00:00:00	Music	Transition	Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue.
00:00:01	Promo	Promo	**Speaker**: *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn* is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR. *[Music fades out.]*
00:00:12	Music	Transition	"Huddle Formation" from the album *Thunder, Lightning, Strike* by The Go! Team. A fast, upbeat, peppy song. Music plays as Jesse speaks, then fades out.
00:00:19	Jesse Thorn	Host	It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. Maybe you've done this before: typed into Google the address of your childhood home or maybe a pizza place you went to growing up—see how it looks now. If it's in a big city, odds are you can see how it changed through the years. Little, imperfect snapshots in time. It could be someone remodeled that house you grew up in. Maybe the pizza place turned into a ramen shop. Maybe those buildings have been torn down altogether and replaced by a drugstore or whatever. But usually, those online searches only take you back 10, 15 years. And the photos don't look that great. But what if I told you, you could go even further back in time and see the history of small places in cities in brilliant, high resolution clarity? That is, in part, the work of Rick Prelinger. Rick is an archivist and a professor at UC Santa Cruz. He's also a collector of found and discarded footage, home movies, outtakes from industrial videos, never before seen B-roll from old feature films. He's digitized, labeled, and archived literally thousands of hours of it. With his partner, he co-founded the Prelinger Library in San Francisco, which collects similarly ephemeral stuff: out of print books, magazines, fliers, photographs. Maybe my favorite part of his work, though, is a thing called *Lost Landscapes*. It's a series of movies Prelinger cobbles together from his archives. So far, he's covered San Francisco, Los Angeles, Detroit, and more. All of them are stunning to watch, especially if you've lived in any of those places. You can view all of the Lost Landscape films on Rick's website, and you should! But maybe the best way to take them in is when he shows them live. He presents the films in a big auditorium without a soundtrack. He grabs a mic and sort of acts as a tour guide and you, the audience, are encouraged to chime in: questions, memories, exclamations, whatever. It's really special. Here's a little bit from a recent *Lost Landscapes* Rick hosted in San Francisco. He's showing the audience some old tourist footage of Alcatraz.
00:02:38	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:02:39	Clip	Clip	*[The murmur of the crowd.]* **Audience Member 1**: What year is this? **Rick Prelinger**: 1956.

			Audience Member 1: Thank you.
			Audience Member 2: They're still there.
			Rick: Still an active prison, of course. Sometimes in home movies, you can see inmates in the yards. Not so much this one.
			Audience Member 3: When did Alcatraz close?
			Rick: '56. Oh, when did it close? Yeah, '62.
00:03:10	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:03:11	Jesse	Host	Rick Prelinger, welcome to *Bullseye*. I'm so happy to have you on the show.
00:03:14	Rick Prelinger	Guest	It's a pleasure.
00:03:15	Jesse	Host	You have some amazing Alcatraz footage. I was watching some footage that you had of the people's launching a boat, headed to Alcatraz for the Native occupation.
00:03:27	Rick	Guest	Yes. That's a home movie with a really interesting story, shot by a man named Sykes who was a Black activist in the—in the rehabilitation business. Came to San Francisco to try to shake up the National Trade Association and she shot all sorts of things. He hung out with Earl Caldwell, who was the reporter embedded with the Black Panther party. And Angela Davis. And he shot the activists on the way to Alcatraz. That boat is still running, and the son of the captain was in the audience. So, great things happened. You know.
00:04:06	Jesse	Host	*[Chuckles.]* That's amazing. What's different about—if we take that footage of Alcatraz that was being shown in the screening that we heard a little bit of the audio from—why is that particular footage of Alcatraz interesting to you or distinctive when there are obviously, you know, hundreds of hours of footage of that famous prison? Not least of which is the hit film, *The Rock*.
00:04:35	Rick	Guest	You know, we're used to citizen journalism today. We're used to people photographing sometimes terrible and unfortunate things just because they're there with their phone. Back in the home movie era, this didn't happen so much. And so, when you have footage that wasn't shot by pros or wasn't shot by—I don't know—universal news reel, but it was shot by somebody that just happened to capture FDR walking or the bonus army in DC—you know, lining up for food in their encampment across from the capital, it's very special. And it's the view of ordinary folks recording history just 'cause they were there. Rare and always quite exciting. Different point of view, as well.
00:05:22	Jesse	Host	I think, for me, one of the most exciting things about the footage that you collect, particularly, is the footage that is not of significant historical stuff. You know, FDR walking—as you mentioned. Right? But just moments of streetscape. I mean, you know, you've made some films about Los Angeles—where I live—and seeing the neighborhood that's called Skid Row in the '50s or whatever is incredibly transporting and kind of leads to a new understanding of

