

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.
00:00:12	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. My first guest this week is Amy Schumer. Amy is, of course, the creator and star of the hit sketch show, <i>Inside Amy Schumer</i> . She also wrote and starred in the hit romcom, <i>Trainwreck</i> . She’s been nominated for Emmys, Grammys, Golden Globes, a Tony. She won a Peabody for <i>Inside Amy Schumer</i> . Her newest project is a TV comedy, called <i>Life & Beth</i> . She wrote, directed, created, and stars in the show. <i>Life & Beth</i> is intense, probing, and unpredictable. Schumer plays the title character, Beth. That’s also Amy’s middle name.
<p>When the show begins, Beth is living in Manhattan, with a great job. She lives with her very handsome boyfriend who also has a great job. And when the episode ends, an inciting event upends her life. It causes her to reexamine who she is, where she came from, and why she is the person she is today.</p> <p>I wanna give you a quick heads up before we get into my conversation with Amy—three heads up, really. First, there are some references to sexual assault in this conversation. No graphic descriptions, just a few mentions. Second, Amy Schumer just hosted the Academy Awards, but we taped this the Wednesday before the Oscars, which means that we didn’t talk about the onstage incident between Will Smith and Chris Rock or any of the other things that happened at the ceremony. We do talk a little bit about Chris Rock, but only in reference to his work as a past Oscars host. And lastly, <i>[chuckles]</i> there is a point in the first ten minutes or so of this interview where things get a little bumpy. It is not the whole conversation, but this first part of the interview gives you some important context for everything else, so we left it all in pretty much unedited.</p> <p>So, uh, you’ll hear what I mean soon enough. It’s fine. Don’t worry too much. Anyway. Let’s kick things off with a clip from <i>Life & Beth</i>. Like I said, it’s an intense show—a serious show—but also very funny. In this scene, Beth is out shopping with her mom. The two of them have a pretty complicated relationship. Beth doesn’t totally understand why her mom does what she does. Beth’s mom doesn’t really understand why her daughter didn’t amount to more than a wine salesperson. The vibe between them is—is tense. And while they’re in the middle of browsing for clothes and kibitzing a little, an employee stops by to offer them champagne.</p>			
00:02:49	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:02:50	Clip	Clip	Jane (<i>Life & Beth</i>): No thanks. No thanks. No, I don’t drink. I never had. I have low blood sugar. But my daughter drinks! A lot! <i>[Chuckles.]</i> But apparently not today.

Beth: [*Chuckles uncomfortably.*] Well, um, that's a lot of information to give a stranger.

Jane: [*Patronizingly.*] Oh. Yeah, well. It's fine. She sells wine for a living.

Associate: Oh! Dream job. What kind of wine?

Beth: Oh, mostly reds. But—I—its—I work for a company called Kerig Cellars. It's a wine distributor.

Associate: Kerig, I thought that was coffee.

Jane: That's what I always say! Don't I always say that?!

Beth: You do.

Jane: That's so funny. It's so funny.

[*The associate chuckles awkwardly.*]

Beth: It not funny. It's really not. It's um—yeah. It's spelled differently and it's a wine company.

Jane: And it sounds the same.

Beth: Right, but it is different.
Music swells and fades.

00:03:28 Sound Effect Transition

00:03:29 Jesse Host Amy Schumer, first of all, welcome to *Bullseye*.

00:03:31 Amy Schumer Guest Thank you. It's an honor to be on *Bullseye*.

00:03:34 Jesse Host That's, uh, not the case.

00:03:35 Amy Guest Wooow.

00:03:36 Jesse Host But I'm glad that you've been led to believe that.

[*They laugh.*]

00:03:38 Amy Guest Okay, then my publicist lied to me.

00:03:43 Jesse Host To what extent did you bring your mother into the process of making a really intense, personal television show that involves a mother character that may share qualities with her?

00:03:56 Amy Guest I brought her into the process in that she knew I was writing it. And then she read all the scripts. And then she watched all the episodes. And along the way, I asked her if there was anything that I wanted—if she wanted me to take anything out. And then, when we watched it together, which was really meaningful and actually really fun—and a couple times, she just said, “[*Censored*] you.”

[*Jesse laughs.*]

But about—not about any like big, dramatic things like, you know, Laura's character says like, “I don't need any sweetener. I have my own Stevia.” And like, that is—you know. That's such a her thing. So, some of the direct things from her, and talking about going to Peru and—you know. And so, she just—like a playful eff you.

00:04:47 Jesse Host So, did you like go through the whole thing when you watched it with her? Did you do it like one a week for—you know what I mean?

00:04:56 Amy Guest What do you mean? We watched it all in one sitting.

00:04:57 Jesse Host Like, did you just like—did you just like march her into a living room and sit down with her and be like, “Okay. We’re gonna check in every half hour at the end of each episode and then we’re gonna have dinner,” or was it—? Was it casual? It’s a lot of—

00:05:09 Amy Guest No, I think we—it’s five hours. And we—I’m sure we ate in there.

