

00:00:00	Music	Transition	Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue.
00:00:01	Promo	Promo	Speaker: <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of MaximumFun.org 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.
00:00:19	Jesse Thorn	Host	It's <i>Bullseye</i> . I'm Jesse Thorn. Sam Richardson is an actor. His breakthrough role came in <i>Veep</i> , the HBO show starring Julia Louis-Dreyfus, where everyone is terrible and mean and incompetent, and they all hate each other. Everyone except for Sam's character! The cheerful, incorruptible, Richard Splett.
00:00:40	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:00:41	Clip	Clip	Speaker 1 (Veep): Is there a way to change Doyle's music without screwing up the lights? Richard: Oh, absolutely. Speaker 1: Great! Richard: Well, I'm not sure, but positivity is the first step. Speaker 1: Love it. Richard: Change the what? Speaker 2: Doesn't matter. Speaker 1: I honestly have no idea. What do you have on your phone? Richard: Well, it's mostly self-help audiobooks and relaxation tapes. I'm quite an anxious man.
00:00:56	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:00:57	Jesse	Host	Sam is also a writer. Richardson, along with Tim Robinson, cocreated and starred in <i>Detroiters</i> , a favorite of mine about two buddies working for an advertising agency in Detroit. Richardson has also appeared in <i>I Think You Should Leave</i> , Tim Robinson's absolutely spectacular sketch comedy show on Netflix. And I think you could say that by this point, Sam Richardson has a brand. He plays cheerful, friendly characters who are usually so nice, they end up getting in their own way. That is probably, in part, because Sam Richardson is an extremely cheerful, friendly guy in real life. Little by little, though, Sam is working on expanding that brand. Recently, he starred alongside Chris Pratt in <i>The Tomorrow War</i> , a science fiction, time travel, action movie. And he has a lead role in <i>Werewolves Within</i> , which is available to rent or buy online now. <i>Werewolves Within</i> is a horror comedy. It's set in a small, New England town where all the people are trapped in a snowstorm. And enough scary stuff has happened that people are beginning to think that maybe, just maybe, a werewolf is lurking somewhere out there.

My guest, Sam Richardson, plays Finn Wheeler in the film: a ranger who just arrived for a new stint at the nearby national park. As the bodies begin to pile up, residents of the town begin to turn on each other. After all, if there is a werewolf in town, it could literally be any of them.

In this clip, Finn makes a last-ditch attempt to keep everyone together with—well, with an inspiring speech. Music swells and fades.

00:02:39 Sound Effect Transition
00:02:40 Clip Clip

Music: Solemn orchestral music that gradually grows more hopeful.

Finn (*Werewolves Within*): I know it's easy to point the finger and fear each other. At its heart, this is a community. You know? One that agrees about more than it doesn't. You know, hard work. Being a good neighbor. A warm place to meet and have a sandwich. Love. All I'm asking is that we remember our common—our common humanity. And we just hold off on being enemies 'til we've all had a little sleep.

[A long stretch of quiet where the music plays inspirationally.]

Speaker: *[Censored]* that noise. I saw what happened to Pete and I saw what happened to Dave and I'm not gonna stick around and let that happen to me and Marcus. Let's go, Marcus.

00:03:36 Sound Effect Transition

Marcus: Hell yeah!
Music swells and fades.

00:03:37 Jesse Host

[Chuckles.] Sam Richardson, welcome to *Bullseye*. I'm happy to have you back on the show.

00:03:40 Sam Richardson Guest

Oh, thank you so much for having me back!

00:03:42 Jesse Host

How do you feel about werewolves in general?

00:03:44 Sam Guest

Uh, you know, a healthy fear.

00:03:48 Jesse Host

[Amused.] Just like standard—?

00:03:49 Sam Guest

Just like standard. Like what the typical amount of fear should be.

00:03:52 Jesse Host

Uh-huh.

00:03:54 Sam Guest

But not more than I think is normal. Like, I like—there's no phobia, you know, of werewolves. Just respect and appreciation for them.

00:04:03 Jesse Host

How do you feel about scary things, in general?

00:04:06 Sam Guest

Scary things in general—you know, I'm not typically just like a scary person. You know? I go—or, as in like a person who is scared.

[Laughs.]

00:04:14 Jesse Host

Uh-huh. *[Chuckles.]* Certainly, you're known for being fearsome.

00:04:17 Sam Guest

I'm very—yeah, that's my main thing in real life. *[Laughs.]* I'm just like a—

00:04:19 Jesse Host

Terrifying. You're a real Tiny Lister type.

00:04:23 Sam Guest

Exactly. This one eye kind of looks onto who knows where. I have a—come right out there—I have like a true arachnophobia. You know? So, I like a—like a true irrational fear of spiders. So, that's the one thing. Everything else, I'm like, "Yeah, sure."

00:04:43 Jesse Host

Does it interfere with your life?

00:04:45 Sam Guest

Like, I'll never go to Australia.

00:04:48 Jesse Host

[Chuckling.] Wait, is that a—is that a spider place?

00:04:49 Sam Guest It's like a spider place. You know, like huge spiders. You always see like videos and things like, "Look at that spider. Eh, that's normal."

