

00:00:00	Music	Transition	Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue.
00:00:01	Promo	Promo	Speaker: <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.
00:00:13	Music	Transition	<i>[Music fades out.]</i> “Huddle Formation” from the album <i>Thunder, Lightning, Strike</i> by The Go! Team. A fast, upbeat, peppy song. Music plays as Jesse speaks, then fades out.
00:00:19	Jesse Thorn	Host	It’s <i>Bullseye</i> . I’m Jesse Thorn. Next up this week, They Might Be Giants. They’re being interviewed by my friend and our correspondent, Jordan Morris. Jordan co-hosts my other show, <i>Jordan, Jesse, Go!</i> . He’s also a lifelong TMBG fan. At the heart of They Might Be Giants, there are two Johns: John Flansburgh and John Linnell. The two singer-songwriters have been writing and recording together since 1982. They’re in their 40 th year—40! In that time, the band has released 22 albums, won two Grammys, and have cultivated a fanbase that is passionate, fun-loving, and yes, a little nerdy. They released the first ever download-only record. They ran a hotline where fans could call to hear demos of songs they were working on. Their newest project, <i>BOOK</i> , is a book and it’s also a record called <i>BOOK</i> . They Might Be Giants’ sound can be a little hard to pinpoint. <i>[Music fades in.]</i>
00:01:23	Music	Music	On some albums it’s abstract and goofy. “Istanbul (Not Constantinople)” from the album <i>Flood</i> by They Might Be Giants. <i>Istanbul was Constantinople Now it's Istanbul, not Constantinople Been a long time gone, Constantinople Now it's Turkish delight on a moonlit night</i> <i>Every gal in Constantinople Lives in Istanbul, not Constantinople So, if you've a date in Constantinople She'll be waiting in Istanbul</i> <i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i>
00:01:41	Jesse	Host	And sometimes it’s broody, melancholic power-pop. Like on this song, “Ana Ng”.
00:01:46	Music	Music	“Ana Ng” from the album <i>Lincoln</i> by They Might Be Giants. <i>Where the world goes by like the humid air And it sticks like a broken record</i> <i>Everything sticks like a broken record Everything sticks until it goes away And the truth is, we don't know anything</i> <i>Ana Ng and I are getting old</i>

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

00:02:08 Jordan Morris Host They Might Be Giants, welcome to *Bullseye!*

00:02:10 John Linnell Guest Thank you, Jordan.

00:02:11 John Flansburgh Guest Hello!

00:02:12 Jordan Host The art book that accompanies your new album, *BOOK*—both of which I loved, by the way, both the album and the book of *BOOK* are both fantastic. The artbook is made up of—it's a lot of things, but it's a lot of photos kind of in and around New York City. And it kind of got me thinking about the New York City that the band started in, back in the '80s. I'd like to hear more about the kind of—that New York and specifically if you can remember like the first venues you guys played.

00:02:45 Linnell Guest Sure, yeah. Well, we—I guess—now, I always forget. Was it Dr. B's was the first indoor venue that we played at?

00:02:53 Flansburgh Guest Dr. B's was the first place we played as They Might Be Giants, I guess. Yeah.

00:02:57 Linnell Guest Right. And that was in—that was in Soho, back when it was a less expensive neighborhood. So, there were these little closet-y sized clubs. 'Cause there was another one that we played in around the same time, which was Green? Something? *[Chuckles.]* I'm forgetting.

00:03:17 Flansburgh Guest Yeah, I'm thinking of Green Street Station, which was—

00:03:18 Linnell Guest No, no, that was in Boston.

00:03:19 Flansburgh Guest That was—yeah, yeah. *[Inaudible]*

00:03:21 Linnell Guest Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, there was another one that was—that had the name—I can't remember. It was—had “green” in it. This was before we kind of migrated over to the—to the East Village. We were—we were sort of trying to figure out where we could do our thing and we'd experimented with getting booked at the showcase night at CBGB, which was a kind of purgatory, it turned out.

[Jordan chuckles.]

