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| 00:00:00 | Jesse Thorn   | Promo      | Support for <i>Bullseye</i> and the following message come from Culturelle. Culturelle wants you to know that an estimated 45 million Americans may have IBS, according to the International Foundation for Gastrointestinal Disorders. Culturelle IBS Complete Support is a medical food for the dietary management of IBS. It's designed to relieve symptoms like abdominal pain, bloating, diarrhea, and constipation in a safe, well-tolerated, once daily dose. Save 20% with promo code "radio" on <a href="http://Culturelle.com">Culturelle.com</a> .   |
| 00:00:35 | Music         | Transition | Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue.   |
| 00:00:36 | Promo         | Promo      | <b>Speaker:</b> <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of <a href="http://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> and is distributed by NPR.   |
| 00:00:47 | Music         | Transition | <i>[Music fades out.]</i><br>"Huddle Formation" from the album <i>Thunder, Lightning, Strike</i> by The Go! Team. A fast, upbeat, peppy song. Music plays as Jesse speaks, then fades out.  |
| 00:00:54 | Jesse Thorn   | Host       | It's <i>Bullseye</i> . I'm Jesse Thorn. Time now for a segment we call "The Craziest <i>[censored]</i> Day of my Entire Career". It's a chance to talk with some of our favorite creators about some of the truly bonkers stuff that has happened to them in their long and storied biographies. This week, we're talking with Jonathan Ames. Ames is a novelist and essayist. His 2013 novel, <i>You Were Never Really Here</i> , was turned into a movie of the same name. He's also a television show creator. He made two of my all-time favorite television shows: the HBO series <i>Bored to Death</i> and perhaps Patrick Stuart's greatest sitcom, <i>Blunt Talk</i> .<br><br>He's got a new book. It's a novel. It's called <i>A Man Named Doll</i> and it's a noir tale about a private detective named Happy Doll and his exploits in Los Angeles, the city I live in, the city of angels. It's a fun, chaotic read like many of his works. When we asked Jonathan about the craziest day of his career, he wanted to talk about boxing. A fertile subject for many writers. Only, in this story, Jonathan wasn't just writing about boxing; he was boxing! Also, just before we get started, this is a story about boxing—as we mentioned—so, there's some violence and some talk about blood. So, if you or somebody with you is sensitive to that, we thought we'd let you know. Anyway. Here's Jonathan. |
| 00:02:23 | Jonathan Ames | Guest      | I'm Jonathan Ames and this is the craziest <i>[censored]</i> day of my entire career.   |
| 00:02:29 | Music         | Music      | Upbeat, cheerful music.   |
| 00:02:32 | Jonathan      | Guest      | <i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i><br>Alright, well, in the mid-90s, I used to perform as a monologist quite frequently at a nightclub called The Fez—a wonderful place where I also worked the door. And when I started working the door there, Jeff Buckley was playing there, the Charles Mingus Band had a weekly show, and eventually I began to have shows there doing monologues. And one of the stories I used to tell onstage was about this time that I met an unusual writer who was trying to write a book about masculinity. And anyway, he wanted to box me but didn't have access to a boxing gym or his apartment was too small. So, anyway, he got a very—one of those motel rooms by the hour and we were to box.   |

*[Music fades in.]*

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| 00:03:20 | Music    | Music | And the whole thing got very strange very quickly. Exciting, percussive music.  |
|          |          |       | <i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i>  |
| 00:03:25 | Jonathan | Guest | And I hit him, and he gouged his hip on the dresser and the fight immediately came to an end and the whole thing was a little weird. He wanted to box naked. I was—did not wanna box naked. The whole thing was nuts. But it was a fun story, very nice fellow. And anyway, I would tell this story onstage. And one of the people that came to my performance was a performance artist named David “The Impact Addict” Leslie. And he’d gotten famous in the ‘80s on MTV known as The Impact Addict ‘cause he was kind of a poor man’s Evel Knievel—not that the quality was poor, but he was nutty. So, like he had himself shot out of a cannon into a gigantic thing of watermelons. He jumped off this unusual theater in New York, called PS 122, dressed as Maria von Trapp. |
| 00:04:13 | Clip     | Clip  | <b>Music:</b> “Climb Ev’ry Mountain” from <i>The Sound of Music</i> .<br><br><b>Reporter:</b> ... dressed as Julie Andrews in <i>The Sound of Music</i> , Leslie followed the inspirational advice of that film’s anthem: “climb every mountain”. At the top of a metaphorical four-story mountain, Leslie found a 30-foot tree and climbed that too, at which point the forces of social repression—symbolized by a trio of nuns—intervened and cut Leslie and the tree down to size.  |
|          |          |       | <i>[A crowd screams.]</i>   |
| 00:04:39 | Jonathan | Guest | He also was a boxer. He had had Golden Gloves matches and once had fought the great heavyweight, Riddick Bowe, on the crossing of the Staten Island ferry. So, he heard me tell this story onstage about boxing and he felt, “Wait! There’s another guy in downtown New York kind of talking about boxing? I’m the boxing guy!”   |
| 00:04:58 | Music    | Music | Playful music.  |
|          |          |       | <i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i>  |
| 00:05:03 | Jonathan | Guest | And so, he challenged me to a boxing match. I’m like, “Okay, yeah. I accept your challenge. And you know what? I’m gonna call myself—” And I don’t know how it came to me in that moment—“The Herring Wonder.” I was living on East 3 <sup>rd</sup> Street in Manhattan and I was right near a legendary herring store called Russ & Daughters. And I immediately had this idea that I would be a reincarnated, lower east side, Jewish boxer—‘cause that’s where a lot of boxers—you know, at the turn of the century—came from, were Jewish immigrants and they were big in the boxing world and that I would be fueled by herring and I would have herring breath in the ring to further repel him.  |
|          |          |       | <i>[Music fades in.]</i>  |
|          |          |       | And I said, “Yes, I’m gonna fight you and I’m gonna be called The Herring Wonder! It’s on!”   |

