

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.
			<i>[Music fades out.]</i>
00:00:13	Jesse Thorn	Host	I'm Jesse Thorn. It's <i>Bullseye</i> .
00:00:15	Music	Transition	"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.
00:00:23	Jesse	Host	Maxo Kream, my guest, is a rapper. He's a big, friendly guy. When you talk to him, he keeps the mood light. If you're a fan, you want a selfie with him, it's no sweat. He might even crack a little joke.
			<i>[Music fades in.]</i>
			But that isn't always how his records sound. He's a big, friendly guy, but that's not all he is.
00:00:42	Music	Music	"Meet Again" from the album <i>Brandon Banks</i> by Maxo Kream.
			<i>I got homies in the grave, I got brothers in the pen I got some that's coming home, I got some that's going in Tried to go to visitation, but they wouldn't let me in So, our only conversation writing letters with a pen Wanna see just how you doing...</i>
			<i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i>
00:00:56	Jesse	Host	Maxo Kream has been in and out of jail, along with many other members of his family. When hurricane Harvey hit Houston a few years ago, many of them lost their homes. He's also lost friends and relatives to gun violence, including his brother just last year. In other words, Maxo Kream has endured an extraordinary amount of pain. And he's not afraid to put that pain on wax.
			People often compare him to his Houston forebearer, Scarface: another MC with a gift for elegant, almost beautiful verses about life's most intense and difficult moments. Maxo's new album is called <i>WEIGHT OF THE WORLD</i> and it's about big stuff. He raps about losing his brother and grandmother and about becoming a parent. But like Maxo, it isn't all big moments and tears. It's a rap record. He also talks a lot of mess. Here's a single from the new album called "Big Persona", featuring Tyler the Creator.
00:01:57	Music	Music	"BIG PERSONA" ft. Tyler the Creator from the album <i>WEIGHT OF THE WORLD</i> by Maxo Kream.
			<i>... talking 'bout? Big dreaming, big business, big risks Big winning, big living, big It's whatever Mr. Maxo Biggie Poppa, who you know that do it better? I'm the trap Barack Obama, Betty Crocker, used to pedal Mixing drugs, but he love Nutty Professor with Griselda Pockets kill, man, it keep popping I make more money than professors</i>

*I'm getting cake
Eight-figure, no more section 8
Moved momma out the hood
We ain't good, we doing great
Big mansion, new estate
Friendly neighbors, pearly gates...*

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

00:02:27 Jesse Host Maxo Kream, welcome to *Bullseye*. Congratulations on this great record.

00:02:30 Maxo Kream Guest Appreciate it, appreciate it.

00:02:31 Jesse Host First of all, I wanna honor the fact that you're in our studio, which does not have air conditioning, is probably 25 square feet, something like that, and you have on a puffer that looks like you're ready to take on the Antarctic. *[Laughs.]*

00:02:48 Maxo Guest Yeah, I got the Ella Montclair on.

[Jesse laughs.]

Appreciate y'all. Fashion statement. But I don't know, like to me this is freezing out here. Like, it been like 55, 60 degrees. I could throw on a jacket. You know, I'm from Houston, bro. We be dealing with triple digits, 111, 110. God, now for like 70% of the year. So, any time I get like a little—if like I feel like a breeze, I'm throwing on a *[censored]* jacket.

00:03:14 Jesse Host Plus, you got a refrigerator on your neck right there. There's plenty of ice. *[Laughs.]*

00:03:16 Maxo Guest Listen. Yeah. Listen.

00:03:18 Jesse Host The most jewelry that's ever been in here, probably more than—more than even, I don't know, Greta Gerwig.

[They laugh.]

Who's bringing the heavy jewelry? John Waters.

00:03:29 Maxo Guest Facts.

00:03:30 Jesse Host Well, I'm glad to have you here. You mentioned you're from Houston. What part of Houston did you grow up in?

00:03:36 Maxo Guest Southwest side, Alief.

00:03:38 Jesse Host I know that your circumstances changed when you were a teenager. Tell me about the kind of places that you were and how they changed.

00:03:47 Maxo Guest It really changed like soon as I hit like 11. You know? I grew up southwest side. You know what I'm saying? It was the hood, but my daddy never let us feel that. You know what I'm saying? He always was getting money. Legal troubles caught up with him. It put me in a situation like, "Alright, now he ain't here." So, I'm starting to bump my head, see things for myself. But when he got back out, you know what I'm saying, he came. Ran his money up. He moved us out again. But when he moved us out again, he went to jail. So. Came right back. So, I've been bouncing—like, you know what I'm saying?—back and forth between like southwest side and Fort Bend like my whole life.

00:04:22 Jesse Host So, how many siblings do you have?

00:04:25 Maxo Guest I got three brothers and one sister.

00:04:28 Jesse Host And so, was everybody in the house together—your folks were together and—?

00:04:31 Maxo Guest For the most part. My older brother, though, he's ten years older than me. And like the rest of my siblings, we're like two years apart. So, like when—like, when my old man went to jail, he was already in jail. So, hell yeah, so, I'm really the second oldest, but I ended up being oldest 'cause he was always locked up.

00:04:49 Jesse Host What did you know about your brother going to jail when your brother went to jail? Your older brother?

