

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.
00:00:20	Jesse Thorn	Host	It’s <i>Bullseye</i> . I’m Jesse Thorn. There are comic actors who are chameleons. They have range for days, play a million different characters, each one fairly recognizable from the next. Your Mike Myers, Maya Rudolf, Bill Hader, that kind of thing. Matt Berry is not one of those comic actors. He does one thing, pretty much. But boy, is he the best in the world at it. What does he do? You might call it something like haughty, elegant buffoon. The kind of person who’s starred in an award-winning West End production of <i>Richard III</i> in 1988, then maybe blustered his way onto a police drama only to—you know, forget his lines and say mean things to somebody from craft services. That’s what Matt Berry does.
00:01:16	Sound Effect	Transition	Maybe my favorite thing he’s ever starred in is <i>Toast of London</i> . Matt plays an aging, boorish, bumbling actor who makes a living doing voiceover. Music swells and fades.
00:01:17	Clip	Clip	Steven Toast (<i>Toast of London</i>): Just to be clear—so, these’ll be heard on every submarine in the royal navy?
			Speaker: Yeah. They’re just automating and digitizing everything. You know. The commander presses a button, and a recording of your voice will be heard in the area.
			Steven: <i>[Interrupting.]</i> Yeah. I’m not interested in all that. Can we just crack on? <i>[Dramatically.]</i> Fire the nuclear weapons!
			Speaker: <i>[Flatly.]</i> Steven. That was good. But do you could give it another try? This time say it in a less alarming way?
			Steven: Less alarming? I’ve just given the order to fire the nuclear weapons! I’ve just unleashed Armageddon!
00:01:48	Sound Effect	Transition	Speaker: Yes, but the feeling here is that you could do it in a way which is a little less dramatic. Music swells and fades.
00:01:49	Jesse	Host	This thing that Matt does, he’s done it on a bunch of great shows: <i>The IT Crowd</i> , <i>The Mighty Boosh</i> , <i>Garth Marenghi’s Darkplace</i> , and—these days— <i>What We Do in the Shadows</i> . <i>What We Do in the Shadows</i> is a mocumentary about vampires. It’s based on the movie of the same name. When I talked with Matt in 2020, that show had just kicked off its third season. We’re now well into season number four, and it keeps getting better. There are four vampires in <i>What We Do in the Shadows</i> . They all share a big house on Staten Island, in New York. They suck blood from victims and mostly wear cool, spooky, fancy clothes. But they are not cool

vampires. They are vain, dumb, self-sabotaging, goofs. And maybe the goofiest of them all is Laszlo Cravensworth, played by Matt Berry.

Before he became a vampire, Laszlo was an English nobleman. Today, he lives with his wife, Nadja. And despite her best efforts to protect him, Laszlo loves to wear his big, stupid, witch hat. Even though it's cursed. Let's listen.

00:02:52 Sound Effect Transition
00:02:53 Clip Clip

Music swells and fades.

Laszlo Cravensworth (*What We Do in the Shadows*): I found it! [Shuffling sounds.] Thoughts?

Guillermo de la Cruz: Looks like it's alive!

Laszlo: Good eye! It's 100% witch skin. Simon was always very jealous of this hat. I can't wait to see his face when I walk in.

Nadja: Please don't wear that hat!

Laszlo: Too stylish?

Nadja: No. It's a big, bloody, stupid hat with a big, bloody, stupid curse on it. And every time you wear it, something bloody, stupid, terrible happens!

Laszlo: Nonsense! Gizmo likes it, don't you?

Guillermo: [Sheepishly.] It's Guillermo.

[Lilting accordion music begins to play.]

Nadja: Laszlo, it's a stupid hat! It's got a bloody huge curse on it. I have tried to throw it out many times, but it keeps crawling back. Literally!

Laszlo: I acquired this hat while draining the blood of a Bavarian Hexe Brenner—a witch burner. He must have noticed me eyeing it. 'Cause with his dying breath, he said, "Take my hat! It's [in a weak death-rattle] cuuuuur—" Yes! It is cool, I thought. Free hat! Even better.

00:03:48 Sound Effect Transition

Music swells and fades.

00:03:49 Jesse Host

Matt Berry! Welcome to *Bullseye*. I'm so happy to have you on the show.

00:03:52 Matt Berry Guest

It's my honor to be on your show.

00:03:54 Jesse Host

Eh, that's probably overstating the case, but I appreciate it nonetheless.

00:03:57 Matt Guest

No. I mean it genuinely.

00:03:59 Jesse Host

How did you come to be an American television vampire?

00:04:05 Matt Guest

I was doing a film with Jemaine Clement and halfway through the film, he leant across and said, "I think I'm gonna do a TV version of the vampire film that I did. Do you wanna do it?" So, I said yes!

[Jesse chuckles.]

And it was as quick and as simple as that. I mean, it's not a particularly great anecdote and it's a very short one. But that's exactly what happened.

00:04:34 Jesse Host Had you seen the movie? The movie has a different cast but is similarly hilarious. I think probably one of the—one of the ten or so funniest movies of the last decade. Really funny movie.

00:04:45 Matt Guest Alright, okay. I can't remember whether I'd seen it when he asked, or just after. I—I mean, I obviously have seen it, now. But I can't remember whether I had, then.

00:04:57 Jesse Host What did you think of the prospect of this—it's a property with a very particular tone. It's a very specific sort of thing.

