the atmosphere.

00:06:48 Jesse Host Yeah, I think I listen much more than it probably merits to just a pretty generic album of pipe organ Christmas songs and I think it's just because it reminds me of, like, reasonably fond memories of the pipe organ at the church I went to, as a kid. Like, it's just—it has a nice quality of the sound. *[Laughs.]* More than anything else.

00:07:19 Andrew Guest It's stuff you wouldn't listen to any other time of year, and it's a time when you have license to be purely nostalgic. I mean, the Handel's *Messiah* was—I remember, as a kid, playing violin and playing in the community, you know, do it yourself *Messiah* at the local church. You know? And you know, that kind of warm glow of the church and this great classical piece played in a sort of folk music kind of way. That was a nice feeling I had about that. Yeah.

00:07:49 Jesse Host Do you have fond memories of Christmas, as a child? Did you like it?

00:07:54 Andrew Guest I did! You know, I understand why a lot of people have mixed feelings about the holidays. You know. Spending a tremendous amount of time with some people you don't always have a lot in common with and stress of family and—I did, with this album, try to write an original—I wrote a few original tunes. But my first attempts, I threw away because they were—got too dark, you know. I was talking about dysfunctional families and alcoholism and I just, like—this is going against the idea of what, you know, why we use Christmas music. Again, it's a utility thing. It serves a purpose, which I think is kind of nice. It gives me license to kind of just enjoy it. You know? Not to suffer over it so much.

[Music fades in.]

00:08:53 Music Music But I did end up using The Handsome Family, “So Much Wine” mixed with the melody for “Greensleeves”, which is one of my favorite melodies.

“Green Wine (So Much Wine)” from the album *HARK!* by Andrew Bird.

*I had nothing to say on Christmas day
When you threw all your clothes in the snow
When you burnt your hair...*

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

00:09:08 Andrew Guest My favorite Christmas tunes are the minor key, sort of dark, melancholy tunes like “Greensleeves”, “Little Drummer Boy”. You know, they tend to be the older ones that are kind of—have a renaissance to baroque kind of era.

00:09:23 Jesse Host I mean, there's something to the—I think to... the idea of Christmas as a celebration of the birth of Christ, where in order to really engage with that idea, as—you know—was the heart of Christmas for a very long time, I think, you have to deal with both the kind of scary loneliness of “alone in a Manger”—you know, just that idea that it's a mother, a father, and the animals. But also, the awe of a miracle. And those are kind of different feelings from a “chestnuts roasting on an open fire”, which is also—I mean, like, that might be the feeling that I most associate with Christmas, but that awed

00:10:18 Andrew Guest quality is so important and so beautifully expressed in something like, you know, “What Child is This?”. That’s true. And it is interesting how the sacred and the secular come together in the music, in Christmas music, and how much we can find ourselves in a CVS hearing something very vividly religious and this great epic being told. And I—you know, I also think about, though, in the secular sense of it, that where it falls on the calendar is—you know, how it fits in with other kind of pagan holidays that preceded Christianity and it is— isn’t it mostly, like, this festival of light to kind of get through the dark, cold days? And it kind of lines up with those other traditions of trying to create some warmth and light in a dark time.

00:11:11 Jesse Host Yeah, I was thinking of the idea of making your own warmth, as you were talking about that. That idea of, like, coming together and fire and light for warmth that is so necessary in the darkest, coldest part of the year.

[Andrew agrees.]

One of the aesthetic things about Christmas songs that I find myself really liking, that I was reminded of by you mentioning Bing Crosby, who—I also will listen to Bing Crosby sing Christmas songs whenever. And I don’t listen to Bing Crosby the rest of the year. No offense to Bing Crosby. But there’s something about the confluence of the, like, singing aesthetics of that time—you know, the ‘40s into the early ‘50s sort of just before rock and roll—and Christmas music that works for me. And it’s something about that, you know, Bing Crosby has such an intimate style. It was basically the first time that you didn’t have to yell to make the needle move enough to cut a record or whatever. *[Chuckles.]* Right?

[Andrew agrees several times.]

00:12:22 Andrew Guest Like, it has something to do with magnets. I don’t know. *[Laughs.]* But, like— Well, yeah. His phrasing is—and his tone is very drowsy, which I think is something I associate with the nostalgia of childhood, too—is that kind of staying up late, it’s dark, there’s like warm lighting and you’re getting sleepy. And you hear Bing Crosby kind of—his syrupy voice in the background. And it was something I try to capture on one of the originals—on “Alabaster”—was this sense of... more like the outside looking in, being out in the cold looking—it was something I used to do in the winter, in Chicago, walking through cold, dark neighborhoods and looking in and seeing these apartments kind of glowing from inside. And that—I was thinking about that voyeurism. Like, what’s their life like in that warm glow?

And so, there’s—those two originals are kind of dealing with that: being on the outside, hoping someone invites you in. That kind of good Samaritan kind of warmth and invitation. And yeah, there’s all sorts of things, like I said. It’s a sensory thing. There’s smells, there’s light and then there’s sound. And those things kind of blur together.

00:13:39 Jesse Host Where are you talking to me from, now?

00:13:42 Andrew Guest I’m in Ojai, California.

00:13:46 Jesse Host So, Ojai—for folks who don't live in Southern California or haven't visited there—is a lovely, long-ago resort town. Still sort of a resort town, but more of a place you'd go for a yoga retreat, maybe.

[Andrew confirms.]

00:14:23 Andrew Guest It's a really nice spot. It probably isn't gonna generate a lot of classic, midwestern Christmas vibes. What is like for you to do Christmas stuff, as a—as a person who's from places where it gets cold and snowy in a place like Southern California?

00:15:25 Jesse How Yeah. I mean, I've had this tradition of doing this show called *Gezelligheid* every year. And it started in Chicago. And I've done it in other cities, but I keep coming back to doing it in Chicago, and this year I can't do it. And it's usually in a church or a synagogue or some sort of reverberant, sacred space where you can create that atmosphere. But this year, I'm gonna do it outside in Ojai, under an oak tree in an orange grove at sunset, with the mountains in the background. I mean, it's—it's not too far off, but it's not—you know, there's not... your midwestern kind of monochromatic, bleak winter landscape. And I was wondering, when I moved out here, if I would start to lose—I mean, I spent 36 years—36 winters in Chicago. I figured I've got enough adversity to extend into other places.

00:15:39 Andrew Guest Andrew, I once spent like three days in winter in Chicago and I feel like I've done enough for my life. Like, I feel like I've earned the relief of Southern California [laughing] from those three days.

00:16:51 Jesse Host Yeah. It's—you really have to get—in those places, you really have to get creative about how you get through those winter months. Either with artistic projects or just riding your bike even though it's ten below to a dance party at a bar. You know, like, I'd—I remember dancing in my snow boots. You know. Many nights in Chicago. You know. It's—I think that bring something out in people that—the—'cause you know you have to do it for your own mental health, to get through. And that was what those—these concerts were designed as. Like, as—not so much—I didn't—never—didn't wanna call it a Christmas concert, 'cause everyone's got associations that they have with that, and I just wanted to keep it more about that festival of lights idea that—you know, something to fortify us through the winter.

00:17:05 Andrew Guest But to answer your question about being in almost constant sunshine [chuckles], it's... there's still the darkness, nonetheless. There's still seasonal depression, though it's not as extreme out here, but it still takes some fortitude.

00:16:51 Jesse Host I wanna play a little bit of a song from your album, *HARK!*—and my guest is Andrew Bird. It's called "Christmas in April". It's a new song and—did you write this song this April? April of 2020?

00:17:05 Andrew Guest I wrote it in March of 2020, but March is not a very elegant word [chuckling] for a song. So, I put it into April. But yes. Yes, it's all about—I mean, that's the interesting thing about being home during this pandemic, is that a lot of my recordings that I've done during that time are extremely casual. Like, this one. Like where I just kind of—I'm making comments about how absurd it is that I'm writing this song while I'm recording the song. It's like you're capturing everyday life and a little more than before the pandemic, or whatever.

00:17:47	Jesse	Host	<i>[Music fades in.]</i> Let's hear a bit of it.
00:17:48	Music	Music	"Christmas in April" from the album <i>HARK!</i> by Andrew Bird.
			<i>When will you know? If we can meet Under the mistletoe</i>
			<i>Yeah, I'm writing this song about Christmas in April this year So, I'm not sure what to think about that</i>
			<i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue, then fades out.]</i>
00:18:18	Andrew	Guest	I was wondering aloud in that song, like, if—if the traditional automatic greetings of the holidays would seem disingenuous. And I was wondering, in April—or March, as it was—if we would be in the same boat or worse and wondering, like, "Oh, maybe I shouldn't say Merry Christmas, 'cause who are we kidding? It's gonna be rough."
00:18:43	Jesse	Host	We'll finish up with Andrew Bird after a quick break. Plus, later on, celebrating the good stuff in life 2020 style, with the hosts of Max Fun's <i>Tiny Victories</i> and an interview with actor and singer Anika Noni Rose. It's <i>Bullseye</i> , from MaximumFun.org and NPR.
00:19:01	Music	Transition	Thumpy electronic music.
00:19:02	Jesse	Promo	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 .
00:19:33	Promo	Clip	<i>[Music fades out.]</i> Music: Relaxing ukulele music.
			Manolo Moreno: Hey, you've reached <i>Dr. Gameshow</i> . Leave your message after the beep.
			<i>[Music stops.]</i>
			<i>[Beep!]</i>
			Speaker: <i>Dr. Gameshow</i> is my favorite podcast and the only podcast my parents let me listen to, because I'm 12. But even old people love the show. Basically, you call in, play games, and have fun. If you win a game, a baby will send you a magnet in the mail. I have sooo many magnets and put them all over my locker and pretty much everyone at school is jealous because they're very cool custom magnets and it also means that I'm really good at winning games. And they even let me practice my recorder while I was on the air!
			<i>[Several notes from a recorder.]</i>
			Listening to this show is like going to a real doctor, but pretty much kind of better. <i>Dr. Gameshow</i> rocks!

[Several notes from a recorder.]

[Beep!]

[Music resumes.]

Jo Firestone: Listen to [Dr. Gameshow](#) on Maximum Fun. New episodes every other Wednesday.

[Music fades out.]

00:20:26 Promo Clip

Music: Relaxed guitar music.

