

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.
00:00:26	Jesse Thorn	Host	It’s <i>Bullseye</i> . I’m Jesse Thorn. Chris Estrada quit his day job a few years ago. He was working in a warehouse in Los Angeles, the town where he was born and raised. He’d been doing standup at clubs for a while. He had a spot on a Comedy Central showcase for up-and-coming comics. He kept working at the warehouse when the special aired. He kept working at the warehouse when he started getting calls from Fred Armisen, who wanted to develop a TV show with him. He’d take his meetings at lunchtime, wearing a back brace. Chris Estrada even kept working at the warehouse after he sold a show to Hulu, because he says the pandemic had just started, and why give up a stable gig in such an uncertain time? So, you know, he took a few more months to make sure showbusiness was for real. That show, the one he sold to Hulu, is the reason that he’s here to talk with me today. It’s called <i>This Fool</i> . It’s brand new. You can watch it on Hulu. It is <u>great</u> . It’s funny and human and surprising and surprisingly sweet. <i>This Fool</i> was co-created by Chris. He also stars in it as the show’s main character, Julio. Julio lives in southcentral LA, where Chris grew up. He wears punk band t-shirts, Levi’s, and Chuck Taylors, just like Chris does in real life. But Julio doesn’t have a warehouse job, and he doesn’t have any interest in getting into showbusiness, either. Julio works at a local nonprofit that helps former gang members adjust to life on the outside: the perfect place for Luis, Julio’s cousin and the show’s other main character. Luis just finished up a lengthy prison sentence. And since he went in, things have changed. A lot of his friends are dead, in jail, or have moved on. All of his comedy references are sort of frozen in the late ’90s, early 2000s. Like, there are more than a few <i>Austin Powers</i> references in <i>This Fool</i> . Before we get into my interview with Chris Estrada, let’s listen to a clip from the show. This comes from <i>This Fool</i> ’s pilot. In this scene, Julio is picking Luis up from prison. He’s late and he doesn’t have his car.
00:02:41	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:02:42	Clip	Clip	Luis (<i>This Fool</i>): Where’s your ride at, Primo? Julio: <i>[Out of breath.]</i> I let my homegirl borrow it. But don’t worry. I got you! I’ll call us an Uber. Uber is like the taxi of the future. Luis: <i>[Mockingly.]</i> Uber is like the taxi of the future. I know what Uber is, <i>[censored]</i> . Damn, talking to me like that. Actually, they have Uber in prison. Yeah. His name is Thumper, and if you give

him a pack of cigarettes, he'll carry you around like, eeey. It's pretty convenient. Yeah.

[Julio laughs.]

Damn, my boy, I haven't seen you in forever! Hey, for real though, why does your body still look 19, but your face looks 56, fool?

[Laughs.]

Julio: Yup.

Luis: You got Edward Jeeve's uncle's face! *[Laughs.]*

00:03:18 Sound Effect Transition

Music swells and fades.

00:03:20 Jesse Host

Chris, welcome to *Bullseye*. I'm happy to have you on the show. Your show's super good.

00:03:24 Chris Estrada Guest

Oh, thanks, Jesse. That really means a lot.

00:03:26 Jesse Host

Are you wearing this Love and Rockets t-shirt that you wore in the show?

00:03:31 Chris Guest

Yeah, I am. I am.

[Jesse laughs.]

Big Love and Rockets fan, and I wanted to wear shirts that I wear in real life on the show.

00:03:37 Jesse Host

That's like a classic Latino nerd text. Like, you could hardly go more classic than that.

00:03:44 Chris Guest

Yup. Yeah. That was totally the aim. I said—I go, "A lot of people might not know what it is, but for those that do, it'll mean something."

00:03:52 Jesse Host

Was there a comic book store in your neighborhood when you were a kid?

00:03:55 Chris Guest

Yeah, there actually was. When I was growing up, there was a comic book store on West Boulevard, on the corner of West Boulevard and Hyde Park. It's the border between Inglewood and southcentral Los Angeles, and it was a comic book called the CBC, the Comic Book Club. This older Black dude named Earl used to own it, and that's where I would go get comic books. And one time, I was there with my friend, Hector. We were like in elementary school, and it got held up at gunpoint.

00:04:23 Jesse Host

That's messed up.

00:04:24 Chris Guest

[Laughs.] Yeah. Just some hood comic book store.

00:04:30 Jesse Host

I was present for a couple of things like that, when I was that age, and it just never stopped—like, when I think about it right now, I'm still kind of terrified.

00:04:39 Chris Guest

[Chuckles.] Yeah. Yeah. It was such a crazy situation. I think we were probably in like sixth grade or something. We were there like looking at comic books, buying some. Some guy comes in and holds the store up at gunpoint. And you know, I mean, being from where I grew up, it's not that you're—you've seen things like that before, and so—it still freaks you out, though. And we were kids. But yeah, I can now really laugh at it, 'cause I think like I went in there and—he went in there to rob the place for money, but I think he put two and two together, and he saw these comic books that

are pinned to the wall are valuable. So, it was just really funny to hear some dude be like, “Give me that *Incredible Hulk*.”

[They laugh.]

