

00:00:00	Music	Transition	Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue.
00:00:01	Promo	Promo	Speaker: <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.
00:00:13	Music	Transition	<i>[Music fades out.]</i> “Huddle Formation” from the album <i>Thunder, Lightning, Strike</i> by The Go! Team. A fast, upbeat, peppy song. Music plays as Jesse speaks, then fades out.
00:00:36	Jesse Thorn	Host	It’s <i>Bullseye</i> . I’m Jesse Thorn. Bjork, Prince, Oprah. They all go by just one name. Why? They’re legends. This week on <i>Bullseye</i> , we welcome another single named icon, Steve-O.
00:00:56	Music	Transition	Energetic rock music.
00:01:05	Jesse	Host	For over 20 years, Steve-O has performed on <i>Jackass</i> in all its iterations. The original TV show, the movies, the spinoffs. He’s risked life and limb. He has suffered countless very serious injuries. And in doing all of those things, he has made millions laugh. And gasp. And cringe.
00:01:27	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:01:28	Clip	Clip	Music: Chaotic orchestral noise. <i>[Multiple voices shout over each other before a thump, a scream of pain, and bursts of laughter. Another crash accompanied by laughter.]</i> Speaker: Maybe we used the wrong instruments. So, you think music calmed the wild beast? Steve-O: Not at all, man. Not at all.
00:01:48	Sound Effect	Transition	<i>[Speaker cackles.]</i> Music swells and fades.
00:01:49	Jesse	Host	Let me put it this way. Steve-O is America’s only entertainer who could pull off a full back tattoo of Steve-O giving a thumbs up. In all seriousness, though, it’s not easy being Steve-O. It never really has been. Steve-O, who was born Stephen Glover, has dealt with addiction nearly his entire life. This past January, he marked his 14 th year clean and sober. He’s been arrested. He’s been jailed. And he suffers from the kind of medical issues you’d expect to see from a person who’s injured themselves for the entertainment of others for two decades. He’s doing a lot better, these days. Like I said, he’s sober. He lives in LA. He’s got a bunch of dogs, two goats. The latest <i>Jackass</i> movie, <i>Jackass Forever</i> , is not only hilarious, it was a huge success. You’ll hear a clip from that later. And Steve-O has a brand-new book. It’s called <i>A Hard Kick in the Nuts: What I’ve Learned from a Lifetime of Terrible Decisions</i> . It just came out last month. In it, Steve-O talks a lot about addiction and recovery, how he came out the other side, and the lessons he learned. Before we get into my interview with Steve-O, a warning. There will be some coarse language. We will also be talking about bodily harm, because—

frankly—it is impossible to tell the story of Steve-O without talking about bodily harm.

[Music fades in.]

So, we thought we'd let you know about both of those things. Anyway, let's get into it: my conversation with Steve-O.

00:03:22	Music	Transition	Thumpy rock music.
00:03:26	Jesse	Host	Steve-O, welcome to <i>Bullseye</i> . It's so nice to have you on the show! It's nice to have you here.
00:03:30	Steve-O	Guest	Yeah, dude. Thank you for the invite. Am I correct, we're on NPR?
00:03:34	Jesse	Host	National Public Radio, the one and only.
00:03:36	Steve-O	Guest	How 'bout that, man? I just had an NPR interview on like this super—it just felt super legit and grownup and sophisticated and mature and highbrow.

[Jesse chuckles and agrees.]

And it was just unfortunate that I had just woken up and I just don't think that—I—

00:03:56	Jesse	Host	<i>[Laughs.]</i> I thought you were about to say, "Whereas <u>this</u> one."
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[They laugh.]

00:04:01	Steve-O	Guest	Well, no, I just—I don't know, and I got feedback from it. Like, "Oh I heard you on NPR today." And yeah, it wasn't negative feedback, but I felt as though I didn't deliver a great interview. And I'm happy to report that right now, I feel rested. I feel sharp. I feel—you know, awake.
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00:04:26	Jesse	Host	What constitutes great public radio interview? I mean, what are we shooting for, here?
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00:04:30	Steve-O	Guest	I mean, I don't know. But I also understand that this being NPR, it means its inherently highbrow and mature and sophisticated. But it's also very much targeted to a comedy audience and wildly popular, at that.
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00:04:47	Jesse	Host	Thank you, Steve. That's very kind of you to say.
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00:04:50	Steve-O	Guest	That is what was reported to me.
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00:04:51	Jesse	Host	I'm glad someone told you that. And I believe them to be correct. Sure.
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00:04:55	Steve-O	Guest	Yeah, my publicist raved about it.
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00:04:58	Jesse	Host	Steve, as long as we're being classy and targeting a comedy audience, maybe we should talk about clown college, which you went to.
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00:05:05	Steve-O	Guest	Sure. Happy to.
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00:05:07	Jesse	Host	I guess the first question is like why did you want to go to clown college enough to figure out how to go to clown college?
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00:05:17	Steve-O	Guest	I never even thought about being a clown or even in the circus until like very shortly before I auditioned for clown college. Never even knew there was a clown college. My story was that I was heavily into skateboarding—you know, when I was young. My dad won a video camera in a golf tournament when I was fifteen. I stole it from his closet and just started filming skateboarding and editing skateboard videos with two VCRs connected to each other. And I fell in love with the video camera at that point. 'Cause I was able to manipulate my appearance. You know? Like, manipulate people's impressions of me, really. Largely because skateboarding is so much just fails and fails and—
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00:06:24 Jesse Host Well, there's—outside of our—our office has a big picture window that overlooks MacArthur Park, new downtown LA.