Manoush Zomorodi: Abigail Disney says if she ran the family company, she'd deal with the current economic crisis very differently.

Abigail Disney: A CEO should be like a ship's captain. You know, if other people are drowning, you're the last one off the ship.

Manoush: Ideas about the history and future of finding financial stability. That's on the *TED Radio Hour*, from NPR.

[Music fades out.]

00:20:47 Music Music

"Christmas is Coming" from the album *HARK!* by Andrew Bird.

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]

00:20:48 Jesse Host

Welcome back to the *Bullseye* Holiday Spectacular. I'm Jesse Thorn. If you're just joining us, my guest is Andrew Bird. He's a Grammy nominated singer-songwriter and multi-instrumentalist. He just put out his first ever holiday record. It's called *HARK!* Let's listen to a track from it. Here's an instrumental rendition of Vince Guaraldi's classic: "Christmas is Coming."

[Volume increases.]

00:21:09 Music Music

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

00:21:23 Jesse Host

When you were a kid, you were primarily a violinist and you know, the violin is still probably your first instrument, although you might say your first job is songwriter. I don't know. But when you were a kid, did you play violin with the idea that you were going to be a classical violinist? Or did you play violin with the idea you were gonna be some kind of fiddler?

00:21:46 Andrew Guest

No, I mean, I started so young that it was just something that I did. My mom took me twice a week to group lessons and then private lessons. And there were recitals, and I was not a prodigy, but I was reasonably good at it and I didn't hate it. But it was not like... part of my identity until I got into my adolescence and then nothing was going particularly well, and I was like, "Oh, I'm actually already pretty good at this." It's like—then I like devoted myself to it. I became, like, "This is the thing I'm gonna throw myself into." And then, yeah, at first I was gonna be like—I wanted to be the best classical violinist, 'cause I didn't know much else out there. And then I started discovering other types of music and then I got into Irish fiddle playing or gypsy folk music and hot jazz and I got into all this other stuff.

But nonetheless, I was completely absorbed by the romance of being—of dedicating myself to this instrument. And then, at some point, my arm stopped working. I had tendonitis from trying to make a living teaching and playing a Renaissance Fair and anything I could do to make rent. And I said, “I’ve become kind of boring.” You know? I used to read more. I used to write poetry. I used to—before that—before I got so dedicated to it. And that’s when I started realizing I—maybe I couldn’t be able to play, because of physical things like—that I better become more well-rounded and that’s when I started writing and conceiving of albums and songs and common threads between lyrics. And so, yeah, now then that—things kind of shifted and then the violin became just something I happen to play. And it serves a song.

00:23:45	Jesse	Host	I mean, I am thinking of you as a—and post-adolescent, maybe as a teenager, 16 or 17 or something—and you know, in a high school there’s probably some punk rock kids. Maybe there’s some metal dudes. I’m not sure that there is a clique of Django Reinhardt enthusiasts. <i>[Laughs.]</i> Those hot— <i>[stammering]</i> the—you can’t—you can’t go hang out with the gypsy folk music kids.
00:24:14	Andrew	Guest	No, but I’ve found kind of the—you know, the—
00:24:17	Jesse	Host	“Ugh, Andrew’s such a hot jazz guy now.”
00:24:21	Andrew	Guest	<i>[Laughing.]</i> Right. That came a little bit later, but I was—I was like playing Dvořák “Violin Concerto” and listening to that while I was hanging out with my goth friends. And we put together, like, a band that played, like, a Donovan song at the talent show at high school. You know. And we were kind of freaky, somewhere between hippie and goth kids or something. Like, I wore like... like a Thomas Jefferson style blousy shirt with wooden buttons. I’m not too proud to say.

[They chuckle.]

00:25:05	Jesse	Host	Moleskine pants and oversized camelhair jackets and... yeah. I was insufferable, probably. So, you’re a gifted singer and wonderful violinist. I think one of the other distinctive elements of your music is that you are often a whistler. Did you discover that... accidentally? Or did you think, “Gosh, I’m good at whistling.”
00:25:23	Andrew	Guest	I never really thought I was exceptional at whistling. It’s just something I did incessantly. And I would drive my family crazy, because if I wasn’t eating or sleeping or talking, I was pretty much whistling. Whatever repertoire I was working on at the time or whatever. It’s just, you know, that—it’s an escape valve for what’s bouncing around in my head. And then I didn’t think to put it on any of my records for the first, I don’t know, three or four records. ‘Cause I figured--well, first of all, I went through so much pain and suffering to learn this violin, it’s a difficult instrument. Who was gonna—who says the money’s in whistling? You know. It’s such a casual, portable, whimsical thing. And I just—took me a while to give it any credit. A lot of times, my hands are busy playing an instrument and to carry a tune, I can—here’s where the melody goes. I would whistle it.

And then that would go on record and I’d be like—with all intention of replacing it—and then it’d be like, “That’s it. That just sounds like

the most honest thing.” If I replace it with a violin, it just sounds kind of romantic, it has all these other associations. The whistling is just so casual. That’s what makes it work. Like, anyone—most—almost anyone can do it. You know?

00:26:43 Jesse Host

Yeah, I mean I think especially if—as you said—whistling has the humanity of singing. You know, it comes directly from a person and is something that we’ve all done. But it doesn’t require that step. It doesn’t require you to lock in words with meanings on top of the melody. It can just be the melody.

00:27:04 Andrew Guest

Exactly. And it’s—when I come up with a melody, it’s only been whistled. It tends to be more interesting and doesn’t conform to the eight-bar phrase like a guitar or a violin or piano part. ‘Cause those have a physical memory or a geometry to it that wants to kind of fit into the way things have been done. And the whistle, is this direct line from what’s in my head. It can tend to be a little more odd. And therefore, I think, can get into people’s heads quicker, too. It also—that tonality of it kind of cuts through everything else I do. The violin and my voice is very mid-rangey and the whistle is just like glass. So, I think of it in a textural way. And also, it can be—it’s not just, like, a—usually, you hear it in like a pop song or rock song like as this kind of, “Oh, hi-ho, hi-ho,” kind of whistle thing.

[Jesse agrees.]

And I don’t usually use it in that way. I think of it as, like, more aria or operatic-like. You know? At least, that’s the way—the technique I use is more like, you know: *[whistles a swirling, descending note and then several ascending tones up and down the scale]*. Like—but you can—once I set up, like, a violin loop or something, it’s this big, massive, mid-rangey, you know, orchestral textures. And the whistle just, like, beams right in there like a laser and cuts right through it. So, I don’t know. I can’t—I can’t quit doing it. I—sometimes I think I should give it a rest, but... it’s just what I do.

00:28:45 Jesse Host

Let’s hear some more music from my guest, Andrew Bird’s new album, *HARK!*.

[Music fades in.]

00:28:55 Music Music

This is a cover of a John Cale song, “Andalucia”.
“Andalucia” from the album *HARK!* by Andrew Bird.

*Andalucia, when can I see ya?
When it's snowing out again
Farmer John wants you
Louder and softer, closer and dearer
Then again*

*Needing you
Taking you
Keeping you
Leaving you*

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

00:29:30 Jesse Host

Andrew, how did you end up recording that song?

00:29:34	Andrew	Guest	When the lockdown started, last... uh, March, my son became the household DJ, and he was just playing music nonstop. And he really got into John Cale's <i>Paris 1919</i> and he was just going through a Velvet Underground and <i>Transformer</i> , Lou Reid and then John Cale phase.
00:29:59	Jesse	Host	I mean, we all go through that in fourth grade.
00:30:02	Andrew	Guest	<i>[Chuckling.]</i> Yeah, right? He's got better taste than any of us. But that song, he kept playing over and over again and I found it was really comforting. That whole record has a vulnerability in John Cale's voice that you come to really love. And I always thought, "Oh, maybe I'll try to finish out this Christmas record that I started." And I was, you know, searching for material and I thought, you know, anything that mentions snow or Christmas or just even if it's peripheral, is fair game. 'Cause we just want some good music. And I thought, "Well, this mentions castles and Christians and snow. I think we're good."
			<i>[Jesse chuckles.]</i>
00:31:05	Jesse	Host	And I just kind of did a very stripped down, pizzicato—I was just playing pizzicato live and singing. And my bass player, Alan Hampton, did these choral arrangements that you hear in the background. And that's... that's pretty much it.
			So, your singing is really beautiful on that song. Did you always feel comfortable singing?
00:31:11	Andrew	Guest	Uh, no. This is a lesson for people who wonder if their kids are listening to them, when they make casual, offhanded comments. But I was in the backseat, as a kid, and I was singing something to myself and I can't remember which parent it was said, "Well, you shouldn't consider a career in singing."
			<i>[They chuckle.]</i>
			And I was like, "Oh. Yeah. No. Geez. Yeah. I wouldn't do that." And I didn't really try singing again until I was 19 or 20. And it took a while to really—it's still an elusive instrument, for me. Like, some days I can sing like Roy Orbison and other days it's just not there. It's just—it's so subject to your psychology, you know? But that song—that vulnerability that you hear in John Cale's voice, it just is part of the song. 'Cause I felt it too when I was singing it. It was not particularly easy to sing, even though it seems like it is. Like, it's just—my voice kind of breaks a little bit and it was not super comfortable for me to sing that. But it worked, somehow.
00:32:24	Jesse	Host	Well, I sure appreciate you taking all this time to talk with me. And thanks for this beautiful record.
00:32:30	Andrew	Guest	Oh, you're welcome. I really enjoy your show. So, I'm glad to do it.
00:32:34	Jesse	Host	Thank you, Andrew.
			Andrew Bird. His holiday album, <i>HARK!</i> , is available to stream or buy pretty much everywhere. One good place to grab it is his Bandcamp page. Also, we didn't get to talk about it during the interview, but Andrew recently made his acting debut on FX's <i>Fargo</i> , playing the protagonist's dad. You can stream that on Hulu.
00:32:56	Music	Transition	Thumpy guitar music overlaid with festive jingle bells.
00:33:00	Jesse	Host	It's the <i>Bullseye</i> Holiday Special. I'm Jesse Thorn. What did you set out to do this year? Did you wanna go running every day or learn

how to bake sourdough bread or get holiday gifts for everybody on your list before December 1st? Look, as far as I'm concerned, it's fine if you didn't do all those things. It's fine really if you didn't do any of those things. It doesn't make you a failure. Victories come in every shape, size, and flavor. That's kind of the idea behind the newest podcast over here at my company, Maximum Fun. The podcast is called *Tiny Victories* and each episode is a bite sized celebration of the small stuff: reconnecting with a friend, dusting the mantle, reading a fun, informative article. Don't worry about it. You're doing great.

