

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>
00:00:14	Jesse	Host	From MaximumFun.org and NPR, it's <i>Bullseye</i> .
00:00:17	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.
00:00:25	Jesse Thorn	Host	Charlie Day is the star and co-creator of <i>It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia</i> .
00:00:31	Music	Music	"Temptation Sensation" by Heinz Kiessling, the theme song for <i>It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia</i> .
			<i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i>
00:00:44	Jesse	Host	You probably know that already, because at this point, <i>Always Sunny</i> is the longest running live action comedy in the history of television. A person born during the show's first season can now get a driver's license. And what's crazy is, <i>Always Sunny</i> is still good. The show's main characters—Charlie, Mac, Dennis, Dee, and Frank—are still immoral, self-sabotaging doofuses and our lives are all the richer for it.
			But Charlie Day the actor is more than just Charlie from <i>Always Sunny</i> . He helped co-create the very funny TV show <i>Mythic Quest</i> . He acted in movies like <i>Pacific Rim</i> , <i>Horrible Bosses</i> , and <i>The Lego Movie</i> . And now, he's the star of <i>I Want You Back</i> . <i>I Want You Back</i> is a romantic comedy. Charlie plays Peter. When the movie begins, Peter has been dumped by his longtime girlfriend and he's feeling pretty crummy about it. Then, he meets Emma, played by Jenny Slate. Emma was also dumped by her longtime partner and she's also feeling crummy about it. In a typical romcom, you'd probably have guessed the next move here. Emma and Peter fall in and out of love, but eventually realize they're meant to be together—possibly one of them owns a cupcake place.
			In <i>I Want You Back</i> , though, they conspire. Peter and Emma develop a plan to win back their exes the only way they know how: each of them will sabotage the new relationship of the other's ex. It's like <i>Strangers On a Train</i> , but instead of murder, emotional warfare. Let's hear a clip from the film. In this scene, Peter and Emma meet each other for the first time. They've both just been dumped. They're crying in a stairwell in an office building. And before long, they get to talking.
00:02:32	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:02:33	Clip	Clip	Peter (<i>I Want You Back</i>): Anna and I were together for... six years.
			Emma: Holy <i>[censored]</i> .
			Peter: And, uh—and I wanted to get married. Have kids, all that. But you know, she wanted to be an artist and I guess drink wine with some <i>[censored]</i> water in a Fonzie jacket. I really don't know what— <i>[sighs]</i> .

Emma: Noah wants a woman who owns a pie shop.

Peter: I love pie.

[Emma bursts into tears.]

Peter: I'm sorry I just said that. I probably shouldn't have said that.

Emma: *[Strangled.]* It's cool. Everyone loves pie.

Peter: Pie's actually not that great. It's very—there's very limited options when it comes to pie.

Emma: Okay.

Peter: This was awkward. Uuh.

Emma: Very!

[They both chuckle weakly.]

00:03:12 Sound Effect Transition

Music swells and fades.

00:03:13 Jesse Host Charlie, it's so great to have you on *Bullseye*. I'm so happy to have you here. Thank you for coming.

00:03:17 Charlie Day Guest I'm excited to be here!

00:03:19 Jesse Host I guess by coming, I mean coming to your own home in your own home office. But—

00:03:21 Charlie Guest Well, yeah, I made it all the way to my little side office here and I got the Zoom setup. So.

00:03:26 Jesse Host You look like a million dollars. Are you a romantic comedy person? Some people are very intense about them.

00:03:33 Charlie Guest I wouldn't say I'm intense about them, but I enjoy them! I enjoy, you know—I think I really enjoy the Tom Hanks ones and obviously *When Harry Met Sally*. I like a romantic storyline in a movie, whether it's a romantic comedy or not. And *[chuckling]* I'm kind of a sucker for the Nancy Meyers romcoms. I always go in thinking, "Eh, it's not maybe for me." And I always wind up saying, "I thoroughly enjoyed it!"

00:04:06 Jesse Host I thought you have, in this film, a very nice romantic comedy job. You know? There's a lot of goofs about what jobs people have in romantic comedies, which are very almost like ritualized. You know? It's like magazine editors and cupcake makers and all those, you know—architects. The dudes are always architects.

[Charlie affirms.]

And *[chuckling]*—and your character works for a company that runs senior citizen's homes, about which job he is kind of—he's kind of ambivalent despite really liking old people. And I thought that was a nice—a nice thing for someone to do in a romantic comedy.

