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| 00:00:00 | Music | Transition | Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue. |
| 00:00:01 | Promo | Promo | **Speaker**: *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn* is a production of [MaximumFun.org](http://www.maximumfun.org) and is distributed by NPR.*[Music fades out.]* |
| 00:00:12 | Jesse Thorn | Host | I’m Jesse Thorn. It’s *Bullseye*. |
| 00:00:14 | Music | Transition | “Huddle Formation” from the album *Thunder, Lightning, Strike* by The Go! Team. A fast, upbeat, peppy song. Music plays as Jesse speaks, then fades out. |
| 00:00:23 | Jesse | Host | Look. There’s a lot going on in the world, right now. You don’t need me to tell you that, NPR listener. Maybe you’re looking for a break, something silly, something weird, something that can transport you somewhere else entirely. Maybe to a place where iguanas carry the mail. One where ATMs sprout from the ground in the city park, and hedges are trimmed with shaving cream and razors. Lemoncurd, Connecticut is one such place. It is a pristine, filthy rich suburb where pretty much everyone drives SUVs and owns a huge, perfect house.Lemoncurd is the fictional setting for the Adult Swim show *Three Busy Debras*. And it is sublime and bizarre and, frankly, a little disturbing. The show follows the day-to-day lives of three housewives, all of whom are named Debra. They’re all a bit deranged. They brunch a lot. They kind of hate each other. They hang out all the time. Look. There have been a lot of stories about the strange things going on behind white picket fences in suburban America, but *Three Busy Debras* might be the strangest. *[Chuckles.]* It is also really silly and really funny. I got to talk with the cast and creators of the show a couple of years ago. They are Sandy Honig—as Debra—Mitra Jouhari—as Debra—and Alyssa Stonoha—as Debra.The show is in its second season, now. It’s just as weird and funny as ever. I really love this show. I think you should watch it. To kick things off, let’s hear a little bit from the very beginning of *Three Busy Debras*’ pilot episode. The three Debras have sat down together for brunch. Like I said, they brunch a lot. The first Debra you’ll hear from is played by Sandy Honig. |
| 00:02:14 | Sound Effect | Transition | Music swells and fades. |
| 00:02:15 | Clip | Clip | *[They all laugh.]***Debra 1**: Debra, your hilarious story reminded me that I have a better one! It’s so funny and it’s sooo long. *[Giggles.]**[Piano music fades in.]***Debra 1**: So, my husband went to the doctor and found out that we have a cholesterol problem *[laughing]* as a result, we started eating oatmeal.*[They chuckle.]***Debra 2**: Debra, that is so funny! You have to stop. I just remembered something that happened on the way here. I forgot, because I was so busy walking inside.*[The sound of a harp being lowered into Debra 3’s arms.]***Debra 3**: So, what happened is that—*[strums harp]*. |
| 00:02:44 | Sound Effect | Transition | Music swells and fades. |
| 00:02:46 | Jesse | Host | Sandy, Mitra, Alyssa, welcome to *Bullseye*. It’s great to have you on the show.*[They thank him.]*How did the three of you start working together? |
| 00:02:55 | Alyssa Stonoha | Guest | We met doing comedy, in New York, in—like—2015. And, just, people in the community, in the New York Comedy community, were like, “You would love Alyssa! You would love Mitra! You would love Sandy!” So, we all got together and just started, like, doing improv together, is how it started. And the first night we hung out, we improvised a scene about three women all named Debra. And then that was the last idea we’ve ever had.*[The others laugh.]*So. |
| 00:03:26 | Mitra Jouhari | Guest | First and the last. And then, from there we were writing sketches and we were trying to write a play, and we just kept coming—we just kept coming back to this idea of three very busy women who were all named Debra and how much fun it was to do that. So, it had several iterations as, first, a ten-minute play, then a twenty-minute play. Then it ran as an hour long play for a few months, at the Annoyance Theatre, in New York. And then that eventually, through a long series of steps, led to it becoming us working with Amy Poehler and her company, Paper Kite, and eventually it becoming an Adult Swim show. |
| 00:04:00 | Jesse | Host | Why do you think you were so drawn to the idea of—I mean, it’s a—it’s a more specific category than busy women, but busy women is a *[laughs]*—as good a name as any for us to give to it, for right now.*[They laugh.]*For the sake of convenience. |
