

00:00:00	Music	Transition	Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue.
00:00:01	Promo	Promo	<b>Speaker:</b> <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of <a href="http://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> and is distributed by NPR.
00:00:14	Jesse Thorn	Host	<p><i>[Music fades out.]</i>  It's <i>Bullseye</i>. I'm Jesse Thorn. Betty Davis died earlier this month. She was 77 years old. She was the very definition of a musical cult hero. She never cut a hit record, but her influence is still strong today. Davis made music that was uncompromising and raw. Her style was somewhere between Screamin' Jay Hawkins and Sly Stone: visceral, aggressive, and absolutely peerless. Her songs and voice were bold and uncompromising and often very sexual. And she recorded those songs at a time when—well, when women didn't really do that kind of thing.</p>
00:00:59	Music	Music	<p>"Nasty Gal" from the album <i>Nasty Gal</i> by Betty Davis.</p> <p><i>Didn't you, didn't you  You said I was a witch now  I'm gonna tell them why, I'm gonna tell them why  You used to love it, oh, to ride my broom honey  I used to love it, ooh, I used to love to ride the range with you baby  (Sing the song, sing the song)  I ain't nothing but a hi-hi, nothing but a  A hi-hi  I said, you said...</i></p> <p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i></p>
00:01:37	Jesse	Host	<p>Davis was absolutely unforgettable. You just heard her music. You probably got a sense of that. But she also looked—if anything—even more outrageous. Like a funky Barbarella with a two-foot wide afro, at home on a motorcycle or—for that matter—a spaceship. Her band was the best of the best: Larry Graham and Greg Errico of Sly and the Family Stone, The Pointer Sisters singing backup, Pete Escovedo playing timbales, Neal Schon and Buddy Miles playing guitar. Even her husband was influential. That's Betty Davis as in Miles Davis. They say she convinced him to listen to Sly and the Family Stone and make <i>Bitches Brew</i>.</p> <p>Betty put out the sum total of her records in about three years' time. Four albums, each a classic. And she wasn't just singing on them. She was in charge. She wrote and produced the records at a time when not many women had the chance to do that. And then, in 1980, she stopped. She retired from music completely. She moved back to Pittsburg, where she grew up. She didn't do interviews. She didn't play reunion shows. As far as the public was concerned, she disappeared completely. She was like a ghost. At one point in the late '90s, a Scandinavian fan had to track her down in the Pittsburg suburbs and show up at her front door with a check from ASCAP for back royalties for a few hundred thousand dollars. That's how off the map she was.</p> <p>When I talked to Davis in 2007, Light In The Attic Records was rereleasing her discography. They'd had to track her down to get the rights and she hadn't done any press in about 25 years. Davis</p>

agreed to talk with me if I called the record label and they patched me through to her. She didn't wanna go to a studio. She didn't want anyone to have her number or her address. It was a strange experience to call one of the boldest and most outrageous voices in pop music history and have a gentle, quiet, delicate older woman answer. She was never less than cordial to me, but every answer felt like hard work. And I'll tell you, every question was, too.

It's one of those interviews, though, that you never forget—not least because after I did it, I got about an email a month for what's now—what? 15 years—from someone whose life Betty's work had changed begging to be put in touch with her just so they could send her a note of thanks or tell her what she meant to them. When Davis answered the phone at her house in suburban Pittsburg, I asked her what got her interested in music when she was a kid. Bright synth with a steady beat.

00:04:30 Music Transition  
00:04:33 Betty Davis Guest  
00:04:43 Jesse Host

Oh, I was writing music since I was 12 years old. It was a gift. The first song I ever wrote was "I'm Gonna Bake That Cake of Love".  
*[Laughs.]* That was when you were 12 years old?

*[Betty confirms.]*

Where did you get the idea to write a song like that when you were 12 years old?

00:04:53 Betty Guest  
00:04:54 Jesse Host  
00:04:57 Betty Guest  
00:05:00 Jesse Host  
00:05:03 Betty Guest  
00:05:12 Jesse Host  
00:05:15 Betty Guest  
00:05:21 Jesse Host  
00:05:23 Betty Guest  
00:05:25 Jesse Host  
00:05:27 Betty Guest

I don't know.