00:04:48 Charlie Guest I certainly thought it was original when I read it. I thought, "Gosh, I never read like a character who aspired to open his own retirement home." You know? And I thought it was rootable and pretty much this whole script, when I—when I got sent it and I read it, caught me

off-guard with how sort of grounded and relatable it was. Which was I think the most appealing factor, to me—which is I always wanted to do a romantic comedy, but I wanted to do the good version of one. And you know, each page I turned and kept reading, I thought, “Oh, gosh, this is a real guy!” And you know, he has real wants and they’re relatable and they’re rootable. And same with Jenny’s character.

So, yeah. It’s a funny job to have, I guess, for a movie. But I really enjoyed it.

00:05:39 Jesse Host

Is “rootable” a term of art? Like is that something that comes in the coverage of a script?

00:05:43 Charlie Guest

Yeah, it’s a terrible term. But rootable, yeah. Rootable, relatable. The worst is likeable. But I think rootable’s better. You know, you’re rooting for—you don’t have to like them, but do you root for the character?

00:05:57 Jesse Host

You’ve played a lot of characters who are either profoundly dimwitted—

[Charlie laughs.]

Um, you know, for *[chuckles]*—for decades now, on *Always Sunny*, you’ve played a character so dimwitted that it seems impossible that he lives in—like, he’s able to put pants on.

[Charlie laughs.]

Or a lot of characters who are bright, but like mostly would like run into a room with their hair messed up, waving a stack of papers. Like, “I found it!” That sort of thing.

00:06:22 Charlie Guest

That’s right. A—yeah, yeah. A lunatic.

00:06:27 Jesse Host

[Laughs.] Um, was doing something that was grounded and relatable aspirational for you, for that reason?

00:06:38 Charlie Guest

It was. Yeah, absolutely. I think I—*[sighs]* I was so relieved reading the story, to say, “Oh, he never—” You know, he’s never crazy and ranting and raving about anything. And, uh—

[Jesse laughs.]

I think that’s something Jason, too, I think had said to me. He’s like, “You know, I really want to do a performance of yours where you—where we don’t really see you in that frantic state that we’re maybe used to.” It’s funny, I remember—I can’t remember what movie it was or what project or—I was doing something. I was like, “I’m always a person in an extreme situation. I guess that’s good storytelling, right? Take an average person and put them in an extreme situation, then hopefully comedy comes out of that. But yeah, it was nice to play slightly more reasonable human being in this movie.

00:07:28 Jesse Host

[Laughs.] At what point did you realize you were good at ranting and raving?

[Charlie laughs.]

Because you—*[stammering]* like, one of the reasons that you do it a lot is because you’re extraordinarily good at it.

00:07:36 Charlie Guest Well, that's nice of you to say. I'm never attempting to be good at ranting and raving. I'm simply ranting or raving as the character is meant it be and then people seem to find it amusing. For me *[chuckles]*—for me it's always really real. I think I remember—I can't remember—maybe it was doing *Pacific Rim*, where I remember doing it and just feeling as though I'd played it real. You know? Played—this is the character. This is his passion. This is what he cares about. This is what he's upset about. And then having someone come up to me and say, "Oh, you were so funny in that." And I *[chuckles]*—I remember thinking, "Well, I wasn't trying—I wasn't trying remotely to be funny."

[Jesse laughs.]

00:08:28 Jesse Host But I also recognize that that's—you know, I am a—I'm thankful that I have a career that people are *[laughs]* amused by my—you know, when I'm stressed or whatever it is, they find it funny. Like, that's a high-class problem, I guess.

00:08:33 Charlie Guest Did you aspire to be an actor, as a kid?

[Beat.] I knew I liked it. The few times that I'd done school plays or gotten a laugh from an audience, you know, I—*[sighs]* I recognize that it was something that felt natural to me. You know. It wasn't like math or reading a book, which *[laughs]* felt like I really had to work at it. Or sports, which I spent a lot of time doing, but you know, I always felt like I had to convince people that, you know—to put me on the team, versus acting seemed to come more naturally. But I don't know that I thought about people having careers as actors. You know? I was growing up in Rhode Island and I didn't know anyone who did that. And that was a different thing. You know? The movie star was—it was, uh—or even just a working, day-to-day actor was an unattainable different thing.

00:09:36 Jesse Host It wasn't until I was in college that I thought, "Oh, well—you know, maybe I could—maybe I could make a living at this."

It's funny. I was thinking about the fact that—correct me if I'm—if I'm wrong and I misread this somewhere or something like that, but both of your parents have PhDs and they're both in music. And I thought that—I thought what a—what a funny thing for an actor to grow up with. Not because it's music and acting and they're so different, but rather just because to have two parents who are both artists in literally the most like practical and serious way that you could possibly be an artist, which is like music theory—you know what I mean?

