

00:00:00	Jesse Thorn	Promo	Hey, all. Jesse again. Maybe you heard about this already. We have a quick, easy favor to ask. We'd like to hear from you. We're looking to learn more about how and why you listen to <i>Bullseye</i> and other NPR podcasts. We have a survey up at NPR.org/podcastsurvey . We wanna hear from folks who've been listening to us for years and from folks who are tuning in for the first time. In short, you. It's quick. It's anonymous. It's easy. One more time: NPR.org/podcastsurvey . And thanks.
00:00:32	Music	Transition	Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue.
00:00:34	Promo	Promo	Speaker: <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.
00:00:45	Music	Transition	<i>[Music fades out.]</i> "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.
00:00:52	Jesse	Host	It's <i>Bullseye</i> . I'm Jesse Thorn. The Brat Pack, as you may know, is a term for a group eight or so actors who starred in about a dozen movies in the 1980s, in various configurations. There is Molly Ringwald, Emilio Estevez, Demi Moore, a bunch of others. And among them, Andrew McCarthy. McCarthy starred in <i>St. Elmo's Fire</i> , played Molly Ringwald's love interest in <i>Pretty in Pink</i> . Beyond the Brat Pack movies, McCarthy also performed in <i>Mannequin</i> , <i>The Joy Luck Club</i> , and another '80s classic, <i>Weekend at Bernie's</i> . In the last couple decades, he's been working more and more behind the camera. He's directed episodes of <i>Orange is the New Black</i> , <i>The Blacklist</i> , and <i>Good Girls</i> . McCarthy always kind of pushed back on the label of being a Brat Pack actor. He wasn't into the whole nostalgia thing. But, as you're about to hear, something changed in McCarthy. In fact, he wrote a whole book about it. <i>Brat: An '80s Story</i> is a memoir that looks back on an era that changed his life forever. It talks about the strange position that he and the other members of the Brat Pack found themselves in, back then: barely old enough to drink, but being labeled as the voice of a generation. Our friend and correspondent, Julie Klausner, read the book and was so taken by it, she sat down with McCarthy to talk about his memories of that time. Let's hear a little from an Andrew McCarthy classic, first. This is from <i>Pretty in Pink</i> . If you don't remember, <i>Pretty in Pink</i> follows Molly Ringwald's character, Andie. She's torn between Duckie, her best friend, and Blane, a preppy heartthrob. McCarthy—dreamy as he is—of course plays Blane. In this clip, he visits Andie at her job to find a new record. Music swells and fades.
00:02:42	Sound Effect	Transition	
00:02:44	Clip	Clip	Music: Pop music playing over the store loudspeaker. Blane (<i>Pretty in Pink</i>): <i>[Flirtatiously.]</i> Hiya. Andie: <i>[Giggling.]</i> Um, oh—let me just get these glasses in. It's really, uh—

Blane: Yeah, I didn't like that album I got, the other day.

Andie: Um—what?

Blane: The record.

Andie: Oh, the record.

Blane: Yeah, I thought it was a little too, uh—

Andie: [*Teasing.*] Too hip, maybe?

Blane: [*Warmly.*] Yeah. A little too hip.

Andie: Well, um.

00:03:07

Clip

Clip

Blane: Think you can recommend something else? A little less political or something?

Andie: Lionel Richie?

Blane: Eh.

Andie: Uh, well. Hmm. Teena Marie? Madonna?

Blane: Madonna?

Andie: Yeah, Madonna.

Blane: That's awfully deep.

Andie: [*Playfully.*] Yeah, very deep. But she's got such great style. You know?

Blane: Yeah, listen, um—

[*They're interrupted by an alarm ringing loudly.*]

Andie: Um, that's the alarm. Can you hold on a second? Just—I'll—I'll be right back.

00:03:35

Sound Effect

Transition

Music swells and fades.

00:03:36

Julie Klausner

Host

Andrew McCarthy, welcome to *Bullseye!* I loved your book and the first question—it's kind of an obvious one. I'm sure you've heard, "Why did you write this book?" But I know that you didn't wanna write this book, originally. And you certainly had issues with being associated with Brat Pack. So, how did you write a book about not wanting to write a book about not wanting to be associated with the Brat Pack?

00:04:04

Andrew McCarthy

Guest

Well, that's sort of the whole thing, isn't it, there? Um. Which question to answer first? I... for years—well, over the years, people have occasionally asked me if I would write a book about the Brat Pack and I always said no instantly, because it was just not of interest to me. And I think I'd spent my entire life [*chuckles*] since the Brat Pack—since the mid-'80s, I guess, running from the Brat Pack to some degree. And I finally sort of—instead of running and dragging it behind me, just turned around and looked into it. And I

thought, you know, it had been this thing that had dominated my life and my life was altered by the several years that I spent making those movies and being associated with the quote/unquote “Brat Pack”.

So, you know, and it had changed who I became! You know? Very much. And I had never looked at that. And I thought—you know, you get old enough [*chuckling*] and you just kind of go, “What? What the hell went on there?”

[*Julie affirms intermittently as Andrew continues.*]

And I just thought I could take a clear-eyed look at it. A couple years ago, an editor asked me. He said, “Would you be interested in writing a book about the Brat Pack?” And my answer was, “Huh. Maybe!” Which was surprising, because it had always been such a quick no. So, anyway, I thought about it for six months and then I just started writing one night when I came home from work. And I just started writing, ‘cause I wanted to see if I had something to say, first of all. If I had—if I remembered stuff. I mean, I used to drink a bit, so you know. [*Chuckles.*] I wanted to see if I remembered things. And if I had something to offer! And if I had something to learn from it, myself.

There’s that Joan Didion line—I’m paraphrasing, but you know, “I write to find out what I’m thinking.” And I kind of ascribe to that. And just sort of what were my feelings about all that stuff—which I find out. You know? I—you know. So, that’s why I took so long, I suppose. I just had run from it.

00:05:58 Julie Host

Well, the Brat Pack article—the sort of infamous article dubbing basically the cast of *St. Elmo’s Fire* as the Brat Pack—you wrote about it in terms of having done a lot of damage. I think both personally and then in terms of the culture at the time and maybe in retrospect. Do you think that the “all press is good press” thing is a new idea? Has it always been a false idea? What do you think about exposure for the sake of exposure and what that article did and why it was—in your opinion, I guess—negative?