00:05:09 Matt Guest I didn't think about it like that. Because Jemaine was involved and Taika was involved, then I knew that it would be funny. And that's all that I was interested in. Tone and things that like didn't even cross my mind. It was more about whether it was gonna be funny. That's all I'm really interested in, to be honest.

00:05:24 Jesse Host Why just, "Is it gonna be funny?"

00:05:26 Matt Guest Well, because it's gonna hang around. *[Laughs.]* And it's a really simple way, you know, of kind of choosing what you wanna do. And it was a safe bet for me, you know, that it was gonna be a funny show and a funny script, in itself, when the pilot came. So, I just—I just sort of said yes.

00:05:46 Jesse Host I don't really get the impression that you got into a career in comedy because you had always intended to be a comedian, or even a—comic actor.

00:05:57 Matt Guest No. Yeah. That would be true. No, I had no plan to do either of those things. I'd never really thought about either. I mean, I kind of drifted into this. And I had a lot of fun. And I've been—and I've been very lucky in the things that I've done, you know, and the people that I've worked with. But it was—there was no kind of plan, so to speak of. And I didn't kind of look to anybody and think—you know, 'cause it wasn't anything that I was particularly looking at, beforehand. But you know, that can't be confused with me not being eternally grateful, because the things that it's bought me... invaluable. I've been very, very lucky.

00:06:41 Jesse Host You went to college at art school.

[Matt confirms.]

00:06:47 Matt Guest Did you—did you intend to be a fine artist?

00:06:47 Matt Guest Um... it was pretty clear that, unless you did portraits of... of princes and incredibly rich people, then there wasn't a lot of money to be had. Unless you were one of the very few that sort of became well-known and paid for the art that you made in your own right. But that was a hell of a gamble. So, I mean, I would have been just as kind of content if things would have worked out that way. But... it seemed too much of a gamble, back then. You know, so I—plus, I was interested in other things, such as music and stuff. So, I kind of pursued that, also.

00:07:35 Jesse Host What were you doing in school? Were you painting?

00:07:37 Matt Guest Yeah. Yeah. I was using acrylic paint. I was doing mostly figurative work. I mean, acrylic paint because it was the cheapest and it, sort of, dried very quickly. That's very boring to people that have no interest in paint, but you know. It's—*[laughs]* it's—it's kind of how I learned. I didn't learn with oil. I learned with cheap, plastic paint.

00:08:00 Jesse Host What was the first comedy gig you got?

00:08:04 Matt Guest Um... *Garth Marengi's Darkplace*, in 2003. It was a show on Channel 4. And... it's—people always don't believe it, but I literally hadn't done anything, before I did that. And that was straight onto the TV. I hadn't done any kind of comedy, as such. And I just lucked out and got a part on that and then *[laughs]* that led to *The IT Crowd*, which led to other stuff. Which eventually led to *What We Do in the Shadows*.

00:08:43 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Jesse:** How did the folks who made that show even know to cast you?

Matt: Know who the hell I was? *[Laughs.]*

00:08:51 Matt Guest **Jesse:** Yeah! Exactly!
Well, what it was—I was—there was a show called *The Mighty Boosh*, and I knew one of the fellas in that. And he let me do some songs, before they came on and did their thing. And I did this—I didn't know what to do, but I knew that what they were doing was comedy, so I thought, "Well, I—you know, I better make these songs kind of funny in some way." So, I did it under the guise of a serial killer. Because I didn't know what else to do!

[Jesse chuckles.]

Like, so I did it and it was like a confessional thing. So, it was a singer-songwriter, but suppose he was a serial killer. So, it was me basically... telling the audience where the bodies were. And that kind of stuff.

[Jesse laughs.]

And it was, honestly, because I wasn't sure what else to do. And then, that led to Matt and Richard—who wrote *Darkplace*—coming to see *The Boosh*, and then they obviously noticed me beforehand. And that's how it all kicked off. Pure luck.

00:09:56 Jesse Host I like the idea that you were 22 or something, you hadn't really done comedy, you—

00:10:01 Matt Guest I hadn't done any comedy.

00:10:03 Jesse Host You got a gig opening for what was basically a comedy act—a musical comedy act, but a comedy act.

[Matt confirms.]

And you thought, "Well, I gotta do something funny." And you had maybe, like, one page in your notebook that had "funny" written at the top.

[Matt wheezes a laugh.]

00:10:20 Matt Guest And then underneath that was: "serial killer".
You've given me too much credit. There would have been no notebook. It would have been done in my head, hours beforehand. It would have—yeah, there would have been hardly any kind of preparation. It would have just been purely winging it, just to—you know, see what happened.