00:05:17 Jesse Host But all in one go?

00:05:19 Amy Guest Yeah! It’s a very bingeable show. *[Laughs.]* She’s like, “I’m 73. I’ve forgiven myself.” And she knows that I’ve forgiven her and she’s like, “This is your story. This is your life.” And she’s totally supportive.

00:05:33 Jesse Host Did you expect that fully or were you trepidatious?

00:05:38 Amy Guest I wasn’t sure. I was just open to—I didn’t wanna hurt her and I was down to change anything, all along. You know. Writing it, anything. And she was just like, “No, go.” I feel like I’m—I feel like that lets you down a little bit. *[Chuckles.]*

00:05:53 Jesse Host No! I mean, I’m thinking—my mom got on Twitter maybe a year ago.

00:05:58 Amy Guest Oh, I’m sorry.

00:05:59 Jesse Host And I love—my mother’s really cool.

00:06:03 Amy Guest She sounds great; she’s on Twitter!

00:06:05 Jesse Host She’s on Twitter. She has a new dog.

00:06:08 Amy Guest Huge.

00:06:09 Jesse Host But I got a couple of like stern, corrective texts—like correct the record texts about my childhood.

[Amy affirms with a laugh.]

About, yeah—about my childhood and like things that happened. And I was like, “Okay. *[Sighs.]* Boy.”

[Amy laughs.]

00:06:29 Amy Guest She does listen to this show sometimes, too. So, this may be—like, it’s nice to know that she cares.

Well, if she had any complaints before, just have her watch my show and she’ll definitely feel like she’s getting an easy—an easy ride.

[Jesse giggles.]

00:06:55 Jesse Host Yeah, my mom had corrective things like when I—I wrote my book and I wrote about some of our family, you know, trauma. And she’d be like, “Hebrew school was on Sunday.” You know? Like she just would correct like any like sort of factual things. Yeah.

Was she someone that you could see, either maybe when you were like an adolescent and becoming self-aware or maybe just when you were a young adult—that you could see was trying to be self-aware and figure things out and be better about things?

00:07:14 Amy Guest Was my—like did I witness my mom trying to—?

00:07:17 Jesse Host Yeah. Like, did you see her actively engaging with her own flaws and faults and challenges?

00:07:25 Amy Guest I really—I don’t remember. Like, as a teen? I don’t know. I only remember sort of my teenage version of her, which is why on the

show a lot of the footage—some of it's like distorted and, you know. 'Cause it's just memories. But she wasn't doing any like sort of Tony Robbins or—I would just assume she was just trying to like sort of survive, because she did have three children and, you know, no financial support. Yeah.

00:07:59 Jesse Host When you were younger—
 00:08:01 Amy Guest When I was like a teenager.
 00:08:02 Jesse Host When you were a teenager and a very young adult—you know what I mean?—before 25, let's say.

[Amy affirms.]

Did you feel like the relative precariousness of your family's situation meant that you had to be more responsible, with a capital "R"? Or did you feel like it meant that you could just do stuff, because—?

00:08:27 Amy Guest Both. I took advantage of the situation and, you know, if she was—my mom was dating, I would have a party. And also, I was kind of the family sparkplug and would try to keep things feeling positive and upbeat and keep everybody laughing. You know? And held my—especially my sister close, you know, to create the illusion that everything was actually fine. And I just have to ask, is this gonna all be about my traumatic childhood? Just so I can mentally prepare.

00:09:03 Jesse Host Do they—did your publicist not mention this is NPR?
 00:09:06 Amy Guest *[Laughs.]* They said it was a career-focused, um—they said it was a career-focused podcast about like your—this whole span of your career. And I'm down to talk about like my childhood or whatever, but I just wanted to know if that's what this whole experience is likely to be.

00:09:28 Jesse Host Not at—it won't at all be the entire thing. I'm not 100% how sincere you are right now. It certainly won't be the entire thing. *[Chuckles.]*

[Amy affirms.]

I really am just reading this in the context of the new show, which is *[chuckling]* very much about that.

00:09:46 Amy Guest Yeah! No, I know! I know. Um, the show is about—it's very personal. I just didn't know I was, you know, gonna talk about um... you know, talk about my family and everything for, um—you know, the majority, I guess.

00:10:10 Jesse Host It won't be the whole thing, but it will definitely be part of everything. It's a—it's a broad conversation, I would say.

00:10:19 Amy Guest Yeah, it feels broad.
 00:10:21 Jesse Host Does that make sense?
 00:10:23 Amy Guest We'll see, Jesse!
 00:10:25 Jesse Host Okay, Amy. I'm doing my best, here. I promise.
 00:10:28 Amy Guest Are you?
 00:10:30 Jesse Host *[Beat.]* Have you talked to my mom?
 00:10:31 Amy Guest Yeah.
 00:10:32 Jesse Host Is that how *[chuckling]*—? She said I could do anything with my life.