00:05:21	Jesse	Host	He’s like picking them out?
00:05:22	Chris	Guest	Yeah, picking them out.
00:05:23	Jesse	Host	Let me—give me that one. <i>[Laughs.]</i> He’s like, “I’m not really a DC guy. So. Let’s—” <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:05:29	Chris	Guest	Yeah. He was like, “Give me—I’m a Vertigo guy. Give me that Vertigo.”
00:05:33	Jesse	Host	He’s only into art comics. He’s like, “This is for grownups. I’m not into that—”
00:05:37	Chris	Guest	“I’m a grown <i>[censored]</i> dude.”
00:05:39	Jesse	Host	The comic book store guy by my house when I was a kid—shoutout to Al from Al’s Comics—he was like a classic comic book store dude. I mean, god bless him. You know? He was across the street from the Boys & Girls Club. So, you know, he dealt with doofuses all—you know, doofy 12-year-olds all day long. So. You know. And he was always gracious about it to the extent he was capable.
00:06:04	Chris	Guest	That’s great.
00:06:05	Jesse	Host	But like <i>[laughs]</i> —like, now you’re going through a comic book store, you know, it’s like some like 20-year-old women with mermaid hair and gauges and whatnot. And like, Al was just like a guy in a dirty t-shirt with a ponytail who was a little mad you were there.
00:06:23	Chris	Guest	Yeah. That’s how it was for me. Now, it feels like it’s a little counterculture-ish—you know. Or—like, you know, that kind of comic book culture is pretty mainstream or alternative mainstream, I guess, or whatnot. But you know. Back then, it was like older dudes who were like, “I just love this, and this is the business I run. And I’m kind of a—you know, I’m kind of a <i>[censored]</i> .”
			<i>[They laugh.]</i>
00:06:48	Jesse	Host	You have a bit in your standup act about holding the world record for most times losing a fight. Um. <i>[Chuckles.]</i>
00:06:58	Chris	Guest	Yeah, that kind of came from—I always talk about how—in the bit, I talk about like I’m not a physical fighter. I’m an emotional fighter, in that like I don’t win fights physically. I win them mentally. So, the idea is that kind of like if—I may get my <i>[censored]</i> kick, but when the guy’s walking away, I’m gonna say that that’s why his little brother makes more money than him and his wife’s incredibly unhappy in their marriage, or whatever. You know. Just that idea of just like I feel like I’ve always been kind of a smart <i>[censored]</i> in that sense. And like, you know, I just like that idea of like, yeah, you might have—you know—messed me up or whatever, but I’m gonna say something really cutting to you that’s gonna hurt your feelings. And that’s even worse, because you clearly don’t have respect for me, but I said something so cutting to you that it’s gonna stay with you.
00:07:45	Jesse	Host	How many times have you, IRL, gotten yourself beat up?
00:07:51	Chris	Guest	You know, I feel like—truthfully, it’s—I mean, it’s not even that many. It’s just the idea is that when I did get into fights, I was like yeah, we’ll fight, but I’m also gonna say something very mean to you. <i>[Laughs.]</i> Yeah.
00:08:06	Jesse	Host	One time, a dude just punched me walking down the street, but that’s the only time I ever—like, I’ll run. I’ll book it <i>[snaps]</i> so fast.

So. But a dude just walking opposite directions, he was wearing the same jacket as me. It pissed him off. He punched me.

00:08:20 Chris Guest See, my problem is that I'll stay there and fight knowing I might lose. I have just this pride thing of like I'd rather put up a fight, know that I'm probably gonna get my [censored] whooped, but I'm gonna say something to you. You know? [Chuckles.] Like, I'm still gonna call you a loser, like even though I lost.

00:08:40 Jesse Host In the bit, it's your girlfriend says to you, "That's why your mom is going bald." [Laughs.]

00:08:47 Chris Guest Yeah. I—well, in the bit, I say I always say my fighting technique is similar to that of an angry girlfriend in an argument. I just win the fight by saying the most messed up thing that had nothing to do with the argument whatsoever. That's the example. I go, one time I was arguing with my girlfriend, and she said, "That's why your mom's going bald." And we were arguing about rent money. Like, what did my poor mother's balding scalp have to do with any of this? You know? So, just kind of taking that technique of like yeah, that's where I'm gonna go. [Laughs.] I'm learning from them.

00:09:21 Jesse Host I've seen you describing your character on the show as dealing with an existential crisis. It borders on nihilism. I mean, there's this scene in the pilot where he goes up to some dudes he's been scared of that are camped out in front of his house and kind of—you know, talked down to him. And he basically asks them to kill him.

00:09:45 Chris Guest Yeah. Yeah. You know what it is? I think it's also like—to just have a existential guy in a working-class world. 'Cause they exist. You know? And they exist, and it was just really inspired by like—there's this movie called *Killer of Sheep*. Old movie about this Black family in Watts, in like the late 1970s. And the husband of that family's kind of going through an existential crisis. He works at a meat factory—like a sheep factory or whatever, where they kill sheep. And there's just something so funny. He's trying to describe his depression to his friend one time. He's telling his friend like how he feels, how life feels, like it's existential to him, and the only response his friend has—who doesn't get what he's talking about—he goes, "Well, if you're so sad, why don't you kill yourself?" [Laughs.]

