

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.
00:00:14	Jesse Thorn	Host	<p><i>[Music fades out.]</i></p> <p>It's Bullseye. I'm Jesse Thorn. Syl Johnson died last month. He was 85. Syl was a Chicago soul and blues singer. He was probably best known for his work on Hi Records, the Memphis home of Ann Peebles and, of course, Al Green. Syl was a soul and blues singer, born and bred in Chicago. He was probably best known for his work on Hi Records, the Memphis home of Ann Peebles and, of course, Al Green. In fact, he turned down a record deal that ended up going to Reverend Green. The songs Syl Johnson cut for Hi, in Memphis, were some of the best soul records of their time. Where Green's voice was light and romantic, Johnson's had weight and edge.</p> <p><i>[Music fades in.]</i></p> <p>And Johnson wasn't just a voice. He wrote some of his greatest tracks, too. Like this one, 1970's "Is It Because I'm Black".</p>
00:01:09	Music	Music	<p>"Is It Because I'm Black" from the album <i>Is It Because I'm Black</i> by Syl Johnson.</p> <p><i>This I want to say to you, my sisters and my brothers Right on, sister, uh-huh Right on, brother Dig this</i></p> <p><i>And we keep on pushing down We've got to make it a little bit further We've got to make it a little further All we got to do is try, try, try</i></p> <p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i></p>
00:01:38	Jesse	Host	Over the years, hip-hop producers have feasted on Johnson's records. Take "Different Strokes", from 1968.
00:01:45	Music	Music	<p>"Different Strokes" from the album <i>Dresses Too Short</i> by Syl Johnson.</p> <p><i>Baby you're laughing But I'll be around for a while, yeah, yeah, yeah Can't you dig it, honey? While watching my style, now Alright, oh yeah</i></p> <p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i></p>
00:02:05	Jesse	Host	Just that one song has been sampled literally hundreds of times—by the Wu-Tang Clan, Kanye West, Jay Z, Public Enemy, De La Soul, Eric B & Rakim. I mean, at this point I am basically just listing everyone who has ever cut a great rap record. But more than that, Syl Johnson was a career artist. He lived in Chicago, where he raised his daughter, Syleena—a great soul singer in her own right. He made soul and blues records through his entire life. He never

stopped working. I got the chance to interview Syl Johnson, back in 2012. He was in his 70s, still gigging relentlessly. His albums had just been rereleased by Numero Group. Johnson was whip smart, funny, and—I'll say it, maybe a little cantankerous. I don't think I'll ever forget him giving me the business when I said he had never had a big hit song.

[Music fades in.]

00:03:10	Music	Transition	Anyway, Syl Johnson will be sorely missed, but I'm grateful we'll always have his music. Here's my 2012 interview with Syl Johnson. Peaceful synth with light vocalizations.
00:03:13	Jesse	Host	Syl Johnson, it is such a joy to have you on Bullseye. Thank you for coming on the show. I wanted to talk about your early life, before you were even a recording artist. How old were you when you moved from the south to Chicago?
00:03:27	Syl Johnson	Guest	Uuuh, about—I think about 12 years old.
00:03:31	Jesse	Host	What were the circumstances of the move? Were your folks looking for work? Or did you have family—other family moving up?
00:03:37	Syl	Guest	Mm, just like a migration. Just like the children of Israel came across the Red Sea, man.
<i>[They chuckle.]</i>			
00:03:45	Jesse	Host	Everybody was moving at the time.
00:03:48	Syl	Guest	Well, they came from Jim Crowism and oppression, man. And went to Chicago and got jobs galore. At one time, the Blacks in the Chicago were the richest Blacks in the world!
00:04:02	Jesse	Host	What was it like for you—I mean, do you remember when you first—like literally, when you first set foot in Chicago?
00:04:08	Syl	Guest	Oh yeah, man. I'm sitting right here, now, looking out the window! But the building is torn down right now. And I rebuilt on this here same street, right here, at the same—on the same lot that I came to. On the same place, block—on <i>[inaudible]</i> that I came to. I got a yellow cab and Magic Sam was sitting right next-door, there. You ever heard of him?
<i>[Jesse confirms.]</i>			
And he was playing some kind of old, raggedy guitar, but he was like playing ragtime music. And I just looked at him and I walked up. Said, "Damn, man! Let me see the guitar." And he let me see it and it was out of tune. I tuned it up and I started hitting him with some Muddy Waters, some Howlin' Wolf blues, man. <i>[Clicks teeth.]</i> He fell off the porch.			
00:04:59	Jesse	Host	The thing that I was—that I was getting at is just—it seems like such a huge transition to me just to go from a life where—you know, you're basically living a country life. You're doing—you know, you and your family are doing country work. You know, field work and stuff. And you get off the train or the bus and you are in the city-city. You know what I mean?
00:05:25	Syl	Guest	Yeah, it's actually kind of strange, looking up at the buildings and stuff, downtown loop. That was fascinating. I said, "Wow!" <i>[Chuckles.]</i> "Okay." But I was like a kid. I—you know. I had to go to school at the time.
00:05:42	Jesse	Host	You mentioned Magic Sam was your neighbor.