Do you remember any of it? "I'm Gonna Bake That Cake of Love"?

No, I can't remember any of it. *[Chuckles.]*

Are you sure? You're not just holding out on me?

No. I think it was, "I'm gonna bake that cake of love, baby. Just you and me." I can't remember anything after that.

What kind of music did you like listening to when you were 12 years old?

I listened to the radio a lot. My mother used to listen to the blues.

Did you like those records?

Yeah, I liked them a lot.

What were your favorites?

I liked Jimmy Reed, Muddy Waters, B.B. King, Lightnin' Hopkins, Big Mama Thornton, Koko Taylor, Johnnie Taylor.

*[Music fades in.]*

And there were several others; I just can't remember their names. John Lee Hooker.

00:05:46 Music Music

"70's Blues" from the album *They Say I'm Different* by Betty Davis.

*I woke up this morning, I was feeling so bad*

*I didn't know what was wrong*

*I had a pain in my head*

*My mind was so troubled from what I did not know*

*I took a look at my face in the mirror*

*And lo and behold, the Blues was there*

*I said the Blues was there*

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

00:06:20 Jesse Host So, you were born in 1945. So, when you were 12 or 13 years old, that's the late '50s, kind of dawn of the rock and roll era. What did you like about those blues artists?

00:06:33 Betty Guest Their rawness. The simplicity of their records.

00:06:37 Jesse Host Are there any records that you remember in particular? Like ones that stand out?

00:06:42 Betty Guest Jimmy Reed's *I'm Going to New York*. And "There's a man down there, maybe your man. How do I know?" Lightnin' Hopkins, "Ride In My Brand New Automobile".

00:06:54 Jesse Host What was it about those?

00:06:56 Betty Guest Well, the lyrics. They were really simple lyrics. You know? There wasn't that much instrumentation. There was like—on Jimmy Reed's *I'm Going to New York*, there was like drums, bass, and guitar. There wasn't any keyboard. On Lightnin' Hopkins' "My Brand New Automobile", there was just guitar and him singing.

00:07:24 Jesse Host How were you writing your songs? Were you writing lyrics or melodies as well?

00:07:29 Betty Guest I was writing the lyrics. And the melody would come with the lyrics. They would come together.

00:07:35 Jesse Host Did you ever perform at the time?

00:07:37 Betty Guest No.

00:07:38 Jesse Host Did you think of yourself as a performer?

00:07:42 Betty Guest Not until I started performing.

00:07:46 Jesse Host Was performing sort of part of a plan for you? Like did you have an idea of yourself as a performer in the future?

00:07:54 Betty Guest No, I didn't really. It came natural with the music, 'cause I could dance. So, movement was a part of my stage performance.

00:08:08 Jesse Host So, you grew up initially in North Carolina. Right?

00:08:13 Betty Guest I was born in North Carolina. I grew up in Pennsylvania.

00:08:17 Jesse Host In and around Pittsburg, right?

*[Betty confirms.]*

00:08:45 Betty Guest Which is the kind of general area where you live these days, as well. What was it like for you—I know you moved to Pittsburg when you were a very young teenager. Sometimes that's a hard time to move. I know my dad moved from Kansas City to LA when he was 13, and he never forgave his parents for it. What was it like for you, moving at that kind of odd time in your life?

Well, it was a bit different, because I was born in North Carolina and my grandmother had a farm there. And my father was stationed in Virginia. He was in the army. It was like moving from the country to the city. You know that song I did—do you remember the song I did, "They Say I'm Different"?

*[Jesse confirms and the music fades in.]*

00:09:16 Music Music Well, every morning, I'd have to slop the hogs. And literally, I would get up in the morning and slop the hogs.

"They Say I'm Different" from the album *They Say I'm Different* by Betty Davis.