00:10:35	Jesse	Host	<p><i>[Laughs.] Garth Marengi's Darkplace, is a wonderful show. It is a parody of low budget sort of horror, thriller stuff from the 1980s. Very aesthetically specific.</i></p> <p><i>[Matt agrees.]</i></p> <p>And it's hosted by and stars a character who is a little bit like if the writer Dean Koontz was also an actor who starred in his own television show that he created. Like a lower-rent Stephen King kind of figure.</p> <p><i>[Matt confirms.]</i></p> <p>And I'm gonna play a scene <i>[chuckling]</i>—a scene from the show, which—you know, you'll be able to hear—</p>
00:11:13	Matt	Guest	So, you know the show, then?
00:11:14	Jesse	Host	Oh, yeah! Absolutely. No, I've seen—I've seen it, yeah. I've watched it. It's a great show. I watched it way back then!
			<p><i>[Matt affirms in surprise.]</i></p> <p>I stole it from the internet.</p> <p><i>[Matt laughs.]</i></p> <p>And you'll be able to hear a little bit of the audio quality of the sort of 1980s, VHS-y effects that we see, but you won't be able to see them. And their pretty extraordinary and mind-bending. So, in this scene, a woman named Dr. Liz Asher has just arrived to apply for a job at the hospital. And then, about halfway through her interview, she's approached by my guest, Matt Berry, playing Dr. Lucien Sanchez.</p>
00:11:50	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:11:52	Clip	Clip	<p>Dr. Liz Asher (<i>Garth Marengi's Darkplace</i>): Hi. I've come to apply for the doctor's job. I can assure you my credentials are top notch! I've just graduated from Harvard College Yale. I aced every semester and I got an 'A'.</p> <p>Interviewer: Well, that sound excellent. Our last doctor only just recently died in horrific circumstances. Can you start immediately?</p> <p>Dr. Asher: Sure. Do I have time to go to the toilet?</p> <p>Interviewer: Not really. I've already paged Dr. Sanchez. He should be here any minute now.</p> <p>Dr. Lucien Sanchez: I'm Dr. Sanchez! You're a woman.</p> <p>Dr. Asher: Yes, I hope that's not a problem.</p> <p>Dr. Sanchez: Not at all! There's plenty of scat on the wall. This is the 20th century, after all. Though some don't like to admit it. Welcome to Darkplace, Liz.</p>
00:12:26	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.

00:12:27 Jesse Host I mean, it feels like, Matt, you fell right into *[chuckling]* this... immediately into a lane that you have mined in various directions with various shadings ever since. Which is, like, actorly acting, but maybe slightly wrong. Were you doing that on purpose? Like, were you just excited to watch—you know—behind the scenes at the Royal Shakespeare Company, 1977?

00:13:00 Matt Guest Well, kind of. Yeah. I mean, where it all comes from is I was taken to see a lot of rep theatre. Because there was a small rep theatre in Bedfordshire, where I'm from, in the UK. So, we would go and see things and I don't think my mum and dad were particularly interested, but you know, they thought that I might be. So, you know, they sort of took—you know, they kind of took me along. Anyway, the—what struck me about this was how, kind of, artificial it all was. Like, the actors would be literally inches away from one another, yet talk incredibly loudly.

[Jesse laughs.]

And it always just made me laugh. I mean, that wasn't the effect, you know, that they were going for. You know. They were going for high drama and, you know, seriousness, but it just used to make me *[censored]* with laughter, because they would—they would be so earnest and talk at such volume while being inches away from one another. And I think that was one of the main inspirations, with a lot of these things. And always so incredibly pompous. That always made me laugh.

[Jesse chuckles.]

And that was a big inspiration. I kind of didn't know that, at the time, 'cause I didn't give it any thought, but I think that's where it came from, 'cause I always found it funny. I used to talk to my dad and my mum, on the way home, saying, "The way these blokes shout at each other, it's hilarious." So, I think that's—I think that's where it comes from.

00:14:34 Jesse Host I mean, it really feels like something that is in some ways culturally specific to the UK.

[Matt concedes.]

But, like, by the time—by the time it was the mid-80s when you were a kid and going to things with your parents—or the late '80s—acting in the United States mostly had had 20 years of, like, highly enforced hypernaturalism.

[Matt agrees.]

You know, like this idea that everybody is in *Easy Rider* or whatever.

00:15:02 Matt Guest No, no, I'm with you. Yeah. Yeah. Elliott Gould.

00:15:05 Jesse Host Exactly! And god bless Elliot Gould. One of the best!

00:15:08 Matt Guest No, it's his style. I know exactly what you mean. Yeah, well the thing is, the UK actors would have taken that stuff onboard and would have been interested in it. You know, they would have been interested in Dustin Hoffman and his style of acting, but they were trained, and they were trained at places like RADA. So, even

though they wanted to appear naturalistic, like those actors—you know—that we’ve just mentioned, they wouldn’t come across that way, because of the training. So, what you’d get is, *[dramatically and loudly]* “Do you fancy a drink?”

[Jesse laughs.]

Do you know what I mean? So, it would be something there that would be said kind of—you know, kind of casually. “Do you want a drink?” Is what, you know, you would say. “Do you fancy a drink?”

Whereas, it would be, *[projecting and annunciating]* “Do you fancy a drink?” Do you see what I’m saying? So, it would be—the ideas would be the same, yet there’d be a different style implied. Applied.

[Jesse laughs.]

00:16:02 Jesse Host Sorry. It’s late in the day. I’ve been thinking about it a lot, because I have two friends who decided for some reason to do a recap podcast of the miniseries *I, Claudius*.

[Matt affirms.]

00:16:18 Matt Guest Which, you know, was made in the mid-70s. And stars—
00:16:21 Jesse Host Yeah. In one studio. Yeah! And stars, like, every brilliant, genius actor available in the UK, at the time. You know. Brian Blessed and Patrick Stuart and Derek Jacobi. Like, every single person ever is in this show. They’re all shooting, as you said, *[laughing]* in one studio in cardboard sets, basically.

00:16:45 Matt Guest Yeah, well it’s black. It’s black background. It’s the old-fashioned way of doing, sort of, Shakespeare on the TV. You just have black drapes and that’s it. And some lights.