It seemed—it seemed like a dream come true at first and then it ultimately didn't seem like it was enough of a personal scene for us. Or I guess, in the fullness of time, we realized like when we started playing in these East Village-y places that it was really a much more friendly and groovy scene for us. That we—you know, we made friends with the people who frequented those places. We had people other than our own fans coming to see us and we were playing with a bunch of other—it was actually performance artists in those kinds of places. So, the thing with Dr. B's was we just sent out invitations and people who we knew came to see us and nobody else who was there who happened to be in there was particularly interested in what we were doing. And you know, it just felt a little bit weird and alien. And we were—*[chuckling]* we were not very confident in what we were doing.

00:04:43 Flansburgh Guest Yeah. I mean, when I think back on those gigs, I think we—I mean, I think it was before the idea of pay to play was invented, but these were essentially kind of showcase-y places and I remember we did one show where, as we were loading out, we were the last people

00:05:06	Linnell	Guest	in the room for the band that was playing onstage. And that when we left, we would—there would be no one. And that—
00:05:08	Flansburgh	Guest	Yeah, that was a typical kind of scene.
00:05:10	Jordan	Host	Yeah, that felt kind of bad.
			Can you remember the time when you knew that They Might Be Giants was gonna be like—more like a job and less like a hobby or an art project?
00:05:20	Flansburgh	Guest	Oh, that's an interesting question! You know, we had a bunch of discussions as in the sort of—between like '82 and I guess like '88, '89, the band was definitely just kind of like a weekender project for us. I mean, when we rehearsed, we lived—we shared an apartment for a big chunk of that time, and we rehearsed every night and poured a lot of energy into sort of the abstract idea of the band. But I remember having conversations about how we didn't want this to become our job. You know? That we didn't wanna rely on the band to pay the rent, because that meant you'd have to do gigs you didn't wanna do, which was kind of an interesting—I mean, I don't think we were really thinking about how much success we would need to kind of escape the gravitational pull of, you know, New York City rent.
00:06:09	Jordan	Host	Obviously you two are very funny people, and They Might Be Giants is a funny band that uses a lot of like great humor.
00:06:17	Linnell	Guest	Funny how, Jordan? What—what do you mean funny?
00:06:18	Jordan	Host	Uuuh—!
00:06:19	Flansburgh	Guest	Next question!
00:06:20	Jordan	Host	Oh boy.

[They laugh.]

			What I was getting at was I think something that maybe casual listeners don't automatically get is that, you know, there's kind of a salty sweet element to They Might Be Giants, where kind of—in these kind of... funny...
00:06:39	Flansburgh	Guest	<i>[Chuckling.]</i> I thought you—I thought you were gonna say there's an unfunny part of They Might Be Giants.

[Jordan laughs.]

00:06:43	Linnell	Guest	Yeah! Well, I think that—I think that is what you said, actually!
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[Jordan struggles to start a sentence and John talks over him.]

00:06:48	Jordan	Host	And I don't disagree. I mean, I think that— It kind of is a little bit! And I think that in a lot of songs, there are these kind of serious topics and these like characters who are dealing with some like very, very real <i>[censored]</i> .
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[Music fades in.]

00:07:04	Music	Music	And I think a great example of that on the new album is “I Can't Remember the Dream”. “I Can't Remember the Dream” from the album <i>BOOK</i> by They Might Be Giants.
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*I can't remember the dream that I had last night
But I woke with delight and excitement and then when I tried
To remember the dream that I had last night*

It was gone but the feeling I had in the dream stayed on

- 00:07:23 Jordan Host *[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]*
I'd love to hear about like kind of this particular song and kind of like some of the emotional stuff that's happening in it and then just, in general—you know, how you kind of go about putting this more serious stuff into, you know, songs where you might not expect it.
- 00:07:38 Linnell Guest Right, that's a—well, that's a... yeah, it's a good question, 'cause I don't know if we—I would say I necessarily can articulate the process, but just off the top of my head, I think that song and a lot of the songs we write begins with this sort of nugget of an idea, which is encapsulated in the chorus. And that's like a country music—you know—formula, where you think of a phrase and then everything else gets wrapped around that.
- 00:08:07 Music Music *[Volume increases.]*