*They say I'm different 'cause I'm a piece of sugar cane  
Sweet to the core that's why I got rhythm  
My Great Grandma didn't like the foxtrot  
Now instead she spitted snuff and boogied to Elmore James*

*Spit on*

*They say I'm different 'cause I eat chitlins  
I can't help it, I was born and raised on them  
That's right, oh, every morning I had to slop the hogs  
And they be getting off humping to John Lee Hooker*

00:09:57	Betty	Guest	<p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]</i> I was basically very country. A country girl. And we moved to Pittsburg. We moved to Pennsylvania. And that was really the city. It was much better for me. I got to play with children. Where we'd lived, there was no houses near us. And I got to play with children—other kids. I got to go like to the community center and things like that.</p>
00:10:27	Music	Music	<p><i>[Volume increases.]</i></p> <p><i>And that's why they say I'm strange I'm talking 'bout Big Mama Thornton (talk about it, talk about it) Talking 'bout Lightning Hopkins (talk about it, talk about it) Talking 'bout Howling Wolf (talk about it, talk about it) I'm Talking 'bout Albert King (alright, alright) Chuck Berry, Chuck Berry</i></p>
00:10:53	Jesse	Host	<p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]</i> We've got more to get into with the late Betty Davis and more of her music to listen, back on—back in a minute. It's <i>Bullseye</i>, from <a href="http://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> and NPR.</p>
00:11:03	Music	Music	<p><i>[Volume increases.]</i></p> <p><i>... they say I'm different And that's why you think I'm strange</i></p>
00:11:14	Music	Transition	<p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i></p>
00:11:18	Jesse	Host	<p>Thumpy synth with light vocalizations and a steady beat. It's <i>Bullseye</i>. I'm Jesse Thorn. We're listening back to my conversation with the late Betty Davis. She was a pioneer in soul and funk music: a writer, producer, and singer who made four classic albums. She then spent four decades out of the business in relative seclusion. Betty Davis died this month of cancer. She was 77. When I talked with her back in 2007, I called her record label who then transferred me to her home outside Pittsburg.</p>
00:11:58	Betty	Guest	<p>Your records are really kind of big and outrageous. Was that the kind of kid that you were?</p> <p>No, I was very quiet. <i>[Beat.]</i> I was very quiet. I'm more of an introvert.</p>
00:12:08	Jesse	Host	<p>Where do you think that kind of big, outrageousness onstage and on record come from?</p>
00:12:15	Betty	Guest	<p>Well, I guess it was just my personality.</p>
00:12:18	Jesse	Host	<p>You mean like a part of your personality that you didn't express in your day-to-day life?</p> <p><i>[Betty confirms.]</i></p>

What was that like? Tell me—describe for me a little bit about like what you were like when you were performing onstage or performing on record or writing songs.

00:12:38 Betty Guest Well, I was more outgoing. Very noisy. Lots of movement, onstage.  
00:12:46 Jesse Host Did you express that side of yourself anywhere else than onstage or on record?

00:12:51 Betty Guest No. *[Beat.]* I think in bed I was very passionate. *[Chuckles.]*  
00:12:59 Jesse Host *[Chuckling.]* Fair enough! Um, why do you think it was that you had this kind of split between what you were like onstage and on record and what you were like in your day-to-day?

00:13:19 Betty Guest Well, because my household—the household that I grew up in was very quiet. There was only two of us, my brother and I. And I'm older than he is. My mother and father were very quiet people and so I think that had a lot to do with it.

00:13:36 Jesse Host It's funny to think that you had this really quiet household and you're listening to—your mom is listening to like Lightnin' Hopkins records with you and stuff.

00:13:48 Betty Guest Well, she was just—my grandmother, her mother, brought her up on the blues. Except my grandmother like listening to Elvis. And Otis Redding and Al Green and people like that. But my mother, she was more of a blues lover. And she couldn't dance. She tried to dance, and she was really comical, you know.

*[Jesse chuckles.]*

But she was just—the music that we listened to—and on Sundays, she would listen to gospel music on the radio. And that's basically about it.

00:14:30 Jesse Host Sure. Well, let's talk a little bit about you away from home. How did you end up going to fashion design school?

00:14:39 Betty Guest Well, I just always sketched clothes. So, I decided when it was time for me to choose a school, I chose The Fashion Institute of Technology in New York. And my aunt lived in New York, so I lived with her while I was going to school.