| 00:04:19 | Sandy Honig | Guest | Well, the first time that we were all trying to hang out, it was very hard for us to get together, because we all had completely different schedules. And we had this running joke, before we had ever hung out in person, just saying like, “Oh my god, I’m so busy. Sorry I can’t make it. Ugh, so busy.” And making up excuses as to why we were so busy. And I think that was why, when we first started performing together, we ended up just doing the bit that we had already started. |
| 00:04:43 | Mitra | Guest | And it’s like a—I think it’s a—you know, it’s a silly way to access the very real thing, which is that every—like, people want to seem like they have a lot going on, that they’re very busy, that they have these rich, fulfilling lives. And I think, you know, it’s obvious—we’re reaching that in a very silly way, but it’s kind of rooted in a real thing. |
| 00:05:03 | Sandy | Guest | Ultimately, the Debras are only busy doing things that they’ve invented and created.*[They laugh.]* |
| 00:05:10 | Jesse | Host | How old were the three of you when you started improvising this idea of busy Debras? |
| 00:05:19 | Sandy | Guest | Um, I was 23, I belieeeve? |
| 00:05:23 | Mitra | Guest | And then I was 22. |
| 00:05:26 | Alyssa | Guest | And I think I was 19. |
| 00:05:29 | Jesse | Host | To me, one of the most remarkable things about this story of the three of you getting together to create these characters is that they live in such a profoundly, like, young-middle-aged world. You know?*[They laugh.]*Like, I’m—I’m in my—I’m in my late 30s, now. And happy birthday to me.*[They laugh.]* |
| 00:05:55 | Mitra | Guest | Is it really your birthday? |
| 00:05:56 | Jesse | Host | It was my birthday a couple days ago, yeah.*[They excitedly wish him happy birthday.]* |
| 00:06:00 | Crosstalk | Crosstalk | **Mitra & Sandy**: *[In unison.]* Wow, way to bury the lede! *[They both laugh in surprise.]* |
| 00:06:04 | Alyssa | Guest | And we brought you here today to give you a surprise party. |
| 00:06:08 | Jesse | Host | Holy cow! |
| 00:06:09 | Mitra | Guest | What if we burst in through the door of your physical space? |
| 00:06:11 | Alyssa | Guest | Yeah, we kick down the door!*[They laugh.]* |
| 00:06:15 | Sandy | Guest | Violating your quarantine to wish you happy birthday. |
| 00:06:19 | Jesse | Host | But, like, I’m in a world of people—and especially parents—who live these lives of desperate busy-ness. You know, coming at it from various perspectives, you know, not everybody puts the shine on it that Debras—that the Debras do. But, like, that is—that is my world. That is not the world of, like, a junior in college.*[They laugh.]* |
| 00:06:43 | Mitra | Guest | I don’t know! I think it is! I mean, I think from—you know, at least for me, I was someone who really wanted to go to, like, an ivy league school, or something. And I was doing a million clubs in high school, or whatever. And it was this, sort of, beleaguered sense of how busy and exhausted I always was. And it’s a choice. I, like, it—I think the activities change, but that sense of, “Oh, god. Sorry, I’m just sooo wiped,” at least for me, I feel like, has always kind of been there. |
| 00:07:16 | Alyssa | Guest | And I think what felt like—like, the bigger picture of the Debras world, I think, was such a reaction for us. A) Leaving, like—leaving our hometowns and moving to New York. It was such a reaction to the people we grew up around. And B) Like, a lot of people from my hometown going on to just, like, be—not just, but going on to be husbands and wives and, you know, preparing to, like, own a house. I grew up around, like, a lot of really rich people. And they’re on track to being homeowners in their mid to late 20s. And it was such a reaction to, like, the people I grew up with and what their lives were becoming. And the—their parents and what their lives were. That I left to go to New York. |
| 00:08:06 | Jesse | Host | Did you feel pressured to be that kind of person, yourself? Or did you pressure yourself to be that kind of person? |
| 00:08:12 | Mitra | Guest | I’m from an area outside of Cincinnati, and everyone’s kind of married straight out of college. And I just sort of assumed that would be my life, as well. And really, had no problem with that and was ready to do that. And then just started doing comedy, and it sort of changed everything very quickly. But I think, you know, had I not started doing college improv, I would certainly be a married doctor *[laughs]*, by now. |
| 00:08:39 | Sandy | Guest | *[Laughing.]* I feel like I kind of had an opposite experience, because I have two parents that… kind of got forced into a career that I don’t—I mean, not forced, but I asked my dad, you know—my dad’s a doctor and his mom always really wanted him to be a doctor. And I was like, you know, “Is that—what would you have been if you weren’t a doctor?”And he was like, “I don’t know!”And I feel like my mom always felt kind of the same and they encouraged me and my brother to, you know, follow more—you know, whatever made us happy and more creative passions. |