[Steve-O affirms enthusiastically.]

And there are a couple of big handrails in the park, down big sets of stairs. And often, there are, you know, groups of four 17-year-olds with cameras and skateboards. And the thing that always strikes me about it is—you know, they just go and go and go! Because skateboard tricks are hard.

[Steve-O agrees.]

00:07:12 Steve-O Guest And editing means that you can use the one that works, so they just—they're just going and getting hurt over and over and over, trying to nail something. And it's kind of—like, it's kind of beautiful. It's super beautiful. I maintain that skateboarding taught me everything of supreme value in life, really. Like, people will say I learned everything I needed to know in kindergarten, and I really think I learned it from skateboarding. Because it is so demanding. It's so difficult. It's so dangerous. You know, you cannot become proficient on any level at skateboarding without falling down and grievously hurting yourself. And it's just so frustrating and difficult. And once the—you know, once you become proficient, you've made it through all these challenges. It whittles down. You know?

Like, I started skateboarding in 1985, when *Back to the Future* came out. It became this big boom in skateboarding. There was a skateboard underneath every kid's Christmas tree that year. And in short order, like 90% of the kids realized how difficult it was, and they fell down and they got hurt. That—you know, "This isn't for me." Like, 10% that kept doing it, if it was that—you know, like it's just this—it isolates this just group of just persistent bastards. You know? Like, it's really the only activity that lends itself to videotaping yourself doing it. Like, that—and early on, it was like that. You know. Every kid that's really trying hard at skateboarding wants to be sponsored. And so, the way to get sponsored is to make what's called a sponsor me video. And you'd document—that's what you said. The kids show up and they're videotaping themselves.

Like, no other activity really lends itself to that the way skateboarding does. You know, if you wanna become a tennis player then win games, win matches—you know? But skateboarders got such a head start on video production. And that was what I first said was that skateboarding led me to the video camera, and I fell in love with the video camera. Now, the first actual—I'll say practical like life goal that I had for myself was to become a creative advertising consultant. I thought, yeah, I love making videos. I'm not that good at skateboarding. But I just love the way that you can edit and manipulate, and I think I could be good at making TV commercials. So, that was what I went to the University of Miami for, to study in the school of communications with an advertising major.

And I found that I was just not able to go to class. Just couldn't do it. You know? I couldn't do it, and I couldn't keep a job. I'd been fired

from every job that I ever had. I was kicked out of the dorms. You know. I was on my way out of the University of Miami having failed really badly. And people were asking me, "Well, what are you gonna do now?" You know? Like, "What's your plan? You were kicked out of the dorms. Can't stay here." And I said I'm gonna become a crazy, famous stuntman with a video camera. And everyone just felt terribly sorry for me. Just what a tragic loser I seemed to be, with this failing plan. And I left the University of Miami. I did have a video camera for a while there, before it melted in a hot car. And *[stammering]* I managed to get my hands on video cameras and get things done all the time. But I was very much homeless for three years after I left the University of Miami.

00:10:59 Steve-O Guest

I'm couch surfing. And at the end of—you know, three years of being homeless, I kind of threw my arms up in the air. I was just really, really hurting. And I just—I reached out to my sister and said, you know, hey, like—you know, I don't know what to do. And she said, "Well, come live with me in Albuquerque, New Mexico. She had just moved out there and become a journalist. She's kind of lonely and—yeah, I moved out to live with my sister. It was a nightmare for her, because she didn't make that much money. She lived in a modest home. I was a slob. I ate her food. I was—you know.

00:11:41 Jesse Host
00:11:43 Steve-O Guest

Were you drinking and using at the time, too? So—
Yeah. I was. I was mostly a pothead and drunk all the time, but yeah. I was a disaster. And she was at work one day, reading a book of trivia, and she came upon a question that asked, "What is the only college that has no tuition?" And she was interested, and she flipped to the answer. And it said, "Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Clown College." If you can get in, it's totally free. And she immediately thought of me. I like to think that she thought of me because like this seemed like a possible way of getting me out of her house. And I came home that night, and there was a little note on the table. Which I kept to this day. It said, "Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Clown College, apparently tuition's free if you can get in." And there was a phone number.

And I called the number, and yeah, that was how I found out about it. The—what turned me on about it was that I wasn't really getting any traction in having a career. By that point, I was like doing simultaneous fire breathing acrobatics. I could do like a perfect standing backflip like on flat ground, while on fire and breathe a fireball as I flipped. All this crazy stuff like that. I was doing handstands on moving cars. I got—

00:13:09 Jesse Host

Was this—now, hold on. Because, like—so, I have a buddy who is like a variety performer. Right? Like, he goes and does the Edinburgh Fringe and then he goes and does—and he does like tricks. Like not like magic tricks, but like—

00:13:23 Steve-O Guest

Skills.

[Jesse confirms.]

Juggles.

