

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. Before we get into my interview with my guests Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis, I wanna kick things off with a song.
00:00:29	Music	Music	“Dream Street” from the album <i>Dream Street</i> by Janet Jackson.  <i>And a bus comes in on the Hollywood freeway in the dark A face catches sight of home</i>
00:00:40	Jesse	Host	<i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i> That record is “Dream Street” by Janet Jackson. It’s a single from her 1984 album of the same name. It’s a solid ‘80s dancey, new wavey song. But if you aren’t familiar with it, I understand. Janet Jackson’s a pretty unique artist and “Dream Street” doesn’t exactly sound like a Janet Jackson song, if you know what I mean. Compare that, though, to her next single: “What Have You Done for Me Lately”.
00:01:11	Music	Music	“What Have You Done for Me Lately” from the album <i>Control</i> by Janet Jackson.  <i>Who’s right?  What have you done for me lately? Ooh, ooh, ooh, yeah What have you done for me lately? Ooh, ooh, ooh, yeah</i>
00:01:34	Jesse	Host	<i>Used to go to dinner almost every night Danced until...</i>
00:01:36	Music	Music	<i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i> Or the one after that. “Nasty”. “Nasty” from the album <i>Control</i> by Janet Jackson.
00:02:04	Jesse	Host	<i>Gimme a beat!</i>  <i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i> Now, those are Janet Jackson songs. Right? They both come from 1986’s <i>Control</i> . <i>Control</i> was a departure for Janet. She’d stopped working with her father and brought on two guys from Minneapolis as producers and songwriters: Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis. And <i>Control</i> was a hit. It went platinum five times over. It earned an Album of the Year nomination at the Grammys. It was a record that

not only launched Janet’s career into the stratosphere, but also the careers of Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis, my guests.

They brought a fierce but also precise energy to that record, to which music producers today still aspire. In their four decades of working together, Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis have written and produced over 40 Top Ten hits. They’ve worked with Prince, Babyface, Usher, Mariah Carey. All of that hasn’t left them a lot of time to write songs for themselves, but now that’s changed. Earlier this summer, they released *Jam & Lewis, Vol. 1*. Believe it or not, it is Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis’s debut album.

*[Music fades in.]*

00:03:28	Music	Music	It features vocals from many of their past collaborators. Babyface, Mary J Blige, Boyz II Men, and of course, Mariah. “Somewhat Loved” from the album <i>Jam &amp; Lewis, Vol. 1</i> by Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis.
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*Helplessly into bliss  
Just like fall, things started to switch  
And now spring’s everything that I miss  
Somewhat loved  
The more I thought about you  
The less I thought about me  
And I lost myself in this dream  
Somewhat loved*

*Only somewhat  
There you go  
Breaking my heart, breaking my heart  
Breaking my heart, again  
No such thing...*

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

00:04:01	Jesse	Host	Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis, welcome to <i>Bullseye!</i> I’m so happy to have you on the show.
00:04:05	Jimmy Jam	Guest	Nice to be here.
00:04:06	Terry Lewis	Guest	Yeah, absolutely happy to be here.
00:04:09	Jesse	Host	The process of recording this album—I imagine it this way: over the course of your 40ish-year partnership, you are trying to record an album the entire time and every time you cut something for the album, somebody grabs it for their record. Like, you’re constantly trying to fill a bucket with a hole in the bottom of it and only 40 years in do you actually accumulate enough songs that you get to make a record of them. Is that about right?
00:04:37	Jimmy	Guest	Yeah, I haven’t heard the bucket analogy, but that’s a good one. You know, we always were very sensitive towards the artists and what the artists wanted to have. And so, when we would do songs and we would say, “Hey, this is for—something for our album.” And then they’d keep the songs for themselves, we couldn’t be that mad about it, because it gave us a very nice writing and production career. You know, which is—which is perfectly fine. But yeah, that was a thing. We finally got selfish a few years back and decided to just keep the songs for ourselves at this point.

But you know, it's been a great journey and a lot of great relationships over the years that, you know, if we would've done the record 20 years ago, 30 years ago, we wouldn't have had these relationships. So. It all happens how it's supposed to happen, I guess.

00:05:20 Jesse Host

What led you to get selfish?

00:05:23 Jimmy Guest

I think a few things. Age, number one. We turned 60 and Terry said, you know, "When you turned 60, you can get selfish." Because you've basically been doing everything for everybody else—whether your—you know, your kids or whoever. And now it's time to do something for yourself. There was actually a Japanese proverb or saying—I think it's called Kanreki or something like that. And please forgive me if I'm saying it wrong, but the idea of it is that you've been through all the different calendars of your life. You know? The pig and the—whatever the animals are and all of the seasons and all of the suns and fire and the water and all of those different things. I'm not articulating it well, but that's kind of the idea.

And when you turn 60, you've been through each one of the calendars, so therefore you are reborn again. So, it feels like we're reborn again and for this phase of our career—I guess you could say—we're being selfish and just doing exactly what we wanna do. Which is make music with people we wanna make it with, doing the songs we want to do. And then we just hope everybody just agrees with what we're doing! You know?

And so, that's kind of the concept of the album. And really, I guess this portion of our journey of our career.

00:06:41 Jesse Host

You guys are obviously legendary producers, legendary for facilitating artists' art. You know what I mean? That's a big part of a producer's job. Obviously, you guys also are—you know, you're writing songs. You're coming up with sounds. Those are important parts of what made you great producers and make you great producers. But you know, your number one job is facilitating. Were you able, in making your own record, to get to a point where you thought, well, Mariah Carey is coming in here, or Usher is coming in here, or—you know, all these folks that you've worked with for decades—and they are going to be a vessel for us, rather than the other way around?

00:07:27 Terry Guest

In a simplistic way, I think just embracing artist's ideas is just kind of what we've always been able to do. And even within this particular record, that was kind of a theme of our concept, too. Like, you have to meet people where they are. And all the artists always come in with a concept of what they wanna say or where they wanna be. And we kind of move it maybe a couple inches left or right, but usually we try to stay right in the pocket of where they're headed, where they want to be or where they see themselves. So, you know, in that you just wanna get the best performance possible and then write a great song to go along with it.

00:08:13 Jimmy Guest

I think the one difference—and what Terry says is absolutely right—as far as kind of the context of things, the thing that's different about it to me is that there was no kind of record company agenda. Not that in any way am I trying to say record companies interfere, but I always come up with the word "record company interference". For some reason, those words all go together. And—but there was

nobody saying, “Well, we have to shoot for this demographic or this analytic or this whatever.” There was none of those kinds of decisions being made in the process. And we always felt like our studio is the safe space for artists to just do what they do.

So, there was no expectation of, “We need to get on this radio station, or we need to get on this streaming service, or we need to—” That was not ever part of the conversations in making this record. The record was always, “Let’s do the best version of you we can possibly do.” And even when the artists themselves maybe couldn’t see what that best version of themselves were, we could. Terry always says we’re Nostradamus for everybody else. You know? We can—we can look at somebody and go, “This is the record you should be doing right now. Here’s the record we’d like to hear you do right now.” And then we go make that record.

So, it was interesting like when the artists heard their songs—like Babyface is a great example of an artist where, you know, obviously he’s as accomplished as an artist could possibly get as a songwriter, as a producer. Where he first of all said, “You guys produce it. We’ll write it together, but you guys produce it.” And when he heard the finished product, he just said, “Man, that sounds really good.”