*When I'm awake I note all that I see
And remember it with photographic accuracy
Most of my memories tend to be bad
And I'm sad I can't remember the dream that I had
Why can't I remember it when...*

- 00:08:27 Linnell Guest *[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]*
So, in this case it's like what does that mean? I can't—I can't remember the dream and it's obviously—whatever it was, it left me feeling like it's better than my real life. You know. That's the entire concept. And then maybe, from that, you can choose to dial up the bleakness of the—you know, the narrative.
- 00:08:51 Jordan Host So, there are some TMBG songs that are—that are kind of these like—formally, kind of these like traditional guitar based, drum keys, pop rock songs. But then—you know, there's some that are more experimental. And on this record, there's one I love called "I Lost Thursday".

[Music fades in.]

- 00:09:32 Music Music And it has all this really kind of unexpected instrumentation and all these kind of unexpected sounds that come in. There's all this like really wild percussion in it that kind of comes out of nowhere and a kind of robot monster voice that has been very fun to imitate to my cat.
"I Lost Thursday" from the album *Secret Music Vol. 1* by They Might Be Giants.
- It's supernatural how spaced out we can be
It's supernatural how spaced out we can be
I left Thursday...*

- 00:09:43 Jordan Host *[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]*
I'd love to hear about kind of this song and... and kind of how you decide what's gonna be more traditional and what's gonna be more experimental.
- 00:09:54 Flansburgh Guest I mean, I think John and I have—from the very beginning, have done this a certain—a bunch of different kind of creative handoff

things, not unlike The Postal Service, where we might write—I mean, we’ve written songs in the same room at various times, but a lot of the collaboration we’ve done has been kind of long distance. John gave me like—literally, I think it was—I think it was a midi file of various keyboard parts. And it had like, you know, what you might assume is like a verse, chorus, bridge-y structure, but it didn’t have like a ton more going on than that. And I just—I spent a long time just trying to find keyboard sounds that would make all the sections kind of stand out from one another.

And it’s actually—it’s one of those things where I think when you’re kind of coming into somebody else’s creative output and working as an editor, you can actually see it in a very different way than—I mean, even though like I sing over the track and, you know, put that part of the song together, I think one of the reasons why the song has got so many kind of hard left turns is because I could sort of feel where it could go in terms of the keyboard textures. And one of the nice things about working with computers is like you can really radically change that stuff up. And then the—you know, and then of course the monster voice stuff comes last.

[Jordan laughs.]

00:11:22	Jesse	Host	More with They Might Be Giants after the break. Stay with us. It’s <i>Bullseye</i> , from MaximumFun.org and NPR.
00:11:28	Music	Transition	Relaxed piano.
00:11:31	Jesse	Promo	This message comes from NPR sponsor Odoo.

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[Music fades out.]

00:12:09	Music	Transition	Thumpy music with light vocalizations.
00:12:13	Jesse	Host	Welcome back to <i>Bullseye</i> . I’m Jesse Thorn. Our guests are They Might Be Giants. The Grammy Award winning duo of John Flansburgh and John Linnell have just recorded their 23 rd album. It’s called <i>BOOK</i> . The album also comes with a 144-page book, also called <i>BOOK</i> . <i>BOOK</i> , the book, features original photography from New York photographer Brian Carlson and lyrics from the band. Interviewing They Might Be Giants is <i>Bullseye</i> correspondent Jordan Morris. Let’s get back into their conversation.
00:12:47	Jordan	Host	You two kind of—you work together and separately. You both still kind of share the songwriting duties in They Might Be Giants. I’d like to hear from Linnell what makes a good Flansburgh song and from Flansburgh, what makes a good Linnell song.
00:13:02	Linnell	Guest	Okay, well, I’ll start. Uh. I am always bowled over by Flansburgh’s lyrical twists and turns and I think that’s the part that like I kind of know when he sends me a—you know, like a demo. Like, when I’m clicking it, I’m like, “What’s about to happen?” And it’s usually the lyrics that are the thing that are blowing my mind, I would say. So, I mean, that’s—you know. I think John and I have a similar sensibility with music writing and there’s differences in certain stylistic things,

but I wish—I wish I could write lyrics like John does. I always feel like that, for me, is the hardest part and I don't know what kind of agony he goes through writing lyrics.