00:16:57 Jesse Host It’s an amazing thing. Like, part of the reason they wanted to do this show is because *I, Claudius*, the original miniseries, is such a wonderful work of art. But it’s also—might as well be from space.

[Matt chuckles.]

Uh, *[laughs]* for all the recognizability to, like, contemporary prestige film and television. You know?

[Matt agrees.]

00:17:29 Matt Guest And, like, those people are—those people are still alive! And they’re all still brilliant artists! I mean, I—you wouldn’t—you wouldn’t find me saying an ill word about any of them. Well, no, but that’s—but that’s all that they had to work with. I mean, if you would look at the, you know—if you look at the version of *Pride and Prejudice* from the mid-1970s, it also looks like that. Do you know what I mean? Like, TV drama was set under very bright television studio lights and was filmed that way. So, it all has that kind of vibe. You know. It’s very rare that they would go on location and use film. You know. They would use—everything would have that kind of horrible, spot sort of video effect. ‘Cause that’s all, you

			know, that we really had. So, it's not just <i>I, Claudius</i> . I mean, you pick any kind of drama from the 1970s up until the end of the '80s, it all looks like that, in the UK.
00:18:11	Jesse	Host	Let's hear a little bit of my guest, Matt Berry, on <i>The Mighty Boosh</i> —which was a slightly surreal, often musical, comedy show, that—
00:18:22	Matt	Guest	So, when—what's the date of that? About 2004 or something? 2000...
00:18:26	Jesse	Host	Yeah, 2004. Yeah.
00:18:28	Matt	Guest	Got it. It's a long while ago.
00:18:29	Jesse	Host	It's all—it was all set in a zoo, and—or, in a zoo in various mystical worlds that they left the zoo to. And my guest, Matt Berry's, character was named Dixon Bainbridge and was the owner. And in this scene that we're about to hear, there are animals on the loose and Dixon is challenging Julian Barratt's character, Howard Moon, to a fight.
00:18:59	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:19:01	Clip	Clip	<i>[The sounds of birds and other animals chittering in the background.]</i>

Howard Moon (*The Mighty Boosh*): Yeah? You want a piece of me?

Dixon Bainbridge: A piece of you, Moon? You haven't got it to give!

Howard: The only reason I'm not coming at you, now, is because Vince, here, is a delicate flower. Doesn't like violence.

Dixon: Get in there, Howard!

Howard: And I've got... flu. I had flu. Not quite 100%, yet. Feeling a bit rundown. But if it wasn't for that, I'd be on you like a powerful moss.

Dixon: You're pathetic, Moon.

Howard: Yeah?

Dixon: Yeah.

Howard: Well, why don't you step on in whenever you're ready?

00:19:25	Clip	Clip	Dixon: Right now. Howard: <i>[Cautious.]</i> Uh, now?
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Dixon: Right now! *[Smacking sounds.]*

Howard: Uuh, what do you mean? I mean, we could—right now?

Dixon: Right now!

Howard: Now?

Dixon: *[Yelling gutturally.]* You and I, right now!

Howard: If you want to go now...

Dixon: Let's go!

Howard: [*Calmly.*] We can go now.

Dixon: COME ON!

Howard: Whenever you're ready.

Dixon: Mano a mano!

Howard: I mean, I can pencil you in later.

Dixon: [*Growls.*] Right noooow!

Howard: Next Tuesday's fine.

Dixon: [*Growls, frustrated.*] Stop talking!

Howard: Today?

Dixon: Right now!

Howard: This morning?

Dixon: Ooooh yes!

Howard: In this actual place, here?

Dixon: NOOOOW!
Music swells and fades.

00:19:48 Sound Effect Transition

00:19:49 Jesse Host

Even more still to get into with Matt Berry. Stay with us. We'll be back in a minute. It's *Bullseye*, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

00:19:57 Promo Clip

Music: Relaxed acoustic guitar.

John Moe: Hey, it's John Moe, host of *Depresh Mode*, a podcast about people's mental health journeys. Guess who we got? Guess who?! It's Jamie Lee Curtis.

Jamie Lee Curtis: I look at life now as the game of *Guess Who*, which is simply the process of elimination. I know what I don't like. That's how I found out who I am.

John: Jamie Lee Curtis on addiction, show business, and fooling people, all on *Depresh Mode* from Maximum Fun, wherever you get your podcasts.

00:20:29 Jesse Host

[*Music ends.*]

It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. I'm talking with Matt Berry. He plays Lazlo on the FX series, *What We Do in the Shadows*. That show's four seasons are streaming now, on Hulu.

So, your show *Toast of London*, of which there are three series that I think are still on Netflix, here in the United States. In fact, I just watched one on Netflix.

[Matt confirms several times as Jesse speaks.]

So, they still are on Netflix, here in the United States. This is a show that I really love. In it, you play an actor of the sort that we've described, but the unsuccessful version. Not entirely unsuccessful. You know. Able to eat and pay rent, but a down-market version of Derek Jacobi or whatever. Was this a—was this a character that you had been thinking about for a long time, before you created the show?