And like, it just—it killed me. And it just kills me to—yeah. I don't think existentialism is sort of unique. Like, in that world. I think you'll find people who are existential in any class bracket or race or ethnic group. But you'll find them, but what you'll find is that people around them usually don't understand what they're going through.

00:10:58 Jesse Host It would be easy for you to make your character, Julio, a saint. He works at a—you know, a rehab place for reforming criminals, and he's the nerd in the hood and all this stuff. Right? He's kind of a narcissist. [Laughs.] Was that a choice?

00:11:14 Chris Guest Oh yeah, he is. That was a big choice. Yeah. 'Cause I wasn't interested in a good guy in that traditional sense or whatever, where people are looking at him like—I was not interested in making the *Ted Lasso* of southcentral Los Angeles. Like, that's fine if you like that, but that was not anything I was interested in—the sweetness. I was interested in like looking at like codependency, and what is the nature of helping someone. And oftentimes, in codependency, when you're helping someone, it's not based in altruism. Like, it's to run away from your own problems. And you're kind of patting yourself on the back while doing so, 'cause you feel so awful about

00:11:58	Jesse	Host	yourself, you have to convince yourself that you're a good guy. And you gotta tell other people that you're a good guy.
00:12:00	Chris	Guest	What did your parents do for work? My mom was a janitor. You know, blue collar job. She's an immigrant from Mexico. Single mom. My dad, he was a bartender for many years at an El Torito in Marina del Rey. That's still there. And then, after that he worked as a bus boy. He worked in construction. You know. Immigrant parents, they didn't have formal educations. So, they worked blue-collar, working-class jobs.
00:12:25	Jesse	Host	Did they expect you to go to college or no?
00:12:28	Chris	Guest	I think they wanted me to go. But I went. I went to Cal State Northridge. I failed <i>[laughs]</i> my freshman year. I didn't come back. And I just—you know, it was mostly my mom, and I think she was just kind of like, "Well, I hope you figure something out." And I didn't figure out something for quite a long time. I was working like a lot of menial jobs. Up until I started comedy, I had several jobs throughout the years.
00:12:54	Jesse	Host	More with Chris Estrada after the break. Stay with us, it's <i>Bullseye</i> , from MaximumFun.org and NPR.
00:13:01	Music	Transition	Chiming synth with a steady beat.
00:13:06	Jesse	Host	Welcome back to <i>Bullseye</i> . I'm Jesse Thorn. If you're just joining us, my guest is Chris Estrada. Chris is the creator and star of <i>This Fool</i> , a new TV comedy that is streaming now on Hulu. On that show, Chris plays Julio, a 30-something guy who lives in southcentral with his family. He stars opposite Frankie Quinones, who plays Luis, who is an ex-con and Julio's cousin. Let's get back into our conversation.

A lot of people start doing standup when they're like 19. I don't know a lot of successful comics who started later on in life. My buddy, Al Madrigal, was like 27 or 28, something like that.

[Chris affirms.]

00:13:51	Chris	Guest	You were even older than that, right? You were like 28 or 29.
00:13:54	Jesse	Host	I was 29. I was 29 when I started.
00:13:57	Chris	Guest	What made you think you could do it? You know, because I didn't think about it in terms of like I'm gonna make a career out of this. 'Cause I think that would've—I think I had probably burned a lot of bridges by that time with friends or, you know, ex-girlfriends or whatever. I was just kind of like what am I doing? And I think I had been let go of a job at that point. And I always say I was one of those dudes that like—before standup, my personality was "dude with three jobs". Like, <i>[laughs]</i> that was my thing. I would just go from—work a morning job—I had to work three jobs to get paid like I was having a decent fulltime job. And I was doing that, but then I just remember my nights started getting free, and I always wanted to do standup in the last few years of like—in my mid-20s, I really got into standup.

I always enjoyed it, but I really got into it. And you know, I loved hearing standup. I love standup albums. I also wanted to write. Like, I wanted—I liked screenwriting. I didn't know how to do it or anything, but I liked it. And I loved movies. I was really into movies. I love the Coen Brothers. You know, I was watching things like *Killer of Sheep* and—you know, watching tons of movies, and—you know

what's so funny? I remember at 25 telling this woman I was dating at the time like, I wanna start standup. And she goes, "That's embarrassing." And I go you're right. *[Laughs.]* And then I didn't—and then I waited four years. And then, finally when I started, I think I just said I just wanna try it. I think if I thought about it in the long haul, it would've overwhelmed me.

I think when I started standup, I had incremental goals. And having big goals would've really consumed me or freaked me out, but I was just like, oh, I wanna try it. I'm gonna see if I can get onstage and say these jokes that I wrote. And then it went okay the first time. It didn't go awful. It didn't go great either. Just okay. And then I said, "That's enough for me to keep going." And then, I kept going. And you know, then things—I would have really bad sets, but then once I was like—once I knew I had a bad set and I wanted to keep doing it, I said, "Alright, there's something here if I wanna keep doing this." But yeah, I started at 29. And it was pretty intimidating, 'cause most people were actually younger. Like, everybody who I was meeting at the time was like 19, 20, 21, 22. And like, you know, I kind of came from this like—I thought I knew something 'cause I was older. Even though I had really no accomplishments. *[Laughs.]* Like, I just thought I've lived a life or whatever. I should know something. But I knew that that didn't translate into the craft of being funny. Like, I think I knew I was inherently funny or like I had funny thoughts, but you know, it's a craft. And I was like—it was really humbling to like be 29 and some—I bombed, but then some 19-year-old goes up onstage and does great.