Tiny Victories is hosted by Annabelle Gurwitch and Laura House. Annabelle is an author of a number of books and an accomplished actor. Laura, her co-host, is also an actor and writer. The two of them are joining me now to talk about holiday tiny victories. Annabelle and Laura, welcome to Bulleye's Holiday Special! Hey, Jesse. Thanks so much for having us!

00:34:04 Laura House Guest
00:34:06 Annabelle Gurwitch Guest

Yeah. This is Annabelle. Thanks for having us. And I love the way you put that—the low expectations of the year.

[Jesse laughs.]

You know. We have this thing we call the tiny victory hotline where people call in and we just got a call from someone whose tiny victory is that they raised their Spanish grade from an F to a C. Now, that's—I just love that.

00:34:32 Laura Guest
00:34:34 Annabelle Guest
00:34:39 Laura Guest
00:34:42 Jesse Host

Que calor!

[Laughs.] Yeah, just—not an A, but a C. Yay! Yay! That's good!

You have to celebrate that. It's the right direction.

Yeah, I mean my feeling about it is that any accomplishment is a monumental accomplishment in the year 2020.

[Laura agrees.]

Did either of the two of you have big goals in January and February? *[Chuckles.]*

00:34:55 Laura Guest

I have a book that has been written and needed to move along for a while. I had that—I had that big goal. And then I just have had to adjust to the smaller steps of that, this year. It has been such a bizarre year, too. Honestly, if anyone's out of bed before noon, hats off. *[Laura claps.]* I salute you. That is a tiny victory, I think, in this—the bar's been lowered so low, this year.

00:35:25 Annabelle Guest

For me—this is Annabelle—this year was going to be one of the most anticipated moments in my life. My kid was graduating college. I had this trip planned. My entire family was heading to upstate New York, to the graduation ceremony that David Byrne was playing at. I mean—just, epic. What that day turned out to be was me in my backyard watching names roll by on my screen, weeping alone. My kid was in lockdown in New York. I was here. I mean, talk about plans for the year changing. And yet, I'm so proud of Ezra. I'm so proud of my child. They graduated. By the time they graduated, I believe they were majoring in sourdough starter and Rubix cube, but whatever! They graduated! I didn't get David Byrne, but you know. So, that was really one of those moments of, "Okay! This is—you know, a positive. We're still—we're still hanging in

there. But so, yeah. This year was gonna be epic for—in that sense. Yeah.

00:36:49 Jesse Host What holidays do the two of you celebrate, at the end of the year?
00:36:54 Laura Guest Oh, I'm Thanksgiving and Christmas.
00:36:57 Jesse Host A classic combo.
00:36:58 Laura Guest Classic. I didn't invent it. A lot of people *[laughs]*—a lot of people hop on that bandwagon.
00:37:04 Annabelle Guest I'm a big Chanukah person—and notice I really hit the “Cha”, ‘cause I'm Jewish. And usually I can, you know, there's eight days of Chanukah and I usually make it to five and then I forget and it all peters out.

[Jesse chuckles.]

This year, if I light candles on two—and by the way, the candles that I have aren't, like, the Chanukah candles. I'm gonna put some, like, old birthday candles in my Chanukah menorah. Like, whatever! It's all—it's all gonna be a tiny—a tiny Chanukah, this year.

00:37:38 Jesse Host Do either of you have big holiday traditions that aren't going to happen this year?
00:37:45 Laura Guest I've transitioned out of a lot of big events. I like to do kind of nontraditional holiday stuff, but when I was about 15, my brother and I were both in high school and my mom—like, Christmas was her thing. Like so many moms. My mom would bake. She would make candy for, like, four days straight in the kitchen. And she's making chocolate covered pretzels. Like, even nontraditional—she's making the divinity, the fruit cakes, all the fruit cakes you see? That came from my mom. Fruit cake cookies. Just trying to like—I thought fruit cakes just came, like, from other people that have been passed around for years. Like, there's one fruit cake in the entire country that gets passed around. But no.
00:38:17 Annabelle Guest
00:38:27 Jesse Host Honestly, I thought fruit cakes were just in Erma Bombeck books.

[They laugh.]

00:38:32 Laura Guest Really?! No.
00:38:33 Jesse Host *[Laughing.]* I really didn't know they actually existed!
00:38:36 Laura Guest My mom, she just—she was just Willy Wonka for, like, a week in December. And loved Christmas and every—when we put up the tree, it was hours ‘cause it was Neil Diamond songs and then she would tell a story out of—like, put an ornament, “Oh! Your grandmother gave this to you when you were seven years old.” She—we had a speech that went to everyone. So, what I was thinking about—our big tradition was we would put up the tree and when I was about 15, my brother and I were both in high school, and we'd kind of lost interest in helping. I don't know if you've met a teenager, but we were pretty typical in that way of we had just—there's just a day you go, “I don't wanna help anymore!”

And so, she was sort of coaxing us for a few weeks of, like, you know, “Help me—help me get the—get the tree up.” And we just... would kind of take a step backwards. *[Laughs.]* In that kind of way. And she threatened. She said, “You know, if you don't help me put the tree up this year, we're just not gonna have one.” And I was like—that's just not even possible. And she folded all the time on stuff. She was just a really nice lady. So, we were like, obviously she's gonna break and put the tree up. But we didn't have the tree

that year. Nobody helped and she was like, “No tree!” That’s—she stood—she stood—*[laughing]* she stuck the landing. And we still had Christmas, but we had to put all of our presents on a chair. And so, we just had this Christmas chair this year.

00:40:32 Annabelle Guest

That—to me, that was like... it’s almost, for me, like I just kind of want to keep honoring that tradition in my family. Of, like, “You know, let’s just put some tinsel on that chair. We’re still gonna buy things, ‘cause it—” In a way, the tiny victory was really mom’s, of like, “You know what? She really stuck it to us.” Like, that was a life-long lesson for me. Of like, “Oh, you—you gotta help out if you want *[laughs]*—if you want Christmas to happen.” Well, I am that mom, now.

[Laura cackles.]

And I applaud that. But I—you know, Jesse, when you just said that I just was thinking about how the one tradition I have kept since my kid was little was that we do, every year, a family picture with our cat. Whichever cat we happen to have. And this year, I just lost my cat and I decided that I had to get kittens. But I don’t know if you know this, but it’s like a dog-eat-dog kitten competition. And I tried to get a cat named Eddie and then there was, like, a kitten named Raisin who I wanted to adopt just to change his name from Raisin. ‘Cause that’s really undignified. A cat shouldn’t have to be called Raisin! And then there were these feral kittens and then I heard about these kittens and someone else sent me this email with a picture of Pablito and Maggie. And I was like, “I’m gonna get these kittens if it kills me.”

00:42:03 Laura Guest
00:42:04 Annabelle Guest

The kitten rescuers sent me a contract to sign. And I said to my friend, “Do you—do you think this is legally enforceable?” Because this—the contract—

The kitten police.

The kitten police are gonna come—kitten rescue police. The—this is the actual wording. In order to adopt these kittens, I have to sign an agreement saying that I will consider these cats to be members of my family. And I have to say that—this has been, like, an ethical dilemma for me, because I’ve always maintained that cats and pets are not members of your family. But I realized that if I didn’t sign this, and if I didn’t—you know—open myself—this sounds so silly. But if I didn’t open myself up to the idea that maybe I was wrong, because during this pandemic, like, my cat just died a couple weeks ago. We had to put her to sleep. And it was so sad. Like, maybe—maybe I was kidding myself. Maybe cats are family members.

00:43:38 Jesse Host

And I signed the contract! And I am going to have that picture of my kid and me and kittens and then I will have kittens! You know. For—well, they will now be running my household, as I have signed a contract to believe. But I actually—I actually felt like that was a tiny victory, to admit that maybe I was wrong. Maybe I was closed-minded. So, I feel like that’s my little holiday tiny victory.

Can I tell you the goal that I achieved, on Thanksgiving, that is my—that is my objective for Christmas?

[Annabelle affirms.]

I only made one meal. I have three children and a lot of neurodiversity in my family. Which leads to a preference for no foods other than cream cheese on rice cakes. When the Thanksgiving holiday rolled around, it was just the five of us—my wife, myself, and my three children, and I made one meal. None of the children liked it!

[They chuckle.]

00:44:20 Annabelle Guest But they didn't complain that much, and they ate enough to make it to the next morning.
That's amazing!

[Laura agrees.]

00:44:32 Jesse Host That is... that's—I—that is not a tiny victory. That's kind of epic. I've never in my life, as a parent, managed to make one meal. That's extraordinary.
Yeah, and I—my plan for Christmas, of course, is to cook a fine, fat goose. So, we'll see how that goes.

00:44:40 Laura Guest *[Annabelle "aw"s.]*

00:44:42 Jesse Host Genuinely? A goose?

[Chuckles.] No, I just think you're supposed to—isn't that what you're supposed to cook for Christmas? A fine, fat goose?

00:44:46 Laura Guest Yeeeah! No, I—um.

00:44:47 Jesse Host That your boss, Scrooge, paid for? *[Chuckles.]*

00:44:50 Annabelle Guest Yes! Yes you are.

00:44:52 Laura Guest I had a goose one Christmas, and so I got really excited. Like, "Are you really gonna have a goose?!"

00:44:58 Annabelle Guest I try not to cook. I tried to make a risotto once and—it was a couple years ago. I'm still making it, now.

[Jesse chuckles.]

00:45:06 Jesse Host It just, like—you couldn't stir that thing forever—

00:45:09 Annabelle Guest You gotta stir continuously. Yeah, you gotta stir continuously.

It's like when they say, "Stir continuously," they mean continuously. 'Cause it's still on my stovetop. It's still happening.

00:45:17 Jesse Host Do you have tiny victory ambitions for 2021?