00:14:57 Jesse Host What kind of clothes were you sketching?  
00:15:00 Betty Guest Um, I can't really remember. Really simple things.  
00:15:05 Jesse Host I was really struck when I read that you had gone to The Fashion Institute of Technology, because you had a such a strong aesthetic sense—in terms of your presentation of yourself.

*[Betty affirms.]*

Was that a choice? To present yourself to the public in a very specific way?

00:15:25 Betty Guest No, it wasn't really a choice. I used to model. I was signed with Wilhelmina in New York. And I modeled under the name of Maybury. And being exposed to the fashion world, I think that defined my aesthetic.

00:15:45 Jesse Host The fashion world is—you were a very successful model during the time that you were modeling. The fashion world is a really intense world. What was it like for you to go from Pittsburg to another big step up to New York and the fashion world?

00:16:07 Betty Guest It wasn't really a big step, because I was going to The Fashion Institute of Technology. I can't remember how I started modeling, though. I just remember going to Wilhelmina. I went to a couple—I went to Ford, and I got turned down. And I went to Wilhelmina, and

			she signed me. I started doing a lot of runway shows, a lot of fashion shows. And I did some TV commercials. And I remember I thought—I used to get \$75 an hour for showing my hands. And I thought what good money for just showing your hands!
00:16:49	Jesse	Host	Did you like modeling?
00:16:51	Betty	Guest	Yeah, I did like it.
			<i>[Music fades in.]</i>
00:16:56	Music	Music	Because you got meet a lot of different people and you got to travel. “Don’t Call Her No Tramp” from the album <i>They Say I’m Different</i> by Betty Davis.
			<i>You can call her trendy And superficial An elegant hustler But don't you call her no tramp</i>
			<i>I said it don't take too much To make her happy Wine or dine her Or introduce her (now, now, mhmm-mhmm)</i>
			<i>To a few fine people That gal, she'll be yours for the taking You can make her, any way you wanna</i>
			<i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i>
00:17:48	Jesse	Host	How old were you when you started to get involved in the—in the sort of the club scene. And eventually you started running, actually, your own nightclub. How did all that come about?
00:18:03	Betty	Guest	I can’t remember how old I was, really. I think I was in my early 20s and I opened up a club called The Cellar, in New York. And everybody used to come there from—they’d go to the beach in the summertime, and after the beach they’d come to the club. And there was dancing. And I was the DJ. I played the music.
00:18:30	Jesse	Host	What kind of records did you play?
00:18:33	Betty	Guest	Whatever was current at the time, whatever they were playing on the radio.
00:18:38	Jesse	Host	It’s so funny to me to think of you and the situation. I mean, you’re such a quiet and introverted woman with this other side that’s so kind of outré—such a big thing. <i>[Chuckling.]</i> You know what I mean? Were you comfortable in those kind of super social, club, wild situations of the late ‘60s?
00:19:02	Betty	Guest	I was comfortable, because you were really always in a group situation. There was always a lot of other people around you. I mean, you weren’t the only person there. There were a lot of other people. I mean, I remember like we’d all go out together. And they would be some friends of mine. Jimi would be there—Jimi Hendrix. And Alan Douglas, who used to manage Jimi. And his wife and his wife’s sister and a girl named Devon that I wrote “I. Miller Shoes” about. And there’d be a lot of people around all the time.
00:19:41	Jesse	Host	You mentioned Devon Wilson, who—about whom you wrote “Steppin Out in My I. Miller Shoes”. Tell me a little bit about your friendship with her.