00:21:20 Matt Guest

Not that long. I mean, I'll tell you where it all came from. So, as a result of doing *The IT Crowd*, I was then asked to do a lot of voiceovers for British adverts and things. And as a result of doing that, sometimes you would be paired with another actor. And so, I got to work with some—you know, very seasoned, very well-respected actors. And the inspiration came from those jobs. So, I would be there. And I was very new to all this, you know, so I kept my mouth shut apart from when I had to do the job, for the most of the time with our—you know, that I was doing those, back then. And I would just watch. And I would watch the other sort of seasoned actor lose his temper or just—you know—or just get up and walk out. You know. 'Cause he'd had enough. Sort of halfway through. And it was fascinating. And that's where *Toast* came from. It came from some of these blokes that I was doing these jobs with. And I'm not gonna tell you who they were. Who would go, "Right, so—what is it we're doing? Is it shampoo or something? Right. And how long's this gonna take?"

And the poor guy would be going, "Well, uh—there isn't much here. So, you know, it's like a couple of pages."

[Interrupting testily.] "Right, can we just get on with it? Hi. Sorry. What's your name again?"

And I'd, "Uuh, sorry, my names Matt."

"Hi, Matt. Um. Yeah. Can we just get on with it, please?" You know, and then all this would happen. And then, *[laughs]* something like—he would get a word wrong, you know, or the guy that was sort of running the show wouldn't be happy with the way that he pronounced something.

So, he'd say, "Look, excuse me, could we just do this one again? I think it's pronounced this way." And then the actor would go *[censored]* nuts and would—

[Jesse laughs.]

"What?! Are you telling me how to say—?" You know. I mean, you've heard these things, you know, 'cause there's some of them on YouTube of actors blowing their tops at stuff. And it's—
Yeah, I mean, I'm reminded of, like, of the famous clip of Orson Wells reading—

00:23:09 Jesse Host

[Matt echoes the name.]

00:23:16 Matt Guest —reading wine copy.
But that’s exactly what it’s like. That was exactly what it was like, in these. I mean, it didn’t happen that often, but when it happened I was mesmerized. Because this was just gold! Do you know what I mean? Like, I didn’t have to do anything. You know. You didn’t have to—I mean, like, it got to the point where I was doing a lot of these things and an actor would sort of mention another actor’s name, and then that would be my way in. And then I’d say, “Oh! I saw him on something the other day. I thought he was very good.” And by saying I thought this other actor was very good to this seasoned actor would drive him nuts.

[Jesse wheezes a laugh.]

00:24:15 Jesse Host And he’d go, “Oh, you think he’s good, do you? He’s *[censored]*. Don’t give me that!” And then you’d get this massive rant, just ‘cause all I’d said was I thought this guy was pretty good. So—and it was a trick, then, that I used on the other actors, you know, that I’d work with. Just to get that sort of reaction. So, to answer your question in a really longwinded way, that’s where *Toast* came from. I’m gonna play a clip from *Toast of London*, with my guest Matt Berry. And there’s a—basically a VO scene in pretty much every episode. A scene where he is in the studio, with his... not beloved engineer, Clem Fandango—who’s maybe also directing, producing these voice overs—and in this one, he’s recording a script that the whole script is just the word “yes”.

00:24:44 Sound Effect Transition Music swells and fades.

00:24:46 Clip **Speaker (*Toast of London*):** Uuh, hey Steven, that was really good. Um. Feeling is, here you could be a bit more positive.

Steven: More positive?!

Speaker: Yeah. You know. Really go for it.

Steven: You want me to go for it.

Speaker: Yeah.

[A click as Clem begins recording.]

Steven: *[Sighs.]* Alright. YEEES!

[A click as the recording stops.]

Speaker: Very, very good. Um. Let’s just try it without the script, might just loosen you up a little bit. Yeah. I mean, it’s—what is it, one word? You don’t really need it, do you?

00:25:09 Clip Clip **Steven:** I probably don’t need the script, it’s just a word.
Speaker: Yeah. Okay. Let’s do it again.

[A click as recording begins.]

Steven: Yeees!

[A click as recording stops.]

Speaker: Is that it?

Steven: *[Uncertainly.]* Yes?

Speaker: *[Skeptically.]* Right.

[A click.]

Clem: Hey, Steven?

Steven: Yes?

Clem: This is Clem Fandango.

Steven: Yes?

Clem: Can you hear me?

Steven: *[Irritated.]* Yes, I can hear you, Clem Fandango!

Clem: Honestly, this is going so great, but I just think there was a little loss of energy in that last take. Maybe try one more.

[A click.]

Steven: *[Sighs.]*

[A click.]

Speaker: Okay, you're ready to go?

Steven: Yep.

Speaker: What?

Steven: *[Angrily.]* Yes!
Music swells and fades.

00:25:22 Clip Clip

00:25:36 Sound Transition
Effect

00:25:38 Jesse Host

There's a wonderful episode in the third season of *Toast of London*, where Jon Hamm comes to visit and your character, Steven Toast, sort of falls in love with Jon Hamm—as anyone who's seen Jon Hamm in real life has.

[Matt laughs.]

Um. *[Chuckles.]* He's extraordinarily—I've seen him, like, around town a few times and every time he just takes your breath away, you know? He's a very nice man from my understanding.

00:26:03 Matt Guest

00:26:04 Jesse Host

He's lovely! Yeah.

Yeah, yeah. I've never heard someone say an ill word about him, as a guy. You just—

00:26:08 Matt Guest

No, no. He's a beautiful fella.

