

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.
00:00:21	Jesse Thorn	Host	It’s <i>Bullseye</i> . I’m Jesse Thorn. My first guest this week is Greg Daniels. If you know that name, it’s probably because you’ve watched a TV comedy. Any TV comedy in the last 30 years. Greg has written for <i>Seinfeld</i> , <i>Saturday Night Live</i> , and <i>The Simpsons</i> . He co-created <i>King of the Hill</i> , the American version of <i>The Office</i> , and <i>Parks and Recreation</i> . On his shelf at home, there are four Emmys and 20 Emmy nominations. And what’s he up to lately? Well, making TV shows! On Amazon, you can watch the second season of his show <i>Upload</i> , which is a dramedy set in a cloud backup afterlife.
			And there’s <i>Space Force</i> . <i>Space Force</i> reunites Daniels with Steve Carell for the first time since <i>The Office</i> . The premise of <i>Space Force</i> is pretty simple: Carell plays General Mark Naird. And he heads up the newest branch of the American armed forces. He’s got a bunch of money and a kind of vague sense of purpose: to put boots on the moon, whatever that means. In this scene, he’s testifying in front of the Secretary of Defense, played by Tim Meadows. The Space Force has already flubbed it a few times. And here, Naird is trying to make the case for keeping the <i>Space Force</i> and him around.
00:01:43	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:01:44	Clip	Clip	General Naird (<i>Space Force</i>): I learned a long time ago that when you point a finger, you have three fingers pointed back at you. And your thumb stands erect, pointed towards the sky.
			Music: Inspirational orchestral music fades in.
			General Naird: Yes. I once used one of our satellites to locate my mother in a Rite-Aid parking lot. Yes. When I was a child, I took several pieces of Halloween candy out of a bowl that said “take one”. Additionally, that Halloween, I was dressed as a hobo, which I now know was inappropriate. I am not perfect. But I do believe that my decision to protect our astronauts and human life was the right decision.
00:02:30	Sound Effect	Transition	Secretary of Defense: <i>[Flatly.]</i> Thank you. Music swells and fades.
00:02:31	Jesse	Host	Greg Daniels, welcome to <i>Bullseye</i> . I’m so happy to have you on the show.
00:02:34	Greg Daniels	Guest	Thank you for having me! I’m very happy to be here.
00:02:37	Jesse	Host	Congratulations on all your television shows and all the other television shows that you already made.
00:02:44	Greg	Guest	Thank you. It’s been quite a fun, lucky career for me.

00:02:49 Jesse Host Did you aspire to be in the comedy business or think that was even like a real job when you were a kid?

00:02:55 Greg Guest I was a pretty funny kid, I think. Um. *[Chuckles.]* Based on friends saying that to me. I actually had two lanes that people I knew had sort of picked out for me. They thought maybe I should do some writing or do something funny. And then the other one was maybe I should be a lawyer. But when they told me maybe I should be a lawyer, they said it like—it wasn't a nice thing to say. Like, they said, "You're so fricking argumentative. You know? You should be a lawyer."

00:03:35 Jesse Host And after a while, it was like, "Oh. Yeah, maybe that's not what I should do. Maybe I should go the other direction."
You ended up getting a cowriting credit on a pretty legendary episode of *Seinfeld*. "The Parking Space", from season three. You grew up in New York. So, was that *[chuckles]*—was that just like New York stuff that you knew about? Was that what got you in the room?

00:03:53 Greg Guest Completely, yeah. Basically, that happened to my father. And that was the funny—you know, that was how I was able to sell it. Because I pitched him at least a dozen ideas, and we were doing a second one after that, when I got hired on *The Simpsons*. So, I had to drop it. But um, yeah. This happened to my dad. Basically, he had a car in New York. He didn't have a garage. He parked on the street. And every two days, he'd have to circle around all the blocks trying to find a new parking space, 'cause it changed every two days. And it would take him—you know—an hour sometimes, driving around. And he found this space. He started to back in. A guy behind him started to front into it. Neither of them would budge. They sat there for hours. A friend walked by my dad, and he yelled at him to get his wife to bring him dinner. And it just became a whole thing.

