

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 Bullseye. 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	Music	Transition	<i>[Music fades out.]</i> "Huddle Formation" from the album <i>Thunder, Lightning, Strike</i> by The Go! Team.
00:00:58	Jesse	Host	It's Bullseye. I'm Jesse Thorn. It's time once again for Canonball.
00:01:03	Music	Transition	"Cannonball" by the Breeders, which ends with a series of cheers and a splash of water.
00:01:13	Jesse	Host	Canonball is a chance for us to take classic albums—or albums that should be considered classics—and find out what makes them so great. This week, we're joined by the pop culture critic and writer, Margaret Wappler.
00:01:26	Margaret Wappler	Guest	I'm Margaret Wappler and I'm going to be talking about Björk's <i>Post</i> .
00:01:30	Music	Music	"Isobel" from the album <i>Post</i> by Björk.
00:01:31	Jesse	Host	<i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]</i> There's kind of a narrative out there about Björk. And it started way back at the beginning of her solo career. 1993.
00:01:38	Margaret	Guest	I wanted to talk about Björk and this album in particular, because I feel like this is when she really cemented this kind of range that she would continue to play with throughout her career. On one side, there's the Björk that often gets called, like, a pixie or a sprite or something light and airy—a wood nymph. I mean, I was reading reviews of <i>Post</i> from <i>Rolling Stone</i> and <i>LA Times</i> and other venues at the time, and almost every single journalist calls her a pixie or a sprite at some point.
00:02:12	Jesse	Host	Those are words that can feel a little condescending or diminutive. Margaret has another word she uses.
00:02:18	Margaret	Guest	It's true that she does have this kind of persona of being this light little gremlin. But then, you know, I use the word gremlin because gremlins are also a type of monster. They're also this kind of menace. They're mischievous. They break things. And all of those elements of Björk's persona, I think, are also really on display in <i>Post</i> —that for every for every moment that she's sort of this charming little kitten purring in your ear, she's also going to shriek and be shrill and almost break your eardrums, at times.
00:02:49	Music	Music	<i>[Volume increases.]</i>
00:02:55	Margaret	Guest	<i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]</i> <i>Björk's Post</i> came out in 1995 and it was the height of the grunge era. Most other popular records at the time were steeped in guitars, steeped in like a really masculine grunge fashion. Nirvana, Alice in

Chains, these were the bands that were dominating the radio waves at the time. Björk's *Post* was really much more in the electronic mode. And of course, there were plenty of practitioners of that too, at the time. But the difference in Björk's *Post* was that it really was this, like, breakout work of feminine emotional electronica.

So many of the songs are fully in a kind of like crisis mode or pining for a lover. You know, all these kinds of different emotions that really created a landscape for the whole record.

00:03:52	Music	Music	Let's hear a little bit of "Army of Me", the first track on the album. "Army of Me" from the album <i>Post</i> by Björk.
00:04:04	Margaret	Guest	<i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]</i> This song has a baseline that producer, Graham Massey came up with. And Björk wrote the lyrics of this song thinking about her little brother, actually. At the time, he was going through some sort of, like, crazy hedonistic period. And this is her basically as a big sister saying, "Hey. Listen. Get your act together."
00:04:37	Music	Music	Of course, it can function as so many different things, though. You listen to it and it's pretty much just an anthem for all of us to, like, get our act together. To be independent, to be fierce, to just do whatever you wanna do. Don't complain. Get your stuff together. <i>[Volume increases.]</i> <i>And if you complain once more You'll meet an army of me And if you complain once more</i>
00:04:53	Margaret	Guest	<i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]</i> And I think one of the things, too, I love so much about <i>Post</i> is that it really is this showcase purely for Björk's vocals, for like the range of attack that she can give to any song. I mean, she can come in there and be really soft and seductive or she can come in there and, like, throttle someone.
00:05:11	Music	Music	"Hyperballad" from the album <i>Post</i> by Björk.
00:05:16 00:05:20	Margaret Music	Guest Music	<i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]</i> This is "Hyperballad", the second song from Björk's <i>Post</i> . <i>[Volume increases.]</i> <i>We live on a mountain Right at the top This beautiful view From the top of the mountain</i>
00:05:40	Margaret	Guest	<i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]</i> Part of the reason I wanted to talk about "Hyperballad" is because it's such a great follow-up song to "Army of Me". It really shows right here, just from first to second song, the kind of transitions that you're going to be trafficking in with this album. The first song was ready to grab you by the collar and say, "Don't mess with me." This song goes into a completely different place. It's like much more dreamy. It's much more spaced out. It's literally based on a dream that she had and it's—you know, it's her having these dark