00:04:52 Maxo Guest Man, I thought he was about to go play football. Like with—running with the wrong crowd, running with *[censored]*. And I didn't really get how Mama like, "How you running with the wrong crowd? You know, we in the neighborhood. We chilling." Like, but as you get older, you peep your environment to see what the *[censored]* is going on. Like, you get to see that. And plus, we got different fathers. Like, my older brother, like his dad different than like my dad.

00:05:15 Jesse Host How old was he and hold were you?

00:05:17 Maxo Guest We're ten years apart. He born in 1980, I'm born in 1990. So, he's like 41. I'm 31.

00:05:24 Jesse Host And so, were you—you must have been pretty little when he—when he went to jail.

00:05:29 Maxo Guest Yeah. Hell yeah. I was like ten. Eight when he got arrested. Ten when he went to go do eight. He came back when like I was 15.

00:05:39 Jesse Host What did you know about why he went in?

00:05:42 Maxo Guest See, one thing about Black families *[inaudible]* my mama. They're gonna lie to you if you're a kid. I understand like they're gonna lie to you, but it's best to stay in like a child's place. You don't really get in the grown folk's business. But me being like one of the oldest, I used to hear everything, just putting two and two together. Ain't ever want us to see that side. Like, my Mom used to tell me a line, tell people that my brother in college. So, like I seen my friend at school, or like my cousin, he's like, "Yeah, so, where your brother at?"

I gotta make up a whole like, "Yeah, he's in college playing football." But they already know he in jail. You feel me? Yeah.

00:06:12 Jesse Host How far was he in jail from where you lived?

00:06:15 Maxo Guest Three hours.

00:06:16 Jesse Host Did you ever go visit him?

00:06:18 Maxo Guest Hell yeah, my mom used to take us on Sunday. Yeah, I'd get a whole bunch of quarters. So, like—'cause alright, so, if like one of your family members, like blood, like immediate family go to jail, you get contact visit where you go see them, touch them, hug them, *[censored]* like that. So, Mom would go get hella quarters and play her Yolanda Adams on a three-hour ride to go visit him and *[censored]* like that.

00:06:39 Jesse Host What were the quarters for?

00:06:40 Maxo Guest Food. You know, like they got commissary in there. So, visitation, they got like vending machines, snickers, sodas, *[censored]* they can't just grab all the time.

00:06:47 Jesse Host One of the reasons that I ask you so much about your childhood is you write so beautifully about it on your record.

[Maxo thanks him.]

00:07:08 Maxo Guest Do you find it difficult to think about the painful stuff that you went through as a kid that you describe so kind of—you describe so much of it so kind of plainly and clearly in your verses. I mean, it ain't really pain. I mean, to other people looking—'cause I grew up in it. So, it's like, nah, I'm just looking back on my life. Just like you'll look back on your life. You can talk about it. You probably got some *[censored]* that's traumatizing to other people, but to you, you're like, "Well, I went through it. It was my life." That's all it is. Like, people just be curious like I make relatable music at the same time, but at the same time I could tell you like—like, just for instance, if you jam my tape, you probably ain't live how I'm living, so like it's probably interest and like—you know what I'm saying? *[inaudible]* at the same time, I got situations that's relatable. You feel me? To everybody. I'm not fronting. That's the main goal.

00:07:41 Jesse Host The thing that surprised me, reading interviews that you did about music, talking about music when you were a kid and what influenced you is every single—every single interviewer goes to you and says they want—basically says, "Please talk to me about Scarface. Please talk to me about Screwed Up Click. Please talk to me about—" You know, like they just have this expectation that that's what you're gonna say, because you're from Houston and because—you know, I mean, because you have a—you know, a deep, slow rap style. You know what I mean?

[Maxo affirms.]

00:08:28 Maxo Guest And like I don't have—I can't begin to say anything bad about any of those people that I just listed, 'cause they're some of the greatest of all time. You know? My favorite rapper of all time is Devin the Dude. He's from Houston.

00:08:29 Jesse Host Devin the Dude loud.

00:08:36 Maxo Guest But when I hear you talk about who influenced you, I read somewhere you were talking about Papoose.

00:08:37 Jesse Host Facts.

You were talking about Lil B. So, you got like Cassidy and Papoose: east coast mixtape rappers. Like, super rapping rapper rappers. Like, in street mode, not an underground mode—you know, not like a backpack mode, but like—but like super rappers. And then Lil B is from the Bay, where I'm from. He's from Berkeley. And you know, Lil B changed the game by just rapping about whatever came into his head and being chill and cool. *[Laughs.]*

[Maxo agrees.]

00:09:27 Maxo Guest You know what I mean? I think that's about as good as a description as I'm gonna be able to give of what Lil B's thing is. But those are completely—first of all, they're completely different from each other, but they're certainly completely different from the expectations that people have of you, being from Houston.