00:13:26 Jesse Host
00:13:28 Steve-O Guest
00:13:29 Jesse Host

His big move is he pulls the—
Tablecloth?

The tablecloth and then he puts it back on.

[Steve-O “wow”s.]

00:13:34	Steve-O	Guest	That’s his big move. And—
00:13:36	Jesse	Host	What do you mean by put it back on? Underneath? I mean, he puts it back on. Like, there’s—you know, the table is all set. Yeah. He pulls it out, and then he pulls it in. He reverses it, like underneath all the stuff.
00:13:46	Steve-O	Guest	Wow! I might need to see a video of that.
00:13:47	Jesse	Host	It’s very cool! I mean, it’s amazing, ‘cause he’s—you know, it took a lot of work. Right? And he made this video about learning to do that and essentially what happened is like his parents wanted him to go to college, so he pretty much told his parents he was going to college, but actually he was going to a park for a year all day long, just practicing skills.

[Steve-O affirms.]

00:14:45	Steve-O	Guest	And so there— <i>[chuckling]</i> like, you’re describing this dissolute lifestyle. Couch surfing and whatever. But like, at some point, fire breathing is not like getting kicked in the jewels. Like, getting kicked in the jewels on camera takes the guts to get kicked in the jewels. And some charisma to do it successfully. <i>[Chuckles.]</i> But like fire breathing involves skill and you don’t just fire breathe. Right?!
00:14:51	Jesse	Host	Well, yeah. I mean, the fire breathing, I learned it in a super unconventional way.
00:14:55	Steve-O	Guest	<i>[Bursts into laughter.]</i> You—not the same old fire breathing learning story! <i>[Stammering.]</i> I was taught the wrong way. I was taught the wrong way. I was—a buddy of mine at the University of Miami would do it with isopropyl rubbing alcohol, which I think is really bad to put in your mouth. Like, and I did it for yeeears. And the first time that I ever performed in front of hundreds of people, it was—I wanna say it was Stuart, Florida, 1996. And I’d heard on the radio that they were having a—it was called the Freak of Nature Contest or Talent Contest. And I called up, and I said, “I wanna be in the talent contest.”

And they said, “What’s your act?” I told them I’m Steve-O, the alcoholic gymnast. And I explained that I would shotgun enough beers onstage like back-to-back to be undeniably drunk, visibly drunk. Then I would perform acrobatics while drunk, and I just threw fire breathing into the mix.

[Jesse laughs.]

So—and they had a number of acts. There was a good number of acts. This was like probably a two-hour show, 700 people in the theater. And there’d be an act. I’d come out and shotgun two beers. You could hear it crack open and you could hear that it was empty when I threw it on the stage. It was—that was one thing I was really good at was shot gunning beers. I would do two, another actor, two, and then I would come back out. You know, by the end of it, I think I’d shot gunned like—I don’t know—nine or ten beers and did my thing. I get to the—oh, and by the way, the crowd—they kind of got more into it the more I would drink. It’s like, oh, he’s gonna do more! So, they would start kind of chanting, “Steve-O, Steve-O.” And I had

been conflicted before that about whether or not I wanted to have this goofy nickname, Steve-O, or if I would be taken more seriously if I was Steve Glover.

00:16:51 Jesse Host No. I mean—

00:16:52 Steve-O Guest And that question was answered.

00:16:53 Jesse Host When you are practicing the art of shot gunning two beers at a time—

00:16:57 Steve-O Guest *[Laughs.]* 100%! I really wanted to be like serious and I wanted to figure it out. And when I heard the crowd chant, “Steve-O, Steve-O,” I was like oh, dude. They would never chant Steve. So, done. And that was when I committed to being Steve-O permanently and forever. Best decision I ever made. But when I got—

00:17:16 Jesse Host Was this—you know, like comics have to have two impressions and two characters to audition for SNL. When you went and auditioned for clown college, were you like, “Well, I’ve got shot gunning. I’ve got drunk acrobatics.” *[Laughs.]*

00:17:29 Steve-O Guest I brought a portfolio of action shots printed out, ‘cause it wasn’t video. You know, I had always had my materials well organized. But on the talent show, when I came to the fire breathing, I clicked the lighter as my buddy had done, and I spit it, but I blew out the lighter. And my—you know, I just blew out the lighter, and it was just this anticlimactic—it didn’t light. Like, ooh. And I was like super, super bummed about that. And then, I tried it again, and when I did it, it worked. But my hand stayed on fire, because I had spit alcohol all over my hand. So, my hand was kind of burning, and I didn’t even realize it at first. And then I was like, “Oh, wow!” So, I shook out my hand.

Now, the thing about the rubbing alcohol is that it really burns like rather thin. Like, my hand wasn’t like terribly injured from being on fire. And then I thought, “Oh. Wow! I could solve my problem—you know, I don’t wanna hold a torch, but I can’t blow out—I can’t risk blowing out the lighter. So, I developed this approach where I would just start out by just pouring rubbing alcohol on my hand, fill up my mouth with it, and then I’d just light my hand on fire and use that as a torch.

00:19:01 Jesse Host *[Concerned.]* Oh nooo!