[Amy chuckles.]

Okay, let me—let me start over, here. How secure did you feel writing a show so personal at this point in your life?

00:10:57 Amy Guest Pretty secure 'til right now.

00:11:01	Jesse	Host	<i>[They chuckle.]</i>
00:11:02	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	Am I making you feel insecure about it? Amy: Well, I don't know.
			Jesse: I'm not doing it intentionally.
00:11:15	Amy	Guest	Amy: It just—there is something—you know, there's something about doing press, which is—which I've really enjoyed for this show, but I think when someone—you know. It is like a—it is, in some ways, the truth is a stranger who you're just meeting now wanting to unpack—you know, the nuances of your early childhood trauma. And you know, even though I put it out there and I made a show, I'm not necessarily down and don't—like it's not gonna be a joyful experience for me to like go through all that with you. And I don't really feel like—you know—just because I made a show about it, that—you know, that... that means that people are entitled to—or I'm, um—that I have to, you know, feel comfortable and feel like going through all of it again. Uh. Yeah. So, I mean, I guess it makes sense for you, as an interviewer, to wanna—I mean, these are like the burning, interesting questions. And I guess it really is just about me not really feeling like talking about it for—you know, talking about all the nuances and, you know. And you know, this is at the end of doing a lot of press, so I've said like a thousand times like—you know—it's 50/50 real and not. And so, maybe today I'm just a little raw and vulnerable and don't really wanna talk on NPR about that right now.
00:12:45	Jesse	Host	That's totally fine. Sincerely.
			<i>[Amy affirms.]</i>
00:13:13	Amy	Guest	I think a lot of your career has been—especially as a standup, has been about like figuring out how to show yourself to an audience. Right? When you first went up onstage, did you have like a goal or an idea of who you wanted to be? Or were you flying blind? I think I was just trying to—like, I think when anyone starts, they're just doing like an impersonation of what you think a comic is. But it was definitely a character. It like morphed into a character.
00:13:25	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:13:26	Clip	Clip	<i>[The audience laughs at regular intervals.]</i>
			Amy: I've lived in New York my whole life. But people—they always just like assume I'm from the Midwest. I've got that look about me. Right?
			<i>[Scattered cheers and applause from the audience.]</i>
00:13:53	Sound Effect	Transition	It looks like I've milked something recently. Right? I know. On the subway, I'm telling you, all the time. People are always like, "Are you lost?" I'm like no?! They're like, "Are you Amish?" I'm like nooo! I just like wearing this bonnet. Like, why are you—? It's my fault I look dope in a bonnet? I don't think so. Music swells and fades.

00:13:54 Amy Guest Yeah, it's like—I don't have a goal of like, "I want the exact same person when I'm on and offstage to—", you know? Because it's pretty boring. *[Chuckles.]* Like, I just kind of want to sit. But yeah, I didn't really have any goal. You know. I have goals like right in front of me, but I didn't have any idea of like an arc of a career or what it could lead to. I knew I wanted to perform and like that that was gonna be my thing. And like, I didn't have a backup to being a performer. But yeah. But I didn't have any like big picture ideas.

00:14:31 Jesse Host Did you find things about yourself that played onstage or things that you could do that played onstage right away?

00:14:44 Amy Guest *[Sighs.]* The things that people responded to—like, you know, when you're just trying to do anything you can to get stage time and it is so much—so many open mics, and the audience is just—you know, mostly guys just looking at you and everybody—you know, you might have a couple friends in comedy when you start out, but it does feel kind of cutthroat. And New York definitely felt like that. And just kind of like, "Okay, you have your five minutes. You waited three hours or whatever to get onstage. You paid whatever—you have to pay something to get onstage for open mics. Well, most of them anyway. *[Sighs.]* I don't know; it's changed. It's been a while. It could be—it's probably bitcoin now.

00:15:29 Jesse Host *[They chuckle.]* Often at least you have to like—you only get stage time if you've gotten people to come to the show.

00:15:35 Amy Guest That's one way. There's—that's called a bringer. You know, where you have to—you know—have eight people there or something. Or you bark—you go on the street; you give out fliers. "You wanna see a show?" You have to do that for hours. Or they do—or, again, open mic where you pay and whatever. And then, you know—there are just other comedians and they're not really an open, captive audience. They're comedians like you and have probably had a lot of trauma that's led them to wanna be a comedian. And you have to surprise them into laughing.

00:16:32 Jesse Host So, me setting up and then delivering like a punchline that's very different from what they thought was coming was—so, like the misdirect, I guess, was my—was like the only way I could get people to laugh. Yeah. And so, it was a lot of misdirection. Which I still—you know, I bet half my stuff is misdirection. Or more. It gives you some juice to really pull the rug out from under people, especially in a situation where you're doing five minutes or you're doing seven minutes and it's a 14-person show. Everybody in the audience is—you know, half the people in the audience are thinking about the set that they're gonna do. A third of the people in the audience are thinking about the set they just did. *[Chuckles.]*

00:16:54 Amy Guest Right. Or they just have their own *[censored]* going on. You know? Like, and comedians, who take things so highly personally—as if you can't tell—and uh, *[chuckles]* and then you know, like I remember one time I was like really worried that this bartender at the Punchline in San Francisco was like, "God, she's giving me such an attitude all weekend. Like, did I say something in my act?"