00:26:10	Jesse	Host	He's gorgeous! And he also has some quality. Although, in this episode, I think your character—
00:26:15	Matt	Guest	No, he's a really nice guy. And the other thing is, he's really funny and the other thing—which is the most impressive thing—is his knowledge of comedy. He knows people that I've worked—I mean, he knew stuff that I'd done that I'd forgotten. He knew everything, do you know what I mean? Like, there isn't a sitcom that probably hasn't been made that he hasn't seen or could tell you the history of. He has an incredible knowledge of US and UK comedy.
00:26:47	Jesse	Host	Yeah, a real—a real comedy lover. And so, in this—in this episode, one plot is your character, Steven Toast, falling in love with Jon Hamm.
			<i>[Matt affirms.]</i>
			The other is your father, who's played by Brian Blessed, the great actor, dying and trying to determine who is going to get his inheritance.
00:27:10	Matt	Guest	<i>[Delighted.]</i> Yeah, I remember that day.
00:27:13	Jesse	Host	You have a brother who's, like, a fancy guy.
00:27:16	Matt	Guest	<i>[Cackling.]</i> Adrian Lucas.
00:27:19	Jesse	Host	Yeah, very—very posh.
			<i>[Matt agrees.]</i>
			And I think, maybe, he has a—did he have a wooden hand? Is that—
00:27:25	Matt	Guest	<i>[Laughing.]</i> Yeah, he does. Yeah.
00:27:27	Jesse	Host	Yeah. But, like, a very sort of, like—
			<i>[Matt bursts into laughter again.]</i>
			He's always wearing, like, fox hunting clothes.
			<i>[Matt confirms.]</i>
			And then—and he's at the father's bedside, at the top floor of an enormous castle. The father is about to reveal who will receive his inheritance, and your character is rushing up the stairs. <i>[Laughs.]</i> That's an amazing scene. So, Brian Blessed <u>is</u> that guy. Like, Brian Blessed is an extraordinarily accomplished actor. He's I guess like a knight, or whatever. He's in <i>I, Claudius</i> . He has—he has—
00:28:06	Matt	Guest	<i>Flash Gordon.</i>
00:28:07	Jesse	Host	He's the oldest—oldest person ever to go to the North Pole.
			<i>[Matt confirms.]</i>
			On foot. He's like a—he's—just is that guy, in many extraordinary ways. I mean, he's also, like, I guess he's probably in his mid-70s or something, now.
00:28:24	Matt	Guest	He's probably older.
00:28:26	Jesse	Host	What was it like to have that guy on set, while you're doing this thing that you've dedicated four years to, like, basically being a joke about that guy?
00:28:34	Matt	Guest	Well, no, I mean, it—I don't, you know—I'm not taking the <i>[censored]</i> out of it. It's all done with love. I find those kind of

performances and those kind of actors so endearing and so funny. You know, it's just love. It isn't—there's no kind of, sort of negativity about him. You know, I mean, I love Brian Blessed. You know, he was in *Flash Gordon*. But on that day, specifically—

00:28:55 Jesse Host He's wonderful! I mean, he's wonderful in everything! Everything he's just—he's—it's like Werner Herzog, like I've interviewed Werner Herzog a couple times, and obviously Werner Herzog is hilarious. I mean, there's—could be nothing funnier than Werner Herzog and the, like, albino alligator at the end of the cave painting documentary. Or—you know.

00:29:13 Matt Guest No, he is so funny. Yeah.

00:29:14 Jesse Host But he's a brilliant genius! Like, he also backs it up 100%, and that's one of the things that makes it so great, is that—if he couldn't deliver, it would be sad! You know? But he can deliver. It's great! And it's brilliant. You know what I wonder, when I watch *Toast of London* is you have such a specific comic sensibility that you've developed over, you know, the many years of your career—you know. 15 almost—

00:29:42 Matt Guest 20 years!

00:29:44 Jesse Host 20 years, yeah. And on that show are many other characters and actors and everyone is able to match the tone of the comedy.

[Matt agrees several times.]

There is never anyone who feels like they are visiting from another universe. And I wonder if that is a job that comes from direction, from casting?

00:30:12 Matt Guest No. Yeah, I think it's—if you—if you peopled the show with straight actors, who are—who are playing those scenes truthfully, then you'll get that atmosphere that you were talking about. Now, if you get a bunch of comedians to do it then they'll all—they'll all raise their game, then as a result raise their kind of performances, and you'll just get this *[censored]* contest, almost. You know, of how outrageous and how loud I can be. But if it's straight actors who are believing that this situation is completely real, you know, that's kind of going on around them—that's how it works, I think. That's why it's more, sort of, believable. I think.

00:31:02 Jesse Host I once wrote, on this show, a radio essay recommending *Toast of London*—as I used to do, every week. I would recommend some piece of culture.

00:31:11 Matt Guest That's very kind of you, thank you.

00:31:13 Jesse Host It—I certainly meant it. But the premise of this recommendation was really, "This is not a show for everyone."

[Matt cackles.]

Um. *[Chuckles.]* Like, I really front-loaded it with, "This is not a show for everyone" content.

00:31:24 Matt Guest So, that was the first thing you said? Yeah, yeah. *[Chuckles.]*

00:31:27 Jesse Host Pretty much. I mean, like, Matt—I'm not gonna sit here and lie to you, I just was like, "I just want everybody to know, it might work for you. It might not. It really works for me. It's really wonderful."

[Matt laughs.]

But, you know, it's not *Cheers*.

