

00:00:00	Music	Transition	Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue.
00:00:01	Promo	Promo	<b>Speaker:</b> <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of <a href="http://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> and is distributed by NPR.
00:00:13	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.
00:00:20	Jesse Thorn	Host	It’s <i>Bullseye</i> . I’m Jesse Thorn. Our guest is Aidy Bryant. She’s being interviewed by our friend and correspondent, Tre’vell Anderson. Odds are, you know Aidy Bryant from <i>Saturday Night Live</i> . She’s been in the cast now for almost a decade. On the show, she’s done killer impressions of Ted Cruz, Sarah Huckabee Sanders, and she sang on an <i>SNL</i> holiday classic called “(Do It On My) Twin Bed”.
00:00:44	Music	Music	“(Do It On My) Twin Bed” from <i>Saturday Night Live</i> .  Come on sexy boy, gotta do this quick While my folks are at the pharmacy My mom is sick; she’s got a cough (cough) She got it from Jean (Jean) And now it’s a whole thing with Jean
00:00:59	Jesse	Host	<i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i> The last few years, Aidy has also starred in and written for her own show, <i>Shrill</i> . <i>Shrill</i> is based on the memoir of the same name by Lindy West. <i>Shrill</i> just wrapped up its third and final season, on Hulu, and it has earned Aidy an Emmy nomination for Best Lead Actress in a Comedy Series.  On the show, Bryant plays Annie Easton: a writer living in Portland and struggling to find her voice. She’s got an on-and-off boyfriend who, frankly, should probably be just off. Annie is also fat. She says it herself in the show’s pilot. Unlike, you know, pretty much every other TV show, Annie’s body isn’t treated like a problem to overcome. It doesn’t really define the show, either. Instead, weight and body image come up on the show the way these things show up in real life: insensitive comments from well-meaning family members, insults from strangers, moments of crushing self-doubt. And sometimes, even doctors.  In this scene from the show’s third and final season, Aidy’s character, Annie, has just visited the gynecologist for an annual checkup. She has a new doctor this time. And after the exam, the doctor shares a somewhat out of the blue recommendation: gastric bypass surgery. The doctor hasn’t run any blood tests. It’s obvious she assumed her health based on her appearance. And Annie is, at first, shocked. She doesn’t say anything. But after the appointment, she finds the doctor in the parking lot and that’s when she decides to give that doctor a piece of her mind.  One important visual cue: the doctor is wearing earbuds and doesn’t hear a word Annie says.

00:02:44	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:02:45	Clip	Clip	<b>Annie (<i>Shrill</i>):</b> Hey! Hey, that was <i>[censored]</i> up! You're gonna look at me for ten minutes and tell me to cut my stomach out?! How is that medically ethical? You're a <u>bad</u> person! You're a bad <i>[censored]</i> person! <i>[Censored]</i> you! <i>[Censored]</i> YOU!
00:03:02	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:03:03	Tre'vell Anderson	Host	Oh yes, we're coming in hot there with a clip from <i>Shrill</i> , starring our guest today, Aidy Bryant. Thanks so much for joining us!
00:03:13	Aidy Bryant	Guest	Oh, thank you for having me. I'm very excited.
00:03:16	Tre'vell	Host	So, I wanted to start off with that clip in particular, because I think it captures just like the tone and the energy of the series so well, for the folks who—for whatever reason—have been living under a rock or don't have a Hulu subscription and haven't seen it yet. But to get us started, I'd love to—if you can—to give folks just an idea of like what the series is about, why they should be watching it.
00:03:39	Aidy	Guest	Yeeeah! I mean, the show is about a young woman <i>[chuckles]</i> who is trying to change her life but not change her body. And she's a fat woman who I think has spent most of her life literally trying to shrink herself <i>[chuckles]</i> and figuratively, too. And so, you know, pretty much in the first season—in the first episode—she has kind of a breakthrough of like, "I'm gonna try and live in a different way." And that's a lot of what this series is, is her trying to find kind of her own self-confidence from within her rather than like external, you know, validation.
00:04:17	Tre'vell	Host	How did the opportunity just first present itself for you to not only star in this series but produce and write it as well?
00:04:25	Aidy	Guest	It was kind of a weird chain of events. But in a nutshell, I had worked with Elizabeth Banks when she hosted <i>SNL</i> , you know, several years ago now. And I heard that she optioned the book <i>Shrill</i> , which I was a huge fan of. The show is based on <i>Shrill</i> , which is written by Lindy West. And I loved the book. It was one of the first times I read a book and I was like, "Oh. I've had every experience in here! I relate to this on so many levels."
			And so, when I heard that Elizabeth optioned the book, I kind of called my agents and was like, "What she's making?" <i>[Giggles.]</i> You know. "Do we know what they're gonna make? I would love to be involved."
			And, weirdly, they were sort of like, "Oh, well, we just got a call from Elizabeth's company, and they were calling to see if you'd be interested." So, it was like this weird—
			<i>[Tre'vell reacts with awe.]</i>
			—sort of meant to be <i>[laughs]</i> moment. And then, yeah. I kind of came onboard.
00:05:21	Tre'vell	Host	I love that! What excited you most about like the potential of like adapting the book into a series?
00:05:28	Aidy	Guest	Well, I think the book had a lot of really simple ideas that felt sort of radical. <i>[Laughs.]</i> You know?
			<i>[Tre'vell agrees.]</i>

And I think, for me, I was like, “Oh, that just feels like the heartbeat of a story that would totally translate to television.” And I felt like I knew this character, ‘cause at different points in my life I was her. You know? And especially for a first—you know, I’d been writing and producing television through *SNL* in sort of this like mini version of making a sketch, which is much like how you make an episode of television. It’s kind of the same thing, but really boiled down.

