It’s Bullseye. I’m Jesse Thorn. A few weeks ago on the show, I said that you know you’re getting old when your heroes start to die. That was—that was me talking about the, uh—the amazing rapper, Gift of Gab, who had just passed away. This week, we lost another one. Zumbi was the MC half of the hip-hop duo Zion I. For decades, they were stalwarts of the Bay Area hip-hop scene. It hardly felt like a rap show unless Zumbi was stalking the stage and his partner, AmpLive, was behind him playing the pads of his MPC sampler like they were an electronic drum kit.

Zion I put out their first record in 2000. *Mind Over Matter* remains an underground classic with Amp providing hard hip-hop drums and sort of ethereal electronic sounds. And Zumbi—whose shifting style finds all the nooks and crannies of those beats.

“Silly Puddy” from the album *Mind Over Matter* by Zion I.

> Dear lord, you showed me the best of times
> Showed me the worst of times
> Confusion all over my mind
> But still, I keep busting rhymes
> And I fight for what I want
> But I’d die for what I need
> And I watch my people bleed
> While vultures steady feed
> We proceed with the mic, bless
> Fashioned in your likeness
> More deadlier than vipers
> Lyric spirit snipers
> Ignite us, we’ll be candles in the dark
> Solid like Noah’s Ark

[Zumbi was never scared to grasp for profundity. He was never scared to rock a crowd or get a party started, either. And for two decades, he was—as we say in hip-hop—true. And he was true even in the toughest circumstances. Zumbi was born and raised in Oakland, and he lived in Oakland with his family. At least, until a few years ago when he lost the house he was renting there thanks to a landlord who, let’s say, wanted a different kind of tenant.

As Zumbi and his family packed up and moved out, they rolled cameras. And the result was a song and attendant music video called “Tech $”. As Zumbi raps in the foreground of the video, we see his kids in the background putting their toys into boxes. We see Zumbi thumbing through his bills and his rental applications.]

[Musics fades in.]
We see furniture leaving the house. Maybe you’ve heard about gentrification in the Bay Area. Now you feel it.

“Tech $” from the album *Saving Souls* by Zion I.

Seen it in the ’90s with the dot.com
Condo shiny popping Shandon
He was still grimy, you had no charm
Made a lot of money ’til it’s no fun
Turn Mission Street into a lounge that
Drunk frat boys where they found at

Penned up, missing—how you love that?
When your ground gets christened
Where are the brown cats?
Got pushed out—this ain’t your house

Third generation came from down south

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

Zumbi was 49 years old: a vibrant 49 by all accounts. He did tai chi every day. He had three children. On GoFundMe right now, you can find a memorial fund to get those kids through college and through the loss of their father. You can find it by searching for GoFundMe and Zumbi—Z-U-M-B-I. We’ll post a link on our website, too. And listen, can I ask you something? Go to Bandcamp and buy those amazing Zion I records. Send a few bucks to those beautiful kids and please, go get vaccinated against this horrible virus. Your people need you.

Anyway, in 2009, Zumbi and AmpLive brought Zion I to my stage, guesting on a live taping of our show at San Francisco Sketchfest. They were gracious guests, and they really brought the heat. Let’s go out this week on a sincere and deeply felt tribute to what makes the Bay Area special. Here’s Zumbi, AmpLive, and singer Martin Luther, performing Zion I’s “The Bay”.

**Clip**

Zumbi: Alright, we’re gonna switch it up a little bit. This is hip-hop right here, so.

[The audience laughs at regular intervals.]

We wanna engage with the community. We, you know—if we call, please call back. That’s how we do it. That’s my boy AmpLive on the bass. I’m Zumbi. Zion I crew. First song we’re gonna do is called “The Bay”. Feel free to clap. Just clap. Clap. Oooh!

**Music:** “The Bay” performed live by Zion I at SF Sketchfest.

Hey, let it go
Let the good take hold
I’m a brother from the west
Who was blessed with a soul
Let me tell you about a place
You probably don’t know
Still live in Cali
Got a style cultural
We was
Known from the ‘60s
From panthers to hippies
Now we’re known for
Murders, pimps, and three-sixty’s
Side shows high speed chases too
And a crack epidemic that will turn you blue
Plus, an AIDS epidemic that can end you too
It's the Yay baby brother and I thought you knew
Oakland to Vallejo
Vallejo to the Zay
The Zay to the Sko’
AKA as the Bay
Unique so to speak
A whole lot of ways
Hardly get the love, we close to LA
We got our own slang
But everybody took it
Now we going dumb down the Av driving crooked

This the way

Zumbi: Sing along, this is your part right here.

In the Bay (in the Bay heyeyeyey)
In the Bay (heyeyeyey)
In the Bay (heyeyeyey)

Zumbi: Louder! In! The! Bay! Bay! Bay!

We a little kuddy cold from the Northern Pacific
Beach always cold, don't get the game twisted
Thugs reprocessed to the death packing biscuits
Weed almost legal the trees are terrific
We got
Cannabis clubs
Filipino, Blacks, Latinos from all over the map
Chinese and Vietnamese
So don’t get jacked
Samoan, Indian, Tongans, Thai's
It's the Bay homie and we multiply
We never act shy when it's time to ride
And we claim 2Pac as a source of pride
I said we claim 2Pac as a source of pride
Let it go
Let me bless the flow, people
Here we go, here we go, here we, here we, here we yo
From the street to beach
Flat lands to peace
To the freaks in the Jeep driving by (beep beep)
To the heat meet the seat
To the cops on the beat
To the rich living sweet
To the poor feeling weak
To the youth and the beast
HP 3rd Street
Telegraph to the Av
North to the deep East
Telegraph to the Av
North to the deep East
Telegraph to the Av
North to the deep East

To the youth and the beast
HP 3rd Street
Telegraph to the Av
North to the deep East
This the way

Zumbi: It’s your part again! Let’s go! Right side!

In the Bay (in the Bay heyeyeyey)
In the Bay (heyeyeyey)
In the Bay (heyeyeyey)

Zumbi: Sounds good! In! The! Bay! Hey! Ey! Bay! Bay! Bay! Bay!
Break it down.

[The audience erupts with cheers and applause.]

00:07:28 Music Transition
Cheerful, thumpy music.
00:07:33 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.

00:08:52 Promo Promo
Speaker: Bullseye with Jesse Thorn is a production of
MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.

[Music fades out.]