[Charlie agrees with a laugh.]

00:10:42 Charlie Guest And like—and like academic music theory. Like, even more than like if your parents were, you know—I have a friend who used to play the piano at Nordstrom for a while. And like that's a pretty practical music job, but like PhDs in music theory is the most like serious, sincere, practical thing you could possibly do in the arts. Yeah. My parents were academics. You know, I didn't really perceive them as artists. You know? Like, they were educators. They were teachers. Yeah, and had spent their lives learning and then their lives after learning teaching. So, to me, music seemed like a horrible thing where *[laughs]*—you know?

[Jesse laughs.]

You had to have your nose in a book all day long and then, you know, it's not very lucrative.

00:11:11 Jesse Host

You only learned about jazz when you were 26.

[They laugh.]

00:11:15 Charlie Guest

I—yeah, exactly! And then—

00:11:17 Jesse Host

You accidentally stumbled into a smoky club and—

00:11:19 Charlie Guest

That's right. I think, you know—I think my parents never made it past Beethoven all the way jazz. I rebelled against it. And school was not something that came natural to me. [Chuckles.] I struggled in school. And I think—[sighs] yeah, I think as a result, the idea of going into music or anything like that seemed like I wanted to get as far away from it as possible. But um, you know, now looking back on it, I wish—I wish I had a PhD in something. I think that would be pretty great. I have an honorary one, which is a bunch of crap. But it's fun to have.

00:11:57 Jesse Host

It's still pretty good. You and Maya Angelou, right?

00:12:00 Charlie Guest

And Kermit the Frog. Yeah. So.

[Jesse agrees and they laugh.]

And Mike Tyson. Mike Tyson too, I believe. So, I'm keeping good company.

00:12:09 Jesse Host

More with Charlie Day in just a minute. Stay with us. It's *Bullseye*, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

00:12:17 Music Transition

Bright, chiming synth with a steady beat.

00:12:22 Jesse Host

It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest is Charlie Day. Along with Rob McElhenney and Glen Howerton, he created and stars in *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia*. That has officially become the longest running live action sitcom in the history of television. Charlie is also a movie actor. He's starring alongside Jenny Slate in the brand-new romantic comedy, *I Want You Back*. It's streaming this week on Amazon Prime. Let's get back into our conversation.

00:12:56 Charlie Guest

Let's talk about *Always Sunny in Philadelphia* for a minute.

00:12:57 Jesse Host

Please. Please!

Always Sunny is a show that came out of the three stars—including you—like making stuff yourself in a time before that was how TV shows—where TV shows came from. [Chuckles.] Like, maybe three or four years before that was where TV shows came from. But like, in 2003 or whatever, when you guys started goofing around together and making videos, that wasn't how you got a television show. So, how did the three of you in a—like an apartment building in Hollywood or whatever become a television pitch?

00:13:40 Charlie Guest

Well, you're right. That's not certainly how it was done, but it was how things have been done. You know? If you're Quinton Tarantino, you raise the money to put together *Reservoir Dogs* or maybe he shot a short *Reservoir Dogs* first. Or, you know, any filmmaker usually goes that route. It just hadn't been done for television. And I think we initially were making what could have been a 30-minute Sundance short. But we realized it felt like it—we could make it episodic and that it could be like a television show. And so, we wound up pitching it as that.

But I think it was beneficial for us that it was before YouTube became big, so we had no outlet. Right? We were—here we are. We're off—we're making something with nowhere to put it. So, we had to find a home for it and the home just happened to be on television. And yeah. And some of that was maybe just right time, right place. It's hard to know exactly. But... hm. That's it.

00:14:56 Jesse Host I was watching some of the videos—some of the videos that you guys made are on YouTube now, speaking of YouTube. And I was watching them, and the vibe is a lot more like—I mean, it's the time, too. But the vibe is more like British *Office*-y, which is to say that it has a kind of [*chuckles*]-like, the discomfort is kind of more quiet and sad. [*Laughs.*]

00:15:18 Charlie Guest Yeah. Well, that absolutely was our inspiration. You know? Both the British *Office* and *Curb Your Enthusiasm* had a lo-fi look to them that really was—it's documentary-style filmmaking, right? Someone—it's a handheld camera. It's doing sort of punch-in zooms. You know, things. And it's very loose. It's cross covered. And for a young filmmaker, that seems attainable. Right? You don't have a—you know, it's not *Boogie Nights*. You don't have a Steadicam shot that goes underwater and then comes back up and, you know. This is—

[*Jesse laughs.*]

00:15:58 Jesse Host You know, like this is something—

00:16:01 Charlie Guest There's no—there's no stuff you're cribbing from *Soy Cuba*, in other words.