00:06:35 Andrew Guest

I don’t know if it’s always been a bad idea. I don’t know if it is a bad idea now. “All press is good press.” I don’t know if that’s—I don’t know that I entirely disagree with that. You know? But the Brat Pack came about—like you say, it was supposed to be a small feature on Emilio for *St. Elmo’s Fire*, and he invited the writer out with him for drinks, which is probably a bit ill-advised, in hindsight. [*Chuckling.*] And he took along Judd Nelson and Rob Lowe and they went to the Hardrock Café and, you know, did what young guys who are in the movies and drinking do. And so, the writer turned off to his subject and then it became this cover story of, you know, kind of this—and the article’s quite sort of scathing, really.

And I remember when I saw the photo of the—on the cover of the magazine, I was in the photo originally. ‘Cause it was promo still from *St. Elmo’s Fire*. And I think my elbow is still in it. And I remember thinking, “Well, they cut me out of the photo!” And then I read the article and I was like, “Thank god they cut me out of the photo!” [*Chuckles.*] And—but I digress. I don’t even remember your question anymore, Julie! I—it’s—

00:07:39 Julie Host It's just the "all press is good press" thing and that there are people that would say, "Hey! At least you're in it!" And—

00:07:44 Andrew Guest You know, but it's how you handle it. I mean, I've reacted to it in a negative way. I found it very pejorative. Which it was intended that way. But someone like Rob Lowe just went, "Ah! The hell with it! Sure!" And just embraced it from day one. And what Rob understood intuitively, which I didn't get, was that the public never viewed it in this pejorative, negative way that the media portrayed it or the movie industry sort of saw it as. And they always saw it as, "Ah! The Brat Pack! I love those movies! Those guys!" You know, as the ultimate sort of in-group. And who wouldn't wanna be a part of that?

So, Rob just sort of was smart enough to just embrace it and/or let it pass right through him. Whereas I found it very—I took it personally and I... you know, who wants to be called a brat? [Chuckles.] And I found it—you know, the minute you label anything, you're done exploring it or examining it or being curious about it. You're just, "That's what that is." And we do it—I do it every day. Still. You know, all the time. We all do it. We just said, "Oh, that? They're that. Yeah, I know what that is. Not interested." And we're wrong so often. You know, because we just sort of see a headline or see something and then we box it and be done with it, and I didn't—I found that limiting.

But, you know, all that said—you know, what writing the book did for me was help me to realize, you know, what the Brat Pack has become now, all these years and decades later. And so—I mean, that we're still talking about it's ludicrous. And yet, it's come to be this affectionately iconic term for a generation of people about their recalled youth. It's not even about—I'm an avatar of people's youth, now, in a certain way. They... you hear—they hear the Brat Pack, and they go, "Oooh! Yeah! Remember, man, when we were in school, and we went to those parties?" And they're thinking—and already they're talking about themselves. They're not even talking about the movies.

And that's what that—the Brat Pack has grown to become, is that kind of touchstone for a generation of people for that moment in youth when people are just cusp into their own lives and stepping out and discovering who they are and there's no more exciting moment in life than that. You know?

00:09:49 Julie Host And so much of your career is sort of your own youth captured in this bottle and you talk about just the freshness and the nascency and the discovery that you were able to, you know, sort of have a record of as a young actor.

00:10:07 Andrew Guest Yeah, you got, you know, the bad phases too. But [laughs], um—

00:10:11 Julie Host We'll get to those!

00:10:12 Andrew Guest Um, but for sure! I mean, there is—I do talk about that in the book a bit. There is that moment when it's so attractive in people, when they're just blossoming. It's like a flower that's opening up. You just stop and go, "Oh my god! Look at that rose!" [Laughs.] I mean, you just—it's—it is beautiful when something is blossoming. And there are scores of examples of people, through the decades, you know—James Dean in *East of Eden* is blossoming onscreen. You

know. Leonardo DiCaprio in *Who's Eating Gilbert Grape* is just blooming onscreen and just like, "Oh my god! They're wonderful!"

And they're not even talking about the acting. The acting happened to be very good in those two cases, but it's more a quality than a skill, like I said. So—and that—capturing that. And that's what I certainly had in my version of that, in like *Pretty in Pink* and *St. Elmo's Fire*. And so, that's what people responded to, I think, about me. Why—I mean, I might cringe a little bit at some of the acting that I did, but there's certainly that quality of awakening that is attractive.

00:11:09	Julie	Host	Well, what I think is also attractive about that area of your career is that you seem to be in acknowledgement of your romantic co-star. In the same way that you experience the wonder of watching yourself having this discovery, you—as an actor—are so gifted at reacting to the object of your characters affection. The way you look at her, the way you fall in love onscreen, that—I wonder if that's sort of part of it, as well.
00:11:47	Andrew	Guest	Hm. Well, I like women <i>[laughing]</i> , so I mean, like it's easy to fall into them sometimes! And, uh—
00:11:54	Julie	Host	I mean—! But let's—uuuh.
00:11:57	Andrew	Guest	You know, you can just sort of fall in that thing and... and we've all been there. You know? So, you just sort of open that floodgate a little bit and people project upon you.
00:12:09	Julie	Host	Yeah, but did you set out to make us all fall in love with you? Because <i>[laughing]</i> it's not fair!

[Andrew laughs.]