[Syl confirms several times as Jesse continues.]

The legendary Chicago blues player. If you were 12, this would've been late '40s, beginning of the 1950s, when you were going through your adolescence. What kind of music did you like to listen to?

00:06:01	Syl	Guest	<i>[Music fades in.]</i> Howlin' Wolf and Little Walter. And Elmore James, <i>[singing]</i> "I'm getting up in the morning, I believe I'll dust my broom!"
00:06:09	Music	Music	"Dust My Broom" by <i>Elmore James</i> . <i>I'm getting up soon in the morning I believe I'll dust my broom I'm getting up soon in the morning I believe I'll dust my broom</i>
00:06:25	Syl	Guest	<i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i> <i>[Singing along with the track.]</i> "I'm gonna get up in the morning. I believe I'll dust my broom. I'm out with the woman I'm loving, so my friends can have my room." That was one of my favorites. And John Lee Hooker, "Boogie Children". <i>[Singing.]</i> "My mama don't allow me to stay out all night long. <i>[Mimicking the percussion.]</i> Boogie children."
00:06:51	Jesse	Host	You know. What did your folks think about the fact that you were—that you were into blues music? Were they okay with that? Did they—would they rather you were listening to church music?
00:06:59	Syl	Guest	Man, that's all there was! It was just—either that or gospel, and I didn't like gospel. <i>[They chuckle.]</i>
00:07:12	Jesse	Host	I didn't like church, but I went to church. This is Chicago. By the time it was the mid-'50s, late '50s, you could've been listening to the music that came out of gospel music in Chicago. You could've been listening to Sam Cooke or something.
00:07:23	Syl	Guest	<i>[Singing.]</i> "Darling, you send me. Cupid, draw back your bow and let your arrow go! Straight to my loving heart." Or Jackie Wilson. <i>[Music fades in.]</i> "Well, lookie there, lookie there, lookie there. Oooh-wee! Lookie there, lookie there, lookie there. Oooh-wee!" <i>[Mimicking the percussion.]</i> "The finest girl you ever wanna meet!"
00:07:51	Music	Music	Those type of songs. "Reet Petite" from the album <i>Jukebox Hits (Vol. 3)</i> by Jackie Wilson. <i>Well, have you ever seen a girl For whom your soul you'd give</i>

*For whom you'd fight for, die for
Pray to God to live*

*'Cause she's so fine
She's so fine
She's really sweet
The finest girl you ever wanna meet*

*Well, she really fills her clothes
From her head to toe
I want the world to know
I love her, love her so*

*She's all right
She's all right*

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

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| 00:08:18 | Jesse | Host | Your earliest records—I hadn't heard your records from—you know, 1959, 1960, 1961 until I was listening to them in preparation for this interview. And your singing at the very beginning of your career actually reminded me a lot of Jackie Wilson. Were you a big fan of his at the time? |
| 00:08:38 | Syl | Guest | Mm! Yes! He was so clever. He was like—mm, he was great! And later on, up in the—in the mid to upper '60s, I got a chance to travel with him with my band. And he was fascinating. |
| 00:08:56 | Jesse | Host | He was an amazing performer. |

[Syl agrees.]