00:16:01 Charlie Guest Yeah—this is—yeah, this is stuff that we can actually—it's not *Jurassic Park*. You know, there's no CG dinosaurs. These are just people in awkward situations and the camera is covering both. Plus, we just love the style of the humor. I think it was very of that time, but it also just appealed to us. So, it felt doable. We thought, "Well, we could at least do that. We could just get our hands on—" And there—also, there was the timing of the technology becoming more attainable. You know. We didn't have a giant camera. We had a—we had a good camera. I mean, it was a Panasonic DVX100A, which was a nice little handheld camera that shot in 24P. So, it had a great look to it.

00:17:05 Jesse Host So, we were able to almost create the same look as those shows, just on our own. You know? No lighting, just these cameras and some funny, awkward scenarios, and cross covered, and... off you go!

00:17:09 Charlie Guest I have watched *Always Sunny* since the—since the start. And, um—

00:17:11 Jesse Host Thank you.

00:17:11 Jesse Host Uh, hey, it's no sweat off my back. I love that. And from the start, I wondered why I liked and rooted for these horrible monsters.

[*Charlie laughs.*]

00:17:39 Charlie Guest Because all of the [*laughing*]-aaall of your characters—like, it's not like one non-monster surrounded by monsters. Like, maybe your character has the least evil intent of any of the characters, I would say.

00:17:39 Charlie Guest Yeah. But they're all monsters.

[Jesse laughs.]

00:17:45 Jesse Host Right? Why do you like and root for them? I don't know. I don't know. I don't know—why do you like—
Yeah. *[Laughing.]* I mean, you just used the word “rootable” earlier. So, you're—
00:17:49 Charlie Guest Rootable. They're rootable. Yeah.
00:17:50 Jesse Host You're obliged to do a breakdown here.
00:17:52 Charlie Guest

Okay, why are these guys rootable. Well, why is Tony Soprano rootable, you know? I don't know that you're necessarily rooting for them. Well, there's a fine line. Right? They're terrible people, but you understand their motivation. And I think this is the key to why it works, but who knows. You understand their motivation and their motivation is so self-centered that it's blind to their terrible behavior. And so, you can find that funny. Now, if their motivation was not blind to their terribleness, it would be—they'd be less funny. You'd be like, “Well, now they're just being awful, and they know they're being awful.”

It's the fact that they're unaware of how awful they're being, I think, that—you know, that makes it funny. Now why you root for them? That's a—that's another sort of level to it, because I don't know why. Because they are, you know, truly despicable. But they don't win. You know? They never win in the end. So, maybe you're rooting for them to win despite their—maybe we recognize that we all have awful *[chuckles]* parts of ourselves. And so, we say, “Well, maybe we all still deserve a win.” I'm not—

00:19:10 Jesse Host Look. I don't know.
I'm talking to you through a video conferencing window. I have a closeup of your face, here in my shot.

[Charlie affirms.]

As you were answering that question, you were gazing out the window a little bit.

[Charlie affirms with a chuckle.]

00:19:29 Charlie Guest And I said, “Oh, I root for you 'cause of the twinkle in those beautiful peepers of yours.”
[Laughs.] Yeah, well maybe that's it. We recognize that everyone has a soul and even evil and complicated people, you know, have a spirit and soul and we root for it. You know? In our shared humanity.

00:19:43 Jesse Host 'Cause I find them rootable and like there's—they do no—they do no—they save no cats. No cats are saved.

[Charlie agrees with a laugh.]

00:19:55 Charlie Guest Through the entire 15 years the show's been on the air, not a cat has been saved.
No. I don't think—I think Glen once read *Save the Cat*, but no I think we don't know how to save cats on our show, for sure.

