

00:00:00	Music	Transition	Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue.
00:00:01	Promo	Promo	Speaker: <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.
00:00:13	Music	Transition	<i>[Music fades out.]</i> “Huddle Formation” from the album <i>Thunder, Lightning, Strike</i> by The Go! Team. A fast, upbeat, peppy song. Music plays as Jesse speaks, then fades out.
00:00:20	Jesse Thorn	Host	It’s <i>Bullseye</i> . I’m Jesse Thorn. Time now for The Song That Changed My Life, a chance to talk to artists who make great music about the music that made them. This week, it’s Eric Nam.
00:00:32	Music	Music	“Honestly” from the album <i>Honestly</i> by Eric Nam.
00:00:51	Jesse	Host	I guess you could call Eric a K-Pop star. He’s very, very successful in that world. He’s headlined festivals like KCON and the Seoul Jazz Festival. He’s a host personality and interviewer for a bunch of different Korean TV networks. He’s even been named Man of the Year by <i>GQ Korea</i> . But he’s also just, you know, a pop star. He’s worked with Timbaland and Gallant and Craig David, among a bunch of others. He’s just wrapped up a solo tour of the US where he sold out literally every venue he played, including in his hometown: Atlanta.
00:01:38	Eric Nam	Guest	When we asked him for the song that changed his life, well, he took that pretty literally. He picked a John Legend song, “Ordinary People”, that propelled him to stardom. I’ll let Eric take it from here.
00:01:42	Music	Music	Hey, this is Eric Nam, and this is the song that changed my life. “Ordinary People” from the album <i>Get Lifted</i> by John Legend.
00:01:51	Eric	Guest	<i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]</i> I don’t know if I remember the first time I heard “Ordinary People”, but I know that I was in high school.
00:01:58	Music	Music	<i>[Volume increases.]</i>
			<i>Girl, I’m in love with you This ain’t the honeymoon</i>
00:02:07	Eric	Guest	<i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]</i> I was big on trying to find up and coming musicians or interesting musicians. And I think John Legend’s album—it’s the <i>Get Lifted</i> album—it had received so many accolades and I think at that point it was probably playing on the radio a good bit. And that’s probably how I discovered the song.
00:02:27	Music	Music	<i>[Volume increases.]</i>
			<i>... still got room left to grow And though love sometimes hurts I still put you first And we’ll make this thing work But I think we should...</i>
			<i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]</i>

00:02:38	Eric	Guest	<p>Yeah. I mean, John Legend—to me, at that point—he was a new name. And I don’t know. I was like, “Wow, this is pretty cool.” And I think the other thing that was cool about him was that he had gone to an Ivy League school. He was a consultant at a major consulting firm and then he made this big pivot towards music. And I found that out a bit later, but to me—as the son of immigrant parents—it was like, “Wow! He can do it all and then still do music.”</p> <p>And so, in many ways, he kind of showed me like, “Oh, I could like prove to my parents that I can get a job and go to college and do all these things. And if I’m good enough, maybe I could do music at some point.”</p>
00:03:20	Music	Music	<p><i>[Volume increases.]</i></p> <p><i>Oh</i> <i>This time we’ll take it slow</i></p>
00:03:26	Eric	Guest	<p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]</i> I love this part right here. <i>[He sings along with the next several bars.]</i></p>
00:03:29	Music	Music	<p><i>[Volume increases.]</i></p> <p><i>This ain’t a movie, no</i> <i>No fairytale conclusion, y’all</i> <i>It gets more confusing every day, oh</i> <i>Sometimes it’s heaven sent</i></p>
00:03:40	Eric	Guest	<p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]</i> And funny enough, like—and I’m thinking about—this is like almost 20 years ago, now. This song came out in 2004. So, if I think back to that, my memory’s not the best. But! He had to have had big enough an impact for me to pay for my first ticket to a concert of his, in my hometown of Atlanta. And that was like the first concert I think that I ever went to with my friends in high school.</p>
00:04:07	Music	Music	<p><i>[Volume increases.]</i></p> <p><i>We’re just ordinary people</i> <i>We don’t know which way to go</i> <i>‘Cause we’re ordinary people</i> <i>Maybe we should take it slow</i></p>
00:04:24	Eric	Guest	<p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]</i> I think one of the reasons that I was so drawn to this song was because of the simplicity of the production itself. It relies heavily just on a piano and his voice. And his voice, there’s something about it. There’s a timbre. There’s a resonance in this... richness in his tone that, if you listen closely, you’re just like, “How does he have that sound? How does he sing that way?”</p>
00:04:49	Music	Music	<p><i>[Volume increases.]</i></p> <p><i>Maybe we’ll crash and burn</i> <i>Maybe you’ll stay</i> <i>Maybe you’ll leave</i> <i>Maybe you’ll return</i></p>

*Maybe another fight
Maybe we won't survive
But maybe we'll grow
We never know, baby, you and I*

We're just ordinary people

00:05:07 Eric Guest *[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]*
The way he uses his breath and the control and to give tension in certain areas and to lean back in other areas while playing the piano, that's like multiple functions of your brain that I could never do, but he's doing it with such ease. *[Chuckles.]* And it blows my mind! And I'm always like, "Man, how do I write a song like that?"
00:05:24 Music Music *[Volume increases.]*

*We're just ordinary people
We don't know which way to go*

00:05:32 Eric Guest *[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]*
There's something about the piano and the lyrics that seems so—in many ways, so just conversational and simple. Even the word "ordinary people" just felt so good, because it just felt like you and me. It felt like you and I. Like, it could happen to anybody, and this song could be about anyone. *[He sings along with the track for a couple bars.]*
00:05:52 Music Music *[Volume increases.]*

*Take it slow, oh, oh
This time we'll take it slow
Take it slow, slow
This time we'll take it slow
Take it slow*

00:06:13 Eric Guest *[Volume decreases and the song comes to an end.]*
So, I went to Boston College. I had a job offer at DeWitt Consulting. So, I was a summer intern. I got the job. I was gonna do strategy and operations out in New York. And it was just a different firm, but it was probably the same role. But it was just like John Legend.