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| 00:09:02 | Syl | Guest | I mean, the passion of the man! <i>[Chuckles.]</i> Right. He was so—he was like Fred Astaire or somebody, onstage. Sammy Davis. He had charisma. |
| 00:09:09 | Jesse | Host | And he also had—I mean, something that I think is interesting about his style of singing is that—you know, I mean nobody—nobody before or since has ever been able to sing like Sam Cooke, but you know, Sam Cooke had that incredible sweetness in his voice. |

[Syl agrees.]

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| 00:09:40 | Syl | Guest | And Jackie Wilson—Jackie Wilson had that sweetness, but Jackie Wilson would also, you know, scream your ear off. <i>[Chuckles.]</i> Right, right, right, right. I think that's where I got my little scream from, on "Sock it to Me" and "Different Strokes". <i>[Chuckles.]</i> |
| 00:09:46 | Music | Music | "Come On, Sock It to Me" from the album <i>Dresses Too Short</i> by Syl Johnson. |

*Sock it to me, mama
Come on, baby
You're looking good, now*

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

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| 00:09:58 | Jesse | Host | By the time you started recording, in the late 1950s, early 1960s, straight blues music wasn't really selling a lot of records. You know? It was—it was not the thing. And the sort of late '60s revival |
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of blues was pretty far away. You can still hear that rawness of Chicago blues in your vocals, even in those early '60s recordings, when everybody else who was making soul music was trying to be kind of—you know, trying to be as sophisticated as possible.

[Syl affirms.]

00:10:40 Syl Guest I wonder if that was—you know, if that was something you were thinking about—that you wanted to retain a little bit of that grit. Eh, somewhat. But I think it was just my style. But I wanted to hold onto the roots, you know? I put rhythm to the blues and I studied a little music and then I found out how different chord changes like—you know, a six chord, a raised nine, a mini chord, diminish chord, and a seventh chord. *[Chuckles.]* Well, blues used seven and straight triads and that was it for the blues. But then there was some minor—I mean, the relative minor, the two minor. I mean, it was—oh wow. And out of those chords you could pick out a melody and it was soulful, but then I mixed it with kind of soul and I mixed it with blues and gospel. And then they started calling that type of music soul music or R&B; like the young people put rhythm to the blues, and I was one that put rhythm to it.

00:11:52 Music Music I took a song called “Teardrops” and the—I used the blues changes, but I kind of switched them around and I used a relative minor.
“Teardrops” from the album *Complete Mythology* by Syl Johnson.

*Until I fell for you
Now I'm full of misery
Full of misery and blues
Teardrops (teardrops), teardrops (teardrops)
Since I fell for you*

Why do you treat me this way?

00:12:13 Jesse Host *[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]*
We've got more to get into with the late Syl Johnson. Stick around. We'll be back in a minute. It's Bullseye, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

00:12:22 Music Music *[Volume increases.]*

*Darling, what can I do?
Teardrops (teardrops), teardrops (teardrops)
Shed my teardrops for you*

00:12:33 Music Transition
00:12:38 Jesse Host *[Music fades out.]*
Thumpy synth with light vocalizations.
It's Bullseye. I'm Jesse Thorn. If you're just joining us, we are listening back to my conversation with the late Syl Johnson. He was a singer, songwriter, and guitarist. He recorded hit versions of “Take Me to the River” and wrote the songs “Is It Because I'm Black” and “Different Strokes”. He was also one of the most frequently sampled recording artists in the history of hip-hop. Syl Johnson died last month at age 85. Let's get back into my conversation with him from 2012.