And they were like, "Oh no, she had an abortion this week."

And I was like, "Okay, it's not all about me."

00:17:25 Jesse Host [Chuckles.] They're usually so nice at the Punchline.
00:17:28 Amy Guest I know! I don't know. It must have just been that abortion.
00:17:33 Jesse Host And I imagine that is particularly true when, you know, the first distinctive thing about you as a comic on a lineup in 2005 in New York City is it's a 13-person lineup and there's two women on it. Right? So, you have to address that. You have to like punch through that right at the top if you only got five minutes. You know?
00:17:55 Amy Guest Yeah. I've found that, you know, the audience—and I know this for myself, being an audience member, they wanna know where to store you. What are you? Okay, you're like the single, slutty girl. Or you're like the uptight mom. Or—actually, those are the only two types of women in the world, but [chuckles]—no, but it's like—yeah, I had like such a gilded path. You know? To this career. Which still has taken an extreme amount of hustle. [Chuckles.]

But the sort of aspect—the being a woman part of it, I just feel like that—the stigma of that and the obstacles are just like across the board. I mean, what we found with the Me-Too movement which wasn't shocking was that like everybody was being oppressed and abused. You know? And from a really young age, I just remember it being made very clear to me that the boys were like the funny, smart ones and the girls were supposed to just try and look pretty and like wait for the boys to sort of call on you if they wanted to. And there were exceptions to that, but that was like pretty much the culture I grew up in and it definitely continued in standup. And it continues, now!

There's still many people in the comedy world that I interact with, you know, sometimes. And they just feel like very confused why you're even there. But also, a ton of really great, you know, men who are clearly feminists and see women as equals, especially female comics.

00:19:27 Jesse Host More to come with Amy Schumer. Stay with us. It's *Bullseye*, from [MaximumFun.org](https://www.maximumfun.org) and NPR.

[Beat.]

Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. If you're just joining us, I'm talking with comedian Amy Schumer. Amy created and starred in the award-winning sketch TV show *Inside Amy Schumer*. She also starred in the movies *Trainwreck* and *I Feel Pretty*. Along with hosting the Oscars—which she just did—Amy created and starred in the brand-new Hulu show, *Life & Beth*. It's a semi-autobiographical comedy about a woman from Long Island who reexamines her life after a sudden traumatic event. Let's get back into our conversation.

I mean, one of the things that I see, as an Angelino, about—you know, maybe the New York comedy scene a little less now, but maybe like in the late '90s through the mid to late aughts, is that this kind of like toughness was really highly prized. Like, the tone of New York comedy, for a long time, was, "Look, we're all doing these—everybody's doing 15 minutes at four clubs a night and we're all kind of punching through and kicking everybody's butt, onstage and seeing who can make the most exciting joke." And

that's like... you really gotta come hard to the hoop if you're gonna do that. You know what I mean?

00:20:48 Amy Guest Yeah! Like, I learned how to surf on a board that was 5'10" so that I could surf on anything. And I think of New York standup the same way. It's like you—*[chuckles]* if you can make it there, Jesse! No, but it's—it is! That is the vibe. And a lot of—and a lot of comics I know, it kind of makes them mad. Like they're like, "Look, I don't wanna get onstage and kill every time." *[Laughing.]* And you're like okay, well. You know, when you're working out a set and it's more laid back, you know. But if it's like a Saturday night, there's an expectation. It's like yeah! That's what New York crowds expect. And that's what the bookers expect. And it is; it's—that is the vibe. Not that there aren't absolute killers in LA, but I think—you know. I think there is like a cultural difference with the vibes at the clubs.

00:21:46 Jesse Host How do you think that effected what you were doing?

00:21:50 Amy Guest Well, I didn't know what was going on in LA. I still really don't. Like, you know, when I'm in town, I really enjoy getting up at all the clubs around here, and especially like Largo is so warm and fun. But yeah. I didn't—I wasn't really like thinking about what was going on in LA. Yeah. *[Laughs.]* I—you know, when I—when I did *Last Comic Standing*, I had gotten very used to like pretty supportive LA audiences while I was on that show. And some of them paid. And then when I came back to New York, I just—people just were like staring at me like I was wasting their time. *[Laughs.]* I was like ookay.

But at the same—you know, you can learn how to kill in New York, but it might not work in middle America. And I think you really need to try your stuff out everywhere for it to be, you know, really tested and ready for a special, or something.