00:20:05	Jesse	Host	Let's hear a scene from the show, <i>Always Sunny in Philadelphia</i> . And my guest, Charlie Day, has been working on that program for its entire run, which is now 15 seasons. And this is from the fourth season. Charlie and Mac, one of the creators of the show—Rob McElhenney—have been hired to work in a mail room and Charlie, who the show has established is semi-literate at best and is really just driven by his own peculiar mania and a healthy dose of charm, is in charge of sorting the mail, can't handle it, and he has created a system for sorting the mail based on how important it is.
00:20:50	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:20:51	Clip	Clip	<p>Mac (<i>It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia</i>): Dude, what's going on over here?</p> <p>Charlie: Oh, I'm really behind the eight ball, Mac. The mail doesn't stop, bud.</p> <p>Mac: You smoking now?</p> <p>Charlie: Uh, yeah, I'm smoking now. Are you kidding me? My nerves are like bloo-boo-bupbupbup-buuh! So, I'm trying to smoke. I'm trying to calm myself down. And hey, we've got insurance, so what the hell. I'ma smoke.</p> <p>Mac: Yeah, maybe you're right, 'cause I need to calm my nerves a bit, dude. It's a shark tank up there!</p> <p>Charlie: Oh yeah? Is it? I bet. Have some coffee too. That'll calm you down.</p> <p>Mac: Yeah? What's your system here, bro?</p> <p>Charlie: Ooh, it's pretty complicated. The mail goes into three sections according to how important I think the thing looks. Okay? Now, the least important stuff, I'm gonna burn that. If it's important, they're gonna send it again, right?</p> <p><i>[Jesse chuckles over the audio.]</i></p> <p>Charlie: The middle important stuff, I put that back in the mail addressed to me. So, I buy myself a couple more days. And the most important stuff, that gets delivered! Although, you know something, Mac? I actually burn that too, most of the time.</p>
00:21:31	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:21:32	Jesse	Host	<p><i>[They laugh.]</i></p> <p>That is a really classic Charlie moment in that I imagine that, at the beginning of the planning of a new season of <i>It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia</i>, when there's all those television writer index cards with things written on them in bulletin boards and stuff, like and stories are being broken. Like, every episode just has an index card with a question mark that says, "Charlie's scheme? Question mark?"</p> <p><i>[They laugh.]</i></p>

00:22:01 Charlie Guest I think most of our index cards, I would not be comfortable saying on the air, here. But *[laughs]* yeah, we usually have some horrible things up there that we think, “Well, that would be an interesting subject matter.” I think that one had to do with, yeah, just health insurance. Which, you know.

00:22:20 Jesse Host *[Laughs.]* Naturally!

00:22:22 Charlie Guest Naturally, health insurance, yeah.

00:22:23 Jesse Host Why wouldn’t that grow from—

00:22:24 Charlie Guest Leads to sort of smoking and madness. But that—I hadn’t heard that clip. You know, the—it’s the next scene, where Mac comes back down and I’ve, uh, really sort of lost my mind and I keep getting these letters and they’re all addressed to this guy named Pepe Silvia, which the fans have sort of theorized that is my misreading of the word “Pennsylvania”. But um—

[Jesse laughs.]

And then I’m hallucinating and stuff. But that they’ve made a meme. You know, like a little image. It’s everywhere, of me just sort of at the conspiracy theory board there, losing my mind. I... the show’s so funny in terms of you never know what’s gonna take off or why it’s gonna, you know, grab the audience. But that particular scene wound up touching a nerve. Maybe ‘cause it’s very funny. I remember that speech being written by a guy named Rob Rosell, and his writing partner, Scott Marder. And it’s just knowing that, you know—coming to set being like, “Oh boy, I get to sink my teeth into this one. It’s gonna be a lot of fun.”

00:23:31 Jesse Host So, the first of *Always Sunny in Philadelphia* was very funny, but it was when FX was not the juggernaut that it is, today. And it has some notable successes. *The Shield* was a big success, early on for FX. Previously, of course, it had been television served fresh daily, the all-live shows network it was for a while. I think they had a live *Antiques Roadshow* type show I remember. *[Chuckles.]*

00:23:58 Charlie Guest I think they also had *Son of the Beach* or *Son of a—Son of a Beach* was the—

00:24:04 Jesse Host Yeah, like a blue parody thing. The—so, FX was sort of finding its footing as a purveyor of high-quality television. That was new. That was a new idea at FX, relatively. And not that many people watched *Always Sunny* in the first season. And the head of FX happened to be friends and former colleagues with Danny DeVito and suggested to you maybe if we added Danny DeVito to the show, people might check it out. I have to say that like as wonderful as Danny DeVito has always been in everything he’s ever been in—I mean, nobody could watch *Taxi* and not think he’s a genius or watch *Matilda* and not think he’s a genius. But like, it was weird when I first saw those promos.

[They laugh.]

I was like, “Wait, Danny DeVito is gonna be on that show?!”

[Laughs.] Like, that weird show with four people I’ve never heard of in my life? That I—

00:25:06 Charlie Guest Yeah. It was weird for us. Well, I—you know, FX had had a hit with *The Shield*, and they’d had a big reigning bump when they had gotten Glenn Close to do an arc on it. So, that was sort of the idea behind it, which was that they said, “Look, we really like this show

you guys are making. Nobody's watching it. We gotta get more people watching it." We were doing it so cheaply that it really—it was not a big risk for them to bring us back. And yeah, they—you know, had pitched Danny to us and we thought, "Well, yeah. Okay, we'll take—sure. Danny DeVito. That's fine."