And we said, “Thanks!”

And he said, “No, that sounds really good!” Like he was surprised about it.

And we were like, “Of course it sounds good! It’s Babyface. You’re Babyface! Like don’t you remember who you are?!” But I think for a lot of fans, you forget that moment when you fell in love with those artists in the first place. So, we wanted this album to bring that to the fans to go, “Oh man, this reminds me of when I fell in love with Babyface,” upon hearing the song. But what we also realized, we were giving the artists a chance to fall back in love with themselves again, to hear themselves without having to do all the meticulous work that goes into the production side of it. But also, once again, without the record company pressure of, “Well, this is—you know, your album or your next follow-up single or your next—” Without that pressure. Just a safe space of being in the studio and just creating songs, if that makes sense. That’s to me what we were able to bring, and I think all the artists appreciated that.

*[Music fades in.]*

00:10:38	Jesse	Host	Let’s take that Babyface song as an example, ‘cause I really like the Babyface song from the record.
00:10:43	Music	Music	“He Don’t Know Nothin’ Bout It” from the album <i>Jam &amp; Lewis, Vol. 1</i> by Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis.

*‘Cause he drive a 600 that  
He don’t even own  
Talking like he’s the guy  
He could ‘bout have any girl he want*

*He don’t know nothing ‘bout it*

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

00:10:59 Jesse Host Babyface has a—you know, 30+ year history as a producer, as a songwriter, and as an artist. So, when you're sitting down to write a song with him and you're gonna produce it for him—like, what are you thinking of? Like what do you—are you trying to figure out in your head what makes Babyface Babyface? Or are you trying to figure out in your head what can Babyface do for us?

00:11:28 Terry Guest *[Laughs.]* Well, I'll give you my personal assessment of it. And that was, "Woah, we gotta get this one right."

*[They laugh.]*

'Cause we're fans of Babyface, as—you know, as an artist. And as a producer. And man, you don't wanna mess up this thing at all. So, you know, we always do our study and homework to try to figure out what we need to do with the particular artist that we're working with. But Babyface, for me, was one of those ones that, "Oh, we have to get this one right."

00:12:01 Jesse Host I like the idea that you're tossing off the Usher and Mariah tracks. You're like, "Oh yeah, sure. Of course, we can do that in our sleep. But we gotta get Babyface right."

00:12:10 Terry Guest No, no, no! But it's just—it's more of a critical thing. Like once again, in production, we'd listen for mistakes. And to have another producer—which all of the people that you mentioned, whether it be Usher or Toni, they all have ears as producers for themselves. But for some reason, Babyface was just one of those ones that I just felt like, "Oh. I gotta get this one right." *[Chuckles.]* 'Cause this is Babyface! And I just wanted to make sure that we got all the particulars in order so that he wouldn't hear it and say, "Hey, could you guys maybe change this, that, or the other thing?"

00:12:49 Jesse Host Have either of you sung on a record?

00:12:51 Jimmy Guest *[Laughs.]* I used to call Terry Mr. Background. Terry used to do the backgrounds on all our records, all the early days records back when you go back to like the Alexander O'Neal records or "Human" by The Human League—all those smooth harmonies in the back, that's all Terry Lewis. So, used to call him Mr. Background. So. Terry's definitely sung on records and, you know, we've sung a little bit. You know, we can do holler vocals like we call out, "Hey!" We can do that kind of stuff. *[Chuckles.]* But actually—

00:13:17 Terry Guest Well, Jam! Jam, you sang—you sang co-lead with Janet on "What Have You Done For Me Lately", man.

00:13:23 Jimmy Guest Uh, yeah. Well, co-lead is very, um.

*[Terry and Jesse cackle.]*

00:13:30 Terry Guest Yeah, I'm the—yeah, that's very generous, Terry. I sang the, uh—*[Recovering from laughter.]* Oh, that was funny.

00:13:31 Jimmy Guest —the low part. Yeah, if you listen, there is an octave underneath. "There used to be a time when you—" Yeah, I'm just kind of gruff voicing that down there.

*[Music fades in.]*

I'm definitely not turned up in the mix, though, which is purposeful.

00:13:41	Music	Music	<p>“What Have You Done for Me Lately” from the album <i>Control</i> by Janet Jackson.</p> <p><i>... you would pamper me Used to brag about it all the time Your friends seem to think that you're so peachy-keen But my friends say neglect is on your mind Who's right?</i></p> <p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i></p>
00:13:57	Jimmy	Guest	<p>But no, I mean, yes. We can hold a note, I guess you could say. But, you know, to use your bucket analogy, there's a hole in our bag. So, we're holding the note, but it ain't—you know, it's not—it's not doing the best that it could possibly do.</p> <p><i>[Jesse laughs.]</i></p>
00:14:07	Terry	Guest	<p>It's slipping away quickly. Yeah, we've got grease on our fingers. Yes. <i>[Chuckles.]</i></p>
00:14:13	Jimmy	Guest	<p>By the way, the good news about that, though—I will say—is that when we do demos for the artists, it's great. I remember, we did a Gladys Knight song and Ann Nesby did the—from <i>Sounds of Blackness</i>—did the demo of it. And Gladys Knight said, “Ooh, Ann sounds really good. She should just keep that song for herself.”</p> <p><i>[Jesse chuckles.]</i></p> <p>And we were like, “Wow, if Gladys Knight is saying that, then we need to just do the vocals ourself. Because when we did the vocals, everybody laughs when we do the vocals. Right? But then they know they can go in and kill it, that they're gonna make it sound really great. So, you know, that's—I guess the blessing is that we're not that great of singers. But we do know what we'd like for the singer to sing and how they should sing it. So, it's a good balance.</p>
00:14:52	Jesse	Host	<p>The two of you met as teenagers. Do you know—do you remember who spotted who?</p>
00:14:56	Jimmy	Guest	<p>I spotted Terry. It was a summer program at the University of Minnesota called Upward Bound. And the cool thing about the program was you basically stayed in dorms, just like it was college. But we were only junior high school students at the time. And I remember, as we were checking into the dorms, I walked by one of the dorm rooms and the door was open and sitting on the bed in the dorm was Terry Lewis playing a red, black, and green bass. And he was playing Kool &amp; The Gang bass parts on it. And I remember looking at him—I don't even know whether I said anything to him, but I just looked at him and I said, “Okay, whoever this brother is, I got to get to know him.” It was like love at first sight for me, seeing Terry.</p> <p>And I think he saw me playing in the—in the lunchroom, they were storing a bunch of pianos, because it was during the summer. So, they were, you know—school wasn't really in. The college part wasn't in. So, they had moved a bunch of pianos into some lunchrooms just to store them. And I found my way to the piano, so I would go down there and play, and Terry would always say, allegedly, that I was swooning the girls or something when I was</p>