00:13:12	Syl	Guest	<p>You were producing most of your records in the '60s, as well as being the vocalist. Right?</p> <p>All of them. I was—I was in England in the mid-'90s—I mean '70s—when I started touring. And some guy—a British guy told me I made a serious mistake for not keeping on producing my music instead of letting Willie Mitchell produce a lot of my music. He really thought that was foul. And he said I should've kept producing it. And I remember that.</p>
00:13:44	Jesse	Host	<p>I wanna talk about your song "Come On, Sock It To Me". Tell me a little bit about writing and recording this record.</p>
00:13:49	Syl	Guest	<p>I used the chords that they use in the blues, but I didn't go with the change and I put a beat to it. Uh! Uh! <i>[Singing.]</i> "Sock it to me! Uh! Uh!" You know, I followed with the idea. And I made the main chord a minor instead of just a regular triad—a major chord. And so, <i>[chuckles]</i> that was the difference. And put a funky groove to it! Instead of putting the <i>[sings a classic, upbeat rhythm]</i>, I put, <i>[sings a much faster, more percussive rhythm]</i>.</p>
00:14:33	Music	Music	<p>That's why the hip-hoppers like my stuff so much—Jay Z and Kanye West just sampled "Different Strokes" and "<i>[Inaudible]</i>" on <i>Watch the Throne</i>.</p> <p>"Different Strokes" from the album <i>Dresses Too Short</i> by Syl Johnson.</p> <p><i>Uh! Uh! Uh! Woo!</i></p> <p><i>[Song fades seamlessly into "The Joy".]</i></p>
00:14:40	Music	Music	<p>"The Joy" from the album <i>Watch the Throne</i> by Ye and Jay Z.</p> <p><i>I do it for the forefathers and the street authors That are not A&Rs in the cheap office Rappers that never got signed but they keep offers Girls that's way too fine for us to keep off us Gave her a handshake only for my man's sake</i></p> <p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i></p>
00:14:54	Jesse	Host	<p>The groove—the groove on "Come On, Sock It To Me" that came out shortly before "Different Strokes"—I mean, it is a—it is a powerful—it is a powerful record. I mean, I think that's part of why those songs have been so widely sampled in hip-hop is because you have that really—that really powerful drum sound.</p>
00:15:16	Music	Music	<p>"Come On, Sock It to Me" from the album <i>Dresses Too Short</i> by Syl Johnson.</p> <p><i>Baby, you're moving You're moving too slow, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah You've gotta get up You've gotta get up and go, go, go, go, mama</i></p> <p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i></p>
00:15:42	Syl	Guest	<p>So, you put a—you heap it up. You jazz it up. And then the people can dance. You know? And you do them jiggy-jiggy-jig dances to it. So, you know, I was just like the younger person thinking—</p>

[stammers] uh, graduating into music and putting it out there!
Because they're just *[sings the melody]*.

There were more *[inaudible]*. *[Sings a galloping, staccato melody.]*

There was more to—*[chuckles]* that was just like simple. So, we younger people put a nice funky pocket to it. And woah! It was all good.

00:16:28 Music Music “Come On, Sock It to Me” from the album *Dresses Too Short* by Syl Johnson.

My baby, you know and I know what you can do, do, do
Sock it to me, pop it to me, rock it to me
Sock it to me, baby

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

00:16:43 Jesse Host I wanna play “Is It Because I’m Black”, which you recorded at the end of the 1960s.

00:16:51 Syl Guest Wow! What a song! Being sampled by hundreds of people right now!

00:16:57 Music Music “Is It Because I’m Black” from the album *Is It Because I’m Black* by Syl Johnson.

The dark brown shades of my skin
Only add color to my tears
That splash against my hollow bones
That rocks my soul
Looking back over my false dreams that I once knew
Wondering why my dreams never came true

Is it because I’m Black?
Somebody tell me, what can I do?
Oh, Lord

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]

00:17:51 Jesse Host This song didn’t come out in 1972, when everyone was cutting—you know—so-called message records. It was frankly before everyone was doing that. *[Chuckles.]*

00:18:03 Syl Guest Right! I would say “Is It Because I’m Black” is like a mirror. You can say, “Is it because I was this? Or ‘cause they were Jews and Hitler was also mean to them? Or is it because I was a—she’s a female and she—you make more?” You know. That’s the type of meaning to that song; it wasn’t militant. So, I escaped from trying to be a militant *[chuckles]* guy. Because at the time, I really played for different races of people, especially White folks in Chicago. The northside—the southside was Blacks and R&B music and the westside was blues. And I didn’t play the westside too much.

