

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.  <i>[Music fades in.]</i>
00:00:27	Music	Music	In 1989, Mac McCaughan cofounded the band Superchunk. “Hyper Enough” from the album <i>Here’s Where the Strings Come In</i> by Superchunk.  <i>If it weren’t for those lofty currents you’re riding on You would not exist If it weren’t for the flashlight shining in my face Maybe I could resist</i>  <i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i>
00:00:40	Jesse	Host	Superchunk was abrasive and vulnerable. Guitars dominated their sound, with Mac’s voice sitting low in the mix. The band caught on and got huge. So huge, they helped coin the Gen X term “slacker” with their 1990 hit, “Slack Mother—” Well, we can’t say the whole title on NPR, but I think you know where that’s going.
00:01:01	Music	Music	“Slack Motherf-cker” from the album <i>Superchunk</i> by Superchunk.  <i>You haven’t moved from that spot all night Since you asked for a light</i>  <i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i>
00:01:20	Jesse	Host	To release Superchunk’s albums, Mac and his bandmates started their own label, Merge Records. Merge quickly became more than just a run of the mill indie label.  <i>[Music fades in.]</i>
00:01:44	Music	Music	Over its 30+ years of existence, Merge released albums like Neutral Milk Hotel’s <i>In the Airplane Over the Sea</i> , Spoon’s <i>Kill the Moonlight</i> , and <i>Funeral</i> , the breakthrough debut by Arcade Fire. “Wake Up” from the album <i>Funeral</i> by Arcade Fire.  <i>I can see where I am going to be</i>  <i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i>
00:01:53	Jesse	Host	Mac is also a solo artist. He’s released a handful of albums and EPs under his own name in a broad range of genres. He’s made

everything from folk rock to ambient music. His latest record is called *The Sound of Yourself*. It's pop music. It caught the ear of our friend Jordan Morris. Along with doing *Bullseye* interviews, Jordan's also a comedy writer and the co-host of one of my other podcasts, *Jordan, Jesse, Go!*. Anyway, let's kick off their conversation with a song from Mac's new album. This is "Dawn Bends".

00:02:27 Music Music

"Dawn Bends" from the album *The Sound of Yourself* by Mac McCaughan.

*Cut me on the dotted line  
Well, I swear, it's been here this whole time  
Instructions for taking me apart  
Couldn't read it 'til it got this dark*

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

00:02:45 Jordan Morris Host

Mac McCaughan, welcome to *Bullseye*.

00:02:47 Mac McCaughan Guest

Thank you.

00:02:49 Jordan Host

So, Mac, I wanna talk a little bit about the music you were listening to when you were growing up. What kind of music was playing around your house and, you know, in the family car when you were a kid?

00:03:00 Mac Guest

I grew up in South Florida until I was 13 years old. We moved to North Carolina. And growing up, in the car there was usually rock radio playing. Either Top 40 or I guess what at the time was album rock radio. At home, we were usually listening to my dad's records. And my dad didn't have a large record collection, but he had some really good records. I would say Rolling Stones, Stevie Wonder, Led Zeppelin, Elton John. Those were all—those were all quite popular. And my dad also loved any rock band that had a horn section. So, Chicago. Blood, Sweat & Tears.

*[Jordan chuckles and agrees.]*

Yeah, that's what we listened to. That's what we listened to a lot, at home.

00:03:54 Jordan Host

Superchunk's had some—had some brass over the years. Did your dad enjoy that addition?

00:03:58 Mac Guest

Oh, I'm sure that he did. I think that the first time we had a horn section on a Superchunk record was 1998, *Come Pick Me Up*, which we were lucky enough to record at Steve Albini's studio, Electrical Recording in—Electrical Audio, in Chicago.

00:04:16 Music Music

"Hello Hawk" from the album *Come Pick Me Up* by Superchunk.

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

00:04:45 Mac Guest

And we made that record with Jim O'Rourke. And one of the reasons that we wanted to work with Jim is because he's such a great writer of string arrangements and horn arrangements. And we also happened to be friends with some musicians in Chicago—Ken Vandermark and Jeb Bishop and Bob Weston all played horns on

that—on that record. And they're—especially Ken and Jeb were known at the time—are still known for their activity in the kind of free jazz world. And so, it was really awesome to have them on a Superchunk record.