00:25:54 Jesse Host I think actually we had the arrogance of thinking, "Weeell, I don't know, that might ruin the show." And not because Danny's not great, but because it would be out of balance. You know? It's so—it was—that's what was weird about it! I mean, obviously Danny DeVito's great. We can stipulate that.

[Charlie agrees.]

00:26:10 Charlie Guest But four dudes you've never—three dudes and a lady you've never heard of and then also, a movie star and like acclaimed film producer Danny DeVito. *[Laughs.]* Well, I remember once he signed on, that was sort of weighing on me—which was that how do we work this guy into the show without it suddenly feeling like a gimmick or a stunt and... in a sense, ruining the show. And I remember going and just—*[sighs]* it must have been DVDs at the time, but like renting every DVD of everything Danny had ever done and sitting and watching it all. And then I remember getting to like the restaurant scene in *Get Shorty* where he's ordering for everyone. It was a different color of Danny I didn't really know as much as the sort of just like Louie De Palma guy.

And he's so good in so many things. I remember having this thought and I remember thinking, "If I can't make Danny DeVito super funny on this show, then that only means that I am a terrible writer and have no business doing this." So, the problem has nothing to do with this big star coming on the show and everything to do with my own ability to work this guy in. And when I say me, I mean Rob and Glen as well. And then, of course you know, it worked great! And I cannot ever imagine doing this show without him. And I'm just so grateful that he decided to do it. And I've just loved working with him so much. And I really think he hasn't gotten the credit for the work that he's done on this show. I mean, *[laughing]* he has done some extraordinarily funny stuff and some just great all-around acting.

00:28:11 Jesse Host And it was transformative, not only to the show, but to my life! I think just getting to be friends with Danny and learning so much from him—not only on set but off set, in terms of just how he's carried his life and himself in the world and with fans and—he was a great mentor and role model and friend and partner and... thank god he wanted to do the show. One of the things about Danny DeVito, as an artist—right?—is he has these obvious gifts, which are: he has one of the funniest voices ever, which is why he's a voice actor and everything. And he has the—like, the most distinctive look of any like funny comedy actor of the last 30 years. You know what I mean? Like, you see Danny DeVito and you're like, "Ah, I wonder what this guy's gonna be up to!"

[Charlie agrees several times as Jesse continues.]

You know what I mean? But he's also like a notably accomplished behind-the-scenes person, as a director and a producer and so on and so forth. Right? And I think the main thing that I wondered when he came onto your show was like above all else, why would he want to do this? Like, what would he be getting—like, are they paying him—? Like, this is a—this is like a dinky show. They can't possibly be paying him so much money that that's why he's doing it. And like—[struggles for words and chuckles].

00:29:15 Charlie Guest

I think there's something to—and I could see this for myself, which is that I think when Danny came onto our show, he was in his early 60s. I'm in my mid-40s now, and I think when I get to my 60s, I would really like to work with someone who's—who—guys who are in their 20s and early 30s and are really passionate and excited about what they're doing. 'Cause I think you—that's who you wanna work with. You know? I think you don't only want to work with the older established guys who have figured out what they're doing and then like... the best stuff is usually born out of that a) you have the drive to prove something and b) you don't know everything yet, so you're free to make these sort of mistakes and accidents that aren't overthought or over planned.

So, you know, I think Danny had the good business sense to say—well, first of all to watch the episodes and be like, "Okay, I like the tone of this." But also, to say it's worth the risk! It's worth taking a shot with these guys. I mean, maybe that's tooting our own horn too much, but—[chuckling] we certainly paid him well. But um, I really do think it's that. And I see the appeal of that. You know? If you were Adam Sandler and the Safdie Brothers call you up, well, you know, they've done a couple cool little independent films, but—you know, they're—it's not—they're not Steven Spielberg yet, but they're on their way. And you know, it's like, who wouldn't want to work with a—you know, young and passionate filmmaker. Whether it's, you know, Greta Gerwig or, you know, a young Quentin Tarantino. Whatever it is, that's an exciting time to work with people.

00:31:25 Jesse Host

I think Danny has always had a good sense for that. And you know, who those people are—and by the way, he is a producer on *Pulp Fiction*, [chuckles] you know? So, like he has good radar, I guess, for what's gonna work.