*[Tre’ve ll agrees.]*

And so, I felt like this was kind of in my wheelhouse and like a place where I would feel comfortable to try and put those things to the test.

00:06:18 Tre’ve ll Host

Mm-hm. Did you—I mean, obviously we all know your brilliance from *SNL*, but did you—did you have any like trepidation like stepping—stepping up to be the—like the main person, right? The first on the call sheet with this particular project?

00:06:35 Aidy Guest

Yeah! *[Laughs.]* You hit the nail on the head!

*[Tre’ve ll chuckles.]*

I mean, I think really all my work before this had been completely about ensemble. And I think this show has incredible ensemble, as well.

*[Tre’ve ll agrees emphatically.]*

But certainly, like Annie is the lead character and I’m in nearly every scene. And so, that was a huge adjustment. But it was also a really good thing to sort of push me forward and make me take it on. And to understand that, you know, I was a leader in this capacity and like an executive producer. I was making decisions that would affect our entire crew, down to the PAs. You know? And that mattered to me and was important. So, it was a really wonderful challenge in that way. Yeah.

00:07:23 Tre’ve ll Host

Yeah and one of the things I love about this series—from that very first episode, I think we get an idea of, you know, what Annie is going through, what she’s deciding that she’s not going to tolerate anymore.

*[Aidy agrees.]*

Right? In terms of like how people make assumptions about her health, about her body, about how she moves through the world. And I remember—I feel like when the show came out first, initially—you know, we were in that moment where there was a lot of conversation happening in pop culture about body positivity and about anti-fatness in our society. I’m wondering, you know, now—three seasons later—how you feel like the conversations and the tone, and the perspective brought up in the show reflects or fits into that broader conversation that we’re still having. Right? About the ways in which society and folks are often, you know, anti-fat and fatphobic in a lot of ways without, you know, sometimes thinking about it.

00:08:23 Aidy Guest

Yeah. I mean, I think it’s a really sensitive topic for a lot of people. *[Laughs.]* You know? Actually, most people have strong feelings

about their own body or resenting it and I think for many people, the body positivity movement has been very helpful, and I think for other people it hasn't been enough.

*[Tre'vell agrees.]*

Or it leaves lacking or it doesn't recognize the people who need to be recognized or—there's so many pieces of it. And I think, certainly Lindy's book and her writing and that influence on our show really was clarifying, but I also think it was helpful—at least for me—to just be like, “We're telling one person's story.” *[Laughs.]* “Just this one character's experience of this.” And that made it easier to approach, because there is so much to unpack there. And it's so different for so many people. But I think we're reaching a moment where now a lot of people have a sense of body positivity—whatever that means to them.

I certainly feel a desire to go deeper than that, if that makes sense. Like, go further than just “body positivity” and trying to figure out, you know, our internal biases and all those—I mean, it's—we're doing this in a lot of places right now, is like looking a little bit deeper. And I think that's what we tried to do on the show. Especially in this third season; we're dealing with like internalized fatphobia and those kinds of things, even though she's a fat woman. And it's a start.

00:10:02 Tre'vell Host

Well, that's one of the interesting things—right?—about what you all have done with this show, is we get the opportunity to go on a journey with Annie, in terms of her relationship to her body, her relationship to other people's bodies, and the various kind of complex conversations that an individual—right?—has to have with themselves, as it—as it relates to that. Was that intentional from your standpoint, as a writer and wanting to have this conversation, to be able to show the complexities and sometimes the contradictions? Right? That we have in these—in these ways?

00:10:39 Aidy Guest

Yeah. I mean, I think you're really hitting right on it, which was like we tried to—especially the first season, 'cause it was only six episodes. The first season was very short. We really tried to simplify. You know? And there couldn't be like a million B and C plots. We kind of have to make it like a character study. And so, that really changed I think sort of the focus of the show as a whole, where it really is about watching one person try to transform. And I think she really does and becomes more assertive. I also think it's about her friendship and many other pieces, but ultimately it was sort of like, “We're gonna follow this sort of person's transformation.”

00:11:24 Tre'vell Host

And that was what we were trying to track.

I love the character, in part because she's also a journalist. She's working at this, you know, alt weekly paper. And I love asking actors in particular about like how they prepare to play a journalist, if they prepare at all. Because I'm obviously being vain, if you can't tell.

*[They chuckle.]*

00:11:59 Aidy Guest So, I would love to know what did the broader prep process look like for you in terms of like delving into Annie figuring out what her particular, you know, quirks might be. What did that process look like for you?  
Yeah, I mean, at least as far as trying to become a journalist—and thank you for your approval, 'cause that means everything.

*[They laugh.]*

You know, I was really lucky because Lindy West—who is, you know, has written for alt weekly papers and has written for *The New York Times* and she was also a writer and an executive producer as well. And so, I had like my specimen right next to me in the best way.