			a place that you might not get from reading a description of it or, you know, looking at it now.
00:06:13	Rick	Guest	That footage of 5th Street in Los Angeles—you know, a very troubled neighborhood which is now filled with blank walls and sidewalks on which people camp when they're permitted to by police—back in the '40s and '50s, that was a neighborhood that was vibrant, filled with stores, filled again with people who might have had some substance abuse issues, but also filled with older folks, with new Americans, with people who were part of the casual workforce. They might go to fight fires or log or get casual work loading freight cars. And it's a vision into a part of the economy and a part of society that was living and real and we don't see anymore. And I think we think of the future of our cities a little bit differently when we get into the details of the past. We can't go back. You know? I'm not a nostalgic person, but I do believe that a lot of the templates for the world that we might want to live in, the world we would hope to live in, can be found or can be understood by seeing this rich imagery from the past.
00:07:30	Jesse	Host	Do you remember the first piece of ephemera that you saved?
00:07:36	Rick	Guest	Well, ephemera—so, my whole life I've always collected something. I was one of those kids that collected stamps and coins. Back in the mainframe computer era, I would go to the computer center in my city and ask for old IBM cards. But the first—
00:07:55	Jesse	Host	My dad—my dad complained to me that when we were walking to preschool together, from the Glen Park BART station, in San Francisco—he would have to physically drag me because I would be like picking up eucalyptus nuts off the ground for my eucalyptus nut collection. *[Chuckles.]*
00:08:13	Rick	Guest	Well, this is—right, you know, so we were squirrels. You know? We were—we were looking for sort of intellectual nourishment that we would carry in our pockets, perhaps. But I'll tell you the first film I collected was in 1982 and it was a film on—it came from the collection of the Grand Rapids Police Department and it was a film called *When You Are a Pedestrian*. It was about how to walk safely. And it was shot in Oakland, on the streets of Oakland, by a man named Bainbridge who put his actors at risk, because he just sent them out into traffic to walk in front of cars and to jaywalk with their—with their children. *[Jesse laughs.]* And, you know, to walk along the—to walk the wrong way along the side of the highway leading to the tunnel. And I don't think the cars knew that this was a movie. So, it was great. And what sent me about that movie was that it was shot in Oakland, as I told you—a place where I'd lived—and it was such a rich picture of what the city of 1948 looked like. You know, in the middle you had some kind of simulated accident, kids falling off their bikes or hanging onto milk trucks and getting into trouble. But on the sides, in the periphery, was all the life of the city. And that's what got me collecting film.
00:09:27	Jesse	Host	When you find a movie like that, what can you do to learn about who made it and how concerned are you that someone who has some claim to it will interfere with you archiving and sharing it?