Just how you would look at Molly Ringwald or even Kim Cattrall, in *Mannequin*. And you just had this sense of—you know, you're a little self-deprecating about—you know, about your looks and you're very complimentary about Rob Lowe's, but I think your status as a dreamboat—which I'm sure you're kind of like ambiguous about—has so much to do—

00:12:37	Andrew	Guest	<i>[Interrupting.]</i> No, no! I'm all for dreamboat, now. Now, that I— <i>[laughs]</i> .
00:12:39	Julie	Host	<i>[Cackling.]</i> Okay, good! At a certain age, you're like, "Objectify me!"
00:12:44	Andrew	Guest	Please, exploit me. Please. Yeah. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:12:46	Julie	Host	I—but I—but I wonder if you see, in your acting and obviously you cringe, but just how beautifully you take in your partner. And I think, as a girl growing up with your movies and falling in love with you, as I had no choice but to do, so much of that has to do with I guess your regard for your scene partner. I don't know if there was some method in it, like were you really in love with Molly Ringwald even when you weren't onscreen?
00:13:12	Andrew	Guest	I was not in love with Molly, but I think one of the things about being in love is that you're interested in the other person. <i>[Chuckles.]</i> And one of the things about good acting is you're actively listening, and you're actively interested in you, you, you and it's like you wanna drink someone up. And I mean, I understood that. And I understood what being in love is that, "I just, the more I bask in you and wallow in you, the better I feel. So, I'm just gonna keep wallowing in you." You know. And I think I understood that. And... you know, a lot of love stuff is unspoken, so it's just—it is looks and things. So. Yeah.

00:13:48	Julie	Host	I might need to turn on the—turn on the air conditioning over here. <i>[Chuckles.]</i>
00:13:53	Andrew	Guest	But I mean, everyone wants to be seen and heard. That’s just—everyone, universally, whether—and when you direct your gaze and your full attention to someone—I remember meeting the actress, Linda Hunt, once. Years ago. And I was gonna do a movie with her, and she took my hand and said hello to me as if I was the only person in the room. Like—and she’d been waiting to meet me for years. And she had no idea who I was. I had her full attention for the minute she grabbed my hand and said how nice it was to meet me. And I was putty in her hands for the whole film, because of that instant.
00:14:38	Jesse	Host	You know, so I think when we really stop and get over ourselves and turn our gaze out—particularly at that age, the gaze is so often in. <i>[Chuckles.]</i> And for some of us, it never turns out. But when we turn that gaze out, it’s—you know, it’s powerful. Even more with Andrew McCarthy still to come. Stay with us. It’s <i>Bullseye</i> , from MaximumFun.org and NPR.
00:14:46	Music	Transition	Relaxed music.
00:14:47	Jesse	Host	This message comes from NPR sponsor Odoo.
			Do you run a business or manage a team? Then it’s time to switch to Odoo. Odoo is a suite of business applications designed to streamline, automate, and simplify any company. Odoo has apps for everything! CRM, inventory, manufacturing, sales, accounting, you name it, Odoo’s got you covered. So, stop wasting time and start getting stuff done with Odoo. For a free trial, go to Odoo.com/Bullseye .
00:15:22	Promo	Clip	<i>[Music fades out.]</i> Music: Intense sci-fi music.
			Jordan Morris: Hey, I’m Jordan Morris, creator of the Max Fun scripted sci-fi comedy podcast <i>Bubble</i> . We just released a special episode of <i>Bubble</i> to celebrate the launch of our new graphic novel. At SF Sketchfest in 2019, we recorded a live show with Alison Becker, Eliza Skinner, Mike Mitchell, Cristela Alonzo, and special guests Jean Grae, Jonathan Coulton, Jesse Thorn, Nick Wiger, and a bunch of other cool folks.
			Speaker 1: We suspect he’ll show signs of mutation when in a state of excitement. Now, Annie matched with him on Tinder, so she’s gonna act as the honeypot.
			<i>[The audience laughs.]</i>
			Annie: I do enjoy being called a honeypot.
			Speaker 2: Hey. You know what’s better than honey? Gravy!
			Annie: <i>[Gasps.]</i> Ooh, yeah! Can I be the gravy sack?!
			Jordan: Out now, on MaximumFun.org and wherever you get podcasts. And pick up the graphic novel at your local bookstore today.

00:16:18 Jesse Host This is *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. Our guest, Andrew McCarthy, is an actor and director and a member of the Brat Pack. His new memoir is called *Brat: An '80s Story*. He's being interviewed by writer and actor Julie Klausner.

00:16:33 Julie Host You are very aware of the—I think we sort of touched on it, the emotional accessibility you have as an actor, but you also talk about having the sort of push-pull of aloofness and sort of staying in your own internal perception of yourself. How do you reconcile that? You're not an actor that stays in character the whole time, right? You talk about how in *Pretty in Pink*, you really didn't talk to Molly when you guys weren't shooting.

00:17:00 Andrew Guest Well, no, I don't—you don't have to walk around set calling me Blane. No.

[Julie erupts into laughter.]

No, I was not—I was not that literal. And I always found that kind of odd when people were literally doing that, 'cause it's like, "Well—*[laughs]*." It just seemed weird to me. But emotionally, I certainly would try and keep myself in this sort of zone, I suppose. But I had a lot—and continue to, in my life, have a lot of ambivalence about most things. You know? And that has, I think, hindered some of my ambition. Because, you know, one step up, two steps back, and three steps up, half a step back. You know, the people that just sort of have no reflective *[chuckles]* gene and they just drive forward, I look at them with awe. And they always succeed. I'm just like, "Wow! Look at you! I mean, you have no shame! You have no—"
[Laughs.]

And they just succeed wildly and I'm just—I marvel at them. And I envy them. But I don't really—but I—part of me does. But I very much have—I've always, you know, questioned. So, I'm always—I do something and I'm questioning and then I'm examining. So, you know, it makes for an uncomfortable *[laughs]* existence at moments. And it certainly hindered my career and my ambitions. Certainly. But it's—you know, on the other hand, it helped me to have a certain awareness and a ability to see things from a different perspective, as opposed to just my own.

00:18:21 Julie Host And it's also, I imagine, part of the exercise of writing this book was looking back and seeing, "Well, that wasn't a missed opportunity, I just didn't wanna do it." You talked about turning down an invitation to dinner with Warhol and some of the factory folks.

00:18:35 Andrew Guest Yeah, well, that was interesting in that it took me 20 years and someone else to mention it to me for me to stop feeling ashamed of missing that—saying no to that opportunity. You know. I mean, that was so classically me at that time. I went, "Yeah, I wanna do it! I'll go. I'm happy to have dinner."

You know, they called me up and said, "Do you wanna have dinner with Andy tonight?"