*[Tre'vell laughs.]*

And so, you know, she was probably my number one source for being like, “How would you even approach that?” Or, “Would you ever even ask this kind of question?” And we also would return to a lot of her old writing from when she was doing that. You know? That kind of alt weekly type stuff. She went to a strip club buffet and wrote a review and then we wrote an episode based on that. We did a lot of sort of returning to her previous work, but we also—I mean, Portland still has that kind of scene. They have an alt weekly that's still going called *The Mercury* and we went and visited their offices, and it was really inspiring. And it—and you see how it's sort of a community that's really strong, but also struggling to keep hold in this, you know, kind of digital world.

00:13:43 Tre'vell Host And then, you know, as far as like developing her in other ways, I certainly was—you know—*[chuckles]* kind of thinking about who I used to be maybe more in my late teens and early 20s as far as like self-hatred or like little things I would do about like touching my shirt to make sure it wasn't clinging to my body or things like that. Using those pieces to kind of put her together and build her back up.  
Yeah. You mentioned the ensemble and, you know, your other costars who are amazing. I wanna talk just a little bit about Lolly, who plays your best friend and roommate, Fran, throughout the entire series. First of all, love her, think she's amazing. But the chemistry between you two, it's super magnetic. There are plenty of laughs that you all give us.

*[Aidy chuckles.]*

00:14:18 Aidy Guest And plenty of tears, as well. Could you talk about like other cast members that like helped you put this all together?  
Oh, I mean, I think—from what we were talking about earlier—to me, that's like everything, is like the chemistry and the ensemble. But Lolly, in particular, I kind of always think of her as my one true scene partner. *[Chuckles.]* You know? 'Cause the boyfriend characters come and go, but she was always there, and she is so incredibly talented. She's—she's such a funny comedian and can improvise with me, which is huge. But she also has a major handle on these tiny, tiny moves she can do with her face to make something so emotional or so painful. And I think she and I were

both really suited for that—for each other, where we were kind of up for anything and would—we would improvise in dramatic scenes and comedic scenes.

And I don't know that the show would've ever—you know, kind of picked up the steam that it did without her, because I think there is kind of a believable chemistry there, because we're really, really close! *[Laughs.]* In real life! And that makes it very, very easy. And sometimes it made it really emotional to kind of play some of these moments.

00:15:28	Jesse	Host	We've got even more with Aidy Bryant still to come. Stay with us. It's <i>Bullseye</i> , from <a href="https://www.maximumfun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> and NPR.
00:15:34	Music	Transition	Spacy electronic music.
00:15:38	Jesse	Promo	This message comes from NPR sponsor Discover. Discover matches all the cashback you earn 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 <a href="https://www.discover.com/match">Discover.com/match</a> . 2021 Neilson Report. Limitations apply.
00:16:12	Promo	Clip	<i>[Music fades out.]</i> <b>Music:</b> Upbeat string music.  <b>Speaker 1:</b> There are arrowheads in the walls.  <b>Ramtin Arablouei:</b> I'm Ramtin Arablouei.  <b>Rund Abdelfatah:</b> I'm Rund Abdelfatah. And we're the hosts of <i>Throughline</i> , NPR's history podcast.  <b>Ramtin:</b> And for our special series this month, the best of <i>Throughline</i> .  <b>Speaker 2:</b> You know, if we carry on as we have been, this is what we might wind up with.  <b>Rund:</b> Listen now to the <i>Throughline</i> podcast from NPR.
00:16:32	Music	Transition	<i>[Music ends.]</i> Thumpy music with light vocalizations.
00:16:36	Jesse	Host	It's <i>Bullseye</i> . I'm Jesse Thorn. You're listening to Tre'vell Anderson in conversation with Aidy Bryant. The star of <i>Saturday Night Live</i> and <i>Shrill</i> is up for Emmys this year for her work on each of those shows.
00:16:49	Tre'vell	Host	I wanna play a clip from—I believe this is from the final season, season three, of <i>Shrill</i> , which stars our guest, Aidy Bryant, as Annie. Annie is a writer for an alt weekly in Portland. And in the show, she's juggling various insecurities in her love life, family life, at her job. In the third and final season, Annie is single again. Back on the prowl, okay? And in this clip, we hear her in conversation with a contributing illustrator for the publication, Nick, over milkshakes.
00:17:18	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.