00:09:46	Rick	Guest	So, I spend a lot of time researching the context of films—who made them, the companies that made them, who were the people, where did they go, what's their story. And one of the amazing things about the United States is that we are the most media rich country in the world. We produce more media than—or we throw away more media, I should say, than other countries ever produce. And because of peculiarities in our copyright law, a great deal of this media was never copyrighted. Or if it was copyrighted, it was not renewed or perhaps they didn't observe all the formalities. So, an overwhelming majority of work that was made before 1964 is in public domain and then even a lot of work made before the '80s is also in public domain. So, I've always had this great privilege where I can like—I can go over to the shelf and pull a film and, you know, quickly check copyright on it and there's a very good chance I'll be able to use it. So, just a tremendous—it's a—the public domain is an amazing resource, and most filmmakers don't—most media makers don't know about it but it's generationally unjust, because I'm a Boomer and my culture—a lot of my culture's in the public domain. But if you're a Gen Xer or if you're a Millennial or if you're younger than that, your culture is copyrighted. So, you run some risks if you wanna make work that, you know, rises above a certain level on the horizon.
00:11:24	Jesse	Host	One of the problems with that risk—you know, as a media maker myself—is that it is—it's disproportionate. It's, uuh *[chuckles]*—you know, it's like—it's like having a lot more—one side has a lot more nuclear weapons. You know? Like the issue is that if you presume something is in the public domain or is fair use, according to copyright law, and you are wrong or even accused of being wrong, it can be catastrophic unless you're on a—unless you're working on a huge scale. And that is the—that feels—that feels so scary to me, as somebody who makes stuff and sometimes has to like use some of stuff that—you know, we use stuff that we don't have explicit permission to use on this show every episode. *[Laughs.]* You know?
00:12:23	Rick	Guest	There's a chilling effect. I always tell my students, you know, and I tell independent filmmakers and artists that if you're making work that's not gonna go on Netflix, you know, please get the pig out of your head. Just make your work. You know? Don't be—don't be chilled. But if you are trying to make work that's gonna go into mass distribution, for sure you have to think about that. But there's good news—which is that fair use, which is not a right. Fair use is not a right, it's a defense. But there are best practices for fair use for people working in documentary and working in art and other areas. And if you observe those best practices, you're very likely to be able to get insurance and get your production distributed. And you know, a lot of major films are fair use now. And so, it's bad but it's much better than it was.
00:13:19	Jesse	Host	We'll have even more with Rick Prelinger after a short break, including the time Rick found a video of himself at five years old in someone else's home movies. Stay with us. It's *Bullseye*, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.
00:13:36	Music	Transition	Relaxed, chiming music.

00:13:37	Jesse	Promo	Support for NPR and the following message come from Culturelle. IBS symptoms can be tough to manage with diet alone. Culturelle IBS Complete Support is a medical food for the dietary management of IBS designed to relieve the intensity and reduce the frequency of severe digestive symptoms associated with all IBS subtypes. Save 20% on IBS Complete Support with promo code "radio" on Culturelle.com or, for occasional digestive issues, try Culturelle Probiotic Supplements.
00:14:17	Promo	Clip	*[Music fades out.]* **Music**: Upbeat, thumpy music. **Speaker 1**: A few years ago, a website popped up in Stockton, California and conspiracy theories started ramping way up. **Speaker 2**: It's being funded by the conservative movement underneath the table. **Speaker 3**: And I was like, "Oh my gosh, you guys—people really believe this." **Speaker 1**: What happens when the local new outlet isn't factchecking conspiracy theories? Maybe encouraging them? Listen now, from NRP's *Invisibilia* podcast. *[Music ends.]*
00:14:41	Jesse	Host	Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. If you're just joining us, I'm talking with Rick Prelinger. He's a professor and archivist and one of the leading collectors of video ephemera. The Prelinger Archives, which he co-founded, compiles tens of thousands of films that document America as it was. There are home movies, outtakes for educational videos, and all kinds of other non-traditional formats. About 20 years ago, it was added to the collection of the Library of Congress. Let's get back into our conversation. One of the things that to me is so special about your archive—much of which is online and available for free—is that it gives a centralized resource or a semi-centralized resource to filmmakers who are looking for that kind of stuff, because they need it for their work and they need more information than they might have if they, you know—if they found it on the street. You know what I mean?
00:15:44	Rick	Guest	We're trying to get better about this all the time, trying to get better about annotating what we put online, trying to put more online. But you know, when I first met Brewster Kahle—the founder of Internet Archive in '99—we were on the phone and in the first like 30 seconds of our conversation, he said, "Hey. How would you like to put your archives online for free?" It was a real speed date. And honestly, I didn't quite know how to respond, because I said, you know—I stuttered. I was like, "Well, you know, this is how I make my income, charging for access to the collection." But after a while I realized he was right, and I came to realize we've gotta tweak the—we've gotta monkey-wrench the economy of archives. 'Cause archives at that point were so enclosed and honestly they still are, 'cause it's expensive to digitize stuff. It's expensive and risky to put

it online depending on what it is. And most of the great stuff in moving image archives, you can't see online. And I really wanted to monkey-wrench that and make a lot of material available and see what would happen.