00:04:59 Jesse Host I'm like, "No, they're not for me, then." Or like Brazil. How do you feel about scary media? Like, I saw *The Shining* in high school English class.

[*They laugh.*]

00:05:15 Sam Guest And even in 40-minute chunks during the day while people threw spitballs, I was too upset to—
Yeah. I—tell you what, I'm not—scary movies don't scare me. However, again, like spiders in movies, I won't watch. I can't watch it. So, like—you're talking about like *Harry Potter*. I'll close my eyes at the—you know, when—I can't even think of the name of the spider in the forest. I close my eyes on it. If I go on the *Harry Potter* ride in Universal Studios, I shut my eyes. I can't do it. You know? *Lord of the Rings*, Shelob's lair. I don't know what that part of the movie looks like. Like, fully. I can't—I cannot do it.

00:05:52 Jesse Host There's a pretty wild part in *King Kong*, the Peter Jackson *King Kong* with all these giant spiders. Have you seen that movie?

00:05:58 Sam Guest Yep! I've—I've seen all the parts around it!

[*They laugh.*]

I can't do it! Can't do it! And like if I think about spiders too much, then I'll like close—[*stammering*] like if I just—if I think about spiders before I go to bed, I—if I—I can't like not see them in my head. So, I'll—I can't shut my eyes and I'll be like, "Ope! Nope! Now I'm thinking—now my image in my head is more vivid than an actual spider." So, like I've gotta like then keep myself up for a little bit and try and like distract myself. 'Cause I'm like, "Huh. Spiders, huh? Oops! Okay. Now we're on—okay. Ooh, don't think about their eyes! Their eyes. I'm thinking about their eyes."

[*They laugh.*]

00:06:44 Jesse Host And like that goes on for [*laughing*] 45 minutes at least. This morning, my son came up to me as I was pouring breakfast cereal for myself and he said, "Dad! Did you know that scorpions have more eyes than spiders?"

00:06:57 Sam Guest [*Quietly.*] Didn't wanna know that.

00:06:58 Jesse Host [*Laughing.*] I was like, "Wow! Well, good morning."

00:07:01 Sam Guest [*Laughing.*] There we go!

[*Jesse makes a strangled sound.*]

That's a cup of joe for you.

[*Jesse groans.*]

I don't have a fear of scorpions, truly. However, I've never like encountered a scorpion, like in like the wild. So, I wonder how I would react to it. I have no fear of snakes. You know. A healthy respect of werewolves, but not a—[*stammering*] also, respect of

wolves in general. But I do like them. But like a spider—it's just like an irrational thing. When I was a kid, I was—I grew up between Detroit and Ghana. And when I was in Ghana, we—my cousin and I watched *Arachnophobia*. My cousin Julien. We were watching the movie *Arachnophobia* and we were in my aunt's house in Accra, and we're watching *Arachnophobia* and there comes a part where the giant spider goes like—rears up and [roars]. And my cousin goes, "YEAH!" Like right next to me and I scream and then I ran around the corner.

And so, the way that the house was set up, it was—there was like this living room and then there was like a hall which led to the kitchen with windows on it. And outside the windows was like a patio area with fluorescent lighting. And so, like I was running down that hallway and I'm running and I'm like—I get down halfway through the hallway and I like stop and I'm like breathing like, "Whew. Okay. Okay." And then I see on the wall, across from me, like the Bat symbol. Just like this image of like these legs and these arms and I look to my right and there's like a spider maybe six inches from my face. And I like fainted, essentially. [Chuckles.] And from now on, that's like a true trauma. I can't handle them. Which I'm gonna overcome one day. Today! Today is the day. There we go.

[They laugh.]

00:08:47 Jesse Host I'm done with it.
I mean, we heard in that scene from *Werewolves Within* something that you are called upon to do a lot, onscreen. Which is to be a charismatic good guy who, nonetheless, can't quite get over the hump.

[Sam agrees with laughter.]

00:09:08 Sam Guest [Chuckling.] Like—like a leader of man who is a little bit failing at leading men.
Yes. That's like maybe the entire flock doesn't entirely listen. You know? [Laughs.] Yeah.

00:09:16 Jesse Host But honestly, like in a horror movie—even in a horror comedy, it's nice to have the Black guy be the doofy one.

[Sam agrees.]

00:09:31 Sam Guest You know what I mean? Like the—instead of like the fast-talking guy who get killed quickly.
Yup. You know. It's, uh—it's nice to have the Black guy [chuckles] be the sort of like emotional and inspirational, quote/unquote, like "leader" for this thing. And like to make it far in—who knows how far, if you haven't seen the movie—but, you know, to sort of be that instead of—instead of garnish, you know, to get the kind of be the meat of this thing and not only be the—purpose of being the [with a cartoonish affect], "Oh my god! I'm so scared!" The whole time. You know? Being like [calmly], "Oh, okay. Well, what's the situation?" I really appreciated to get to do that. And like that and the script, as well.