			playing. But that was kind of how he—how he saw me for the first time. So, I think that we both had a mutual admiration society from first meeting, I guess I would say. And he was definitely swooning the girls.
00:16:07	Terry	Guest	
			<i>[They laugh.]</i>
00:16:14	Jesse	Host	Did the two of you have similar music tastes when you met?
			<i>[Jimmy denies it.]</i>
00:16:19	Terry	Guest	Our musical tastes were—yeah, we were all over the place that way. Because we grew up in Minneapolis and we probably did have some overlapping musical taste, but Minneapolis was a place that you very rarely would hear R&B music on the radio. So, you know, I was more of a funk R&B person, but I also—you know—loved some soft rock. You know, some James Gang and some different things like that. And so, when I met Jam, Jam was trying to turn me onto the new Chicago album and I was like, “Woah! Chicago?! Alright, well, do you know about New Birth? Earth, Wind & Fire?”
			So, I just started turning him on to more of the R&B type of music. You know, and we just kind of started to blend things that way.
00:17:11	Jesse	Host	We’ve got even more with Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis. Stay with us. It’s <i>Bullseye</i> , from <a href="http://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> and NPR.
00:17:18	Music	Transition	Heady, bluesy music.
00:17:22	Jesse	Promo	This message comes from NPR sponsor Green Chef.
			Green Chef is a USDA certified organic meal kit, offering plans for every lifestyle—including paleo, plant-powered, keto, and balanced living. With their wide variety of high quality, clean ingredients seasonally sourced for peak freshness, you can feel great about what you’re eating and how it got to your table. Go to <a href="http://GreenChef.com/bullseye100">GreenChef.com/bullseye100</a> and use code “bullseye100” to get \$100 off, including free shipping.
			<i>[Music fades out.]</i>
00:18:00	Promo	Clip	<b>Music:</b> Relaxed, cheerful music.
			<b>Speaker:</b> Maya Rudolph’s up for two Emmys this year. One nomination for guest hosting <i>Saturday Night Live</i> , the other for playing a puberty-inducing hormone monstress on the animated show <i>Big Mouth</i> .
			<i>[Scene change to Big Mouth, underscored by ominous music.]</i>
			<b>Connie the Hormone Monstress:</b> You wanna scream at your mother and then laugh at her tears!
			<i>[Music roars to a crescendo as the clip ends.]</i>
			<b>Speaker:</b> Comedian Maya Rudolph. Listen now to the <i>It’s Been a Minute</i> podcast from NPR.
00:18:20	Music	Transition	Thumpy rock music.
00:18:25	Jesse	Host	It’s <i>Bullseye</i> . I’m Jesse Thorn. My guests, Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis, have been working together for 40 years, producing some of the biggest R&B records of all time. This past July, they released their first ever album under their own name. It’s called <i>Jam &amp; Lewis</i> ,

Vol. 1. Let's get back to my interview with Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis.

The other day on *Bullseye*, we had Wendy & Lisa on and—you know, both of their dads were very serious professional musicians in the—in the Wrecking Crew. And both their moms were musicians, as well—although mostly amateur ones. And there was a part in the conversation where Wendy said that when she was in middle school or something, she was listening to a lot of deep funk. And I'm like, "What, you're telling me you were like 14, 15 years old you were—you were hanging out, listening to Mandrill or whatever?"

And she goes, "Oh yeah. I loved Mandrill." *[Laughs.]*

And I was like, "Oh, alright!"

*[They affirm.]*

00:19:27 Terry Guest

Great taste! "Fencewalk".

00:19:31 Jesse Host

*[Jimmy echoes him.]*

But it's funny because, you know, she's in LA and she's like sneaking out to clubs and her dad's a musician who's, you know, playing on Frank Sinatra records or whatever. And you guys are in Minneapolis where it's hard work just to listen to R&B.

00:19:46 Jimmy Guest

Yeah, it was definitely hard work. And you know, I had the same kind of upbringing, though. My dad played—still plays as a musician to this day. So, I grew up with a bunch of instruments around my house. There was always keyboards around the house. There was always a drum set around the house. Actually, I got my first drum set, I think, when I was maybe five years old. And, you know, so I grew up really with instruments and stuff around the house. But I think part of the thing that makes Terry—where we really bonded over music was, you know, like Terry said. He introduced me to New Birth and Tower of Power and Earth, Wind & Fire and those kinds of records. I introduced him to Chicago. But growing up, I was into—you know—Seals & Crofts and America and Bread and anything that was harmony and major 7 chords was my favorite stuff.

But we found a nice place where it blended. It took a while for us to figure out what the combination should be for that. 'Cause Terry would—you know, write something really funky and then I'd put a pretty melody over the top and he'd go, "Nooo!" Or I'd write something really with a pretty melody and then he'd put a funky bottom on it, and I'd go, "Nooo!" And we finally figured it out. Probably "Just Be Good to Me" was probably—with The S.O.S. Band—was probably the first time that we kind of figured it out. You know, the funky bottom and pretty top—as I guess some people call it. So, that's kind of a—ended up being our combination. But it was because of the differences of the kind of music that we listened to and appreciated.

But the thing was, we appreciated all music. So, the chance to kind of blend those types of influences together was always cool. And growing up in Minneapolis, you had a chance to do that because

you were getting east coast records, west coast records. You were getting Chicago records, Memphis records, Nashville records, Detroit records were all finding their way to Minneapolis. So, it was a great kind of gumbo, if you will, of a lot of different things. And obviously, Prince personified that better than anybody. You know? Kind of the blending of all types of music. 'Cause he was as much into—you know, you think Jimi Hendrix and Sly and the Family Stone, but also—you know, Lindsey Buckingham and Carlos Santana and all of those types of influences.

00:21:50 Jesse Host So, it was a great way to grow up. Let's listen to "Just Be Good to Me" by The S.O.S. Band. That's from 1983. One of the first things that the two of you guys worked on outside of your own stuff in The Time, and so forth.

*[Music fades in.]*

00:22:09 Music Music And yeah. Your first—your first big hit, as producers. "Just Be Good to Me" from the album *On the Rise* by The S.O.S. Band.

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

00:22:34 Jesse Host That bassline is heavy, though! *[Laughs.]* Those keyboards!  
00:22:37 Jimmy Guest Hey, man, I've gotta tell you—I gotta tell you. So, real quick story. The night we got fired from The Time—or as Terry likes to say, freed from The Time—we were at Sunset Sound. We'd gone for a recording session for The Time. And Prince was there along with Morris and Jesse. And we walked into the room and Prince said, "I heard you guys were working on other songs with The S.O.S. Band and I told you not to do that. So, you're fired."

So, when he said that, I just got up and said, "Okay, cool." And so, Terry stayed in there and tried to reason with him a little bit. And eventually, Terry came out. So, we kind of looked at each other and we said, "Well. What do you wanna do?" And we said, "Well, let's go over to the other studio that we had already booked and let's go mix this S.O.S. Band record." So, we walked into the studio—which was called Larrabee Sound. And the engineer was a guy named Steve Hodge. And we knew Steve Hodge's name from looking at the liner notes of all the Solar Records productions from back in the day. Whispers, Shalamar, Lakeside. We knew that Steve Hodge was the engineer that mixed all those records. So, we said, "Let's go get him to mix 'Just Be Good to Me'."

And so, we walked into the studio. We had never met him; we'd only talked to him on the phone. And we walked in, and he said, "Hey! Nice to meet you guys." And we said, yeah, nice to meet you, Steve. And he said, "What's wrong with you guys? And we said, well, we just got fired from The Time. *[Beat.]* And he said, "You did?!" And we said yeah. And he said, "Well." He said, "I don't think you guys have anything to worry about, 'cause this song here? This is a smash." And we said, really? And he said, "Yeah." And he pressed play. And when that song came on with his mix on it, with the bass like you was saying. The *[grows to imitate the bassline]*—when that thing exploded in, we were like oh my god. You know?