00:45:21 Laura Guest It would be a tiny victory for me to think about 2021. I've come so—just one step in front of the other, in this year. Like, nothing—and I've taught meditation for years, so that thing about being here now has never been more, like... easy? It's like we're forced to do that, now, because we've been like, "I don't—" Like, every month has been weirder than the one before. Like, I feel like a life we could not fathom, in May of 2020. Like, if we were like, "Can you imagine—?" Like, was the norm 20 day later. In June. It was just the weird—so, honestly, I didn't even think about there being a 2021 until you just mentioned it.

[They laugh.]

00:46:13 Jesse Host Annabelle, Laura, it's been a pleasure to talk to you. And congratulations on the launch of *Tiny Victories*! We're so happy to have it.

00:46:20	Annabelle	Guest	I'm so happy that we found a home with Maximum Fun. It was—it was a dream. And it still is. So, we're really happy to be with you guys.
00:46:29	Laura	Guest	Yeah, it's so great to be here.
00:46:31	Jesse	Host	That's laying it on a little thick. But—I appreciate it.
00:46:34	Annabelle	Guest	No, it's true! <i>[Laughing.]</i> It's true!
00:46:35	Jesse	Host	I'll take it. I'll call it a tiny victory.
			Laura House and Annabelle Gurwitch. They're the hosts of the new Max Fun podcast, <i>Tiny Victories</i> , which is very fun and funny and only 15 minutes long. It is a brief blast of hope in a dark winter. Give it a listen.
00:46:52	Music	Transition	Thumpy, relaxed music interspersed with festive jingle bells.
00:46:57	Jesse	Host	It's the <i>Bullseye</i> Holiday Special. I'm Jesse Thorn. Our next guest is the Tony Award winning actor, Anika Noni Rose. She's an actress and singer. Her breakthrough role was in the movie <i>Dreamgirls</i> , where she sang and performed alongside Beyonce and Jennifer Hudson. You might also know her as the voice of Princess Tiana, from <i>The Princess and the Frog</i> . Anika stars in the new holiday movie, <i>Jingle Jangle</i> . And if there was one word to describe it, it might be: extravagant. Everything is big, from the performances to the costume choices to the drama.
			Anika, who plays Jessica, stars alongside Keegan-Michael Key, Ricky Martin, and Forest Whitaker. Whitaker plays Jeronicus Jangle. He's an inventor and toymaker. He's lost his creative spark, after a devastating betrayal by his former apprentice and the death of his wife. His granddaughter, Journey, shows up for an unannounced visit. She helps him rediscover his creativity. In the process, she also helps mend his broken heart and his relationship with his daughter, Jessica.
			Jarrett Hill, one of the hosts of Maximum Fun's own podcast, <i>FANTI</i> —which, by the way, was just picked as one of the best podcasts of 2020 by the folks at Apple Podcasts, caught up with Anika Noni Rose recently to talk about the movie, what she's doing for the holidays, and more. Let's kick things off with a clip from <i>Jingle Jangle</i> . In this scene, Jessica has returned home to see her father after many years away and—as we're about to hear—there's still a lot that they need to talk about.
00:48:27	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:48:28	Clip	Clip	Jessica (<i>Jingle Jangle</i>): We should leave now, if we're gonna make it by morning.
			Jeronicus: Jessica, I'm sorry.
			Jessica: <i>[Softly.]</i> For what? For giving up? <i>[Beat.]</i> For making me feel like it was my fault that things turned out the way they did? Do you know how many times I went to my mailbox hoping for—something! To let me know that you still cared? That you even thought about me at all?!
00:49:01	Sound Effect	Transition	Jeronicus: I thought about you every day. <i>[Beat.]</i> Every day. Music swells and fades.

00:49:03	Jarrett Hill	Host	Anika Noni Rose, welcome to <i>Bullseye</i> —the Holiday Spectacular, as I’m making them call it.
00:49:09	Anika Noni Rose	Guest	<i>[Laughing.]</i> Thank you so much.
00:49:11	Jarrett	Host	Of course. Of course. I wanna really start off right there, in that clip. As I watched the movie, you kind of know that this moment is going to come when Jessica will confront her dad. And in that moment, he says, “Jessica, I’m sorry.” And it kind of hit! That was like, “Oh wow. He said the word that you don’t often get to hear from someone.” Talk to me about this relationship between Jessica and her father, in <i>Jingle Jangle</i> . That’s really the central kind of story, in this movie.
00:49:41	Anika	Guest	You know, I’m gonna start when I talk about their relationship—well, also I could start with what it was. You know. He was her hero. He was the person that she had the most in common with. They were both inventors and she started to invent because of what she had seen him do. And what she knew was possible because of the magic that he believed in and through his heart created. So, when things went bad and he lost... the last thing that he had created—that we had sort of done together, actually—and then later on I also lost my mother and he his wife. It was like something shattered within him.

And so, what he was not able to do was put his pieces back together enough to be whole enough for his child—which we all know is a theme that runs through so many families so often.

[Jarrett agrees.]

And I think—I wanna go back to the “I’m sorry”—you said that that’s—the confrontation is what you’d been hoping for or waiting for, but I wonder how many people imagined they would hear an “I’m sorry”, because I think that if parents could say “I’m sorry” and mean it—not somebody who just throws “I’m sorry” out at every moment, but truly to have a moment and say, “I’m sorry that I hurt you. I’m sorry that I did this wrong. I’m the adult and sometimes we don’t get it right.” But to really speak to that hurt that was given to that child, we would have much more healthy families! We would have much healthier families. You know. And I know—you know, for Black families, the thought of a father telling their child, “I’m sorry.” It just—I’m not saying it doesn’t happen. I’m saying that, culturally, it is something that isn’t necessarily the norm. And it is something that is necessary.

00:52:12	Jarrett	Host	To the point that you’re making about not hearing “I’m sorry”—I think that hit with me the way that it did ‘cause I had a conversation like that with my own father. And I had been telling myself for years, “Oh, he was doing the best that he could with what he had.” But he had never said that to me. And I had a long conversation with him about, like, how I feel about this, that, and the other. And he said to me, “Well, you know I was doing the best I could with what I had.” And, like, I burst into tears. And I think in that kind of moment that we see between Jessica and her father, it’s that validating moment of like, “I’ve been feeling this for so long and apparently you have too.” And I think that also what’s beautiful about this film is that it’s really centered on this idea of beliefs and believing in the possibilities. You guys have this beautiful song about impossible is
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00:53:03 Anika Guest

possible in me. What do you hope that people walk away from this film talking about, feeling, thinking about?

Oh my gosh. You know, I really—I try not to tell people what to take away, because I think that every person that watches it, depending on the road that they've walked, is gonna take away something different. I do think that there are themes that are going through it and one of them you hit straight on is that the impossible is possible. No one should tell a child, in my opinion, anything other than, "It's possible." Even if you think it's not. Because people do things that someone else once said was impossible every single day. And if we continue to tell children, "Sure. Try," they may be the person that does that thing. Or at least, their heart will continue to soar and move in that space of positivity. But I think, also, that we as adults need to realize that there's not a time limit on possibility. There's not a time limit on reinvention or invention.

[Jarrett hums in agreement.]

And I think that society has taught us—you know, particularly women—that there's a time limit for you. And once you get to whatever that limit is, depending on your field of interest, your life movement, then you—like the milk—are now curdled and sour and expired and we don't need you anymore. People need to remember that magic is important to believe in and that magic comes in really many different forms. It's not always the rabbit coming out of the hat. 'Cause always—we know that there's—there's a formula to that and you can figure that out. It's the magic that you can't see your way to that exists. Some people call it magic, some people call it miracles, some people call it faith, hope, whatever. But it's there and it's important for us to put our—to put our energy into that and our trust into that. But also, when we look at these movies—you know, children are gonna take so many things from this. Little girls are gonna recognize their possibilities in STEM without thinking of it as STEM, which I think is fantastic, particularly as somebody who was atrocious at math.

[They laugh.]

I was so bad! I just feel like there are so many places to go with this film. And adults watching it—some are really figuring out ways to heal their wounds and to create a bridge. And you know, it's not really the child's job to create the bridge, but the parent. But we have to! A lot of the times! Because parents are people and parents were once hurt children. And that hurt child still lives in that parent or that hurt adult but hurt lives. And so, I think that one thing that was really—is beautiful to me is that... families can break—they can break the bad bonds. They can break the habitual hurt that lives within them, but only if they're willing to look at it, put air on it, look at each other, talk about it, be open.

I think one thing that I loved about Jessica—which I think was so brave and strong and right that she did—is that she never poisoned her child against—poisoned her child against her father. She taught her child who her father was, the part that she loved the most. And because of that, her child grew up to have that kind of magic and hope in her spirit and was able to be the bridge to bond—to bring

the two of them back together. I think it may not have even happened if not for Journey going on that—on that journey. *[Laughs.]* So, we have to know—you know—that we can break trauma.

00:57:16 Jarrett Host Today I'm talking with Tony Award winning actor, Anika Noni Rose. Anika stars in the Netflix film *Jingle Jangle*—although, she's probably best known as the voice of Princess Tiana from the Disney film *The Princess and the Frog*.

[Music fades in.]

Anika is a veteran Broadway actor and performer. Here, she performs "Make it Work" with her *Jingle Jangle* co-star, Forest Whitaker.

00:57:36 Music Music "Make it Work" from the film *Jingle Jangle*.

[JESSICA]
He says he wants to make it work again
Let the long road back to love begin
He thinks that we can make, we can make it work again
I've got a heart that needs to mend
And I don't know how this story ends
Oh, can we make, can we make it work again?
I know it won't be easy

[JERONICUS]
But I'm gonna tighten every screw, turn every gear

[JESSICA]
I hope this time you'll see me

[JERONICUS]
Working on this formula for years

[BOTH]
Wonder if this time it could be real

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

00:58:16 Jarrett Host What I love about this and the conversation that we're already having, and the theme of this film is that there's a lot to relate to, in this. And I think that so often, in the holidays, people are going home to see their family member that they haven't seen in a long time or that maybe they haven't talked to in a long time and watching that scene—when you both are performing "Make it Work", it made me think about all of the folks that have to go home over the holiday season. Or this year, folks that can't go home for the holiday season but are trying to figure out how to make it work.

This is our holiday spectacular, as I told you. And I wanna know—talk to me about what the holidays are looking like for you, this year, as we are in the middle of a global pandemic and stay at home orders and things like that. What have the holidays been looking like for you so far and as we look ahead to Christmas?