You know, one of the things I wanted to do was give everybody the opportunity to comment on American culture. You know, to find their own resonance and find their own families—you know, where their family had come from. I wanted—I wanted newer Americans to be able to understand the heritage of the nation that they'd migrated to and look at it critically. I wanted every kind of emergent generation to like look at all the stuff and come up with their own attitude towards it and that sort of happened. You know? People—makers, everybody uses that stuff. And what's great is I don't know how it's used. Our collection's like vanished into the internet. It's become infrastructure. And that's the highest destiny of an archive, that it becomes something that people use every day. You know? That becomes like air and water. Nobody asks any questions, there's no special rigamarole needed to invoke history. History should be like, you know, air that surrounds us. It should be everywhere. It should be available at a moment's notice. And so, I feel great about that.

00:18:06	Jesse	Host	One of the things that attracted me to your work was that you have made films about the city that I'm from—San Francisco—and the city in which I live—Los Angeles—and, you know, obviously *[chuckles]* me being from those places, there is special interest to me in looking at the placeness of it. Looking at the physical place of it. And that is, in a lot of ways, the theme of those *Landscapes* films that you've made. Is that interest in landscapes and the way they change and the way they interact with our lives something that came out of the film collection or something that, you know, fed the film collection?
00:18:58	Rick	Guest	That's a thoughtful question and I think the truth is that I grew up in New Haven, Connecticut. New Haven got the lion's share of the redevelopment money from the feds in the '50s and '60s and they tore the heart out of the city. It was like a donut after they finished: a big hole in the middle. And I became fascinated with what had been on the streets before they built all these vacant lots and these buildings that themselves became derelict, you know, some years later. So, I started looking at old photographs, old postcards, moved to California to go to school, got fascinated with the way that the past is always present in California, where you have buildings from the '30s and '40s because the weather is good, you know, coexisting with the newest construction. And it seemed natural to start looking for the evidence in these films and that's—as I said about Oakland, these films were such great evidence. And it has been a self-feeding thing. I live now to find new footage of Los Angeles. Like I look for—I'm looking right now for home movies of east LA, of the Barrio, of neighborhoods in the inner city—Black neighborhoods in Los Angeles, not just Central Avenue but also right around downtown as well. And finding that material excites me, because I know that it's gonna mean a lot to people that are trying to understand the history of their neighborhoods and the history of their communities. Working right

			now on Chávez Ravine, you know, there's very little footage of Chávez Ravine. I found footage of the elderly folks' home, you know, for—it's called Los Viejitos up on the hill. There was like a private home for elderly people in Chávez Ravine. It's amazing footage. It's in the—it's in the LA film and it's a pastoral, countrified, people living among the eucalyptus, you know? It's like nothing you could imagine today.
00:21:04	Jesse	Host	I think the story of Chávez Ravine is a revealing one. It is, of course, the place where Dodgers Stadium was built in the 1950s and it was a very small community. Folks who are interested in the—in the story of this should listen back to—we did a—we did a whole episode of *Bullseye* about it. But one of the things that is revealing about it is that when urban landscapes change, you know, there is an element of inevitability. There's an element of like the cyclical nature of buildings. You know? As you mentioned, weather affects buildings, right? Like eventually you have to replace the roof or else your building collapses. But there's also an element of power and I wonder what you see when you look at historical footage of places and think about the cultural and economic powers that shape it?
00:22:11	Rick	Guest	So, once you start thinking about film—once—let me say it this way, once you stop thinking about film as just entertainment and when you think about it also as evidence—I mean, it's always entertaining, but it can also be evidence—you begin to look at these small traces and one of the things that happens when I do these urban landscape events is that we're taking movies that were made for viewing, you know, in a family environment on a small screen and blow them up to a big screen and you see all the detail and the audience becomes—the audience turns into cultural geographers and ethnographers and linguists. You know, they get very, very into the evidence. And you can start to see the signs of let's say gentrification and displacement even back in the '30s and '40s. Yesterday, in my class at UC Santa Cruz, we had a woman named Marisol Medina-Cadena, who's producing podcasts for KQED and she said when she worked for KCT in LA, she learned that gentrification is a long process. It's sometimes 30 or 40 years in the making, like Bunker Hill in LA—it took years to reclaim that neighborhood for big business. And in these films, you can start to see the signs. And you know, you can kind of pick apart history with sort of mental tweezers and look at what's old and what's new and what's being threatened and how populations are starting to be pushed in different directions by forces that they don't control. So, yeah. I mean, I'm going on a bit about that, but the film evidence is so vivid. Yeah.
00:24:00	Jesse	Host	You know, I grew up in the Mission district in San Francisco and I remember being told as a teenager in the late 1990s, when the first internet boom was kind of sweeping across the city, that this was a neighborhood that had always changed. You know? You say, "Well, it used to be an Irish neighborhood." My wife has Irish American relatives who lived there in the—you know—'30s and '40s. And you know, it only—it only became a Latinx neighborhood of, you know, Mexican and Central American refugees in the '60s, '70s, and '80s. And so, all this that I saw as permanent was relatively new. And I