So, that experience of hearing that song—every time I hear that song, it's so much more than just hearing a song. It really was like the birth. You know? It was the baby getting slapped on the butt and our first cry. That's what that song is to me, when I hear that bass come in at the beginning. It was just like—yeah. I mean, that's the song that set us on our way.

00:24:45 Jesse Host

I feel like the story that I have always heard about you guys getting fired from The Time is that the reason you got fired was because you were working on another record, got stuck somewhere, and missed a gig. Did Prince tell you not to work on other stuff?

00:25:03 Terry Guest

He absolutely told us not to work on other stuff! We actually were working on a record with Climax. It was one of the early records that we got the opportunity to produce. And we went and played it for him, and he went through a series of tantrums. *[Laughs.]* I guess.

*[Jimmy chuckles.]*

And finally told us, you know, "Hey, this song could be a hit." And, you know, "But I don't want you guys doing records outside of the group." But he would never give us the opportunity to produce a record for the group! And all we wanted to do was to just be better at what we loved to do, which was create music. And so, he told us not to do it and we said, "Okay." And then we went outside and said, "Nnnn. Let's go back and do some more."

*[Jesse laughs.]*

So, *[laughing]* it was—it was, you know, very simple to us. It's like we weren't hurting anyone. It's like, why should we stop doing what we love to do? If we can't get the opportunity here, we have to do it somewhere! And for someone to ask us to not do it wasn't—didn't seem correct to us. So, we just went on and we kept producing. We produced some things and wrote some things for Gladys Knight and finally got the opportunity to produce The S.O.S Band, through Clarence Avant. And so, that just became a great opportunity that we couldn't pass up! And in the interim, we missed a flight and missed a gig, and that history is what it is. But it was in no way to do anything to mess up The Time thing. We always were committed to that.

But we had to do what we were meant to do. We were built to make music.

00:26:55 Jesse Host

I mean, one of the weird things about The Time, as a band, is you have this act that is just top to bottom brilliant people who know what they're doing. You know what I mean? Like, a rock-solid great band, soup to nuts. You have a great front man in Morris Day. You're making great records. And, you know, you're sort of—this is a band put together by Prince, one of the great music geniuses of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. And so, you have this kind of—you have this kind of tension between *[chuckles]* basically like, "Hey, we're all great. Like, we can tell that we are good." And also like, "We can all tell Prince is a genius." I'm sure. At least that—you know, that was how Wendy & Lisa described it to me. They were like, "Yeah. Prince was a genius. We could all tell."

00:28:04 Jimmy Guest

But like, Prince is like, “Hey, here’s a record. I made it. Morris can sing the vocals. And you have to figure out what to do in that situation. And it’s such a weird place to be in.

Yeah, it’s definitely a weird place to be in. But I will say one thing, just to—just some nuance was that we were already together as a band and had been for quite a while. And we’re already known as basically the best band in Minneapolis. So, when Morris came and joined us and said basically, “I want you guys to be my band. Prince is gonna get us a record deal.” At one point in time, we had heard—because Morris had said—that Prince didn’t really want us for the band. He wanted to get some other people for the band. And Morris was the one that was insistent that, “No. Flight Time is the band. We’re—I’m keeping Flight Time. You know, Jimmy and Terry and Monty and Jellybean and Jesse and the guys, like these are the guys. These are—this is the band.”

So, Prince got us, obviously, the record deal. But he did not put us together. It wasn’t that type of thing. It was—it was—and he definitely did the records. No doubt about it. But we were already together as a band, and we were already tight, and we already had—the idea really was to always be better than the record. And that was the thing that Prince always said, even when we would rehearse. You know? He’d always tell us, “It’s gotta be better than the record. It’s gotta be better than the record.” So, we always took that as gospel. And so, when our six-hour-a-day rehearsals—we were always trying to improve upon what was already there. And in the interim, of course, we were learning more about arranging and more about production and more about songwriting and those types of things. So, we were all getting better at our craft.

You know, and he felt like he created Frankenstein because when we would get in concert and stuff—you know, we’d be out there trying to kill it. Like, we’d be out there trying to—you know, we’re gonna kick his butt. And we did! You know? And one of the funny things I remember too was when we were like in a small town—like when we were in like, I don’t know, North Carolina or South Carolina and the headlines in the paper would come out and it would always be, “Yeah, Prince was really good but oh my god, The Time!” That would always be kind of the headline. And I remember specifically never being able to play in LA or New York with Prince. Because those papers had too much—you know, the whole country read *The LA Times* and *The New York Times*.

So, both of those places—we’d be in the towns, but we couldn’t play. It would just be Prince and Vanity 6, but without The Time playing. And it was the weird—that was—talk about some weird stuff. That was weird. You know. We could play Nassau Coliseum, or we could play Long Beach Arena, but we couldn’t play the two kind of Meccas at the time: the Forum, in LA, and Madison Square Garden, in New York. We never played those gigs.

[Terry affirms.]

So, that was—that was really interesting to us. But we took it seriously. And it really was about bringing it to life. You know?

00:30:54	Jesse	Host	<p>Prince created it, but we were the ones that really brought it to life. And that—we took that responsibility really seriously. I mean, in a funny way, that prepares you for the decades of extraordinary success you had, thereafter. Right? Where a huge part of your career, your job is to take something that exists—whether it's an artist and their gifts or, in some cases, an artist and their gifts and a song somebody wrote. Although most of your hits, you wrote. And find a way to make it into something special in the same way that you—you know, in The Time, your job was to start with this thing that somebody with a huge amount of talent gave you and find a way to make it into something more, make it better onstage than it was on the record.</p>
00:31:41	Jimmy	Guest	<p>Yeah, it was definitely good training. And we always say we had the seasoning. You know. When you think about, you know, live performing and learning about an audience, how to hold an audience, how to please an audience. You know, once again, that's something we had done. That was in our DNA from the time Terry and I met. We actually, for a lot of our early years, we were in separate bands. So, we were in Battle of the Bands against each other. You know? And so, it was always about upping your level and getting better at what it was you did, like improving yourself. And it wasn't that we were trying to beat the other bands so much. It was just that we were trying to improve ourselves.</p>
00:32:28	Terry	Guest	<p>And that was the thing I always admired about Terry. I remember one of the gigs we did—you know, Terry's band was a little bit shorthanded. You know. He'd had some injuries or however you wanna call it. And we went out and we did— Wounded. <i>[Laughs.]</i></p>
00:32:29	Jimmy	Guest	<p>We had—yeah, they were wounded. Yes. They were wounded. And we went out and—we went out and Letashed them. You know? But the very next gig, we did a big outdoor gig and—you know, Terry came back, and they had added a horn section and added all of these pieces and they killed us. But I remember looking at Terry—not with anger, but with admiration. Like, damn. Terry's killing it. And it's like, "We gotta get together." Like, if we get—if we join together, then we're really gonna have something. So, we always felt that way. We felt that way about the members of The Time.</p>
00:33:29	Jesse	Host	<p>That's one of the reasons, too, that we never put another band together was because we felt we had already been in the best band we could ever be with. Like, there's no reason to ever even try to do another band. So, once we were not in The Time anymore, other than getting back together with The Time and doing a couple of records and a couple of dates here and there, we never really wanted to be in another band. You know? We had already been in the best band we could possibly be in with the best—you know—the best brothers we could ever have.</p> <p>Did the two of you know when you were playing in rival bands and then when you were in The Time together, that the two of you were just gonna be bound at the hip forever? Was there a point when you figured that out?</p>
00:33:42	Terry	Guest	<p>I don't think there was a—well. Nothing specific, I think. But we—even in rival bands, I used to go enlist Jimmy to play on my sessions when we took Flight Time in the studio. I would always get</p>

him to come and play keyboards on whatever we were trying to produce.

