

00:00:00	Jesse Thorn	Host	I'm Jesse Thorn. R.L. Stein is the creator of <i>Goosebumps</i> , the kid's horror books. He's written about ventriloquist dummies that come to life, haunted garden gnomes. And take it from our man, Bob Stein—inspiration can strike anywhere.
00:00:17	R.L. Stein	Guest	I came up with this book title. I'm walking along. <i>A Little Shop of Hamsters</i> . Which is a great title, right? So, I had to do a book about it. But how— <i>[laughs]</i> how do you make hamsters scary? That was a challenge!
00:00:31	Jesse	Host	From MaximumFun.org and NPR, it's <i>Bullseye</i> .
00:00:34	Music	Transition	"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.
00:00:38	Jesse	Host	This week, the <i>Bullseye</i> Halloween Spectacular. We've got more with R.L. Stein. We have Monét X Change from <i>Drag Race</i> . Ana Fabrega, from <i>Los Espookys</i> . All that coming up on <i>Bullseye</i> . Let's go!
00:00:57	Music	Transition	<i>[An echoing wolf howl.]</i> Thumpy rock music.
00:01:01	Jesse	Host	It's <i>Bullseye</i> . I'm Jesse Thorn. My first guest in our Halloween Spectacular doesn't need much introduction. <i>[Music fades in.]</i>
00:01:10	Music	Music	It's R.L. Stein. "Goosebumps (Theme Song)" from the album <i>Goosebumps (Original Television Soundtrack)</i> by Jack Lenz. <i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i>
00:01:19	Jesse	Host	If you're my age or close to it, odds are you read one or two or 20 or 100 of his books when you were a kid. He has written over 200 <i>Goosebumps</i> books, sold millions of copies, inspired a TV show, two movies, and a video game. Now, Stein—as you are about to hear—can't resist a good title. <i>Say Cheese and Die</i> , <i>Werewolf Skin</i> , <i>Go Eat Worms</i> . We're basically just reading out of Wikipedia right now. And he has carried on that proud tradition with a new series: a compilation of short horror stories for kids, which he has titled <i>SteinTinglers</i> .
00:02:06	Music	Transition	And as you're about to hear, R.L. Stein is just as you would hope he would be: an absolute delight. Let's get into it. Distorted, spooky keyboard.
00:02:12	Jesse	Host	R.L. Stein, welcome to <i>Bullseye</i> . I'm so happy to have you here.
00:02:15	R.L. Stein	Guest	Well thank you. My pleasure.
00:02:17	Jesse	Host	Did you read series books when you were a kid? Did you read <i>Tom Swift</i> or <i>The Hardy Boys</i> or something?
00:02:25	Stein	Guest	Um, I found those old books—my father had had them. And I found a bunch of them, but I didn't read books when I was a kid.
00:02:33	Jesse	Host	Not at all?
00:02:34	Stein	Guest	No. I read only comic books. I was a comic book freak. And so, I mean, this—I have all the wrong answers for these things. <i>[Chuckles.]</i> I should tell you about how much I loved children's books and how inspired I was. But uh, no, I loved comic books. And you know, when I was a kid, there were those incredible horror comics. <i>Tales from the Crypt</i> and <i>The Vault of Horror</i> . And they

were just horrifying. Gruesome with wonderful art. And they were funny and scary at the same time. Those were very big influences on me.

00:03:09 Jesse Host Where did you get your comics?
00:03:10 Stein Guest At the barber shop. The barber shop had—this is a true story. The barber shop had a big stack of these horror comics. And one day, I bought some and brought it home. And my mother wouldn't let me bring them into the house. She said, "These are trash. You can't have these." And so, I used to the barber—I used to get a haircut ever Saturday morning so I could read these comics books. And I had less hair when I was a kid than I do now.

00:03:40 Jesse Host [Chuckles.] How old were you when you tried to bring them home?
00:03:43 Stein Guest Nine or ten.
00:03:44 Jesse Host I mean, I'm impressed that the barber sold them to you.
00:03:48 Stein Guest Well, he didn't sell them. He just had—you know, for reading in the barber shop, they had a big stack of them. And I'd just go—I just loved them.

00:03:55 Jesse Host You're like going down the line there. You're like *Sports Illustrated*, not interested. *Playboy*, not for me. Horror comics? Yes, please.
Thank you.

00:04:03 Stein Guest Right. But my friends and I all carried around big stacks of comic books. We used to trade them and read them under a tree in my front yard. And I didn't really discover books until I was about 10.

00:04:17 Jesse Host What books did you discover when you were 10 or 11?
00:04:20 Stein Guest Well, this is my librarian story—how a librarian changed my life. Okay? [Chuckles.] It's one of my few nice—really nice stories. I grew up in a suburb of Columbus, Ohio. And one day, my mom dropped me off—I was just a kid—at the public library on main street. This little library. And the librarian was waiting for me. And she said, "Bobby? I know you like comic books. I have something else I think you will like." And she took me to a shelf of Ray Bradbury stories. And that really changed my life.

00:04:57 Jesse Host And you were like middle school aged? Like 11 or 12?
00:04:59 Stein Guest I was ten. Nine or ten. And the stories were just so imaginative and so beautifully written, and all had great twist endings. And so, Ray Bradbury turned me into a reader. And then I started reading all kinds of science fiction. I discovered books. I started reading Isaac Asimov and Robert Sheckley and the *Dune* books and all those things.

00:05:26 Jesse Host Were your parents readers?
00:05:27 Stein Guest No. No, they weren't. My dad was a blue-collar worker. My family was very poor. And my dad was a blue-collar worker. He unloaded refrigerators in a warehouse. And he never read anything. And my mother just—she never really understood it. You know. What I was doing. When I started writing, I'd be staying in my room typing, writing stories, writing little joke books and things. And they would—my mother would say, "What's wrong with you? Why are you doing that? Go outside and play. What's wrong with you?" They didn't get it. Worst advice I ever got, right? "Stop typing and go play."

00:06:09 Jesse Host Did other people in your life get it? Like, were you handing out joke books to classmates at school or your teachers?
00:06:17 Stein Guest Here, I have another wrong answer. No teacher ever really encouraged me. So, I was a very shy kid. And I'd do these little magazines—the joke magazines—and I'd bring them in and pass them around. And you know—for attention. And my teachers would say, "Bob, please, please stop bringing these in. Please stop."

[Chuckles.] And I often think that if they hadn't asked me to stop, I might have stopped.

[Jesse laughs.]

00:06:48 Jesse Host Right?
Yeah, I understand that entirely. I was only ever a disappointment to my teachers.

00:06:53 Stein Guest *[Laughs.]* Yeah, ever report card I ever got said, "Bob isn't working to the best of his abilities."

[They laugh.]

00:07:04 Jesse Host Every single report card.
Once my AP English teacher wrote on a paper that I submitted, "Jesse, I fear you will never take anything in life seriously."

00:07:20 Stein Guest What a wonderful thing to say!

[They laugh.]

00:07:26 Jesse Host What a—yeah! What a compliment, right?
It was very motivating. *[Laughs.]*

00:07:27 Stein Guest No, yeah! I would love to get that!

00:07:31 Jesse Host God bless my mom. She came in and yelled at him. *[Cackles.]*

00:07:34 Stein Guest Oh yeah? Oh, that's good. That's good.

00:07:37 Jesse Host Thanks, Mom. Thanks for that one, Mom.

[They chuckle.]

00:07:42 Stein Guest But you went to college! So, you must have been—
Yeah, I was the first one.

00:07:44 Jesse Host You must have had something going.

00:07:45 Stein Guest I was the first one in my family. I—you know, I lived in Columbus, and we couldn't really afford much. But when—I tell college students this. When I went to Ohio State, the tuition was \$125 a quarter. It was \$375 a year. I always say, "Worth every penny." *[Chuckles.]* But my family was so poor, we actually had to borrow money so I could go and do that. And I had the worst college experience you can have. I lived at home.

00:08:18 Jesse Host Did your siblings go to college?

00:08:20 Stein Guest Yeah, my brother did. My brother would go.

00:08:22 Jesse Host Did you have to convince your folks to do the money borrowing?

00:08:27 Stein Guest Um, yeah, I don't remember what happened with Bill. I don't remember how he did it. But it was—you know, it was tough. But I went to college because they had a humor magazine. Back in the '60s, every college had a humor magazine. And I wanted to work on the humor magazine. And at Ohio State, there was a magazine called *The Sundial*, which had been around from 1917 or something. James Thurber was the editor of it. And I was editor of the magazine for three years. Three years in a row. That's all I did, in college. I just did this humor magazine.

00:09:06 Jesse Host Did you know that was there when you were applying to school?

[Stein confirms.]

Had you like picked it up at coffee shops on your campus or something?

00:09:14 Stein Guest Yeah, I'd seen it—you know, in high school I'd seen it. And I got to do this magazine, the editor of the magazine got 23% of the profits. And it paid my way to New York City. 'Cause I was desperate to get out of Columbus.

00:09:32 Jesse Host I'm just impressed it was profitable.