00:05:42 Music Music Triumphant brassy music.

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

00:05:49 Jonathan Guest What did I get into? Oh my god. Well, so a few months passed, and this is really going to happen. He's keeping me to my acceptance of his challenge. And David is a great promoter, a maestro, impresario and he got this ancient synagogue on the lower east side called—well, had been renamed Angel Orensanz, but I think it was one of the first synagogues in New York. Beautiful old building, now used for performances and weddings and all sorts of things. And we were going to have a match there and there were gonna be three undercards. And I began really training for this fight and I went to a documentary and film forum called *On the Ropes*. They did this documentary about this boxing gym in Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn, and really focused on this wonderful trainer named Harry Kite, who'd once been the sparring partner of Muhammad Ali for his last fight in 1980. And Harry was an incredibly interesting man.

And so, I went to this documentary and afterwards I said, "Hey, I've got a boxing match coming up. Could you train me?" And he took me on.

00:06:58 Music Music Explosive, exciting music.

*[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]*

00:07:10 Jonathan Guest And so, I began to train like crazy with Harry five days a week. I mean, he took me on like as if I was a real boxer. I mostly made my living back then teaching at night and writing my column and, you know, other part time jobs. But I'd gotten a Guggenheim grant—most of which I then spent so that I could train fulltime. I used my Guggenheim to—for boxing training!

*[The music swells triumphantly.]*

And then—so, we were gonna have this huge match, something like 600 tickets had been sold, the great performance artist, Matthew Barney was gonna be one of the judges, the opening match was this fellow named Zero Boy—a great voice artist—fighting himself. He does all these voices. The second match was Michael Portnoy, who at the time was famous for jumping in front of Bob Dylan at the Grammys with the words "soy bomb" on his chest.

But two weeks before the fight, training—I was training with this guy in Gleason's. He hit me in the nose and shattered my nose. The pain was incredible. It was like a firecracker went off in my face. And I started bleeding and Harry's like, "It's alright! It's alright, Jonathan. It's alright." Harry said, "Alright, okay." He's like, "Look, stop sparring and, you know, go do some shadowboxing in front of the mirror."

So, I go in front of the mirror and my nose was on the right side of my face. It was over at least two inches. It had—like, I'm like, "Harry! My face is like underneath my eye! Underneath my right eye! This isn't normal!"

He said, "It'll go back in place."

*[The music ends with a dramatic chord.]*

Anyway, a guy I went to college with—very successful 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue plastic surgeon. I went to see him and he's like, "Yeah, your nose is really busted."

I said, "Can I fight safely in two weeks?" We had sold all these tickets already.

He said, "Yeeeah, and you know, if it breaks, I'll just fix it. If it breaks again, I'll fix it." He might—you know, but later people told me, you know, a shard of my nose could have gone into my brain. Anyway. And then David kindly said, "Look, I won't go for your head." You know. But that was really a white lie. Because if you're in a boxing match, the guy's gonna try to hit you in the head. "Hava Nagila", a Jewish folk song.

00:09:23 Music Music  
00:09:24 Jonathan Guest

And I went into the fight, huge crowd—all my fans were waving silver herrings and I was supposed to come into the ring to Hava Nagila but like for some reason the tape didn't play.

*[A record scratch distortion cuts the music.]*

So, I came out *[chuckling]*—like, I'm jumping around but no music's playing.

*[The sound of a rambunctious crowd.]*

And then David's music's playing, and I thought, oh my god, you know, did he do that to psych me out?

00:09:46 Clip Clip

*[A crowd screams and cheers as a high intensity entrance song plays.]*

00:09:56 Jonathan Guest

And then another funny thing is, this was like—you know, basically an illegal amateur fight and—but we were doing four rounds.

*[A triple bell ring signifying the beginning of the match.]*

And they should have been two-minute rounds—usually times, amateur fights are two minutes. But we had a punch-drunk timekeeper from Gleason's, and he did three-minute rounds! So, it was a 12-minute fight! Now, if anyone out there has boxed, you get exhausted quickly. And one thing I had learned in training for boxing—I didn't like to hit people. I was a pacifist! I didn't really like hitting people. I just liked the romance of putting on the trunks and the gloves and stepping through the ropes and—you know, feeling like—you know, Rocky and Muhammad Ali.