00:19:50	Betty	Guest	She used to date Jimi, and she also used to date Mick Jagger. She was all over the music scene. She was really on the English music scene, with the Stones and the Beatles and the Who. She was a part of that scene, which I really wasn't. And the song <b>with them</b> was written about her life. And she had a really tragic ending in her life.
00:20:22	Music	Music	<p>"Steppin In Her I. Miller Shoes" from the album <i>Betty Davis</i> by Betty Davis.</p> <p><i>Steppin' high in her I. Miller shoes</i></p> <p><i>She could've been anything that she wanted A cutie thing from her head down to her toes Instead, she chose to be nothing! So, nothing flew from the East to the West Coast Became a fiend! She was a dancer! Became a harlet! She was a black Donna queen!</i></p> <p><i>Music men wrote songs about her Some sad, some sweet, some said were very mean Rock music played loud and clear for her Rock music took her youth and left her very dry She was used and abused by many men I asked the guitarist, I found out he'll tell you why Tell her! Tell her!</i></p>
00:21:31	Jesse	Host	<i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]</i>
00:21:36	Betty	Guest	Did the fact that she died so tragically—how did that affect you? Well, I was—I was very sad, because we were very close. And it made me really sad. I mean, Jimi had just died, and she died right after him. It was death right on top of death. So, it was a very sad time for me.
00:21:53	Music	Music	<p><i>[Volume increases.]</i></p> <p><i>Because certain services were all she had to give And after the passing of a savior She went and tried everything she could to stay here A dark mask used to hide her morning face A dark mask from her face upon her arms And when they told me that she had died They didn't have to tell me why or how she'd gone I knew! I knew!</i></p> <p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i></p>
00:22:27	Jesse	Host	How did you respond to all that sadness? All those tragedies?
00:22:31	Betty	Guest	Well, I didn't really respond. I mean, because whenever someone dies, you have to grieve. And I did a lot of grieving, because they were dying and they were very young, you see.
00:22:46	Jesse	Host	There's this kind of frivolity to—you know, a bunch of young people, especially ones as kind of extraordinarily successful as you and many of the people that you were hanging out with were—kind of going out and having fun and doing stuff that's expressed in that

song. But then, death is like such a—*[chuckles]*. I mean, there's just no way to—there's just no way to kind of ignore that. You know what I mean? Did it make you—did it make you think differently about, you know, your own kind of lifestyle and what you were up to?

00:23:31 Betty Guest No, because I didn't get high in the '60s. Devon died of an overdose. So, my connection with the '60s was just really a musical connection, I guess.

00:23:48 Jesse Host When you say that you didn't get high, you really didn't get high at all.

00:23:53 Betty Guest No, I didn't get high at all.

00:23:55 Jesse Host Why did you make that choice?

00:23:57 Betty Guest Because I didn't feel that I needed to.

00:24:00 Jesse Host Was it hard not to?

00:24:02 Betty Guest No. When everybody started to get high, I'd leave.

00:24:06 Jesse Host Yeah. *[Chuckles.]* I know the exact situation that you're describing. I can only speak from my own personal experience, but speaking as someone—you know, I myself, I don't even drink. That's still kind of a hard thing when you get to that point where it's like either you're in or you're out and you have to leave. And I imagine it must have—it must have been—I know it's been difficult for me at times, and I imagine it must have been kind of difficult for you.

00:24:38 Betty Guest It wasn't really difficult; I'd just leave! I didn't wanna be a drag. You know? Or a party pooper. Or someone that would be there observing. So, I would just leave.

00:24:56 Jesse Host Let's talk a little bit more about your music. At what point did you decide that you wanted to be a music performer?

00:25:05 Betty Guest Well, I never decided that I wanted to be a performer. I always wanted to be a writer. And I wrote "Uptown to Harlem" by The Chamber Brothers. And a group called The Commodores, their manager got in contact with me, because the guy who used to write lead sheets for me, Sam Herman who's departed now, told him about me and The Commodores needed someone to write for them, 'cause they wanted to get a deal with Motown. So, I wrote some songs for them, and the songs were submitted to Motown. Motown signed them. But I couldn't work out a writer's deal with them for financial reasons.

So, I was left with a lot of songs that I had written for a group. Like "Walkin' Up the Road" was written for a group. "Game is My Middle Name" was written for a group.

*[Music fades in.]*

00:26:17 Music Music The group being The Commodores. And that's how I got into the business.  
"Game is My Middle Name" from the album *Betty Davis* by Betty Davis.