00:17:19	Clip	Clip	<p><b>Nick:</b> How would you possibly know that banana's gonna be better than smores?</p> <p><b>Annie:</b> I'm just very good at picking stuff.</p> <p><b>Nick:</b> Uuh, like your boyfriend?</p> <p><b>Annie:</b> Mmm. Wow.</p> <p><b>Nick:</b> Sorry! No, like, bearded shorts.</p> <p><b>Annie:</b> The good thing is we broke up. <i>[Giggles.]</i> So. He's gone.</p> <p><b>Nick:</b> <i>[Awkwardly.]</i> Yeah, I'm sorry. Uh.</p> <p><b>Annie:</b> No, it's okay. It's actually fine. <i>[Chuckles.]</i></p> <p><b>Nick:</b> Actually, me and my girlfriend of six years just broke up. So.</p> <p><b>Annie:</b> Wow. I'm—I'm sorry.</p> <p><b>Nick:</b> It's okay.</p> <p><b>Annie:</b> Are you... seeing anyone else?</p> <p><b>Nick:</b> No. I mean, yeah, but not really. Like kind of dating, but also I think I just wanna be single.</p> <p><b>Annie:</b> Dating is a lot—it's a lot. Music swells and fades.</p>
00:18:04	Sound Effect	Transition	
00:18:05	Tre'vell	Host	<p>Each season of the show, you all delve more and deeper into Annie's love life. And that of Fran, as well, for that matter. Why was it important, you know, for you and for the team to explore kind of those aspects of the character's lives as deeply as you all did? Well, it's deeply attached to body image. You know? Relationships really <i>[chuckles]</i> often define how we feel about each—ourselves and our bodies, the way they look. And I think, you know, in the first two seasons, Annie is sort of—kind of constantly breaking up or getting back together with this one partner. And in this new season, she's having to put herself out there again. And I think for a fat woman, it's a different ballgame. <i>[Chuckles.]</i> Because there are sections of the population who will not even consider dating you because you're fat. And so, there's that kind of fear in approaching any person. And so, that's something we wanted to explore, of like kind of the trepidation and reading signals. It becomes even more mixed, sometimes, when you have sort of a difficult view of yourself.</p>
00:18:26	Aidy	Guest	
00:19:30	Tre'vell	Host	<p>And I think it's a great way to show personal growth! Just within the arc of the story.</p> <p>It makes me think of something you said earlier, when you were talking about balancing the comedic elements with the kind of more serious, dramatic elements. What were the conversations like between you and the other, you know, folks on the writing team about the tone and the kind of thrust that you wanted audiences to take away from what they were seeing onscreen?</p>

00:19:55 Aidy Guest I think early conversations, we decided we wanted to have a pretty grounded tone, partially because—you know, not entirely, but a lot of fat characters that you see are kind of like extremes. Like, cartoonish extremes. *[Chuckles.]* You know? Where like—especially in the romantic scene. I feel like it's a little bit of a Miss Piggy syndrome, where it's like she's gonna jump on the man and crush him and that's her sexual interaction. *[Laughs.]* And we were really wanting to give a fat character dignity in those spaces and keep her human, keep it grounded. And so, we found a really grounded tone, but comedy's also a huge part of who I am and a huge part of—pretty much our entire ensemble is like a comedian in some form.

So, it was really wonderful, 'cause even in our serious scenes, I feel like part of the rhythm of the show we have a lot is like if there's kind of an intense moment, often there's a huge joke at the end that's kind of gonna pull you out of it. Or in big, goofy moments, something at the end of that moment might feel a little more grounded. And it's a little bit of—it's how real life is, honestly. I mean, there are funny moments even at funerals. And that's sometimes hard *[laughs]*. You know?

00:21:12 Tre'vell Host Yeah. I think I—what I was thinking of when you were speaking was, you know—particularly about the ways in which we've seen fat characters before as these extremes. The movie that immediately came to mind for me was *Norbit*. Right?

*[Aidy agrees multiple times as Tre'vell continues.]*

Which is this like romantic comedy, but like all of the comedy is about—you know—the woman's size. Right? And how much of a "issue", quote/unquote, that is for other people around her. And it is deeply—in a lot of ways, it's dehumanizing. Right? Of fat people? You—and I often think about this when it comes to like LGBTQ characters sometimes, particularly Black LGBTQ characters. We're often only the comedic relief onscreen. Right? And never have the ability to be fully realized, you know, people with multidimensional lives and things like that. And I think that is similar with fat characters as well. There are these tropes that fat characters are supposed to fit in. And when you start stepping outside of that, it is—it is a super simple thing, like you mentioned earlier, but also in the grand scheme of things, is radical or revolutionary by a lot of people's, you know, terms.

00:22:27 Aidy Guest Yeah! And I mean, I think it's something that—it's exactly what you're saying, where it's like it becomes dehumanizing. Or it makes people who are real people into caricatures. And ultimately, it's lazy writing. *[Laughs.]* It really is just lazy writing. Like, think a little harder. You know?

*[Tre'vell agrees.]*

I mean, that's—and it's not a reflection of who these people are. Fat people are having meaningful relationships. They are having sexy sex. You know?

*[Tre'vell agrees.]*



			Same with LGBTQ characters. It's like—it is—I think it's the great difference of having the people who have lived the stories in the writer's room. And it changes things so drastically from then other people's perceptions, which often are sort of stereotypes or these cartoonish versions of people that really probably have never existed. <i>[Chuckles.]</i>
00:23:22	Tre'vell	Guest	Right. Is there an episode or like an onset memory that, you know, now that the series is over, that sticks with you and sticks out in your mind as like particularly a great time? Or something that just you can't get out of your head when you think back about the journey of <i>Shrill</i> ?
00:23:42	Aidy	Guest	Oh gosh. I mean, there's lots of really wonderful—I think the one that I really remember, and that people ask me about a lot is the pool party, the fat—all fat babes pool party in the first season. Which was really like just a very special experience, 'cause it was sort of like actually just attending <i>[chuckles]</i> a pool party, surrounded by fat people who were all in swimsuits and living comfortably. And it was really thrilling to be around and, you know, the folks that worked background those two days—they were—they were kind of living it themselves. You know? And like dancing and eating and hanging out between takes. And I think the mood was so infectious. I mean, some of our crew was like in tears at the monitors, 'cause it really just felt very free.
00:24:34	Tre'vell	Host	Mm. Mmm. That was a whole setup for me to tell you what my favorite scene is, by the way.  <i>[They giggle.]</i>  Which is! I think it's from the first season. I think we have a clip of a portion of the scene in which your character, Annie—like a lot of women or Black folks or other, you know, folks of color online—is getting like harassed and trolled by this guy and Annie ends up finding the troll, going to his house, knocking on his door, and he answers. Take a listen, y'all.
00:25:08	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:25:09	Clip	Clip	<b>Annie:</b> So, you are him. You're the <i>[censored]</i> monster who's been torturing me every day.  <b>Speaker:</b> I don't—I don't torture you. I'm just expressing my opinion.  <b>Annie:</b> <i>[Speaking over him.]</i> Yeah, shut up. Just shut up. Do you know how <i>[censored]</i> lame it is that you spend so much time trying to hurt a complete stranger? I'm a real person. And I'm just trying to go to work and do my job and you're calling me a pig every day?! And you threaten to kill me, and you talk about my—my family?! And what I don't understand the most is why? Is it because I'm not the type of girl you wanna <i>[censored]</i> ? Or maybe is it because I am the type of girl you wanna <i>[censored]</i> , but you're too chicken <i>[censored]</i> to admit it? Either way, it doesn't matter because <i>[censored]</i> you. <i>[Censored]</i> you, <i>[censored]</i> you! I <i>[censored]</i> hate you.
00:25:59	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.