00:10:12 Jesse Host I was and am a huge fan of the show that you and Tim Robinson created, *Detroiters*. And one of the things that I don't think I realized until six or eight episodes into the show—that was unexpected to me, was—this is a show about two best friends. Right? So, the two of you are essentially the co-leads of the program. But in terms of the structure of the world of the show, he—Tim—is the best friend.

[Sam chuckles.]

He lives in your character's world. And Tim Robinson is White. And I thought, "*[Chuckling.]* Well, gosh, how many thousands of times have I seen a television sitcom with a Black guy whose best friends are to a White guy and lives in the White guy's world? And how close to zero times have I seen the opposite?"

[Sam affirms.]

00:11:07 Sam Guest Was that a choice that the two of you made?
It was. It was. To make it—to make it true to life, whereas like Detroit is 75% Black, you know? So, with casting and with that world and all that, we were like, "Well, this show is going to be Black—primarily a Black show with characters who are also not." You know? *[Chuckles.]* So, like the show being a Black show with Tim in it. You know? That we very purposefully—like, so at the workplace, it's Tim's, you know, legacy and Tim's job. But then outside of there, it's kind of like Sam's world. You know? So, it's a very purposeful relationship.

Like, to have Tim's wife be my sister and so like Tim's family is my family. You know? So, Tim is my best friend and my brother-in-law, but in the family unit of the Duvets—which is the bigger family in that. You get the Cramblins as well, but like—you know, typically the family things are happening among the Duvets and like the world—like, you try and get the clients to be Black, all these things. Because that's what Detroit is. You know? So, it was a very purposeful sort of a composition.

00:12:17 Jesse Host Because of that composition, there's also something that you don't see a lot in television, in terms of race dynamics, which is that Tim Robinson's character has a Black wife. Which, you know—I mean, if you watch television commercials in America, there is a lot of interracial couples and almost none of them have, you know—in heterosexual couples, have a wife who is darker skinned than the husband.

[Sam affirms several times.]

That is something that you essentially never see. And I just *[chuckling]*—I was like, "Isn't that nice?" They're a loving couple that has normal couple things going on.

[They chuckle.]

00:12:59 Sam Guest Yeah! You know, it was like—again, part of that composition was like, "Well, what—" Like, if Tim grew up in my world. Again, in my world—you know, we're best friends and he probably just mostly dated Black girls, you know, and he mostly like existed in that world. So, like him falling—and also, in the thing, is like we spent so much

time together that like—that we—I mean, we never have explored this ‘cause we only did the two seasons, but like kind of like how the dynamic of them started—like, where it came from. For a while, we were—we never landed on whether Chrissy and I were twins or not, ‘cause we never like—but that was always kind of like a little idea. And so, the idea of him marrying her was like the closest thing to marrying me that he could do. Because we were like, it’s the type of friendship where [*excitedly*], “Maybe we can hang out together all the time!” And like—[*chuckles*].

So, like—and like, there’s a photo of [*laughs*]—of the—like, the wedding photo. I don’t know if it ever showed up onscreen, but it’s like their wedding photos and I’m in them too. Like, doing jokes.

[*They laugh.*]

And like she’s like annoyed because like in marrying—like, he married the both of us, essentially.

00:14:10 Jesse Host We’ve got even more with Sam Richardson’s still to come. Stay with us. It’s *Bullseye*, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

00:14:17 Music Transition Cheerful, chiming music.

00:14:19 Jesse Promo Support for *Bullseye* and the following message come from Culturelle. Culturelle wants you to know that an estimated 45 million Americans may have IBS, according to the International Foundation for Gastrointestinal Disorders. Culturelle IBS Complete Support is a medical food for the dietary management of IBS. It’s designed to relieve symptoms like abdominal pain, bloating, diarrhea, and constipation in a safe, well-tolerated, once daily dose. Save 20% with promo code “radio” on Culturelle.com.

[*Music fades out.*]

00:14:54 Promo Clip **Music:** Low, up-tempo music.

Speaker: Comedian Tiffany Haddish is busy. She’s acting, producing. But she says she’s not just doing it for herself.

Tiffany Haddish: How much generational wealth are you creating when you get to tell a story and give other people opportunity to tell that story with you?

Speaker: Tiffany Haddish on her power in Hollywood. Listen now to the *It’s Been a Minute* podcast from NPR.

[*Music fades out.*]

00:15:14 Music Transition Bright synth music.

00:15:19 Jesse Host It’s *Bullseye*. I’m Jesse Thorn. I’m talking with Sam Richardson. He’s the star of *Detroiters*, *Veep*, and the new movie *Werewolves Within*. Let’s get back into our conversation.