*Rock on, heavy one  
Tell me the world is real  
Get inside my head  
Just mess up my mind  
Do me in, do me in  
I could dig it now  
Do me in, do me in*

*If you can do it now  
Come on, now!*

00:26:48 Jesse Host *[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]*  
We'll wrap up with Betty Davis after a quick break. Stay with us. It's *Bullseye*, from [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and NPR.

00:26:56 Music Music

*[Volume increases.]*

*Anything that you've got  
To give, I'll take it  
You're fine, so fine  
Whatever you want that's what I'll be*

00:27:10 Promo Clip *[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]*

*[Crash of thunder and sound of rain.]*

**Speaker 1:** We have wasted this world. Our magic put a storm in the sky that has rendered the surface of our planet uninhabitable. But... beneath the surface? Well, that's another story entirely.

*[Magical sound.]*

**Music:** Synth-heavy, mid-tempo music with driving beat.

**Speaker 1:** In a city built leagues below the apocalypse, survivors of the storm forge paths through a strange new world. Some seek salvation for their homeland above. Others seek to chart the vast, undersea expanse outside the city's walls. And others still seek—what else?—fortune and glory. Dive into the Ether Sea, the latest campaign from *The Adventure Zone*. Every-other Thursday on [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) or wherever you listen to podcasts.

00:27:56 Music Transition  
00:28:01 Jesse Host

*[Music fades out.]*

Thumpy synth with a steady beat.

This is *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. We're listening back to my conversation with the late singer Betty Davis.

00:28:11 Betty Guest

How did you get your first record deal? How did you cut that first album?

Well, what happened—Michael Lang—I was introduced to Michael Lang by a guy named Paul Ford who was the west coast rep for Just Sunshine Records at the time. Michael Lang, who had done the Woodstock movie—the film. Paul Ford told him about a young lady that had written a lot of songs and was looking for a writer's deal. So, I signed with Just Sunshine as a writer. Not really—I signed with—I went to Just Sunshine as a writer and it all changed, and I signed with them as an artist.

00:28:51 Jesse Host  
00:28:53 Betty Guest

How did it change?

Well, I went into the studio, and I laid down some tracks. Michael Lang heard the tracks and he played them for a man called Bob Krasnow. I don't know if you know who he is. And Bob told him, "She's like a female Dr. John and you should sign her." So, Michael signed me.

00:29:19 Jesse Host

What did you think about becoming an artist at the time?

00:29:22 Betty Guest I didn't really think about it. I was just really fortunate to have gotten a record deal. So, I really didn't think about it too much.

00:29:32 Jesse Host Were the performances in the first song demos that you cut as big and strong as the performances that are on your albums?

00:29:39 Betty Guest The first album was considered to be a demo. Part of the first album. And then, afterward I got into the album—Michael heard the tapes, then I was signed as an artist.

00:29:53 Jesse Host So, you had cut the—you had cut the whole thing? As song demos?

00:29:58 Betty Guest I had cut half of it.

00:30:00 Jesse Host That's amazing to me. Where did you find it in yourself to give these kind of performances when you, to that point, really hadn't been a performer?

00:30:09 Betty Guest It was just natural. It came naturally.

00:30:13 Jesse Host Everything I read about you and your career—everybody who's talking about working with you describes that you had a really strong vision for what you wanted your records to sound like.

*[Betty confirms.]*

00:30:30 Betty Guest How did you want your records to sound? What was that vision? Well, I wanted there to be a purity in the sound. Not a lot of gimmicks or anything like that. I just wanted the sound to be pure.

00:30:45 Jesse Host You had two kind of really amazing bands on the records. How did you get all these folks onboard?

00:30:51 Betty Guest Greg Errico produced the first album. He got all the musicians together for me.

00:30:58 Jesse Host He was—at the time, was just coming off being the drummer in Sly and the Family Stone, which is about as prestigious a gig as you could have.

00:31:06 Betty Guest Yeah. And the other band consisted of my family members.

00:31:13 Jesse Host Have you listened to the records that you cut since the late '70s or so when you left the music business?

*[Betty confirms.]*

00:31:26 Betty Guest Do they sound different now to you than they did then? No.

00:31:28 Jesse Host Are you happy with them?