And I'm like, "Sure! Love to." And as the day wore on, I just grew more and more anxious 'til finally I called them up right before and I said, "Uh, my cat jumped out the window. I can't come." *[Laughs.]* And, you know, just this ridiculous—and for 25 years, I think, I was just like, "Oh man, that would have—you idiot. You missed so many

opportunities like that.” My wife—we were walking through a Warhol exhibit at a museum. My wife—and I told her that story and I was expecting her to say just that. That *[sighs]*, “Why do you always—you know, just get over yourself and do it.”

She said, “Well, maybe you just didn’t wanna be exploited. Or, you know, seen as an amusement,” I think is what she said.

And I looked at her and went, “Oh my god, that’s so largely true.” And there was also the anxiety—the social anxiety of it. But there was also largely that part of me. I just didn’t wanna be—you know, so it took me a quarter century and someone else’s insight to realize that what I did was fine. But that was so much of I guess what writing the book helped me discover: that I did just fine and that so many of what I perceived were mistakes and missed opportunities were simply who I was, who I am, and that it was fine. And the things that, you know, limit me and stop my progress also are part of my assets.

00:20:02	Julie	Host	And you were turned off by Hollywood after experiencing some of the most Hollywoody—things that would make people say, “I’m staying here forever.” Which is living with Jackie Bisset. Uh—
00:20:16	Andrew	Guest	Well, I should have—I should have quit show business right—the second I left Jacqueline Bisset’s house. <i>[Chuckles.]</i>
00:20:20	Julie	Host	<i>[Laughs.]</i> At one point, you went out to a dinner with Liza and then you ended up at Sammy’s house late at night! I mean, these are Hollywood experiences!
00:20:27	Andrew	Guest	No, I did have—yeah. No, and I didn’t turn off to Hollywood so much as I just—I enjoyed it. I just didn’t—wasn’t for me. It wasn’t my life. You know? It wasn’t interesting to me. It wasn’t—yes but going out to dinner and sitting next to Liza and then going up to Sammy Davis Jr’s house and—you know, and shooting pool with Sammy and, you know. <i>[Laughs.]</i> And it was so bizarre for this kid from New Jersey, at 21, 22 kind of going, “How the hell did I get here?”

But, you know, those people were all very kind, you know—to us and to me. You know, that’s when old Hollywood sort of still was around a bit and, you know, they were—granted, Jacqueline Bisset was extraordinarily generous to me and kind and patient and loving and—you know. And I was appreciative. You know? I was an appreciative young person. You know, I was a bit lost and *[chuckling]* wasn’t hard to see. And those people were very generous.

00:21:16	Julie	Host	And... you were onstage. Is that something that you preferred, or it was just different than acting on film? I know that you had this curiosity with the camera that later led you to directing.
00:21:28	Andrew	Guest	I was studying in a theatre program at NYU when I got the first—well, I was kicked out of school, but I had been studying at school, theatre, and I always imagined I would be in the theatre, because I couldn’t have imagined being in the movies. And I loved doing—you know, I have to say—to this day, the happiest times I’ve had, professionally, have always been in the theatre. You know? But I have such nerves, I think, on first nights that I’ve often—I swore that I’ll never do it again. Every time I’m in a first night in a play and I go, “I don’t care how good it gets. I will never do this to myself again. The anxiety and stress I felt was so much.

But I have—the most satisfying I’ve ever felt was when I—was onstage. Professionally. You know. ‘Cause that—that’s a very alive experience. But then, having said that, I didn’t pursue it. You know, I dabbled back and forth in it over the years and didn’t sort of dedicate myself to that. So.

00:22:23 Julie Host

What is your attitude towards acting now? Because I know that you’re definitely a more prolific director, currently.

00:22:29 Andrew Guest

Well, yeah, no, directing is my day job, now. Um. And yeah, I mean, I direct lots of TV shows. So—and travel writing. But I—you know, I acted again. And I’m just gonna go out next week to act in something. I direct this show sometimes called *Good Girls* and I’ve been acting on that a little bit and I’m gonna go out next week and do it again. And I hadn’t acted in a number of years until I did this bit on *Good Girls*. You know, I was working, and the producer said, “Do you wanna—we have this thing of this guy. Do you wanna do it?”

And I’m like, “Yeah! Sure, I do!” And anyway, I found it very... it was really much more fun that I remembered it being. And acting always used to cause me such anxiety when I was younger. And I just found it to be sort of—that joke of the two fish swimming in the water and the one fish passes the other and says, “Hey! Ain’t the water fine today?” And the other fish says, “What water?” And that’s how I sort of felt when I started acting again. When I went on this show. It’s just like ultimately who I am. You know? I used to say it’s not who I am; it’s what I do. But I think it’s who I am. It’s how I located myself first when I was 15 years old and discovered acting. I discovered who I was. It helped me feel safe in the world and have my place in the world.

And as I got away from it, I got into other things. But I think going back to it was exciting in a certain way. And sort of liberating. So, you know. And I have great respect now. You know, ‘cause I’m directing people all the time now and, you know, when I see good acting I just love it.

00:24:02 Julie Host

How much of your attraction to directing had to do with your curiosity around the camera and what it does? And how much of it is sort of more about having been on the other side of it and thinking, “Oh, it would be nice to be in control of this.”

00:24:16 Andrew Guest

Well... all of the above, I suppose. But, you know, for my ego and vanity, I enjoyed the singular position of directing. There’s no one else on the set that’s directing. Yeah, so I think I enjoyed having that unique position and I still enjoy that aspect of it. I like—you know, I know how to work now. I’ve worked with 100, 200 directors. Most of them not barely competent. A couple terrific. Most of them good craftsman. But nothing—you know. Most time, directors—particularly in television—are not concerning themselves with acting. They just have—there are a million things to think about. Mostly the clock and getting the shot and just getting it done. Getting it in the can.

And I understand that completely. So, whenever I—which I—‘cause I come from acting, I—whenever I give attention to actors, they’re like shocked! Just, “Oh my god! [*Laughing.*] Thank you for paying attention!” You know? And I do pay attention, because I cringe. I can’t—if I’m cringing back there, I just can’t take it. I’m not gonna

tolerate it. I can't—we have to fix this. *[Laughs.]* You know? You can't—I can't be cringing back there. And you—'cause I have ever actor neuroses there is, I understand them and so I'm able to help an actor and I can talk to them very quickly about how to get out of it. And it always comes back to Acting 101, which is: you came in here to get something. Get it. You know? It's the first thing you learn, first day of acting school. And it's the thing people forget instantly. You came in to get \$10.