00:59:05 Anika Guest Well, I sent my parents food. *[Chuckles.]* I sent them special holiday food for Thanksgiving. I sent them a turducken, something else, that

all they had to do was heat up. Because I didn't really want them in the stores. And I felt like, you know, you can make your own sides, but let's just handle this right here.

[They laugh.]

So, I did that and—you know. We're doing secret Santa for extended family and then we'll probably open gifts online for that secret Santa but listen. First and foremost, I wanna say please don't go home for the holidays. You know. Wherever you are, please don't go home for the holidays this year. The reason I am not is because, you know, my parents are older and I don't feel like it's fair for me to get off a plane, not have two weeks to quarantine, and bring possibility to them. I am also—I'm an asthmatic, so I don't have space for this COVID situation in my life or in my body at all. I don't know anybody who does, but the way I see people tipping about *[laughing]* like, you know, with no mask and hanging out and in a bar and whatever—you know, some people apparently think they do. I don't.

[They chuckle.]

So, it is my hope that people stay home, but it's gonna be a very simple holiday this season for me. And you know, I think that... there's so many things that lead up to the holidays that we skip because we're moving into money. And it has become about money. So, I think that it's really nice, actually, to be able to just focus on self, focus on family. And when I said focus on self, I don't mean like be selfish, what can I find myself on Amazon? I mean focus on *[chuckles]* the inside. Focus on what have we learned this year? What can I be better at? And I think that 2020 has been really clear, with me, on that. And when I say really clear, I don't mean kind. I say clear. I mean, I've been looking at myself and—
Say that.

01:01:24 Jarrett Host
01:01:25 Anika Guest

—seeing, you know—sure. There's some great things about me. But there's some stuff that is—that needs to be dusted off. I think people needed something like this to usher in 2021. I mean, not even talking about ushering out 2020, but to usher in 2021 we need to be able to put a different foot down.

01:01:47 Jesse Host

We'll finish up with Anika Noni Rose after a quick break. Plus, still to come, holiday advice from the hosts of *My Brother, My Brother, and Me*. Stay with us. It's *Bullseye* from [MaximumFun.org](https://www.maximumfun.org) and NPR.

01:02:00 Promo Clip

[Radio interference followed by laidback music with a snare drum beat. A phone rings as the DJ speaks.]

Radio DJ: Welcome back to *Fireside Chat* on KMAX. With me in-studio to take your calls is the dopest duo on the West Coast, Oliver Wang and Morgan Rhodes.

[Click.]

Go ahead, caller.

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.

Morgan Rhodes: Yeah, man. Sounds like you need to listen to *Heat Rocks*. 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.

Oliver Wang: Guests like Moby, Open Mike Eagle, talk about albums by Prince, Joni Mitchell, and so much more.

Caller: Yooo! What’s that show called again?

Morgan: *Heat Rocks*. Deep dives into hot records.

Oliver: Every Thursday on Maximum Fun.

01:02:47	Music	Transition	<i>[Music suddenly gives way to static and a dial tone.]</i>
01:02:48	Jesse	Promo	Thumpy electronic music. 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 .
01:03:19	Jesse	Promo	<i>[Music fades out.]</i> Hey all. Jesse here again with a reminder: we’re getting to the end of the year. Now is a great time to support shows like <i>Bullseye</i> by supporting your local public radio station. They do so much for you and they’re only asking for a little in return. Give what you can and do it now. Go to Donate.NPR.org/bullseye . And thanks.
01:03:40	Music	Transition	Relaxed music interspersed with festive jingle bells.
01:03:45	Jesse	Host	It’s <i>Bullseye</i> Holiday Spectacular. I’m Jesse Thorn. We’re listening to Jarrett Hill’s conversation with the actor and singer Anika Noni Rose. She’s a Tony Award winner. She starred in the movies <i>The Princess and the Frog</i> and <i>Dreamgirls</i> . These days, she’s performing alongside Forest Whitaker in the brand-new Christmas movie <i>Jingle Jangle</i> . You can stream it now on Netflix. Let’s get back into their conversation.
01:04:07	Jarrett	Host	In doing research on you, I found this really great bio and I saw that you have been inducted into the Connecticut Women’s Hall of Fame. <i>[Anika confirms.]</i> And they did a really nice write up on you about your background and you as a kid and I found it really interesting. They said that you grew up, like, kind of observing and starting to imitate people. Which said to me that you are probably like a people-watcher even now. Or at least, as a kid. Talk to me about what you were learning about what people did and what it meant about them and what you learned about yourself from that?
01:04:39	Anika	Guest	Oh my god, I was the worst. <i>[They laugh.]</i>

I—I was the worst! I would imitate you to your face.

[They laugh.]

01:04:49 Jarrett Host
01:04:50 Anika Guest

And people didn't—
I'm sure people loved. Yeah. *[Laughing.]*

Yeah, right! Well, some people didn't always know—I would say most people didn't always know that they were being imitated. So, I remember going to the mall, Christmas shopping with my parents one year, and there was a girl who was on the register. She was a teen, and she was killing some gum! Like, her—she should have had TMJ!

[Jarrett laughs.]

Like, she was wearing this gum to a fare-thee-well. And I started imitating her chewing gum. I didn't have any gum in my mouth. I remember my mother was like, "Anika! If this woman turns around and catches you, there is nothing I can do."

[Jarrett cackles.]

Because neither one of us—like, I'm 5'2". So, I wasn't even 5'2" then. 5'2" and a half. But I wasn't quite even that, then. You know. So, this woman could have, like, stepped on me. But it wasn't about being mean. It just—it tickled me that she was killing that gum like that and I don't know what it is about people—human behavior is something that has always intrigued me. Like, I've always been the kid who's gonna walk behind you and do your walk. If I found a walk to be interesting in the mall, I was doing that walk right behind that person.

[They chuckle.]

And you know, interestingly enough, had no desire to be a performer. Didn't know that that would be part of my life or my job or that that was even part of what acting is. Just was something that I enjoyed. I liked watching people. My grandmother and I used to sit in the car and watch people. She liked to go to Burger King. My grandmother did not like coffee, but if a restaurant had 25 cent senior coffee, believe my grandmother was going to get 25 cent senior coffee. This woman didn't even like it.

01:06:38 Jarrett Host
01:06:39 Anika Guest

She wanted her deal! Dadgummit!
But she was gonna have that deal!

[They laugh.]

So, we go, and we would go and get something from Burger King, and she would get her 25 cent coffee and we would sit in the car and we would watch people together and we would make up stories about who they were and what their lives were as they walked past.

01:06:58 Jarrett Host
01:06:59 Anika Guest
01:07:01 Jarrett Host

I do the same thing! It's so fun!

[Delighted.] I love it!

It's so fun! And I will tell you, I was in New York and at a bar and I was sitting with a friend and we had made up this whole story about who this guy was sitting at the bar. And then, like, a woman came

and joined him and so we made up who she was. And then as he was leaving, we were like, “We should stop him and ask him if any of this was right.”

[Anika laughs.]

01:07:26 Anika Guest Have you ever asked the person if they’re right? ‘Cause we were right about 65, 70% of the stuff. It was—it was really wild. I have intruded on people’s lives and asked them.

[They laugh.]

01:07:35 Jarrett Host Mostly as—mostly it’s, “Sooooo... what do you think? That’s a first date, isn’t it? They’ve never dated before.” *[Laughs.]*
01:07:38 Crosstalk Crosstalk Yes! Yes! Exactly!

Anika: And then I would be like, “Sooo—”

01:07:43 Anika Guest **Jarrett:** I always blame it on being a journalist. I blame it on being a journalist. Like, I’m just really curious and love people’s lives. So. You’re nosy. You’re nosy. That’s what you are. You’re nosy. That’s it. *[Laughs.]*

01:07:47 Jarrett Host I call it being a journalist!

[Anika howls with laughter.]

And I will ask questions! But it’s so fun to do that and just kind observe people.

[Anika agrees.]

Are you still—are you still very much of a people watcher now adays?

[Anika confirms.]

And does that kind of help you in, like, coming up with roles—like, your characters and stuff like that?

01:08:03 Anika Guest *[Jarrett agrees multiple times as Anika continues.]*
I think it does! And you know, I’ve always been a little bit nosy, but always just intrigued by people, by humanity, and by our movement through the world. And I think it absolutely does, because the little things that people do that they’re not thinking about are the things that inform you, you know, about who that person is and if you ever get to know the person or know anything about them, then it gives you a bit of a psychological movement through why they do the things they do. ‘Cause your body tells on you. Even when your mouth is saying something else, your body tells on you. And I think that we all, to some extent as people, do that. Because otherwise, you know, we’d be in trouble all the time. We’d be hurt or in danger or something like that.

Or the way that New Yorkers move through the street and they’re not even looking up. Maybe they’re looking at their phone, maybe they’re doing something else, but they manage to move through these busy streets without bumping into anybody else. It’s because

of the way that we take in the people around us and how they move and it's something that has always intrigued me, though I didn't think of it as that at the time. I was just a nosy little kicked who liked imitating people.

[They laugh.]

It has benefited me in my life, so now I just say, you know, *[with faux grandiosity]* I'm a very, very perceptive actor.

01:09:29	Jarrett	Host	<i>[They laugh.]</i> I love that. I love that. I love that. Lastly, I wanna talk to you about—we talked about you being known for Princess Tiana. I know that when the <i>Wreck it Ralph</i> version of Princess Tiana came out, you went back and asked them to, like, reanimate her face for her to have, you know, the rounder nose and for her to have the darker skin and that said, to me, that the representation had a lot of importance to you. And when we're looking at a film like <i>Jingle Jangle</i> , where probably a lot of children are gonna see this movie this year and then watch it next year and the year after that and, like, it'll become a tradition for them.
01:10:10	Anika	Guest	I hope so.
01:10:12	Jarrett	Host	Talk to me about the value of representation when you're choosing roles and thinking about the work that you're gonna be putting out into the world.
01:10:19	Anika	Guest	Look. Let me start with—on <i>Jingle Jangle</i> , if you are not a person of the African diaspora, this is something you probably didn't notice: everyone had natural hair. That—people are probably like, "Okay, so? It's hair. It's natural. Okay."
01:10:37	Jarrett	Host	That's revolutionary! Yeah.
01:10:39	Anika	Guest	It's revolutionary. Particularly in a magical space—where so often, even if we're in magical spaces, we're being made to look like somebody else's magic.