00:05:24 Jordan Host Do you have an explanation for like how to make your punk band age well?

00:05:30 Mac Guest I mean, it's such a good question. And I actually have thought about it a lot and am constantly assessing what I'm doing and what Superchunk is doing from the point of view of like, okay. If I was a fan of this band for like 30 years and this—I heard this song. Would I be like, "Oh dude, like that is—okay. I love your old records, but I hate this new song."

*[Jordan chuckles.]*

I think about that and just try to avoid doing whatever that would be that would cause that feeling. So, I don't know! Like, I mean, you can't say to someone like, "Look, just take eight years off. Think about what you're doing. Reassess what you really get out of it. And like the parts that you love."

00:06:14 Jordan Host *[Laughs.]* "Make a couple solo albums." Yeah.

00:06:16 Mac Guest "Make a couple solo albums!" You know, so I don't have great advice except for the fact that I think one of the things that happened when we stopped making a record like every two years was that when we came back to make records, we—again, we could just go like, you know, we're gonna make this record. We're not gonna be on tour for six months out of the year like we used to be. And so, like, what would be a super fun record to make and a super fun record to play live after we make it? Because those shows are gonna be—there's not gonna be that many of those shows, so they should be really fun, not stressful shows to play. You know?

Like, let's not make a record where it's like, "Oh, in order to recreate this, we have to have a keyboard player and a string section, you know, in order for it to like make sense." No, like let's just like make a punk record that is gonna be fun to play live. And that's how we started with *Majesty Shredding*.

00:07:23 Music Music "Learned to Surf" from the album *Majesty Shredding* by Superchunk.

*'Cause I seem out of it*

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

00:08:02 Mac Guest And when we made *I Hate Music*, I think we learned a lot and we learned that that worked, but at the same time, that record is about like the death of a friend. So, the mood is different. It's not gonna always be like a joyous, "I love rock and roll," kind of thing. But at the same time, you know, I think we'd figured out how to do it. And then, you know, *Here's to Shutting Up*, the last album, is just more like rage-driven. Which is kind of exhausting, but kind of a—can be a good place to make a record from and to play live. So—but I think

it was really just about like—again, like looking for like, “What do we love about doing this? Let’s do that.”

It’s not advice that can work for everyone, because we had the luxury of being in a place where no one was even expecting us to make a record. So, when there’s no pressure on you like that, you can just do the thing that’s fun for you and then put it out. Because there’s no expectations. You know? And there’s no—our label, which is also us, was not saying like, “We need this at this time and now you gotta make another one and do this.” Like, you know, it was literally like a no pressure situation, which is always the best position to make music from, I think. You know.

I mean, there’s pressure on you from yourself to make it great and there’s pressure on you from yourself because you don’t wanna disappoint fans that have been listening to your records for that long. You know. But when there’s no—you know, commercial pressure and there’s no like, “You guys gotta go on tour quick.” You know, like that is a luxurious place to operate from.