			remember feeling very deeply that while all of those things were true, what they didn't account for was the relative power of those forces. Right? That when my mom got evicted—owner move-in evicted from her apartment when I was 11—that she had no agency to exercise in that change. Whereas someone else had had full agency. Someone had bought the building and *[chuckling]* moved their daughter into my mom's apartment so they could clear it out! And that is—those kinds of forces are ones that you kind of have to—you kind of have to reveal when you're putting together a film like your films. Like, it is the juxtaposition. It is the choices that you're making that show that.
00:25:49	Rick	Guest	It's putting history and people together. My movies, people talk during the screening. So, there is some sound, but a lot of them are silent. And the audience is invited to talk back and sometimes it's people asking questions, sometimes it's people telling stories of their own lives or their families, sometimes it's people arguing. But it's that juxtaposition of evidence and testimony. You know, what in Spanish would be called testimonios—personal memories, stories that aren't necessarily considered history by scholars but are still incredibly valuable evidence. That's I think what you have to do. I'm gonna say one other thing, you know, about the—San Francisco. You know, there is this feeling that the—that it became a Latina, Latino, Latinx neighborhood in the '60s, but we have a home movie of a Mexican American family from about 1951, '52, little further down on the Excelsior. And this is a family that's really well situated in San Francisco, a working family. But you know, I'd love to know who these people were. I'd love to get them back their film. It's a beautiful, wonderful film and they're hanging out with their Irish neighbors and having birthdays and having a quinceañera and it's just—it's the kind of film that everybody's gotta see because it changes your sense about the history of your home.
00:27:24	Jesse	Host	We'll finish up with Rick Prelinger in just a minute. Stick around. It's *Bullseye*, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.
00:27:32	Promo	Clip	**Speaker**: This message comes from NPR sponsor Fidelity Wealth Management. VP Dylan Sanders shares why it's important to understand clients' values. **Dylan Sanders**: At times, it feels difficult to work towards just a dollar amount. And having a conversation about what wealth is for brings excitement and purpose to all the work in getting there. **Speaker**: To learn more, go to Fidelity.com/wealth. Fidelity Brokerage Services LLC, member NYSESIPC.
00:28:02	Jesse	Host	This is *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. I'm talking with Rick Prelinger. Rick is one of the foremost collectors of video ephemera: home movies, industrial videos, that kind of thing. He and his partner have their own library in San Francisco. He also runs the Prelinger Archive, which is housed in the Library of Congress. When you are making one of these *Landscape* films, of which you've made quite a number. I mean, you've been making one a year in San Francisco for 10 or 15 years now.