[Flansburgh chuckles.]

I don't get to experience his pain the way I experience my own, but I find lyric writing really, really—sometimes just—it's just like I'm glad when I'm done. You know? *[Chuckles.]* Like I'm happy when I've done it and then—but that's the only pleasure that comes with it. I love writing music, but I kind of hate writing lyrics.

00:14:19 Flansburgh Guest

Well, lyrics do seem like they get harder like the older you get.

[Linnell agrees.]

Especially like—it doesn't—it doesn't help writing a lot of lyrics before. You know? It actually—

00:14:27 Linnell Guest

No, well, I've never been able to do that! I've literally never—never write the—or very, very rarely write lyrics first.

00:14:35 Flansburgh Guest

Mm-hm. Oh, I mean like it doesn't help having written songs before to write more songs. Like I don't—I mean, well. I don't know. Maybe.

00:14:42 Linnell Guest

Oh, I see what you're saying. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

00:14:44 Flansburgh Guest

I mean, like I feel—you know, sometimes I feel like I fully want to just reclaim like old ideas again. You know? Like to say like, "Okay, you know, I know I've written a song like this before." I mean, you know, I guess lots of writers get into kind of their mannerist period where they just don't worry about stuff like that. But—

[Linnell agrees.]

But you know, I have to say like—you know, one of the weird things about being in a band for 35 years is a lot of times people ask you like what the secret for being in a band for 35 years is. And I have to say, I think the fact that John can write a really compelling rock song is actually kind of the—is kind of like the secret weapon of They Might Be Giants, because I don't think—I don't think we would've been able to get through the world as it is if we weren't in some way really a rock band. And that's not—that's not—having an identity in the world of rock music is kind of hard and it's also kind of limited. And I think that, you know, really from the jump like working on songs like, you know, "Don't Let's Start" and "Ana Ng", they're like really guitar-driven songs in a certain way. And it's great. It's really fun to be in like a band where you get—kind of get handed these, you know, great ideas and great parts and you can kind of just do it.

And it's—you know, I mean, to me that's kind of the sort of the exceptional thing about They Might Be Giants. I think on—you know, on paper, I don't think people think about like, oh, like, "Oh, They Might Be Giants, they're a good, rocking band." But I—but, you know, just speaking as the guitar player in the band, I think that that has been very helpful for us.

00:16:35 Linnell Guest

Yeah, I think that's—I think that is a thing that our live audience would probably chime in with, 'cause generally that's kind of the vibe of like—I don't even completely recognize us in the

descriptions of our live shows that we hear from the audience., which is they're saying like, "Yeah, they really rocked the place." And like, wow, I never even like consider rocking a place. Like that's—[chuckles] obviously there's—somebody is feeling it, but to me it's like I don't even know how to describe the process exactly. But it—yeah, it's great. It's obviously why people come to see us perform, is partly like the actual live event.

I guess what it is, is we're doing the live show over and over again, so I'm just kind of accustomed to that experience and it doesn't seem that crazy. It seems normal.

00:17:30 Jordan Host

I would love to a little bit more about the book that accompanies the album, *BOOK*.

[They affirm.]

The photos, the beautiful photos in *BOOK* are by a photographer named Brian Carlson. Yeah. I'd like to hear a little bit more about how you got in contact with him and why you thought his work was, you know, something that would accompany your work.

00:17:54 Flansburgh Guest

Well, one of the great things about like the last ten or fifteen years of being in They Might Be Giants is how we've been collaborating really head-on with this fellow named Paul Sayer who's a very successful graphic designer and graphic artist. And he is really connected to that world of New York designers. And a friend of his is a photographer—I think teaches photography and knew about Brian's work. Brian actually went to the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, which is where I went to art school. And so, we were looking at different portfolios and, you know, the whole book project was in collaboration with Paul as the designer, art director of the thing.