00:09:47	Jesse	Host	We’ve got even more with Mac McCaughan still to come. After the break, what makes a good saxophone solo on a pop record? Mac has the key. Find out more after the break. It’s <i>Bullseye</i> , from <a href="http://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> and NPR.
00:10:00	Music	Transition	Relaxed, bright music.
00:10:02	Jesse	Promo	This message comes from NPR sponsor Discover. Discover matches all the cashback you earn on your credit card at the end of your first year, automatically. With no limit on how much you can earn. It’s amazing because of all the places where Discover is accepted. 99% of places in the US that take credit cards. So, when it comes to Discover, get used to hearing “yes” more often. Learn more at <a href="http://Discover.com/match">Discover.com/match</a> . 2021 Neilson Report. Limitations apply.
00:10:38	Music	Transition	<i>[Music fades out.]</i>
00:10:43	Jesse	Host	Chiming, upbeat music. Welcome back to <i>Bullseye</i> . I’m Jesse Thorn. Our guest is Mac McCaughan. He’s the singer and founder of the bands Superchunk and Portastatic. He also co-founded and runs the indie record label Merge Records. He’s got a new solo album out. It’s called <i>The Sound of Yourself</i> . Mac is talking with Jordan Morris, comedy writer and co-host of the podcast <i>Jordan, Jesse, Go!</i> . Let’s get back into their conversation.
00:11:09	Jordan	Host	We are here talking about your new solo record, <i>The Sound of Yourself</i> . It’s not your first one. You’ve made solo records in the past and you’ve had kind of non Superchunk bands that you’re a part of. I’m curious what makes the songs on this record different from the songs on a Superchunk record.
00:11:29	Mac	Guest	I’ve been thinking about this and I’m pretty sure that, you know, with the exception of <i>Here’s to Shutting Up</i> , where we were all kind of in a garage and playing different instruments, sometimes keyboards and things like that—Superchunk songs are almost always written on a guitar, whether it’s an acoustic guitar or an electric guitar. And the fun thing about making <i>The Sound of Yourself</i> —I kind of went into it with the idea of like, “These songs

can come from anywhere and be built from any kind of parts. In other words, one song could be—the inspiration for a song could just be like, okay, I'm making a drum beat in an Oberheim drum machine, which is the same drum machine that New Order used. So, I like that one. And I'm just gonna like make a beat that I like and then come up with a bassline to go with that drum machine and then just go from there. Like, a Superchunk song would never start like that.

There's songs on here that came from very random like samples that I found in like an old sampler of mine that was like a sample of a live recording I think of myself playing with Mary Lattimore. And so, I like took that sample and edited it into a somewhat rhythmic basis for a song and then just piled things on top of it, including a new Mary Lattimore track that she recorded. So, the songs were kind of coming from all over the place and a lot of it was inspired by what I was listening to a lot during lockdown. This record was recorded in a month, in January of 2021. So, lockdown was still kind of in effect. Pre-vaccine. Still staying home. And what I found that my brain was like wanting to hear during the time when we were all kind of staying home was a lot of ambient music and kind of more spacey instrumental music. Music like Mary Lattimore's records, for instance. Kaitlyn Aurelia Smith. Just these things that—it wasn't really the type of music that I was used to making, but it's what I wanted to hear.

And so, I think the record reflects a lot of that and in the same way that kind of early Portastatic records—which was a side project that I started outside Superchunk in the kind of early '90s. It was very much an anything goes kind of approach to each song. And trying to just take advantage of the fact that, again, like no one's expecting anything. This can be anything. I'm sitting here at home in my basement studio and why don't I just take advantage of that fact that I have this basement studio? And that I have this time. For the first eight months of the pandemic, I couldn't write a song. I mean, I think a lot of people probably experienced this. Like, that's just not where my brain could go.

But then, once I started, I was like, oh, well I can start doing this and I have the time, because where else am I gonna go? What else am I gonna do? Other than, you know, walk the dog, make banana muffins, drive my family crazy. [Chuckles.] Be down here. Make some songs. And I was—I was inspired by a couple things. One is that, you know, I watched this Brian Eno documentary, and he's—his music and his kind of writing about music has always been an inspiration. But he—of course, one of his things is about accidents and just letting things happen. And so, I was trying to kind of keep that in mind and leave things—trying not to like make things conform to what my instinct is, which is to kind of tie things up in a nice like—there's a nice song! Or whatever. You know.

00:15:13 Mac Guest

The album title itself comes from listening to Amy Rigby's audiobook for the book that she wrote, called *Girl to City*, which is a great—it's a great memoir about moving to New York in the late '70s and starting bands and starting clubs. She talks about that

terrifying moment the first time you hear your voice coming out of a speaker, whether it's like a monitor onstage or like a speaker in a studio or something. Like a monitor in a studio. You're just like, "Oh my god, like, that's what my voice sounds like?" [Chuckles.] You know. 'Cause you're just used to—whatever. Sitting around, playing songs with your friends in a room. You know? I think that most people have that experience the first time they hear their voice on like a tape recorder or something. They're just like, "What?!"