00:16:46 Jesse Host

[Chuckles.] I can understand that. There's a great moment in your act when you start talking about bits that work at your job that you couldn't bring onstage.

00:17:00 Chris Guest

Yeah. I always say that like I'm considered a comedic genius at my old warehouse job, and then I—you know, it's just the idea of that like I may not be—I don't know what you're gonna think about me here, but I will tell you this, there's a warehouse I used to work at, and everybody thinks I'm a comedic genius there. And it's just the idea of differentiating. 'Cause I kind of wanted to find a way of like how can I talk about these things I'm living or—you know, I was working at a warehouse at the time, and—while I was still doing standup, and I was just like—it just made me laugh, the humor of what was funny at work. Like, you know, so much of what's funny at work only works at work.

00:17:37 Sound Effect Transition

Music swells and fades.

00:17:38 Clip Clip

[The audience laughs regularly.]

Chris: You know, as a comedian, you work really hard to be smart, funny, and clever. But what's great about being funny at my warehouse job is you don't have to be any of those things. And I know that, because a few weeks ago I saw my coworker, Armando—he was covered in sweat from unloading trucks all day. And I walked up to him, and I said, "Damn, fool, you look cold! Put a sweater on!" And they've been laughing about that *[censored]* for two weeks now. Oh, they can't get enough of it! They can't get enough of it. The other day, José came up to me. He was like, "Hey, fool, what was that joke you told Armando a few weeks ago?"

I go, "Well, check this out. He was covered in sweat, right? So, I told him that he looked cold, and he should put a sweater on."

And José said, "How do you come up with this [censored]?! You should be a comedian."

00:18:20 Sound Effect Transition

Music swells and fades.

00:18:21 Chris Guest

You know? So, just the idea that I can really crack these guys up with like softball pitches of the worst type of job humor, but it just wouldn't work anywhere else. And the thing is, when they find out that you're funny or that you're doing standup, they go, "Do the stuff you do here at work." You know? Like, I used to go up to some of my coworkers at this warehouse, and I used to say, "Hey, don't tell anyone, but I'm with undercover boss." [Laughs.] "I actually own this warehouse. Like, we're filming something." Like you know. And it would kill them, but I'd go—I can't—

They would say, "Do that onstage when you do standup."

00:18:58 Jesse Host

I'd go, "It doesn't work, guys. Like, believe me." [Laughs.] What was the comedy that you got really into when you were in your 20s?

00:19:03 Chris Guest

You know, comedians like Greg Giraldo, who passed away. Really smart comedian that I just thought was like so sharp and funny, wrote really funny jokes. Just felt like him and comics like Colin Quinn, Patrice O'Neal, even comics like Maria Bamford that I really enjoyed. I think I was listening to Mitch Hedberg or DL Hughley, I really liked at the time. But I remember, it was really Greg Giraldo that I just thought this guy's like not underestimating the audience. I just like when you can make a mechanic, working class guy laugh but also make some pretentious snob laugh at the same time. I really enjoy that. Because I don't think you're underestimating anyone.

And I thought like comics like Greg Giraldo were doing that. Like, it was really great to see. Like, he would have just really great jokes, really smart jokes. Like, yeah. He was one of those kind of like—I wouldn't say he was necessarily political, but you know, he was kind of topical but had interesting takes on things. But also, the same thing, like I just remember being like—I remember listening to like someone like Maria Bamford and it just killing me, and thinking, "Woah, there's something to this, because I'm a dude who's working regular jobs and, you know, I'm from LA." I'm not from where Maria Bamford's from, where her humor informed her from like—I think she was from Minneapolis or that area, maybe Wisconsin or something.

00:20:38 Jesse Host

Duluth. I think she's from—

00:20:39 Chris Guest

Yeah, Duluth, yeah. But I just remember thinking, "Woah, she found a way to make that funny. I think we probably have lived different lives, and it's still making me laugh." So, I just always loved somebody that was like—yeah, those kind of comics really informed me a lot.

00:20:57 Jesse Host

This Fool is set in south LA. I think there are a lot more depictions of Latino culture in LA that are set in east LA.

[Chris confirms.]

00:21:13 Chris Guest Why did you wanna set it in south LA?
'Cause I grew up there, and I was living there at the time. And you know, I just—I think I have a tremendous amount of respect for east LA and communities like Boyle Heights. And I think there's a rich history there. And you know, Latinos—specifically Mexican Americans—have been there for a long time. And you know, activism and movements have come out of there. But that wasn't my life. You know? I didn't grow up there. You know. It's kind of a homogenous neighborhood. Like, you know, it's 90-something% Latino. And I grew up in Inglewood. And then, as an adult, I lived in southcentral Los Angeles. They're right next to each other, and like I had family in—you know, I had an uncle that lived in Compton. I had family that lived in southcentral. I had family that lived in Inglewood.