00:05:03 Jesse Host And so, I—you know, it was very good, 'cause it had such strong conflict and it was sort of absurd and pretty much the moment Larry David heard that, he was like, "Yeah. That's good. I'll take that one."
[Chuckles.] There are some really hot conflicts for a show that is about such unimportant things *[laughing]* as *Seinfeld*.

00:05:11 Greg Guest *[Laughs.]* I always felt that was kind of a con job. You know what I mean? Because it says it's a show about nothing, and then—you know, there's like limos for Nazis and—you know, mints flying into whale blowholes. *[Laughing.]* And you know, it's like that's not nothing! That would be the headline of a newspaper if that ever, you know, actually happened in real life.

00:05:31 Jesse Host It's—whenever something that crazy happens on *Seinfeld*, though, the story tends to be about the weirdest, tiny pieces of it. And whenever the story is about something tiny, the stakes of the tiny thing are like monumental! *[Laughs.]*

[Greg agrees.]

Like, they're really—like, Kenny Rogers roasters turning Kramer red or whatever. Like, the craziest stuff that happens is treated with like the exact same weird, tiny thing blown up into enormous things tone, when the episode is about chewing gum or something.

00:06:08 Greg Guest Yeah. Well. And that—I mean, if your characters are petty enough, then—

[They chuckle.]

00:06:19 Jesse Host Tiny things can be huge to them. So, you ended up getting a writing job on *The Simpsons*. And I was thinking about *The Simpsons*, as I often do. And one of the things that like I think maybe has been lost, perspective-wise, as *The Simpsons* has run in circles, in syndication and on streaming and stuff, is it just has become kind of flat and ubiquitous. Not flat in terms of laughs or anything, but flat in terms of the shape of the whole deal. Is like—at the beginning of *The Simpsons*, the amount of phenomenon that it was... like, how absurdly like—[struggling for words].

00:07:02 Greg Guest Huge, it was.

00:07:03 Jesse Host As pervasive as it is even now, 30 years later, like it was absurd. I mean, maybe because I was 11 or 10 or whatever. But like it was—

00:07:13 Greg Guest Oh, I think it was pretty big. I mean, I definitely—the other thing I thought you were gonna say is there was such an examination of each season as to whether the show was changing and whether it was better this year or that year or how was it different. And you know, it changed a lot in the first six years. And it has kind of figured out what it is, so there's less of that. But yeah. And no, it was huge. And I remember getting there, the end of season four, and it was so—it was such a big deal. And you had—you definitely felt this pressure of, “Don't let the—don't let this thing down.”

00:08:05 Jesse Host So, we worked super hard. I mean, we were always there after hours working on our scripts and, you know, not going home. What did you learn about writing on a sitcom that is as both traditional and completely untraditional as *The Simpsons*?

00:08:15 Greg Guest Well! It's a great question, 'cause you know, I had come from late night, *SNL*. And there was a sensibility on late night and also it was on *Letterman*, and it was also on *The Simpsons*, but it wasn't quite the same sensibility as, say, *Family Ties* or the more traditional sitcoms. And so, you know, I—when I was trying to get my job past *SNL* and past that screenplay, there were—I had a shortlist of shows I really wanted to work on, and I tried to work on *Rosanne* and *Seinfeld* and *Larry Sanders* and couldn't get hired on those and managed to get hired on *The Simpsons*.

00:09:44 Jesse Host But there was a difference between those shows and kind of the warmer, you know, sitcom half hours at that time. And I really wanted to be on one that was—had more of that late night sense of humor. And I feel like animation had it. And then by the time I got to the mockumentaries, that was also like a way of doing something with a slightly higher concept sensibility than the straight-ahead sitcom. So, I managed to try and avoid like the real—you know. I never really did a multi-cam.

00:10:02 Greg Guest I mean, the thing about *The Simpsons* is—as many crazy jokes as there are in it, and as crazy as the world can sometimes get. And like, you know, especially Homer Simpson is—you know—criminally insane and stupid.