One of the things that is just incredible to me about *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia* is that here you are like 15 years in, as long as any sitcom has ever been on television, and every time a new season starts, I think to myself, "Well, this can't possibly be good. They've done so many stories with these dumb characters. They—[chuckling] they've gotta be tired. Like, no show is great in season 15. You know what I mean? Like, *The Simpsons* started being okay around season 10 and it's been okay ever since. Like, some episodes are real good, some episodes are fine. And that's like the highwater mark of running forever. You know what I mean?

[Charlie confirms.]

And then I watched the new episodes of *Always Sunny in Philadelphia* and I'm like, "Dang! How come that's good?!" So, here's my question: why do you still do the show? And... what do you have to do to make sure that after all these years—'cause it's not like the show has changed—you know, it's changed—it has accrued changes over time, but like it's not like you're doing a crazy new concept every season or something to refresh things. Like, what do you do to make sure it doesn't just become a tired version of itself?

00:32:48 Charlie Guest

Well, it's a challenge. Right? And I don't know that we're always successful. I think—well, to answer your first question of why we keep doing it, we still really enjoy each other's company. And FX is still willing to let us do it. So, when you have a network that says, "Hey, here is an opportunity to go create," and when you're only doing eight episodes—eight to ten. Actually, FX said eight this year. We would've done ten, but they said eight. So, we figure, okay, can we get together for eight episodes and make them good? And we should. And then—and then just purely from a life standpoint, you know, it keeps me home, as a parent. You know, there's the benefits of that.

In terms of how we keep them good—well, that's a challenge. You know, I think sometimes within the last few years, I think we've had maybe more missteps than we had in previous seasons. I think this season, this 15th season, is stronger than maybe the 13th and 14th, because I think we figured out a few like, oh, let's go back to some basics or storytelling principles of, "Hey. Who are these people? What do they want? And they really—let's make sure that you believe that they really care about what they want and let's make those wants somewhat relatable." Plus, the world just keeps giving us crazy things to talk about and do. *[Chuckles.]*

Like, you know, when—there's this sort of political commentary aspect of our show, which I mean, the—you know, the world—the world just... I don't think it's ever gonna stop having some sort of thing that you can talk about and show back to the audience in a comedic light that they might not have looked at in a comedic way, before. I don't know. I think mainly we all—FX just keeps letting us do it and we all really enjoy each other's company and... you know, as long as we think we can make them good, we'll keep trying. But we'll probably run out of steam—I can't—I don't see a *Simpsons* run. But let's get—at least one more good season I think is in there. More with Charlie Day still to come. When we come back from our break, Charlie has started rewatching *Always Sunny* episodes, which he hasn't seen in over a decade. And he'll tell me what that's like. It's *Bullseye*, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

00:35:03 Jesse Host

00:35:18 Promo Clip

John C. McGinley: Hey, kid. Your dad tell you about the time he broke Stephen Dorff's nose at the Kids' Choice Awards?

[Audience laughs.]

Music: Upbeat, funky rock.

Andrew Reich: In *Dead Pilots Society*, scripts that were developed by studios and networks, but were never produced, are given the table reads they deserve.

Will Forte: When I was a kid, I had to spend my Christmas break filming a PSA about angel dust. So yeah, being a kid sucks sometimes!

[Audience laughs.]

Andrew Reich: Presented by Andrew Reich and Ben Blacker. *Dead Pilots Society*. Twice a month on MaximumFun.org.

Echoing Background Voices: *Dead Pilots Society...*

Sage Ryan: You know, the show you like. That hobo with the scarf who lives in a magic dumpster?

[Audience laughs. Scattered applause.]

[Music fades out.]

John Hodgman: ...*Doctor Who*?

Sage Ryan: Yeah!

[Audience laughs and applauds as the clip fades out.]

00:36:00 Music Transition
00:36:05 Jesse Host

Upbeat, chiming synth with a steady beat.
It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest is Charlie Day, star of *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia* and the new comedy movie *I Want You Back*. Let's get back into our conversation.

00:36:37 Charlie Guest

What's it like to watch the show for your podcast? Your podcast, do you—look, there's a lot of non-*Always Sunny*—not directly *Always Sunny* content on your podcast, but it's theoretically a looking back episode by episode show. Is it—is it hard or enjoyable to see yourself doing that job 15 years ago?

[Sighs.] It's mostly enjoyable. I have a really hard time when I'm in it, feeling as though the work is good enough. I think every time we finish an episode, I think, "Man, we blew it. It doesn't work. It's not as good as it can be. It's not as good as it should be." And then, when enough time has passed, I'm able to see it with fresh eyes and I—and I enjoy it. And I start to understand why the audience enjoys it. *[Chuckles.]* Um. In the moment, I think I'm striving for something that's unattainable, and then it's only until that moment has passed and I've moved on that I can look at it and say, "Oh no, we did okay here."