00:19:02 Steve-O Guest And then shake out my hand after. And so, once I figured that out, then I’d pour it on my hand, light my hand on fire, and then do the backflip and blow it off my hand that way. So, that was the whole genesis of the fire breathing backflip. But yeah, I hitchhiked from Albuquerque to Denver to audition for clown college. And they held auditions in all 100 cities that the circus went to every year. And so, there were like probably about 60 people at the audition I went to. Saved maybe half of that. Like, call it 30 people went on average, maybe. Times 100, that’s 3000 people and only 33 got in.

00:19:52 Jesse Host So much more to get into with Steve-O. When we come back from the break, we’ll talk about performing as a cruise ship clown. It’s *Bullseye*, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

00:20:04 Music Transition Thumpy synth with light vocalizations.

00:20:08 Jesse Host Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I’m Jesse Thorn. If you’re just joining us, my guest is Steve-O. He’s one of the stars of the *Jackass* movies and television shows. He has a new book—his third. It’s called *A Hard Kick in the Nuts: What I’ve Learned from a Lifetime of Terrible Decisions*. Let’s get back into our conversation.

00:20:41 Steve-O Guest

I wonder if—you know—you, in clown college, developed particular bits of schtick or if you had to like—like, do you have to take a Commedia dell'arte class? Like?

[Sighs.] Well, for starters, clown college was much less like college than it was bootcamp. It was basically bootcamp for circus clowns. It lasted for eight weeks. And yeah, in and out in a short time. During those eight weeks, they broke the days down into like hour-long classes. You know, you'd be starting—you'd be in like the gymnasium at like eight AM to just do like a morning kind of workout. And then the classes that you would have throughout the day were—you know, an hour of dance, an hour of acrobatics. An hour of skills. You know? An hour of improv. You know? Like, circus history. You know? And then like an hour where you put on makeup. You know. And break an hour for lunch and then come back and—you know, whatever else. And then you would have—from like six to ten PM was like—you can just—you can focus on whatever you want to, to prepare for the show that you're gonna put up that week. Every Saturday, there was a show, and it was free for the public. The public *[inaudible]* that we don't have experience performing.

Well, in the first week, after training 14 hours, effectively—eight in the morning to ten PM is 14 hours—and once we were done at ten PM, then I would start drinking. *[Laughs.]* You know? I would drink until probably at least two in the morning. You know? Or whatever. It was—like I would be under slept and hungover. And I would be like with my video camera doing all my crazy stuff. So, in the first week, I was skateboarding in our apartment complex, drunk, late at night. And I split my head open! Like, you know, there was like bleeding everywhere. Big gash, because I hit my head on this thing while jumping down a flight of stairs. And they said, "Oh, you gotta go to the hospital. You know? You definitely need to go to the hospital."

I said—and now I'm thinking I don't wanna go to the hospital at one in the morning! Like, that's gonna make me look terrible at clown college. We're all out here competing. Only ten of us are gonna get contracts. You know? You don't wanna look bad. You don't wanna—and then they really insisted. No, we're gonna take you to the hospital. I said, "Alright. Well, I'm not going anywhere until I get a rad picture of me with all this blood pouring out." And I got the rad picture, and it's actually on a rad t-shirt. I curse myself for not having one handy, but I have them in my car. They take me to the hospital, and I remember too I went into the—I needed to get five staples in my head. And there was somebody from clown college waiting. It's like one in the morning. This is just awful.

So, the doctor says I need to put in five staples—*[mumbles]* whatever, we need to staple your head shut. And so, here, I'm gonna do—I'm gonna give you a shot to numb it up. And I said, "Dude, I don't have time for that, dude. There's like important—someone important is in the waiting room. I cannot keep them waiting. *[Censored]* the anesthesia. Just pump in the staples!" *[Stammering.]* And he thought I was kind of nuts, but he pumped in the staples with no anesthesia. Which I was super proud of. And then he said, "Okay, like these have to come out in—" I think he