*[Betty confirms.]*

00:31:38 Betty Guest What are you most proud of on them? I mean, not just in terms of a song, but what do you like about them? I like the structure of the tunes, the lyrics I really like.

00:31:43 Music Music "He Was a Big Freak" from the album *They Say I'm Different* by Betty Davis.

*He was a big freak!  
I used to beat him with a turquoise chain, yeah*

*When I was his woman  
I pleased him, I'd lead him to the tip  
When I was his mistress  
Ooh-ooh, I gave him cheap thrills  
When I was his princess  
Silk and satin and lace, I'd wear for him*

*He was a big freak!  
Flimflam, floozy, fantasy*

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

00:32:30	Jesse	Host	Do you still write?
00:32:32	Betty	Guest	Yes. I just started—I stopped for a while. And I just started back writing.
00:32:39	Jesse	Host	Why'd you start up again?
00:32:41	Betty	Guest	I don't know. It just happened.
00:32:44	Jesse	Host	What are your new songs like?
00:32:45	Betty	Guest	They're very lyrical. Funky.
00:32:49	Jesse	Host	Do you think you would ever record again?
00:32:51	Betty	Guest	I don't know. I think I'd like to have my songs done by someone else.
00:32:58	Music	Music	<i>[Volume increases.]</i>

*When I was his flower  
Oh, I'd answer to the name of Rosie May*

*He was a big freak*

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

00:33:07	Jesse	Host	Betty Davis. There will never, ever be another one like her. If you're interested in Davis's life and career, well you can start with her records, because they are spectacularly good—just about as good as it gets. There's been some great writing about Davis. I particularly recommend the work of my friend and sometime NPR and Maximum Fun colleague, Oliver Wang. He wrote a great remembrance of her for NPR. He also wrote the liner notes on these 2007 reissues. In fact, he was the only other person who had interviewed her when I interviewed her, in the preceding 40 years. So, thanks 15 years ago to Oliver for chatting with me about what it was like to talk with her before I got on the phone with her.
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If you'll permit me a personal reminiscence, um—Davis's records always reminded me of a very special person in my family, my aunt Claudia, who ever every bit as outrageous as Davis was. And brilliant. And some years ago, I was talking to my mom and my mom was telling me about how much she and Claudia used to love listening to Betty Davis. And so, Claudia passed away right at the beginning of the pandemic. She was from a similar generation as Davis. And my mom told me that they always joked that this Betty Davis song was Claudia's *[chuckling]* personal theme song. "Anti Love Song" from the album *Betty Davis* by Betty Davis.

00:34:37	Music	Music
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*No, I don't want to love you  
'Cause I know how you are  
That's why I have been staying away from you  
That's why I haven't called you  
'Cause I know you could possess my body  
I know you can make me scrawl  
I know you can have me shaking  
I know you could have me climbing the walls  
That's why I don't want to love you*

*'Cause I know how you are  
Sure, you say your right on and your righteous  
But with me I know you'd be right off*

00:35:46 Jesse Host  
[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]  
That's the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye* is created from the homes me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California. Here in Los Angeles, [chuckling] it was 87 degrees. And then I think it was two days later, it was snowing?! [Laughs.] So, I don't really know what to make of that. Granted, the snow was in Pasadena, a couple miles from my house. But it was bonkers.

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 booking help from Mara Davis. Our interstitial music is by Dan Wally, also known as DJW. Our theme song is called "Huddle Formation" 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 find us there. Give us a follow; we'll share with you all of our interviews. And I think that's about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.

00:36:50 Music Music

[Volume increases.]

*That's why I ain't gonna love you*

*'Cause I know you like to be in charge  
And with me, well, you know you couldn't control me  
Don't you?  
'Cause you know I'd make you drop your guard*

00:37:15 Promo Clip  
[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]  
**Speaker:** *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn* is a production of [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and is distributed by NPR.  
00:37:22 Music Music  
[Volume increases.]

*I'd make you pocket your pride  
And just as hard as I'd be loving you, boy  
Well, you know you'd be loving me harder  
That's why I don't want to love you*

*No, no, no*

[Music fades out.]