00:10:02 Greg Guest Yeah. What is wrong with him? He's—there's something seriously wrong with him.

00:10:06 Jesse Host *[They laugh.]*
 And a child abuser! Like a serial child abuser. But like, despite those things, like there really aren't very many—there are almost no sour episodes of *The Simpsons*. There are almost no cynical episodes of *The Simpsons*. There's cynical jokes in *The Simpsons*, but ultimately like almost every episode is about, "Isn't it nice that families love each other?" You know what I mean? *[Chuckles.]*
 Even the ones where Homer is choking Bart.

00:10:39 Greg Guest
 Yeah. Well, you know, I think that Jim Brooks put a lot of that into the show in the beginning. And I was always very impressed with that aspect. Like, the—I think my favorite episode is the one with Lisa's substitute teacher, which is a season three episode. And to find yourself, you know, choking up at the end of this cartoon with these weird, yellow creatures with spikey heads and everything is—I think is great. And you know, it's just about kind of the writing and the acting and the—'cause there's no—I mean, the designs are great, actually. I mean, they're very expressive. But in terms of really identifying with them, I think a lot of that is in the voice acting and the writing.

00:11:28 Jesse Host
The Simpsons is famous for reworking jokes 20,000 times over many, many hours in the writers' room, but leaving that aside, what did you find that you got wrong when you started writing on *The Simpsons*? Like, what did people have to correct you on or tell you to change the most?

00:11:49 Greg Guest
 Well, I really feel like I learned how to rewrite. You know? I think that I maybe would write something and then have this feeling of, "Well. I—that's—I did it. That was my best work." And you know. And *The Simpsons*—the writing room at *The Simpsons* was extremely professional about breaking things apart and trying to beat every line and every thought and every joke and... And so, um, you know, afterwards—when I was working on other shows—would sometimes put on my hat of rewriting, like my *Simpsons* hat. Not a—it wasn't a real hat, but *[chuckles]* just run with this metaphor, okay?

[Jesse confirms with a chuckle.]

So, I had a hat—not a hat, but a hat. And you know, and then I'd look at the script and I would just strike through everything, and I'd go better, you know, more interesting—you know, whatever. I would put all the notes. And then later, you take that hat off, 'cause that hat is stifling. You can't really pitch when that hat is on, because it hates everything. So, you take that hat off and then you fix all of the things that are written in the—in the margins. And you can kind of recreate the room if you imagine all the other people criticizing you.

[They laugh.]

00:13:15 Jesse Host
 That's very mentally healthy.
[Through laughter.] Is that—is that horrible for you? Or have you learned not to let yourself destroy yourself by imagining everyone you know and what they would not like about your work?

00:13:29 Greg Guest
 Well, as long as it's—you know, it's all in that one hat that you can take off. You know? You just can't walk around wearing that hat all the time, 'cause it's too hard. But you know—so, the funniest thing

about *The Simpsons* and working there is that it's such a lively, musical, brightly colored, compressed, fun half hour. And people come and they hear that you work there, and they assume that the experience of working there is a lot like the actual show, is that it's all like this—circus music is playing and, you know, you're dancing and eating candy and everything. And the candy part's true, but there were—you know. It was long hours of staring at, you know, other morose, misanthropic writers in a room. You know?

[They chuckle.]