00:37:57 Jesse Host

I've been pleasantly surprised to go back and look at the episode and say, "Oh no, I really—I'm enjoying these and I'm proud of them." You know, occasionally you see moments or aspects of the storytelling that you don't like. And the interesting thing is Rob and Glen and I usually agree as to what those moments are, where we say, "Yeah, that one missed the mark for this reason or that." But yeah, for the most part, it's been actually a good sort of healthy experience to go back and look at this and sort of learn what we got right and what we got wrong.

Are you happy and proud that this is like not just a thing that you made with your buddies when you were, you know, 25 or however

old you were, but actually like, “Oh wow, I guess this is our magnum opus? This is like our life’s work. Like, we’ve done this so long that like—”

[Charlie laughs and agrees.]

00:38:23 Charlie Guest “We’ll do lots of other things, but like this is our thing.”
Yeah. Yeah, I think so. I mean, like sometimes—sometimes I wrestle with that a little bit, where I’m like, “Look, I’ve done all this other stuff.” Like, I’m on here promoting a movie I’m really proud of, but I’m mostly talking about *Sunny*.

[Jesse chuckles.]

00:38:56 Jesse Host So—but then, you know, what is that? That’s just ego. You know? I think... no, I—I’m grateful for everything that *Sunny* has provided in my life and just, uh—I’m not gonna complain about it. It’s just been a gift.

I’ve enjoyed watching the four and then five of you on television so much for so long. I’m just—I’m just happy—it means a lot to me that you still like each other and wanna make a television show together, still. And like, yeah, that’s my guy! He’s from television!

00:39:13 Charlie Guest *[Laughs.]* Yeah! I wanted to—every time we set out to do it, I want to do it really well. And every time we finish, I look at it and I say, “Damn, I wanna do it better.”

[They chuckle.]

But, uh, you know. I think, um... yeah, it’s just been such a good, good experience and a good creative experience and I don’t wanna do it poorly, so the thing that I wrestled with the most is when I feel as though we’ve missed the mark with an episode. It weighs on me for quite a long time. And I stress about it and then I start to say, “We need to stop; we’re not doing as good of work.” But then I think, “Well, that’s just quitting.” If someone says go ahead and try again then, you know, you get back out there and you try again.

But we’ll see. I mean, it’s gotta stop at some point.

[They laugh.]

00:40:11 Jesse Host That’s gonna be the pull quote, here, Charlie.

[Charlie agrees with a laugh.]

00:40:18 Charlie Guest Charlie Day on *Always Sunny*: “It’s gotta stop.”
It’s gotta stop!

[They laugh.]

00:40:23 Jesse Host Get me out of this!
Well, Charlie Day, I enjoyed the movie so much and I’ve loved *Always Sunny* for so long. I really—I really admire your work. So, I’m very grateful to have you take this time to be on *Bullseye*. It was really nice to get to talk to you.

00:40:37 Charlie Guest Thanks! I really enjoyed the conversation, and I can—you know, I feel your genuine love for the show and I—it’s not lost on me.

[Music fades in.]

00:40:53	Music	Transition	I really appreciate it and I hope—I hope, uh—you know, next year, season 16 will knock your socks off.
00:40:56	Jesse	Host	Staccato, jazzy piano overlaid with low vocalizations. Charlie Day. His new movie, <i>I Want You Back</i> , is very funny and sweet. You can stream it this week on Amazon.

[Music fades out.]

00:41:04	Music	Transition	Bright, cheerful music.
00:41:05	Jesse	Host	That's the end of another episode of <i>Bullseye</i> . <i>Bullseye</i> , created from the homes me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California. I recently got the 311 app. And this is the dorkiest public radio-est host thing I've ever done in my life. But now, when I walk my dog, if I see abandoned furniture on the sidewalk, I pull out my app and report it. Anyway. If you live in Los Angeles, you can too! Just download that 311 app or call 311.

The 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 booking help from Mara Davis. Our interstitial music is by Dan Wally, also known as DJW. He has a collection of it, by the way, on Bandcamp, which you can buy from him. It's called the—search for DJW and *Bullseye* on Bandcamp and you'll find it. It's pay what you want! 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.

Bullseye is also on YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook. You can follow us in those places. We will share with you all of our interviews. I think that's it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.

00:42:28	Promo	Promo	Speaker: <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.
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[Music fades out.]