So, yeah. That's what I knew and that's where my life was at. And I also like—you know, I wanted to have a show that like—you know, most of these shows when it's about Latinos, it's usually set in east LA. But I just wanted to have a show where the neighbors are Black, because my neighbors were Black. You know? Or I wanted to show that sometimes they get along and sometimes they don't. You know? And being comedically honest about that. 'Cause that's always been my version of LA. Like, up until quarantine, I didn't live anywhere else. Like, I always lived in a part of LA that was both Latino and Black. So, that just felt natural to me, and it also felt interesting.

Like, you know, sometimes we had great relationships with Black neighbors, or I had great relationships with some of my Black neighbors, but I also went to a high school that had race riots. Like, you know, where it was Latinos against Black people. Like, there would be race riots twice a year. Or sometimes gangs in the neighborhood—a Latino gang and a Black gang might not get along. Sometimes they do, sometimes they don't. And that was kind of like—I don't know, I always just think those relationships are interesting. And I just thought you never see that. It's always kind of homogenous. You know? And I'd like to see a little bit of that.

00:23:24 Jesse Host One of the things that I like about the slightly scary dudes hanging outside your house racing remote control cars is—first of all, racing remote control cars, classic activity.

[Chris agrees with a laugh.]

But also—right? It's two Latino dudes and two Black guys, and there's a moment where one of the Latino guys says, "Last time around, it was Blacks versus Mexicans. Now it's Mexicans versus Blacks." And then his buddy goes, "I'm Salvadorian. You know I'm Salvadorian. I said I'm Salvadorian!"

00:23:58 Chris Guest Yeah! That was just really like a funny joke to me, but also a way to acknowledge like yeah, there's a lot of Salvadorians in this city. *[Laughs.]* Like, you know? A lot of my friends are—like, I grew up with—some of my closest friends are from Central America. You know? So, I just thought it was really funny. Because you know, sometimes there's such a—I don't know, because I'm Mexican American, but I would imagine if you're from Guatemala or El

Salvador, you know, “Mexican” kind of encompasses the culture or whatever. So, you know, it was just funny for me to sort of touch on this like Black versus Mexican and the guy being like, “Hey, dude, I’m—we’re on the same side, I’m just—I’m Salvadorian.” *[Laughs.]* I thought it was a really funny moment to do that.

00:24:45 Jesse Host I think when I first moved to LA, I was not used to people calling all Latinos Mexican. I wasn’t even used to people calling Mexican Americans Mexican. But I think it’s a byproduct of—as you said, the kind of hegemony of Mexican American culture in LA is like almost nowhere else in the United States.

00:25:10 Chris Guest Yeah. That’s right. I think that there’s a lot of that. I mean, because we’re just—it’s a lot of us here, but you know, growing up where I grew up, there was a lot of Salvadorian kids around or Guatemalan kids. So, it was like in a way, we kind of grew up like—I always kind of say this. In a way, I didn’t grow up viewing myself as a Chicano, you know? Because my parents were immigrants. And you know, they didn’t have formal educations, so they didn’t have—you know, that’s a term that was, I think, invented here. And you know, was sort of like came through like counterculture and civil rights and politics and whatnot. So, you know, my parents were immigrants, and they came out here. And they had like blue collar jobs, so to them, they were just like, “You’re Mexican.” You know?

And then, I sort of just viewed myself that way. And then, as I got older and my friends were other things—like other types of Latino—this term, just “Latino” took over. You know? And I was like yeah, I’m just a Latino dude from LA. You know? Now that I’m older, I understand the context of what being a Chicano is, and I have an understanding of like, yeah, I guess I am that. But I didn’t grow up with it. It wasn’t prevalent in my life. You know? I even tell people like, you know, when I was growing up, my mom didn’t even know what that meant. Like, my mom thought that meant gangsters with lowriders. *[Laughs.]* Like, you know? So, yeah.

00:26:28 Jesse Host She was confused between Chicanos and cholos. They both start with “ch”!

00:26:30 Chris Guest Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. She just thought—yeah. Yeah. Yeah! You know? *[Chuckling.]* There you go.

00:26:36 Jesse Host Yeah, I mean, another thing about LA Latino culture is this remains a city of immigrants. Right? There are many, many first- and second-generation Americans in Los Angeles, from all over the world, but certainly from Mexico and Central America. There’s also a huge community of Mexican Americans in LA whose families have been in LA for six generations, eight generations. And in—you know, there are certainly people who have ancestors who have been in California since before California was part of the United States.

00:27:14 Chris Guest Yeah, that trips me out, ‘cause that wasn’t my—like, I never knew anyone like that. I think, you know, where I grew up and where I lived as an adult, everybody was kind of—their parents got here in the late ’70s and ’80s. Like, you know. I didn’t—to me, the idea of somebody’s parents speaking English and if they were Latino, I would be like, “Yo, that’s insane.” You know?

[Jesse laughs.]

Like—or I remember one time, I met this girl from east LA, or she was like from Boyle Heights, and she told me that her grandfather fought in World War II. And I said, “What?!” *[Laughs.]* Like, that is like—that’s—I was like, “He’s been here since then?!” It just blew my mind.

00:27:53 Jesse Host

I had a conversation with Al Madrigal one time—standup comic whose—he’s half Mexican American, half Italian American. And he doesn’t speak any Spanish at all, I don’t think. Or his Spanish is terrible, one or the other. And like, he’s been in a lot of situations in comedy where there is an expectation that he is either gonna be like an intensely Mexican American comedian or he’s gonna be like a righteous Chicano comedian. He’s not either of those things at all. *[Chuckles.]*

[Chris affirms.]