00:31:41 Matt Guest Not a thing, no.
00:31:43 Jesse Host And five days after I recorded that—as it aired on a station in the Midwest—I got this email from someone who had, I guess looked up my email address. A guy who taught at Southern Illinois University, in the film department. You know. Showbusiness adjacent. And he wrote—the subject line was, “*Toast of London*” and the email was, “Just watched this show based on your recommendation.”

[Matt laughs uproariously.]

“Forced myself to make it all the way through the episode, because I thought it would get better. *[Chuckles.]* It didn’t.”

00:32:20 Matt Guest *[Amused.]* No.
00:32:22 Jesse Host “Now, anything you recommend is suspect.”
00:32:25 Matt Guest *[Cackles.]* Well, I’m sorry about that. I’m sorry I ruined your credibility.

00:32:31 Jesse Host *[Laughing helplessly.]* It really felt like a threat, at the end there! Like—I—it really burnt him.

00:32:37 Matt Guest No, well that’s comforting. That’s comforting. ‘Cause if you do something, you know—if he’d have said, “Yeah, I thought it was alright.” That’s the worst! I’d hate that. You know what I mean? The fact that he was disgusted by it, you know, and he thought you were an idiot for recommending it, that’s far more satisfying to me. Like—

00:32:58 Jesse Host I know, at some point, there was talk of there being more *Toast of London*.

[Matt confirms.]

00:33:04 Matt Guest How realistic is that, now?
No, that is gonna happen. Yeah. I can tell you that it is. It’s being written, now. I tell you, I’ve done some—as a kind of warmup to writing it, I’ve done some audio sort of episodes on Twitter. I’ve just put them onto YouTube. So, there’s six free, five-minute, sort of *Toast* warmup audio episodes. Just to get back into it. Do you know what I mean? You know, just to kind of get all the rhythms going again, you know. And to see whether we could still do it and stuff. I had great fun doing those. You know, they won’t be for everybody. You know. And whether you get through the whole thing is—

[They laugh.]

00:33:49 Jesse Host Is your business! *[Giggles.]*
Even more with the great Matt Berry still to come. What’s his favorite part about playing a vampire? Does Matt think it’s weird that I want to be friends with the vampire he plays? The answers when we return. It’s *Bullseye*, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

00:34:06 Music Transition Chiming synth with a steady beat.
00:34:11 Jesse Host It’s *Bullseye*. I’m Jesse Thorn. If you’re just joining us, my guest is the actor Matt Berry. You’ve seen him on *The IT Crowd*, *The Mighty Boosh*, and on one of my favorite shows, *Toast of London*. He’s currently starring in *What We Do in the Shadows*. It’s a TV sitcom about vampires who live on Staten Island. Matt plays a fancy, haughty, buffoonish vampire named Lazlo Cravensworth. He’s also known as Jackie Daytona. You can catch that show on Hulu. Matt and I talked in 2020. Let’s get back into it.

One of the things about your show, *What We Do in Shadows*—which is in its second season, now, on FX and is really wonderful—is, you know, it is a mocumentary that plays on the idea that vampires, while they are vampire-y, also live in the world. And I think these particular vampires are in Long Island, if I remember correctly.

00:35:04 Matt Guest
00:35:05 Jesse Host

Staten Island.

Staten Island, thank you. *[Chuckles.]* That vampires, while they are vampire-y, also live in the world. These vampires live in Staten Island.

[Matt agrees.]

And, like, have to interact with the regular world and maybe aren't that good at it, because they're vampires. It's not, like, a big goofy show. It's pretty close to what a documentary would be like if it were really about vampires. But you, as a performer, have to kind of make a choice of how vampire-y to be? By which I mean, like, how much you have to do... to enact the, like, cultural associations of vampires, you know? Like, how often you wanna sweep your cape around or, like, whether you're gonna do a Dracula voice. Those kinds of things. *[Chuckles.]* Was there a discussion, as the show was kicking off, about how much you should pursue vampire stuff and how much you should act like a regular person?

00:36:13 Matt Guest

Well, I mean, I can't speak for anyone else who's in the show. I mean, I can only speak for myself. Not—no. I didn't have any of those conversations. The only time that... that vampire, sort of, manifesto is reminded to you is—I mean, 'cause Jemaine has all this knowledge. He's obsessed with vampires, which is—which is good! You know, 'cause that's, you know, that's how the whole thing's shaped. But—so, for instance, if something happens and as a result of that—'cause a lot of it's improvised, as you probably know. You know. I said, "Jesus Christ! What's this then?"

And Jemaine would go, "Matt, Matt, you can't. You can't. They don't swear. 'Cause if they swear, it causes them pain. It, like, burns their tongue."

"Oh, sorry. Yeah. Okay." You know.

[Jesse laughs.]

So, that's the only time, you know, where the vampire kind of rules and regulations come into the performance. I try and treat the thing, you know, again—like I said with, *Toast*, you know—as if I'm really in that house and those things are kind of—are kind of happening. Not a... bigger version or a contrived version of someone who's in a sitcom where there's kind of crazy things that are happening to them. That's how I approach it, I think.

00:37:39 Jesse Host

I only recently learned that Count von Count—the count from *Sesame Street*, the vampire character from *Sesame Street* who's always counting things—is based on the idea that vampires have to count everything, and so one way to get away from a vampire is to throw a bag of rice on the ground, so they have to count all of the grains of rice.