00:19:00 Jesse Host The song’s very sad. It’s a—

00:19:03 Syl Guest Eh. It sounds sad.

[Jesse affirms.]

So, I’m like a—I thought I was like an actor at the time, with my vocals and my inter-feelings to get my point across. But I didn’t mean harm to anyone, I just asked a question. Man, like The Staple

00:19:40 Jesse Host Singers say, "Why am I treated so bad?" But I think mine was more profound. It addressed a particular people at the time. You had—you had had an offer from Willie Mitchell to sign with Hi Records in the late '60s that didn't come through.

[Syl confirms.]

00:19:57 Syl Guest Tell me about that, before we—before we talk about the one that did.
Oh, boy. They made me a big offer. And I sort of like drug my feet on it. And when I wanted to accept it, I was coming from New Orleans. I came through and he said, "Well, we made another deal at the time, and we signed a young guy by the name of Al Green."

00:20:22 Jesse Host So, he wouldn't make that same offer no more and I passed it up. At the time, you had gone through with Twilight and Twinight Records, which was your label through most of the '60s. It seems like a kind of extended period of real difficulty with a business partner who ended up getting in payola trouble and put his secretary in charge of the label.

[They laugh.]

00:20:46 Syl Guest Right! Ooh, you know about that! Right?

00:20:49 Jesse Host When you did sign with Willie Mitchell and Hi Records, what were the circumstances?

00:20:55 Syl Guest I was fascinated on the work that they did with this guy, Al Green. He was one of the underrated—well, he sold a lot of records and he's one of the biggest ever that's sold records to Blacks. No one ever sold records like him. No one. Not even Michael Jackson. He was one of the greatest sellers of all times. No one—he broke a Guinness Book of records selling music to Blacks. And he also crossed over big, as well.

00:21:34 Jesse Host Soul music was, at the time—and I mean, it still is to some extent—urban music is, in general, a very kind of regional business. And you were an established act. You were based in Chicago. You know, you were a grownup. And you were ten years older than Al Green and Hi was based in Memphis, a couple thousand miles away from Chicago. So, it was a—

00:22:01 Syl Guest Mm-mm! Nuh-uh! 580 miles.

00:22:03 Jesse Host 580 miles. So—but still quite a ways. I mean, a world away.

[Syl agrees.]

00:22:18 Syl Guest So, it was a—it must have been a big decision. I mean, it's a—it's a big transition one way or the other.

00:22:26 Jesse Host I went—I should've gone with Jerry Wexler. He wanted me to come and record with Atlantic.

00:22:26 Jesse Host I'm surprised to hear you say that. I've heard you say that you thought it was a mistake to sign with Hi. And—

[Syl confirms.]

00:22:34 Syl Guest So, tell me why.
Well, I mean, look. Their focus was Al Green, man.

[Jesse affirms.]

They couldn't focus on me, and it was just that simple. At the time, I had a pretty big hit on "Take Me to the River". Otherwise, I wouldn't have went on *American Bandstand* and *Soul Train* and singing with Dick Clark and Don Cornelius. It was a big hit!

00:22:57 Jesse Host

Let's take a listen to "Take Me to the River" by my guest, Syl Johnson.

00:23:00 Music Music

"Take Me to the River" from the album *Total Explosion* by Syl Johnson.

*I don't know why I love you like I do
After all these changes you put me through
You stole my money and my cigarettes*

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

00:23:14 Jesse Host

Tell me a little bit about your recording process. When you were working with Hi, how was it—how was it similar and how was it different to when you were working yourself?

00:23:23 Syl Guest

That particular song—Willie Mitchell called me at Cunard International Hotel in London, England. He said, "Al wrote a song for you."

And I said, *[suspiciously]* "Oh yeah?" So, I was a little reluctant. Okay?

[Jesse chuckles.]