00:26:00 Tre'vell Host I love that scene because I remember when I was working at *The LA Times*, earlier in my career, covering diversity in Hollywood with a focus on Black and queer film. I would get a lot of emails from readers that were the most insane things that you can imagine. You know, saying—all of the epithets you can think of came my way. And it was—it was empowering for me to see Annie find her troll, confront him. She also, uh, breaks out his car window.

*[Aidy giggles.]*

Which is the best part of the scene. *[Laughs.]* But I wanna ask about the importance or the reason why you all, as a team, wanted to have that scene of her confronting this guy who has caused a lot of problems for her?

00:26:57 Aidy Guest Part of it was just based on the book. I mean, that is Lindy's own experience. You know, not exactly that. She didn't smash anyone's car window!

*[Tre'vell giggles.]*

But she did experience extremely targeted harassment. And to an extreme degree, where she was in danger at times. And... I think that is, of course—I mean, just like what you experienced, that's gonna change you on some level. You know?

*[Tre'vell agrees.]*

And I think Lindy did have the opportunity to meet someone who was trolling her and who had done some very cruel things to her and when they were in person, he really sort of folded and apologized and—you know, I think that's a big theme of our show is sort of like rehumanizing people who have been dismissed as something caricature-y or just a sort of thing to grab onto as like hateful and—you know? And so, yeah. It was just—it was a natural part of the story because of her book, and I also think it's the experience of being an othered person trying to be a public person—that it just is, unfortunately.

00:28:18 Tre'vell Host One of the reasons why you're here is 'cause you are a double Emmy nominee this year for your lead role in this final season of *Shrill* as well as a supporting actress nom for your work on *SNL*. I'd love to know what you were doing when the Emmy nominations came out. Were you—were you up at five o'clock in the morning watching? Or were you sleeping?

00:28:41 Aidy Guest *[Laughs.]* I can't like engage with like award stuff, otherwise it would like make me crazy.

*[Tre'vell laughs and agrees.]*

You know what I mean? So, I've sort of taken a very passive experience of the whole thing. So, I didn't even know that they were announcing. And I was in LA and my husband was in New York and so we were just on Facetime, like kind of chatting 'cause we hadn't gotten to talk the day before. And all of the sudden, at like 7:30 in the morning or whatever it was, I got probably 40 texts within like five seconds. And it made me think something bad had happened, honestly! I was really scared. Like I thought someone had died.

[They laugh.]

But then when I opened—and—‘cause also, they didn’t say like, “You were just nominated for an Emmy.” They were just things like, “Ahhh!” Or like, exclamation points or like—you know. And so, I was like trying really hard to put together what was happening. And then eventually I saw, like, “Double nom,” and I was like, “Okay, I think I just got nominated.” But even then, I didn’t—I didn’t totally understand what was happening. Took me a minute.

[They laugh.]

00:29:49	Tre'vell	Host	How does it feel to be recognized for this final season of <i>Shrill</i> ?
00:29:57	Aidy	Guest	Oh, it’s—it means a lot. I mean, it was very, very unexpected. So, that was certainly thrilling. [Laughs.] And I think it’s our best season and I think we did get to go a lot deeper on some of these issues that we’ve been writing around. And I was really proud of my performance; it was really hard to do it in covid and to stay connected with our crew and our cast, but I feel like we did something that was incredibly challenging. And so, you know, especially to be recognized now is—it means a lot and it’s a really nice cherry on top to sort of say goodbye to this chapter.
00:30:34	Tre'vell	Host	Yeah. I wanted to ask about how the pandemic—which we’re still living through, right?—impacted the production of that last season. In what ways were things different for you?
00:30:47	Aidy	Guest	I mean, honestly? In every way. [Laughs.] Like, you know—very weirdly, we were sort of picked up for our third season right as lockdown was starting. And so, the entire experience of making <i>Shrill</i> this season happened through the pandemic. We wrote in a Zoom writers’ room in May and June. Those were early days still of the pandemic. And then we were planning to film in the summer, but continued to get pushed because of surges and so, ultimately, we filmed in October, November, and December—which there were also surges during that time, ‘cause of the holidays. And it was so difficult. [Chuckles.] You know?