| 00:09:17 | Alyssa | Guest | Yeah, I felt—I felt similarly. That I got really into comedy, like—in, like, middle school and high school. And I didn’t—you know, I thought I would maybe do other things, but I desperately knew that I—that that’s what I wanted to pursue, because I just loved comedy so much. And I didn’t know if it was possible or, you know, whatever. But I just knew, like, I feel strongly about this and I hope beyond hope that I can pursue it. |
| 00:09:45 | Mitra | Guest | Wait! Yeah, actually, I knew from a young age too, that I loved comedy!*[They all laugh.]* |
| 00:09:50 | Sandy | Guest | Actually, the moment I came out of the womb, I said, “Somebody stop me!” And just sort of—everything fell into place after that.*[They laugh.]*But, I don’t know, I do definitely feel—I don’t know if this is something that, like, our parents’ generation felt, but I definitely feel like there’s a pressure of us, when we’re in middle school, of, you know, “Oh, when you get to high school, you have to figure out—you have to have the perfect GPA and you have to take AP classes so that when you go to college you can have—” You know, etc., etc., etc.—"you can have your college courses done and then when you’re done with college—”It’s, like, a very—you know— |
| 00:10:21 | Mitra | Guest | Life is a long list of tasks. |
| 00:10:24 | Alyssa | Guest | And then you die! |
| 00:10:27 | Mitra | Guest | *[Laughs.]* It’s beautiful. Get a tat—I hope somebody gets a tattoo of that. |
| 00:10:32 | Jesse | Host | There’s another kind of pressure, which is the pressure to, like, live your passion.*[They all agree.]*Did any—*[laughing]* did any—then, that can kind of—that is obviously, often in direct conflict with the pressure to achieve or get into the right college or whatever. Did any of you feel that at your back? |
| 00:10:57 | Sandy | Guest | I remember when I was applying to colleges, I went to school for photography and I worked as a photographer, and I—a friend of mine was asking me, like, “What do you wanna major in, in college?” And I was, “Well, I was thinking photography.”And he was like, “Why would you waste your brain on that?” And I’ll never forget that! Because he was like, “You’re smart. You shouldn’t do art. Like, why would you—”*[They laugh.]* |
| 00:11:26 | Jesse | Host | Art’s for dummies. Everyone knows that. |
| 00:11:28 | Alyssa | Guest | Anyone can do art! |
| 00:11:29 | Sandy | Guest | And I was like, “Okay.” *[Laughing.]* Yeah! |
| 00:11:33 | Jesse | Host | That’s why nose tackles make the best artists.*[They laugh.]* |
| 00:11:38 | Sandy | Guest | Which—I don’t know, I also had a situation in college where—this is not really the same thing, but more just, like, the pressure of—when I was, like, a junior in college, I was studying photography and I had a friend of mine—I was like, “You know, I’m thinking I kinda wanna do comedy.”And he said, “It’s too late. You’re three years into a photography degree. You’re a photographer. It’s too late for you to do comedy.”*[They laugh.]*And I, like, freaked out! Because I was like, “Oh *[censored]*. Like, I should have started earlier!” Now, like—you know, everyone that I knew in college was already, like—oh, doing improv and on sketch teams, and I wasn’t doing any of that. And it, like, completely got in my head. I was 20? No, I was maybe 19? I don’t know. It was insane. |
| 00:12:17 | Jesse | Host | Holy Moley!*[Sandy agrees.]* |
| 00:12:20 | Mitra | Guest | Yeah, I didn’t really think that you could live your passion. *[Laughs.]* So, sort of the opposite of, like—I don’t know. I would watch shows that filmed—like, shows like *The Daily Show* that filmed in New York and be like, “Wow, I wonder, like, whoooo—who works on those shows? It feels so impossible and inaccessible to me.” And there was, sort of, never any sense of, like, “That could be you, one day.” Or “You could—you could—you could one day work in television.” It just felt like all those people must have known a million people in New York or grew up in New York and, like—just that it was this, sort of—that, like, inaccessible club that people like me, being like, you know, someone from Ohio or whatever, like could not access.So, it just wasn’t even—there was never any sense of, “You’re gonna do this, one day.” |
| 00:13:11 | Sandy | Guest | Whereas I am an East Coast elite!*[They laugh.]*And was told from a young age, *[in a snooty, transatlantic accent]*, “You can do whatever you want.” JK, JK, JK. But… |