[Jarrett hums in agreement.]

And I had a relaxer in my hair from ten years old until three years ago, I think, is when I chopped everything off. I didn't know what my hair looked like. I didn't—I had no sense of the texture of my hair. I had no idea. And I thought that it was something that was sort of unruly and unable to be handled and dealt with, because when you have a relaxer and your natural hair starts to grow in, it feels hard and angry and mad. Because it is hard and angry and mad, because you've been messing with it.

[Jarrett laughs.]

It's mad at you. So, it has actually taken probably two, two and a half years for me to feel—my hair's texture is changing all the time and it's different all over my head, but I wonder would I have felt the need to have a relaxer. For people who don't know what that is, a relaxer is when you basically strip the natural curl out of your hair, chemically so that your hair is straight or wavy or whatever. Just a much looser curl. Mostly it's straight. And it also strips the nutrients of your hair, so most of the time you're hurting your hair, whether you realize it or not.

Sharon Martin did the hair on this film and she and I've worked together before. We worked together on *Half of a Yellow Sun*, which a lot of people unfortunately didn't see, 'cause it's beautiful. And every piece of hair was thought about. We wanted styles that were—spoke to the Victorian era, but through the African gaze. Because that's who these people were. You know? You always take your history with you, through your DNA. And you always—and I would say Black folks—always are putting a twist on something. You know. And they may not even know that what they're doing is something that came from across the ocean with them. And it's amazing that it lasted this long, but that's what happens. And I thought, "How amazing for children to be able to see their hair in its natural state for—" But—and beautiful! In its beautiful natural state! Like, glorious crowns and beads and twists and braids and locs.

You know, at a time where you're having to create laws so that people can wear their natural hair as it comes out of their head in the way that it comes out of their head to go to work, so that children can go to school with the hair that grows out of their head the way it grows out of their head—so that boys can finish their wrestling matches without some random person shaving their head. And let me tell you, ooooh! That's a lucky person.

01:13:59 Jarrett Host
01:14:00 Anika Guest

It be enraging.

That's a lucky person, 'cause that's beyond—you've—that's beyond the pale. Like, you've overstepped. That even children in Africa, little Black children are being told that they can't go to school with their hair in its natural state. So, for people to see—and not just for us to see it, though most importantly for us to see it—but also for young children who are not children of color to see the glory of natural, Black hair onscreen. It is—it is a lesson that is softly being seeped into the spirit of all of these children. It is a normalization. But it is also a heightening—not only is it normal, it's beautiful. So, when you see it, know that it's beautiful. It's not different. It's not something you need to touch without asking. *[Laughs.]* It's not something that you need to make a fuss about or to decide that, "Oh, you can't possibly have a meeting with your hair like that." It's my hair! It's my hair.

And there is a beauty in that normalization and regalization of those images that I think will reverberate and I'm grateful that that was something that was important to both the filmmakers—Lyn Sisson-Talbert was very into that. David was very into it. And Sharon Martin, whose hair is recently natural as well. It's fantastic.

01:15:36 Jarrett Host

As you talk about that, I think about the first time I saw a depiction of, like, the value of representation was on Twitter. And I remember watching *The Wiz* live and Uzo Aduba was playing Glinda the Good Witch and there was a little girl—there was a photo of a little girl standing in front of the screen. And she's in silhouette and Uzo Aduba is singing on the screen. She is Glinda the Good Witch, and she has this natural hair, and the little girl has her little afro puffs and she's like reaching to touch the screen. And her mom tweeted the photo out with the caption, "Representation matters."

And my hope is that little girls and little boys that are of the African diaspora will be able to see *Jingle Jangle* and see Jessica and see

all of these beautiful characters and their beauty and recognize that they matter as well. So, it is such an honor to get to speak with you about this film and to have this conversation with you. I really, really appreciate it.

01:16:30 Anika Guest Thank you. It's been a joy talking to you. I hope people love the film as much as we love it and have a wonderful holiday season.

01:16:39 Jesse Host Anika Noni Rose, interviewed by Jarrett Hill. Rose's film, *Jingle Jangle*, is streaming right now on Netflix. It's got some wonderful performances. Jarrett is half of the terrific Max Fun show *FANTI*, which was just named one of Apple's best podcasts of 2020. *FANTI*, of course, is also great. Go check out *FANTI*.

01:16:58 Music Transition Thumpy music with light vocalizations and festive jingle bells.

01:17:02 Jesse Host It's the *Bullseye* Holiday Special. I'm Jesse Thorn. And it's that time of year again. What time? Well, of course it is the holidays, but also the time during *Bullseye's* Holiday Episode where we turn to our three favorite brothers for some seasonal wisdom. Justin, Travis, and Griffin McElroy are the hosts of the Maximum Fun podcasts *The Adventure Zone* and *My Brother, My Brother, and Me*. The latter of them is billed as an advice show for the modern era. It's one of the funniest podcasts out there. The advice is... uh, let's say a mixed bag. Uh, but it's always fun!

01:17:35 Travis McElroy Guest *[Interrupting with faux indignance.]* Alright! Okay! No! Whatever! Whatever, Jesse!

01:17:40 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Jesse:** *[Laughing.]* I have, on the line with me—

01:17:42 Griffin McElroy Guest **Griffin:** Let's walk. Let's walk. *[Stammering.]* To—it—to be disrespected like this on the holiday episode. We're outta here!

01:17:46 Travis Guest *[Jesse laughs.]* We just got here and you're like, "Maybe their advice isn't good advice!" Whatever! I don't need this.

01:17:53 Jesse Host I wanna set you guys up for success, not failure. So. If I'm promising great advice and you guys don't deliver, you look like fools!

[The McElroys hum in understanding.]

01:18:06 Travis Guest But if I promise a mixed bag and you deliver, then you're exceeding customer expectations. We have— I learned about this when I worked retail. Under promise and over deliver.

01:18:11 Jesse Host Exactly. So, we have the McElroy brothers on the line, as you can hear. We have a list of holiday conundrums sent in by *Bullseye* and *My Brother, My Brother, and Me* listeners. Justin, Travis, Griffin, welcome to the *Bullseye* Holiday Special.

01:18:26 Justin McElroy Guest This is Justin's voice.

01:18:29 Travis Guest This is Travis's voice. Is this—?

01:18:31 Griffin Guest This is Griffin's. Why are we doing that?! But okay!

01:18:33 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Griffin:** I think most people know.

Justin: I think it's—

Travis: I'm also Travis, it's not just disconnected.

01:18:36 Justin Guest **Griffin:** No. I'm tired of being part of the whole. I have my own career, my own family, my own goals. I wanna be sort of a—I wanna be sort of Justin and Justinettes. I wanna—I—if someone's—if someone's gonna be Beyonce out of the three of us? I wanna Beyonce.

01:18:51 Travis Guest You can't just arbitrarily decide!

01:18:53 Griffin Guest You can't claim that. It's not shotgun.

01:18:54 Travis Guest That—that you're going to Beyonce!

01:18:56 Jesse Host Uh, sorry, Griffin, Travis, this is your chance to be Kelly Rowland Nobody wants to be that other one. *[Laughs.]*

01:19:01 Griffin Guest *[Interrupting.]* I'm Kelly Rowland! *[Claps.]* Kelly Rowland! Bunny ears—bunny ears up! Kelly Rowland!

01:19:05 Travis Guest Listen, I'll be Michelle. But the fact of the matter is, I would Beyonce before either of you.

01:19:11 Jesse Host By the way, Michelle is wonderful. She's really talented. From what I understand, she has a big gospel career, I think? I might be mistaking that, but she's wonderfully talented. Yeah.

01:19:21 Justin Guest They're all talented or they wouldn't be Destiny's Child. They'd be in the dustbin of history.

01:19:26 Jesse Host Well, guys, do you have—I know that you typically—in a typical year, you host a big holiday spectacular in West Virginia, where you're from. And obviously, it's not feasible or safe to do that this year—

01:19:43 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Jesse:** Do you have—

Griffin: No, we're still doing it, man!

Justin: Doing it anyway, folks!

Griffin: YEE-HAWWWW! *[Dissolves into laughter.]*

01:19:53 Griffin Guest **Justin:** Tickets available now! Let's go, yee-haw! West Virginia said it was fine! We're going for the gusto. We're in—we're mauve on the COVID scale, which nobody knows what any of it means, so we just sort of—again—just yee-haw, let's do it.

01:20:02 Travis Guest Right now, West Virginia is a *Magic Eye* poster on the COVID scale, so if you look at it too long you'll get a headache.

01:20:09 Justin Guest But come on out and watch our show. We will be handing out Gallagher style tarps to everyone in the audience to protect yourself from the flying melon chunks and the COVID.

No, we're doing it an online streaming spectacular, as is the sort of custom of the day. We've got a lot of special guests and friends helping us ring in the Candlenights segments from a lot of our family's podcasts and it's gonna be a big thing. It's a charity show, as always, for Candlenights. We're benefiting Harmony House, which is a shelter for people experiencing homelessness in our area and it's gonna be—it's gonna be a great show. Tickets are—you can get it and stream it and this would be the perfect moment for me to tell everybody what the URL is, and that's bit.ly/candlenights2020. Come on out.

01:21:03 Jesse Host So, what are the key—what are the key aspects of the celebration of Candlenights?

01:21:09 Justin Guest Griffin?

01:21:11 Griffin Guest *[Sarcastically.]* Thanks. Uuum, you know. The usual stuff. All of it, honestly. If we're being honest, we sort of developed Candlesnights as an err'y holiday. So, whatever you wanna bring to it. We're freestyling it, mostly. And it's like traditions, but you can change them every year. And maybe not do them some years and do them others!

01:21:31 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Jesse:** Are there any special foods?

Justin: Thanks, and also, uh—hm.

01:21:33 Justin Guest **Travis:** *[Inaudible].* It can start whenever you want and it ends whenever you want, which is really the real blessing *[laughs]* for this holiday. A lot of holidays don't have that going for it, but it's a huge competitive advantage.

01:21:45 Jesse Host *[Laughs.]* Are there any special foods?