Right. They come from the internet. Like, bro, if like the internet period would've never happened, I'd probably just be naming Houston rappers. But the internet, um—I stole a iPod that had all that *[censored]* on there. So, I was jamming that *[censored]*. And just love for music, like—it switched like that whole time, like I was in a real time period where we was in *[inaudible]*, baggy *[censored]* clothes and with skinny jeans, purple jeans, turquoise. Like, you feel

			me? And like around that time in high school transition, I'm in the suburbs. I'm getting all the <i>[censored]</i> . I'm learning about the Pack. Kid Cudi. That's the whole—I mean, like here, I went from Wayne, Jeezy, Gucci, to that kind of music. You know what I'm saying? Just experimenting, just—
00:10:14	Jesse	Host	Just your pants just got much tighter in a short period of time.
00:10:16	Maxo	Guest	Maaan! It was crazy. It was crazy.
00:10:18	Jesse	Host	Did you have your Vans on? They look like sneakers.
00:10:20	Maxo	Guest	Vans. I had Vans, but I'm a sneakerhead though. I had all that. I was a kid. Like, I was on all that. I was very materialistic. I ain't scared to say it. Like, you know what I'm saying? I love fashion. I'm into fashion hard. So, yeah, I had all that. But yeah, my music—shit, that was like real music. But I said my introduction was—like when I went out on my own, discovering like 50 Cent. 50 Cent, I say, yeah, <i>Get Rich or Die Tryin'</i> from there. Then The Game. Then like Papoose, Cassidy, Dipset, Wayne, that whole like little era of good music.
			Then I had to branch off and go dig into Hove, dig into Nas, you know what I'm saying? I love Nas's music, his lyrical ability. I love how Hove tells stories and like Nas gonna give you everything, paint the picture. No shortcut. Jay-Z gonna give you the—like, he gonna serve you a good steak but he don't cut the fat out for you and serve it to you. That's how I look at their type of music. But yeah, man, I love music. I ain't gonna lie to you.
00:11:17	Jesse	Host	I don't think anybody has ever come on this show before—and I've been doing this 20 years, now. I don't think anybody's ever come on this show and said like, "Well, I was really influenced by this great iPod that I stole."
00:11:28	Maxo	Guest	<i>[Laughs.]</i> A whole gang go; that was crazy. I ain't even take them. My little brother and them had took them. They broke into the principal's office. Stole iPods, Razr phones, Sidekicks. This was before iPhones.
00:11:40	Jesse	Host	Like the ones that had been confiscated by the—?
00:11:42	Maxo	Guest	Yes. The ones. For sure. Then they did it with score bandanas. Remember like—that's when like—before everybody was wearing snapbacks, this was the time period where it went from baggy clothes like Ed Hardy and True Religion, to that. I never did the Ed Hardy, True Religion. I went straight from baggy clothes to skinny jeans and stuff like that, but they had like the mohawks and like the score bandanas. They broke into the principal's office, stole iPods and all that. Brought it home. Then they were like, "Bring everything back." We didn't bring everything back. You know how it go.
00:12:10	Jesse	Host	Even more with Maxo Kream after the break. Stay with us. It's <i>Bullseye</i> , from MaximumFun.org and NPR.
00:12:17	Music	Transition	Surreal synth with a steady beat.
00:12:19	Jesse	Promo	Support for NPR comes from Discover with a message about rewards. If you're a loyal credit card customer, you should be rewarded for your loyalty—preferably with something that's useful, like cashback match, for instance. Discover matches all the cashback you've earned at the end of your first year. Finally! Rewards that make sense. Discover: exceptionally common sense. Learn more at Discover.com/match . Limitations apply.
			<i>[Music fades out.]</i>
00:12:51	Music	Transition	Thumpy rock music.

00:12:56 Jesse Host Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. I'm talking with Maxo Kream. He's a rapper from Houston. On his new album, *WEIGHT OF THE WORLD*, he collaborates with A\$AP Rocky, Tyler the Creator, Freddie Gibbs, and more. You can purchase or stream the album now. Let's get back into our conversation.

00:13:22 Maxo Guest When did you decide that rap was something that was worth doing, as you said, like someone else would go to college?

00:13:37 Jesse Host Um, when I was supposed to start seriously rapping at 18, I was in the streets beefing. Like going to parties, shutting down parties, beefing with other cliques, beefing with other dudes in the H. And I look up, I'm 21 years old. I'm like, "Damn, I just wasted three years."

00:13:40 Maxo Guest When you were that age, were you in the system? Were you getting arrested, or—?

00:14:16 Jesse Host I was in jail. *[Chuckles.]* I was in jail looking like, "Damn!" I got arrested two years before that like pistol case. I was like 18, 17, something like that. Then I look up. I'm on probation; I'm violating my probation. Like you know what I'm saying? So, they had me. I think I was in there like six months. Not no long time. I don't do like—I ain't never been in TBC prison. I ain't never done no year or nothing. But that six months got my—got my *[censored]* right. I ain't gonna lie to you. And I got out, first thing I did was went to South by Southwest. And as soon as we got back to Houston after South by Southwest—was it 2011?—I shot a video.

00:14:22 Maxo Guest So, were you already recording by the time you—I mean, you must have been if you were headed out to South by Southwest, the music festival in Austin.

00:14:46 Jesse Host We was going looking for females. We were gonna get like—it was spring break. We were gonna get turnt. We didn't wanna go to South Padre, we wanted to do something else. Everybody was going to South By like that. This was back when you could walk up and see a Kendrick Lamar show and just walk right in. Like, back when it was real intimate. You feel me? Then, over the years it built up, built up and became too lit and everybody was gone. But yeah, I had music, but I wasn't serious. South by Southwest made me get serious.