| 00:13:22 | Jesse | Host | Even more with the *Three Busy Debras* still to come. We’ll be back in a minute! It’s *Bullseye*, from [MaximumFun.org](http://www.maximumfun.org) and NPR. |
| 00:13:31 | Music | Transition | Thumpy synth with light vocalizations. |
| 00:13:35 | Jesse | Host | It’s *Bullseye*, I’m Jesse Thorn. We’re listening back to my 2020 conversation with Sandy Honig, Mitra Jouhari, and Alyssa Stonoha. They’re the creators and stars of the great show *Three Busy Debras*. It is truly bizarre and hilarious and in the midst of its second season on Adult Swim. *[Laughing.]* It’s a little hard to describe the premise of the show other than to say they are highly burnished, suburban women who live in an idyllic and slightly insane suburb. They wear white most of the time. They are crazy. They are busy. And their names are all Debra. Let’s get back into our conversation.There’s something really… remarkable about the show, which is that these characters are, each in their own way, horrible monsters.*[They laugh.]*I mean, the show really opens with—the show opens with them sort of smiling and waving their way through manslaughter, at best.*[They cackle.]*But there is a certain sympathy for these characters, as well. Like, it seems like you are having a contest to see, “What is the most horrible thing that they can do that you can give a little bit of reason for why they would do something like that, that actually kind of feels like it makes sense?” |
| 00:15:02 | Alyssa | Guest | Well, it’s sort of this idea of, like, they’re—the protagonists of the show are villains to the world. But they’re villains because they’re, like, a product of the place and time and structure that they’ve been raised in. And it’s—so, it’s sort of like sympathizing with these horrible women, but also getting to, like, laugh at them and laugh with them. I think is the desire. |
| 00:15:31 | Mitra | Guest | Yeah I think—you know, a lot of our process of writing the show is starting with some sort of real, emotional thing that is relatable. So, you know, two Debras get into a club and the other one doesn’t get in. So, she feels left out. Like, feeling excluded feels very real, so then we can do really heightened, silly stuff. But I think, ultimately, coming from the place of, like, three women being very, very unfulfilled. So, you can kind of relate to that—or at least understand that. |
| 00:16:03 | Jesse | Host | What are the key elements of the sort of semi anonymous world in which the Debras live? Like what are the things, like them driving white Cadillac Escalades that feel like the specifics that make it familiar? |
| 00:16:22 | Sandy | Guest | I would say wasteful, for sure. Like, you know, driving these huge gas-guzzlers alone in their car. |
| 00:16:30 | Mitra | Guest | To go next door. |
| 00:16:33 | Alyssa | Guest | It’s like a Americana suburbia, but trying to—you know—literally trying to divorce it from existing in a time or place that we know, by not—by not really… naming it something that exists, or referencing things, but trying to make it feel like the—it’s a unique—suburbia’s a uniquely—like, this kind of suburbia is a uniquely, like, American, I think, wastefulness. |
| 00:17:01 | Mitra | Guest | And we wanted it to feel like—you know, you could watch this show and it’s whatever the richest neighborhood in your hometown is, or something like that. Like, it’s not tied to a specific state or city or anything like that. These are just really extravagant, manicured, pristine—like it’s all about projection and the show. Even if things are really horrible inside the house, the house will always look beautiful. And the same with the Debras. You know, it’s horrible inside the Debras, but on the outside they’re very clean at least. *[Laughs.]* |
| 00:17:31 | Jesse | Host | What are some moments in the show that grew out of or were exaggerated from things that you saw people do, in your own lives? |
| 00:17:42 | Sandy | Guest | Oh, if I say it I’ll get in troubleeee! |
| 00:17:45 | Mitra | Guest | I knooow.*[They laugh.]* |
| 00:17:48 | Jesse | Host | You don’t have to use names. And this is public radio, so there’s not that many people listening.*[They laugh.]* |
| 00:17:56 | Mitra | Guest | I mean, I would say definitely some stuff from that sleepover episode both comes from me as a person, but also people in my life. Just, like, the desperately wanting—like, trying to force warmth and intimacy onto other people and the, like—the obviously the tactics are very heightened, but I think those are very relatable to me, as a person, as well to people in my own life. Where, like, in my real life I’m constantly—before quarantine, was like constantly—you know, “Come over, I’ll make you dinner.” Like, this sense of like, “If I curate such a perfect environment, then you’re gonna like me back.”*[Laughing.]* So, that is something that comes from a very real place within me. And I think, hopefully, like kind of is a relatable thing. But I think that’s something that I’ve seen and felt in my own life. |