			said two weeks. They have to come out in two weeks. If you leave them in after two weeks, then it'll—
00:24:25	Jesse	Host	Heal over them.
00:24:26	Steve-O	Guest	It'll heal over it. It can get infected. Just all kinds of bad news. And it would be physically impossible for you to take out the staples. So, you have to come back. And I'm like okay, this guy just challenged me. Can't be physically impossible. So, after two weeks, I'm trying to take out the staples, and I just can't figure it out. And I got the other clowns—some of the other clowns to try and help me figure it out. Night after night, we just can't figure it out. Until we got wire clippers—like, <i>[stammering]</i> wire clippers and we had to cut the staples in half in the middle and take out the two pieces separately. And then, I—so, we got 'em out. But the—
00:25:07	Jesse	Host	So, it's a—it has a happy ending, the story.
00:25:11	Steve-O	Guest	Yeah! The thing was that the general consensus among everybody at the clown college was sort of like, "This guy doesn't wanna be a clown. What the <i>[censored]</i> is he doing here?" And it was true. Like, the reason I wanted to go to clown college was to further my goal of becoming a crazy, famous stuntman. I thought if I graduate from clown college, then I will be a trained circus professional. And as such, people will take me seriously when I'm lighting myself on fire at backyard keg parties. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:25:41	Jesse	Host	Well, I mean, I've seen video of you in full clown makeup and clown costume. And the video I saw, you were balancing a skateboard on your hand, presumably about to do some kind of skateboard clown thing. Which is not a category—unlike rodeo clown, not a category of employment.
00:26:02	Steve-O	Guest	I did end up working in a circus for six months. And on days when I felt up to it, I would do a skateboard routine.
00:26:13	Jesse	Host	So, here's my question. You got fired out of clowning. You got fired from a job on a—clowning on a cruise ship.
			<i>[Steve-O confirms.]</i>
			And you kind of, as I understand it, went straight into the <i>Jackass</i> world from there.
00:26:30	Steve-O	Guest	Yeah, and I was working on—I was working on cruise ships as a clown. I did not get—I was not one of the ten clowns that got the contract for the circus. Then—and it was sad for me, because even though I didn't necessarily wanna be a clown, and I was going there like to legitimize my—you know—crazy stunts. And I made a terrible first impression at clown college. But the reality was by the end of those eight weeks, by the time I graduated from clown college, I had really fallen in love with the idea of it. You know? And I was like pretty heartbroken that I didn't get a contract.
			And about a year later, I'm in Florida and these clowns who left the circus—because the circus job that we were competing for in clown college paid \$235 a week. And you lived on a train for 50 out of 52 weeks a year. It was a rough job. And the clowns were like, "Man, we're better than this. We can—" You know, there was like a small group of clowns that, "We're better than this. We're talented. We want a better gig. And they figured out how to bring clowning to cruise ships. Six months of training was the contract, and we were just preparing for the program to launch. And I was teamed up with these other clowns who I didn't particularly think were talented or

			funny, and they certainly didn't have rad skills. And the stuff they were trying to do, I just didn't—
00:28:07	Jesse	Host	They failed your radness test. You have high radness standards.
00:28:11	Steve-O	Guest	<i>[Chuckles.]</i> Yeah, I didn't get it. And so, I wasn't particularly like collaborative with them. You know? I kind of wanted to do my own thing. I had my own skillset, and I was disrespectful of them. And they decided that they didn't wanna work with me after this contract. And they got me fired. They said to the cruise ship brass, "If Steve-O comes back for another contract, we all quit." Like all three of them. And that was—it's understandable, because I was legitimately disrespectful of them. But my boss clown in the troupe above me, he—this guy was awesome. His name's Edge. Edge <i>[inaudible]</i> , a Polish guy. Super rad. Unbelievably talented; I just looked up to him so much. And he called a meeting with me. And he said, "Hey, dude, these clowns that you're working with have—they've like pulled a mutiny. You know? Like they've gone behind your back, and I'm telling you that you are not—you're not getting your contract renewed."
00:29:18	Jesse	Host	"Our next port is Bora Bora. You better get off now."
00:29:20	Steve-O	Guest	It wasn't that. I was gonna finish out my contract, but I had another two months on my contract to finish it out. But they were just gonna have me not know and just find out that—he says, "I'm not gonna let them do you like that." But the boss clown told me, "If anybody finds out I told you this, then I'm gonna lose <u>my</u> job. So, you cannot let on that you know. But I just feel strongly that you have—you know—I'm telling you, call up your skateboard buddies. Call up your skateboard buddies and try to drum something up, because this job is not—you're not coming back for another contract." But sure enough, I—like the boss said, Edge said reach out to your skateboard buddies, and I—the person I reached out to was Jeff Tremaine. Who—
00:30:05	Jesse	Host	And he's the director of—
00:30:07	Steve-O	Guest	He is the director of <i>Jackass</i> . I had been on one cover—on the cover of his—he was the editor in chief of <i>Big Brother Skateboarding Magazine</i> . And I called him up. I said, "I think I've got another cover." I said, "Here's the idea. I get a—like I'm ten feet tall on stilts. I got a stilt costume. I'm gonna—the whole stilt costume, in flames, on fire. While I'm burning, like the stilt costume's on fire, I got a unicyclist rides a unicycle through my flaming stilts. At the exact same time, a skateboarder jumps off the roof of a house over my head and through a fireball I'm blowing out of my mouth. And then, when the skateboarder like lands on a ramp and rides away— <i>[stammers]</i> when those two guys ride away, then I crack open a beer and pound it. And while I'm pounding the beer, I tip myself over and slam onto the concrete. And then I need someone to put me out."

And Jeff Tremaine says, "I like it."

[They laugh.]

And it, the year at that point was 1999. And I was like this is my—I came off the cruise ship in November. And I got three stilt costumes made up. You know, it was custom made by like a seamstress person. Like, I bought the stilts, the—you know, I'm juggling toward the end. Everything that I could possibly, you know, get to help me

with this. I flew myself out to California. And this was like pretty early internet. You know? Like, I found someone on like AOL chatrooms—you know—to be the unicyclist. And I forget how the unicyclist got there, but I brought my pro skateboard buddy. I put it all together. Flew myself out there, put it all together.

Tremaine came down on December 30th, 1999, with Johnny Knoxville. He says—yeah, with the photographer, the whole little team And Tremaine said, “Okay, man. Now that—now that you’re here, you know, you’ve come all this way. So, now I’m gonna tell you that we’re not doing this really for *Big Brother*. We’re doing it for MTV, for this pilot.