00:14:47 Maxo Guest What about it?

00:15:17 Jesse Host Um, honestly, it was networking their music. I was printing up CDs, passing them out. You could walk up on 2DOPEBOYZ, Earmilk. You could walk up on a A&R at Atlantic. It was right there. Like we don't got media like that. Like, whether we were downtown or what. We like in LA right now. You could pull up on Capital, Sony, RCA. You could do all that. You can't do that in Houston. Ain't no major distribution, no media, for real. Except for like SAY CHEESE.

00:15:35 Maxo Guest By the time you got to South by Southwest, you're 20 or 21 years old.

[Maxo confirms.]

00:15:35 Maxo Guest Yeah. So, by then, was your idea, "I'm gonna—I'm gonna get signed to Roc Nation," or whatever? Or was your idea—you know, "I'm gonna build something here at home."

00:15:35 Maxo Guest It was more like, "Man, I'ma have my way, anyways." But I'm independent and I'm underground and I was trapping. Like, you know what I'm saying? That's in the past now, but yeah, I was trapping, had my way. I had my own money. By the time I was 21, I

had more money than every [censored] probably in the city that was 21. So, I wasn't really tripping. I wasn't looking for like no deal or nothing like that. It wasn't until 2016 when I caught the RICO case for the—that's a organized crime money laundering, manufacturing 2000 pounds of bitter marijuana and [censored] like that. Which is legal in 70% of the country. I don't know why they was on my case like that. You feel me?

But yeah, that shit really had me like, "Okay." Like, when the police come and take \$500k from you, take change, jewelry, your car, everything that you bought, it's like, "Dang, like okay, maybe I need to get right. Get all the way legal. Sign a deal." You know what I'm saying? So, yeah, they really forced my hand. Like, the police been at—bro. They been not liking me for a minute. They never liked the fact that I was rapping, just 'cause like my name—like where I'm from and like how much influence I got over the city of Alief, even though I moved out. Like you feel me? You know how it be with the rappers and [censored]. Like, I remember after that, I had went to the South by Southwest. I dropped a tape. I got big. I went on tour with Chief Keef, 2012. Was it 2013? 2012? One of those.

And then for the Houston show—I killed the Austin show. We killed the Dallas show. For the Houston show, they didn't let me perform. They said that I was exciting gang riots. So, yeah, they always had it out for me. So. And then, after I took the loss to the RICO, then it was like, alright, you know, I'ma sign with Sony or RCA. Well, even that wasn't—I called the case in 2016. I ain't signed 'til like 2018. And Roc Nation, I'm not signed to them like recording. Like, that's management. You feel me?

00:17:22	Jesse	Host	Is that—are those charges still pending? Are you still under those charges?
00:17:25	Maxo	Guest	Naaah. I just got those charges settled like three months ago. Yeah, they were trying to like further like fight on '99. You know, like eight years, four years in, like four years' probation. They dropped it down two years' probation. Then they were like misdemeanor. Once I heard "misdemeanor" and not felony, I'm like, "Okay, now we can talk." You know, I could take a probation. I said I beat it, but me taking—I got a year probation. And like, you feel me? But to me, that's beating it. A year probation ain't [censored]. I'm a grown man. I'm legal. I ain't doing nothing wrong. I'm not gonna get in trouble. You feel me? So, I feel like that was a blessing in disguise.
00:17:58	Jesse	Host	What was it like to be out in the world, you know, touring, recording, etc., etc., etc., and know that you have this thing over you that could change your life completely? Right?

[Maxo affirms.]

00:18:17	Maxo	Guest	Like, you know—I'm sure you had lawyers working on it and reassuring you and so forth, but—
00:18:20	Jesse	Host	For sure. Shoutout to Ken Schaffer, the best lawyer in Texas. But like, I'm sure that whole—that's four or five years that you knew that if things went wrong there, you might end up in jail for real.
00:18:30	Maxo	Guest	I knew I was gonna be good. Like I said, I got Ken Schaffer, one of the top lawyers. You know what I'm saying? He worked on J Prince's case. You know what I'm saying? He helped J Prince beat his case. He worked on the El Chapo case. You know what I'm

saying? Real power of attorney. So, I knew I was in good hands. And then, like—that's how they did it. I was on tour with Danny Brown, and they came to us. So, look, boom. I think it was 2012, 2013, I told you about Chief Keef. They didn't let me perform. Then, I'm on tour with Danny Brown. They planned to come arrest me while I was onstage, but I performed and after I had went to the bus, and they grabbed me. But yeah, they've been trying to like shut me down. Like, there's be a—like, their goal is to mess up your money, everything you got going. Like, you know what I'm saying? And really try to bring you down.

00:19:12 Jesse Host

How did the people like in your family feel about what you write about them? 'Cause you write...

[Maxo chuckles.]

You write—you know like memoirists come on this show and there's always this question, "When is it my story and when is it their story?" Right?

[Maxo agrees.]

00:19:37 Maxo Guest

And you write really specifically about lots of people in your family. So, do you talk to them about it? Before? After?