There’s a great scene from the show that I’m gonna play. And *Detroiters* ran for two seasons on Comedy Central a couple of years ago and was co-created by my guest, Sam Richardson, and his real-life pal, Tim Robinson. And they play best buddies on the show and they’re also business partners in the advertising business, which they’re pretty bad at. And they’re neighbors and Tim’s character is married to Sam’s character’s sister. So, they’re

			very close knit. And so, in this scene, the two of them are hanging out at a bar and Tim is trying to figure out why Sam has such a hard time meeting women.
00:16:11	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:16:12	Clip	Clip	Music: Rock music playing over the bar speakers.
			Tim (<i>Detroiters</i>): When are you gonna settle down, man?
			Speaker 1: Can you help us settle a bet?
			Sam: Sure!
			Tim: [<i>Shouting.</i>] Excuse me! We're talking! Move it alooong! Thaaaaanks. [<i>Returning to his normal voice.</i>] Seriously, man. When are you gonna settle down? It's amazing.
			Sam: Yeah, Tim, I do wanna meet somebody.
			Tim: Then what is stopping you?!
			Speaker 2: Heeey. I like your shirt. That color looks great on you.
			Sam: Oh, thank you.
			Tim: [<i>Talking over Sam.</i>] Oh, so you just interrupt people?! Is that your whole gig?! You interrupt folks?
			[<i>Sam struggles with laughter.</i>]
			Tim: Don't know who you are! Later, dude! [<i>Beat.</i>] Seriously. Why are you not settling down?!
			Sam: Because of you, Tim! It is impossible to meet girls around you!
			Tim: Okay, that's insane.
			Sam: Oh yeah. Sure. Okay. I'm insane, then.
00:17:03	Sound Effect	Transition	Tim: Suit yourself, man! I'm giving you advice! Music swells and fades.
00:17:07	Jesse	Host	[<i>They laugh.</i>]
			The tag to that that I think got edited out is him saying, "Maybe he's right."
			[<i>They giggle helplessly.</i>]
00:17:18	Sam	Guest	Then he goes, "Maybe he is insane." "Maybe I'm a figment of his imagination." [<i>Laughs.</i>] Oh, man. That's—so, that scene and that like sort of notion and like even that storyline comes from real life, 'cause Tim and I were—you know, performing at Second City together. And we were on the Mainstage together in Chicago. And we would spend all our time together. You

know? 'Cause we were best friends before, then got hired to the Mainstage together. We got moved to Chicago at essentially the same time, got hired to the Mainstage to write two shows together. And we would spend all our time together. We did eight shows a week, six days a week, Tuesday through Sunday. And then Mondays we would hang out. You know? And go to the bar, like go—or watch TV or whatever.

And Tim, though, would be the worst wingman possible. Like, we would go—so we would do a show at Second City and then go across the street to Corcoran's and like be eating. *[Chuckles.]* We would get what we called a turf and turf—which is where we would get wings and a burger, and we would cut the burger in half and then split the wings. “Hey, we gonna eat turf and turf?” “Yeah, turf and turf.” Anyway. *[Chuckles.]* But we—so we—after the show—That's very cute, Sam.

00:18:26 Jesse Host

[They chuckle.]

00:18:27 Sam Guest

Isn't that cute? Isn't that cuteee?

00:18:28 Jesse Host

It's adorable. It's genuinely adorable.

00:18:30 Sam Guest

[Laughing.] Yeah, very cute! We love each other very much. But we would do the show and then go across the street. And I was single. You know, Tim has been married to his high school sweetheart. Tim has essentially, his whole adult life, been married. You know? But we would go across the street and then like people would come up and like kind of like flirt. You know? And I'm like single. So, I'm like, “Oh, perfect. I'm just in this show. I'm on cloud nine and like, I'm—” Got all these wings.

00:18:57 Jesse Host

00:18:58 Sam Guest

You know? I've got all these—*[laughs]* these wings and winks and like so they'd—we'd start talking and then Tim would literally be like, “Excuse me! Uuh, thank you. We're in the middle of something.” He would do that! And he'd be so annoyed. And then I'd get so mad! He'd be like, “Sorry, buddy, I just wanna spend time with you.”

And I'm like, “Yes! Of course! We spend so much time together. Let me *[laughing]* have this moment!”

00:19:23 Jesse Host

I mean, in *Detroiters*, I think you have a really clear reason to make the choice that these guys are gonna be—you know, to borrow the cherry tomato brand—little sweetums. Which is that like you wanna do all this crazy stuff, 'cause I can tell the two of you just sit around all day making a list of crazy stuff you've thought of for a guy to do.

[Sam confirms with a laugh.]

“What if a guy did this? What if I guy did that?” But like beyond—beyond that—so, you need to make room for that. But beyond that, like you have named this show after your home. It is a home that is only represented in one way, in mass media—essentially—which is as a symbol of either crime or decrepitude. Or, you know, maybe the like flipside of that—which is like a parody of, you know, blue collar resilience. Something, something, something. Like picture of a metal grinder with sparks coming off of it.

[Sam laughs and agrees.]

And a guy lifting up his welder's mask and like he's got like—he's handsome. He's got a lined face.

00:20:39 Sam Guest *[Laughing.]* Yep. Built Ford tough.

00:20:41 Jesse Host So, like ultimate—yeah—so ultimately, like you are—you're representing your home. Which is a big responsibility. And if you made everybody in the show a jerk, it would—it would be hard to represent your home in a way that you could be proud of.