| 00:18:43 | Alyssa | Guest | I feel like, in the cartwheel club episode where Mitra and Sandy’s Debra’s get into the club and I don’t, and I’m left out, feels a—and also, the specific detail that, like, I can’t do a cartwheel.*[They laugh.]*And I did it once—it, well, I mean I can’t do a cartwheel, but also it’s this sense of, like, “I can’t do the thing that is required of me and I didn’t try to learn and now I feel left out” is, like, a very bad cycle that I feel I can—I’ve gotten in, like, since I was a child, right? *[Laughs.]* Like, I don’t do the thing. Don’t try to do the thing. But then when I see everyone else do it, I’m really jealous and have horrific desires to ruin it for everybody else. |
| 00:19:29 | Jesse | Host | You got the attention of Amy Poehler—one of the founders of the Upright Citizen’s Brigade, who is also a producer on the show—when you did a version of the *Three Debras* play at a theater at Carnegie Hall. |
| 00:19:44 | Sandy | Guest | You ever heard of it? No, I’m just kidding.*[They laugh.]*Yeeeah! No, I’m just kidding. |
| 00:19:50 | Jesse | Host | How did you get to Carnegie Hall? |
| 00:19:53 | Alyssa | Guest | Money, money, money!*[They laugh.]*We found out that you can just rent it and that’s how a lot of people end up performing there, is—like any good old institution—capitalism. So, we started a Kickstarter to raise the money to rent it for a night, to perform the show one night only, for free. Like, the tradeoff was, the tickets would be free if you—if you gave to the Kickstarter. So, we did a one night only show. |
| 00:20:28 | Mitra | Guest | And it was all new, which was super fun. And also, the most stressful experience of our lives.*[They laugh.]* |
| 00:20:36 | Sandy | Guest | It was also—you know, it’s a lot of money to rent it out, but even more money if you want to actually have lights change or the light—or, you know, sound! Or—so, the reason that we ended up writing this new show is because our original play had so many sound cues and video cues that we were—we realized we just had to write something specifically built for a stage where you couldn’t have anything change except dialogue and someone playing a piano. |
| 00:21:05 | Mitra | Guest | Yeah, we did the bare bones package, which is they turn the lights on and then they turn the lights off.*[Jesse laughs.]* |
| 00:21:11 | Sandy | Guest | Yeah, it was the house lights. So, we could see everyone’s face for the entire show. The lighting was horrible. |
| 00:21:19 | Alyssa | Guest | The lighting was horrible, and we worked unnecessarily and tirelessly on the seating chart. So, we also— |
| 00:21:26 | Mitra | Guest | ‘Cause we had audience plants. |
| 00:21:28 | Alyssa | Guest | We had audience plants, so we assigned every single person who got a ticket their seat. And then, during the intermission when the house lights came up again and we were back onstage, we realized that people were in different seats than we had assigned them. |
| 00:21:42 | Mitra | Guest | And we still remember that. So—*[They laugh.]* |
| 00:21:46 | Jesse | Host | Yeah, I mean the more you talk about this event, the more it’s starting to sound like you were trying to plan the perfect wedding. |
| 00:21:52 | Mitra | Guest | It really felt like a wedding! I mean, there was a day when we were all at my house and we were putting together the seating chart and it really was like, “Wow, I mean—this could be our wedding. Like, this might be it.” Like, all of our families were there. Our best friends were there. We’re wearing white. |
| 00:22:07 | Alyssa | Guest | We made them all dress up. We made them all—we made them all dress up and we sat all of our parents together. So, it very much was our wedding.*[They chuckle.]* |
| 00:22:16 | Jesse | Host | I mean, it is ironic that all three of you chose the path of not getting married right out of college and trying to become a pharmacist or whatever, and instead dedicated your lives to comedy and had to have this weird, symbolic wedding instead. |
| 00:22:32 | Alyssa | Guest | And actually, right now—oh. |
| 00:22:33 | Sandy | Guest | Well, one of the—oh, go ahead, Alyssa. |
| 00:22:35 | Alyssa | Guest | No, it was a joke, so it’s—it’s—the time has passed. |
| 00:22:38 | Sandy | Guest | I wanna hear the joooke! |
| 00:22:40 | Alyssa | Guest | I was saying—and actually, now, we need comedy, not pharmacists, more than ever. |
| 00:22:44 | Mitra | Guest | No!*[They laugh.]* |
| 00:22:46 | Sandy | Guest | Oh, nooo! |