00:14:19	Jesse	Host	It wasn't quite as fun as the show.
			Even more with Greg Daniels still to come. Stay with us. It's <i>Bullseye</i> , from MaximumFun.org and NPR.
00:14:26	Music	Transition	Thumpy synth with light vocalizations.
00:14:31	Jesse	Host	Welcome back to <i>Bullseye</i> . I'm Jesse Thorn. I'm talking with Greg Daniels. Greg is a veteran TV writer. He's written classic episodes of <i>Seinfeld</i> , <i>The Simpsons</i> , and more. He also cocreated the American version of <i>The Office</i> , <i>King of the Hill</i> , and <i>Parks and Recreation</i> . These days, he's running two shows, both in their second season: <i>Space Force</i> , which is on Netflix, and <i>Upload</i> , which is streaming on Amazon Prime. Let's get back into our conversation.
00:15:06	Greg	Guest	How did you end up developing <i>King of the Hill</i> with Mike Judge? Right! So, I had—you know. So, I was on, uh—working at Fox on <i>The Simpsons</i> , and I started doing—I had a deal to develop new shows. And I wrote two things that were—went into production. One of them was this idea that I had to do a family show in the vein of <i>Seinfeld</i> , which was very sort of autobiographical, 'cause my family had—you know, had weird adventures in New York City. So, I was doing that. And then the other project that I had was sort of partnered by the studio with Mike Judge, who had obviously done <i>Beavis and Butt-Head</i> and a lot of great animation. And he had this script based on guys that he observed in his backyard in Richardson, Texas. Which was not a world that I really had any affinity for, but I was super curious about, and I loved the way he wrote. I thought it was so well-observed and slow-paced and detailed.

So, we kind of got together and hit it off. And I went to Texas and like observed what he was doing. And then I took the script and made a variety of changes. And then we did a little animation test and we kind of clawed our way onto the air. But it was—it was such a different thing than *The Simpsons*, intentionally. Because I didn't think we should imitate *The Simpsons* and I didn't wanna take any personnel from *The Simpsons*, really, except for Wes Archer. And he was, you know, a Texan and a great animator. So, he seemed like he belonged on our show more than theirs. Um.

[Jesse chuckles softly.]

You know, we were intentionally very slow. And we had—and Hank was the smartest of the characters, not the—not the dumbest. And you know, we just kind of went our own way with that.

00:17:13 Jesse Host It's interesting that you mention that he is the smart one, because of the power dynamics of—you know, our culture's inherent misogyny, there are often kind of two kinds of sitcom dads. One is just a dumb idiot who's really dumb. And—

00:17:31 Greg Guest That's pretty much it. I mean, *[chuckling]* the Hank Hill type hasn't been around since like *Father Knows Best*. You know? That was—we were very aware that there weren't a lot of smart dads on TV. I'd be curious if you had another example.

00:17:47 Jesse Host Maybe there's a little bit of—you know, "I can't believe these people," energy in the occasional less-dumb sitcom dad. Sometimes really—well, I mean, there's like a little bit of that in Ray Romano on *Everybody Loves Raymond*, which is a fantastic show. But like—

00:18:05 Greg Guest I think that came out after us, but—

[Jesse confirms.]

But yeah, I mean at the time, the tagline that I used to say about the show was, "Andy Griffith's back and he's pissed." Uh.

[They laugh.]

But there weren't a lot of Andy Griffith style characters around, then. So.

00:18:27 Jesse Host One of the characters I like—look. I love *King of the Hill*. I love all of the characters. I've watched every episode of the show. But one of the characters that I find the most interesting—and especially in watching it relatively recently—is the neighbor, Khan, who's a Lao immigrant and I'm like pretty sensitive about portrayals of Lao people because my dad worked in Laos for a long time, and I worked in Laos for a little while. And the representation of Lao people is important to me. And like, *[chuckles]* he is—let's say—somewhat broadly voiced by Toby Huss, who's a White guy. But as a character, like he is pretty rich and interesting. He's admirable without only being admirable. Like, he's also a little bit of a jerk. *[Laughs.]* But like—

00:19:24 Greg Guest Yeah. He's a—he's a pretty big jerk, yeah. I mean, I think *[laughs]*—on the plus side, I think he's a three-dimensional character and I think that we showed a lot of variety for him. You know? And he was the hero sometimes and he was a jerk often. On the negative side, I don't think I would have Toby Huss him nowadays. I mean, at the time—you know, one of the parts of the economics of a cartoon was that the actor's voiced many characters and Toby was Cotton Hill. And so, you know, he also did Khan.

00:20:05 Jesse Host It feels like you were trying to make choices about how you could represent these characters on the show—both Khan and John Redcorn is Native American, and his son who's half Native American—how you could represent these characters fully and outside of, you know—outside of just the things that are stereotypically associated with those ethnicities. Sort of in the same way that you were trying to do with the White characters on the show and what people might think about or presume about people from—you know—semi-rural Texas.