*[Jimmy confirms.]*

00:34:05 Jimmy Guest  
00:34:08 Terry Guest

And so, we always worked together. Yeah. And—  
I loved that. I loved that.

Yeah. It was never any animosity and rivalry that way. It's just that when you get on the stage, that's—well, somebody's got to go down.

*[Jimmy laughs and agrees.]*

That's just—that's just the way that is! But as musicians, no. It was total respect. And no, I never knew that we were going to get together and be partners and that all happened kind of just as a result of things happening in a negative way with The Time, sometimes. And you know, at a point—you know, we had an argument. They called a big meeting. Well, we had a disagreement. We won't even call it an argument. Where we weren't being handled like we thought we should be. And so, in the meeting, Prince asked us—you know, what were we gonna do?

I said, "Well, I'm gonna do what I gotta do, Prince."

He said, "Is that a threat?"

And I said, "No, that's a promise." And so, we went outside that room at that particular day, and I said, "I'm going to LA at the end of the tour. Who's coming?"

And Jam said, "I'll come." And everybody else said they were gonna go home and buy a VCR. And that's why we're partners to this day.

*[They chuckle.]*

00:35:41 Jesse Host

Because we chose to be together and work together and, you know, take whatever would come. You know. We ate a piece of chicken and a strawberry soda and a biscuit for months on end with no money, together. And we braved a whole lot of circumstances.

00:35:52 Terry Guest

Do the two of you do different things on records? Is one of you the guy that programs the drums or plays the drums or—you know, Terry are you always the one picking up the bass guitar?

00:36:05 Jimmy Guest

No, man. With Jimmy Jam on the keys, man, that's just like having a extra bass player. So, a lot of times I don't play bass at all.

00:36:07 Terry Guest

Because my style is very—you know. My style. And damn well—  
Distinctive.

00:36:09 Jimmy Guest

Very distinct. Yes.

00:36:10 Terry Guest

Yes. It's distinct.

And sometimes we don't want it to "stink" on the record. So.

*[They laugh.]*

So, Jam plays a lot of keyboard bass a lot of times. Or we had Big Jim Wright—who was a writer and a producer along with us, and he

played on a whole lot of records, too. So, when you had two Jims around? I didn't really need to play that much. So.

But I do write most of the lyrics. Not all. And, you know, I do produce a lot of the vocals. Jam does a lot of the drum programming or most of the drum programming, now. And pretty much all of the keyboards. He—at one time, he made me play. And I always thought that was really senseless for me to try to play keyboards with these two guys around that were—that were so good and proficient at it.

*[Jimmy chuckles.]*

So, I would struggle up on some stuff and—you know, I did some good work, sometimes, making keyboard parts. But these guys were just pros. So, I always know my place. I sit back down and get my place, easy.

00:37:12 Jimmy Guest

I think that's part of the key too, by the way. Is that we always say we have no slack, meaning we pick up each other's slack. And so, there can be times where, you know, maybe I'll work on a song for a little bit. I can't really figure anything out and I just will throw it on a hard drive or something. And then, you know, years later Terry'll find it and all of the sudden there'll be like this song and I'll—he'll play it and I'll go, "Wait! Where'd you find that?"

He says, "Oh, it was on your hard drive."

I'm like, "Oh my god! I didn't imagine it was gonna sound like that."

So, we do a lot of that type of thing. But the thing I always say about Terry, what makes him such a great lyricist, is what it takes me a paragraph to say, he can say in a sentence. And I think his efficiency in writing is amazing. We were doing—one of the songs I always give as an example is when we were doing "Livin' in a World They Didn't Make" with Janet. Or what turned out to be that. And we had seen the school shooting that had happened, and we wanted to write a song about it. And Terry wasn't there; he had gone over—we were putting together a new studio in Minneapolis at that time.

So—you know, we're having a conversation with Janet about it and then Terry walks in with wallpaper samples in one hand and carpet samples in the other hand and he goes, "Uh, which one of these do you like for the studio?"

And we said, "Terry, Terry, no! Here's what we need: we got this song. And, you know, these kids got shot. And it's the adult's fault. And, you know, it's not these kid's fault." And blah, blah, blah.

*[Music fades in.]*

00:38:41 Music Music

And we go through this long explanation and Terry just looks at us and says, "Livin' in a world they didn't make".

"Livin' in a World" from the album *Janet Jackson's Rhythm Nation 1814* by Janet Jackson.

*Living in a world they didn't make*

*Paying for a lot of adult mistakes  
How much of this madness can they take?  
Our children*

*Children...*

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

00:38:55 Jimmy Guest

And we said, "Yeah! Yeah."

And he said, "Okay." And he puts the samples down and he goes and 15 minutes later, he hands us the lyrics to the song. And then he goes, "Okay, which wallpaper sample do you like?"

*[Jesse laughs.]*

I mean, it was like the ultimate multitasking. But that's the gift that Terry has. It's like, whatever you say to him, he can decipher it and make it into a beautiful lyric. And even the way he goes about writing—'cause he never wants to just write—there's a million different ways to say I love you, and Terry will figure out a unique way of saying it where you go, "Ooh, I haven't heard it like that before." And there's something that's so magic about that. I'm glad—and I get to sit, every day, and watch that happen as he—as he creates that. I absolutely love that.

00:39:40 Jesse Host

At the beginning of your careers as producers, in the early to mid-'80s, were you programming all your drums?

00:39:49 Jimmy Guest

Yeah. I started off as a drummer. I think I mentioned earlier. I don't know that I did, but I had a drum set when I was like five years old. So, drums was always my first love. And when the drum machines happened, the Linn drum, the DMX, the 808. I loved programming the beats, of doing that. Later on, when it went to the SP-1200, it went to the MPC. I was good on those—not quite as good as I was on the original, you know, Linn drums and stuff. So, we had a couple other guys. We had a guy named Alex Richburg, who was a great drum programmer who actually showed me, finally, how to work the MPC in the right way. But yeah, I love programming drums. I still do! I still do.

But I think we're really good at knowing what we can do well and what we can't do well. And I think that's always been a key to our success, sort of, is that we know what we do really well and then we'll try to do that to the—to the utmost. But we also are the ultimate collaborators. So, we'll bring in somebody that we'll hear and go, "Ooh, this is really good, the way you programmed this or the way you played this," or whatever. And bring them in and let them do their thing. So, the collaboration is always the funnest part, to me.

00:41:05 Jesse Host

I mean, you guys are famous for using that 808. You know, probably the most legendary drum machine of all time. And you've used it in different ways over a time period where, you know—started when the 808 was cutting edge technology and got to the point, today, where it is—you know, it's a classic sound. Like, it's like—I was trying to think of what's a more iconic musical instrument, in American popular music. It's like I guess maybe a

Stratocaster? But like it's a pretty short list. *[Chuckles.]* You know what I mean?