00:09:34 Stein Guest What? No! Come on! Jesse! It was good! *[Chuckles.]* It was good! We sold a lot.

[They laugh.]

00:09:43 Jesse Host Was it currency on campus? Like, could you get anywhere by saying, "Hey, I'm the editor of that."

00:09:49 Stein Guest Not at all.

[They laugh.]

00:09:57 Jesse Host No. The opposite, I would think.

00:10:03 Stein Guest Was it your plan to do that with your life already?

Yes. I knew when I was nine. I loved doing it. And see, I started out—I wanted to be a—you know, I loved comics books, so I wanted to be an illustrator. I wanted to be a comic book illustrator. And so, I started doing little comics—fourth grade, fifth grade. And I'd bring them in, and the kids would say, "Bob, your drawings suck! You're terrible!" And I would look around at what everyone else could do, and I couldn't draw anything! So, I realized I had to write. And then I started writing all this stuff, and I just loved it.

I think partly because I was this fearful kid, and I could stay in my room and type and create my own people and worlds. I think that's one reason I liked it so much.

00:10:47 Jesse Host I mean, there's being fearful of—you know, going out, social situations, the kinds of things that keep kids in their room. But it is a pretty audacious plan to think yeah, I'm gonna go to college to do this impractical thing. Then I am going to move to New York to do that same, impractical thing.

00:11:13 Stein Guest Right. I just—I wanted my own humor mag. I loved *MAD Magazine*, as with many people. A very big influence on me. And that's what I wanted to do.

00:11:25 Jesse Host What was your relationship to the counterculture at the time, when you were in school and just after, as it kind of exploded?

00:11:33 Stein Guest I was not part of it at all. You know, I'm this college kid living at home. I thought it was all fascinating, very intriguing. But I was not—you know, I was a shy, repressed kid. *[Chuckling.]* I was never really part of any of that.

00:11:50 Jesse Host Did you date, in college?

00:11:53 Stein Guest Um, yes, near the end of college. But I was a very shy guy. No, you know—no one ever asked me that question before. *[Chuckles.]* That's interesting.

00:12:06 Jesse Host Were you shy at the magazine? Or was it like your world?

00:12:09 Stein Guest No, that was—I was the editor. I was the boss. So, you know. I could do what I wanted to do with it.

00:12:17 Jesse Host What was your plan when you moved to New York?

00:12:19 Stein Guest My plan was to—first, I had to support myself. I moved to New York. I didn't know a single person in the city. And so, I had to start getting jobs to support myself. But my plan was to find a way to

work on a humor magazine and to write funny novels for adults. I wanted to write humorous novels for adults. People have forgotten Max Shulman, who was a very big humorist in the Midwest. He wrote the *Dobie Gillis* books. I don't know. And people don't remember any of this stuff. But he was a real hero of mine, and so were other really funny writers. And I wanted to be one. But I ended up—I had to get work.

My very first job in New York was making up interviews with the stars. I went to work for this woman who had a brownstone on 95th Street. She worked out of her brownstone. This was before working at home was—you know—the thing. And she had six movie magazines that she had to fill every month. Six monthly movie magazines. And there were three of us on the staff. And we sat all day and made-up interviews with movie stars. I would come in in the morning, and she would say, "Write an interview with Jane Fonda. Write an interview with Dianna Ross. Do an interview with the Beatles." And I would sit down and write an interview. That was my first job in New York. It's a great job!

00:13:55 Jesse Host Did you have to phone them into Dianna Ross's publicist? Or—? Was it soup to nuts?

00:13:58 Stein Guest No, no. No one knew. No.

[Jesse laughs.]

This is way before *People Magazine*. No, we just made up everything. Or we'd have a little news clipping and make up the story. I remember, one day I wrote two articles. One was—it was rumors about Tom Jones. They're not true. And then, that afternoon, I wrote, "The rumors about Tom Jones, they're true!" You know, for a different magazine. It was very creative work! And I learned how to write really fast, 'cause I had to do two or three interviews a day. It was good training.

00:14:34 Jesse Host Did the three of you like pass them between each other to spellcheck or whatever? *[Laughs.]*

00:14:41 Stein Guest There was no time for that! No time for that.

00:14:46 Jesse Host Who were the other people that worked with you?

00:14:48 Stein Guest I don't remember at all. This was 50 years ago. You know? It's a long time ago. But I thought it was a good job.

00:14:58 Jesse Host For some reason, I'm imagining the woman you worked for like carrying a Pomeranian and wearing a fur shrug. But like a threadbare dress.

00:15:05 Stein Guest Well, you're pretty close. You're—*[laughs]* you're pretty close. She wore a brown bathrobe. She never got dressed.

[Jesse laughs.]

She never got dressed. And the thing is, she never went to the movies.

[They laugh.]

00:15:21 Jesse Host She had six magazines. How did you even get the gig? Was it like an ad in the newspaper?

00:15:25 Stein Guest In those—yes! In those days, there were classified ads in *The Times*. You know? Before—you know, they lost them all. And on

Sunday, there would be two or three pages of jobs—publishing jobs—listed in *The Times*. And you would go through *The Times* and circle jobs you were interested in, publishing jobs, and then go call them on Monday. That’s all gone, of course.

00:15:51 Jesse Host One of my favorite movies is *A Thousand Clowns*. And there’s a scene where the protagonist and his semi-son are going through the classified job listings. And I think often of Murray Burns having an *[inaudible]* as an exec assist.

00:16:16 Stein Guest *[Laughs.]* That’s great.

00:16:17 Jesse Host But I mean, let’s be frank! Your career wasn’t that far off! I mean, you’re a few years later than that film, five years-ish.

00:16:26 Stein Guest It was like ’68, ’69.

00:16:29 Jesse Host Yeah, so you’re trying to—you’re trying to be—to the extent a comic novelist can be credible, you’re trying to be a credible comic novelist. And you’re writing—you have literally the strangest, goofiest writing job on earth. How long did you do it?

00:16:49 Stein Guest Not very long. Not very long. And then I had a horrible job for a year. But you know, I had to support myself. I was assistant editor of *Soft Drink Magazine*.

[Jesse cackles.]

And I—see, you’re laughing! It’s not funny. It wasn’t funny. I wrote about new syrups and flip-top cans were coming in. And I had to cover bottler’s conventions. And—

[They laugh.]

00:17:23 Jesse Host Yeah. And I did that for a year.

00:17:25 Stein Guest Did you go to the bottler’s convention?

00:17:26 Jesse Host I had to!

00:17:27 Stein Guest What was it like?

I had to photograph them. And listen, there were three different soft drink magazines!

[Jesse laughs.]

00:17:36 Jesse Host It was very competitive!

00:17:38 Stein Guest What were the competitors?

Beverage Digest. I forget the third one. It was a dog-eat-dog business. I was sharing an office. We shared an office with *Candy Industry Journal*. And they got much better samples than we did.

00:17:54 Jesse Host Did having these weird jobs change your career goals or your ideas about what you could do?

00:18:00 Stein Guest No. Not really. I kept—you know, I would write at night and everything. The thing is nobody wants humorous novels for adults. Nobody ever wanted them. You know? It’s not a good career choice! But I got lucky, but I would—everything that’s ever happened to me really happened by accident. It wasn’t my thinking it out, where I ended up, really. ‘Cause I answered an ad for—at Scholastic, and I ended up writing for kids. I went to work at Scholastic. I was assistant editor of *Junior Scholastic Magazine*, writing history and geography articles. And it was a magazine. You know, it was better than soft drinks. So, I went to work there. But I never thought of writing for kids! It wasn’t my dream.