00:22:48 Jesse Host I think also like there's a certain kind of—you know, a lot of New York comics are throwing really hard punches, you know what I mean? 'Cause you—'cause you gotta clear some space for yourself when you hit the stage. That's true in any standup, but like—

00:23:03 Amy Guest Yeah, the like make me remember—make them remember you vibe.

00:23:07 Jesse Host Yeah!

[Amy agrees.]

And that also kind of comes with a like—you know, "Well, I did it," if it works. Right? Like, if the audience is laughing, then it worked. And there's a kind of like—there's both an "I accomplished that thing" and there is an—there's like a little bit of defensiveness to it, at least as I hear it, sometimes. I haven't heard it from you, to be clear.

00:23:29 Amy Guest Sure! *[Chuckles.]* No, definitely. I think a lot of standups get in it, whether they know it or not, because they need to be in control. And I think like, weirdly, they feel safer onstage, 'cause that's where they're—and I say "them", but I know I'm included in that, you know, to some degree. And... but the thing is, is like then once your foot's in the door, like—you know, in the position I'm in now, I feel like I can explore more with being more myself and I'm not trying to say the thing that's gonna shock people anymore, unless I think it's like either really funny or silly or I'm like trying to make a statement.

00:24:14 Jesse Host Well, I mean, I think one of the things that I—when I saw your standup at the time, I saw you figuring out—and also one of the things that really connected with people is like, at the base of it, was this like dumb lady character.

[Amy agrees with a chuckle.]

And I can't think of an appropriate for NPR way to put another quality of this character that you were presenting, but maybe—*[stammering]* this is not a word I would use in my regular life, but when you were presenting self-consciously—easy?

00:24:47 Amy Guest Go ahead, say it! *[Censored.]*

[They laugh.]

00:24:49 Jesse Host Nooo! I wouldn't go that far.

00:24:50 Amy Guest Actually, I'm going on tour, and I call—I'm calling it *[Censored]* Tour.

00:24:54 Jesse Host So, *[laughs]* you're doing this character, but you're also doing it like—you're interspersing it with a voice that is a little more like a human person's voice, but you were still figuring out how to blend those two things together. *[Chuckles.]*

[Amy agrees.]

And that's not that wildly different from like having to combine like who am I—if I'm gonna be in the tabloids, like who is my public persona compared to me, as a human being?

00:25:18 Amy Guest I feel like you just have such little control over that. Like, tabloid sort of stuff and whatever? But I wasn't—you know, it's like, okay. We're all curating ourselves on Instagram and whatever. And that was all happening—it's like, you know, I was part of the generation that—as I think you were—that witnessed Britany Spears and Paris Hilton like just get devoured. And in like this really savage, cruel way. And so, the idea of becoming a famous person was not appealing at all and was really scary. And so, I think in order to feel like I had some control over it was like just to go hard the other way. Like, I'm not gonna try to always like look—you know, not that I'm like famous for my looks, but I'm not gonna—like, I'm gonna still wear, you know—like how I live my life, which is like obviously sweatpants all day and like just doing what I normally do, like just trying to just pretend like it's not there, I guess.

I don't even know if that's what you were asking, but that's just where my mind went. And in terms of like—yeah, like I wasn't really aware of like the bigger picture of sort of curating my identity as a famous person, at the time. But I mean, I was aware of the huge disparity between who I am in real life and who I was onstage. Like, I've never been a huge—no, I can't say I've never been a huge drinker. I don't remember years of college. But since then, you know. I'm not a big drinker. I do enjoy drinking, like having a couple drinks with friends or whatever, but I've never—and not since college have I like really slept around. Except for this one little stint, actually, right before I met my husband.

But no. So, like this sort of—this sort of like slutty, ugly, drunk thing was a part of me and kind of more who I was in college and—you know, like my girls from Long Island who I'm still really close with

like—you know, it's kind of like, okay, if you boil it down... like, your essence. Like that is in there and that is a part of me. But it was definitely—it's definitely not who I am—you know, who I am offstage. Like I—you know, you can't party like that or whatever. I couldn't. I suffer from chronic pain. *[Chuckles.]* So, it's like I have to really take care of myself in order to just do the bare minimum. One of the things that I, personally, have struggled with in my own marginal career as a public figure is understanding like how specific a role my work plays in people's lives, how narrow a role, and how narrow their idea of me is.

00:27:58 Jesse Host

[Amy affirms.]

And that *[chuckles]*—that like I can't make them know me. You know what I mean?
Nooo, no it's not even about you. It's not personal. Like, somebody's feelings about you are like actually not even any of our business.

00:28:25 Amy Guest

My instinct is always to explain myself to someone. And I'm like, no! They're just like—it's like, the way to do it is to be Guy Fieri. And your hairstyle—you just—

00:28:33 Jesse Host

[Amy giggles.]

Somebody sees you and they understand two things about you. That's not the totality of you, but they like see you, understand two things.

00:28:48 Amy Guest

00:28:51 Jesse Host

00:28:52 Amy Guest

That's so funny.

And those things are useful to them, in some way.