And as we were talking about it, it just—it sort of dawned on us that it would really be beautiful if we could find one photographer who could just—had—you know, had a big enough scope of work that it could support a whole folio of a book. And Brian's work is that. You know. I mean, it's sort of a strange—it's a strange testament. The whole project is kind of a strange testament to the COVID moment and just long-distance collaborations in general. I've still never met Brian, which is super weird. I've—you know, I've like Facetimed with him, which is—you know—interesting, but it's like I feel strange talking about him because in some other essential way, I don't even know who he is. But I know his work really well, now.

And there was something about—I mean, street photography is always kind of interesting. It's a little bit voyeuristic in a way, but you know, if it's—if it's done well, it doesn't feel like exploitation and I think the fact is like—the truth about They Might Be Giants as like, you know, the way we approach what we're doing I think in general is like—there's a lot of unreliable narrators. So, like there's kind of a real overlap between the impulses of like street photography and the impulses in our songs. Like, our songs are kind of—they're not—they're not first-person singular songs. They're not diary entry songs. They're not like about our personal, emotional revelations. They're really about—kind of about characters. Even—you know, even if—you know, we're saying something about ourselves, it's like there's something vaguely theatrical about it.

So, it's like—I don't know. His work seemed to kind of echo something in what we're doing that really made sense. And so, you know, we approached him about doing it and—you know, and he was—he was very into it. So, the whole—the whole thing has, you know, been kind of a glorious love-fest.

00:20:55 Linnell Guest

Miracle.

00:20:56 Jordan Host

In next year, in 2022, you guys have a tour planned after some time of not being on tour. And I guess a part of this tour is you are going to play I think the entirety of your 1990 album, *Flood*.

00:21:17 Flansburgh Guest

Yeah, well, it was this weird thing happened, which is that there was an interval of time when we were planning this tour where we were actually between albums. We had not finished the album that is coming out right now and—but we were gonna go back out on the road. So, we were just thinking like, "Well, what can we do if we don't—if we're not touring behind the new album?" And we thought, "Oh, well, it's the 30th anniversary of *Flood* and we'll just celebrate that and that'll be a huge crowd pleaser anyway. So, we'll just try that out. And of course, it was like a huge success. I mean, we've really avoided a lot of the sort of low hanging fruit of being like a nostalgia—whatever you call it. Like a legacy act, I guess is the term that people would call it.

And like—but people have been doing this thing. We play full albums a lot of times when we're playing a second night in some cities. So, we've done lots of *Flood* shows before. And we even have done it in various different ways. We've done it like in reverse order. We've done it mixed into a set. But that was for 2020 and it's been rescheduled three times now. So, we're just—we're just rolling with the changes, man.

00:22:31 Jordan Host

What is it about *Flood* that you think makes it so special to people? 'Cause I think it is a very special album to a lot, a lot of people.

00:22:41 Linnell Guest

I've—you know, we've had to kind of consider this, because obviously we like all our records. And I feel much closer to the stuff we've done in the last 30 years. But there is obviously something about *Flood* that really connected with people. And I think, at that time, what it seemed like was that we had fully—you know, we'd had two indie albums up until that point and we really kind of established what it is we were doing. And it was a kind of a more fleshed out—kind of a high—I mean, I hate to say this, but kind of a high-end version of this indie thing that we'd been doing. And we had this monster corporation promoting us for the first time. We were signed to Warner, Elektra.

And so, we had all this international distribution, and you know, just this giant machine of a record company to promote this thing. So, you know, it was this confluence of everything. I think. And I hate to say this, but there is a thing about bands when they're starting out, where they often have a kind of an initial explosion of creativity that sort of ramps up, in our case, to the third album. It was a kind of a third album sort of focusing of everything that we were doing, and we knew exactly what we wanted to do. We—yeah. It was—I mean, so in that sense, yeah. It was kind of this lucky confluence. And like I said, if I look at everything we've done up until now, it's—to me, it's the work of like a much more juvenile couple of guys. So, it's—I can't completely identify with that album, like the way I do with the

last—maybe the last ten years in particular, the stuff we’ve been doing. Or I would say the last 20 years, in a way. I feel like much closer to that stuff.