*[They agree.]*

00:41:45 Jimmy Guest Like, in terms of a particular sound. Well, it's interesting because the 808 is—for most people, it is a sound. And it is literally this sound that you would recognize as the sound of the—of the low bass, of the sign bass that was always part of that kickdrum. And, you know, we used to turn that up.

*[Music fades in.]*

00:42:12 Music Music I remember, on “Tell Me You Still Care” by The S.O.S. Band, that was one of the first places that we turned up the decay on the kickdrum to give it that booom that you hear on all the records. “Tell Me if You Still Care” from the album *On the Rise* by The S.O.S. Band.

*Tell me  
If you still care*

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

00:42:23 Jimmy Guest And now, of course, people started tuning that. So, now it became the—literally the bass on the records is just a tuned 808. But it was funny, because I remember, a long time ago—I think we were probably working on Mariah's record back in the day. And I remember that one of the guys—I don't remember whether it was Beats by the Pound or one of the other guys, had—they were looking for an 808 sound. They were at our studio in Minneapolis, and they said, “Hey, you guys have anything with a 808 sound on it?” And I said yeah. And I gave them the 808 drum machine. And they said, “What is this?”

And I said, “It's the 808 drum machine.”

*[Jesse and Terry chuckle.]*

They said, *[excited]* “Oh my god!” And they—I remember, they got on their phones and started calling all their friends and going, “Man, they got an actual 808, man! No, not the sound! The actual machine, man! They got the real machine!” And it was so funny. I never thought of it like that, but that's what people think of when they think of 808. They think of 808, they think of a sound. They don't think of the actual machine. But we still have our original machine that did all the records from back in the day and we love it because whenever we need—it was funny. I played something for Jermaine Dupri the other day, and he said, “Man, is that a real 808?” And I said yeah. He said, “Man!” *[Chuckling.]* He said, “I got—I gotta get a real 808.”

It's like—it was so funny. But yeah, it's definitely—like you said, Stratocaster, yeah. But I think as far as—certainly for drums, that 808 is the one. And literally, it's in every record that you hear, nowadays. So, we're glad we still have our original one.

00:43:49 Jesse Host We had Egyptian Lover on the show one time, and I think he has a borderline romantic relationship with his 808s.

*[Jimmy affirms.]*

00:43:57 Jimmy Guest Like, he's got like a stash. *[Laughs.]* I bet he does, yeah. Yes. Yeah. Yeah. No, it's a great drum machine. It was really funny, too—even when you mentioned it a little earlier, when we were working on the Mariah record, we knew the things that Mariah liked. When we first met Mariah for the very first time, she literally sang half our songbook back to us. She was like a true fan. You know how you meet people, and they go, “Oh, yeah, I'm a fan of your work.”

And you go, “Oh, what do you like?”

And they'll go, “I like all your stuff.”

No, she specifically was like, “‘Didn't Mean to Turn You On’. ‘Just Be Good to Me’. ‘Tell Me if You Still Care’.” Like, she named off songs. You know? And it was really funny when we worked even on this new record with her, we made sure that the 808 sound was in there, the claps and the—and the drums were the 808 drums. And the synthesizer little lines were the—were the OB-8. And the bassline was the OB-8. Like, we made sure to give her those ingredients that she liked. So, it was like—you know—taking a bite of a—of a new meal in a restaurant but it reminding you of the way mom used to cook it. You know? That's what we wanted to do with her song and really with all the songs on the album, is give you that feel. You know?

So, yeah. That—we still, to this day—you know, we love using those sounds. They're so relevant and they're so beautiful. And they're timeless! They're timeless sounds.

00:45:20 Jesse Host We'll finish up with Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis in just a minute. After the break, we'll dive deep into the Janet Jackson single “Love Will Never Do” and the jaw dropping synthesizer line on that record. It's *Bullseye*, from [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and NPR.

00:45:35 Promo Clip **Music:** Bright orchestral music.

**Hal Lublin:** If you're sick of constantly arguing with the people closest to you about topics that really aren't going to change the world, we're here to take that stress off your shoulders. We take care of it for you on *We Got This with Mark and Hal*.

**Mark Gagliardi:** That's right, Hal! If you have a subjective question that you want answered objectively once and for all time for all of the people of the world—questions like who's the best Disney villain? Mac or PC? Or should you put ketchup on a hotdog? That's why we're here.

**Hal:** Yes, I get that these are the biggest questions of our time. And we're often joined by special guests like Nathan Fillion, Orlando Jones, and Paget Brewster. So, let Mark and Hal take care of it for you on *We Got This with Mark and Hal*, weekly on [Maximum Fun](http://MaximumFun.org).

00:46:20	Promo	Clip	<p><i>[Music ends.]</i>  <b>Music:</b> Cheerful guitar.</p> <p><b>John Moe:</b> Hey, it's John Moe. And look, these are challenging times for our mental and emotional health. I get it! That's why I'm so excited for my new podcast, <i>Depresh Mode</i>. We're tackling depression, anxiety, trauma, stress, the kinds of things that are just super common but don't get talked about nearly enough. Conversations that are illuminating, honest, and sometimes pretty funny, with folks like Kelsey Darragh, and Open Mike Eagle, and Patton Oswalt.</p> <p><b>Patton Oswalt:</b> "Humphrey Bogart was never in therapy!" And then my dad said, "Yeah, but he smoked a carton of cigarettes a day! So, he <u>was</u> in therapy."</p> <p><b>John:</b> Plus, psychiatrists, psychologist, and all kinds of folks. On <i>Depresh Mode</i>, we're working together: learning, helping each other out. We're a team! Join our team! <i>Depresh Mode</i> from <a href="#">Maximum Fun</a>, wherever you get your podcasts.</p>
00:47:08 00:47:13	Music Jesse	Transition Host	<p><i>[Music fades out.]</i>  Thumpy rock music.  Welcome back to <i>Bullseye</i>. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guests are Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis. They're songwriters and producers who have worked on over 40 Top Ten hits with some of the biggest names in R&amp;B. Their productions include Janet Jackson's <i>Control</i> and <i>Rhythm Nation</i>. After 40 years of writing and recording stuff for other people, though, they're trying something different. <i>Jam &amp; Lewis, Vol. 1</i> is the duo's first ever album with their name on the cover. And it's worth the wait. Let's get back into our conversation.</p> <p>I have a friend who is king nerd of the Minneapolis sound. Just one of the greatest nerds of every tributary of that river—not least of which is your work. And he heard I was doing this interview and he sent me this stem that I wanted to play.</p>
00:48:18	Music	Music	<p>So, this is from—and just 'cause I just loved hearing it. So, first I wanna play a little bit of a hit that you guys made with Janet Jackson called "Love Would Never Do Without You".  "Love Will Never Do" from the album <i>Janet Jackson's Rhythm Nation 1814</i> by Janet Jackson.</p>
			<p><i>Ooh, ooh, go on</i>  <i>(Love would never do) Fine</i>  <i>(Never do without you) Oh yeah</i>  <i>(Love would never do) Fine</i>  <i>(Never do without you) Not for me</i>  <i>(Love would never do)</i></p>
00:48:38	Jesse	Host	<p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i>  So, like, when I hear that record, I hear a lot of the—a lot of the kind of signatures of the especially kind of upbeat records that you made with Janet Jackson. Right? Janet has this beautiful—this beautiful light voice that always feels like it's flying no matter what she's</p>

singing. And you're backing that up with those—you know, with those hard drums. You know, boom-BOP! You know? But he sent me—the stem that he sent me, and he like—he sent me a timecode. He wanted me to hear this particular—was the synth. Just halfway through the record. So, I just wanna play a little bit of that.