00:20:56 Sam Guest Yes, exactly that. And it was such an important thing to us to shine a different light on Detroit than is commonly like—the idea of like Detroit being the easy joke for everyone. It makes us so mad. It makes me so mad. *[Chuckles.]* The idea that's like, "Yeah, Detroit, like—oh, Detroit. Like *Robocop!*" Like you're just thinking of *Robocop* automatically. Or just like an easy A to B punchline is like, "What's dangerous? Not more dangerous than Detroit!" Then you're there and you get your little laugh and all that.

But like, they're—it's so disrespectful to this place where there are people who are genuinely—it's a midwestern city. So, everybody is kind, and everybody is—you know, is doing their best. And everybody is supporting the way they live that the fact that outside of it everybody's like, "Hahaha." And then we're like, "Woah! You know how strong we are here?!" Like... we wanted to show that to a degree. Or not even to a degree. We wanted to show that and give that the respect and the love that it deserves. And I think we achieve that. And I think, at first—I don't know if the show—I don't think the show was very well advertised or like well set. People were—people from Detroit were a little fearful of it. They were like, "Aw, what's this?! This isn't—this isn't Detroit. This isn't Detroit!"

And like, well it is! Like, I'm not an outsider! I've lived there my entire life. Well, up until I left. *[Chuckles.]* But that's—I think as the show went on and people like kind of saw what we were doing, they got onboard. I remember—and I was happy that it was like well-received by Detroiters themselves. After the show premiered, we—Tim and I went to Detroit to like do a screening. And I remember the very first person off the airplane. The guy who like—with the wheelchair, on the tarmac, was like, "Hey! *Detroiters!*" And I was like wow! That's like the very first person stepping back into Detroit was somebody who like loved and respected that show. And if we walk down the streets of Detroit together, people will stop and they'll honk and they'll be like, "Yaaay!" And like that's the warmest, best feeling. You know?

We always—people would get so annoyed with us when we were like in Chicago. 'Cause we—like, they would always be like, "Yeah we get it, Sam, Tim. You're from Detroit. Yes, we know."

We were always like, "Well, back in Detroit, we do this. And back in Detroit—" 'Cause we love it so much! Anybody from Detroit will always rep Detroit as hard as they can. And that's not a false thing. It's because we love where we come from so much. You know? And that's universal.

00:23:32 Jesse Host It's a very beautiful place. I've only been one time, so I can't speak to it from a really informed perspective, but that was something that struck me in the time that I was there. I was like, "Wow. What a beautiful city." You know? Like it's—you know, it's similar to when

			you're in Chicago and you're like, "God, there's a lot of beautiful buildings around me." It was a very same feeling in Detroit. Like what a beautiful place.
00:23:53	Sam	Guest	Yeah, really. Really it is. And like, you know, the ruin porn that, you know, books are sold on and like all these things— <i>[stammering]</i> I get it. Because you are looking at something beautiful and like even like something amazing—that was once magnificent and majestic is now dilapidated. But in that dilapidation, there is still like this beauty and like the negative space of what was there and what is there, currently, is beautiful in itself. But sort of like I appreciate that, but you have to counter it with like what is alive there as well. If you only show these things that are like decrepit then people think it's a zombie—a zombie town. You know? But like you have to show what is still there and what is new there, you know, along with what was there and what is old there.
00:24:46	Jesse	Host	I wanna play an <i>I Think You Should Leave</i> sketch that is really—is really a Sam Richardson sketch. This is one where you're really front and center. You're really carrying the burden on this. It's called "Baby of the Year".
			<i>[Sam chuckles.]</i>
			And I mean, it's a—it's a sort of beauty contest, although not— <i>[chuckling]</i> I mean, in the same way that beauty contests aren't just about beauty.
			<i>[Sam agrees.]</i>
00:25:15	Sam	Guest	You know? It's like—it's a pageant for babies.
00:25:18	Jesse	Host	<i>[Laughing.]</i> For babies! Just like the general baby—yeah.
00:25:20	Sound Effect	Transition	And my guest, Sam Richardson, is the—is the host. Music swells and fades.
00:25:21	Clip	Clip	<i>[Applause.]</i>
			Music: Upbeat piano. Sam Richardson sings the pageant's opening song.
			<i>Who will be the baby of the year? Look at their rolls! Look at their folds! Look at their rummy, bummy, tummies! Heads are round, bellies are squishy. Look at their toes, like so many curled, canned shrimp Are they ticklish? Are they jigglish? Can they be tricked? Can they be chucked? Which ones will move? Which ones will talk? But more important Which ones can dance? Oh Who will be baby of the year?</i>
00:26:04	Sound Effect	Transition	<i>[The audience cheers and claps.]</i> Music swells and fades.
00:26:06	Jesse	Host	<i>[Giggling.]</i> This—this sketch, like many <i>I Think You Should Leave</i> sketches, just has a long series of premises <i>[laughing]</i> rather than one premise.
00:26:14	Sam	Guest	Yes! Exactly! It's got so many twists and turns and like hard banks.

00:26:19 Jesse Host Like, it really—it really starts with—it really starts with what we just heard, which is what if in like—there’s kid pageants, there’s toddler pageants. Why not baby pageants, right?

00:26:33 Sam Guest *[Laughing.]* Why not baby pageants?