I said okay. He said, "It's a smash, man!" And I was coming into his home. He said, "Well, I'm gonna send it on over to your house." So, he sent it over and my wife pulled it out and we listened to it. And she took a tablet—a calendar!—and she wrote across the calendar, the first time she heard it, "Smash! Total smash!" So, I did it. But he—Al Green wrote the song. Him and Teenie Hodges. He said—with me in mind, he said he wanted Willie Mitchell to separate our sound somewhat, because the sound that Willie had started using with me was running together with Al Green's type of song. So, it turned out so good, Al Green did it himself!

[Jesse chuckles.]

And he made a big hit out of it! Talking heads and Tina Turner and Three Dog Nights and, ooh! On and on and on and on.

00:24:43 Jesse Host

We'll wrap up with Syl Johnson after a quick break. Stay with us. It's Bullseye, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

00:24:51 Promo Clip

Music: Pleasant, gentle ukulele.

Jo Firestone: Well, Manolo, we have a show to promote. It's called *Dr. Gameshow*.

Manolo Moreno: It's a family friendly podcast where listeners submit games, and we play them with callers from around the world.

Jo: Oh! Sounds good! New episodes, uh, happen every other Wednesday on MaximumFun.org!

Manolo: It's a—it's a fast and loose oasis of absurd innocence and naivete and—

Jo: Are you writing a poem?

Manolo: Nooo. I'm just saying things from my memory. And, uh, it's a nice break from reality. *[Chuckles.]* Is that—? Are we allowed to say that?

Jo: I don't know. It sounds bad.

Manolo: It comes with a 100% happiness guarantee.

Jo: *[Interrupting.]* It does not.

[Manolo chuckles.]

Jo: Come for the games and stay for the chaos.

[Music ends.]

00:25:37 Music Music "Take Me to the River" from the album *Total Explosion* by Syl Johnson.

Hey, hey, hey, hey!

*Take me to the river
Wash me down*

00:25:49 Jesse Host *[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]*
This is Bullseye. I'm Jesse Thorn. We're listening back to my conversation with the late soul singer, Syl Johnson.

00:25:55 Music Music *[Volume increases.]*

... with my feet on the ground

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

00:26:01 Jesse Host I think one of the reasons that hip-hop producers have sampled your records so much and a lot of the other Hi records so much, Ann Peebles's records so much, Al Green's records so much—

00:26:15 Syl Guest Not that much. They sampled them because I led them over there to there. But they were sampling me long before they jumped into the Hi stuff. They said, "Ooh, we followed—" RZA followed me on over to the Hi stuff, and then the other hip-hoppers started jumping into the Hi stuff. Don't you get it?

00:26:34 Jesse Host I agree! I think they have an incredible—an incredibly specific sound. And I wonder—I wonder whether—I think you must have been—I think you must have been really focused. You and to some extent Willie Mitchell, engineering and producing, and creating that specific sound—the way those records feel.

00:27:01 Syl Guest Well, I'm—listen, here! I'm gonna take this away from you. I taught them! The Uptown sound. Teenie Hodges, Leroy Hodges, Al, Bulldog, Howard Grimes, and Charles Hodges. I taught them! I recorded with them before Al Green. And I taught them the Uptown sound, the Uptown Chicago licks. I did!

00:27:31 Jesse Host Describe to me what that—what that sound was. What—

00:27:34 Syl Guest Well, you know, Willie Mitchell didn't like—*[sings a funky riff]*. He kind of resented that groove, man. He wanted it straight down home. *[Sings a similar riff to before, but with descending notes.]* Got the difference?

[Jesse confirms.]