00:20:46 Greg Guest Well, I think that's the key, is to try to undermine stereotypes wherever you can, because they're lazy thinking, and show the humanism of—or the humanity of all the different characters and

the three dimensionality of the characters, even if it wasn't good for—you know—just reasons of fairness and sort of being pro-social and inclusive. I think it's good just from artistic reasons, because—you know, it's more fun when a character is three dimensional and so you're always—you're always trying to figure out, "Well, what do people expect from that? And let's show something—you know—more real."

And we actually—we actually won some award for Asian inclusion and representation, at the time. *[Chuckling.]* Which is hard to believe, maybe, looking back. But yeah. That was—that was certainly our intention to not be stereotypical.

00:21:49 Jesse Host I feel like one of the things that I saw in watching *The Office*, which I watched from the beginning, is that—and that I think also showed up on *Parks and Recreation*, which you also helped develop with Mike Schur—was a kind of process of listening to your performers and looking for what is special about your performers in these big, ensemble shows. Was that something that you chose to do specifically? Like, "Well, here I am with my own show. This is how I want to do it." Or was it something that grew particularly out of the experience of making *The Office*? Which was a very weird show to make because it was a remake of a British show that had just recently changed the face of television.

00:22:43 Greg Guest When you talk about—I'm sure—you know, you talked about *Everybody Loves Raymond*. I'm sure it was the same process there. I think as a writer, you imagine the characters before they're cast, but once they're cast, they become that person's character. And you know, you lean in and incorporate as much as you can from the real person to tailor the character more closely to the actor. I would say the metaphor is a tailor.

Like, I always felt like I had little pins in my mouth, and I was measuring Rainn Wilson and, you know, saying—you know, asking him to bring in all of his family photo albums of his farmer relatives in Oregon and then saying, "Oh, that's gonna be good. That's gonna be part of Dwight." You know? That he's got a farm and—or, you know, Nick Offerman has a woodshop. And the moment that I toured his woodshop, it was so obvious that Ron Swanson has to have all these aspects of Nick Offerman.

00:23:51 Jesse Host *[Chuckles.]* Nick Offerman sent somebody to my house to build some bookshelves, so shoutout to Nick Offerman. *[Laughs.]*

00:23:56 Greg Guest Yeah! *[Chuckles.]* As a carpenter.

00:24:01 Jesse Host *[Playfully.]* Yeah, only. Yeah. Not as a performer.

But I think that everyone—look, everyone writes to the strengths of their performers. Not everyone is so particularly pulling directly from the lives of their performers. And like, when I heard *[laughing]*—I read somewhere that when you were developing *King of the Hill*, you brought everybody down to Texas to take notes.

00:24:26 Greg Guest Yes. We did that—every year we did that, yeah. I would say that—'cause you could look at it as being lazy. Right? You could look at it as I'm like, "Oh, great. A woodshop. Terrific. Ron'll have a woodshop. *[Chuckles.]* That's easy. I can go home now." But I think that one of the things that I didn't love about sitcom writing when doing *King of the Hill* that I could observe in other shows was recycling of old plots. Like, sometimes a writer would be like, "Oh, I

remember something that—you know, that we could steal from whatever thing it was.”

And I had been pitching stories that—you know, happened to my dad for the *Seinfeld* episode or—and I think this is true with the writers from *Everybody Loves Raymond*, by the way, as well—but you know, I always felt like I wanna hear the personal experiences of the writers’ room and then we’ll figure out a way to make those into TV episodes, and then they’ll be fresh. You know. They won’t be recycled stories.

00:25:31 Jesse Host

That’s something I’ve heard from Phil Rosenthal, who was running *Everybody Loves Raymond*, and from Paul Feig, who—about *Freaks and Geeks*—is they both asked everyone on the staff to like fill 3x5 cards with every story they could think of that had actually happened to them. In Paul’s case, it was every horrible embarrassment that happened during their adolescence. And in Rosenthal’s case it was—you know—every awkward, painful, or funny thing that happened to them with their family at home.