fantasies about, like, what would happen if she threw her body into the ocean.

So, it just has a different kind of complexity to it. And I also just think it's really beautiful. It's just a very gorgeous, sumptuous, like the sun's just shining on this cold ocean kind of song.

00:06:30 Music Music

[Volume increases.]

*So I can feel happier
To be safe up here with you*

00:06:44 Music Music

"It's Oh So Quiet" from the album *Post* by Björk.

Shhhh...

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]

00:06:50 Margaret Guest
00:06:52 Music Music

This is "It's Oh So Quiet".

[Volume increases.]

*Shhhh
It's, oh, so quiet
Shhhh, Shhhh
It's, oh, so still
Shhhh, Shhhh
You're all alone
Shhhh, Shhhh
And so peaceful until...*

You fall in love

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]

00:07:24 Margaret Guest

[Chuckles.] Yeah, you don't see this one coming, do you? "It's Oh So Quiet". This is a cover of a song by Betty Hutton, who also takes the whole screaming, speaking, whispering mode. But Björk builds on it wonderfully. She takes that whole convention of just spazzing out in certain moments—when you're falling in love—and just explodes it with this 20-piece orchestra. It's wonderful! It's like—it's like the song from a long-lost madcap musical from the '50s.

00:08:02 Music Music

[Volume increases.]

*Shhhh
Starts another big riot*

*You blow a fuse
Zing boom
The devil cuts loose
Zing boom*

*So, what's the use
Wow bam
Of falling in love?*

00:08:24 Margaret Guest

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]

Yeah, this was the—actually, the last song that she recorded for the album. And she purposely recorded this as a kind of like, "Look, I want this album to as schizophrenic as possible. I want it to shock you. I want every single song to have its own kind of shock."

00:08:40	Music	Music	<p><i>[Volume increases.]</i></p> <p><i>... oh, so still</i> <i>You're all...</i></p>
00:08:47	Margaret	Guest	<p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]</i></p> <p>If Björk's a pixie, she's not one you should leave alone with anything fragile—like your baby-man heart. Don't do it. She will rip it to shreds.</p>
00:08:56	Music	Music	<p><i>[Volume increases.]</i></p> <p><i>You ring the bell</i> <i>Bim bam</i> <i>You shout and you yell</i></p> <p><i>Hi ho ho</i> <i>You broke the spell</i> <i>Gee, this is swell you almost have a fit</i> <i>This guy is "gorge" and I got hit</i> <i>There's no mistake this is it</i></p>
00:09:15	Margaret	Guest	<p>Let's listen to "Possibly Maybe", which is the eighth song on <i>Post</i>.</p>
00:09:21	Music	Music	<p>"Possibly Maybe" from the album <i>Post</i> by Björk.</p>
00:09:27	Margaret	Guest	<p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]</i></p> <p>This is one of my absolute favorites on the record. Part of it is because this first bit really reminds me of, like, a radio signal from a faraway planet. This is definitely so ethereal, so from outer space.</p>
00:09:46	Music	Music	<p><i>[Volume increases.]</i></p> <p><i>Your flirt...</i></p>
00:09:51	Margaret	Guest	<p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]</i></p> <p>Part of the reason I really love "Possibly Maybe", too, is because it really strikes a very subtle, sophisticated, emotional point. This is a hard mood to convey. "Possibly Maybe"—I mean, in its name itself, it's ambivalent. It's like, "I'm not sure." And that's a hard kind of emotion to capture in a song, but you feel it in this song—the kind of like seductive allure into a certain mood, but then somebody kind of holding off right at the edge. Like, they can't get aaall the way into it.</p>
00:10:26	Music	Music	<p><i>[Volume increases.]</i></p> <p><i>As much as I definitely enjoy solitude</i> <i>I wouldn't mind perhaps</i> <i>Spending little time with you</i> <i>Sometimes</i> <i>Sometimes</i></p> <p><i>Possibly maybe probably love</i> <i>Possibly maybe...</i></p>
00:10:53	Margaret	Guest	<p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]</i></p> <p>When you compare the kind of understated elegance that this song has with "It's Oh So Quiet"—like, that's the mercurial thrash of this record, right there. Like, how can the same person that screamed in your ear about falling in love be this person who's just gonna sort of like chill and whisper?</p>