I mean, like, if I listen to this interview—I mean, I still have that feeling of just like, "Oh my god. My voice sounds like that?!" But at a certain point, you know, you think—you've been making more than 30 years, like you just like accept that's how you sound.

[Music fades in.]

But it's still a thing to think about. So, you know, that's what the title track is kind of about. And you know, when you're—when you can't go outside your house very much or see other people, like—you know, even more so, you're—[chuckles] you're stuck with your own voice, whether it's your literal voice or just like the voice in your head. You know?

00:16:33 Music Music

"The Sound of Yourself" from the album *The Sound of Yourself* by Mac McCaughan.

*Oh, will you ever get used to the sound of yourself  
When it's enough to make you fall in love with the sound  
Of anything else*

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

00:17:02 Jordan Host

There's a lot of different sounds on the record. Like, definitely sounds that you don't normally hear in a rock and roll record. And I wanna talk about like how you picked the sounds. And I wanna start by talking about one in particular. Around two minutes and thirty seconds into the song "Burn a Fax", this saxophone kicks in. Mm-hm! Does it ever!

00:17:20 Mac Guest

[Music fades in.]

00:17:23 Jordan Host

It kicks in, and it is so delightful when it kicks in 'cause you don't see it coming. And it is smoooooth! Oh, it's smooth.

00:17:30 Music Music

"Burn a Fax" from the album *The Sound of Yourself* by Superchunk.

[inaudible]

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

00:18:00 Jordan Host

I wanna talk specifically about that sax, how you decided on it, and then—you know, just like any other sounds you brought into the album that weren't kind of—you know, not something you would usually put onto a rock record.

00:18:13 Mac Guest

Sure. Well, you know, we were talking about things that we listened to during the pandemic, and jazz is another one of those things that

I normally listen to a lot anyway. And you know, having a lot of time not being able to leave the house but having the internet and being able to buy records online was like a dangerous thing to have access to and also a great thing. So, I bought a lot of ambient records. I bought a lot of jazz records. And when I was making that song—again, that song was built up from basically the synthesizer bassline that starts the—that starts the song.

00:18:58 Music Music

“Burn a Fax” from the album *The Sound of Yourself* by Mac McCaughan.

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

00:19:22 Mac Guest

That bassline kind of goes through the whole thing, along with this pretty simple like drum machine. And as I was kind of building up the song, I did the vocals. I did like some other synthesizers playing along. I did like a little piano thing. And then I just felt like okay, this song kind of like has like a cool kind of stasis to it, but it needs something else to happen. And one of the last tours we did before everything shut down was we did a tour for *Acoustic Foolish*, which was an acoustic re-recording of our *Foolish* album, the Superchunk *Foolish* album from 1994.

And Matt Douglas, who also plays in the Mountain Goats, played keyboards and sax with us on that tour. And I know what a powerhouse he is. And so, I thought—you know, this song needs Matt Douglas on saxophone. And so, I sent him the track and—you know, I think that the internet in general is probably like a net negative for the world, but, um—for this record, it was a—  
*[Interrupting with a laugh.]* Yeah, I can get behind that theory. I can get behind that.

00:20:31 Jordan Host

00:20:34 Mac Guest

For this—for this record, it was a net positive, because I could get these amazing people to play on my record without anyone having to leave their home. So, Matt sent me several solos and said, you know, you can pick one. And of course, I picked all of them. And they’re all on there. And yeah, it’s just—it’s beautiful. I mean, he has such a great tone and such a great instinct and kind of just knew what I wanted upon first hearing it. And you know, I think one of the references I might have given him was Pharoah Sanders ‘80s recordings. Where—you know, Pharoah I think still gets pretty far out there, but he also just has these beautiful recordings that are melodic and kind of just flowing and... and so, that’s kind of what I was imagining when I sent that track to Matt.