00:32:35	Jesse	Host	I wanna play a little bit from <i>Jackass Forever</i> , the most recent <i>Jackass</i> movie with my guest, Steve-O and Machine Gun Kelly, the singer and—sometimes singer, sometimes rapper, sometimes whatever it is. And it’s a thing called “Bicycle Backhand”. You and Machine Gun Kelly are on stationary bikes. You’re sort of—
00:32:47	Steve-O	Guest	Exercise bikes, yeah.
00:32:48	Jesse	Host	Yeah. Above and next to a pool. And there’s two enormous like five foot tall, seven foot long, white gloved Mickey Mouse hands—
00:33:00	Steve-O	Guest	Not white gloves. It was flesh toned. But yeah, but Styrofoam hands.
00:33:04	Jesse	Host	Yeah. Gargantuan hands on gargantuan sort of swing arms.
00:33:10	Steve-O	Guest	It was rigged up by a stunt person, but yeah, the idea was that the hands were built onto a mechanism that would coil back to a certain point. And what determined it being coiled back was the exercise bike. The faster you pedaled, the more that the hand would be—you know—coiled back on this spring mechanism. And then, when it got to a certain point, the spring would be released and <i>[impact sound]</i> , the hand would—we weren’t allowed to call it the <i>[censored]</i> slap. <i>[Laughs.]</i> But yeah, the hand—it was called the backhand or—I don’t know.
00:33:47	Jesse	Host	You can’t call it that on National Public Radio now, Steve. <i>[Steve-O laughs.]</i> So, the first thing we’re gonna hear is Steve-O talking some mess, and then at the end, there is a misfire from one of those hands.
00:33:59	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:34:00	Clip	Clip	Steve-O: You might be younger, taller, better looking, richer, more talented, but <i>[censored]</i> , I can ride! Yeah! <i>[Cackles.]</i> Speaker 1: Steve-O’s just eat up with envy. <i>[Steve-O laughs into a cough. Several voices speak softly in the background as they get the crew into place.]</i> Speaker 2: Charlie, can you push that hand in a little closer? Charlie: Okay, I’m gonna push it forward a little. <i>[A huge crash followed by a splash.]</i> Charlie: Oh shit!

[Laughter.]

Speaker 1: What the *[censored]*!?

00:34:30	Sound Effect	Transition	Charlie: Oops! Oops! Music swells and fades.
00:34:31	Steve-O	Guest	It's fun hearing that. Like, what we do is fun, man.
00:34:36	Jesse	Host	Well, that's—okay, so that's what I wanna ask you about. Because I hadn't really watched <i>Jackass</i> until my 11-year-old got obsessed with it. Probably not appropriate for 11-year-olds, but the train left the station and there wasn't anything we could do about it besides participate and be guiding lights. And so, I ended up watching all the movies and a lot of episodes of the TV show with her. And in the early stuff, once in a while there's something that's a little distasteful to me. And obviously, like it's a looot of White dudes. Like, there's—but in general, generally speaking, one of the things that I was struck by is just how sweet it is.
00:35:23	Steve-O	Guest	I describe it as wholesome.
00:35:25	Jesse	Host	Like, I am— <i>[chuckles]</i> , like I am bothered by people getting hurt and bodily functions. So, it's very upsetting to me to watch it in some ways.

[Steve-O affirms.]

It's wonderful stuff. Like, it's really great. But—

[Steve-O thanks him.]

00:35:57	Steve-O	Guest	But like the thing that was most impressive to me about it is all of these horrible, horrible things happening onscreen and they all seem to be expressions of love and fond regard. <i>[Laughs.]</i> Like... Yes, I think that to the extent that the things happening onscreen lean towards just self-harm, self-destructive behavior, like—you know, injuries, and you know, awful things happening, the fact is that it all just brings us joy. You know? Like, we're rabid attention whores begging for the screentime and the spotlight. We so want all of this stuff to happen to us and to each other, and it brings us so much joy when it happens that it's permissible to enjoy it. You know? Like, we're not—like, we're all willing participants. We're actually begging for it. So, there's nothing—there's nothing meanspirited about what's actually happening. And we don't target anybody except ourselves and each other.
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So, it's just—I really feel strongly that it's just devoid of anything meanspirited. There's nothing hateful. There's nothing nasty or cruel. It's just a bunch of guys just absolutely tickling—just we're tickled. Like, the way—you know, and then the measure for success of a bit when we film it is what we call the peanut gallery. You know? You've got a guy—two guys, however many guys are actually actively participating in the bit, but then basically without fail you've got onlookers. You know? A strategically set up group of supporting cast members who are simply there as a peanut gallery just looking on. And if the peanut gallery is laughing, then we know it's working.