"Just be Guy Fieri" is like the most delightful thing I've heard in a really long time.

[They laugh.]

That makes me—
Well, you could—you could say the same thing about Anthony Bourdain. You know what I mean? Like, the late Anthony Bourdain.

00:28:59 Jesse Host

00:30:04 Amy Guest

No, but "just be—just be Guy Fieri" is such a funny line. I can't get over it. It made me cry-laugh.

00:30:10 Jesse Host

00:30:11 Amy Guest

But understand what I mean, right?

They want one thing. Like, you mean they want you to be one thing?

00:30:16 Jesse Host

Yeah, or one thing with a little modifier. Like a distinctive version of one thing. And that they—

00:29:20 Amy Guest

It's like how long are people thinking about us? You know what I mean? Even like—

[Jesse agrees.]

Like, you become a thought in their head and whether it's based on truth or—you know, maybe they—I maybe said something to you during this interview where—like, I was joking, and they took it that I wasn't joking or—you know. It's like whatever. Or someone like Pete Davidson, who's like—you know, everybody like is buzzing about—it's like just fun gossip or whatever. You really don't spend that much time on it. And then you're back thinking about yourself

again. So, I just—yeah. I don't know. I'm not worried about it. But you know what I do wanna say is like the only thing that has—that has upset me about my experience becoming a famous person, whatever, is the blatant lie that I've ever stolen a joke.

And there's viral videos out there where they made compilations making it look like I have. Never in my life would I do that. And I actually just had the opportunity—and I was taking a lie detector test and I asked them if they would please ask me about that. Because, as a comic, it's just such an ugly accusation. And if you're someone who does steal jokes, like you're not allowed—you're not gonna be friends with comics. You're not gonna—in my entire—that's just like handing trolls whatever. But you know what, I think the trolls are getting tired. The ones who were like up in arms and like organizing on reddit when I was—you know, to get me voted down on Rotten Tomatoes or whatever, I think that they might be tired.

But that was like the worst part of my, you know, whatever, journey of being a famous person. And that is like just—it was a total lie and is totally out of my control. You know?

00:31:08 Jesse Host

It's funny what hits, 'cause like obviously you went through it with, "Amy Schumer is racist. Amy Schumer isn't a real feminist." You know.

00:31:19 Amy Guest

[Chuckles dryly.] "Amy Schumer's fat." I'm like I don't care, but I never stole a joke.

[Jesse agrees with a laugh.]

No, but I mean, the thing is like I've just like educated myself and those criticisms of not understanding what it means to really be an actively good feminist and an ally—I didn't have those tools, then. And so, the things they were accusing me of—like, there was definitely truth to them. Not—you know, in the way that people go, "Well, I'm not racist. You know? I love Black people. I love all people of color and all people, and I see them all equally." It's like—and that was true then, that's true now. But you know, my eyes weren't opened to how much we live in an actual caste system. Yeah, they just weren't, like a lot of ours weren't.

And so—and I remember America Ferrara was the one who, you know, told me. I'm like, "Well, can't we just be working to help all women?" And like, no. This is a triage. We need to help women of color first, 'cause they've had it the worst for the longest. And that had to be explained to me. And so, you know, I've spent the last whatever, five or six years like really trying to be proactive in educating myself. And evolve. So, yeah. I'm like totally down to apologize for my jokes I've said before and for the decisions I've made that weren't good. And not as a PR statement. You know? That's how I really feel.

And just as I'm forgiving of other people who like aren't there yet and who haven't had their eyes opened to it—yeah.

00:33:03 Jesse Host

I mean, I very sincerely believe you. Like, I would not have invited you on this show if I didn't believe that to be the case. Like, I see it in your—

00:33:09 Amy Guest Oh, thank you.
00:33:10 Jesse Host Yeah, in your work and in—you know—the way you talk about your work in public, both. You know. Having followed many “someone is stealing someone’s jokes” controversies over the years, like there’s nothing that there’s less tolerance for in standup comedy, I would say.

00:33:26 Amy Guest I know. I mean, literally like the people who have raped—
00:33:30 Jesse Host Like, White people saying the “n” word or—yeah. Like, those things are more tolerated.

00:33:34 Amy Guest Come and go, yeah. Yeah. Oh, you statutory raped? You masturbated in front of people? You coerced somebody—? Nope, aaall forgiven. Cosby, forgiven. *[Laughs.]*

00:33:48 Jesse Host But parallel thought is a real thing that really exists. Like, two people can look at the same situation and see something similar that’s funny about it.

00:33:53 Amy Guest Yeah. It—yeah. But it’s also not just that. It’s like the things are like—okay, one of the things was like about an old joke that somebody said in a special and we did a line in one of the sketches about it that one of the writers pitched. Like, not even me. You know? It’s like—or Colin Quinn pitched a joke for *Trainwreck*, you know, that they were like, “Oh, well Daniel Tosh—” Like, it’s like so—and you could edit anybody’s stuff and make it look like that. But—so, I just hate that that’s out there in the ether.