00:18:55	Jesse	Host	What did they tell you when you got there? Like, what was the mandate?
00:19:00	Stein	Guest	Well, it was a weekly news magazine for kids. And they had—you know, Scholastic had a whole bunch of them at the time.
00:19:10	Jesse	Host	Were you bad at it to begin with?
00:19:12	Stein	Guest	No. Writing's the only thing I'm [<i>chuckles</i>] good at. You can ask my wife. It's the only thing I'm competent at. No, I was always—I could—you know, I'm a good writer. I had been a teacher for a year, back in Ohio. You know, trying to avoid the draft. And so, I—you know, I knew a little bit about education. And I mean, I wasn't great at it. I never liked to do research. In my books, I never do research! I make everything up. So, in one article I got the capital of Brazil wrong.
			<i>[Jesse chuckles.]</i>
			And James Michener wrote in to say that I'd gotten the capital of Brazil wrong. Why was he reading <i>Junior Scholastic Magazine</i> ?
00:19:57	Jesse	Host	He didn't. He did not!
00:20:00	Stein	Guest	Yes! James Michener said, "I'm sorry to tell you, Rio de Janeiro is no longer the capital of—" Whatever.
			<i>[They laugh.]</i>
00:20:11	Jesse	Host	"Sincerely, James Michener, author of <i>Shogun</i> ."
00:20:15	Stein	Guest	Yes. Yeah—what did he write? <i>Hawaii</i> , he wrote. He wrote a lot of things.
00:20:22	Jesse	Host	Did you learn something about what was different about writing for kids, relative to, say, writing for syrup distributors?
00:20:30	Stein	Guest	Yeah, here's what I learned. There was a thing called The Dale Shall Method. Is this interesting to anybody? I don't know.
00:20:38	Jesse	Host	It's interesting to me!
00:20:39	Stein	Guest	Yeah? Well, good. It teaches you how to write to a grade level. So, it gives you like vocabulary tips. And what you can do, like writing at a fourth grade reading level or writing at a fifth-grade reading level. And this turned out to be really valuable, as far as <i>Goosebumps</i> goes. So, I learned all this, and then I—at Scholastic, I was given a magazine. A social studies magazine. It was for kids—junior high kids. Seventh and eighth graders who read at a fourth-grade level. And so, I could then practice and figure out and make sure that these kids could read it. It was a fourth-grade level. And this really helped me, because <i>Goosebumps</i> is the same. It's at a fourth or fifth grade level. It never goes above that.
00:21:33	Jesse	Host	What were the things that you had to modulate to hit the grade level?
00:21:37	Stein	Guest	Sentence length, for one thing. And just length of words. And you know, simple vocabulary words. There's nothing challenging in <i>Goosebumps</i> . You never learn any new words in it.
00:21:53	Jesse	Host	Yeah, and you have to focus on what you are actually trying to write or say. 'Cause you can't dance around it.
00:22:03	Stein	Guest	Well, what's hard for me is—you know, writing for ten-year-olds—is harder than the language part is that they have no references. They don't know anything. You know, they were born in 2012, if they're ten. Right? So, they don't remember anything. They don't know anything. They have no references. That, to me, is the hardest part.
00:22:28	Jesse	Host	You're like crossing out your <i>B.J. and the Bear</i> jokes. TV show with a monkey trucker.

00:22:34	Stein	Guest	<i>[Laughs.]</i> Yeah, those always get—those always get taken out.
00:22:41	Jesse	Host	<i>[Laughs.]</i> Your first kind of career success was writing humor for kids. That was kind of the track that you ended up on. Did you think that you had—by the time that you were doing that and, you know, making a middle class living doing that, did you think I have found my career?
			<i>[Stein confirms.]</i>
00:23:04	Stein	Guest	Or did you think I'm on my way somewhere else? No. I did a humor magazine for Scholastic, called <i>Bananas</i> , for ten years. I think from like '75 to '85. And that was my life's dream. I had my own humor magazine. It was all in color. I had a whole staff of artists and writers. And I did it for ten years. And that's really—that's what I wanted to do. And when the magazine folded and it was over and I was out of Scholastic, I figured I would coast the rest of my life.
00:23:35	Jesse	Host	What kind of coast? <i>[Chuckling.]</i>
00:23:36	Stein	Guest	I'd just coast! I don't know!
00:23:37	Jesse	Host	Coast on your—you just head out to dinner. Ooh! That's the <i>Bananas</i> guy! Dinner's on us!
00:23:44	Stein	Guest	<i>[Laughs.]</i> No, I'd done my life's dream. I didn't have any other real goals. That was it! I had no idea what was in store for me. And of course, that was another accident. I was never—never thought of writing scary stuff!
00:24:02	Jesse	Host	Who asked you to write your first scary book?
00:24:05	Stein	Guest	A woman named Jean Feiwel, who was the publisher at Scholastic and a friend of mine. And we were having lunch. She showed up late for lunch. She was angry. She'd just had a fight with a guy who wrote teen horror. And she said, "I'm never working with him again! You could write a good teen horror book. Go home and write a book called <i>Blind Date</i> ." She even gave me the title. I didn't know what she was talking about. What's a teen horror book? But I was at that point then where I didn't say no—you know. I was all totally freelance. I didn't say no to anything. I said sure! No problem! And I went running to the bookstore to see what people were doing with teen horror. And I read Christopher Pike books and a whole bunch of other—Diane Hoh, Richie Tankersley Cusick, Lois Duncan. They were all writing teen horror.
			And so, I read those books to try to find out what it was. 'Cause I didn't know. And then I tried to figure out what I could do that would be different. And I wrote <i>Blind Date</i> , and it came out a year later. It was a number one best seller. It was number one on <i>Publisher's Weekly</i> list. I thought wait a minute! What's going on here? I'd never been close to that list with the funny stuff. And then, a year later, she asked me to write another one, called <i>Twisted</i> . Number one bestseller. And I thought, "Forget the funny stuff! Kids like to be scared." And that's how it happened.
00:25:49	Jesse	Host	It's kind of embarrassing! 'Cause it wasn't my idea.
00:25:55	Stein	Guest	It's a pretty fine line between being scared and laughing. Oh, I've talked about this, but horror makes me laugh. I don't get scared. Maybe there's something missing in my brain. I think horror's funny! I mean, going back to those comic books—they were hilarious, the horror comics! And if you go to like a horror

movie—the shark jumps up and it’s chewing the teenager to bits, I’m the one in the theater who’s laughing. People say to me, “After I read one of your books, I had to leave all the lights on. I had to lock the doors. I was so scared.” I’ve never had that feeling. I don’t know what that feeling would be. I read Stephen King. I read—you know, I can admire them. But I don’t know that feeling of being scared. It always makes me laugh.

00:26:43 Jesse Host Even if you watch like *The Shining* or *The Exorcist* or something like that? Something really genuinely—[laughs] upsettingly terrifying?

00:26:54 Stein Guest Not very often.

00:26:55 Jesse Host Like, it’s one thing to laugh at a shark eating a teenager, but...

00:26:59 Stein Guest Yeah. Not very often. Not very often.

00:27:03 Jesse Host Bradbury can be a little unsettling.

00:27:05 Stein Guest Yes. I recommend to kids *Something Wicked This Way Comes*. That novel about the evil carnival setting up in this Midwest neighborhood. That’s a very scary book. And beautifully written.

00:27:20 Jesse Host I feel like every—you know, sixth grade English teacher passed out like *The Veldt*, and then kids read it and I know—I mean, I liked it, but I found it deeply distressing.

00:27:37 Stein Guest Yes. That one or the one about the rainy day. Do you know that one? Where it just rains all the time and there’s gonna be one sunny day? And everyone’s looking forward to it, with the rain stopping, and this kid somehow—he’s trapped inside, and he misses it. That’s the other story that’s really disturbing.

00:28:00 Jesse Host I mean, the things that kids are scared of are not necessarily... angry, giant hamsters, as in one of your books. Or you know, evil ventriloquist dummies, as in 70,000 of your books.

[Stein agrees.]

00:28:30 Stein Guest Not necessarily like those particular subjects. I feel like it is being alone, being trapped.

00:28:30 Stein Guest Being lost. Being somewhere weird, in the dark. Being somewhere unfamiliar. Being by yourself when you don’t wanna be. In *Goosebumps*, I don’t really wanna scare the kids. I don’t really wanna terrify kids! You know, you just wanna get them reading. So, I don’t do—you know, I don’t really get too deep into the real fears. It’s a lot safer to do a dummy coming to life.

00:29:03 Jesse Host [Laughing.] Or a giant, evil hamster, or a bunch of giant, evil hamsters, I believe. If I remember correctly.

00:29:07 Stein Guest Listen, I came up with that book title. I came up with this book title. I’m walking along. *A Little Shop of Hamsters*. Which is a great title, right?! So, I had to do a book about it. But how—[laughs] how do you make hamsters scary? That was a challenge! I had to do it ‘cause of the title.

00:29:27 Jesse Host There’s like a guy that works for *Star Wars*, for Lucasfilm or whatever, and I think that his job is just making sure that all the pieces fit together right. You know, they do this in like the Marvel movies, too. But I think there’s a lot—there’s a lot of *Star Wars* stuff. So, there’s somebody whose just in charge of making sure that nobody writes anything or says anything that contradicts what anyone else says. And I was thinking like [laughs], at the point where you’ve written—which you have literally hundreds of scary books for kids—how on earth do you keep track of what premises you’ve already used?

00:30:10 Stein Guest Oh, I have good editors.

[They chuckle.]

My editors have a memory. No, [laughing] seriously! You know, they'll say, "Bob, you did that. You've already done that title. Bob, you did that in number 18. You did that!" Seriously! 'Cause it's—you know, it's—I've written every story a human can write. Right? So, it's hard. It's a real challenge to not repeat yourself.

00:30:38 Jesse Host

I mean, it's like season 14 of a sitcom or something. You know? Like, how do they make more *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphias*? It's impossible.

[Stein agrees.]

00:30:48 Stein Guest

That they can still come up with—
No, it's the same. This is my problem with Slappy the dummy.

[They chuckle.]

I shouldn't say this, but you know, I'm sick of it. I didn't say that, but—because I've written 15 books—15 books about a dummy that comes to life! How many stories are there? I actually killed him in one book. *The Ghost of Slappy*. But then I had to bring him back. He's too popular!

00:31:17 Jesse Host

Do you have a corkboard or a notebook or something that has potential book titles written on it?