00:26:02 Greg Guest

Yeah. Well, so we did that too on *King of the Hill*. And a lot of the stories and the family’s behaviors came out of family stories. Hank especially was like everybody’s uncle. You know? Everybody had some masculine figure like Hank in their family that they could pitch stories on. And in order to get it to be really specific to Texas, which was part of that whole drive of not presenting stereotypes, I used to take the writers to Texas at the beginning of every season. And we had these reporter’s notebooks that fit in your back pocket, and we would fan out—you know, and go to volunteer fire stations and interview pest control people and go to the middle schools and just try and absorb the flavor of it and be alive to any story ideas that we could grab.

That—you know. And we would find—some of them would be too specific, like when were talking to people who drove propane delivery trucks, there was this black box that the managers were putting in their truck that measured their route so that they couldn’t deviate from their route and go, you know—go have a barbeque sandwich that was three miles away and waste gas or whatever. So, that kind of thing we were like, “Ah, we gotta write something about that box in the truck.” You know? And it was kind of too specific. I don’t think we ever were able to work that in. But other things—you know, we were able to work in.

And those details—we did that with *The Office* with Scranton. There were so many references to actual Scranton area businesses and local products. And I think most people have no idea that that’s happening, but they can pick up on a sense of authenticity that kind of clings to those details and it makes you feel that everything is just a bit more real.

00:28:04 Jesse Host

So much more to get into with Greg Daniels. I mentioned he cocreated *King of the Hill*. He knows that show’s characters like they were family. But has Greg Daniels heard the French-Canadian version of Boomhauer? Until this interview, he had not. We will play it for him and for you. And it is dang ol’ amazing.

00:28:30 Promo Clip

It’s *Bullseye*, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.
Music: Relaxed ukulele.

Jesse Thorn: Hi, I'm Jesse Thorn, the founder of Maximum Fun. And I have a special announcement. I'm no longer embarrassed by *My Brother, My Brother and Me*. You know, for years, each new episode of this supposed advice show was a fresh insult, a depraved jumble of erection jokes, ghost humor, and—frankly this is for the best—very little actionable advice. But now, as they enter their twilight years, I'm as surprised as anyone to admit that it's gotten kind of good. Justin, Travis, and Griffin's witticisms are more refined, like a humor column in a fancy magazine. And they hardly ever say "bazinga" anymore. So, after you've completely finished listening to every single one of all of our other shows, why not join the McElroy brothers every week for *My Brother, My Brother and Me*?

[*Music fades out.*]

00:29:24 Music Transition
00:29:29 Jesse Host

Thumpy rock music.
It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. I'm talking with Greg Daniels of *The Office*, *Space Force*, and *Upload*.

00:30:04 Greg Guest

You have two television shows on the air right now that are entering their second season. And you know, both *The Office* and *Parks and Recreation* are shows that grew a lot over the course of the first season going into the second season. Let's take *Space Force*. Like, what is something that you noticed in making the first season that led you to change or develop something in the second season? Well, it's interesting. I mean, I personally love the first season of *Space Force*. And I know we got a lot of negativity about it, but I think there's probably a lot of reasons for that. And I think—two of the reasons I don't think were really our fault. And one—[*laughs*], without sounding too defensive, I would say that the first season of any character comedy is always rocky, because the audience doesn't know who the characters are yet. And if the jokes are coming from who the characters are, then the first few episodes, you're trying to figure out where are these jokes coming from. So, I think that the key is when you—when you start to like the show and then you go back and rewatch the first seasons now knowing the characters, oftentimes they're funny now because you learned the characters.

00:31:19 Jesse Host

But I'd say the second thing was that we dropped in the middle of the George Floyd protests. And you know, it was just a really weird time to try and do a comedy, 'cause there was so much anger over the pandemic and the election and the racial situation in the country and it was just like not a great time to just drop a character comedy. Yeah. A show that was about a real-life thing that the president was doing, but also not really a satire of the real-life president at all.