Not saying that he wasn't good. He had a good groove, but he had a down home type of groove. And I had a Uptown, hip-hoppy, sharp *[sings a speedy, playful tune]*. Very simple! It's not hard to figure out. I taught the musicians, Leroy, Charles, Teenie, and Bulldog, the Uptown sound. Yeah, I was traveling with—OV was traveling with me, at the time. It was pretty hot and we were doing this chilling circuit. And he said—

00:28:31 Jesse Host The singer OV Wright *[inaudible]*.
00:28:33 Syl Guest *[Voice pitched up.]* "I wanna record!" He say, "You'll be admitted. Come by and hear me record!" So, *[chuckling]* I went in and he started to record. I went by and I liked the band. So, I went down there and I cut, uh, *[singing]* "I said baby." *[Sings a funky riff.]* Do you hear the difference? *[Singing.]* "You wear your dresses too—" *[Continuing the riff.]* Do you hear it?! And then I cut *[sings a playful, upbeat tune]*. You get that—"Any Way the Wind Blows", you get that Al Green sound. Right?

[Jesse affirms.]

But Al didn't know—he never—he had never seen or heard their music. I mean, he might have heard them, but he was nowhere near Hi at the time.

00:29:27 Jesse Host There's something to my ear about that—the combination of that drive and something that maybe is Memphis about laying back, a little bit. Being almost behind, a little bit.

[Syl agrees emphatically.]

00:29:50 Syl Guest Kind of a country thing.
Yeeeah! When they went to Chicago—when a musician went to Chicago, they got a little slicker. *[Chuckles.]* They put a little bebop, hip-hop. Like, the musicians went from Mississippi to New York and they started playing *[sings a speedy blues riff]*. Bebop and hip-hop. And then they changed it into modern jazz. *[Sings a bright, open tune.]* *[Inaudible]* and start elevating and getting slicker. It's the same way when you come out of Mississippi cotton fields, you go to Chicago. You—you hip-hop it up. So, that's why the hip-hoppers like—that's why they named it hip-hop. 'Cause my name—my music was close to bebop. You heard of bebop?

[Jesse confirms.]

Okay, that's New York. Bebop. Hip-hop, hippity hop, hop, hop *[sings an example]*. Willie Mitchell didn't go for that, at the time. *[Continues singing.]* "You remember the last time you threatened to leave?" I wouldn't sign with Hi at the time. I cut that for my own label, Twilight, with those musicians. I went back and recorded it myself with my money, out of my pocket. Get the picture?

00:31:18 Jesse Host Well, still, I really appreciate you taking the time to be on our show. It was really a pleasure to have you.

00:31:23 Syl Guest Well, man, I appreciate it. Thank you so much.

00:31:27 Jesse Host Syl Johnson from 2012. Let's go out on one more song from him— maybe my favorite. "I Hear the Love Chimes".

00:31:34 Music Music "I Hear the Love Chimes" from the album *Diamond in the Rough* by Syl Johnson.

*I hear the love chimes
And that's a clear sign*

00:31:45 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. At my house, I just put together a swing set. It's actually not a set. It's one swing. And it's not the kind with a seat. It sort of looks like a UFO? Anyway. *[Laughing.]* Kids don't seem to use it that much.

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 help booking from Mara Davis. Our interstitial music is by Dan Wally, also known as DJW. If you need some chill beats to study to or whatever, you can actually download music from *Bullseye* on Bandcamp. It's called *Target Practice: Interstitial Music from NPR's Bullseye* and it's pay what you want. So, uh, you know. Whether you just wanna drop some bars on an instrumental or hang out at your house and feel chill, go grab that DJW music. Dan's a good dude. Our theme song is "Huddle Formation" by The Go! Team. Thanks to The Go! Team. Thanks to their label, Memphis Industries, for letting us use that song.

Bullseye is on YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook, as well. You can find us there. You can give us a follow, hear all our interviews. I think that's about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.

00:33:18 Music Music *[Volume increases.]*

... almost crying

I hear the love chimes

00:33:35 Promo Promo *[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]*

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

00:33:41 Music Music *[Volume increases.]*

*You know it must be my time
I've got to make you mine*

*I hear the love chimes
I hear the love chimes*

[Music fades out.]

00:33:52 Syl

Guest

[Singing over the recording.] I hear the love chimes, and that's a clear sign, be-doop, de-doop. You know it must be my time!

I'm out of key, but that's okay. You get the picture?

[They chuckle.]

So, that was the type of thing we did in those days.