And there were major writing challenges. There couldn’t be party scenes and we had to limit physical contact, or we wrote around our actor’s comfort, as well. I mean, I really didn’t wanna put anyone in a position where they had to do something that they didn’t feel comfortable doing. So, it was a lot of checking in—even more so than usual. And then, similar—like, the editing process and putting the music in the show. These are all things that normally we would have in-person meetings or be able to get together and talk about that we did it all via Zoom and all remotely. So.

In some ways, it made doing *SNL* at the same time easier, ‘cause I could do it from my office at *SNL* or from my room. But it was definitely [chuckles] a huge challenge.

00:32:18	Jesse	Host	We’ll finish up with Aidy Bryant in just a minute. Still on the docket: with <i>Shrill</i> wrapping up, Aidy has a lot more time on her hands, more projects she can work on. What did she learn from that? The answer after the break. It’s <i>Bullseye</i> , from <a href="https://www.maximumfun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> and NPR.
00:32:34	Music	Transition	Chiming synth music.
00:32:37	Jesse	Promo	This message comes from NPR sponsor Odoo.

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00:33:11	Promo	Clip	<p><i>[Music fades out.]</i></p> <p><b>Music:</b> Light, rhythmic keyboard over drums plays in background.</p> <p><b>Tre'vell Anderson:</b> Hey there, beautiful people! Did you hear that good, good news?</p> <p><b>Jarrett Hill:</b> Something about the baby Jesus?</p> <p><b>Tre'vell:</b> Mmmm! He's coming back! <i>[Laughs.]</i></p> <p><b>Jarrett:</b> Or—do you mean the fact that Apple Podcasts has named <i>FANTI</i> one of <u>the</u> best shows of 2020?</p> <p><b>Tre'vell:</b> I mean, we already knew that we was hot stuff, but a little external validation never hurts. Okay?</p> <p><b>Jarrett:</b> <i>[Through laughter]</i> Hosted by me, writer and journalist Jarrett Hill.</p> <p><b>Tre'vell:</b> And me, the ebony enchantress myself—</p> <p><i>[Jarrett laughs.]</i></p> <p><b>Tre'vell:</b> —Tre'vell Anderson.</p> <p><b>Jarrett:</b> <i>FANTI</i> is your home for complex conversations about the grey areas in our lives; the people, places, and things we're huge fans of but got some anti feelings toward.</p> <p><b>Tre'vell:</b> You name it, we <i>FANTI</i> it. Nobody's off-limits.</p> <p><b>Jarrett:</b> Check us out every Thursday on <a href="https://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> or wherever you get your slay-worthy audio.</p> <p><i>[Music ends.]</i></p>
00:33:57	Music	Transition	Relaxed music.
00:34:02	Jesse	Host	It's <i>Bullseye</i> . I'm Jesse Thorn. Our guest, Aidy Bryant, is the star of Hulu's <i>Shrill</i> and a veteran cast member on <i>Saturday Night Live</i> . She's being interviewed by Tre'vell Anderson.
00:34:14	Tre'vell	Host	I'm gonna ask you about <i>SNL</i> in a minute, but I've been interviewing a lot of like artists and creatives over the last year and so many people have talked about how, you know—how the lockdown, how—you know, having to stop everything, particularly for us in this industry—was deeply clarifying for them in their art, in how they go about or how they go about now doing the work that they do. Is that a similar experience for you? Do you feel like, you

00:34:54 Aidy Guest know, this last year and a half has shifted anything in how you wanna go about doing the work that you do?  
I mean, definitely. I think we all [chuckles] hopefully are changed for the better in some way from this. It's—I feel more protective and more boundaried about my kind of private time. [Laughs.] You know?

[Tre'vell agrees.]

Time for myself, time for my family and my husband, and—'cause, certainly—you know, I've been doing *SNL* and *Shrill* at the same time for almost four years, now. And it's not a healthy schedule.

[They chuckle.]

And I think, in a weird way, the show ending is obviously painful, and I will miss it very much. But I also think it's a big opportunity for me to protect myself better. You know? And take care of myself and actually protect time for creativity and thinking over an idea longer rather than feeling like, "Okay, I have the idea. I've gotta type it up now, send it over, let's get it going." You know? There's more room for creativity in having a little bit of space [chuckles] to check in with yourself.

00:35:55 Tre'vell Host What does doing *SNL* like give you or provide for you as a artist, as a creative, that perhaps—you know—doing series work doesn't let you do? Or vice versa.

00:36:08 Aidy Guest Yeah, I mean, they're really different shows. They're really, really different shows and they're really different styles of performance. I mean, sketch comedy is almost like clown work. You know? It's big reactions and goofy voices and a crazy wig or like dress me as a chicken. You know?!

[They chuckle.]

That's really like a wonderful thing to do. You know? It's like silly and less pressure in some ways and it allows me to like write into these fantastical situations. And I love that. You know? And it really is like a piece of who I am. But I think *Shrill* also really allowed me to kind of dig deeper and be more introspective and perform things that I never would've performed maybe on *SNL*. I mean, certainly like scenes where I'm crying, or sex scenes was like whole new territory for me. But I actually think they made me better on *SNL* and what I do at *SNL* makes me better on *Shrill*. They kind of feed each other in a nice way.