			Björk has this great quote about people saying that electronic music is cold or unemotional. And she says, you know, if that's the case in a song, that's on the musician, not on the machines. And she's a great example of a person who's found a way to completely pour in the emotional into machines.
00:11:42	Music	Music	<i>[Volume increases.]</i> <i>You're eruptions and disasters I keep calm admiring your lava I keep calm</i> <i>Possibly maybe probably love</i>
00:11:58	Margaret	Guest	<i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]</i> I definitely feel like <i>Post</i> is one of the best albums she ever made, in part because it was this brave, out there, really bold statement that, hey, I can do anything. I can really try out just about any style and still sound like me, because I always ground it in this essential Björkism and this essential language that she used that had to do with electronica, but she was able to roam in that territory so much more than most people could. Even in a pop context, even when you're still writing what is essentially a pop song that you want as many listeners to gravitate to as possible, you can still do these really wild, crazy experimental things.
00:12:47	Music	Music	<i>[Volume increases.]</i> <i>My heart's burned How can you offer me love like that? I'm exhausted Leave me alone</i> <i>Possibly maybe...</i>
00:13:01	Jesse	Host	<i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]</i> Margaret Wappler on the album she would add to the pop culture canon: <i>Post</i> , the 1995 record by Björk. You can find an essay Margaret wrote about Björk in the anthology <i>Here She Comes Now</i> .
00:13:14	Music	Music	<i>[Volume increases.]</i> <i>Since we broke up I'm using lipstick again I suck my tongue In remembrance of you</i>
00:13:42	Music	Transition	<i>So, maybe...</i> Cheerful, brassy transition music.
00:13:46	Jesse	Host	That's the end of another episode of <i>Bullseye</i> . <i>Bullseye</i> is created in the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around great Los Angeles, California—where, across the street from me, they have just started piledriving. They're building two houses and a piledriver is involved. It may make some guest appearances on this show.

Our program, produced by speaking into microphones. Our producer is Kevin Ferguson. Jesus Ambrosio and Jordan Kawling

are our associate producers. We get help from Casey O'Brien and Kristen Bennett.

Special thanks to Max Fun producer Christian Dueñas, who produced that segment on Björk. If you've never listened to the Max Fun show *Heat Rocks*, which Christian produces, that is one of our best programs. It is a show that is about one album every week with lots of music and insight from great music artists and great music writers and thinkers. It's all about—I guess you could probably call it urban music, uh, soul, hip-hop, jazz, dance. Man, it is a really great show. *Heat Rocks!* Find it in your podcast app.

Our interstitial music is by Dan Wally, also known as DJW. Our theme song is by The Go! Team. Thanks very much to them and to their label, Memphis Industries. 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 our interviews there.

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

00:15:16 Promo Promo

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

[Music fades out.]