| 00:22:47 | Alyssa | Guest | But that didn’t—but I was saying it ironically and if anybody comes for me, I’ll kill them! *[Laughs.]*  |
| 00:22:53 | Sandy | Guest | Um, I—when we did the Kickstarter, we had a bunch of Kickstarter prizes, which most of them were kind of slaps in the face, kind of doing a joke on Kickstarters. Where it was like, “If you donate $100, we will send you a zip file of papers that we wrote in college.” Or, “If you donate $50, we will mail you a box of stuff that we don’t want, from our apartments.” And, you know, it was—it was, like— |
| 00:23:20 | Alyssa | Guest | Someone got pistachio shells.*[They laugh.]*Someone got a box full of discarded pistachio shells. |
| 00:23:27 | Sandy | Guest | But one of the things that you could do, is if you paid the full amount that we were asking for, which was—I believe—$75,000, you could marry Alyssa at Carnegie Hall. |
| 00:23:40 | Alyssa | Guest | And no one did it! |
| 00:23:42 | Sandy | Guest | No one took the bait. Oh, and it if you donate—if you donated $5000, you would get a digital shoutout.*[They laugh.]*That was something that… |
| 00:23:54 | Jesse | Host | The show is on Adult Swim, which has been—supported so many brilliant and amazing, bizarre and disturbing comedy projects over the last few decades. It also was the subject, maybe six months ago, of a *Buzzfeed* article that revealed that, of the topline creator level talent of it’s shows that it had on the air and in production, 1 in 34 was a woman. Did you know about that reputation before you went into pitch? And was it a worry? |
| 00:24:29 | Mitra | Guest | I mean, I think what we wanted was a place where we could make exactly the show we wanted to make, in our own voices. And the place that felt to us—like, the place where we had the likeliest chance of getting to make our show, was Adult Swim. So, that was the place where we always wanted to make it. So, we went into that pitch just hoping that we would get to do that. So, it was very exciting to us to… to get that yes, ‘cause we… we just wanted to be able to make our thing. |
| 00:25:01 | Alyssa | Guest | And when we were doing our play and we were, like, you know—just sort of talking and dreaming to one another about, like, “What if we get to make this, like, a big thing—like, for TV or, you know, whatever?” It was always like, “Adult Swim feels like the right—the only right place, really.” It’s like the only place that really embraces, like, that—you know, weird, surreal, absurdist— |
| 00:25:26 | Mitra | Guest | Freaks and weirdos! |
| 00:25:28 | Alyssa | Guest | Like, comedy! Like type of comedy. Like, there’s—I don’t know. It just—it was always like a dream sort of place, because the coolest stuff had come out of there. |
| 00:25:37 | Sandy | Guest | Yeah, you know, one of the things that—we did know, going into the pitch, you know, about that. But after, you know, that stuff came out, a ton of people that worked with Adult Swim—people like Brett Gelman, and—they came out and sort of defended women and were saying, you know, “This is something that we should change.” So, it felt like there was a very positive atmosphere towards looking to remedy that, which was exciting. |
| 00:26:02 | Jesse | Host | All three of your characters are named Debra and, as far as we can tell, that is their only name. What do you actually, like, write into the script? |
| 00:26:12 | Alyssa | Guest | We write, “Mitra, Sandy, and Alyssa” in the script. And, sometimes when we’re writing in the dialogue, we will accidentally write one of them referring to Mitra, Sandy, or Alyssa instead of Debra. And the joke we always make is, “Who’s Mitra? Who’s Sandy? Who’s Alyssa?” And it’s really awesome. We all laugh a lot, the whole time. |
| 00:26:33 | Sandy | Guest | It’s funny every time!*[They all laugh.]* |
| 00:26:34 | Alyssa | Guest | Gets me every time! Aha! |
| 00:26:36 | Sandy | Guest | It does, actually.*[They laugh.]* |
| 00:26:39 | Jesse | Host | We’ll wrap up my interview with the cast of *Three Busy Debras*. After a quick break, was there even an idea they pitched for the show that was too bizarre to make the cut? What could possibly be to bizarre for this bizarre, bizarre television show? We’ll find out in a moment. It’s *Bullseye*, from [MaximumFun.org](http://www.maximumfun.org) and NPR. |