01:21:48 Travis Guest *[Beat.]* Um, yeah, it's—just whatever you can fit in your mouth in 30 seconds.

[They laugh and agree.]

01:22:00 Justin Guest It's kind of a—the special foods are all eating challenges, mostly, for Candlesnights.

01:22:10 Travis Guest And there's usually Whiteclaws and pepperoni rolls and some Totino's pizza rolls, for sure. Um. Just sort of a low country boil. Anything you can hold on the go. And that's hard with the low country boil, 'cause you gotta wait for it to cool down. I learned that the hard way.

01:22:17 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Griffin:** The problem is—

Justin: Where—you should go to put—go to put this on, find the shirt with the most pockets and that is gonna be your low country boil buddy.

01:22:24 Griffin Guest *[Jesse chuckles.]* A lot of the foods that were part of the Candlesnights folktales were, unfortunately, culled from the Taco Bell menu, this year.

[Travis and Justin confirm.]

01:22:35 Jesse Host So, we're kind of flying without a net in 2020. It's been tough for all of us.

We do have some holiday conundrums here from *Bullseye* and *My Brother, My Brother, and Me* listeners. Here's the first one: "When I was tucking in my three-year-old tonight, he suddenly said to me, 'Are you excited for Batman to come and give us presents?'"

[Justin bursts into laughter; Travis hums thoughtfully.]

"What's my responsibility here? He didn't specify when Batman would be coming, so I don't know if he's invented his own new holiday or if he's just mixed up on how Christmas, the holiday our family celebrates, works. Can I assume he'll wake up tomorrow and have completely forgotten this idea? Or am I going to have a crestfallen little guy in the morning or whenever he thinks this is

01:23:23 Travis Guest happening if I don't pull together some kind of feast day of Batman? Also, what kind of gifts would Batman bring?"
 Aw, these are all great questions. First—first and foremost, what you got here, folks, you got four dads. And let us tell you, the thing you want your kid to forget they're excited about, they'll never forget!

[Justin and Griffin agree. Jesse laughs.]

That's the thing your child will carry with them forever. Four days ago, my kid looked at me—offhandedly, Bebe said, "I'd like to get a snow globe." I have heard that—about that snow globe so many times since then!

[Justin wheezes with laughter.]

01:23:54 Griffin Guest And it's a snow globe! I don't know why she's excited about it, but now it's all she wants!
 We can more or less set aside the option of not having Batman come to your house. Like, right now the question has evolved into, "How can we get Batman at your house?"

[Jesse laughs.]

01:24:10 Crosstalk Crosstalk Because if it doesn't happen, that's—that Christmas is gonna be talked about in therapy, you know, 25 years from now.
Travis: Now, but—to be fair...
Jesse: Could you get one of the lesser Batman figures? I know there's a—
Griffin: Oh, I thought you were gonna say Batman actors.
Jesse: There's some kind of—no. *[Laughing and stammering.]* Could you get Val Kilmer? I think you could get Val Kilmer. He's just hanging out on his ranch in Tahoe!

01:24:24 Travis Guest **Travis:** Yeah, you could get...
 You could get Val Kilmer. But you don't need a Batman! Like, every year you don't have someone pose as Santa in your house! All you have to do, as the parent, is say Batman came! Bury a batarang in the wall. Maybe, you know, project the bat signal onto a window or two and you're golden!

01:24:44 Justin Guest Leave out a rare steak and some scalloped potatoes, which is Batman's favorite meal.

[They chuckle.]

01:24:51 Travis Guest We all know!
 And leave one bat-shaped bite out of it! What would Batman bring? Uuum... I don't know. Gadgets. He likes gadgets, right? He's probably brought you—oh, you know what?! He's probably brought you, like, a coupon for some mixed martial arts lessons.

01:25:07 Justin Guest I'd be careful of going down this path, as a parent. 'Cause the thing Batman really wants is more Batmans running around and there's only one way to make a Batman, baby.

01:25:14 Crosstalk Crosstalk *[They laugh.]*
Travis: That's what I'm saying!

Justin: You know what it is. I know what it is!

[They laugh.]

Justin: The first thought—

01:25:19 Justin Guest **Travis:** Oh no!
The first thought—the first—the first thought any new parent always has is, “Boy, I hope you don’t do a Batman! I would do—I just would love that. Be any other hero.”

01:25:28 Jesse Host Okay, we have another one here. “Every December 26th, my mother and I celebrate our favorite holiday tradition, the stoning of Saint Stephen, by ambushing each other and pelting each other with walnuts! We’re always trying to get the upper hand when it comes to the element of surprise. Last year, I snuck into her closet while she was out, stole her walnuts, and *[chuckling]* hid them under my bed. But she picked the lock to my room while I was sleeping and snuck the walnuts before I could stop her. This year, I’m determined to get my revenge. So, what’s the best way to make sure that I come out on top as the superior walnut pelter? I’m willing to do whatever it takes. Thanks, Do or Do Nut, There is No Try in Maine.

01:26:14 Travis Guest Um, here’s—okay. Um... This is—okay. There is an—there is an outcome here of you guys having this so fun walnut fight in which one of you dies. *[Laughs.]* Like, is that—? Has that occurred to you?! Like, you catch a walnut in the eye, my friend, and you’re down! Get one in the temple!

01:26:33 Griffin Guest Yeeeah, you could get one—

01:26:34 Jesse Host This person could, theoretically, self-Batman.

[A pause, and then the McElroys all agree enthusiastically.]

01:26:43 Justin Guest That actually doesn’t work.

[Griffin confirms.]

‘Cause they’re going to find out. They’ll make—they’ll make fun of you. *[Gruffly.]* “I heard he Batman’d himself. Nobody’s afraid of that!”

01:26:55 Travis Guest Maybe, uh, bake your mom a cake. Right? And put walnuts in it. And then when she’s done eating it, say, “I hit your insides with walnuts.”

01:27:05 Griffin Guest Okaaaaay. That’s cool. Uuuh.

01:27:08 Travis Guest And also, less likely to kill your mother.

01:27:11 Justin Guest You know what would make a—you know what would be worse than getting hit by a walnut? Getting hit by a walnut that had been dipped in some jelly. Can you imagine?

01:27:19 Griffin Guest Oh, maaaaan.

01:27:20 Justin Guest And then you add stickiness into it?

[Jesse agrees in horror.]

Oh no. It’s so sticky! Ugh! God!

01:27:27	Griffin	Guest	I've done a bit of—a bit more research and this is an ancient fertility rite. A Polish custom. And so, maybe your mom throws a walnut at you and a baby comes out?! And then you're like, "What did you do?! It woorked!"
01:27:47	Jesse	Host	Here's another holiday question for our friends, the McElroy brothers from <i>My Brother, My Brother, and Me</i> . "My neighbor across the street has a lot of festive yard decorations that he puts up on the first day of every December, including some particularly obnoxious lights that shine at all hours of the day into my room, while I'm trying to sleep. I can't put curtains up, as my walls are made of impenetrable concrete. So, how can I protect my delicate corneas from the constant holiday festivities? Thank you, Ashley."
01:28:20	Griffin	Guest	You said Ashley, did you mean Julia Louis-Dreyfus in the movie <i>Christmas Vacation</i> ? It's—that's—
01:28:25	Jesse	Host	Yeah. It says "Ashley", but it obviously means that. Yeah.
01:28:31	Travis	Guest	You are—this is simple. <i>[Beat.]</i> This is simple!
01:28:35	Justin	Guest	Simple!
01:28:36	Travis	Guest	It's simple! You're gonna go, uh, maybe online. You don't need to go into a store for this. You're gonna order a timer plug and you're going to gift that to your neighbor and say, "Hey, here you go. Comes on automatically when it gets dark. There are ones that you can set a timer. There are some that have light sensors on 'em. Comes on when it's dark, goes off when it's light. Or you set a timer so that it goes off at midnight, so I can sleep! It's a free timer for you, Bob! Fix your light situation."
01:29:08	Justin	Guest	Um, nobody can tell me how to celebrate the birth of my lord and savior, Jesus Christ. Certainly not someone who lives in an adjacent home. I'm gonna continue to party. Question asker, I got your back. What you're gonna do is your gonna go to your local hardware store. You're gonna get yourself a hammer drill, and some anchors and screws and some masonry drill bits for your hammer drill and you're gonna—you're gonna get serious about hanging up some curtains. Because you need this control back in your life and you need power. And you could be spending this time—you know, uh, fretting about your neighbor's décor or you could teach yourself how to reform concrete in whatever image that you like. So, go get those things and hang yourself some curtains.
01:30:02	Griffin	Guest	Do not let man-made products stand in the way of your good night sleep. You're ready for this, friend. I was gonna go a step further and just say, "Paint your entire house with vantablack." And then it's like the—it will just eat up all the light that it shoots at you. And the bonus benefit is that when folks come around to check out this house's big, wild Christmas light production, they will also be intrigued by <i>[chuckles]</i> the negative space, dark obelisk that exists across the street from it.
01:30:28	Justin	Guest	Did I mention tension mounted curtain rods? Because this would be another great option for you.
01:30:33	Jesse	Host	Yeah, it seems like another possibility.
01:30:35	Travis	Guest	A third DIY option—third DIY option, double sided—
01:30:39	Justin	Guest	<i>[Interrupted.]</i> Hope it's as funny as mine!
01:30:41	Travis	Guest	Double sided tape and a bunch of mirrors. You're gonna put those up on the outside of your house and take that, next door Bob! Now how about a taste of your own photons!
01:30:53	Justin	Guest	Alright, but what if you go overboard and then he looks out and he's like, "Wait a minute, is that my house over there? How did my

house get all the way over there? I'm extremely confused and also I'm a betta fish."

[They laugh.]

01:31:04	Travis	Guest	That is a huge, Justin! You're right.
01:31:06	Justin	Guest	It's a huge risk.
01:31:07	Jesse	Host	He's gonna attack himself!
01:31:10	Griffin	Guest	Just to counter that, though, Travis, they put up mirrors. Now what?
01:31:14	Justin	Guest	<i>[Wheezes with laughter.]</i> I mean, at least you can sleep at night.
01:31:17	Griffin	Guest	Then that shines on the map and it shows you where the treasure is. You have to wait, though.
01:31:24	Jesse	Host	<i>[Chuckles.]</i> Here's another one: "My dad is getting surgery on his bladder soon and he's gonna be out of commission for a little while. I wanna get him a funny gift related to the surgery to lift his spirits a bit, but I don't have any clue what to get. Do you have any suggestions? From Bad Bladder Bafflement, in Smith's Creek, Michigan."
01:31:43	Travis	Guest	Funny gift for a bladder surgery patient. Mmm. Mm-hm.
01:31:51	Justin	Guest	Maybe a coupon that says, "I promise I will never ask you or discuss your bladder surgery ever again in your life."