I want \$10 from you. You don't wanna give me \$10. We have a scene. We have conflict. And I'm gonna get that \$10 whether I seduce you or browbeat you or whatever—in many different ways. As long as I don't lose sight of that I need that \$10, we're gonna be fine. And I tell new actors and, you know, I say to Jane Fonda. *[Chuckles.]* You know. "Jane. Remember, you came in to get the \$10." And she goes, "Ah, Jesus. Thank Andrew. Jeez—how could I—?"

[Laughing.] You know? And so, I digress. What were we talking about?

[They laugh.]

00:26:12 Julie Host
00:26:14 Andrew Guest

Is it fun directing James Spader on *Blacklist*?

I love directing Jimmy! 'Cause he's all the things I was talking about before. He's, you know, he's very smart and he's very well prepared. They—you know, the one thing that I find shocking is how unprepared so many actors are, that you could show up unprepared. I just find that shocking. And so many are. And they cause—then, they so—cause themselves so much problems. So many problems by trying to pretend that they're not unprepared. And it's just like, "Dude, it's so transparent. You don't know your lines, here. So. Okay. Let's just take it bit by bit, then. Let's just call it what it is, though. You didn't do your work."

Which you can't of course say. You know, people ask me if being an actor is good preparation for directing and I always say, "Y-yeah, somewhat. But really the best preparation for directing is having small children." You know? *[Laughs.]* And it is. Because you have to constantly redirect people from their own foibles and neuroses into something else. And you create a space and go, "Okay, here's the space. This is—you can do anything you want in here, but these are the boundaries. Okay?"

00:27:07 Julie Host
00:27:10 Andrew Guest

Yeah. "Hit your mark. Hit your mark, kid."

That and also just sort of like, "You don't tell the other actor what to do. I'll handle that." You know what I mean? Or, "Don't worry—" You know, one of the—anyway, there's lots of things. But I find that I enjoy it a lot and I love the technical aspect of it, which was a great relief to me. And it was a great relief to me not to be stared at. You know? So—when I started directing. To not be the absolute focus of attention. And yet to have a unique position upon the set. I liked that.

00:27:39 Jesse Host

We'll wrap up with Andrew McCarthy in just a minute. When we come back from a break, he has kids now. Kids who have seen *Weekend at Bernie's*, the weird, morbid comedy where two guys go on a long vacation with a corpse. Which begs the question: what do Andrew McCarthy's kids think of *Weekend at Bernie's*? Yeah, that's

00:28:06	Promo	Clip	<p>right. We're not afraid to ask the tough questions. It's <i>Bullseye</i>, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.</p> <p><i>[The sound of a cassette being slotted into a cassette player.]</i></p> <p>Music: Police radio chatter fading into solemn music.</p> <p>Speaker: Investigations into police use of force and misconduct were secret in California until now. We've sifted through hours of interrogation tape to find out who does the system of police accountability really serve and who does it protect? Listen now to every episode of the new podcast <i>On Our Watch</i>, from NPR and KQED.</p>
00:28:29	Music	Transition	<i>[Music ends.]</i>
00:28:31	Jesse	Promo	<p>Bright, chiming music.</p> <p>This message comes from NPR sponsor Discover. Discover matches all the cashback you've earned on your credit card at the end of your first year, automatically. With no limit on how much you can earn. It's amazing because of all the places where Discover is accepted. 99% of places in the US that take credit cards. So, when it comes to Discover, get used to hearing "yes" more often. Learn more at Discover.com/match. 2021 Neilson Report. Limitations apply.</p>
00:29:06	Jesse	Host	<p><i>[Music fades out.]</i></p> <p>Welcome back to <i>Bullseye</i>. I'm Jesse Thorn. Our guest is Andrew McCarthy. He's an actor and director and was a charter member of the Brat Pack in the 1980s. He starred opposite Molly Ringwald in <i>Pretty in Pink</i> and in <i>St. Elmo's Fire</i>. Along with being an actor and director, he's now a writer. A few months ago, he released a memoir called <i>Brat: An '80s Story</i>. It's about the Brat Pack era and how strange and painful and uncomfortable and thrilling it was to be at the epicenter of a cultural phenomenon.</p>
00:29:44	Julie	Host	<p>McCarthy is being interviewed by our friend and correspondent, Julie Klausner.</p> <p>I'm gonna ask you a couple questions about <i>Pretty in Pink</i>.</p>
00:30:03	Andrew	Guest	<p><i>[Andrew affirms.]</i></p> <p>Which is one of my favorites and I hope that you're affectionate toward it. I think—you seem—it's very clear from the book how affectionate you are towards the films that sort of made you. I was particularly happy to see that you had affection for <i>Mannequin</i>, for example.</p>
00:30:08	Julie	Host	<i>[Laughs.]</i> I love—I love <i>Mannequin</i> . I mean, I'm embarrassed to say I love <i>Mannequin</i> . And—
00:30:11	Andrew	Guest	<p>I love <i>Mannequin</i>. You're in a safe space, here.</p> <p>It, uh—yeah. It's—you know, I love all those movies now. You know, it did take me years. I ran from them. You know? And—but I love all of them. And for different reasons. <i>Mannequin's</i> particularly sweet 'cause it's such an openhearted, innocent movie.</p>
00:30:25	Julie	Host	And for <i>Pretty in Pink</i> , were you surprised when it needed a reshoot?
00:30:31	Andrew	Guest	<i>[Beat.]</i> Well, no. I wasn't particularly surprised it needed a reshoot. I was surprised it was successful. Like, you know, as I wrote in the

book there, I didn't like when the original ending was there where I sort of diss Molly and sort of don't show up for the prom with her and all that kind of stuff. I mean, I thought—I have to back up. I thought the movie was a ridiculous movie about... a whole movie's gonna be about a girl wanting to go to a dance? And making a dress? I mean, this is gonna hold?