00:34:28 Jesse Host Yeah, I was pretty shocked when I—somebody mentioned that to me. I hadn’t heard about it. And I was like, “One of these is like a sketch premise from her show. She didn’t write every sketch in her entire—” You can’t write an entire television sketch show by yourself.

00:34:41 Amy Guest No. It’s like—yeah. It’s wild. I’m so—I’ve always been like so careful and done my best. And then other stuff, they’ll show like a clip of—you know, Ali Wong’s special and a special I did before her. You know, it’s like—

00:35:07 Jesse Host And I would—you know, I understand this. I would call and go, “Excuse me. Did you steal—?” It’s like—it’s so dumb. Do you feel like going through like he gigantic life upheavals roughly in parallel of falling in love, getting married, turning 40, having a kid, dealing with a serious chronic illness, and a global pandemic—

00:35:30 Amy Guest *[Chuckles.]* Don’t forget about the war, the “don’t say gay” bill in Florida.

[Jesse sighs sadly and agrees.]

00:35:40 Jesse Host The climate and, um—you know.
00:35:41 Amy Guest There’s other stuff. Law enforcement killing Black people to an unbelievable rate—at an unbelievable rate. Yeah.

00:35:49 Jesse Host Do you think that all of those things made you want to work more or less?

00:35:55 Amy Guest Well, you know, before—when I was pregnant, I kind of like thought of when you have a baby as like—and because my pregnancy was so bad. It was just like, “Am I dying?” I always have this urgency to create stuff, whatever it is. I really like to hustle and work and do a ton of stuff and then like kind of chill a little bit. And so, I’m hoping to chill a little bit pretty soon, in like a month. So, it made me—it made me really appreciate everything. Like, you know, everybody else.

And you don't know what's gonna happen. Like, I wouldn't wanna—I wouldn't have wanted to host the Oscars if there weren't a pandemic. Like *[laughs]*, you know. It's like so risky and such a target on your back. But—such a bullseye! But uh, hello!

But yeah, I think it made me like—I was like in survival mode. Like, “Okay, how can we still make money and hustle?” And like—you know, and now I'm like I would love to just like get to just hang out with the fam and go for walks and you know.

00:37:11 Jesse Host

We've got even more to get into with Amy Schumer after a quick break. We'll talk about why she said yes to maybe the most stressful job in the business: hosting the Oscars. It's *Bullseye*, from [MaximumFun.org](https://www.maximumfun.org) and NPR.

00:37:25 Promo Clip

Music: Cheerful banjo music plays in the background.

Biz Ellis: Hi! I'm Biz, host of *One Bad Mother*. Whether you're a parent or just know kids exist in the world, join us each week as we honestly share what it's like to be a parent.

Speaker 1: I signed my stepson up for a camp that is actually in another state. I feel really stupid, and I don't think we're gonna get the money back!

Speaker 2: And then he found out that the car manual is a book about cars! So, now he's reading our car manual.

Speaker 3: We—our—I—*[stammering into a frustrated scream]*.

Biz: So, join us each week as we judge less, laugh more, and remind you that you are doing a great job. Download *One Bad Mother* on [MaximumFun.org](https://www.maximumfun.org). And yes, there will be swears.

[Music ends.]

00:38:08 Jesse Host

It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest is Amy Schumer. She created and stars in the new TV show, *Life & Beth*.

00:38:31 Amy Guest

Somehow, I feel like agreeing to cohost the Oscars is like a bigger self-exposure than writing and starring in a television show that's significantly like personal and based on your life. Like—

00:38:39 Jesse Host

I know. It's such a like skydive into just like a pile of *[censored]*.

00:38:46 Amy Guest

You must know people—I mean, did you ask Chris Rock what it was like for him? 'Cause he was—he was really funny in—

00:38:47 Jesse Host

He was great.

00:38:52 Amy Guest

I don't know if it was a net positive experience for him. *[Chuckles.]*

Yeah! He had fun.

[Jesse affirms.]

He definitely wasn't—didn't feel like doing it again. We're having dinner tonight, actually. He's, uh... but you know, I don't know. Everybody I talk to—like nobody was like, “Don't do it.” And you know, it's—and a lot of people don't wanna do it now, because—but, you know, Wanda and Regina and I have—we've never raped anyone that we're afraid is gonna come out. *[Laughs.]* Yeah. It is kind of like a psychotic thing to wanna do. And I really just wanna do it because I wanna do it. Like, I wanna have the experience. It's

been so fun to work on it, and I wanna perform. Like, I wanna go up and be funny.

And you know, I always—it annoys me every year. After the Oscars ends, then all of the—there’s like these pundits who have like never even told a joke at a dinner, and they’re deliberating on whether or not you were funny or if you were—took it too far or whatever. You know? So, yeah. It’s like, hope public opinion—but you just have no control. So, it’s just—it’s a skydive.