00:31:35 Greg Guest

Yeah. I mean, there—you know, the other thing about Netflix is you're making it so far in advance. You know? It's not like *Saturday Night Live*, where you're writing it on Tuesday night and then it comes out on Saturday. It's like—you know. There's a three-month period of dubbing [*chuckles*]. You know. You have to have everything completely turned in three months before it airs. You know? 'Cause they have to dub it. So, when we were doing this was a year earlier. You know. So, in terms of being topical and being able to roll with whatever, I don't think that was that possible. I'm

happy that we're having a second season, because I think it'll also allow people to go back and watch the first season in a little calmer frame of mind.

But anyway. So, one of the other things, though, we noticed was—you know, we really wanted to not redo *The Office*. That was a thing that Steve and I had talked about. So, we tried to be very cinematic, 'cause *The Office* was very casually shot. And you know. And we were like, "No, we're gonna—we're gonna try to make it look really beautiful." And that's all great and I think it turned out well, but the downside of that is it's much harder for the cast to improvise with each other. And if they can't really improvise, they can't kind of get as funny as they could be if they were more, you know, in the moment. And so, the biggest change—and we decided to do it the moment we wrapped. And—you know, and I sat down with Steve and was like, "Well, how was that?"

And he was like, "Oh, that was kind of exhausting and not as much fun as I was hoping." You know? And we decided to retool it, visually, so that we would be able to spend more time on the set with the actors relating to each other. And we brought in Ken Kwapis, who's this wonderful director who had directed the pilot of *The Office* and many of the best episodes. And his specialty is creating an atmosphere that is very conducive to comedy on the set. And he really protects the actors from all of the—you know, hassles and stuff that a big movie-style production requires of them. And he really tries to protect it so that they can just play around with each other in more of a theatre-type way.

And so, that's what season two—that's probably why season two is funnier, is 'cause they have—I mean, obviously I also brought in Norm Hiscock, who is a great writer who I worked with on *Parks and Rec* and *King of the Hill*. And you know. And we very intentionally tried to lean more into comedy bits and less into extravaganza.

00:34:36 Jesse Host Your wife, who you've been with for 30ish years, is maybe more successful in television than you are.

[Greg agrees with a laugh.]

[Chuckling.] She is right now the head of original content for YouTube and has been the boss of a number of television networks—the content boss of a number of television networks. And she's pretty monumentally successful as a TV executive.

00:35:00 Greg Guest Yeah. I mean, she's responsible for our—for everything from *Dawson's Creek* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* to *Cobra Kai*.

00:35:09 Jesse Host So, what does she tell you about what you do that you couldn't get if you—*[chuckling]* if you weren't lying next to a high-powered television executive in bed?

00:35:25 Greg Guest Well, let's not get too graphic here with this, but um—

[They laugh.]

I think that—you know, we don't have the same taste, which is interesting. Because she told me not to adapt *The Office*. She

wasn't sure if that was a funny thing. *[Chuckles.]* So, I always—I always hold that over her head.

00:35:42 Jesse Host Wait, she wasn't sure if it was a good idea or if the original *Office* was funny?

00:35:46 Greg Guest I don't know. You know, she—um. She—I don't think she thought it could be adapted to US TV.

00:35:52 Jesse Host That's possible.

00:35:53 Greg Guest Yeah. And the kind of stuff that she likes to watch when you're—if you are picturing us in bed, we have completely different bedtime tastes. So, she loves to watch *Friends* or like a very—you know, gentle comedy experience. And I love to watch violence.

[Jesse laughs.]

The violence helps me go to sleep at night. I don't know why. *[Chuckling.]* I don't—I don't know what the chemical reaction is, but if it's—you know, if I can't find it fictionally, I'll watch the UFC. I just—that's the part that... that kind of helps me sleep. Um. *[Laughs.]*

00:36:32 Jesse Host Does she tell you what somebody like her wants from somebody like you? Not in the context of your marriage, but in the context of your jobs?