You know, we’ve obviously had a—we’ve lived a long time since we came out with *Flood*. But I remember the excitement of that time, as well. And this sort of—partly the excitement of having all this—all these resources that we hadn’t fully had up until then. We were able to record in a fancier studio and we weren’t kind of cutting corners the way we had been doing, economically, up until then.

00:25:11 Jesse Host

We’ve got so much more to get into with They Might Be Giants. We kicked off the interview with a classic from the band, “Ana Ing”. When we come back from the break, have They Might Be Giants heard the crustpunk ska version of that hit song? Well, we’re gonna play it for them. It’s *Bullseye*, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

00:25:31 Music Transition
00:25:34 Jesse Promo

Futuristic electronic music.

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00:26:06 Promo Clip

[Music fades out.]

Music: Surreal, sci-fi music.

Narrator: We’ve all made mistakes in book club, right? You drink a little too much, you don’t actually read the book. And, if you’re under the bubble—in Fairhaven?—your individual will gets subsumed by the collective.

Speaker 1: Hey. Maybe I just let him go and whip us up some guac?

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Narrator: *Bubble*, the sci-fi comedy from MaximumFun.org. Just open your podcast app and search for *Bubble*.

00:26:49 Jesse Host

[Music fades out.]

This is *Bullseye*. I’m Jesse Thorn. You’re listening to Jordan Morris’s conversation with John Flansburgh and John Linnell, the cofounders and front men of the band They Might Be Giants.

00:27:01 Jordan Host

I was also really excited to read that this tour is gonna feature some selections from a It Might Be Giants album that I love called *Mink Car*.

00:27:11 Linnell Guest

Oh, that’s nice. Thank you.

00:27:12 Jordan Host

And it’s described on the website as a lost album, and I had no idea that it—that it had this history.

[They chuckle.]

Yeah! I'd love to hear about what you're excited about playing off *Mink Car* and how it—how it became a lost album. I just didn't know that.

00:27:30 Flansburgh Guest

We're excited about knowing how to play the songs that we're gonna play off of *Mink Car*.

[Linnell chuckles.]

So, then we're gonna pick those probably. But the—the only reason that *Mink Car* is—you know, became lost was because it was released on 9/11, which—you know, a lot of records were released actually, on 9/11. There's only two big days a month that records are released, and 9/11 happened to be the first month—the first day in September that records were released. But what happened was, the very newly minted record label that we were on immediately lost their funding. So, it became—you know, they were out of business in less than two months after the record came out. So, it just was not available at all for a long interval of time and, you know, wouldn't even come out on iTunes, 'cause there was kind of like a rights knot surrounding it.

But what's weird is that in many ways, it was kind of designed to be this—you know, pop juggernaut. We worked with—you know, Adam Schlesinger from Fountains of Wayne on it. We worked with Clive Langer and Alan Winstanley, the producers we worked on *Flood* with. So, it was like a reunion of that. And it's—you know, it's got a lot of, you know, big, peak moments. Like it's a very pop kind of frontloaded album. But it just inadvertently kind of, you know, fell to this—you know, other historic event.

00:29:08 Jordan Host

Yeah, something about *Mink Car* that I like so much is that there are these kind of like—

00:29:14 Flansburgh Guest

It's a psycho album. I mean, it's crazy.

00:29:16 Jordan Host

It's nnnnnuts. It's nuts.

[They agree and laugh.]

It's so cool, though. It's like such a fun—

00:29:21 Linnell Guest

You chimed in very quickly, there.

[Jordan agrees with a laugh.]

00:29:23 Flansburgh Guest

[Emphatically.] "YES! It's cra—it's insaaane!"

Well, it's like—I mean, I have—I have listened to it recently, and it's like there's—it doesn't—it doesn't flow from like one into—one kind of song into another like kind of song, ever. You know? So, it's like here's the electronica song. Here's the super loud rock song. Here's the really quiet, kind of—you know—percussive ballad-y song. It's very—it's a very—it's a real—I mean, we're just kind of, you know, bouncing off the guard rails of the musical highway.