And like, he has to figure out how to deal with that. Right? Like, when you’re a comic, you have to deal with whatever assumptions people make about you right away, or you’re never gonna get anywhere onstage.

00:28:34 Chris Guest

Yeah. Absolutely. You know, I feel sort of similar in a sense. I mean, like I speak fluent Spanish ‘cause I just grew up speaking it. Like, my mom didn’t speak English. You know? So, I never feel that I’m not enough of anything. I just know what I am. Like, this is what I’m into. This is my point of view. I’m not gonna come up here and give you cultural jokes that you’ve heard before. You know? I’ve got a point of view on things or I had these esoteric thoughts that I think I can make funny. And yeah. So, sometimes it takes a minute for them to be like—get a context for you. You know?

00:29:13 Jesse Host

Your character on this show wears a lot of punk rock t-shirts in addition to your comic book t-shirt, there. Are you a punk rock guy?

00:29:22 Chris Guest

Yeah. I mean, I love it. It really had a profound effect on me. I wanted the show to have a little—have that. You know? ‘Cause I always tell people like, you know, this is not unique. This guy is not unique. There’s more dudes like me in these neighborhoods, in these working-class neighborhoods than there is gang members. You know? Like, what’s gonna make the rounds in the news is the sensationalism of gangs or whatever. But the character of Julio or me as a person, we’re not—I grew up with 20 dudes, men and women, who are just like me. You know? So—but I wanted that. I wanted to have that like—I wanted to wear punk shirts in there ‘cause I love that. You know?

I think I grew up listening to like punk and hardcore, and it still plays a profound effect on my life. Like, I try to sneak little things in there. We had an episode about Ronald Reagan. And I thought to myself we should close the episode out with an ‘80s hardcore song that’s an anti-Reagan song. So, we got—we reached out to the band D.O.A., and we got the song “Effed Up Ronnie” and closed out the episode with that. ‘Cause I just thought like if we’re doing a Reagan episode, let’s have an anti-Reagan anthem by a hardcore band from the ‘80s. And I tried to sneak in stuff. I wore Joe Strummer t-shirts and there are Clash t-shirts and there are little easter eggs.

There’s a episode I have that’s like a birthday episode. The whole point is my character hates celebrating his birthday and whatnot.

And when he looks at his texts, one of the texts he receives is from Joe Strummer that says happy birthday. And I love when people pick up on that. I saw that you sneaked that in.

00:31:00 Jesse Host I feel like that's a pretty delicate telephone call, calling D.O.A.. Like, you can't just send the regular Hulu music clearance lawyer.
[Laughs.]

00:31:09 Chris Guest No, yeah. You gotta send a letter saying, "Hey, I really love D.O.A.."
00:31:15 Jesse Host You're like, "Hi, I'm calling from *Celebrity Family Feud*, and—"
[Laughs.]

00:31:20 Chris Guest "Yeah, we were wondering—" No, I had to be like, "Just so you know, your album *Hardcore '81* played a big role in my life."
[Laughs.] And like, we had to let them know. But yeah, we were able to just get some music. There was music that we licensed from local Latino punk hardcore bands from the area. We licensed—we used music by this really great band, called Generación Suicida. They're from southcentral Los Angeles. We used another song by this really great band called Tozcos. They're from Santa Ana, California. It was really cool. I just remember being like, "We should use some of their music. These are bands that I like." You know? And who, if I wasn't doing standup, I would go see. And it was—yeah, it was really cool to do that.

00:32:04 Jesse Host I'm the least punk rock dude ever, but you know, I knew punk rock kids growing up, going to arts high school and stuff. And you know, anytime I've ever had anybody on this show who was that way as an adolescent, like the depth of its effect on their life is so extraordinary.

00:32:29 Chris Guest Oh yeah, absolutely.
00:32:32 Jesse Host What was it for you?
00:32:34 Chris Guest You know, I think for me, when I was growing up it was like—the things that were around me were kind of like—you know, you could hear hip-hop. You know? Hip-hop was around. But also, my parents' music, you know, Mexican music, Latino music was around. But there was just something about punk and its energy and its like anger that really just got to me, that I just thought, "Ah, this is great, 'cause I already feel different. So, this is perfect for that." And then, you know, just like some bands were slightly personal and expressed more emotive thoughts and some bands expressed more political thoughts or—you know—societal thoughts.

And that really intrigued me. Both, you know? Bands like Fugazi to like The Clash and like—you know, there's another band, called Las Cruces. I wear one of their t-shirts. It's like a Chicago band. And you know, that kind of anger really got to me. They were presenting ideas, and I thought that was like really cool. It, you know, was through like—through the Minutemen that I found out about—they had a song called "El Salvador", and like you know, reading about like the civil war then. It really helped inform me a lot. Or even like The Clash having an album called *Sandinista*. I was like what is that? And then you find out it's like, oh there was a Nicaraguan rebellion—you know—like rebellion at the time. You start digging deeper. You know.