And he sent it back and it’s awesome! And then Mackenzie Scott, from Torres, sings the second verse on that song, which I think is also a great surprise when she comes in, because her voice is so unique and so awesome. Especially after you hear me singing the first verse, and that song comes kind of later in the record. So, you’re like, “Alright, I’ve heard this—heard this guy singing for a while now.” And then when Mackenzie comes in, you’re like, “Yesss. Somebody else singing.”

*[They laugh.]*

00:22:02	Jordan	Host	And then the saxophone comes in and it's—yeah. I love how that turned out.
			This album has, you know, kind of traditional two and a half, three-minute pop rock songs. But it also, like you were saying, has a lot of instrumental music on it. And while you're listening to the album just from front to back, it kind of alternates one to one almost. Not exclusively, but like pretty much you're getting an instrumental track and then a—you know, more pop rock track with vocals. Yeah! I'd like to hear more about what you were thinking about when you were sequencing the album.
00:22:32	Mac	Guest	Well, I mentioned Brian Eno and I was reading an old interview with him where he was talking about when he put out <i>Another Green World</i> . And that record is—I mean, it's one of my favorite records, but you know, he was saying that, "You know, there's only a few songs with vocals on this record and more than half is instrumental, but people reviewed it like it was a pop record." And then he's like, "I realized like, oh, as long as there's like a couple songs with singing, like people are gonna review it like it's a pop record and I can kind of do whatever on the rest of it."
			And so, I was thinking about that. You know, wanting it to still feel like a balanced record that you'd wanna listen to. You know what I mean? But not worrying so much about like, "Oh! There has to be mostly songs with vocals or—you know, like I gotta write lyrics! Or there has to be like some like rockers on there." Because it's just not that kind of record. You know, I think that it's—I think there's maybe one more songs with vocals than songs without? But I liked the idea of a record that you can put on and hopefully the pacing of what it's gonna be like is implied by the first song, which is a pretty long instrumental.
			<i>[Music fades in.]</i>
00:23:52	Music	Music	Mary Lattimore plays harp on it. My brother, Matt, plays percussion on there. "Moss Light" from the album <i>The Sound of Yourself</i> by Mac McCaughan.
00:24:18	Mac	Guest	<i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i> And hopefully, that first song being this kind of like long instrumental with like the drum machine like gives you the idea of like, "Okay, I'm just gonna settle in." I was trying to make a record that had a pacing that was frankly like somewhat against my nature. Like, it's what I like to listen to, but then when I'm making a record, I think I tend to feel like, "Oh no! People are getting bored right now!" You know what I mean?
			<i>[Jordan chuckles.]</i>
			Like, "It's been two minutes without singing!" You know. It's like, well. You know, listen to what the singing sounds like! Maybe people are okay with another couple minutes <i>[laughing]</i> without the singing! But, you know, just trying to integrate the instrumental stuff



into a pop record, whereas—in the past—I’ve made, you know, film scores. All instrumental. I’ve made a couple records with Mary Lattimore now, in the last couple of years, that were these improvised albums for synthesizer and harp. And then I’ve made the pop rock records with all the songs.