00:31:25 Stein Guest

No. I mean, I'm always thinking of titles. And I have a piece of paper, and I'll keep a list of titles. That's—to be serious, I don't think of ideas anymore. I only think of titles. If I can get a good title, it'll lead me to the story. So, I don't try to think of ideas.

00:31:45 Jesse Host

What's an example of that? I mean, we can—*Little Shop of Hamsters* we already talked about, but what's another where the title led you to the story?

00:31:53 Stein Guest

Say Cheese and Die.

00:31:56 Jesse Host

That's a classic!

00:31:57 Stein Guest

Yeah, well, I—the words flashed in my mind. And I had it, so what could it be about? And then I had to start thinking. You know. What if there was a camera. What if some boys discover a camera? And the camera takes pictures of things—bad things that happened in the future. And then, they start taking pictures. And that's how that story evolved. But it came from the title. I'm working on a *Goosebumps* book for next year, called *Scariest Book Ever*. That's gonna lead me to some kind of story, I hope. But I—that's backwards for most authors, right? Most authors get an idea of what they wanna write, and later on they think of a title. But I have to start with a title.

00:32:43 Jesse Host

Even more still to come with R.L. Stein. Stay with us. It's *Bullseye*, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

00:32:50 Music Transition

Thumpy rock music.

00:32:55 Jesse Host

Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. This week, it's our annual *Bullseye* Halloween Spectacular. My guest is R.L. Stein. He's the creator of the *Goosebumps* books, one of the bestselling book series in publishing history. Let's get back into our conversation.

Why do you still write your books?

00:33:16 Stein Guest Why do I still do it?
00:33:18 Jesse Host Well, there's two questions herein. Number one is, obviously, you made a lifetime's worth of money at the peak of *Goosebumps*, I'm sure. You know. I'm sure you have a beautiful apartment, and you don't have to worry about whether you can afford to go out to dinner if you feel like it.

00:33:35 Stein Guest I'm comfortable, yes.
00:33:36 Jesse Host Yeah. So, that's one piece of it. One is why keep working? The other part is why keep working on this? Right? Like, why not just have 1000 other people be R.L. Stein and you just check the box next to "approved".

00:33:53 Stein Guest No, that's no fun. I think I—I keep going—I think it's my—a total lack of imagination. Because I don't know what else I would do during the day. I couldn't—what would I do? This is what I've done. You know, 30 years of *Goosebumps*. But I still enjoy it, is the thing. I don't dread having to sit down and start another book. I don't dread it at all. I still—it's actually—I have to tell you. I mean, I have a lot of bad things happening in my life, personal things. And we had covid for two years, and three or four hours a day that I spend writing are—maybe I'm being too serious here. But those are the best hours of my day.

00:34:39 Jesse Host That said, you could be writing humorous novels for adults.
00:34:45 Stein Guest Well, I've gotten to write humorous novels for kids. I just did three stories about the Garbage Pail Kids. That was fun for me. I didn't have to be scary. And you know, I've done a couple funny series for kids.

00:35:01 Jesse Host My daughter, downstairs, is ten years old, and she said, "He wrote these Garbage Pail Kids books, and they're even grosser than the cards!"

00:35:12 Stein Guest *[Laughs.]* That's a very nice complement, too. Very nice. My grandson is eight, Dylan. And he's carrying on a family tradition of not reading my stuff.

[Jesse chuckles.]

00:35:37 Jesse Host My son's claim to fame was that he never read one of my books. Isn't that horrible? He was the right age. *[Chuckles.]* That was just his way of getting dad. You know, making me nuts.
00:35:41 Stein Guest He's just like *Nancy Drew* or nothing for me! Sorry, Dad. *[Laughs.]* It was *Garfield* comics. That's all he read. Just *Garfield*. Anyway! My grandson, he's eight years old. And I have this new short story book, called *SteinTinglers*, 'cause I need another series. Right?

00:35:56 Jesse Host Right. Ooh, that's because you thought of *SteinTinglers*, and you couldn't leave it alone!

00:36:01 Stein Guest I know. That's why he bought the book, of course. For the name. And I dedicated it to him, and I said, "Dylan, sit down." We were out at the house. "Sit down on the couch. I'm gonna read you one of these stories." I'm gonna force him to listen to one of the stories, 'cause I knew he wouldn't read it. He's just—he's busy playing *Minecraft* all day. And so, I sat down, and I read this story about bugs. It was one of the better stories in *SteinTinglers*. And I read it and he sat there very intent. Sat there, read it. I said, "Well." I finished. "Well, what do you think?"

"It's very confusing."

[Jesse laughs.]

00:36:45	Jesse	Host	That's it. That was the whole reaction. "It's very confusing."
00:36:49	Stein	Guest	Why did you wanna write even shorter? Um, 'cause I'm stupid! I'm stupid! Why—who would wanna write ten short stories?! It was a crazy idea! It's like writing ten novels! You need ten beginnings, ten middles, ten good endings. And I'm doing three of these books; I just finished the one for next summer.
00:37:09	Jesse	Host	Are you proud of your work? And two sub questions on this. One line is: are you proud of your work in its constituent parts? And one is: are you proud of your work in the aggregate?
00:37:23	Stein	Guest	Well, I'm proud of the millions of kids who got into reading from my books. That's what I'm—I never get tired of hearing parents who come up to me and say, "My kid never read a book in his life, and I caught him under the covers with a flashlight reading a <i>Goosebumps</i> book last night." I never get tired of hearing that. And I just—it's so gratifying. All these—just, millions of kids who turn to books for entertainment and who got it from reading my books.
00:37:56	Jesse	Host	As a guy who was writing 12 books a year at the peak of your <i>Goosebumps</i> productivity, you can't possibly have been too actively involved in all of the peripheral <i>Goosebumps</i> -ery.

[Stein confirms.]

00:38:23	Stein	Guest	A lot of it is pretty good! I was watching the old <i>Goosebumps</i> TV show when my daughter was at the peak of her <i>Goosebumps</i> obsession. I was like, "This is really—[laughing] this is not bad at all!" No, I was pretty lucky! I've been very lucky with—like, the two <i>Goosebumps</i> movies, they didn't have to be good. And I had no input in them at all. And they were both really good! And the TV series—
00:38:34	Jesse	Host	Yeah! They're legitimately good! They're really fun movies!
00:38:38	Stein	Guest	Yeah! And the <i>Goosebumps</i> series, back in the '90s—we had these two guys who just got it! I had no time. You know, I'm writing a book a month! I had no time to work on the TV series! And they just got it, and they did it so well! That's all luck, of course. Could've been awful.
00:38:59	Jesse	Host	Did you really write the like storybook version of <i>Big Top Pee-Wee</i> ?
00:39:08	Stein	Guest	Uh, yes. I did—you know, I did novelizations for quite a while before <i>Fear Street</i> caught on. I did most of them for Scholastic, I think.
00:39:20	Jesse	Host	Did somebody just like hand them out at a meeting once a week?
00:39:25	Stein	Guest	Well, they would sign up—they would get rights to a movie and then they'd ask an author to write a novelization real quick. I did the novelization of <i>Space Balls</i> , the Mel Brooks movie. That was fun! That was really fun. Then—I added a lot of jokes, though. And then I thought, "Oh my god, he's—he'll be furious about it!" But I never heard from him. Of course.

[They laugh.]

00:39:57	Jesse	Host	But with <i>Big Top Pee-Wee</i> , as I recall, Pee-Wee <u>hated</u> what I did. And he asked that— Oh no!
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00:39:58 Stein Guest He asked that the book go out with just photographs and not my text.

00:40:04 Jesse Host *[Sadly.]* Ohh.

00:40:18 Stein Guest He's very careful about Pee-Wee. I made a radio show with him, and never have I met someone who is so—I mean, look. *Pee-Wee's* one of the greatest things ever, so I would be careful about it too.

00:40:19 Jesse Host So talented.

00:40:21 Stein Guest But he's extraordinarily careful with it.

00:40:30 Jesse Host Uh-huh. I don't remember what his problem was with the work I did, but I think he hated it.

00:40:55 Stein Guest It seems like—it seems like at some point you came to enjoy the craft part of this. Like, somewhere between writing fake movie star interviews and accidentally becoming a squagillionaire on the—you know—completely being blindsided by that, I'm sure.

00:40:56 Jesse Host Totally.

00:41:06 Stein Guest There must have been some point when you were like, "You know what I like? I like sitting down and solving the problem of how do I make this into something that kids will get a kick out of?"

00:41:09 Jesse Host That's true. It's puzzle solving.

00:41:11 Stein Guest Do you remember when you started feeling that way?

00:41:23 Jesse Host No. No. I just—you know, it just developed. It developed with the success. I wrote for 20 years before anyone noticed, really.

00:41:29 Stein Guest When no one was noticing, did you not feel that way?

00:41:38 Jesse Host I just kept on. You know, I had to make a living. And I loved writing, and I wrote all kinds of things. I wrote Bazooka Joe comics.