00:40:07 Jesse Host

One of the things that makes me worried when I watch the Oscars is I’m like I don’t know that these people or even people watching at home want this to be funny?

[Amy laughs and agrees.]

Like, I’m not 100% on that. Like, ‘cause I—like a formative experience in my childhood, I think was watching David Letterman host the Oscars. To me, it was the funniest thing I’d ever seen on television, and then all anyone could talk about was how bad it was.

[Amy agrees.]

And I was like, “What?! I’ve—that was the best thing I’ve ever seen!” *[Laughs.]*

00:40:39 Amy Guest

Right. No, I know. I felt like that when Jon Stewart hosted, I was like—I just thought he killed and that it was so funny. And then public opinion, I remember, was just like tearing him to—but you know, *[sighs]* the people that really matter to you—like the people who are smart that you care about their opinion, they’ll see what really happens. And you gotta just depend on that. So, you know. Whatever—I mean, I want public opinion to be nice to me. Like, it doesn’t feel good to have the whole world like hating you on the internet. But it also doesn’t really matter. And what really matters is that I’m gonna have this amazing memory and, you know, get to do these jokes I’ve worked hard on and be funny and...

And I think it’s cool. And I think it’s cool to be doing it with Wanda and Regina. Well, this is gonna air after. Watch, I’m like actually fully canceled. *[Laughs.]* “Amy’s last interview before she was canceled, on NPR.” Yeah.

00:41:50 Jesse Host

Wanda Sykes has your back. She’s got powerful mom vibes. I was—I was really—when she was on this show, I was so—I was so thrilled at how fully she delivered on what my hopes of what kind of lady she would be like. Or—

00:42:02 Amy Guest

Oh, god, I love her.

00:42:04 Jesse Host

A total hero.

00:42:06 Amy Guest

She’s a total hero. And she’s just one of my favorite people. Very lucky to be friends with her.

00:42:12 Jesse Host

When the three of you got this job, like did you have a cloister and say *[chuckles]*, “Hey, what do we want this to be?”

00:42:20 Amy Guest

That would’ve been a good idea.

[Jesse laughs.]

No, I think it was like really feeling each other out. You know? It’s like everybody’s bringing all their emotional baggage, and their

bagged of what this business—how they’ve treated them. And a lot of us, especially women, it’s like you have to start your career over every day. It doesn’t matter what you’ve done. Like, I know that like Tina Fey and her like even final season of *30 Rock*, like the network would give notes and—you know. It’s like they’d want like a season map out and just—just, you know things like that. It’s like, you know, if some network, some streaming service is like, “Okay, we wanna do something with you, but then we’re gonna micromanage every step of the way.” You know? It’s like you really have to start fresh every day. *[Chuckles.]* With like trying to prove yourself.

So, I think we all came in kind of a little bit ready to be disrespected and have just really met each other with like open arms and have been enjoying this actual collaboration, even from shooting the promos. Yeah. It’s like such a team thing and like I just feel like we’ve all been very down to share and like if I write a joke, I’m like, “Oh! Do you want that?” Or you know, any overflow, like we’re all very giving and—yeah.

00:43:37 Jesse Host Well, I think we should probably close the interview with a clip of you killing on the Oscars, the other day.

[Amy gasps excitedly.]

00:43:45 Amy Guest Right? *[Chuckles.]*

00:43:50 Jesse Host Yes! Let’s go to that clip where I wasn’t canceled.

00:43:50 Jesse Host Well, I really appreciate you taking the time, Amy. Thanks for talking to me.

00:43:54 Amy Guest Yeah, thank you. And thanks for holding my hand through my like mini meltdown.

00:44:00 Jesse Host The last thing I wanna do is have anybody come on this show and feel *[censored]* about it.

[Music fades in.]

So, I’m glad that you said something and I’m glad we got somewhere good.

00:44:07 Amy Guest I’m glad we talked it out. It was a pleasure.

00:44:09 Jesse Host Thank you very much.

00:44:10 Amy Guest Thank you.

00:44:11 Music Transition Bright, chiming synth.

00:44:15 Jesse Host Amy Schumer. Her new show, *Life & Beth*, is streaming now on Hulu. As we mentioned, this was taped the Wednesday before Amy hosted the Oscars. So, we didn’t get to ask her about what happened that night, but as promised, here’s Amy doing great from her opening speech at the ceremony.

00:44:33 Sound Effect Transition Music swells and fades.

00:44:34 Clip Clip **Amy:** This year, the Academy hired three women to host, because it’s cheaper than hiring one man.

[The audience laughs and applauds.]

00:44:44 Music Transition Relaxed music plays

00:44:46 Jesse Host 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. My eight-year-old, Oscar, took my power drill and disassembled the playhouse that was in the

backyard. *[Chuckles.]* It's now a pile of sticks and he also made a few swords out of it.

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", recorded by the group The Go! Team. Thanks to them and to their label, Memphis Industries, for sharing it.

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

00:45:43 Promo Promo

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

[Music fades out.]