00:10:38 Clip Clip

*[Roars from the crowd.]*

**Speaker:** *[Shouting.]* Double jab! Double jab!

00:10:39 Jonathan Guest

And anyway, I took quite a beating. The nose was rebroken. I remember sitting in the corner, Harry saying to me, "Jonathan! Get angry! Get angry!" And I don't know if I had the thought in my mind, but that had always been my problem in life. I go straight to depression.

00:10:57 Clip Clip

**Speaker:** *[Shouting.]* Let's double jab right into the body! Body! Come on!

00:11:00 Jonathan Guest I did land a few punches. I remember landing a jab and seeing a kind of—in almost slow motion, a sheet of blood come out of his nose.

*[Triple bell ring.]*

00:11:20 Clip Clip Um, there was no official score. We did have a ref, but it was acknowledged I had lost terribly. *[Laughs.]*  
**Announcer:** *[Muffled.]* The champion of the *[inaudible]*, Leslie!

00:11:29 Music Music **Speaker:** Never any doubt.  
 Jazzy saxophone music.

00:11:31 Jonathan Guest *[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue and eventually fades out.]*  
 When I went back to my apartment that night, I was very scared that maybe I had suffered an injury to my brain. And I remember George Foreman, in the documentary about his fight with Ali, had said something like the night after that fight, he counted backwards from 1000 or something to make sure his mind was still working. So, that night I couldn't sleep. I was in a lot of pain. I wrote half of my column for the *New York Press* to just make sure I could still write.

00:12:17 Music Music For the first ten days after the fight, my face was so swollen. I had—basically had one brow. I had this—it seemed like people on the subway—well, women smiled at me a lot. They were like, “Oh, there’s a warrior.” I don’t know. Maybe that was my projection at the time.  
 Relaxed music punctuated with the sound of seagulls.

00:12:23 Jonathan Guest *[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]*  
 About a month later, some friends of mine were attending the Havana Film Festival in Cuba. And so, I went along with them. And I was running up the steps of the Hotel Nacional and this guy stops me—an American tourist—and he goes, “Are you Jonathan Ames? The Herring Wonder? The fighter?”

I go, “Y-yes, I am.” I thought oh my god, this is so cool. It’s like out of the ‘50s. I’m a boxer in Havana being recognized for being a boxer.

He goes, “I saw your fight! You were great! That other guy—you know, whatever.” You know, ‘cause it seemed like I’d been bullied in the ring. *[Chuckling.]* I was smaller. Not that much smaller. I was—you know, but maybe 20 pounds.

But anyway, so I go, “Thank you so much.”

He goes, “You were great.” And he was like, “Well, I gotta get on this tour bus. See you!”

I’m like, “Bye!” I later found out it was the legendary director Darren Aronofsky, because a lot of people had showed up at this fight back

|          |       |       |   |
|----------|-------|-------|---|
|          |       |       | in '99. And so, that's just about the craziest... "blank" day of my career.   |
| 00:13:24 | Music | Music | Song continues with a brassy flare.   |
| 00:13:31 | Jesse | Host  | Jonathan Ames on the craziest <i>[censored]</i> day of his entire career. His new book, <i>A Man Named Doll</i> , is out now. Go out and buy it from your local bookstore. Ames is such a brilliant writer. Just go to the Jonathan Ames section and pick something. You'll love it. And also—I mean, if you have not watched <i>Bored to Death</i> and <i>Blunt Talk</i> —two of the strangest, most beautiful, hilarious, humane television shows that I have ever seen. Just two of my absolute all-time faves.  |
|          |       |       | I wanna give some special thanks to the filmmaker Richard Sandler. He was at that fight and was generous enough to share his footage, which you heard in that piece. Also, we have photos from Jonathan's fight—never before seen film photos shot by Jonathan's friend, Nelson Bakerman. We'll have some of them up on the <i>Bullseye</i> page at <a href="http://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> .  |
| 00:14:27 | Music | Music | Song continues, a bright piano adding to the composition.   |
| 00:14:34 | Jesse | Host  | That's the end of another episode of <i>Bullseye</i> . <i>Bullseye</i> , created out of the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California—where I got two beds that I bought at auction for a total of \$30, powder-coated the other day in a place called Pico Rivera: an industrial town here in the Los Angeles basin, and man. <i>[Chuckles]</i> . If you've never gotten anything powder-coated, I can't recommend it highly enough.   |
|          |       |       | The show 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. Production fellows at Maximum Fun are Richard Robey and Valerie Moffat. Our interstitial music is by Dan Wally, also known as DJW. Our theme song is by the band The Go! Team. Thanks very much to them and to their label, Memphis Industries, for sharing it. They have a new single called "Pow", from their upcoming LP, and it jams so hard, and the video is so cool. So, go check out The Go! Team and their new single, "Pow", if you need to get pumped up for your day. |
|          |       |       | You can also keep up with our show on Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. We post our interviews in all of those places. And I think that's about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.  |
| 00:16:00 | Promo | Promo | <b>Speaker:</b> <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of <a href="http://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> and is distributed by NPR.   |
|          |       |       | <i>[Music ends.]</i>  |