00:38:04 Matt Guest That sounds like bull[censored]. I haven't—
00:38:07 Jesse Host [Laughs.] You think Jim Henson was just messing with us?
00:38:10 Matt Guest Yeah. That's—there's no way that's—

[Jesse cackles.]

—that's part of it. That's—[laughs].

00:38:17 Jesse Host Was it in the script of *What We Do in Shadows* that when your character transmogrifies into a bat, he yells “bat”?

00:38:26 Matt Guest Do you know, I can't remember. You'd have to ask Jemaine, and then Jemaine would say, “You'd have to ask Matt.”

[Jesse giggles.]

Because I don't remember what happened there, to be honest with you. So, that would have happened in the pilot, in Los Angeles—where we filmed it. But I cannot—I cannot remember. Uuum. Yeah. I don't know. Yeah.

00:38:47 Jesse Host [Laughing.] It's a true—I mean, it—it might have been you just sort of offering a way to sleight the beginning of the FX shot, or whatever.

00:38:57 Matt Guest I think it would have been. I think—I mean, it could have easily been. It would have just been a way of me getting out of the scene, is what it would have been. Having said what I said, you know, and giving the space to other people. I think that's what it would have come from, and that would have been me sort of signaling that I'm out.

But, again, you'd have to ask Jemaine. But I know what Jemaine'd say. He'd go, [in a New Zealand accent] “Well, you better ask Matt.”

00:39:26 Jesse Host [Laughs.] Well, what is the greatest pleasure of portraying a vampire, on screen?

00:39:31 Matt Guest It's that set. It's the house set. I haven't seen many of the episodes, so I don't know—you know—how it comes across, particularly, on the—but it's the best set that I've ever—that I've ever seen, you know. Let alone worked on. The detail is incredible. And when you sit down in one of those rooms—they're 360, they're not let a set where there's like a missing wall for the audience. They're all, sort of, 360 things. And during, sort of, breaks, you go and sit in one of those and you're in a turn of the century, sort of, drawing room. And it can freak you out. You know. It can start to make you anxious and, you know, kind of look behind you.

That's the greatest gift. 'Cause if it feels totally authentic, you know, and a 360 experience, then a lot of the job is done. Do you know what I mean? So, if you feel like you're in, you know, you're in amongst it and everywhere you look, it's basically covered—there's the stairs, you know, that go up there. Well, if you go up there, you know, there's some bedrooms that go off there. And that's the way that it is. And the fact that it's—the detail of the set is so, so meticulous and so beautifully done. Yeah. That's the thing that I feel very grateful for, because it just makes the tomfoolery that I do just much easier.

00:41:02 Jesse Host Is it weird that I want to be friends with these vampires? Is that just—

00:41:07 Matt Guest Yeah. [Laughs.]

00:41:08	Jesse	Host	Is it the magic of situation comedies. <i>[Laughing.]</i> Where—I’m—they’re just such sweeties!
00:41:15	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	Jesse: For—you know. Matt: I don’t know. Well—I don’t know. Jesse: Considering they drink blood <i>[laughing]</i> to give themselves eternal life. Matt: Yeah, they’re pretty despicable. Yeah. They’re pretty despicable. You know, the kind of more you learn about them all—they’ve got terrible backstories. So, yeah. I don’t think you’d wanna be in that house for, you know, one second. <i>[Chuckles.]</i> Well, Matt Berry, I’m so grateful to you for taking this time to talk with me. I’ve— Well, I’m grateful to you! So happy to finally get you on the show. I’m such an admirer of your work for such a long time. And I love— Oh, you’re too kind. Well, I mean it. I mean it, Matt. Thank you again. Thank you very much. Matt Berry, the absolute best. All four seasons of <i>What We Do in the Shadows</i> , streaming now, on Hulu. If you haven’t watched it, watch it. There’s also a new season of <i>Toast of London! Toast of Tinseltown</i> was released earlier this year, in the UK. We’re holding out hope it will be released in the US soon. Are you listening, show business? Let’s make that happen. Funky synth with light vocalizations. That’s the end of another episode of <i>Bullseye</i> . <i>Bullseye</i> , created from the homes me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California. Although, I have to say, I just went into our actual office. And so, I have MacArthur Park lake news. First of all, I saw five pelicans on the lake. I think they think it’s an ocean. I also saw a pair of blue jeans that had been pulled from the lake, then dried out solid. They were green with moss, and it was kind of amazing. The show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our senior producer is Kevin Ferguson. Our producers are Jesus Ambrosio and Richard Robey. Our production fellow at Maximum Fun is Tabatha Myers. We get booking help from Mara Davis. Our interstitial music is by Dan Wally, also known as DJW. Our theme music is by The Go! Team. It’s called “Huddle Formation”. Thanks to The Go! Team for sharing it with us, and to their label, Memphis Industries. <i>Bullseye</i> is also on YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook. Find us there, give us a follow. We’ll share with you all of our interviews. And I think that’s about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.
00:41:21	Matt	Guest	
00:41:34	Jesse	Host	
00:41:38	Matt	Guest	
00:41:39	Jesse	Host	
00:41:45	Matt	Guest	
00:41:47	Jesse	Host	
00:41:50	Matt	Guest	
00:41:52	Jesse	Host	
00:42:15	Music	Transition	
00:42:18	Jesse	Host	
00:43:31	Promo	Promo	Speaker: <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR. <i>[Music fades out.]</i>