00:38:09	Jesse	Host	One of the great skills of <i>Jackass</i> —it is obvious that there is a great gift among the cast and producers of the show for thinking of something novel. Like, coming up with something. Like, that—like, part of the joy of watching <i>Jackass 4</i> , which came after a long run of television programs is that you have new ideas. <i>[Laughs.]</i> Right?
00:38:41	Steve-O	Guest	I wonder—there— <i>[stammering]</i> .
00:38:43	Jesse	Host	And it's not just that they're worse! It's how new they are. Like, it's how like—
00:38:46	Steve-O	Guest	There was some new stuff, but yeah there's definitely—there's definitely a lot going on and it has to feel fresh.
00:39:00	Jesse	Host	Like, you have to figure out so many new ways to injure your genitals.
			<i>[They laugh.]</i>
00:39:10	Steve-O	Guest	There's one with honey and a group of bumble bees! I don't even think we had honey. With bees, all you have to have is the queen bee.
			<i>[Jesse laughs.]</i>
00:39:21	Jesse	Host	We strapped the queen bee underneath my <i>[censored]</i> . We'll finish up with Steve-O in just a minute. After the break, we'll talk about whether or not going sober has affected the work he does onscreen, with <i>Jackass</i> . It's <i>Bullseye</i> , from MaximumFun.org and NPR.
00:39:34	Promo	Clip	Benjamin Partridge: Her majesty served Great Britain and the commonwealth loyally for over 70 years. And while, of course, we feel a profound sadness, we must remember she lived a long life and died in such a way that I think many of us would want for ourselves. She was at home, surrounded by her family. And of course, she was listening to <i>The Beef and Dairy Network Podcast</i> .
			<i>[Air horns.]</i>
			Music: Relaxed music fades in.
			Benjamin: <i>The Beef and Dairy Network Podcast</i> is a multi-award-winning comedy podcast, and you can find it at MaximumFun.org or wherever you get your podcasts.
			<i>[Music fades out.]</i>
00:40:17	Music	Transition	Thumpy synth with light vocalizations.
00:40:21	Jesse	Host	Welcome back to <i>Bullseye</i> . I'm Jesse Thorn. If you're just joining us, I am talking with Steve-O, the star of <i>Jackass</i> . He has a new book. It's called <i>A Hard Kick in the Nuts: What I've Learned from a Lifetime of Terrible Decisions</i> . It's part advice book, part memoir. It is harrowing and hilarious. Very on brand for Steve-O. Let's get back into our conversation.
			I don't want you to think this is an insincere question, 'cause it is not. I—for public radio purposes—will say caught it in the jewels in first grade, playing softball after school. It's burned into my memory forever. It has not happened since, and I'm <u>so</u> grateful for that.
			<i>[Steve-O chuckles.]</i>

You've caught it in the jewels on camera many times. And probably, you know, a lot of skateboard guys have had that happen to them riding rails, I think, that kind of thing.

[Steve-O confirms.]

And I wonder if it—if the experience changes. Trying to keep this relatively radio friendly. If the experience changes further on down the line. Does it hurt less, later?

00:41:31	Steve-O	Guest	It's pretty awful no matter what. It's—yeah. I don't—I remember catching a volleyball to the jewels in high school. And that's burned into my memory as just being so terrible. And it's basically the same thing at this age. The question of tolerating pain at that level—the question that people ask me so often, "Do you have a high threshold for pain?" I don't think I do, particularly. I just have such an overdeveloped need for attention that my desire for attention outweighs my desire for comfort.
00:42:27	Jesse	Host	Do you think that's pathological? Do you think you're a narcissist?
00:42:30	Steve-O	Guest	Um, for sure I would guess yeah. I don't even think I have to guess. I think that that would make perfect sense. Yeah.
00:42:39	Jesse	Host	I mean, one of the things that your book is about is you, over time—like, as you enter middle age—having to build the muscle of having productive relationships.
00:42:44	Steve-O	Guest	For sure. For sure. Now, I'm wondering like—on the question of narcissism, I know that narcissists—that the term comes from the guy looking at his reflection in the water.
00:43:08	Jesse	Host	Narcissus, yeah. Narcissus, right?
00:43:11	Steve-O	Guest	Yeah. And so, he's just obsessed with the image of himself. That's me, through and through. But I think that there are like really negative connotations to the term narcissist which extend beyond simply being obsessed with one's own image. And I think that the connotations imply not caring about others. You know? I think—and I don't know that—I think that that might be a departure for me, because I very much care about others. And you know, like when I'm obsessed about my own image, it's like in crafting my own image to be impactful, to be—you know, entertaining, enjoyable for others. So, I don't know if that breaks the mold of what the definition of narcissism is. Maybe not. Maybe I'm just trying to wiggle out of something negative.

[They laugh.]

I don't know. But I look at what I do as something that I consider very noble. You know? Because it's safe to say probably most people have great stress in their life. You know? Probably most people don't love what they do for a living. You know? A lot of people have health issues that are very stressful, unhappy marriages, you name it. There's all kinds of stressors. And I'll never purport to—you know, being able to fix any of these problems. But if I can create art which is compelling—you know—shocking, entertaining enough to distract one's thoughts from their stressors, I may not have fixed their problems, but I have made their problems go away. And so, you know, by that measure, the term that I've coined, the title that I have given myself and my career is distraction therapist.

00:45:28 Jesse Host I am a professional distraction therapist. You got clean and sober. You've been clean and sober for a long time. Do you think that changed what you wanted to get out of your performances? Or do you think it's the same thing in a different way? Or what?