00:41:39 Stein Guest For real?!

00:41:42 Jesse Host Yeah! I wrote jokes! I got \$25 a joke!

00:41:46 Stein Guest Did you write the gags for the panels or the jokes that ran down at the bottom?

00:41:49 Jesse Host Down in the bubble gum.

00:41:52 Stein Guest Yeah, well, there was—there was like—there was like a three-panel comic. Right? And then there was like—

00:41:53 Jesse Host Yeah, I wrote those.

00:41:56 Stein Guest —something printed underneath the three-panel comic, as I remember.

00:42:00 Jesse Host No, I wrote the three-panels. \$25 a joke!

00:42:03 Stein Guest Oh my gosh. Do you remember any of the jokes you wrote for—for Bazooka Joe, Mort, and the gang?

00:42:07 Jesse Host *[Chuckling.]* No. No.

00:42:13 Stein Guest I can't think of any other characters besides Bazooka Joe and Mort. Mort was the one with the turtleneck that covered his face.

00:42:13 Stein Guest Yeah. What was his name? Maybe he didn't have a name.

[Jesse laughs.]

00:42:42 Jesse Host But when *Fear Street* started really doing well and when *Goosebumps* had this amazing success—I mean, it just—then I really got very serious about what I was doing. And I was, of course, enjoying it so much more. It was such a surprise.

00:42:50 Stein Guest Do you think that, in part, you were—look, this is a psychoanalysis question for which I apologize in advance.

00:42:51 Jesse Host Oh boy.

00:42:51 Jesse Host But you were the one who brought up being serious, earlier. Do you think that that fact that you started writing in a situation where your

			folks maybe kind of thought it was a waste, you weren't getting a lot of positive feedback for it from teachers, and it was obviously much more impractical than becoming an electrician or whatever. Do you think that feeling of needing to do it in a way that made it a job ever left you?
00:43:29	Stein	Guest	I don't know. The feeling of surprise never left. That's too deep for me, I think.
			<i>[They chuckle.]</i>
00:43:55	Jesse	Host	I've never—seriously. I don't know if I can answer that question. It's just what I've always done. People always say, "What else would you do if you didn't—?" But that's what I—it's the only thing I've ever done. I mean, I was an editor for a while. But I don't know. Well, R.L. Stein, I sure appreciate you coming on the show.
			<i>[Music fades in.]</i>
00:44:05	Stein	Guest	You're every bit as jovial as your former penname, Jovial Bob.
00:44:07	Music	Transition	Thank you, Jesse. Hey, this has really been fun. Buzzy, echoing synth with a steady beat.
00:44:11	Jesse	Host	R.L. Stein! His newest book is called <i>SteinTinglers</i> . It's a collection of ten short horror stories for kids. Go get it from your local bookstore.
			<i>[Music fades out.]</i>
00:44:32	Music	Transition	Thumpy synth with light vocalizations.
00:44:36	Jesse	Host	It's the <i>Bullseye Halloween Spectacular</i> . I'm Jesse Thorn. It's time now for The Craziest <i>[Censored]</i> Day of My Entire Career. On deck, Monét X Change. Monét is a drag queen. An icon in that world. A legend on <i>RuPaul's Drag Race</i> . On that show, she showcased her many talents, including a breathtaking opera performance.
00:44:59	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:45:00	Clip	Clip	"Vi Ravviso O Luoghi Ameni" from the opera <i>La Sonnambula</i> performed by Monét X Change on <i>RuPaul's Drag Race</i> .
			<i>[Singing in Italian.]</i>
00:45:36	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:45:38	Jesse	Host	Monét X Change is also the cohost of the <i>2022 Huluween Dragstravaganza</i> , on Hulu.
00:45:47	Music	Music	"The Big Opening" from <i>Huluween Dragstravaganza</i> .
			<i>We've been dragged to a world full of frights Of things that creep and crawl and go bump in the night It's glam and it's gore It's bloody couture And every freaky thing we've ever seen before!</i>
			<i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i>
00:45:58	Jesse	Host	Here's the premise. Monét and her cohost, Ginger Minj, get stuck in an old, haunted television. And the only way out is to host a hilarious, larger than life variety special. Sketches, musical numbers, cameos, the whole nine yards. When we asked Monét X

00:46:24 00:46:28	Music Monét X Change	Transition Guest	<p>Change about the craziest <i>[censored]</i> day of her entire career, she had a story locked and loaded. We'll let her take it from here.</p> <p>High energy, exciting dance music.</p> <p>My name is Monét X Change, and this is the craziest <i>[censored]</i> day of my entire career.</p>
00:47:10 00:47:21	Music Monét	Transition Guest	<p>Okay, so the craziest <i>[censored]</i> day of my career. I had—you know, I had just competed on <i>RuPaul's Drag Race</i>, season ten, where I was voted Ms. Congeniality. And I was really feeling my superstar celebrity drag fantasy. And I was ready to take America by storm. So, I was doing a club tour at different clubs all over the country. You know, in Seattle, in San Diego. All these places. And I found myself <i>[chuckles]</i>—I ended up in El Paso, Texas for a night that I'll never forget.</p> <p>Electric party music with a hurried beat.</p> <p>I was doing this thing back then of propositioning the audience to buy me tequila. And if you bought me tequila, I would drink it. And I just got drunker and drunker as the night went on. And you know, I've been drinking since I was in high school. You know. And I have never, ever been blackout drunk. That was my first time ever being blackout drunk. And since then, it has not happened again.</p>
00:48:31	Music	Music	<p>For folks who have never seen me live, this was 2018. This was Monét four years ago. A lot has changed and grown in four years. I don't necessarily do the club circuit anymore, but back then what you would see—I would come out. I would tell a few jokes. I would do a number, go do a costume change, and then I would come back out, tell some more jokes, and do another drag number. And then, that would be it. So, that's what my little club shows looked like back in the day. But now, I'm very happy to be doing just full comedy club tours, where I do my comedy set for an hour. Or right now, currently I'm on <i>Sibling Rivalry Live</i>. The tour of my podcast, <i>Bob the Drag Queen</i>. So, things have changed. But back then, that's what she was doing, girl. Telling jokes, drinking tequila. And you know. You fill in the rest.</p> <p><i>You wanna party, I wanna party</i> <i>Teach me how you wind down</i> <i>You wanna party, I wanna party</i> <i>Come on, baby, let's [inaudible] out</i></p>
00:48:41	Monét	Guest	<p>So, my assistant—Patty—is watching the chaos as it happened. And he is like, "Oh my god, who is this person? I've never seen you like this, Monét." And he's like, "You know what? But we need to get to the hotel. We had a very early flight, 'cause we had—the next stop on my little club tour was in Columbus, Ohio. Our flight was at 4:50Am, which means you had to be at the airport by 3:50AM, which means—and we were in El Paso, so the airport was like 45 minutes away, which means we had to leave our hotel at 2:50AM, and we were still at the club at 1 o'clock in the morning.</p>
00:49:33	Music	Music	<p>And he's like trying to wrangle—get me together so we can get in an Uber and back to the hotel. But I was just too busy feeling myself, girl. But you know. Patty is a strong, 5'3" little ginger, and he gathered my big behind and got me in the Uber and we made our way to the hotel.</p> <p>Playful wind music.</p>

00:49:37 Monét Guest So, we—we're in the Uber. We get to the hotel. Then, it hits me that I need to use the potty. Number one was a knocking, and I was like, "Oh my god, what do I do?" And I just—I remember looking at the front desk, looking at Patty, and just letting go and letting God. Immediately, in that moment, I started to apologize profusely. I was like, "I am so sorry. I'm so sorry. Please!" I apologized profusely to the staff, and I said, "Hey, I will clean this up for you. Please, just give me a mop and a bucket, and I'll take care of this." They begged me to leave them alone and go upstairs. And I got in the elevator and went up to my room.

[Music ends.]

00:50:28 Music Music
00:50:36 Monét Guest I have like tidbits of me being in my room. I remember being in the room and saying to myself, "Okay, you have to pack." But there were so many other thoughts swirling through my brain. And I was like, "You need to pack, but you also need to sleep."
"Brahms's Lullaby" played on acoustic guitar.
So, I chose sleep. And to Patty's dismay, when it was time for me to come back to—to get the Uber, to help get my bags, and go downstairs, I was unresponsive. So, Patty—little Patty had to go down to the front desk and ask them to call my room so the phone would ring.

[Phone ringing.]

00:51:14 Music Music
00:51:23 Monét Guest 'Cause my cell phone was dead. And they called me. I jumped right out of sleep, answered the phone. I was like, "Yeah, yeah!" And then he came upstairs, and he saw my things were still not packed. And I said, "Just give me five minutes. Just five minutes. I will pack it." Which I did. I just got all my things together, I put them in my suitcase, and I was downstairs ready to go in—in fact—five minutes. Maybe seven.
Upbeat, beachy music.
So, we're on this flight.

[Airplane announcement bing.]

And we got—we're on the flight from El Paso to Atlanta.

[Jet engine sounds.]