[Music fades in.]

00:06:36 Music Music
And then, I got a message from YouTube. I put up covers of myself singing on YouTube.
"If I Ain't Got You" by Alicia Keys covered by Eric Nam.

*Some people live for the fortune
Some people live just for fame*

00:06:46 Eric Guest *[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]*
And they said, "Hey, we're a TV show in Korea. We're like *American Idol* meets *X Factor* meets *The Voice*. Would you like to come to Korea and audition?"

And I was like yeah! Why not? This has been—pursuing music has been a dream of mine my entire life. I never thought it would happen. And I have a job. I have all these things set up. Like, worst case, it's just gonna be a fun trip to Korea. And we should go.

I go and... I did this audition. I was so nervous.

[Music fades in.]

00:07:22 Music Music Just shaking. And I sang “Ordinary People”.
“Ordinary People” covered by Eric Nam.

*Girl, I'm in love with you
But this ain't the honeymoon
We're past the infatuation phase
We're right in the thick of love
At times, we get sick of love
Seems like we argue every day*

00:07:37 Eric Guest *[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]*
And that song is what kind of took off for me. It was like the first appearance of Eric Nam, myself, on National television. And this TV show at the time was like outrageously popular.

00:07:52 Music Music

[Volume increases.]

*I still put you first
And we'll make this thing work
But I think we should take it slow*

00:08:00 Eric Guest *[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]*
So, immediately I was thrown into the limelight. Ratings through the roof. I was a number one trending topic anytime and “Ordinary People” was right there with me. And that's kind of what catapulted me into becoming a musician.

00:08:16 Music Music

[Volume increases.]

*...we should take it slow
Take it slow, oh, oh
This time we'll take it slow
Take it slow, oh*

00:08:30 Eric Guest *[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]*
I have not met John Legend. I would like to meet him. I don't know if I would say, “Hey, go listen to my version,” because it's not very good. Let's be very honest. *[Chuckles.]* This is—you know, 22-year-old Eric with no vocal training, never been on TV, shaking in front of three legendary Korean rockstars, singing—you know—John Legend's song. So, I was just mortified.

But it was funny, because once that happened, in Korea—you know, I do a lot of radio appearances and that was like the most regular request. “Can you sing John Legend's ‘Ordinary People’.” And so, I think over time I learned to sing it better and better. But I

00:09:17	Music	Music	<p>still don't know if I could beat the original, original John Legend at his own song. You know. "Ordinary People" from the album Get Lifted by John Legend.</p>
			<p><i>We're just ordinary people We don't know which way to go 'Cause we're ordinary people Maybe we should take it slow</i></p>
00:09:34	Eric	Host	<p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]</i> The way I listen to this song has changed and shifted throughout the years. I think mainly because my understanding and appreciation of music has evolved over my career. I think I've been doing music for eight, nine years now. And at first, it's just—you like the song because of the melody and the lyrics or whatever it is that draws you to it. But as I started to write my own music, as I started to put out my own albums and tour and do all those things, you have a deeper appreciation for how he got to a point where it's seemingly effortless for him.</p>
00:10:10	Music	Music	<p><i>[Volume increases.]</i></p> <p><i>Maybe we'll grow We never know, baby, you and I</i></p> <p><i>We're just ordinary people</i></p>
00:10:18	Eric	Guest	<p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]</i> You know, there's an intentionality in when he puts in an adlib and where he uses his breath a certain way or holds a note through as he sings, instead of taking a brief pause. And those are the small things that I think I hear more now than I did before. And when I think of it from that level, I'm just like, "Wow, he was so meticulous, it seems like." In terms of how he phrased everything.</p>
00:10:55	Music	Music	<p>And so, my appreciation I think has grown even more. And I think—I honestly had not listened to this song for quite some time until I was like, "Oh. Maybe I'll talk about this song, today." But time and time again, I'm just like, "Man. What a great song." <i>[Volume increases.]</i></p> <p><i>... oh, oh This time we'll take it slow Take it slow, oh, oh This time we'll take it slow Take it slow, slow This time we'll take it slow Take it slow</i></p>
00:11:23	Jesse	Host	<p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i> K-Pop sensation Eric Nam on the song that changed his life, John Legend's "Ordinary People". Eric has a new album out, called <i>There and Back Again</i>. Let's go out on a song from it. This is "Any Other Way".</p>

00:11:37	Music	Music	<p>“Any Other Way” from the album <i>There and Back Again</i> by Eric Nam.</p> <p><i>I didn't know why Why happiness was fleeting in my life 'Til you</i></p>
00:11:49	Jesse	Host	<p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i></p> <p>That's the end of another episode of <i>Bullseye</i>. <i>Bullseye</i> is created from the homes me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California—where, here at my house, my daughter hosted a front porch party welcoming the delivery of her used PSP. I—I don't know, 15-year-old portable video game system. She was really excited about it. She saved for it.</p> <p>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. Our theme song is called “Huddle Formation” recorded by the group The Go! Team. Thanks to them and to their label, Memphis Industries, for letting us use it.</p> <p><i>Bullseye</i> is also on YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook. 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.</p>
00:12:52	Promo	Promo	<p>Speaker: <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.</p> <p><i>[Music ends.]</i></p>