00:45:46 Steve-O Guest Um, *[clears throat]* I think that the biggest change is before I got clean and sober in 2008, I expected that my life would end much sooner rather than later. I never—growing up, I never imagined making it to 30 years old. And you know, even when I was dropping out the University of Miami and I'm gonna be a crazy, famous stuntman—I don't know that I believed that I would accomplish my goals in my lifetime. I felt pretty convinced that what I was doing with the home video camera was an exercise in trying to pack my message into a bottle. Because I expected that I would die having largely failed at life young and—you know—tragically young. And that maybe what I was documenting with the video camera might outlive me. You know? This was like—this was so important to me, the idea that I might die, but what I'm documenting is forever.

And that went on. The only thing that mattered—like, I didn't care about money. Like, I wasn't saving for anything, because I didn't expect to be alive. Like, all I cared about was attention. And what changed about that—I'm still every bit the attention whore that I ever was. But when I got sober in 2008, all of the sudden it was like a perfect storm of terror. I had burned all the bridges in my career. You know, any opportunities that I had professionally, I had ruined. So, when I went into rehab in 2008, there was no live, professional—you know—opportunities. Also, in this world of recovery that I was being introduced to in rehab, they talked a lot about deflating the ego. You know? Like, developing humility. Like, practicing spirituality in all of your affairs.

And that just—I couldn't understand how that jived with being Steve-O of *Jackass*. I just thought, "Oh my god, like can I even continue to pursue a career in entertainment and meet these requirements of being in recovery? Like, it just seemed so—so, I didn't even know if I had a career anymore. Like, I didn't know—and it was so scary, because now I was taking care of myself for the first time. Now, I'm clean and sober. I'm watching what I'm eating. And I'm like, "Maybe I'm not gonna die young. Maybe I'm actually gonna live for many more decades. Maybe I'm not even halfway through my life! Maybe—you know, maybe I've got another 50 years, and I don't know how I'm gonna eat. And on top of that, it was 2008, and the financial crisis came and wiped out more than half of what I did manage to save. And what's crazy is I look back on it now, and logic tells me how terrorizing all of that was, but I don't remember being particularly terrorized at the time, because I was just kind of focused on getting through each day, just like they say: one day at a time. But looking back on it now, I think, "Man, that was a scary, perfect storm."

And clearly, it became more important to me to be savvy as a businessman—to try to put together like a viable career to sustain myself for what might be a long life. And that's been the biggest change. So, I'm less concerned now about what people's opinion is

of me after I've passed. You know? Like, that just seems a little bit silly. Now, I'm more interested in—you know, this whole idea of having an animal sanctuary is my new, big goal with my fiancé. You know, we wanna buy this big property and have an animal sanctuary. And you know, I'd love that to be a legacy, 'cause that might actually do something. Instead of just like people remembering me. Like, what does that do? You know? So, having lasting change that actually serves some kind of benefit I think is a more worthy goal.

00:50:41	Jesse	Host	Well, Steve-O, I've taken so much of your time. Thank you so much for coming on the show. It was really nice to get to talk to you.
00:50:48	Steve-O	Guest	Well, thanks, man. I have this thing where I never shut up, and I talk the whole time. But hopefully, we made a pretty good show.
00:50:55	Jesse	Host	Well, the good news is, Steve, I was interviewing you. So, that's sort of how it goes. Like, that's what it is. So. Thank you.
00:51:01	Steve-O	Guest	[Laughs.] Right. Well, thank you, man. It's been a joy.
00:51:06	Jesse	Host	Steve-O. His book is out now. It's called <i>A Hard Kick in the Nuts: What I've Learned from a Lifetime of Terrible Decisions</i> . Go get it wherever you buy books. The latest <i>Jackass</i> movie is called <i>Jackass Forever</i> . You can rent or buy it pretty much anywhere. Or you can stream it on Paramount+. I will tell you that I have watched it, and it is monumentally funny. Steve-O is also crisscrossing the country, promoting the book and doing his live stage extravaganza. [Chuckles.] Which features him swinging from a rope ladder, dangling from a helicopter, and various other videos of him doing terrible things and then telling funny stories about them.
00:51:50	Music	Transition	Bright, upbeat synth.
00:51:54	Jesse	Host	That's the end of another episode of <i>Bullseye</i> . <i>Bullseye</i> is created from the homes me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California. As we were preparing this week's episode, the Dodgers were playing the Padres in the playoffs and a goose interrupted the game. He wouldn't leave.

Our show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our senior producer is Kevin Ferguson. Kevin's a Dodger's fan. [Sighs.] Our producers are Jesus Ambrosio and Richard Robey. I don't know if they like baseball. Our production fellow at Maximum Fun is Tabatha Myers. She's probably a Philly's fan. We get booking help from Mara Davis. She might be rooting for the Braves. Our interstitial music is by DJW, also known as Dan Wally. He's definitely a Red Sox fan, if he likes sports. Special thanks this week to Kayla Puntly and Crystal Smith of Castle Row Studios, in Oklahoma City, for recording Mike and Bone for us. Our theme song is "Huddle Formation" by The Go! Team. Thanks to The Go! Team and to their label, Memphis Industries.

Bullseye is on YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook. You can find us on each of those platforms. Follow us; we will share with you all of our interviews. We hope that you will take this opportunity to share an interview from this week's program with someone that you love. And I think that's about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.

00:53:17	Promo	Promo	Speaker: <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.
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[Music fades out.]