00:29:59 Jordan Host

[Chuckling.] Yeah, I'd love to hear about what's fun about kind of experimenting with those other genres. 'Cause I think that there's some stuff on that that is not—you know, there's dance pop. There's kind of like lounge music. There's some like—

00:30:11 Linnell Guest Right. Well, yeah. I mean, I suppose some of it was in fact driven by the producers that we worked with. And we—you know, mostly wanted to do our own mental illness, you know, on our—you know, just like draw from our own, completely nutzo ideas. But it really—we experienced this completely other flavor with, you know, Adam Schlesinger had all sorts of—and I think he saw this as an opportunity. Like, 'cause we were perfectly comfortable hanging out with him by the time of this recording.

[Music fades in.]

00:30:54 Flansburgh Guest And so, he could say, "Well, let's take this song and make it into this completely other thing." And—you know.

Right, right. Like, a song like "Another First Kiss" is like a kind of a interesting example of like Adam really having added—like, you know, we had recorded a live version of the song that's essentially just our kind of regular power pop way of approaching a song. And it—you know, to us, it's like, "Oh, that's kind of like—that's what a pop song is. You know, that's—

And you know, he's in a kind of power pop band, himself. So, I thought—you would think he would just go like, you know, "Good job." But instead, he was like—he was—he actually was like, "You know, you could make this a much like—a much more interesting, you know, kind of a—like a ballad song." And it was just like, oh, okay.

00:31:37 Music Music "Another First Kiss" from the album *TMBG UnLtd May* by They Might Be Giants.

*Other people were too sentimental
And always worrying about their hair
Got tired of wasting all of my time
Now I'm not worrying at all*

"How 'bout another first kiss?"

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

00:32:00 Flansburgh Guest And uh, you know, similarly with "Man, It's So Loud in Here", you know, Adam just had this whole other take on it.

[Music fades in.]

Which was to really take, you know, the idea that's inside the lyric of the song—which is about being kind of inside a really oppressive disco area and then turn that into like the actual music—I mean, it's sort of meta. It's like that's the music that the song is made of is the like—is the like, "Get out, get out, get out," disco, you know, sound.

[Jordan chuckles.]

And *[laughing]* I mean, I think it's pretty effective but it's like—it was definitely a—it seemed like a hard left turn.

00:32:41 Music Music "Man, It's So Loud in Here" from the album *TMBG UnLtd June* by They Might Be Giants.

*Baby, check this out, I've got something to say,
Man, it's so loud in here*

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

00:32:55 Linnell Guest Yeah, I would say with those two songs, he was pulling out something that we wouldn't have tried to do and maybe have been able to do on our own. So, we were really—this was like the actual value of getting another person in to produce is like, he came up with some really different stuff. And Clive and Alan who we'd worked with already, I think mainly, they wanted to just do the thing they'd done on *Flood*, which is to bring out—you know, accentuate the stuff they thought was cool. So, I specifically remember this with doing vocals with them on *Mink Car*, was that they were more demanding of us than we probably would ordinarily have been.

We were—we were the normal amount of demanding with ourselves and then they were adding onto that by going, "Well, it could be better." You know. Like, "Try this again, only more. More good." You know. So, that—I mean, I remember all that process pretty well, 'cause we worked with him in London, right?

[Flansburgh confirms.]

00:34:06 Flansburgh Guest And then we were working with Adam in New York, and it was a—it was a multi, you know—it was like a multi-studio project. Um. Well, I mean, just circling back to the whole thing of like, you know, working with Clive and Alan in the first place. Clive and Alan are like—were these big hit-maker guys. They did like Madness and the Dexys Midnight Runner's "Come On, Eileen", which was kind of like the first unplugged kind of recording. And they did Morrissey albums and I'm trying to think—oh, they did, uh *[chuckles]* "Dancing in the Streets" with Mick Jagger and David Bowie. And they had many—they had tons of hits. They were literally the biggest producers of the year the first year we worked with them. And the record company was very into the idea of us getting together with them for obvious reasons.