00:36:39 Greg Guest Well, yes. I mean, that's the other thing is that—you know, I've heard her come home and complain about, you know, the problems that she has in her job. And after hearing that enough, when I'm dealing with executives that I deal with, I kind of am less—I don't take things personally that other writers sometimes take personally, I think. Because I understand where it's coming from; I understand that—you know, the marketing department needs this and they can't do it without this and you have to, you know, give it to them and things like that.

00:37:16 Jesse Host So, I mentioned on twitter that you were coming on the show, and somebody sent me a scene from *King of the Hill* in Quebecois French. Have you ever heard *[chuckling]* French-Canadian Boomhauer?

00:37:31 Greg Guest *[Laughing.]* No! No. It makes sense though.

00:37:33 Jesse Host Jesus, can you play—*[giggling]*.

00:37:34 Greg Guest That makes sense, right? I mean, I think that there is a kind of a rural, French Canadian guy voice—I can image it. Let's hear it.

00:37:42 Jesse Host Jesus, can you play—can you play Quebecois Boomhauer, please?

00:37:46 Sound Effect Transition Music swells and fades.

00:37:48 Clip Clip *[Birds chirp.]*

Boomhauer (*King of the Hill*): *[Mumbles hurriedly in a soft, high tone.]*

00:37:54 Sound Effect Transition Music swells and fades.

00:37:55 Greg Guest *[Jesse laughs.]*

Well, that's much higher voiced than I thought.

[They cackle.]

That's funny. Huh. Well, you know, Boomhauer's voice came from—there was a guy who was I think complaining about MTV

moving the timeslot for *Beavis and Butt-Head* and left a really long, rambling message on Mike's—Mike Judge's—voicemail. And it wasn't—it wasn't 100% clear what he was complaining about, but I think it was that—

[They chuckle.]

—they changed the timeslot or something. And anyway, Mike saved that voice message and that was—that's where Boomhauer came from.

00:38:37	Jesse	Host	Well, Greg, I'm so grateful to you for taking all this time to be on the show. I've admired and enjoyed your work. It's meant so much to me for so long. I'm really glad to get to talk to you. Thank you.
00:38:47	Greg	Guest	Oh! Thanks! Well, it was super fun. Just felt like a very natural conversation. Did you press record?
00:38:53	Jesse	Host	<i>[Dejectedly.]</i> No. I didn't.

[Greg sighs sadly.]

That was—*[stammering]* were we—did Jesus tell you this is a radio show? No—I thought—

00:38:59	Greg	Guest	Oh, I don't know. I don't know. I guess I was waiting for Jesus to say "start".
00:39:03	Jesse	Host	Oh, yeah, no. I thought you wanted a job at my company.

[Music fades in.]

00:39:06	Greg	Guest	Oh! Well, is there a job open?
00:39:08	Jesse	Host	<i>[Pleasantly.]</i> No.
00:39:09	Greg	Guest	No.
00:39:10	Jesse	Host	No. This was just a favor I did for Jesus.
00:39:12	Greg	Guest	Oh, well that was very nice of you, Jesus. Thank you. I want my muffin basket back, though.

[Jesse laughs.]

00:39:19	Music	Transition	Relaxed synth with a steady beat and light vocalizations.
00:39:21	Jesse	Host	Greg Daniels. His two new shows are called <i>Space Force</i> and <i>Upload</i> , which are streaming on Netflix and Amazon, respectively.

[Music fades out.]

00:39:33	Music	Transition	Brassy, casual music.
00:39:40	Jesse	Host	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. Here at my house, we held a welcome party for my daughter's flip phone. She's been asking for a flip phone for a long time. We finally got one. Apparently, the phone company delivers them to your house now? Uh, so they can sell you stuff. And uh, my daughter sat on the porch with a sign. It was really something else.

The show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our senior producer is Kevin Ferguson. Our producers are Jesus Ambrosio, Valerie Moffat, and Richard Robey. 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". It's by the group The Go! Team. Thanks to The Go! Team and thanks to Memphis Industries Records for sharing it with us.

00:40:55 Promo Promo

Bullseye is also on YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook. You can find us there and follow us. We share all our interviews in those places as well as at NPR.org. And I think that's about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.

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

[Music fades out.]