00:34:04 Jesse Host And it was through punk rock that that really kind of opened me up. I mean, it's funny to think about the wars in Nicaragua and El Salvador from punk rock as an adolescent, when—presumably—there was like lots of kids around whose parents had come to the

00:34:21	Chris	Guest	States because of those wars—or in some cases maybe themselves. I don't know exactly how old you are, but— Yeah. Yeah. No, that's true. Yeah, absolutely. I'm 38, and you know, there was kids who—you know, the thing about it is sometimes they might have not even known why they were here. You know? And their parents probably—you know, there's people who don't understand the depth of why things are started or whatever. You know? So, yeah, that was really interesting. Or like hearing—I just remember hearing like Rage Against the Machine songs and then talking about what was going on in Chiapas, at the time.
00:34:53	Jesse	Host	The other thing about punk rock that like—as a guy that's not that, I have a hard time wrapping my head around—is like the physical part of it. Like, the way people talk about going to shows is about, first and foremost, sense of community, I hear from people. But also like a physical experience of—
00:35:16	Chris	Guest	Yeah, slam dancing. Like, people slamming in and stuff like that. Yeah! I mean, you know what's so funny? It's something that I don't go to shows anymore or like if I do, I'm not interested in doing that. Like, I'm 38 and my knees hurt sometimes. But I think when you're young or even if you're my age or older, like you might have an anger or a frustration or like—you know, that kind of aggressiveness of like slam dancing might work for you. You know? I think when I was young, it was really exciting to be like wow, people slam dance?! Like, this is cool and if you fall, they'll pick you up. And it's aggressive, but it's communal. You know?
00:36:07	Jesse	Host	It was pretty—I can totally see how it wouldn't make sense to anyone who's not part of that world. I remember explaining it to my older cousin whose like not into that, and he'd be like, "So, you guys just beat each other?" Like, it made no sense to him. That's how I felt when I—I was like, "What are you—?! Sorry, say that again!?" <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:36:14	Chris	Guest	Yeah, it's so funny.
00:36:16	Jesse	Host	We'll wrap up with Chris Estrada from <i>This Fool</i> in just a minute. When we come back from the break, we'll talk about creating the character Luis in the show and how he kept an ex-con cousin from coming off as a stereotype. It's <i>Bullseye</i> , from MaximumFun.org and NPR.
00:36:33	Promo	Clip	Music: Exciting techno music plays.

Tre'vell Anderson: Hey there, beautiful people! I'm Tre'vell Anderson.

Jarrett Hill: And I'm Jarrett Hill. We are the hosts of *FANTI*, the show where we have complex and complicated conversations about the grey areas in our lives, the things that we really, really love sometimes but also have some problematic feelings about.

Tre'vell: Yes, we get into it all. You wanna know our thoughts about Nicki Minaj and all her foolishness? We got you. You wanna know our thoughts about gentrification and perhaps some positive?—question mark?—

Jarrett: Uh-oh.

Tre'vell: —aspects of gentrification? We get into that, too! Every single Thursday, you can check us out at MaximumFun.org. Listen, you know you want it, honey, so come on and get it!

[Jarrett laughs.]

Tre'vell: Period!

00:37:15 Music Transition
00:37:21 Jesse Host

[Music fades out.]

Chiming synth with a steady beat.

It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. I'm talking with comedian Chris Estrada of the TV comedy *This Fool*.

So, your character on the show has a counterpart: his cousin, Luis.

[Chris confirms.]

And his cousin Luis is fresh out of jail—maybe prison—and living at the house, and they're kind of like pushing on each other, trying to figure out what's what.

[Chris confirms.]

00:38:13 Chris Guest

How do you write that character? How do you write a 35-year-old, semi-retired cholo without being broad? Without playing into people's ideas about—you know—a guy in slides with tube socks pulled up to his knees?

You know, by knowing those guys. Like, having those guys in my family. Like, knowing that they're scary to some people, but hilarious to me. Or like, the kind of guys that can joke with me, that I know then have a sense of humor. It's like, you know, nobody's that one thing. And like, I mean, I always say this in regular life. I had cousins who were gang members, older than me, and I'd go—you live in such a dichotomy or such a grey area that you understand—I know they're scary to you, or I know they've done things to maybe people who fear them or now fear them, but I know them in a different facet in that I know them to be scary, but I also know them to be loving or vulnerable or have insecurities or be guys who are immature. You know? Who laugh at things.

And I think that's—finding a way to sort of like humanize a guy like that, I think is really—would make the character unique. And having cousins that were like that and, you know, basing it off of my real cousins.

00:39:17 Jesse Host
00:39:19 Chris Guest

How do you cast it?

You know, we went with Frankie Quinones, who's an amazing actor, amazing comedian, amazing actor. And you know, in the beginning, we weren't thinking of someone like Frankie. We were thinking of someone more stereotypical, some big, buff dude with tattoos all over. You know? And what we found was that oftentimes the jokes or like us picking on each other—him saying things to me—it didn't feel like a comedy. It felt scary. And when we had Frankie audition, he had this like big kid energy to it, where it's like—you know what he brought was a Joe Pesci energy to it.

[Jesse agrees with a laugh.]