| 00:26:58 | Promo | Clip | Music: Bold, orchestral, classic sci-fi style music.**Alden Ford**: Hey! This is Alden Ford.**Moujan Zolfaghari**: And Moujan Zolfaghari.**Alden**: And we’re here with all the other creators of *Mission to Zyxx*.*[Everyone offers less than enthusiastic hellos.]***Speaker**: You’re not gonna say our names, too?**Moujan**: No, no. It’s a short promo.*[The others agree skeptically.]***Alden**: Yeah, sort of speed through it.**Moujan**: Now, with the end of our fifth and final season just a few weeks away, we wanna say thank you to Maximum Fun and to every single one of you who’s listened to and supported *Mission to Zyxx*.**Alden**: Thank you. And if you haven’t checked it out, well, *Mission to Zyxx* is an improvised space opera with blockbuster quality sound design, a score performed by an actual 60-piece orchestra, and hilarious guest comedians on every episode. And, as our final episodes air, now is the… perfect?—time to jump on board.**Moujan**: That’s *Mission to Zyxx*. Z-Y-X-X, on Maximum Fun.*[Music ends in an exciting swell of horns.]* |
| 00:27:43 | Music | Transition | Thumpy synth with light vocalizations. |
| 00:27:48 | Jesse | Host | It’s *Bullseye*. I’m Jesse Thorn. I’m talking with Alyssa Stonoha, Sandy Honig, and Mitra Jouhari. They’re the stars and creators of the TV show *Three Busy Debras*.What is one of the most bizarre plot pitches that made it into this season of *Three Busy Debras* and what is one that was simply too bizarre for television? |
| 00:28:13 | Alyssa | Guest | I’m gonna go out on a limb and say the ATM that grows out of the ground.*[They laugh.]*The naturally occurring ATM that grows out of the ground, which was originally a joke beat in an episode that didn’t end up getting made—or, like, didn’t end up getting written. It was a joke beat that we were told to cut, that we then said, “Well, what if it actually—" |
| 00:28:35 | Mitra | Guest | And we were told to cut it because it was too weird, also. *[Laughs.]* |
| 00:28:39 | Alyssa | Guest | And then we were like, but what if we made that the whole episode? I feel like it could make cents (sense).*[They laugh.]*I think that was maybe the weirdest—or, like, the—yeah, the most—the most, like, strange world building thing we had to explain. *[Laughs.]* |
| 00:29:00 | Sandy | Guest | Definitely, like, the one where you really have to ask the audience to suspend their *[laughs]*, uh, you know… disbelief and really go—just go with the fact that we’re saying, “Okay, listen. In the first 10 seconds of this episode, you just have to understand the ATM grows out of the ground, and now it’s erupting. Okay. Continue with the story.”*[Jesse laughs.]* |
| 00:29:21 | Alyssa | Guest | Don’t ask questions yet, ‘cause I feel like there’ll be a lot more questions you will be asking later. |
| 00:29:27 | Jesse | Host | I like the idea of someone say, “Sorry, gang. This one strains credulity. Let’s stick with grounded material, like an iguana delivering the mail."*[They laugh.]* |
| 00:29:39 | Alyssa | Guest | But we understand the mail—we understand the concept of the mailman.*[They giggle.]* |
| 00:29:46 | Jesse | Host | And we certainly understand the concept of an iguana! |
| 00:29:49 | Alyssa | Guest | Yeah! So, like, we just combined the two! |
| 00:29:52 | Jesse | Host | Where’s the problem here? |
| 00:29:53 | Mitra | Guest | And it’s grounded! *[Laughs.]* |
| 00:29:54 | Alyssa | Guest | I’m trying to think of something that got cut, that we didn’t end up doing ‘cause it didn’t make any sense. |
| 00:30:00 | Sandy | Guest | But I kind of feel like we were able to get away with… everything. *[Laughs.]* |
| 00:30:06 | Mitra | Guest | Yeah. I mean… I think, like… like, gags got cut. But for the most part, you know—for better or for worse, we’re kind of allowed to do the stuff that we like. *[Laughs.]* So, I—yeah. I’m not—I’m not sure if, like, anything we really, really loved got cut. |
| 00:30:26 | Sandy | Guest | I don’t think—I mean, I think there was one thing where, at the end of the episode—the fourth episode, “Barbara”—we were writing the end of that episode, which I think is the most chaotic 30 seconds of any episode that we’ve done. And the whole time we were writing it, we were like, “Alright, obviously we’re gonna be told we have to change this.” And then we didn’t get told and we’re going into production and we’re like, “Well, obviously at some point someone is gonna stop us and someone is gonna tell us we can’t do this.”And then it just got to the day we were shooting it and it was like, “Okay! I guess everyone’s letting us *[laughs]* do this!” |
| 00:30:58 | Mitra | Guest | That’s a—and that’s a nice sort of, like, succinct way to describe the whole experience of doing this show. *[Laughs.]* It’s like, “Surely someone will interfere!” No? Okay! Wow. Yay!*[They laugh.]* |
| 00:31:10 | Jesse | Host | Is that also scary? |