My dad—my dad *[inaudible]*, he'd be like, "Okay, son. I feel what you're doing." But look, they was always like—so, I grew up like—you know what I'm saying?—not to tell my family business. It's one thing you ain't supposed to tell it. But I feel like we older now, we grown. Like *[censored]*, it's my life. So, I'ma speak on it. You know what I'm saying? Like. And then it's real. It's our identity. You know what I'm saying? But my mama don't like it. She don't like the "MAMA'S PURSE" song, that I brought up like her past. You know what I'm saying?

My dad, he love and hate it. 'Cause he loved *Brandon Banks*, he just don't like me talking about the situation and like, I'ma—I tell him I'ma forever talk about it. Like, I'ma do me. I don't care how nobody feel. It's my story. I don't really be into that, 'cause like I take care of my family. I give back to my family. I do for my family. You know what I'm saying? I'm the first male to have a legal job. Anything y'all talking about, I'm really not trying to hear.

00:20:25 Jesse Host

I wanna play a little bit of a song from your album from 2018, *Punken*. This song is called "Grannies".

00:20:32 Music Music

"Grannies" from the album *Punken* by Maxo Kream.

... can't leave home without it

*Come from where you see a lot of bodies, but don't talk about it
Hard to find the plug, I middleman'd that package on consignment
Hookers, strippers, crackheads, robbers, trappers, all in public
housing*

*Uncle Bo was stealing from my Granny, can't leave— around here
Roaches, rats, and ants inside my pantry, can't leave food around
here*

*Aunty Trish was sleep, I stole her car and went out serving, robbing
Grinding with my family through the struggle, hold 'em down
regardless*

*My Uncle Bo, my Granny youngest son, he always doing extra
Moved in for the summer, he was tired of living in a shelter
Up all night and sleep all day, you never know his sleeping
schedule...*

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

00:21:03 Jesse Host

I mean, it's a list. *[Laughs.]*

[Maxo agrees with a chuckle.]

00:21:07 Maxo Guest
00:21:09 Jesse Host

You know what I mean?

Yeah, no cap.

It's a list. Like, you get a call from an uncle? You get a call from a
cousin?

00:21:13 Maxo Guest

They be jamming it! My cousin, Pooh, free him. He got out. He had
went back. But yeah, like... like, he love it. He love that I'm telling
his story, telling the truth. Everybody knows the truth. Like, the
family know. Like you know what I'm saying? Especially what I feel
they like to patch up and cover up and front. Like, even there was a
time like when we had moved out—we was in the suburbs, but my
dad had went back to jail. We couldn't afford the house. We in like a
\$500k neighborhood and we the only people getting eviction—like
getting eviction notice on the door. The cops were pulling up trying
to kick us out. But my mama just don't want—at first, I thought she
was just always trying to uphold herself to something she can't
afford and look a certain way. But I get it. She'd do whatever to
keep us in that house, even when she can't afford it, 'cause she
didn't want us to go back.

00:22:01 Jesse Host
00:22:05 Maxo Guest

Like, you really don't understand what your parents go through until
you become a parent.

Tell me about how you write when you write.

Play the beat and I rap for a little bit, stop. Think about some other
stuff, rap, stop. I just feel like writing it down takes away the
emotion. And like—and like I could have some of my—like, in my
head I can see it how I want to. If—like, if I'm writing, it might not
come out the same when I come back to read it. And like, writing
just made me feel I was in school. I don't—I ain't really big on
subordination and having someone over me telling me what to do.
You feel me? Now, in music—like, I know some A&R artists in
there. I can't work with that, 'cause I felt we were working as a
team. But I just be feeling like, in school, that—for instance, bro, like
I couldn't have no professor that don't make more money than me
telling me about something, trying to point their finger and tell me
what I should do with my life. I don't like that.

So—and I feel like writing take me back to that school, but I never
got along with teachers. Like, from first grade, bro! This is how I
know, like I used to go to school in first grade. Teachers ask me
like, "What do your dad do for a living? What does your mom do?"
My mom was a housewife. My dad—I didn't know what he did. So,
my mom would always say, "Tell them that your dad owns a
ambulance company." 'Cause we—I used to come to school fresh
every day. Jordans, Tommy Hilfiger, Polo. All that. You know what
I'm saying? All the way through high school. So, teachers always

looked at me funny. Even when my dad went to jail and I ain't had that no more, he was a hustler so I was a hustler. I was getting money, making more money than the teachers, pulling up in different whips. They didn't like that.

So, it did something like with subordination, that and writing just take me back to school. So, I'm like—man, yeah, I'm not gonna do this. I'm just gonna spit everything from the heart.

00:23:36 Jesse Host

I'm gonna play another song from your 2018 album, *Punken*. This one is called "Roaches".

00:23:42 Music Music

[Maxo affirms.]

"Roaches" from the album *Punken* by Maxo Kream.

*I was up in Vegas at the Mayweather party
Then my momma call me 'bout Hurricane Harvey
Said the house got flooded, water covered up the sofa
Impala, Range Rover, she need me to come over
Nowhere near sober, it was— up my night
Like, "They gon' be alright. Tomorrow, book a flight"
Book a-, 40 missed calls, she was calling all night
Said there's no more food and lights and she been fighting for her
life
Told Toby, Book the plane..."*

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

00:24:07 Jesse Host

It's a terrifying situation you describe on that song, to be away from your family and know that they're in very real danger. What do you remember about that?