00:49:14 Music Music

"Love Will Never Do" by Janet Jackson, but with the synth line isolated and brought to the forefront of the audio.

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

00:49:35 Jesse Host  
00:49:37 Terry Guest  
00:49:38 Jesse Host

So, I gotta take us out of that or else I'll just—  
Ooooh, that's funky.  
I'll just listen to it all day long.

*[They laugh.]*

00:49:42 Jimmy Guest

Yeah. That was my—that was my attempt at Sly and the Family Stone, right there.

*[Jesse and Terry laugh.]*

00:50:04 Jesse Host

But played on a—played on a—played on an OB-8. That's an OB-8 organ. It's—A5 is the setting on the OB-8, on the original settings, that's what that is. I know exactly the sound. That's funky.

What's wild to me about that is that that is like a complimentary piece in this song. Right? Like, as I described, like as a casual listener to that hit record, I'm hearing Janet and I'm hearing that drum track. You know? And I'm hearing choruses of vocals. You know, you've got the kind of big call and response-y type deal going on. You know, there's a lot of things going on in that song. And that part *[chuckling]* is so distinctive and so funky and it's just in there. You know what I mean? Like, it's just a piece of the puzzle.

00:50:37 Jimmy Guest

It's—yeah. You know, that's the seasoning. When I—when we do—I talk all the time about the seasoning and stuff. It's like when you cook in the kitchen. Right? You know, when you taste the food, you just taste it and it either tastes good or it doesn't taste good. But if you're an actual chef when you taste the food, you're not only tasting that it tastes good overall, but you're also deciphering all of the seasonings that are in there. So, that organ part is one of those things that you don't necessarily hear it, but you feel it. Like if you take it out, it doesn't feel the same. Like a certain spice, if you take it out, it doesn't taste the same. And it's not even that you're tasting the spice, but you can taste when it's not there.

I love music nerds, because I'm a music nerd myself and I love when there's things in there that only music nerds would ever hear or appreciate what they are. Because I just think it's important. And I think to the casual listener—like I say, they don't know that it's there, but they know the way that it makes them feel when they hear it. You know? So, that's cool. I—that's awesome. I haven't heard that part broken out like that before, either. So, that's very cool.

00:51:49 Jesse Host

I'm glad somebody *[laughing]*—I don't know! Stole it from one of your hard drives or something?

00:51:56 Jimmy Guest

Yeah, probably so. There's a lot of—there's a lot of stuff floating around out there. A lot of it, we do have. But I don't—you know, but

other people's appreciation of it is different than ours. You know? When you're actually doing it, it's a different thing. I mean, to keep the cooking analogy, it's like if you're the chef and you actually make the meal, you might enjoy it, you know, but you're not gonna have that feeling that somebody who wasn't in the kitchen doing it—you know, 'cause when we produce, we always say we're listening for mistakes. Right? And I'm sure a chef is kind of doing the same thing. He's trying to make sure not too much pepper, not too much salt, cook at the right temperature, serve it the right way. All those types of things.

So, part of the satisfaction is—you know, the satisfaction of getting it done, but you'll never have that experience of hearing it—you know—for the first time. And going back and hearing something like that, that I don't even remember doing it, but I know what I was thinking when I was doing it was, "I wanna hear—" That's one of those parts that I would hear in the record, even if nobody else did, because I always love that style of playing. And like I say, that—for me, that was always Sly. Like, the way he played organ, those kinds of inversions and that kind of funk. But then, not doing it on—necessarily—an organ, but doing it on an OB-8, which was my favorite synthesizer from back in the day.

00:53:19	Jesse	Host	So, it's really cool to hear—to hear that. It's so cool. So, I understand the feeling of having been so deep in something that it's hard to see the forest for the trees when you try and stand back from it. But you guys are also 40 years deep, now, in your music careers. And I wonder if you're ever—if you've ever had the experience of like being at the grocery store and one of your records comes on and you're like, "Oh, yeah! Yeah, that is good!"
00:53:54	Jimmy	Guest	<i>[They chuckle.]</i> All the time! All the time. I went through a period—it was really interesting, too. 'Cause during COVID—the early stages of it—that was probably the one place that I did actually go to was the grocery store, because—you know, my wife would wanna cook or, you know, something. And that would be the one place I'd venture out to. And it would always be early in the morning. I—you know, 'cause I could get the—they would open up early for seniors <i>[chuckles]</i> , which I loved. So, you know, you could go in early and get your shopping done without, you know, a ton of people around.  But yeah, I'd always hear something that we did, and I still get that same impression when I—you know, I look around and I can't say anything, 'cause who cares. Right? But I kind of look around and I see other people grooving to it or something and it feels great. Terry and I were just in New York a few days ago and we walked into a little store just kind of randomly. We grabbed some juice and some stuff.  <i>[Music fades in.]</i>  And I can't even remember what song played, Terry! One of our songs played. And—
00:54:58	Terry	Guest	New Edition. "If it Isn't Love".
00:54:59	Jimmy	Guest	Oh, right! "If it Isn't Love". Yeah!

00:55:02	Music	Music	<p>"If It Isn't Love" from the album <i>Heart Break</i> by New Edition.</p> <p><i>'Cause if it isn't love Why do I feel this way? Why does she stay on my mind? And if it isn't love Why does it hurt so bad? Make me feel so sad inside?</i></p> <p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i></p>
00:55:21	Jimmy	Guest	<p>It's the first time I've been in the store with—in a long time, with Terry, and were able to actually look at each other and acknowledge that, "Oh, yeah! That's ours! That's cool." <i>[Chuckles.]</i> You know? So, we definitely do feel that way at the grocery store. I hear our stuff all the time and I love it! I mean, it's—it feels great. It feels great.</p>
00:55:40	Jesse	Host	<p>Guys, I've taken a lot of your time, but there is one thing that I feel obliged to ask about, which is: how did you come to produce a hit record in the mid to late 1980s for Herb Alpert?</p>
00:55:53	Jimmy	Guest	<p>Huh. Well, Herb Alpert was really interesting, because—and the—and the name I'll attach to that story, at the very beginning, is John McClain. Now, John McClain was the person responsible for us working with Janet. 'Cause he was the A&amp;R person at A&amp;M Records and one day gave us a list of names and said, "Who do you wanna work with on the roster?" And we looked at the list of names and we stopped on Janet, and we said we wanna do Janet. And so, that's how that happened. But after we had kind of a nice little run of success—and I think we had run—we had done—Human League had happened after that, after <i>Control</i>. And we had a nice—we'd been working pretty much straight from '83 up through '86/'87, just with no breaks whatsoever.</p> <p>And I remember Clarence Avant—the Black Godfather. He said to us, "You guys need to take a break."</p> <p>And we said, "What do you mean?"</p> <p>And he said, "You gotta take a break." He said, "I don't want you guys to go to the studio." And this was before the days of laptops and stuff. So, it wasn't like you could do—if you didn't go to the studio, you couldn't get anything done. So, when he said you can't go to the studio, we were like okay. He says, "And you guys gotta take two weeks off." And we said okay, cool.</p> <p>So, I remember the first week was horrendous, because Terry would call every day. Now, this was before cell phones, too. Right? So, Terry would call on this phone in my house every day. And our conversations would be the same. "How you doing, man?" "Good, man. How are you doing?" "Good, man. What you up to, today?" "Aw, nothing, man. Just, you know. Hanging out, man. What are you doing?" "Aw, man. Just hanging out." I mean like, literally that would be our discussion. "Okay, man. Okay, cool." And after the first week of that, that was kind of—that was tough. Right? Going into the second week, we started having a little bit better—you know, it was cool. It was like, "How you doing, man?" "Oh, good,</p>

man. Just relaxing, man.” “Yeah! Feels good to relax, man!” “Yeah!” “You know, cool, cool, cool.”