| 00:31:12 | Alyssa | Guest | Well, it—it—it is.*[They laugh.]*Well, episode—that episode aired not this past—I don’t know when this is coming out. But at the time of this recording, not this past Sunday but the Sunday before. And I was prepared—I was worried that that episode would—the ending of that episode would be, like—would make people watching it mad at how stupid it was. *[Laughs.]*And people—*[Jesse laughs.]*And the feedback I’ve seen has been that it’s like some of people’s favorite jokes and stuff. And that is rewarding, where it’s like, “Oh, this was really silly to—this was the silliest moment of writing that season, was writing that scene.” And we were, like, doing it through tears laughing, ‘cause we were like, “This is so stupid and funny to us.” And for people feel similarly is shocking and scary going into it. |
| 00:32:07 | Mitra | Guest | Yeah, I mean it’s very vulnerable to have worked on something for five years and, like, constantly, consistently—throughout those five years—and at the end of that, the show just comes out! And it’s like, “Here’s that thing I’ve been talking about since 2015. Oh god, I hope you like it!” And the nice thing is that people have been so kind and it, you know—that it has been well-received. And that is—I mean, it is very scary to just earnestly put something out, into the world. No matter what. So, it’s exciting that people like it. |
| 00:32:43 | Jesse | Host | I think I would be most afraid of not having limits and thus being entirely responsible for… my work. Like, the fact that no one was checking me, you know? |
| 00:32:58 | Mitra | Guest | I mean, we’re super lucky that we have, like, great producers and our—like, the folks at Adult Swim are really—everybody’s really involved in the making of this show. So, I mean if we’re ever going out too far on a limb, someone will be like, “Hey! Like, maybe reign this thing in, but this thing is really working.” So, I think we definitely have checks—we are getting—we are, I think—do a good job of, sort of, checking ourselves. But we also work with really wonderful people who ask the right questions and keep us from going too—you know, it’s so hard to tell, with this show, like what’s too far, or something. But keep us—keep us true to whatever story we say that we’re trying to tell. Kinda. *[Chuckles.]* |
| 00:33:41 | Jesse | Host | I mean, I think we’ve established that as far as you’re concerned, too far has yet to occur.*[They laugh.]* |
| 00:33:47 | Mitra | Guest | Well, we just wanna make sure we keep it subtle, nuanced, grounded, bumblecore kind of vibes for—*[laughs.]**[Jesse laughs.]* |
| 00:33:54 | Sandy | Guest | And the thing that’s been really amazing is, you know, it’s like we get to—we just do such subtle performances that, ummm— |
| 00:33:59 | Alyssa | Guest | Yeah, we trained reeeally, reeeally looong in Julliard’s Ack-Ting School.*[They laugh.]*No, we’re all hams.*[They laugh.]* |
| 00:34:12 | Jesse | Host | *[Chuckling.]* Well, Sandy, Mitra, Alyssa, thank you so much for taking the time to talk to me on *Bullseye*. It was really great to talk to you and the show is really hilarious. Congratulations.*[They thank him.]*Sandy Honig, Mitra Jouhari, and Alyssa Stonoha. *Three Busy Debras,* really something else. You can watch both seasons on Adult Swim or the HBO Max app, and I very sincerely recommend that you do. I guess it’s one of those things that maybe isn’t for everyone but, man, it is real funny. And the episodes are short! So, give it a try. |
| 00:34:43 | Music | Transition | Cheerful, chiming synth. |
| 00:34:49 | Jesse | Host | That’s the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye*, created from the homes me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California. The other day, I was gonna have a birthday party. So, I rented a bounce house for my kids and their friends who were gonna be around. And then my youngest got sick. Just a cold, but a bad cold. So, we had to cancel the party. But they still delivered he bounce house. So, it just sort of was our personal bounce house for a day. It was weird but fun!Our show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our senior producer is Kevin Ferguson. Our producers are Jesus Ambrosio, Valerie Moffat and Richard Robey. Our production fellow at Maximum Fun is Tabatha Myers. Welcome onboard, Tabatha. We get booking help from Mara Davis. Our interstitial music is by Dan Wally, also known as DJW. Our theme song is “Huddle Formation”, written and recorded by the great band, The Go! Team. Thanks to them and to their label, Memphis Industries, for letting us use that song. *Bullseye* is also on YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook. You can find us there. Give us a follow; we will share with you all of our interviews. And I think that’s about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature signoff. |
| 00:36:11 | Promo | Promo | **Speaker**: *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn* is a production of [MaximumFun.org](http://www.maximumfun.org) and is distributed by NPR.*[Music ends.]* |