00:25:26	Jordan	Host	<p>So, trying to kind of combine those two things together in one album was what this ended up being.</p> <p>I think I am kind of a modern music listener in that I do a lot of listening to single songs and playlists. And yeah, once I kind of got—realized what was going on in the album, I’m like, “Oh, I’m gonna listen to this front to back.” And now I’m like, “Oh, I haven’t really done that in a while.” I’ve not like just put on a record and listened to it front to back in a while.</p>
00:26:03	Mac	Guest	<p>It was an interesting experience, and it was definitely noteworthy, because I realized I hadn’t done it in a while. Were you thinking at all about, you know, the modern listener’s tendency to just make a bunch of playlists?</p> <p>I mean, I wasn’t. Though I know that that is the case. And of course, if there’s a song that—I mean, my—I guess my feeling is like I still—like, it would be so weird for me, personally, to make a record then be like, “I don’t really care what order these songs are in.” ‘Cause everyone’s gonna listen to them separately anyway.</p> <p>Like, the sequencing is so much a part of it to me. And also, just fun to do. You know? Like—I think about it a lot and I think about it when I’m listening to other people’s records too. You know, the good things is, you can make a record that’s intended to be listened to start to—start to finish, in a certain order, and people can do that. Like you chose to do. You know, like that—to me—is like the best way to listen to it. But at the same time, someone hears “Dawn Bends” and they go like, “I love that song! I’m gonna put it on my playlist!” Like, that’s fine too. Like, that doesn’t stop anyone from listening to it the other way. You know.</p>
00:27:03	Jesse	Host	<p>We’ll finish up with Mac McCaughan after the break. It’s <i>Bullseye</i>, from <a href="http://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> and NPR.</p>
00:27:10	Music	Transition	<p>Cheerful, thumpy music.</p>
00:27:12	Jesse	Promo	<p>This message comes from NPR sponsor Odoo.</p> <p>Do you run a business or manage a team? Then it’s time to switch to Odoo. Odoo is a suite of business applications designed to streamline, automate, and simplify any company. Odoo has apps for everything! CRM, inventory, manufacturing, sales, accounting, you name it, Odoo’s got you covered. So, stop wasting time and start getting stuff done with Odoo. For a free trial, go to <a href="http://Odoo.com/Bullseye">Odoo.com/Bullseye</a>.</p>
00:27:46	Promo	Clip	<p><i>[Music fades out.]</i> <b>Music:</b> Cheerful, brassy music.</p> <p><i>[The chatter of a wedding party, quieted by the insistent clinking of a glass.]</i></p>

**Kyle:** *[Clears throat.]* Hey, excuse me everybody. I just wanted to say a few words about the beautiful couple. I've known you two for a long time. And you get along like peanut butter and chocolate! Or, you know, *[chuckling]* like—like, uh, comedy and culture! Like, uh, Maximum Fun podcasts.

*[Polite chuckles from the crowd.]*

**Kyle:** Actually, they're having a block party from October 11<sup>th</sup> to October 22<sup>nd</sup>. And that's kind of like your party. Right? You have a community of friends and family, and Max Fun has a community of shows and audiences that support them!

*[Curious sounds from the crowd.]*

**Kyle:** You're having a new start with your life together and Max Fun will be putting out new episodes that are especially welcoming to new audiences! So, it's a great time to introduce your friends to your favorite show or jump into one you haven't tried before.

**Speaker 1:** *[Quietly.]* Is he still talking about podcasts?

**Kyle:** AND they're setting up a volunteer event where we can help out our local communities, plus Maximum Fun is gonna have games, prizes, episode recs, so much other fun stuff!

**Speaker 2:** What's wrong with Kyle? Is he okay?

**Kyle:** Oh! *[Chuckles.]* Anyways, anyways. Sorry for getting carried away there. If it's alright with everybody here, let's all raise our glasses for a toast. To the Max Fun Block Party!

*[The audience groans.]*

**Kyle:** Which you can learn more about at [MaximumFun.org/blockparty](https://MaximumFun.org/blockparty) and don't forget to join in on October 11<sup>th</sup>!

00:29:23	Music	Transition	<b>Speaker 3:</b> Actually, that sounds pretty cool.
00:29:27	Jesse	Host	Thumpy jazz music with light vocalizations. It's <i>Bullseye</i> . I'm Jesse Thorn. Our guest is singer-songwriter Mac McCaughan. He's being interviewed by Jordan Morris. Let's get back into their conversation.
00:29:37	Jordan	Host	You had mentioned working on film scores. I wanted to hear about one in particular. You did the score for an Amy Poehler Netflix comedy called <i>Moxie</i> . It is a—kind of a teen high school comedy. It has a lot of like dramatic bits in it too, but it—you know, kind of at its core, it's a—

*[Mac agrees.]*

It's a—like a high school comedy. But yeah, I'm so curious to hear about making that and if, at any point, you kind of dug in and thought about like what makes a teen movie?