Everything was fine. I slept. I was feeling good. We got off—when we were getting off the plane, the flight attendant goes—he's like, "Oh my god, Monét X Change. I love you so much. You were so good on season ten. I was rooting for you."

I was like, "Oh my god, I was rooting for me, too. That's crazy."

And he then said, "Can I have a picture?" And I said of course. So, we take the picture together.

[Camera shutter sounds.]

And you know, civilians who don't do drag are just generally bad at taking pictures. There's normally like a flash, there's shadows

everywhere, and it's just not good. So, I always say, "Let me see the picture," to make sure it's okay. I took his phone to look at the picture, and I was shocked, 'cause I was still in full drag. I had never taken my makeup off from the night before. I just had a face full of makeup and like some joggers and like a hoodie from Aéropostale or something with a full face of makeup on.

So, we get to Columbus, and we actually check into the hotel, and I open my backpack and I'm like, "Wait, where is my computer? I definitely had it." And then, I immediately thought, "Oh god, in your state, you left it somewhere in your hotel room in El Paso.

[Notification sounds and key tapping.]

So, I text Patty, and I'm like, "Please call the hotel. Tell them they need to like find a way to overnight my computer to me, yada-yada-yada." And then I open my suitcase, so I start getting my makeup out. I have to pull my makeup out to get ready for the next show. And as soon as I open my suitcase, I just see my laptop is flat, face open, in my luggage. Not closed like a normal person would. I just—in my state, just dumped it open-faced into my computer. *[Laughing.]* I mean, into my luggage. But you know, it's Mac, honey. Steve Jobs got me together, 'cause it was fine. My computer was absolutely fine.

[Music ends.]

00:53:26	Monét	Guest	I think this was one of the craziest days of my career because, you know, I was young. <i>[Stammering.]</i> I was just younger, and I—looking back, I would never do that again. And I feel—and I used to work at a hotel. Like, that's what I did before drag, was I was a front desk agent. I know how annoying it is to have drunk guests come into a hotel. And I wasn't even just drunk, I fully—you know, let go and let God in the lobby of this person's work. So, that part I'm not very proud of, and I feel so bad.
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[Music fades in.]

And if I ever go to El Paso again, I'm gonna—I'm gonna ask—I think I remember his name. His name was Jeffery. I'm gonna ask, "Is Jeffery here?" And I wanna give Jeffery \$100,000—something that you win on *RuPaul's Drag Race*—to apologize and atone what I did. Yeah, so in hindsight, I would never behave that way again. And you know, I think this is a very—it was a very big lesson for me in knowing your limits and not being raggedy and messy in El Paso. Maybe in New York. Not El Paso.

00:54:33	Music	Music	Playful wind music that finishes with a flourish.
00:54:43	Jesse	Host	Monét X Change on the craziest day of her entire career. Make sure to watch Monét X Change and Ginger Minj on Hulu's <i>2022 Huluween Dragstravaganza</i> . Monét X Change is also touring a lot these days. We'll have a link to dates on our website. It's at the <i>Bullseye</i> page at MaximumFun.org .

00:55:04	Music	Transition	Thumpy synth with light vocalizations.
00:55:08	Jesse	Host	It's <i>Bullseye</i> . I'm Jesse Thorn. We're doing things a little differently this week. It's our <i>2022 Bullseye Halloween Spectacular</i> . My next guest is Ana Fabrega. She's a comedian, actor, and writer. She worked on <i>The Chris Gethard Show</i> , had parts in <i>High Maintenance</i>

			and <i>At Home with Amy Sedaris</i> . But she's probably best known as the star and cocreator of one of my favorite shows on television, <i>Los Espookys</i> .
00:55:35	Music	Music	Ominous electronic dance music.
00:55:44	Jesse	Host	It is a little awkward for me to be hosting a Halloween Spectacular, because I am not a horror guy. I am not into slasher movies. I am not into ghost movies. I am not into jumpscares. None of these things appeal to me. And I want you to know that <i>Los Espookys</i> is not a horror show. Or at least, not really a horror show. It's about four weirdos who love horror, and they run a company where they go around town and bring scenes from horror movies to real life. Or I guess maybe the kinds of things you would see in horror movies. Demonic possessions, sea monsters, creepy aliens, that kind of thing.
			It is a sweet, goofy, and surreal program about friendship and carving a place in the world for yourself. And frankly, the spooky stuff is almost immediately incidental. <i>Los Espookys</i> just wrapped up its second season, which was even better than the first one, which I already really loved. I'm thrilled to have Ana Fabrega on the show. Let's get into it.
00:56:45	Music	Transition	Fun synth with a steady beat.
00:56:48	Jesse	Host	Ana Fabrega, welcome to <i>Bullseye</i> . I'm so, so happy to have you on the show. I'm such a fan.
00:56:53	Ana Fabrega	Guest	Thank you. I'm happy to be here.
00:56:55	Jesse	Host	You're from Scottsdale, Arizona. And you grew up in Scottsdale, Arizona.
			<i>[Ana confirms.]</i>
00:57:05	Ana	Guest	What did you think of Scottsdale, Arizona, when you were a kid? We moved there when I was in first grade, like in the middle of the school year. We had been in Iowa before that. And so, you know, aesthetically very different from Iowa. I—you know, in my teenage years I felt just kind of like bored. Like, there's not a ton to do there. I mean, I think most places when you're a teenager, you only have so many options. But I definitely knew I wanted to leave. So, when I was—you know, 18 or—I mean, 17 and I was a senior in high school and was applying to schools. I was like, "I wanna go to New York." But when I started going back, once I moved to New York, I started to appreciate the desert landscape much more. I took it for granted, growing up, that it's really beautiful.
00:57:49	Jesse	Host	I read you describing somewhere feeling like you didn't realize the extent to which you didn't fit in when you were an adolescent until you were in New York and had perspective on your adolescence. Like, you didn't have an unhappy childhood; it was just you were like, "Oh, wow! There's all this possibility."
00:58:15	Ana	Guest	Yeah, I mean, I think that like by no means was I like—you know—unhappy or anything. Like, I had my friends. I was like—you know, the type of kid in school who is like—I wasn't like the popular kid, but I was friends with everyone. So, like the popular kids liked me, but I wasn't hanging out with them. You know? I was like—you know, very much had like my small group of close friends, and we had shared interests and, you know, would bond over similar things. And then, going to New York, like the first four years that I was here

when I was in school, I didn't find people that I felt like I had—you know—things I could connect with or felt like we had similar—you know, sense of humor, interests, or anything.

So, then I just kind of went like full like—I don't know, like sort of reclusive and like my sister was living in New York at the time, so I would just hang out with her and her friends, and then just like treat school as like put my head down, do—go to class, go to work, go home, do my homework. Like, I wasn't very social in college. And then, when I graduated—a year after I graduated and I started doing standup is when I was like, "Oh, here's where my people are. Here are where like the people that I do sort of feel like I belong with are." And then, found my like community that I didn't ever really find when I was in college, after college.

00:59:33	Jesse	Host	What was it that didn't feel like it was a fit with the other kids when you were in college?
00:59:38	Ana	Guest	Just like—you know when you make a joke and someone just goes like, "[<i>Chuckles.</i>] You're so weird!" It's like that feeling of like, oh, like you don't wanna like joke back, you just think that it's like absurd that somebody would say this. You know what I mean? It was that sort of feeling.
00:59:53	Jesse	Host	I mean, look, I'm gonna play a clip from <i>The Chris Gethard Show</i> , for which you wrote. And [<i>chuckling</i>] like, I just don't think I can describe how particular your work is without playing a little bit of it. And you know, the videos you make for social media maybe are a little short and visual, but there's enough words in this. And basically, this is you after a writer's meeting convincing Chris and the show's head writer or director that you're—that you have some ideas that they need to hear. And the [<i>chuckles</i>] initially, they're gonna be all ideas about scorpions. And there's a picture of a scorpion on your binder of ideas.

[*Jesse laughs and Ana confirms.*]

I don't think that we hear—I don't remember if there's scorpion jokes in there, but let's listen to the clip.

01:00:58	Sound Effect	Transition
01:00:59	Clip	Clip

Music swells and fades.

Music: Peaceful, classical music.

Ana (*The Chris Gethard Show*): Sooo, um. The first idea is really simple. I'm walking down the street, there's a sign that says, "wet paint". And I walk up to it. I touch it. If it's dry, I remove the sign.

Speaker: [*Beat.*] Yeah.

Ana: And if it's wet, I leave it. Okay. Uh, there's one where I'm playing baseball. I'm up to bat, and as the ball comes, I drop the bat and then punch the ball, and then I run. [*Beat.*] So, it's like—I mean, the backstory could be that I used to be a boxer. Or we could do it where instead, when the ball comes—instead of dropping the bat, I turn around and I hit the ball, so it keeps going that way.

Speaker: Can you do that?!

Ana: I mean, we could try.