00:24:18 Maxo Guest

Um. Everything that's in the song. I remember her calling me. I remember being in Vegas. You know what I'm saying? *[Inaudible]* it's gonna flood. I remember hurricane Katrina, but that was more like New Orleans. It didn't really flood in Houston like that. I didn't know Harvey was gonna be like that. It was just crazy. Traumatizing. Losing cars, whips, cribs. Then it made me realize, ain't nothing more important than family. Everything else is materialistic, bro. Like I said, I was way materialistic. But like losing your family's way worse than losing any piece of clothing or car or anything like that. You feel me? That was my biggest fear, for sure. My dad got heart problems. He on the roof. Like, you can be in the house 'cause the light's still on but it's flooded up to your knees. I mean, all the sockets is full of water that's deadly. You feel me?

00:25:06 Jesse Host

How did you get back?

00:25:07 Maxo Guest

On the plane. They was delayed for like a couple of days and I had came back. But they was good by then. Like, by the time I came back, they was good. Then, like, she wasn't even in the hood. Like, she was in the good part. Like, hurricane... Harvey messed up the city. Banged the city up, for sure.

00:25:27 Jesse Host

Were you able to stay in contact with them or have people check up on them when they were out of the house but not yet out of the house, so to speak?

00:25:38 Maxo Guest

Yeah, for sure. We stayed on the phone, stayed in contact. They had like rescue teams and rescue people out there. I was connecting them. You know what I'm saying? A group of my fans helped my mama clean out the house and stuff like that. Like, it was

			a lot of love, a lot of H-Town love. Really brought the city together. For sure.
00:25:56	Jesse	Host	It's a scary situation to see, you know, the pieces of your parents' life washed. You know what I mean?
			<i>[Maxo confirms.]</i>
			Like, your parents are there, but you know, like—well, I don't know. There goes my <i>Masters of the Universe</i> . You're a little too young to have <i>Masters of the Universe</i> . Probably <i>Power Rangers</i> or something.
00:26:17	Maxo	Guest	Yeah, I don't know. I was about to say what's <i>Masters of the Universe</i> ? I'm like, "Hold on, masters?"
00:26:20	Jesse	Host	That's He-Man.
00:26:21	Maxo	Guest	Oh, yeah. Facts.
			<i>[Jesse chuckles.]</i>
			It was cool, though, like—one thing about my mama, she kept a lot of stuff. She had set it on the bed. We didn't lose too much, just the cars I bought them.
00:26:33	Jesse	Host	What was the toughest part about it?
00:26:37	Maxo	Guest	<i>[Beat.]</i> Uuum. <i>[Chuckling.]</i> Cleaning up. To be honest, bro, like my family—once everything good, we get happy. We tightknit. We laugh, joke. But yeah, the cleaning up. Shoutout to all the fans that pulled up to help us recover the house. It was crazy, 'cause it was already fans—well, I ain't gonna say fans. It was like a little rescue crew there. Like, cleaning up. Then they look in the garage. They seen a box, one of my South by Southwest boxes full of CDs. They're like, "Holy <i>[censored]</i> , dudes, is this Maxo Kream's house? This is Maxo Kream's mother?" Taking pictures, autographing. See, that thing got tricky, 'cause you know how fans get, bro. They probably gonna start try and take extra <i>[censored]</i> . Like, "No way, I got Maxo's shoes from 5 th grade." Or like something weird with—
			'Cause I'm already worried about that for real, man. Just make sure my people good, and we good.
00:27:25	Jesse	Host	We'll finish up with Maxo Kream in just a minute. Don't go anywhere. It's <i>Bullseye</i> , from MaximumFun.org and NPR.
00:27:32	Music	Transition	Cheerful music with light vocalizations.
00:27:33	Jesse	Promo	Support for this podcast and the following message come from Airbnb.
			If you've ever thought about hosting, you might have a few questions. What's it like? Where do I store my stuff? Is hosting worth it? Now, with Ask a Super Host, you can get free one-on-one help from Airbnb's most experienced hosts. Whether you're curious how to get started or just wondering if it's right for you, you can now ask someone who's already hosting. Learn more at Airbnb.com/askasuperhost .
			<i>[Music fades out.]</i>
00:28:05	Promo	Clip	Music: Cheerful acoustic guitar.
			John Moe: Look, it's a rough world out there, especially lately. I get it. So, let's take care of our minds as best we can. I'm John Moe,

host of *Depresh Mode with John Moe*. Every week, I talk with comedians, actors, writers, musicians, doctors, therapists, and everyday folks about the obstacles that our world and our brains throw in front of us. Depression, anxiety, traumatic stress, all those mental health challenges that are way more common and more treatable than you might think.

Patton Oswald: The first time I went to therapy, I was so ashamed, and I was like, “I can’t believe I gotta go into therapy. Like, I thought I could be a man. And Humphrey Bogart was never in therapy!” And then my dad said, “Yeah, but he smoked a carton of cigarettes a day.”

John Moe: Give your mind a break, give yourself a break, and join me for *Depresh Mode with John Moe*.

[Music fades out.]