[Jesse laughs.]

01:31:58	Travis	Guest	Oh, that's pretty good.
01:31:59	Justin	Guest	And I certainly won't email it to any NPR shows.

[They laugh; Griffin really loses it.]

01:32:08	Travis	Guest	About it. I guarantee to you.
01:32:09	Justin	Guest	What about—
01:32:13	Travis	Guest	And it says "again" in <i>[laughing]</i> really small letters at the bottom.
01:32:22	Justin	Guest	What about a whoopie cushion that you have written "replacement bladder" on? And then they just have a backup if they ever need it!
			And then when they're asleep, you get in there—up in their gullyworks and you install that.

[Jesse laughs.]

01:32:27	Travis	Guest	Yep! There's already an opening. You gotta get in there quick before it heals.
01:32:31	Justin	Guest	You gotta get in there quick.
01:32:32	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	Justin: People don't take advantage of the fact—

Jesse: I'm sorry, Justin, where do you get it?

Justin: —that there's an opening. What? In the—up in the gullyworks. You know.

Travis: Up in the gullyworks!

Justin: In their, uh—the gooshy bits.

Jesse: Got it.

Travis: You know! Justin's wife is a doctor. He knows what he's talking about!

Justin: The poop factory! Yeah!

01:32:45 Justin Guest She's nodding from the door. She can give me the thumbs up. She says that's a technical term.

01:32:50 Jesse Host "I'm a preschool teacher and I bake for fun. I often leave cookies and things to cool on my kitchen counter. My dad works nights and often comes home and eats 85% of whatever I had baked the day before—which isn't usually a problem. Earlier this week, I made cinnamon ornaments with my students and brought them home to dry."

01:33:13 Travis Guest *[Justin cackles.]*
Oh boy.

01:33:14 Jesse Host "The only ingredients are two cups of flour and a cup, each, of cinnamon and salt. So, they're not cookies even though they look like gingerbread. They obviously don't taste good. I didn't think to leave a note, because they were on a tray covered in dry paint and clearly, to me, not food. I think my dad ate one of the extras I made and threw it out. I can't imagine he was able to eat the whole thing, because now he's refusing to eat the actual baked goods I make. How do I tell my dad I'm not mad he ate an intentionally inedible ornament and that the other stuff I leave out tastes fine and he's welcome to them? Thanks, from Not a Bad Baker, in New York."

01:33:58 Justin Guest I have a big problem with this and it's that this person sounds like they asked us for advice about a different question and already came up to, like, an incredible solution to their first problem and now they're like, "How can re-problem it?"

[Travis agrees.]

01:34:21 Travis Guest And we're not—as professional advice guys, we're not in the business of recreating problems. This one's been solved! And you should feel very good about that.

01:34:35 Justin Guest *[Interrupting.]* "Hey Jesse and brothers, up 'til now, my dad has been eating, uuh 85% of the things I make. And I already solved it. Anyways, guys, have a great day!"

01:34:40 Travis Guest *[They giggle.]*
"Happy holidays to you and yours! I need nothing from you."
This—okay. Your dad floated in on the good smell thing, normally. Right? Normally he floats in on the good smells, right?

[Jesse agrees with a chuckle.]

01:34:50 Jesse Host And eats all the things.
Well, it depends on how hungry he is.

[They agree.]

01:34:59 Travis Guest He might be looking at someone and instead of them, seeing a fully-dressed roasted chicken.

01:35:02 Griffin Guest Obviously, Jesse. That's just science. But what I'm saying, here—
They wrote—they wrote that their dad is Top Cat, so...

[They laugh.]

I think this tracks.

01:35:08 Travis Guest Top Dad—Top Dad came in and he, like, saw this tray of *[chuckles]* children’s ornaments, which sounds like—you said painted. Were painted on. And he said, “Mmmmm, num, num, mmm! Don’t mind if I do!” And ate one! It seemed like your dad, who I’m going to guess—if you’re a teacher—he’s at least 42? Just learned a lesson I’m trying to teach my child about not eating things. And just to be clear, I’m talking about the 11-month-old one.

01:35:40 Justin Guest No, but these cookies are mean. I’m sorry. This is a mean thing to do with ornaments. Folks, I don’t feel like you should be allowed to use food products in a nonedible fashion. You know when people take perfectly good pinecones and then they cover them in seeds and peanut butter? There’s always part of me that’s like, “Dang, I think I kinda wanna eat that.” But you’re not allowed to!

[They laugh.]

01:36:01 Travis Guest Come oon!
But that’s the opposite, Justin! You’re taking an inedible thing and you’re making it more edible. This would be like if you took chunks of wood and dipped them in chocolate, I guess.

01:36:08 Jesse Host No—dipping chunks of wood?! Travis! Dipping chunks of wood in chocolate is almost exactly the same as covering pinecones in peanut butter. I mean, you substituted wood for pinecones and chocolate for peanut butter, but it’s the same story! We’re talking, here, about food products made into non-food products. Not non-food products made into food products.

01:36:31 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Justin:** It’s mean!

Travis: But that’s what Justin said! Justin said non-food products—

Justin: Yeah, but mine was a bad example and we all knew, and we weren’t gonna dwell on it, but now you’ve turned it into a federal case, and I feel like that’s really the problem at this point.

Griffin: It’s like when—

01:36:42 Travis Guest You know what we’re not talking about, here? The real victims? The kids!

[Justin echoes him.]

You could’ve made edible cookies for your kids! But instead, you made them make kind of cookies that they can’t eat!

01:36:56 Justin Guest You know, you really should—the question should be, “How do I tell little Vickie that my dad ate her *[laughing]*—ate her ornament?” You know?

[They snort with laughter.]

That’s really the—“My mean dad ate it.” *[Wheezes with laughter.]*

“But it was inedible!”

“Well, not—apparently not, Vickie. I’m really sorry.”

01:37:11 Jesse Host Here’s one last question for the McElroy brothers from *My Brother, My Brother, and Me*. “Every year for Christmas, for many years now, my aunt’s main gift to me is a giant package of Ghirardelli

peppermint bark. When I was kid, I loved it. I couldn't get enough of it! But this has been going on for years now and unfortunately my tastes have changed with age. I guess I had too much of a good thing, because now I can't stand the sight of that peppermint bark. My problem is, I don't know how to tell my aunt that I want different candy for Christmas. If she's going to buy me candy, I'd like to actually enjoy the gesture. Please help me, brothers. From Peppermint Bratty, in Pittsburgh."

01:37:54 Travis Guest
01:37:55 Justin Guest

Great name.

You... you do know where candy is sold, right? I mean, you're an adult, I'm assuming. You know where to go to get it yourself, I bet. Come on.

01:38:04 Travis Guest
01:38:06 Justin Guest
01:38:07 Travis Guest

That's not the problem, Justin. The problem is—

It is the problem!

No, no, no, no. This is classic. It's the classic problem where a family member who doesn't know you well—extended family member—thinks they locked onto something that they feel comfortable getting you for Christmas, for holidays, and that they believe you enjoy. And there's been an unspoken agreement between the two of you that you like it, and they haven't felt the need to push past that. Right? And—

01:38:35 Justin Guest

I think we can all agree that's an excellent summation of the question we all heard. For sure.

01:38:39 Travis Guest

Well, now, the problem is: how do you then break that covenant? Because as soon as you say, "Hey, I think I might like some different candy this year," it will ripple back through your aunt's mind and what she will hear is, "I've never liked this candy. It's all been a lie. Everything up 'til now has been hollow." And if that's the case, who knows what else, Aunt Vickie, hasn't been enjoyed by other people you know?

01:39:07 Griffin Guest

I think you could do, like, a, "I got struck by lightning this year and when I got to the other side of that electric tunnel, I liked different foods." And you could also—and this is maybe not the most tasteful recommendation—say that COVID swapped your taste—your buds all around.

[Travis "ooh"s.]

And you did COVID, but now you like chocolate oranges. COVID made that do it. And I know! I LOVED—*[faking tears]* the thought of me never eating another Ghirardelli peppermint patty breaks my heart! But COVID done remixed—

01:39:40 Justin Guest

It's the—it's the worst thing about COVID. We can all agree.

[Travis agrees.]

01:39:43 Griffin Guest

It remixed my buuuds! So, now I need chocolate oranges and malabars.

01:39:48 Travis Guest

"What—your mom didn't tell me you were sick?"

"It was just a touch of the COVID."

[Justin echoes him.]

01:39:54 Griffin Guest

"I didn't even wanna make a big deal out of it."

No sniffles, no coughies. Just got my buds mixed up.

01:39:57	Justin	Guest	I would sooner petition the Ghirardelli company to stop making peppermint bark. That is, like, your only actual solution at this point.
01:40:06	Jesse	Host	Justin, Travis, Griffin McElroy—always a joy to talk to you. Your podcast, <i>My Brother, My Brother, and Me</i> along with <i>The Adventure Zone</i> . <i>The Candlenights Streaming Spectacular</i> is available to watch starting December 19 th for a modest contribution to charity. Thanks guys. Always a joy to get to talk to you.
01:40:25	Griffin	Guest	You too.
01:40:26	Travis	Guest	Thank you.
01:40:27	Justin	Guest	Thanks, Jesse. Same—same to you.
01:40:29	Music	Transition	Relaxed music.
01:40:31	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... uh, a number of indoor climbing toys and backyard balance beams have basically transformed my home into an occupational therapist's office.
			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 the great Dan Wally, also known as DJW. Our theme song is by the band The Go! Team. We're very grateful to them and to their label, Memphis Industries, for letting us use it. You should go check out their wonderful music. If you wanna hear the latest about what we're up to, you can keep up with our show on Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. We post all of our interviews there. And I think that's about it.
01:41:32	Promo	Promo	Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature signoff. Speaker: <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.
			<i>[Music fades out.]</i>