But what was so great is like how generous they were with like all the sort of like trade secrets of how to make recordings, because—you know, we had only worked in 8-track studios before then and that was—and suddenly we're in these like enormous rooms with all this stuff and they just—they just, you know—they really—they really welcomed us as peers, which we certainly weren't in some ultimate way.

[Linnell laughs.]

But like, they—you know, I just felt like we were in this crazy, two-month long masterclass in how to make great sounding records and it was just—it was fantastic.

00:35:21 Jordan Host Have you guys heard the crustpunk version of "Ana Ng"?

00:35:24 Linnell Guest No!

00:35:25 Flansburgh Guest I don't—I don't think so, no.

00:35:26 Jordan Host Oh, it's really good! It really works. It totally works.

00:35:29 Linnell Guest Wh-what—you have to back up just a little bit for the old guys here. Like, what’s crustpunk? *[Chuckles.]*

00:35:34 Jordan Host The band is called Star *[censored]* Hipsters. They are like a—

00:35:38 Linnell Guest Good. Good.

00:35:39 Flansburgh Guest I’m looking forward to hearing them on the radio. Yeah.

00:35:39 Jordan Host They’re a Fat Wreck Chords band and it’s got a lot of like guttural, metal screaming. And it totally *[censored]* works.

[Music begins.]

00:35:48 Linnell Guest Cool!

00:35:49 Jordan Host It’s really good.

00:35:50 Music Music “Ana Ng” from the album *From the Dumpster to the Grave* by Star F***ing Hipsters.

Jordan: *[Speaking over the music.]* It’s got a little ska interlude, too.

*Make a hole with a gun perpendicular
To the name of this town in a desk-top globe
Exit wound in a foreign nation
Showing the home of the one this was written for*

My apartment looks upside down from there

[Linnell and Jordan laugh.]

*Water spirals the wrong way the sink
And her voice is a backwards record*

00:36:16 Jordan Host *[Volume decreases under the dialogue then fades out.]*
Anyway! You—you get it. You get it.

[They agree.]

My point is that it—that it works. They Might Be Giants rocks. Anyway.

00:36:22 Flansburgh Guest Lovely. Yeah, yeah.

00:36:24 Jordan Host They Might Be Giants, thanks for hanging out with us on *Bullseye*.

[Music fades in.]

00:36:27 Flansburgh Guest Thank you, Jordan.

00:36:28 Linnell Guest Thanks for having us.

00:36:29 Music Transition Chiming synth.

00:36:32 Jesse Host They Might Be Giants. Their newest project, *BOOK*, drops November 12th. You can get it on their website right now. We’ll have a link to it on the *Bullseye* page at MaximumFun.org.

Thanks to Jordan Morris for conducting the interview. Jordan is also the cohost of my comedy podcast, and his: *Jordan, Jesse, Go!* Jordan is a comedy writer and an author. His latest book is a graphic novel called *Bubble*. It’s a science fiction comedy where people get paid through an app to hunt monsters. It is funny, weird, and very brilliant, in my opinion. I’m not biased. If you have a sci-fi fan or a comedy fan in your family, consider your holiday shopping over.

[Music fades out.]

00:37:17 00:37:21	Music Jesse	Transition Host	<p>Cheerful, relaxed music.</p> <p>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. In my neighborhood, <u>many</u> houses have dragon fruit plants trellised across their front yards. And they are these extraordinary, long, cactus-y things. And they grow the incredible, almost science fiction, fantasy-ish dragon fruits on them. And those dragon fruits are starting to turn red and come ripe. And I'm hoping I can scam a few from a neighbor. Maybe they want some of the grapefruits that grow in my backyard.</p> <p>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 recorded by the group The Go! Team. Thanks to them and to their label, Memphis Industries, for sharing it with us.</p> <p>You can also keep up with our show on Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. We post our interviews in all those places. And I think that's about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.</p>
00:38:34	Promo	Promo	<p>Speaker: <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.</p> <p><i>[Music fades out.]</i></p>