00:28:52	Music	Transition	Thumpy music with light vocalizations.
00:28:56	Jesse	Host	Welcome back to <i>Bullseye</i> . I’m Jesse Thorn. If you’re just joining us, my guest is Maxo Kream. He’s a critically acclaimed rapper from Houston who just put out the new album <i>WEIGHT OF THE WORLD</i> . In it, he talks about losing his brother to gun violence, his grandmother to COVID-19, and about becoming a new parent. You can buy or stream it now. Let’s get back into our conversation.
00:29:23	Maxo	Cream	Your brother was killed right before the pandemic, right?
00:29:27	Jesse	Host	For sure. March 9 th , 2020.
00:29:29	Maxo	Cream	How did you hear about it?
00:29:36	Jesse	Host	My homies that was there with him called me. They called—I was the first person. I had to call my mama. “Hey, yo.”
00:29:37	Maxo	Guest	Were you in town?
00:29:42	Jesse	Host	I was in Houston. He was in LA.
00:29:44	Maxo	Guest	<i>[Beat.]</i> Where were you when you got the call?
00:29:52	Jesse	Host	I was at my girlfriend’s house—well, my baby mama now, but my girlfriend house asleep, chilling. He called me.
00:29:54	Maxo	Guest	Was it a surprise to you?
00:30:33	Jesse	Host	Yeah—hell yeah! Surprised, like you never know when it’s your last day, bro, waking up. Think about that. You never know. So, hell yeah I was surprised. But I’m like, “Damn.” It really caught me off guard. I was supposed to come, but I ain’t coming ‘cause he wasn’t trying to grab no hotel room. He wasn’t trying to grab like a rent-a-car to move around. I pay for my safety. That’s one thing. Like, you know what I’m saying? But I ain’t think nothing about it; he done this shit about a million times. Felt like he was gonna <i>[inaudible]</i> fly here, grab what he need or whatever, come back. That wasn’t the situation, though.
00:30:36	Maxo	Guest	What was it like to call your mom?
			The call, it was hard. But at the candlelight, looking her in the eyes, like that was the most traumatizing of the stuff. <i>[Inaudible]</i> thing you could do to a person: having a little brother die. Especially the little brother that was cool, the good one. I was the one with all the drama and the gang, with all the stuff—the gang banging, the drama, all that. And I felt like, “Dang.” You know what I’m saying? I felt like if anything, the karma should’ve been on me, not him. I really felt like that. So, for me to be standing there looking at her, telling her that, I kind of feel selfish like in a way. Even though it’s

not my fault. Yeah, I think though, it was like, okay. Cool. He's through trapping. I'm a rapper. I got the money. I'm the one this, I'm the one that. You know how the family look at you like—the kids like, "You're a king. You're doing this and that."

And he over here like—you know what I'm saying? I ain't gonna say struggling, but his lifestyle. I wish it were just set up differently. You know what I'm saying? And for him to go like that, it's crazy.

00:31:33 Jesse Host

I mean, one of the things that I imagine—and you can tell me if I'm completely wrong—is that you might have felt like you had—you know. You had changed things. Like, you were in a different part of your life, where stuff like that doesn't happen the way it used to.

00:31:57 Maxo Guest

Facts. I felt like we just so above the curve. I don't believe—I ain't never spoke on this, but he was moving sloppy, too, my brother. Like, we gotta take accountability. For sure, he was moving sloppy. Like, that's why I didn't go with him. He was moving too sloppy, being too cheap. Like, you can't be cheap on your safety, especially when you in that kind of market and dealing. And like that's another thing too. Like, death is real sensitive. But people don't like to use their—*[starts to curse but stops himself]* freaking head. You know what I'm saying? When it comes to stuff like—dude, if you know you're doing that kind of stuff, like... *[sighs]* you don't eat where you *[censored]*. You gotta mix up, move different.

And I preached to him about it, but he was hardheaded. It is what it is, though. You live, you learn. You know what I'm saying? I'm still here, for him. I'm putting on for him, every day. Persona money gang for "Persona" do. I mean, for "Persona" money do. And he gonna live forever through me, for sure.

00:32:47 Jesse Host

Well, let's hear a little bit of the record that you wrote about him and his passing.

[Music fades in.]

00:32:52 Maxo Guest

This song is called—"Trips".

00:32:53 Jesse Host

"Trips", from your new album.

00:32:54 Music Music

"TRIPS" from the album *WEIGHT OF THE WORLD* by Maxo Kream.

*Taking trips to California, you're frequent flying with United
OG— buying, how you end up dying
Set my brother up, try to run off with his stuff
They tried to take your pounds, you chased 'em down and— that—
up
Right jab, uppercut, he hit the ground then y'all start to scuff
On his neck, he felt you was threat, he had the— tucked
Pocket— he just bought it but ain't use yet
My brother should've wore a vest
He should've grabbed that pipe, before he chased him out the
house
Instead, he fighting for his life and he bleeding out the mouth
Ran up the stairs two flights, then collapsed in front the house
Slammed the door, and woke up Ike, who was sleeping on the
couch*

*But dude was screaming out, "They shot me", laying in a bloody puddle,
"Tried to rob me, then they popped me. Got me for my bundles."*

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

00:33:42 Jesse Host You know, playing that record into our headphones—'cause we played it live—one of the things that I thought of was like—you know, it's one thing to write a record like that or record it, but you know, it's your album. So, like, you have like approve the mastering and—you know what I mean?

[Maxo agrees emphatically.]