And so, clearly, I was wrong! And... but the original ending where I diss Molly was, I thought—you know—unsatisfying. And so, luckily, when they did—they did the test screening, and the audience felt the same way. They loved the movie until that moment, then they hated the movie. And, you know, John Hughes—being the smart businessman he is—said, “Okay! [Chuckles.] Let's reshoot that.”

00:31:20	Julie	Host	And that's your fault for being so dreamy.
00:31:23	Andrew	Guest	Well, you know. Yes, naturally. Um. [Chuckles.] No, but—
00:31:25	Julie	Host	I mean, it kind of is, Andrew! You're joking but it kind of is!
00:31:29	Andrew	Guest	But—well, that's—you know, that's—that—
00:31:30	Julie	Host	'Cause Blane was not written to be that lovable! He was sort written to be a, you know—
00:31:34	Andrew	Guest	No, that backs up to—that backs up to Molly. You know. Because Molly got me that part because, as you said, the movie—the part was written for like a high school—
00:31:41	Julie	Host	Just a jock.
00:31:42	Andrew	Guest	Jock. You know, quarterback type. Square jaw. You know, broad shouldered kind of—you know. That guy. And I was clearly not that, but Molly—when I went into audition, Molly—you know... said, “That's the guy.”

And John Hughes said, “That wimp?”

And, you know, the rest is history as they say. But yeah, that was all Molly getting me that job.

00:32:01	Julie	Host	“The one—the one that's gonna cost us thousands in reshoots?”
00:32:04	Andrew	Guest	Yeah, well—yeah. I mean, but it had to end that way, because it's a fairytale, really. It's just a little fantasy, that movie. A little fairytale. So, it has—there's only one way for those things to end.
00:32:13	Julie	Host	But the way that you played it makes—because what Blane does to her is unforgivable. But the way you play it—you want them to end up together anyway. You want—you wanna forgive him just because the two of them have this—I mean, you're just looking at her like this and it's just overwhelming! So. Like I said, I mean I think that's so much to how you—how you played it.
00:32:35	Andrew	Guest	Well, that was largely the wig as well. You know.
00:32:38	Julie	Host	And what a wig!
00:32:39	Andrew	Guest	And what a wig!
00:32:40	Julie	Host	That was right from—I think that was from Party City. Or was it just a raccoon that was—?
00:32:42	Andrew	Guest	[Laughing.] It could well have been from Party City. It was terrible wig, yeah, and—for the reshoot. 'Cause I was—I had a—I had a shaved head 'cause I was doing a play in New York and so, yeah, I had this—so, if you look at that scene, which I have now seen, you know, thousands of times over the years. It's the clip they show when I go up to Molly at the prom and kiss her and say, “I love you,” or, “I believe in you.” Whatever it was I said. And, you know, all I can think about is just bad wig acting because I look so—I look so—

00:33:15	Julie	Host	like I'm suffering and in so much pain and it's really just the wig is so ill-fitting that I look so forlorn that it sort of did all the work.
00:33:17	Andrew	Guest	Well, it looks like Blane is very—regrets being awful. So, it works.
00:33:19	Julie	Host	<i>[Laughing.]</i> He looks very regret—remorseful! Yeah.
			It works beautiful. Did you do an actor's secret for Blane? That thing where only an—for— <i>[playfully]</i> for those who don't know, an actor's secret is when an actor knows something about his character that is not, you know, explicit.
00:33:34	Andrew	Guest	Well, I think you always wanna do that. That really—anybody with a secret is sort of—even if you're aware they have a secret or not, there's something about them that leans you forward and sort of you're drawn to them. But in that movie, I did not actively—you know, that movie... I had just been in <i>St. Elmo's Fire</i> where I was starting to become public and young women were suddenly attracted to me where they had never been before. I'd been invisible a week before. And so, suddenly I was attractive, and I was sprinkled with catnip. You know?
			And so, there's nothing that builds confidence in a 22-year-old <i>[chuckling]</i> young guy as having women suddenly find you very attractive. And that gave me a certain—not confidence, but just a feeling of expansiveness that suited that part well. So, to couple that with the vulnerability and sort of sensitive—oversensitivity coupled with a sense of like feeling your oats a little and you've got this dichotomy that is, you know, a good recipe for that particular movie.
00:34:35	Julie	Host	Have you showed it to your kids? Do they like it?
00:34:38	Andrew	Guest	No, my kids have no interest in seeing my movies.
00:34:41	Julie	Host	Oh no!
00:34:42	Andrew	Guest	Well, my—you know, I've told this before. My son, several years ago, watched <i>Weekend at Bernie's</i> . And he said—he was about 15, I guess, at the time. And he said, "Dad. I love you. That's the stupidest movie I've ever seen."
			To which I said, "Sammy, that's the point! Come on, dude. We made two of those."
			And my daughter some of her friends told her she needed to watch <i>Pretty in Pink</i> . She's 14 now. I guess she was 13 at the time. And so, she watched the trailer for <i>Pretty in Pink</i> and saw me kissing Molly and said, "I don't wanna—I'm not watching some movie where you're kissing some other woman. I'm not watching that." So, no. They have not seen— <i>[chuckling]</i> it's ancient history.
00:35:17	Julie	Host	<i>Weekend at Bernie's</i> saved you, you wrote, after a run of flops. It is a wonderful, goofy, extremely stupid, underrated movie.
00:35:25	Andrew	Guest	I love <i>Bernie</i> . I think <i>Bernie's</i> great. I—you know, <i>Bernie</i> lives.
00:35:26	Julie	Host	I don't really have a question. I just sort of wanted to share that.
			<i>[They laugh.]</i>
00:35:30	Andrew	Guest	Well, I'd say—when I said that in the book, I said, " <i>Bernie</i> saved my life." It was a good transition for the—for the—to start the next chapter! But it also—
00:35:37	Julie	Host	It was an act break. Yeah.
00:35:38	Andrew	Guest	It also—yeah, it was a good act break. And also, I just enjoyed it so much. I hadn't gotten a chance to play comedy like that and to play