00:30:08	Mac	Guest	<p>Well, so, I got asked to do the score for this film, <i>Moxie</i>, and I flew to Los Angeles. I think it was probably like February 28<sup>th</sup> or something. It was in February of 2020. Saw the first cut of the movie that I'd seen and had—we had a meeting. We had a meeting talking about the music with the editors and with Amy and Netflix people. And then I came home and then, two weeks later, it was like everything's shut down. So—but luckily I was like, "Wow, I have this amazing project to work on. I can—I'm working on the score for this film."</p> <p>And so, that's kind of what I did for the first four or five months of the lockdown, was work on this film score. And you know, I read the script first and I was like, "Oh, that's cool." And then—but when I saw the movie itself and the acting in the movie and the way the jokes fell and everything, I was like, "Oh wow, this is really good and I know it's geared towards teens, yes, but I think it's really sensitive and smart and funny." And it's a comedy, but—you know, like you said, like it's heavy. Like there's heavy—there's heavy themes in there. And so, making the score for it was interesting, trying to like hit all the right tones, you know, for the different—for the different parts of the film and stuff like that.</p>
00:31:40	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:31:41	Clip	Clip	<p><b>Music:</b> Wistful string music.</p> <p><i>[Sounds of text messages sending and receiving punctuates the dreamy music.]</i></p> <p><i>[A knock at the door.]</i></p> <p><b>Lisa:</b> Hey. Are we still mad at each other?</p> <p><i>[Music fades out.]</i></p>
00:32:08	Sound Effect	Transition	<p><b>Vivian:</b> You don't need to apologize. It's okay.</p> <p><b>Lisa:</b> I thought you were gonna apologize to me.</p> <p>Music swells and fades.</p>
00:32:09	Mac	Guest	<p>I think about film music all the time when I'm watching movies. And I feel like you usually notice film music if it's really great or if it's really not great.</p> <p><i>[They chuckle.]</i></p> <p>Um. But I had an awesome time working on that. It would've been even cooler if there wasn't a pandemic going on, because I would've gotten to go to LA and see the strings being recorded in a sound studio and that kind of stuff. You know. Which I was looking forward to. But I was just glad to have something to be working on, especially because—like I said, like I couldn't write a song on my own for—to save my life. So—but it's just different, you know, picking up a guitar and trying to write a song than if someone's saying like, "Compose something for this scene where this thing</p>

happens.” Like, that’s a different part of my brain, for whatever reason.

And I could work on that, and it was—it was great. And like I said, you know, technology allowing me to get Chris Stamey, who lives nearby but I wasn’t gonna go over to his house to record piano for—on the score. And Phil Cook recorded some electric piano and Michael Benjamin Lerner, from Telekinesis, played drums on a song. And, you know, it was—my brother, Matt, played drums on a song. That was all for *Moxie* and it was stuff that we would’ve done in a studio, a proper studio, if we’d be able to. But we didn’t have that option, so just trying to like figure out ways to make it work. And I think it came out great.

00:33:34 Jordan Host

One of the plot points is that a modern kid discovers her mom’s old collection of like punk and riot grrrl stuff. I imagine that was kind of fun to work around, because that’s kind of the scene you came from. Do you think that was part of why you got the gig?

00:33:53 Mac Guest

I mean, I think so. I mean, I think that Amy knew that I was aware of all that context and the music that was involved there. At the same time, you know, I was doing the score and so, in some ways the music I was doing had to contrast with the music—you know—that was happening for the characters in real life, in the film. Like, you know, like when a Bikini Kill song comes on in that movie, it’s just so like, “Yes. Like this rules.” You know what I mean?

*[Jordan chuckles.]*

And so, like the stuff I was doing was like the contrast to that. You know? The band—that band, the Linda Lindas, is in this movie and that was the first time I had ever heard them, and I was like, “Oh my gosh! Like this band rules! Like what is the deal—what is the deal with this band?!”

00:34:40 Jordan Host

They are—

*[Music fades in.]*

They are like a band of LA teenagers who had a viral video playing in like a public library.

00:34:47 Music Music

“Racist, Sexist Boy” by The Linda Lindas.