He brought a Joe Pesci energy where it was like, you know, he was—loved to make jokes, loved to be funny, but also would kick your *[censored]*. You know, he'd be the first guy to get a bat out of the car. He was not the biggest guy in the world. You know, I'm actually taller than him. And we then started looking at that image of like me being taller than him, him being shorter, and we just said, "That's actually funny. That presents better." 'Cause you know, the truth of the matter of fact is that also not all gang members are big. *[Laughs.]* Like, not all of them are big. And I started thinking about my cousins, who at some point I was actually taller than them. You know? So, yeah. That was it. And then, Frankie just brought a kind of really just vulnerability to the character.

And I think a lot of it was also, you know, with these kinds of characters, it's easy to make them Homer Simpson buffoon type characters. And I think it was making sure you ride a line where it's like we want this guy to be funny and immature, but we never want him to feel like he won't kick your *[censored]*. And not the character Julio's *[censored]*, because they fight each—he doesn't fear him. They get each other in headlocks. But he doesn't fear him 'cause he knows him to be family, and you know, he knows that he's bigger than them. But you never want him to be too buffoonish or too immature that he's not scared to fight, that you go, "This guy won't get a bat out of his car or pull out a gun or something like that."

00:41:30	Jesse	Host	So, you know, it's that thin line. He also lives very comfortably right on the line between kind of having gone to seed and not. <i>[Laughs.]</i> You know what I mean? Like, your character works in a kind of homeboy industries kind of situation, like rehabilitation for comics and former gang members. And there's just this kind of—one of the big things is this kind of question of what do you do when you're 40 and you have a face tattoo. And like, he really lives very comfortably in that area between going and getting a bat out of his car and coaching youth football.
00:42:12	Chris	Guest	Yeah, where it's like—you know, it's hard. It's like if you've lived that life or whatever—I mean, just from growing up from where I grew up, you have these intentions, but then your temper will take over. You know? Or sometimes if—whether you're a gang member or you grew up in a working-class neighborhood that had gangs, if you don't—you don't have a lot, but you have pride and you have a sense of like, "Don't mess with me." Or even—in my sense, it's like, look, I'd rather pridefully put up a fight and get my <i>[censored]</i> kicked than just hand over my money." You know?
00:42:50	Jesse	Host	And I think Luis has that. And I think everybody in that world has that. Had you quit your job when you sold this show?
00:42:53	Chris	Guest	No, I worked a few more months, and then I felt like—we sold it right before covid, and then covid hit and I remember really thinking to myself, "I should go back. 'Cause I think—I don't know that there's gonna be TV around anymore." <i>[Laughs.]</i> But I will say this, I remember when I thought we were gonna be okay, I was looking—I was like on my computer, looking at the news, and there was this

like entertainment news that said, “Disney is developing a live action *Tarzan* movie.” And I thought to myself if Disney thinks we’re still gonna have money in three years and society hasn’t collapsed, they must know something we don’t.

[They laugh.]

If they’re still developing stuff, I’m like, “They probably have the vaccine, and you’re gonna have to get it with a proof of purchase that you saw the *Tarzan* movie.”

00:43:38	Jesse	Host	<i>[Laughs.]</i> Just the headline in <i>Variety</i> says, “Disney hoarding diamonds.” They’re like wait a minute! Wait a minute.
00:43:44	Chris	Guest	Wait a minute, they know something. <i>[Laughs.]</i> Like, yeah. I—
00:43:49	Jesse	Host	Paramount <i>[inaudible]</i> has cooking oil.
00:43:52	Chris	Guest	<i>[Laughs.]</i> Yeah, that eventually is what’s gonna happen, though. But yeah, I quit my job a few months after.
00:44:00	Jesse	Host	I mean, the good news about warehouse work is it’s relatively casual, so you could get some if you needed it.
00:44:07	Chris	Guest	Yeah, you could. I mean all of the—I got all those warehouse jobs I had throughout the years were through temp jobs. Yeah. If this doesn’t work out in the long-haul, I always say I’m gonna go back and get my forklift license.
00:44:20	Jesse	Host	That’s where the real money is?
00:44:21	Chris	Guest	That’s where the real money is, yeah.
00:44:23	Jesse	Host	Well, Chris, I sure appreciate you taking this time to talk to me. And your show’s so great.
00:44:27	Chris	Guest	Thanks, Jesse. It really means a lot. Thank you so much.
00:44:30	Jesse	Host	Chris Estrada, everyone. <i>This Fool</i> is streaming now on Hulu. It is an excellent program. Chris is great in it. Frankie Quinones is great in it. Michael Imperioli is in it, from <i>The Sopranos</i> . We didn’t even talk about <i>The Sopranos</i> . Everyone is great in it. It’s a great show. Go watch it.
00:44:48	Music	Transition	Thumpy synth with light vocalizations.
00:44:51	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. We had a tropical storm in Los Angeles the other day. As if there <i>[chuckling]</i> wasn’t enough evidence here that God is mad at us. Anyway. It turned out to be not that bad.

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 DJW, also known as Dan Wally. Our theme song is called “Huddle Formation”. It’s by The Go! Team. Thanks to The Go! Team and to Memphis Industries, their label. Go! Team, great band. Go check out their records.

Bullseye is also on YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook. Find us in all of those places. We share our interviews there. You can share them thence? I don’t know if that’s right. Anyway, I think that’s about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.

00:46:03	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.]