			that part. To play this sort of jerk. And, you know, I found that really—
00:35:47	Julie	Host	Well, you got to be the guy with the swagger, not the one who’s—you know, sensitive and hurt and gets the girl.
00:35:53	Andrew	Guest	Yeah. And that was the part they asked me to do. And because I had been—I was successful at that time, I said, “I don’t wanna play that. I wanna play the other part.”
			And he went, “Okay, sure.” So, yeah. I loved that. But that was a—and I based that entirely on my—my friend. A friend of mine. Everything about it. The look, his purple high tops. The Hawaiian shirts. The shorts. The idiotic attitude. <i>[Laughs.]</i> All of it was just—I just imitated my friend.
00:36:15	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:36:17	Clip	Clip	Larry (<i>Weekend at Bernie’s</i>): What kind of a host invites you to his house for the weekend and dies on you?! I—why would he do this, huh? I mean, he had everything. A house, the cars, women. This is tragic. I don’t understand why he couldn’t wait until Monday to kill himself.
			Richard: Look, we—we—we have to call the police. Huh?
			Larry: I mean—and how am I gonna get back to the city? He promised me a ride.
			Richard: Knock it off, Larry! Who cares about a ride? We’re talking death, here.
			Larry: I mean, this is just my luck! I finally catch a break at the office, finally see some light at the end of the tunnel, and WHAM! GONE! <i>[A loud thump.]</i> Wait a minute. Wait a minute. What am I gonna tell them? Huh? I mean, they might think we had something to do with it. You know, I told everyone at the office we were going out to Bernie’s house for the weekend. They were so jealous! I mean, I loved it! Now what am I gonna tell them?!
00:37:11	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:37:12	Julie	Host	You wrote about a lot of obviously very personal stuff in this book. You mention your drinking. You mention your dad, with whom you’ve had a complicated relationship. And I wondered what was the hardest thing about writing this book? Was it that stuff or was it sort of more of the connecting the dots?
00:37:30	Andrew	Guest	Well, there were three things that were important, if you were to be interested and learn about that time in my life. And one was I was successful in movies. One was that I had drinking issue. And one, that my father and my relationship was very fraught and got worse the more successful I got. And to take any one of those two—it’s like a three-legged stool, and to take any one of those out, you would not be getting the complete story of what happened. So, I first wrote sort of all the professional kind of stuff and then I layered in the drinking and then my father stuff. Were they—those weren’t particularly hard to write about in the sense I’ve talked about my drinking in the past. You know, and it’s a long time ago, so it’s not—so, it’s fine.

I probably wouldn't have talked about my dad if I hadn't have reconciled with my dad before he died. I would have just, out of respect for that I guess, left that alone. But now—you know, my dad—he was freewheeling. He didn't—he had no secrets. *[Laughing.]* So, I mean, he didn't—that was fine. I had more difficulty writing about the moments like when I was at the Paramount 75th anniversary event and I was so hungover and just—it felt like such a wonderful opportunity. I was surrounded—you know, I'm invited to be in this event with all these legends of like, you know—there's Gregory Peck and Charlton Heston and James Stewart and Olivia de Havilland and Liz Taylor. One after—you know, Robert De Niro. Whatever. And one after another. 75 of them. Hundreds—however many that were there. And little Andy's there.

And I was so hungover and so sort of ashamed of myself, because I just felt so a mess that opportunities like that, that I sort of squandered—I don't really have regrets, but that one had been like, "Ah. Come on. Would've been nicer to handle that a little better." So, moments like that to really sort of go back and sort of unpack were like, "Yeah, no, that was not your best moment."

00:39:20 Julie Host

It seems like the hangover is where the bad parts—when you talk about the effect of alcoholism on—

00:39:25 Andrew Guest

Well, it's a—I mean, I suppose the fear. And the hangovers would unleash, I suppose, great fear. And then what do you do to get rid of fear, but you drink more. And so—you know, and then you start to cycle over again. And then when you're drinking, you know, you're hiding. And so, then—you know, it's just a vicious kind of thing. And you know, the beauty of drinking is that everybody's exactly the same. Everybody thinks they're unique in doing—and getting over and all this stuff. And you're all just—you're a dime a dozen. *[Chuckles.]* You know? It's just—drinking snuck up on me. I wanted to become a drinker. You know? All the actors I admired were kind of drinkers and all that and I wanted to become it, so I made myself a drinker. I was a very apt pupil.

And then, you know, drink works until it doesn't and then it turns around at some invisible point and consumes the very thing that you were—it was helping you with. And so, you know, that line—like, I think I quote it in the book is, "A man takes a drink. The drink takes a drink. Then the drink takes the man." I think is very apt. And yeah. So—but, you know, again that's just a dime a dozen story. And—so, I drank for several years. It took me several years to realize I had a problem and several years to do something about it. And it affected your acting?

00:40:33 Julie Host

00:40:35 Andrew Guest

Oh, sure. Of course. Of course. I mean, like I always say, though—I'm always careful to say that my success in movies did not cause my drinking. My drinking was very much in and of itself. And it certainly affected my acting, hugely, in an adverse way. But I didn't drink as a reaction to anything except itself. But certainly, it affected my acting in a very adverse way. And, you know, right when I really needed to be pivoting and trying to do more—upping my game, I opted out and took another drink. You know? So.

But again, you know, the ground—the rubble of that, of my drinking, is the foundation for the rest of my life. So, it's turned into a great

gift as well. You know, the same way [chuckling]—you know, the Brat Pack—to bring it back to that for just a second—is that it was what I perceived to be this very negative thing has ultimately been one of the greatest blessings of my life. You know? I could have been in the exact same movies and if the Brat Pack label didn't exist, we wouldn't be talking today. You know? It elevated all of us. And, as much as it contained us and stigmatized us, it elevated us all into this kind of culturally iconic position that would never have existed if it were just simply the movies.

00:41:46 Julie Host

You talk about your reluctance to brand yourself. You didn't have a word for it, then. But it almost was as though that article had done that for you. And I imagine that must have been challenging.

00:41:54 Andrew Guest

Oh, certainly we were branded. Yeah, I mean, your brand is a brat. Your brand is unprofessional, untrained. That was one of the things that really bothered me, 'cause one of the things the article said—

00:42:02 Julie Host

Oh yeah, you went to acting school! [Chuckles.] Screw you!