00:28:34	Rick	Guest	I made about 27 of them.
00:28:35	Jesse	Host	Yeah. *[Chuckles.]* There you go. So, besides just—you know—pulling your selects from whatever you've found that year, just finding the most interesting stuff that happens to be in the films that come in through your front door, what choices are you making when you put these pieces together?
00:28:58	Rick	Guest	So, it's funny. It is really meticulous but it's also a jam at the same time. I've done this so often that I look at material and I see something I might like to work with, I shove it on a timeline, and I start moving it around and I've got a 15-hour long film. And then I start cutting, cutting, cutting 'cause—as my friend Keller Easterling once put it—"Subtraction is growth." To me, that's the principle of editing. You know? Subtraction is growth. And it's very intuitive. Some of the thoughts are that there are different kinds of landscapes. There's public landscapes, streets and buildings and freeways and skylines and public events, demonstrations, ceremonies. But there's also the private and intimate landscape. There's family scenes. There's backyards, front yards. There's people driving in a car on a new freeway. Whatever. And so, you modulate public and private and there's a tempo.
00:30:00	Jesse	Host	Do you think of those films as having a story?
00:30:03	Rick	Guest	Do I think of those films as having story? You've just asked me a question that I—you know, "Okay. Do we have another hour to talk about that?" *[Jesse laughs.]* 'Cause story is so complicated. If you are a maker, a producer, a museum curator, a designer, you are told these days that everything is about telling stories. If you wanna get money to make something and get your project past the gatekeepers, you've gotta tell a story. You've gotta have characters. You've gotta have an arc.
00:30:34	Jesse	Host	Coronet Films was one of the most prolific and significant producers of the kinds of educational films that people think of when they think of the parody of a film projector being rolled into a classroom in 1960 or 1958 and, you know, *This is How—This is How Jimmy Brushes His Teeth* plays. Do you have a favorite in their oeuvre?
00:31:03	Rick	Guest	Oh, Coronet Films. You know, well, there's 2000 of them. You're asking me a very, very hard question. *[Jesse chuckles.]* But I like *Are You Popular?*, which was made in 1947 and it was part of this great movement after World War II when society lost control of teenagers. It was made to try to train kids how to be kids again. And it's kind of the definitive statement on, you know, gender roles. On penalizing sexually expressive girls. On sort of control. It's about how you have to conform in order to be accepted by people around you.
00:31:51	Jesse	Host	Do you laugh at the films that you watch?
00:31:53	Rick	Guest	Uh, yeah. I, um… I find that these films still trigger me in a lot of different ways and a lot of times I see things that are pretty funny. But lately, I have been laughing at outtakes and I'll tell you why: in

			2002, our collection was acquired by Library of Congress. Our collection up to that point, it was 18 tractor trailer loads of film, about 200,000 cans. And among it—that stuff—were some really large collections of industrial outtakes that I'd acquired. And last year, the Library of Congress said, "You know, we're not gonna keep these outtakes. Do you want them back?" And I said, "Sure!" And we got about 19 palates of outtakes back. There's gonna be more. And my spouse, Megan, and I have been transferring. I assemble rolls and she scans and it's this world of—it's an alternate 1960s and 1950s, because it's stuff that wasn't used and it's just incredible. And that's where you find the humor of these really small movements, you know. The mistakes, the blooper—I mean, but it's more than bloopers. It's just—it's a very odd view of the past. And of course, it's all pristine, so it's hyperreal. It could have been shot yesterday. So, I laugh at outtakes.
00:33:20	Jesse	Host	When I was watching films from your collection in the Internet Archive, which is available for free online, I remembered *[chuckles]*, upon looking at the most popular videos, that maybe like one time like ten years ago my co-host on another show—who's a comedy writer—and I, for a pledge drive thing, had pulled short films from that archive to write jokes about. And obviously, you know, the folks at *RiffTrax* and *Mystery Science Theater 3000* and *Cinematic Titanic* have made a living doing that. What do you think when you watch one of these painstakingly preserved slices of history and see it as a *[laughs]*—as a venue for dumb jokes?
00:34:11	Rick	Guest	I love it. And I wanna say, you know, on *Mystery Science Theater*, Joel Hodgson, who's gonna come speak in my class next month—um. *Mystery Science Theater* is a class act because there are—they're riff and there's gags that, you know, if you're an ordinary Minnesotan you'll get. There's riffs and tracks and—but there's—but there's stuff that, you know, if you have a PhD in literature, you'll get it. It just works on many, many levels. And a lot of great comedy approaches different people differently but all at the same time. It's kind of an orchestral score. And that's, I think, their great achievement—that they've made something that, you know—in the—in academia we would say it's multivalent. It happens on a lot of different levels at the same time.
00:34:59	Jesse	Host	*[Chuckles.]* Also, caring. I imagine that you find common cause in their very sincere interest. When I—when I talk to Kevin Murphy or Bill Corbett about the movies that they are mocking—which they are to some extent mocking—I'm always struck by how much they love them.
00:35:17	Rick	Guest	They love them. Yeah.
00:35:18	Jesse	Host	And—yeah. And I know that you love this stuff too.
00:35:21	Rick	Guest	Yeah. Yeah. You can't—you know, you can hate some of the ideas and you can hate the fact that these films were weaponized sometimes for bad purposes, but you think of the people making them and the workers putting these films together and I do feel a bond.
00:35:42	Jesse	Host	One of the most remarkable kinds of film that you have in your archive and that you often use in the *Landscapes* films is the film that was shot to be rear projected in bigger budget productions. Tell me about what that film is and why it's consequential.