00:26:34 Jesse Host That’s just a pretty straight-forward sketch premise that could be on almost any sketch show.

[Sam agrees with a giggle.]

00:26:45 Sam Guest And it just—like, there’s no moment that is not more insane than the last.

Yes. *[Laughs.]* Yes! ‘Cause it goes from there into like the devolution—it devolves quickly in—the idea of like, “Oh, well, alright. There’s three babies but the one baby is hated by the audience.”

[Jesse laughs.]

00:27:00 Jesse Host Like, for what—like why—what did this baby do? Like the audience—

00:27:01 Sam Guest It’s the bad boy baby.

00:27:04 Jesse Host The bad boy baby! And the audience is not having it. They hate him!

00:27:05 Sam Guest He’s wearing a leather jacket.

00:27:20 Jesse Host He’s wearing a leather jacket and a little bandana! Bart Harley Jarvis, the bad boy of the competition. You know? *[Laughing.]* And—and—it like kind of just goes so many places. Ah.

Well, I mean there is a pleasure in like, “I can’t believe how crazy this thing is,” that is kind of like—you know, it’s what people imagine of the kind of like Adult Swim humor of 20 years ago—15/20 years ago, right? And they can be really great. One of the things that always surprises me, and it was true of *Detroiters*. It’s true of *I Think You Should Leave*, is the commitment to grounding this insane nonsense in human emotions. *[Laughs.]*

00:27:56 Sam Guest *[Laughing.]* Yes! Exactly that! Exactly that. And I mean, I think that’s like the key to comedy, period. You know? Is like whatever—whatever—or the key to like bold, big sketch comedy is like whatever’s going on, as long as somebody like legitimately cares about it in the thing, then you can get away with so much. You know? And it grounds even the most out there premise. As long as somebody’s like—has emotional invest—has an emotional investment in it. You know? So, that’s what’s true for that sketch. Like the people—like, and there’s so many different emotions in that. Like, because the people aren’t just like screaming—they legitimately hate that baby.

[Jesse laughs.]

00:28:58 Jesse Host This guy legitimately is like annoyed with how the thing is going. Like he legitimately is angry at them for like screaming and ruining the competition. *[Laughs.]* And then like even at the end, like, “Dump it. This one’s garbage. Dump it.” Like he’s given up on this thing.

Your mother is Ghanaian, as you mentioned. And you spent a fair bit of your childhood in Ghana just, you know, going there—whatever, summers or that kind of thing.

[Sam affirms.]

00:29:17	Sam	Guest	You know, what kind of relatives did you have in Ghana who didn't spend much time in the United States? Most of my cousins were between Ghana and London. I was the American one, up until older—when my cousin, Lauren, then came to the States to go to college. And my cousin, William, came—he started working in finance. But apart from that, I'm the American one among my Ghanaian and English cousins. You know?
00:29:40	Jesse	Host	What did they think that meant?
00:29:42	Sam	Guest	What did they think that—[stammering] and also, because like America was like very cool. You know? And it's very cool and like also you—my cousins would come—sometimes they'd come and visit the States and the whole idea was like, "Gooo shopping! You can get your cool sneakers. You can get all these things. You can get stuff." Because like the tax and like the import and all that stuff, it doesn't make sense to like buy it in England or—you certainly just can't buy it in Ghana. So, you come to America and like you just get stuff to take back with you.
			So, it was like sort of like an amusement park kind of thing. You know? Come to America and like all the stuff was on TV and like all of the—you know, go to the mall and like all these activities. There's like so much going on. Even in Detroit. You know?
00:30:26	Jesse	Host	Like a <i>Bill & Ted</i> type situation?
00:30:28	Sam	Guest	You know?! Truly! [Laughs.]
00:30:30	Jesse	Host	All the figures from history are playing the demonstration organ in the mall.
00:30:34	Sam	Guest	Exactly! Station is uh—you know. [Laughs.] But yeah! I think sort of—I think among us, we were all Ghanaian. You know? And so, being the American guy in the end just meant that I probably—I was spending less time with everybody than everybody else was. You know? But that was still—you know—we still had like our—there, we were Ghanaians with a little extra something. You know? If that makes sense.
00:31:06	Jesse	Host	We'll finish up with Sam Richardson after a quick break. He is, as we said, a nice guy. Gets a lot of roles where he plays nice guys and when we come back, Sam will tell us how he plans to break that mold. It's <i>Bullseye</i> , from MaximumFun.org and NPR.
00:31:24	Music	Transition	Relaxed keyboard music.
00:31:27	Jesse	Host	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 Discover.com/match . 2021 Neilson Report. Limitations apply.
00:32:02	Promo	Clip	[Music fades out.] Music: Dramatic, suspenseful string music.

Narrator: From the internationally acclaimed creators of *Who Shot Ya?* comes the movie podcast *Maximum Film*. Starring producer

and film festival programmer, Drea Clark as a woman bound by passion.

Drea Clark: *[Decadently.]* I saw this eight months ago on the festival circuit and I loved it.

Narrator: Film critic, Alonso Duralde, as a man corrupted by greed.

Alonso Duralde: *[Incensed.]* Why watch one Hallmark Christmas movie when I could watch seven!?