00:34:04 Maxo Guest Like, you have to live with it. Facts. I wrote that song like two days after it happened. And I never went back to listen to it. Like, I was on the way here and the song came on. I changed it. For sure, for sure. It's a great song. I could jam it. I could perform it. It's just like—like, it's so traumatic. You feel me? Like, I don't really wanna hear that. Even to write that song, I wasn't in my right state of—I ain't gonna say right state of mind, but I was on Adderall. I feel like when I get on Adderall, I can go get my emotions out without showing the emotion. I can show it through the mic. So, I—*[chuckles]* I wouldn't be able to write that song without shedding a tear or without—like, you feel me?—type *[censored]*. Like, it's a deep song. For sure.

00:34:43 Jesse Host Have you been able to express those feelings for yourself?
00:34:47 Maxo Guest What you mean? Like, grieve?

[Jesse confirms.]

I don't know. I feel like—I agree with turning up. Like, bro wanted to see me on my *[censored]*. Like, I wanna cop the Lambo, chuck. Like, you know, like the material things. It's crazy how all this wrap around. Like, how I had all the material *[censored]* as a kid and I got older like—it's kind of like a crackhead smoking crack. You try and chase that first high. So, it was like whenever I get like that—I mean, I shop 24/7 but retail therapy is like trying to help me get over it. You feel me?

And that's what I talk about in "MAMA'S PURSE" on the new album. Like, you know what I'm saying? Like, *[rhythmically]* "They put my brother in the dirt, and he just gave his daughter birth. Look at her face and see the hurt. Bought her—I bought a necklace, a diamond necklace, a new Lexus, and a Balenciaga purse. I was trying buy her love, but I only made it worse." You feel me? Like, the material stuff don't really—

00:35:43 Jesse Host I mean, you're telling me that you're doing it you're also telling me that it doesn't work.

00:35:47 Maxo Guest Yeah, but I'm doing it, though. To keep my mind off of it. I try not to think like—you don't see me posting my brother all day. It hurts too much. You might see me post some homies I was real close with, but I feel like it's different. I lost a lot of homies. I grew up—I was in the streets. Lost a lot of homies, but it's different when it hit home like that. Like, I trust my brother more than my mom and my daddy. Like, that was the number one person. Like, you feel me?

So, it really like—it hit me different. But yeah, it made me turn up, though. Like just get on my boss. Like be a boss. But I really got into like—you know what I'm saying? Like credit. Shot my credit score up. Started looking for properties. Reading this dumb as heck when like I got all this jewelry on, I could've bought how many properties? Like, it just really opened my eyes and like I'm not scared to say it. Like, one thing about me, I'm a great listener, great follower, 'cause I'm a great leader. So, just getting it right—like really make generational wealth, not just rap rich. We got on jewelry and all this and that. It look good. But like—you know what I'm saying? It really had like generational wealth.

And I feel like that's not even like—it don't even come with your money. It come with your mindset. 'Cause your mindset, you gonna set everything up accordingly to get that.

00:36:54 Jesse Host Do you—I know you're faithful. Do you have somebody to talk about? A pastor or therapist or...?

00:37:04 Maxo Guest My fans of this album. I don't trust no damn therapist. I... I need to go see one. It's just like, "Nah." I can't open up everything. As a matter of fact, I don't mind the looks that I got coming. I got a line like, "How my mama said I need to go talk to a therapist," and then like my reply back is like, "Man, ain't nothing like—" Like, basically, ain't nothing that that White man that could tell me to get over what I got going, is one of my lines.

00:37:35 Jesse Host There are therapists that aren't White.

00:37:37 Maxo Guest Yeah, I know.

[They laugh.]

00:37:40 Jesse Host Thanks.
Look, I'm not trying to tell you how to live your life, Maxo.
[Laughing.]

[Maxo affirms.]

00:37:46 Maxo Guest I'm just saying, I got a lot out of it.
Facts. I mean, I'm—man, *[censored]*, making these tapes' my therapy. Putting out this music. The feedback I get. 'Cause like, man, like this your first time meeting me, but like I give you so much in these albums that like you get a glimpse. You get a idea, for sure. And that's all like—we had a question like—that's why they come out like that. So, I try to like—you know what I'm saying?—put like—I don't got no diary. But this tape is. You feel me? I just try to pour it all into the music.

00:38:14 Jesse Host Well, Maxo, I sure appreciate you taking all this time to be on *Bullseye*. It was really nice to get to talk to you.

00:38:18 Maxo Guest For sure. Appreciate the love.

00:38:21 Jesse Host Maxo Kream, everyone. His new record, *WEIGHT OF THE WORLD*, is really great. You can buy or stream it pretty much anywhere, right now.

00:38:30 Music Transition Bright piano.

00:38:32 Jesse Host That's the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye* is created from the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California—where I was struggling with the issue *[chuckling]* of a too-loud doorbell. My doorbell was too loud,

and I posted on social media, “What can I do to make my doorbell less loud? How do I choose between all these other new doorbells when I replace my doorbell?” And none other than comedy legend Andy Richter replied to me and said, “Hey, dummy, just put some tape on the hammer that hits the bell in your doorbell and that will deaden the sound a little.” Thank you, Andy Richter!

The show, 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.

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

00:39:45 Promo Promo

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

[Music fades out.]