00:36:07	Rick	Guest	So, imagine that you are watching a Hollywood—let's say a film noir from 1949, 1950 and there's a chase and people get into a taxicab. And out the back window of the taxicab, you see the street going by and it's—you know, in the movie it's out of focus and maybe it's bouncing up and down. That's a process plate being projected in the rear of a—of a car that's cut out. And it turns out that those process plates are actually rocksteady, razor sharp, locked down views of cities, country, oceans and skies. The whole world. And they're this—they were not shot to be a record, but it turns out they're an amazing record. Something about when you move through space in a car, you also feel like you're moving through time. I don't really know how to describe it, but there's an uncanny feeling about it in the same way that you're driving down 8th Avenue in New York in the last few days of World War II and gas is still being rationed, so there's not a lot of cars on the street but people walk in front of the camera and they look at the camera and you see the wartime recycling guys with these huge carts of cans and scrap paper that they're carrying, just using the energy in their back and legs. I mean, you are there. It's just an—it's—you are in the middle of some scene in the past. So, I love those. And I used them whenever I can find them.
00:37:41	Jesse	Host	I love that some of the best stuff that you find is garbage. And some of the best stuff that you find are treasures—that you are getting the value out of out-shots from industrial films, *[chuckling]* leftover reels of film from industrials—the most garbage of all garbage—and you're getting material from people's home movies that is the most treasure of all treasures. At least for those people. It's kind of a beautiful thing.
00:38:21	Rick	Guest	It's kind of like bottom feeders find the treasure. I don't know. You know? I think it's that every day—I sometimes tell people at screenings, you know, take your phone and photograph gas stations. Photograph the vaping stores. Photograph the bar. You know? Take pictures of 711, the hotdogs rolling around on the grill. That's the kind of thing we're gonna want to remember. It's people who had the foresight to capture a little bit of that fabric of daily life that gets forgotten. You know, I'd love to know what the world was like when I was a kid, and I can't 'cause we didn't shoot home movies. But I can look at other people's home movies and get a sense of kind of how the material space has changed. I think those are really important for people to see and remember.
00:39:18	Jesse	Host	You're an anti-nostalgist and that's a value that I share, at least in theory. Maybe two years ago, I saw some photographs by a photographer who's based in the bay area named Janet Delaney that she had shot when—in the late 1980s, when I was kid, in the Mission district where I grew up. And she was really into shooting public gatherings. You know. The Cinco de Mayo parade and stuff like that. And it was a sensory rush like almost *[chuckling]* nothing I've ever had in my life to see my—what I still think of as my home represented directly in front of me in a way that, you know, outside of I guess exteriors in the movie *Sister Act*, I had basically never seen in that way.