Narrator: And comedian, Ify Nwadiwe, as a man protecting a love that society simply won't accept.

Ify Nwadiwe: *[In tears.]* I think *Pacific Rim* is a perfect movie. And if you can't accept that, then I want you out of my life!

Narrator: From the makers of the movie podcast Who Shot Ya? comes *Maximum Film*.

[Upbeat music fades in.]

Ify: That's right, we changed the name of our show to *Maximum Film*.

Alonso: But don't worry! We're still a movie review show that isn't just a bunch of straight, White dudes.

Drea: So, tune into *Maximum Film*! At MaximumFun.org or wherever you get your podcasts.

[Music fades out.]

00:32:55 Music Transition
00:33:00 Jesse Host

Relaxed keyboard music.
Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest is the great Sam Richardson. He played Richard Splett in the HBO show *Veep*. And he created and starred in the fantastic Comedy Central sitcom *Detroiters*. Sam is also the star of the new action movie *The Tomorrow War*, which is streaming now on Amazon Prime. And! You can see him playing the lead in the horror comedy *Werewolves Within*, which you can buy or rent now. Let's get back into our conversation.

00:33:34 Sam Guest

Did you have a different class position in the States and in Ghana and in London, if you were visiting family there?
Yes. In the States, you know, my family—my family was like into politics. My auntie is a congresswoman. You know, we were involved in politics and all that sort of stuff. And like, you know, like middle class, you know, African American family in Detroit. And Detroit being like a predominantly Black city. You know, that's good. But in Ghana, my grandfather was a chief and like a businessman. So, like we were upper class, in Ghana. So, you know, with drivers and, you know, cooks and all that sort of—all that sort of thing, where like the dichotomy of wealth also like lends itself to that. Where like you have the haves, and you have the have-nots. And so, like it's the haves—if you don't have a cook and a driver then

you were being irresponsible. 'Cause like you have to employ people. You know? That sort of thing.

Now, there's a full middle class in Ghana. The—I think the advent of like technology becoming exponentially more available and useful and cheap kind of like allowed that to happen. But it was an interesting thing to go from being at the top of the mountain to being—and even in Detroit, even among all the Black people—you know, you're still *[chuckles]*—uh, you're still second class. You know? If that makes sense. I mean, of course it makes sense because it's what it is. But, uh, you can certainly see it. And like, you come back to the States and like you're—even if all you see are Black people around you, if you turn on the TV, you don't. You know? And so, like that's the culture there and here. But versus Ghana, it was like, "Oh, everybody's Black and all of the presidents are Black, here. The—you know, the parliament's all Black, here." You know? Like everything—the king of the—the chief of Imprisu is Black. The chief of Atibie is Black. The chief of, you know, the Omahenene is Black. They're all African. You know? Everything.

But then you still have these interests from other nations and colonialism still has its—it's grips there. So, like a lot of the wealth is still diverted to White nations and to White people. Like, I'm remembering—a friend of mine growing up at school, his name was Alex, and his dad worked in the gold mines. And I was like—he's from Canada, and I was like, "Why—? Why? Like why do—why do you have access to our gold mines?" It never made sense to me. You know? Like this resource—surely this is our resource. We mine it and then we sell it. Why is that not the case? But even still, I'm like, I don't—*[chuckles]* it's befuddling to me. But that sort of thing. Like, you know, like age old lines cut in—drawn—like literally lines drawn in the earth to say that this is what Ghana is and this is what Africa is. And we've accepted that and that's like what our world is, even in this place where I'm like, "Oh, well in America—" You know—it's at the second—it's at the behest or at the—at the—at the sort of whatever the service of White people is.

And Africa—it's that way as well. Because that's global. Yeah. *[Chuckles.]*

00:36:50 Jesse Host Did other kids at school—in Detroit where you grew up—know you were or think of you as Ghanaian?

00:36:57 Sam Guest Um... nnot really. Uh, 'cause I've always been pretty Americanized. But I was—but I was like—I was like the African prince. That's what like—it was—it'd be like because I went to such a small school, that kind of like fades pretty quick. 'Cause like, you know, we're—there's like 15 kids in my graduating class from middle school. I went to a Friends school, so it was like the same kids from first grade to eighth grade. You know? So, like the idea of like—of me being African—there was *[chuckles]*—there was one kid who was new. I had just moved back from Ghana maybe two years previous and I had—and she was new to the class, and I convinced her that I was British, and she believed it, and everybody was like, "Yeeeah, let's play this game."

00:37:41 Jesse Host You know, so it was truly cruel. Everyone was onboard for this?!

[Sam confirms.]

All 13 other—

[Sam stammers.]

00:37:48 Sam Guest What about staff?
00:37:53 Jesse Host Staff, I don't—no, I—[stammering] and also, the idea was that—
00:37:55 Sam Guest You know the Quakers are known for cruelty.
[Laughing.] They looove cruelty! They love—they love to get one up on each other.

[They laugh.]