*One, two, one, two, three, four!*

*You say mean stuff and*

*You close your mind that you don’t like*

*And you turn away from what you don’t wanna see*

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

00:34:59 Mac Guest

The first time I saw them was like when I first saw the first cut of this movie. And I was like, “Oh my gosh, is that a real band? Like they’re incredible.” It was really great working on it and learning about them and just seeing how that kind of music still has so much power. You know?

00:35:16	Jordan	Host	Yeah! You worked with Amy Poehler and a lot of other funny people on this movie. But yeah, you and Superchunk have worked with a lot of comedians in the past. I think your drummer, Jon Wurster, is kind of like a comedy legend in his own weird way.
00:35:32	Mac	Guest	He is! He certainly is. Drumming and comedy legend.
00:35:36	Jordan	Host	Is this something you kind of set out to do or is it something that just kind of happens because it happened in the past?
00:35:44	Mac	Guest	I think that our kind of interaction with comedians is that—that came about in the past because we were all fans of comedy and would talk about it in the van and listen to tapes in the van. You know? And then because of our age and the age of the comedians that were coming up when we were coming up, as a band. You know, they were fans of music, we were fans of theirs, and that's how we ended up with, you know, David Cross and Janeane Garofalo in our videos. And we got to play a show in Los Angeles for—it was the premiere of a new season of <i>Mr. Show</i> , when that was on HBO.
			I don't know, I think that there was—especially, I mean, we're east coast. You know? And so, I think that there was a lot of crossover between the rock and comedy worlds in the—in the mid-'90s, because we were all just like fans of each other. There's some excellent video of Todd Barry playing drums with us.
00:36:45	Jordan	Host	Oh! I didn't know Todd Barry played the drums!
00:36:48	Mac	Guest	<i>[Chuckles.]</i> You didn't know Todd—that's the main thing people know about Todd Barry! Is that he plays the drums!
			<i>[Jordan laughs.]</i>
00:36:55	Jordan	Host	Alright, well, you should go—you should go find that video online. Maybe I'm just a fair-weather Todd Barry fan.
00:36:57	Mac	Guest	I guess so. I guess so.
00:36:59	Jordan	Host	I have been talking to Mac McCaughan. He has a great new solo record called <i>The Sound of Yourself</i> . You can listen to the songs individually, but I recommend listening to the album front to back, the way it was meant to be heard.
			<i>[Music fades in and Mac giggles.]</i>
00:37:15	Mac	Guest	Mac, thanks for hanging out with us on <i>Bullseye</i> .
00:37:18	Music	Music	The way nature intended it. Thanks, Jordan.
00:37:21	Jesse	Host	Upbeat rock music. Mac McCaughan. His new album is called <i>The Sound of Yourself</i> . You can pick it up at your local record store or online. Our thanks to our correspondent, Jordan Morris. When he's not on the air, Jordan is also the author of the new graphic novel, <i>Bubble</i> , which is based on the podcast of the same name. It is super funny, and you can buy it wherever you buy books. Jordan Morris. <i>Bubble</i> . Great book.
			<i>[Music fades out.]</i>
00:37:54	Music	Music	Surreal, percussive music with discordant buzzing.
00:37:56	Jesse	Host	That's the end of another episode of <i>Bullseye</i> . <i>Bullseye</i> is created from the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California—where I celebrated getting my

COVID vaccine booster shot by hanging a hammock chair on my porch, just in the last moments of my strength, today. *[Chuckles.]* Just in time to collapse into it, spend some time with Susan Orlean's new book.

Our show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our senior producer is Kevin Ferguson. Our producer is Jesus Ambrosio. Production fellows at Maximum Fun are Richard Robey and Valerie Moffat. We get help from Casey O'Brien. Our interstitial music is by Dan Wally, also known as DJW. Our theme song is called "Huddle Formation". It's by the group The Go! Team. Thanks very much to them and their label, Memphis Industries, for sharing it. Just got an enthusiastic endorsement for that theme music from my friend, Brian Huskey, when I was on his show, *Bald Talk*. It's a bald people talk show. He loves The Go! Team.

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

00:39:15    Promo                    Promo

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

*[Music fades out.]*