			You grew up in New Haven, Connecticut. Have you ever had that experience of seeing not just like a place where you live but a place where you are from on film?
00:40:27	Rick	Guest	I… a few years ago on eBay, I saw a film for sale called *Homes of Connecticut* and I bought it. And when I got it, I scanned it and it turned out that there were all these sequences shot in my neighborhood between, I don't know, 1941 and '46. Long, long, long before I was born. And it was a revelation to see my city during World War II. It was a revelation to see housing projects that had turned into horrible places to live by the time I was a kid, when they were still idyllic, New Deal based garden apartments. It was wonderful. And I started digging more into this film and it turned out that it was actually shot by the grandfather of somebody I went to elementary school with. And when I contacted the family and we got them some of their family materials back they said, "Hey, you should scan our home movies too." And I found Field Day when I was in like fourth or fifth grade. So, I actually found myself in one of those home movies. And otherwise, I don't think I've ever been shot. So, you know, funny things happen. Funny things happen. We didn't have home movies and to find myself in a friend's home movie turning around and looking at the camera, that was weird.
00:41:47	Jesse	Host	Do you shoot, yourself? Film?
00:41:51	Rick	Guest	You know, here and there I shoot a video with my camera. I shot a tiny bit of home movie film when I was like 18, but I don't even know where it is. I like to edit. I—you know, *[laughs]* the world—the world is so filled with orphan media, why create more of it, right?
00:42:12	Jesse	Host	*[Chuckles.]* Do you—I like imagining it as a protective act. *[Laughs.]* I don't think that if you shot film it would necessarily have feelings of being lonely, but—*[laughs]*.
00:42:26	Rick	Guest	Nooo, but I—you know. Okay, so today Megan is sitting behind the glass door, scanning film and by the end of the day we're gonna have two terabytes of new digital files and those two terabytes are like our children! They have to be taken care of. They have to be duplicated. They have to be migrated and stored in three different places. That's a responsibility. It's a life sentence. And so, you know, I will tell you a lot of socially conscious archivists right now are questioning how much material we should actually save, because of the cost of keeping it, on the environment. It's like making NFTs, you know? That's—it requires electricity and electricity contributes to climate change and so there is this question which right now I'm sort of finessing, but you know, it is litter. It's gonna have to be taken care of. And we don't have any answer to it. You know, we—when—films that came back from the Library of Congress that we gave the Library of Congress and they gave back to us, nobody wants them. And if we don't keep them, nobody else will. We're like this is the last stop. And if I have to throw something away, it's a really complicated feeling, because—you know, and this is true of the—in a lot of media. Who's gonna keep it? And in some cases, nobody will.
00:43:58	Jesse	Host	What's the most beautiful thing you've seen on film in let's say the last month?

00:44:04	Rick	Guest	The most beautiful thing I've seen on film in the last month. I'm gonna talk about a man named Henry Fleischer, who went by the name Henry Charles, who was wounded in World War II and went to NYU film school on the GI Bill and learned about humanistic documentary, moved back home to Jersey, and started making films about the Jersey shore. You know, for tourist's boards and so on. But he also made these industrials. These are the most public-spirited businesses in New Jersey, and he saw his work as art. His films are filled with reflections and views through many layers of glass and movement of camera corresponding to the movement of cars in the frame. It's very poetic. It's very beautiful and yet the subjects are the most banal you could imagine. And every shot, he has something red in it even if it's a woman wearing red shoes or a worker driving a red pickup truck through the parking lot. And it's one of these people who made—whose life was very quiet but everything he did, he did with the spirit of making art and nobody really knew it. Nobody really probably saw this except himself and his editor and maybe us.
00:45:35	Jesse	Host	Rick Prelinger, I'm so grateful to you for taking the time to be on the show.
00:45:39	Rick	Guest	Thank you for your extremely thoughtful questions and I hope people will use the archives and make new work.
00:45:48	Jesse	Host	Rick Prelinger. As you probably guessed, there aren't any live showings of *Lost Landscapes* planned right this moment, but we will have a link for you to watch the entire collection. They're all breathtaking. Just find the *Bullseye* page at MaximumFun.org.
00:46:05	Music	Transition	Cheerful, relaxed music.
00:46:07	Jesse	Host	That's the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye* is created out of the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California—where I had to deal with a pigeon that my son said was probably still alive, but upon further inspection was definitely not. RIP, pigeon. The 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. 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 Go! Team. Thanks to them and to their label, Memphis Industries. You can also keep up with the show on social media. We're on Twitter @Bullseye, we're on Facebook at Facebook.com/bullseyewithjessethorn, and we are on YouTube. You can search on any of those platforms and find our interviews there. You should smash that subscribe button on YouTube. Feels gross even saying that phrase. I apologize. And I guess that's about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.
00:47:19	Promo	Promo	**Speaker**: *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn* is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.

[Music fades out.]