01:01:41	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
01:01:43	Jesse	Host	<i>[Laughing.]</i> So, you can see how this, in little moments, can play on social media—especially to people who signed up for it. How did it play when you started doing standup open mics?
01:01:59	Ana	Guest	So, I like—you know, I'd been making videos, and I didn't know what it would look like to try to sort of take what I like doing online and do it live. And so, the first few times I went to open mics, I was like, "Well, standup is like a setup and a punchline, and you tell a story." And so, I had sort of like the line that I thought was funny, and then I would write like context around it so that it would be like a little story the way I thought standup had to be. And I did that a few times, and I was like, "This doesn't feel right. Like, what if I tried to just say the line that's funny to me?"
			And then, I did that, and I felt like, "Oh! Okay, this is I think the way that—you know, I should approach it." That like I don't need to try to make this look like what I think standup has to be. And a big part of sort of that moment of like, "Oh, I can do anything," was like starting to go to mics that were like from other people that had more similar sensibilities and kind of seeing like, oh yeah, you know, standup is solo comedic performance. And you can interpret it however you want and do anything you want within it. And the type of like, you know, specials on comedy central that I saw growing up is like one way to do this, but it's not the only way. And so, then yeah, I—like, you know, I think the first few years I was doing standup was kind of trying to figure out like what does—like, how do I take the thing that I think is funny and like present that in a live format?
01:03:25	Jesse	Host	What was the first thing that you did onstage that really worked, that you feel like still kind of represents you?
01:03:34	Ana	Guest	Um, I mean, I remember the first open mic I went to where I was like, "I'm gonna try to just say the lines that are funny to me. It was—so, I had been going to an open mic that was at UCB, 'cause I didn't know where else to go.
01:03:47	Jesse	Host	The Upright Citizens Brigade Theatre, in New York.
01:03:49	Ana	Guest	Yeah. There were open mics there, and so I would go there, and I felt like, "This doesn't feel right." And then, some friends who I had known in college through another friend—they went to a different school—they were like, "We kinda wanna do standup, too." And there's this mic in Bushwick, called Do Something. And it was one that River Ramirez would host with, at the time, DJ Jeep Grand Cherokee, who would kind of do like psychotic visuals and torture people during their sets sometimes. But it was like—you know, they were like, "Let's go to this mic." And I was like okay. I'm gonna—maybe this one is the mic where I try to just say the lines.

And I remember like I had a joke—I mean, I don't think it's a good joke, but it kind of embodies the like—that moment of like, "Oh yeah, I think this is my thing." Was just kind of like marching in place for a sec and then like, "Whoo!" Like sighing and saying that like, "I hate going upstairs." It was something like that. And it's like whatever.

[Jesse laughs.]

And people were like really laughing. And I was like, “Oh yeah! I can just like do this. And people will get it.” And it’s maybe not like a joke, but there’s something funny about someone like just doing that. And people go—you know, they relate to it! Like, yeah, it’s tiring to go upstairs! *[Laughs.]*

01:05:01 Jesse Host

I mean, speaking of not... not recognizing where you belonged or not recognizing the extent to which you were out of place as a teenager and adolescent—I read that you realized you were queer like as an adult.

01:05:22 Ana Guest

Yeah. Yeah. I was like—I mean, it’s like funny now, ‘cause it seems so obvious. Even from like the youngest age, like photos of me. I’m like dressed like a tomboy. I mean, I’m dressed in things that like queer people wear now. I have like a little chain. I’m like, “Oh wow, I really like—you know, when I was five, it was so obvious.” But I think part of it was just kind of like the environment I grew up in was like very heteronormative and straight. And like, everyone at my school was—like, there were no openly gay people. There was like maybe a couple people in like the theatre department that people were like, “I think he’s gay!” But no one was like really open. It was very like—you know, I don’t know. Not a place I think that sort lent itself to that sort of like exploration.

And so, I just thought like, “Well, I’m not really that attracted to guys. So, maybe I’m just asexual.” It like didn’t occur to me that like maybe I like non-cis males. Like, I don’t know. And so, then like—yeah, in college I was similarly just like not dating, not interested, nothing. Very like sort of—I think like so out of touch with that part of myself, and not open to the possibility that like maybe I wasn’t straight. I was actually thinking about this the other day. I... I was in college. I forget what year it was. But it was the year that *Blue is the Warmest Color* came out. And I felt like, “Huh. I wanna see that movie. I don’t know why, but I wanna see it!” *[Laughs.]*

And I go to the theater, and I’m like so self-conscious going to the theater, ‘cause I’m like, “People are gonna think I’m gay because I wanna see this movie.” And I was like by myself. I was like, “Oh my god, like I hope I don’t see anyone at the theater.” You know. I went to like the IFC Center downtown. And in the middle of the movie, there’s a problem with the projector and they have to stop the movie, and the lights come up. And I feel like, “Oh my god. Now the whole theater’s gonna be looking at me and thinking that I’m gay because I’m here.” And like, it was such—I mean, when I look back on it I’m like oh my god, I was like—had so much like sort of like deep internalized homophobia and was like terrified at the thought of like what if I—what if I am gay?

And then, seeing that movie, I was like, “Oh my god, I relate to this.” And I was like, *[whispering]* “No, no, no, no, no. This can’t be happening. This can’t be me. No. It’s not me.” And then it still took me like a while to sort of like come to terms with it and like be okay with it. And then, once I did, I was like, “Oh damn. Like, if I had done this a long time ago, I would have felt so much happier, I’m sure.” You know? It’s not like something that I like necessarily knew and was repressing. I just like didn’t know. And then, once I thought maybe it was that I still needed time to be like—you know, it’s okay

to like explore it and see if it is. But yeah, *Blue is the Warmest Color* was *[laughs]* huuuge for me.

01:08:16 Jesse Host I feel like *Los Espookys* is one of the queerest shows on television. And I don't know exactly—I mean, there's gay characters on it, but like, I don't know exactly what besides that makes it one of the queerest shows on television.

01:08:33 Ana Guest I think it's that like the show is not trying to be anything or like trying to fit any sort of mold. It just sort of like is itself, and it is what it is. And like, I don't know! I think like especially like writing the second season, I feel like the show is so just okay with being itself and like there's no agenda. There's no like sort of desire to teach the audience. It's just sort of like, yeah, this is just what like comes out of us, and we're—you know, Julio and I are both queer. And a lot of the actors on the show that are friends of ours are queer. And it—so, it just—you know, it just is! But I think it's just because we're just being ourselves when we write it.

01:09:21 Jesse Host *[Chuckling.]* When you were writing *Los Espookys*—like, the thought of you handing it in to the executive who's also in charge of—you know, the *Sex in the City* reboots and *Hacks* and—

[Ana laughs.]

01:09:46 Ana Guest Like, none of those things being bad. Like, I especially like *Hacks*. But you know, just like to somebody who's in charge of regular television shows. *[Laughs.]*

Yeah! I mean, like I think that Julio and I didn't realize when we were making the first season how sort of unusual it was to be able to make this type of show. Like—and you know, we weren't involved in pitching or selling this show. Like, Fred had sold the pilot to HBO about like a group of horror makeup enthusiasts in Mexico City. That was like the original idea. And then, once they ordered a script, he brought us onboard to develop it. And then it became, you know, *Los Espookys*.

And so, I think that had Julio and I gone in and tried to pitch what the show ultimately became, I'm sure we would've gotten a lot of like, "What are you—what is this? Why—? No." *[Chuckles.]* And so, it feels almost like we were able to like Trojan horse the show like into the like—you know, people's TVs just via like how we went about getting involved. But like yeah. I do feel really like fortunate. And I mean, and especially like once I started to like pitch my own projects and I saw the way that people sort of react to or have a hard time, I think, feeling comfortable with ideas that maybe aren't as like linear as they're used to. Or as sort of—you know—conventional story structure that they're used to. Like, then I was like, "Oh man, it feels like a miracle that we got this show made."

01:11:15 Jesse Host And I think it really—you know, HBO has been so supportive in letting us—you know—make it the way that we wanna make it. And I feel very fortunate for that.

I mean, right from the start, *Los Espookys* is a show about a group of—like a crew. Like a group of friends who work together as real-life special effects artists sort of.

01:11:31 Ana Guest Tricking—yeah! It's like they like deceive people. *[Laughs.]* They help people trick other people.

01:11:38 Jesse Host And like when they're doing—when they're like doing a haunted house for an inheritance. Like, you have to spend the night in this haunted house thing. All of the effects that they do involve like pullies. *[Chuckling.]* Like, visible pullies. Like, dayglow paint.

01:12:03 Ana Guest It's very like scrappy and DIY. Like, you know, we wanted it to feel very like practical. Like, they're not doing like David Blaine style optical illusions. Like, no. You can see the rope and pullies if you just look closely. But people buy it.

01:12:19 Jesse Host But this is also a program *[laughing]* where—like, I was just watching the first episode of season two, and it features heavily what appears to be the ghost of a beauty contestant who's been impaled on an anchor.

[Ana confirms.]