I remember toward the end of the second week, we called Clarence and we said, “Hey, Clarence, can we take another week off?” [Chuckles.] And he said yeah, absolutely! Take another week off! Because we realized, I think at that point, that the world wasn’t gonna fall apart without us doing something or working on something. So, that was kind of the setup for it. When we finally did go back to work or we were like, “Okay, now what are we gonna do next?”, McClain said, “Are you guys—when are you guys getting back to work?”

00:58:21 Jimmy

Guest

And we said, “We’re gonna get back to work next week.”

He said, “So—” He said, “What about if you guys do a record with Herb Alpert?”

And we said, “Well, what are you thinking?” By the way, this is—once again, Janet and Human League. So, he’s two for two right now. So, we said, “John, what are you thinking?”

He said, “Herb would be great, because it would be great to give him a hit record, but also there’s no pressure, because—you know, nobody’s expecting anything from Herb. It’s not like you’re going in with a bunch of expectations.” And so, he said, “That’d be a great way to get back into doing your work.”

And we thought, “Oh yeah! You’re right!” So, yeah. And also, in our minds, we thought it was also a nice way to say thank you for what he had done for Janet, what he had done for the *Control* album. And also, a challenge to try to give him a hit record. And we were able to all of those things and Herb was—is—the nicest dude. I mean, he is so—he’s so amazing. And that’s the reason that even later on—I mean, besides working on his album, and of course later on doing rhythm nation and then actually bringing our label—Perspective Records—to A&M and doing *Sounds of Blackness* there, it was because of Herb. Because it wasn’t about the business of it. It was about the humanity of it. It was about someone that understood music and the importance of it. And I remember when we—I’m starting to jump around, but I remember when we delivered “Optimistic” to him, he called us and we said—he said, “Hey.” He said, “‘Optimistic’.”

And we said, “Yeah, man!” We said, “Hey, we were most added on the radio, man! WBLS played us like 70 times and whatever!”

And he said, “I didn’t call to hear that bull[censored].” He said, “I called to just tell you how proud I am that you brought this record to us and that we’re associated with this piece of work.” And we were like wow, cool! You know? We—[stammering] the thing about like—we’re thinking about it like—‘cause everybody was telling us, “Oh man, you’re putting a gospel record out. That’s never gonna work.” And so, we figure Herb’s calling us to tell us—you know, “Well, what are you guys doing?!” You know. [Chuckles.] And he was calling to just talk about his appreciation of it. And so, the fact of giving him, you know, a couple of big hit records—and even as we—literally as

we speak, we're sitting with the number one song on R&B radio this week with a song called "Damage" by the artist H.E.R.

*[Music fades in.]*

Which basically is an interpolation of "Making Love in the Rain", Herb Alpert.

01:00:49 Music Music

"Damage" from the album *Back of My Mind* by H.E.R.

*If you got it, it ain't a question  
No, it ain't no room for guessing  
No more than emotionally invested (no, no)  
Showing you all my imperfections, oh*

*If I let you, don't take me for granted, yeah*

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

01:01:12 Jimmy Guest

So, you know, to 30 years later have that song and things from that album resonating today with people is an amazing thing. And it's a connectivity that music gives you—those threads like that. So, it's really cool, but we couldn't think of a better way to say thank you to Herb than to work on his record. And it was a fuuun record to do, man. We had a—we had a great time.

01:01:35 Jesse Host

Well, Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis, I'm so grateful for all this time you took to talk to me and for all your amazing work. I hope you'll come back another time. It was really awesome.

01:01:44 Jimmy Guest

We'll definitely come back, man. It was enjoyable and thanks for digging up that—the nerdism on the—on the OB-8 organ part.

*[Music fades in.]*

01:01:56 Terry Guest  
01:01:57 Music Music

That was great to hear. Loved that.

It's pretty funky.

"Til I Found You" from the album *Jam & Lewis, Vol. 1* by Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis.

*When I was out in the cold (somebody help her)  
And You took me in and gave me shelter  
In Your kingdom of tranquility and peace*

01:02:07 Jesse Host

*[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]*

Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis, living legends. I am already counting the days until I can have them back on *Bullseye*, because I feel like *[chuckles]* we did 1/20<sup>th</sup> of what we could have done in that conversation. Their new album—the first one they have ever released as recording artists—is called *Jam & Lewis, Vol. 1*. It is a great one. Let's go out with one more song from *Jam & Lewis, Vol. 1*. This is "Til I Found You" and it features the Twin Cities vocal group and Jam and Lewis mentees, *Sounds of Blackness*.

01:02:41 Music Music

*[Volume increases.]*

*Never felt real love (real, real love)  
'til I found You*

*Somebody say*

*Heaven must be like this  
It must be like this (it must be like this)  
Must be, gotta be, sure enough it is (hey)  
Heaven must be like this  
(Heaven must be like this)  
It must be like this  
It must be like this*

01:03:01 Jesse Host *[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]*  
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. Here at my house, we're putting in permeable pavers. Apparently, you wanna have permeable pavers, because that way when it rains, the water goes down back into the water table instead of washing down into the storm drains, along with all the pollution on the street. I don't know, it's just something I learned about pavers! *[Chuckles.]* Uh, okay.

Show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our senior producer, Kevin Ferguson. Our producer, Jesus Ambrosio. Production fellows at Maximum Fun are Richard Robey and Valerie Moffat. We get help from Casey O'Brien. Special thanks this week to Jam and Lewis for recording themselves at their own Flight Times Studios in Agora Hills, California. Jam and Lewis maybe know a little bit about recording. Our interstitial music by Dan Wally, also known as DJW. You know, Dan also has a Prince connection. During the last few years of Prince's life, Dan was his personal Los Angeles DJ, which basically meant that Prince would just show up in a hotel bar, have everyone else leave, call Dan, and Dan would come and play records for him all night. Our theme song is by The Go! Team. Thanks to them and to their label, Memphis Industries, for sharing it. I love The Go! Team's new record; you should go check that out.

01:04:37 Music Music  
You can also keep up with the show on Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. We post all our interviews there. And I think that's about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.  
*[Volume increases.]*

*(Oh yes You did)  
You showed me that You care*

01:04:42 Promo Promo  
*[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]*  
**Speaker:** *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn* is a production of [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and is distributed by NPR.

01:04:49 Music Music  
*[Volume increases.]*

*'Cause You give me the strength to weather any storm  
(Yes You do) and I wanna thank You for (thank You)  
Opening Heaven's doors*

*[Music fades out.]*