00:42:03 Andrew Guest

It said how the actors bragged about not being trained and I was very—all I wanted to do was train to be an actor! So, it just felt like I was, "Well, wait, this isn't who I am!" And so, I felt unseen. Like we were talking before, about people wanting to be seen and heard. I felt unseen. I felt seen for something that I was not. And that—and I felt utterly powerless to alter that. And that's why later, when I started writing and travel writing and things, I was very careful to write for, you know, *The New York Times* and *National Geographic*. You know, these outlets that were respectable, so that when I was sort of outed for being this actor, kind of would get them to go, "Oh, well, no. He's—we can't dismiss him because he's—I branded myself in that, you know, I was very actively conscious about that.

And directing, too. I wanted to direct good shows so that it's—you know, 'cause you're very quickly, you know, boxed in. Unless you actively don't be. You know?

00:42:59 Julie Host

When was the transition between acting and writing? Was there a sort of a period in the middle where you were figuring things out? Was it sort of seamless? Was there an overlap?

00:43:12 Andrew Guest

I was successful for... six, seven years in acting, really. And then I chased it for another decade. You know, and I discovered travel writing. You know, that's a longer story. But I began traveling a lot, and—

00:43:25 Julie Host

I read that book, too!

00:43:27 Andrew Guest

[Laughs.] And yeah, it's a different book. And so, yeah, I—you know, I wrote for about ten years before I actively started to try and do something with my writing, because I was a terrible student in school, and I didn't feel I had—I didn't feel I was smart or capable of writing in that way. So, I just wrote for myself and then eventually I wanted to do something with it and then I became successful at that, because—and largely because I—the same thing we were talking about, about directing. I knew to tell a story. And—you know, and so, I employed tools I knew from acting and then later that helped me with directing. You know, the notion of "tell a story".

Because in directing, you wanna be—you have to be very objective and a bird's eye view. And then you have to be very subjective at the same—at the next moment. You know? So, all those kind of things went together.

00:44:17	Julie	Host	And then, back to just your first role, which was as the Artful Dodger in your high school production of <i>Oliver</i> .
			<i>[Andrew chuckles.]</i>
00:44:33	Andrew	Guest	I wanted to know; at what point did you know you wanted that role? Because it seemed like you were the opposite of a ham. And...
00:44:35	Julie	Host	I was very much the opposite of a ham. And always have been.
00:44:42	Andrew	Guest	So, what made you be a loudmouth in a big old musical in that cockney, you know—that's like the hammiest role in that show.
00:44:44	Julie	Host	It's not hammy at all! No, no, no! He's very—
00:44:45	Andrew	Guest	Artful Dodger?!
00:44:46	Julie	Host	No, he's not hammy at all! He's very sort of—
00:44:48	Andrew	Guest	How'd you do it?
			I've been playing the same part ever since. I mean, it was the best role I ever had, and I play ever role the same. <i>[Laughing.]</i> I have a joke. But, uh—
00:44:54	Julie	Host	The quiet conman?
00:44:56	Andrew	Guest	He's not a conman. He's just very clever and observant and facile and very affectionate. Anyway.
00:45:06	Julie	Host	I—no, I love this! I wanna talk about the Artful Dodger more.
00:45:08	Andrew	Guest	<i>[Laughs.]</i> I mean—but how did I know I wanted that? I didn't—when I was auditioning and someone else was gonna get the part, I was—I remember it clearly, when I was—you know. I had been cut from the basketball team. My mom said, "Try out for the play." I'm like, "I don't wanna be in the play. I wanna be the point guard." And I tried out for the play. And it looked like I was gonna get it, and then this other kid—Matthew Quilty; he was a lovely guy—and he had a very much prettier voice than I did and was taller and better looking than I was. So, he was suddenly favored for the part. And I remember wanting. For the first time in my life, I went, "That's mine." And stepping up in a way that I had no awareness of doing ever before—or ability to do before. And just getting that.
			And then, of course, then I stepped out onstage as the Artful Dodger and my life just changed. It just was like—I—there I was.
00:45:59	Julie	Host	I think I just have one more question, which I think I asked you already, but I'm gonna ask it again 'cause it's important. Did you set out to make us all fall in love with you?
			<i>[They laugh.]</i>
			Were you tapping into wanting to be loved by every woman watching you, onscreen? Over and over and over again? Or was it just a lucky—just a lucky accident?
00:46:18	Andrew	Guest	Just the luck of the draw. <i>[Chuckles.]</i>
00:46:20	Julie	Host	Ugh, you're killing me.
00:46:21	Jesse	Host	Andrew McCarthy. His book, <i>Brat: An '80s Story</i> , is available for purchase at your favorite local bookstore. It's a great read. Thanks to our friend Julie Klausner for interviewing Andrew this week. Julie is the host of the very, very funny podcast <i>DOUBLE THREAT</i> , alongside our friend and upcoming <i>Bullseye</i> guest, Tom Scharpling. So, give <i>DOUBLE THREAT</i> a listen. Julie's the best.
00:46:45	Music	Transition	Thumpy, upbeat music.
00:46:47	Jesse	Host	That's the end of another episode of <i>Bullseye</i> . <i>Bullseye</i> , created from the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around

Los Angeles, California. We are, once in a while, inside the office these days. My producer, Kevin, was at our office overlooking beautiful MacArthur Park and he saw a man riding his bicycle down the ramp that goes into the lake to scare away geese or something. But then his bike fell over in the water, and he got all gross and wet. So, our thoughts are with that guy.

The show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our senior producer is Kevin Ferguson. Our producer is Jesus Ambrosio. Production fellows at Maximum Fun are Richard Robey and Valerie Moffat. We get help from Casey O'Brien. 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, for sharing it. The Go! Team's new record, *Get up Sequences Part One*, is out now! It is hot. Go get it. Go! Team, they rule.

You can also 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.

00:48:04 Promo Promo

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

00:48:14 Jesse Promo

[Music fades out.]

Hey, there! *[Chuckles.]* You just listened to a whole episode of *Bullseye*, credits and all! First of all, thank you for doing that. Second, we would like you, still, to take a quick survey so we can learn what you think about NPR shows like *Bullseye*. The survey link is NPR.org/podcastsurvey. It doesn't take long. Your answers are completely anonymous. That's NPR.org/podcastsurvey. And thank you.