00:37:15 Tre'vell Host I wanna play a clip from this past season of *SNL*. And y'all did a lot of like pre-recorded segments filmed remotely, you know, by the cast members. In this bit that we're about to listen to, our guest—Aidy Bryant—shares details from some of her actual childhood journals. Let's take a listen.

00:37:34 Sound Effect Transition Music swells and fades.

00:37:35 Clip Clip **Music:** Cheerful, plucky music.

**Aidy (Saturday Night Live):** At this point, I was nine years old and what are nine-year-olds in love with? Horses. No. Pop stars. No. The answer is turtles, okay? And I loved turtles so much, but not

enough to learn how to spell the word. And so, I doubled down hard on “turtels”. *[Grandly.]* Turtels, turtels! Turteeels! But at the bottom, here, I’ve made an important note, and it’s coming from a speech bubble from no one. “But I won’t eat them.” So, don’t think I was gonna eat my turtles, guys.

00:38:08 Sound Effect Transition

Music swells and fades.

00:38:09 Tre’ve

Host

*[Laughs.]* What was it like doing these types of sketches and things from your home or from your office?

00:38:19 Aidy

Guest

Oh gosh. Um. I mean, I’m not gonna lie. It was really hard.

*[Laughs.]* It was really, really hard.

*[Tre’ve laughs.]*

Partially because—I mean, now I’m much better at setting up a microphone or setting up a camera or making sure it’s lit in a way that’s gonna work for the show. Certainly, that’s stuff that I didn’t know how to do and... and also, I mean, those shows especially were like early, early, early in the pandemic and—you know, a few blocks from my house, there was also like refrigerated trucks for bodies. And—and sirens constantly. And we lost a beloved, beloved member of our crew, Hal Willner. And many of our cast members and crew members were losing family members. So, it was really like two realities at once.

*[Tre’ve affirms.]*

Which was like one is, “I’m trying to film myself in a goofy hat that I found at the bottom of my closet.” And the other is the reality of what was happening and how frightening it was and also how much New York was sort of on the forefront of that and so, it was really hard. It was really, really odd but I’m really proud of those shows and I think because of the circumstances, we all wrote things that I don’t think we ever would have written, because of these weird parameters that were brought on by the pandemic. And so, I feel really proud of those and also they were an incredible, incredible effort by our crew. I mean, they were downloading files from a bunch of us who like had taken improv classes. We didn’t know what the hell we were doing.

*[Tre’ve giggles.]*

So, they were explaining everything to us, and they deserve a gold medal for that. It was like patience—absolute patience personified.

*[Laughs.]*

00:40:13 Tre’ve

Host

Do you have a favorite sketch from your time on the show? Or a favorite character? ‘Cause you play some recurring characters, as well.

00:40:23 Aidy

Guest

Oh gosh! I mean, honestly I’ve been on the show so long *[laughs]* like, it’s hard.

*[Tre’ve chuckles.]*

It’s hard, ‘cause I almost feel like there’s different phases or stages where it’s like those early wins meant so much more—having my first piece on that I wrote or some of those things. One of my first

pre-tape videos that I ever wrote was “(Do It in My) Twin Bed”, which was like a music video that we did with all the girls, and it sort of started this trend of doing these like all-girl music videos for *SNL*. And, you know, basically it was just a chance for us to like act like Pussycat Dolls and kind of strut around and say stupid stuff. But I was really proud of those, in those early days. ‘Cause it just felt like I was at least finding my way on the show. But then, you know, there’s other things later in the show that—it’s like it kind of changes every couple of years. *[Chuckles.]*

00:41:22 Tre’veil Host

I want to play one of the—this is from the episode when Cardi B was there and you play a character—I guess—you play yourself, but then an alter ego version of yourself called Aidy B. Can we play that?

00:41:37 Sound Effect Transition

Music swells and fades.

00:41:38 Clip Clip

**Speaker:** Could you do a quick shoutout for *SNL*’s Instagram?

**Aidy:** Oh yeah, of course! Okay, so what should I say?

**Speaker:** Just say something to the fans.

**Aidy:** Okay.

*[A steady beat fades in.]*

**Aidy:** *[Rapping as Aidy B.]* Oooow, stop asking me about the show. The cast sucks. The writers are stupid. I *[censored]* them all. They were boring. So, live from the Bronx, y’all can shut the *[censored]* up!

*[The audience laughs and the music ends.]*

**Aidy:** *[Herself again.]* And then I—I’m sorry, do I hit send or just—?

**Speaker:** *[Shocked.]* Yeah. Yeah. That was good.

**Aidy:** Yaaay! Cardi, your music has changed my life. It honestly inspired me to just say what’s on my mind. So, thank you.