00:38:00 Jesse Host But—
If you've seen the prank wars in Quaker communities. Have a meeting. You know what—that silence where everyone is contemplating whether they should speak—
00:38:10 Sam Guest Exactly, the silent meetings.
00:38:12 Jesse Host They're actually just letting cockroaches loose up people's trouser legs.
00:38:16 Sam Guest That's right! And into people's ears. It's a funny Quaker prank. But like, I think—but also the game there was when I was using my American accent, that was me trying to fit in. And so then, when I was talking to her and like—everybody's like, "Wow." You know? Like she was like the only one who really knew [laughing] that I was British. And maybe a couple other people.
00:38:39 Jesse Host Is this a story you've ever told your therapist about?
00:38:42 Sam Guest [Pleasantly.] No! No.
00:38:43 Jesse Host Okay, I would—I don't know if you have a therapist, but...

[Sam laughs.]

00:38:50 Sam Guest It's possible it might have some [laughing] symbolic meaning.
Probably! It probably does!
00:38:52 Jesse Host I have a—I have a good buddy from back home where I'm from, in San Francisco, who is now an Emmy winning television host. He was a standup comic for a long time. Still is a standup comic. And because he is a huge guy, has an afro, and wears glasses, he fell into show business's "best friend" category immediately and very hard and had to try and figure out what to do about the fact—he's also very genial. White people like him because he seems like a nice guy. He is a nice guy; that's why.

[Sam affirms.]

But White people like him because he seems like a nice guy. And it took him a long time to find his own career and voice because of that. Now, you are a guy who comes over, onscreen and in real life, as a notably nice guy—which means that if you want to have—and you're also very good at—you know, you're a skilled performer. So, if you wanna have a career being a nice friend on every television show and in every movie ever made, you'll—you know—you'll own a home here in Los Angeles and have health insurance for a long time.

[Sam chuckles.]

Are there things that you want to do or wish you could do that are difficult to access from that place of people immediately seeing you as a nice friend?

00:40:17 Sam Guest Yes, but I think I'm actively working to sort of widen that breath. I'm not offered characters who have backbone a lot of times. It's always like a person who's like tripping up over himself and, you know— 'cause I think I am good at imbuing like a kindness and a sort of likeability to a character who'd be like a sad sack otherwise? You know? Like a sad sack weak guy. I think I'm good at and people I think look to me to try and find a way to like make that person likeable and charming and those things. But there's—rarely do characters I play like straighten their back and be like, "Hey. Get the hell out of here. Like what are you talking about?" Which is something I do, myself. You know? Like I'm nice up until I'm disrespected and then I'll—you know what I mean? I can [chuckles] turn on a dime and become very sinister.

[Laughs.] But like that sort of character who doesn't need to have the other shoe drop—when the person does standup for themselves, it's not—it doesn't need to be—the rug doesn't need to be yanked out from under him once he like has a like a bold moment, I think is something that I'm looking to do more. And figuring out for myself—and when I read things, I'm like, "Well, I mean, if this character is this—" Like, I'm looking for more characters with like guile. You know? And sort of [chuckles] not just like—

00:41:48 Jesse Host Guileful characters rather than guileless characters.

00:41:49 Sam Guest Guileful characters. Exactly! You know? And that's something I'm making sure that it doesn't become that people don't think I can do that. You know?

00:42:01 Jesse Host Just sent your agent a postcard that says "Wiley" on it.

00:42:04 Sam Guest [Laughing.] Wiley! Exactly. "Wiley? Hm?" Yeah, I'm—let me send him another text.

00:42:14 Jesse Host [Laughs.]

Sam Richardson, thanks for coming on *Bullseye*.

[Music fades in.]

00:42:17 Sam Guest Thank you so much for having me. This was great.

00:42:20 Music Transition Soft, jazzy music.

00:42:21 Jesse Host Sam Richardson. *Werewolves Within*, his newest movie, is fun and only a little scary. It is also, by the way, one of the best reviewed videogame-based movies of all time. So. Take that, *Super Mario Brothers*!

If, for some reason, you haven't seen everything that Sam has been in—*Veep*, *Detroiters*, *I Think You Should Leave*—they're all great. So, I guess just stay home from work next week and get caught up? That's my tip for you. Sam Richardson's great and he's in great stuff.

[Music fades out.]

00:42:54 Music Transition Upbeat, cheerful music.

00:42:59 Jesse Host That's the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye* is created from the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California. We're working in the office a little bit, overlooking beautiful MacArthur Park in Los Angeles, where our producer—Jesus Ambrosio—attended his first free Levitt Pavilion concert, this summer. They're back. He saw the local ska group The Paranoias, because Jesus loves ska.

The show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our senior producer is Kevin Ferguson. Our producer is ska enthusiast, Jesus Ambrosio. Production fellows at Maximum Fun are Richard Robey and Valerie Moffat. No word on whether they enjoy ska. We get help from Casey O'Brien. I don't think he's into ska, but he does like The Twins. Our interstitial music is by Dan Wally, also known as DJW. He's more of a soul and hip-hop guy. Our theme song is by The Go! Team. Thanks to them and to their label, Memphis Industries, for sharing it. They've got a new record; you should go check it out.

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

00:44:18 Promo Promo

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

[Music fades out.]