00:42:09 Clip Clip

**Cardi B:** You know I do it for my faaans! Yeah!

*[The audience gets excited.]*

**Aidy:** And I am a fan, but maybe also your best friend. We’re pretty much the same.

*[The audience laughs.]*

**Cardi B:** Uh, can you please go get me some water? *[Whispering.]* I’m a little parched.

**Aidy:** Oh! Uh, sure. Unless you want me to just stay.

**Cardi B:** Nooo!

**Aidy:** I have a lot of very short songs that I’ve written.

00:42:29	Sound Effect	Transition	<b>Cardi B:</b> <i>[With strained playfulness.]</i> No! Music swells and fades.
00:42:30	Tre'vell	Host	<i>[They laugh.]</i>
00:42:55	Aidy	Guest	<p>I'm always amazed at how y'all keep it funny after all of these years. And I imagine that part of that is because, you know, you have new cast members coming in. You have—the host rotates, right? Every single week. Could you talk a little bit just about what that process looks like and how you all come up with your various ideas?</p> <p>Yeah! I mean, it's kind of the thrill of the show is that every week is different. 'Cause there's a new host and so you kind of never know what you're gonna get. And it's a great source of inspiration every week! But yeah, the process for making the show is kind of about finding new ideas. So, like Monday we pitch an idea to the host and to the writer's room and it's kind of just a way to get the juices flowing and kind of see the host's vibe. Like kind of—you know when you get into a room with someone and you're like, "Oh! You're kind of taller than I thought! Or sexier than I thought!" Or whatever.</p> <p><i>[Tre'vell laughs and confirms.]</i></p> <p>You know? Like—and so, then you're like, "Okay, maybe I'll write them that way." And so, that's part of it. And then, Tuesdays we write those sketches. Wednesday we read them. Then some get chosen and then Thursday and Friday, we rehearse and film the videos and then Saturday we rehearse again and then do dress rehearsal and that's the show. So, it's a really quick process. And so, you learn to be really <i>[chuckles]</i> free and not precious with your ideas, as far as like, "They're gonna come, they're gonna go. You've gotta think of more. Okay, last week sucked, but it's over and we're onto a new one. Here we go again." It helped me a lot to be less <i>[laughs]</i>—to loosen my grip on my own ideas.</p> <p><i>[They chuckle.]</i></p>
00:44:22	Tre'vell	Host	As we—as we wrap up, I'd love to know how like both the experience of the three seasons, on <i>Shrill</i> , and your time on <i>SNL</i> have like influenced or impacted how you plan to like chart your path and your career, going forward? Like what have these experiences like taught you about yourself and the type of storytelling that you wanna do?
00:44:45	Aidy	Guest	It's taught me a lot! <i>[Laughs.]</i> So much! And I think it—the main thing it's taught me is to trust my gut and to kind of take it one hour at a time. 'Cause I think there's so much uncertainty in really most businesses, but particularly in entertainment, 'cause it's like, "Oh, are you doing this? Are you doing that? You're auditioning for something." It's just—it can be hard to grab onto something and I think, for me, it's just like, I gotta take it minute by minute. So, I don't have like a huge trajectory that I'm trying to hit. And I don't feel a ton of pressure. I kind of am just trying to be inspired and creative and follow those kind of notions. You know?

And—I mean, I loved writing *Shrill*, and it was extremely cathartic. And so, I think those are themes that are naturally important to me, and I'll continue to write around them. But I would love to come at



			them from different angles or different perspectives. And I think I'll just continue to do that and see where it takes me.
00:45:56	Tre'vell	Host	Is there a mantra or like a quote that like has stuck with you that you use as a—as a way of like—just like figuring out how to move through the world that you're open to share?
00:46:10	Aidy	Guest	I don't know that I would have liked called this my mantra, but I do think it's something that I like go back to a lot, is—especially 'cause at <i>SNL</i> there's so much nerves and there's so much adrenaline and it's live and you're put into these extreme scenarios, is that the thing that I often return to is sort of like, "You know how to do this. You know how to do this." You know? Like, I know how to get onstage and make people laugh. Or I know how to—I can do it. I've done it for, you know, close to 15 years now. I know how to do this.
			And it really helps when I feel kind of freaked out, even in making decisions about, you know, projects to say no to or yes to. It's kind of like going back to just checking in with that inner voice and being like, "You know what to do. You know how to do this."
00:47:01	Tre'vell	Host	I love that. I love that and I think that's a perfect place to end it. Everybody who's listening, make sure you watch <i>Shrill</i> , available on Hulu. Aidy Bryant, thanks so much for joining us.
00:47:11	Aidy	Guest	Thank you. Thanks for your really thoughtful questions. That was really wonderful.
00:47:16	Music	Transition	Thumpy synth music.
00:47:17	Jesse	Host	Aidy Bryant. The third and final season of her show, <i>Shrill</i> , is streaming now on Hulu. Go check that out. She has been nominated for Best Lead Actress in a Comedy for that one. She's also up for Best Supporting Actress in a Comedy Series for her work on <i>Saturday Night Live</i> . Our thanks to Tre'vell Anderson, for interviewing Aidy. They are the host of the great Maximum Fun podcast, <i>FANTI</i> , where they and Jarrett Hill talk about complicated, conflicted, and nuanced issues in popular culture. You can find <i>FANTI</i> wherever you get your podcasts.
			Also, Tre'vell just wrote a stunning profile of Lil' Nas X for this month's issue of <i>Out Magazine</i> , so go check that out.
			<i>[Music fades out.]</i>
00:48:01	Music	Transition	Soft, futuristic music.
00:48:04	Jesse	Host	That's the end of another episode of <i>Bullseye</i> . <i>Bullseye</i> is created from the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California. Here at my house, my daughter has created her own set of Mystery Science Theater 3000 robots, including <i>[laughs]</i> —including a Ken doll fashioned to look like Jonah Ray—to watch cheesy movies with her.
			Our 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.

00:49:07

Promo

Promo

You can also keep up with our show on Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. We post our interviews there. And I think that's it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.

**Speaker:** *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn* is a production of [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and is distributed by NPR.

*[Music fades out.]*