01:12:39 Ana Guest And she doesn't—she doesn't come from pullies world. No. So, it's like a mix of like—the things that they do, we want them to feel practical. But then, in their world it's just sort of like anything can kind of happen, and it is kind of like surreal and abstract and absurd. But that the effects that they do are kind of like lame. Like, even in the first episode of season two, when they do the ghost, it's like—it looks like lame. It doesn't look cool, like good. It looks just kind of like, "Oh, we see the ropes when you guys are going up." You know? But people buy it! Which I think is really funny.

01:13:06 Jesse Host We'll wrap up with Ana Fabrega after a quick break. Stick around! It's *Bullseye*, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

01:13:15 Promo Clip **Music:** Relaxed ukulele.

Jesse Thorn: Hi, I'm Jesse Thorn, the founder of Maximum Fun. And I have a special announcement. I'm no longer embarrassed by *My Brother, My Brother and Me*. You know, for years, each new episode of this supposed advice show was a fresh insult, a depraved jumble of erection jokes, ghost humor, and—frankly this is for the best—very little actionable advice. But now, as they enter their twilight years, I'm as surprised as anyone to admit that it's gotten kind of good. Justin, Travis, and Griffin's witticisms are more refined, like a humor column in a fancy magazine. And they hardly ever say "bazinga" anymore. So, after you've completely finished listening to every single one of all of our other shows, why not join the McElroy brothers every week for *My Brother, My Brother and Me*?

[Music fades out.]

01:14:09 Music Transition Thumpy rock music.

01:14:13 Jesse Host It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. I'm talking with Ana Fabrega. She's the star and co-creator of HBO's *Los Espookys*.

One of the things that's special about *Los Espookys* to me is that Tati, in particular, but several of the main characters of the show have such a warm positivity. And that isn't always a quality on a comedy thing that's this odd or distinctive. It is something that you see a lot in Fred Armisen's work, who originally created the show. And it's something that I feel from, you know, your online work that I've seen. But was that a choice, to make a show about—that's theoretically about, uh, dark goths, so wide-eyed and smiling?

01:15:06 Ana Guest Um, I mean, I don't know if it was necessarily a conscious choice. I think that Julio and I are like optimistic people. And like, so the characters that we—you know—created for this show wound up being like that. And also, it's like—you know, goth people are not just like frowning all the time. Like, they laugh with their friends *[laughing]* and they're—you know, have a full range of emotions. So, we were like, "Okay, let's have their like ringleader, Fernando, be like really sweet and have like a little dog that he takes care of. And like, you know, just things like that.

But yeah, I do think that overall, it's a very like happy and like upbeat show. You know? In a way that I think is—yeah. Nice. *[Chuckles.]*

01:15:49 Jesse Host So, the show was originally—as you said—gonna be set in Mexico City. And one of the stars of the show, Bernardo Velasco—who plays Renaldo, who's the like the mastermind of this operation, such as it is. Or at least, he's the guy who keeps barreling forward, at the very least. He's Mexican. How did you—and he feels very Mexican. Like, as a guy in LA from a Mexican American neighborhood in San Francisco, like he feels very Mexican. And he also like—as a straight guy, I just wanna be his friend so desperately. Like, just—he's just everyone's dream of what your dude friend would be, attitude-wise.

01:16:42 Ana Guest So, how did you cast him?
So, like when we were making the pilot and casting the pilot, at this time the show was still gonna be set in Mexico. So, we were like, "Okay, if Julio and I are not Mexican, Fred's not Mexican. We need our other like lead actors to be Mexican. And the director who did the first episode knew Bernardo, because Bernardo also works as a casting director. And he works a lot with like found actors. He's very good at like—yeah, finding people that are not actors and training them for film and TV and stuff. And he's like a talented stage actor, too. And so, our director for the pilot was like, "You know, like he should audition." And as soon as we saw his tape, we were like, "Oh my god, yes. It's him. Of course, it's him."

And the same with Cassandra, who plays Úrsula. She's also Mexican. And similarly, like yeah, once we saw her, we were like, "Oh yeah. It's gotta be her." And then, once the show was no longer set in Mexico, you know, and there was no sort of parameters on where they live or anything, then it was like, "Oh yeah, you guys can keep your accents. You can—you know, infuse your dialogue with like Mexican slang if you want. I mean, especially Bernardo's character uses a lot of slang. But yeah, it was like—I'm so happy that we sort of wound up picking from that pool, in Mexico, because otherwise we wouldn't have found the two of them.

01:18:06 Jesse Host Velasco has like a level of friendship charisma that is sooo extraordinary that it leads you to believe that all of these characters would be friends with each other. *[Chuckles.]* And that feels to me like the special trick of *Los Espookys*, is—well, Julio Torres as a performer is so sui generis that you can hardly imagine him talking to anyone else. *[Laughs.]* You know what I mean?

[Ana agrees.]

Much less having a relationship with. He's just so his own thing. And your character is such a doofus. And—you know what I mean? Like, there's so much going on there that you like need somebody that you could believe could bind any group of human beings together.

- 01:18:56 Ana Guest Yeah. And I mean, that's Bernardo in real life. He is so sweet and so kind and charming and just like everyone that meets him is like, oh, in love. 'Cause he's really like the best. And same with Cassandra. Like, when we got to know each other shooting the first season, I felt like, "Man. We really lucked out. Like, that we have these people that we're gonna be working with a lot and that we really like and get along with who bring so much to the characters. And like, I mean especially after we shot the first season. I feel like Bernardo and Cassandra's characters became so much more clear to us and helped us write better stories for them in season two. And yeah, they're like as sort of—I mean, Bernardo is as like captivating and friendly and like lovable as his character.
- 01:19:44 Jesse Host What's something that you learned about his character from seeing him perform it?
- 01:19:49 Ana Guest Like, he can be so like earnest and sweet in a way that I think I hadn't anticipated with the character. Like, we knew like oh, it's maybe it's kind of funny if he's like a little bit of like a mama's boy or something. Like, didn't fully like grow up, still at home. But then, the way that he played it was like that but not sort of like making fun of it. It was like very sweet and like—yeah! I think just like he's so like well—he has good intentions and is like always putting other people before himself. And yeah, it made it then like—I mean, especially his storyline in season two is a lot about like the sort of pitfalls of putting other people before yourself. And I think we wouldn't have had that storyline had it not been for, you know, how he played him in season one.
- 01:20:40 Jesse Host Had you written jokes in Spanish before you and Julio Torres started writing this show?
- 01:20:45 Ana Guest No! I had never like done any work in Spanish before. And the script—we initially write them in English knowing that they'll—that certain dialogue will be said in Spanish and read in English. So, there's that process of like, okay, we want it to look funny onscreen for people that are reading it. And then, you know, in the back of our heads we also know how it will be spoken in Spanish. And so, we do all the English versions so that the network can read them and understand them. And then, there's the Spanish pass. And when I like take a stab at it, like I always need to have Julio—whose Spanish is stronger than mine like—you know, we'll look at things together and be like, "Oh, actually maybe it should be phrased like this or like that."
- 01:21:32 Jesse Host But yeah, it's a funny kind of way of thinking, 'cause we know it'll be said in one language and read in another, and we want both of them to be funny. It's such an amazing thing about the show, which is probably like 85-90% in Spanish. Some parts are in English, but substantially in Spanish with English subtitles on the screen that, you know, subtitled comedy almost never plays. Because you lose the—you lose the rhythm of the speech, and you lose particularities of the language, all the jokes about puns and so on and so forth. And it

plays sooo beautifully on *Los Espookys*. It is so funny reading the words.

01:22:22	Ana	Guest	And so, what do you have to get right to make that work? Like, what is different about writing a joke and imagining it being read on subtitle in front of someone speaking it in a different language? I mean, a lot of it—like the subtitled process for the show is so meticulous, because it's not just about like, you know, we wanna phrase this right but we also wanna make sure that the way the timing of when it appears onscreen is good. That if the text is broken up and we're gonna see like the rest of the sentence on the next like screen or whatever, we want it to be broken up in a way where it's like, "Okay, the joke will be in the second part and not the first part."
01:23:02	Jesse	Host	And so, like I don't know, it's just a matter of like tinkering and finding ways that like—you know—make us laugh when we read it. Because that's how a lot—you know, a lot of the audience in the US is gonna be experiencing it.
01:23:27	Ana	Guest	I mean, it also is such a comedy of images and ideas. You know? Like, it's full of jokes, but there are no—I don't know, <i>30 Rock</i> jokes that are a lot of funny words that end in "K" and two deep-cut cultural reverences and it's like, "Here's an interesting idea."
01:23:57	Jesse	Host	Yeah. Yeah. Julio and I are not like very pun-oriented writers. And so, luckily—I mean, I think if we were, this show would not work in two languages like this. And yeah, I think we are more drawn to like ideas that make us laugh. And sometimes they're like very visual things, where like reading it is not as important as seeing it. And sometimes it's about like, yeah, the thing that somebody says and making sure that like that looks funny, reading.
01:24:06	Ana	Guest	How do people talk to you about it differently who are watching it in Spanish, so to speak, rather than watching it in English?
01:24:46	Jesse	Host	I think that for people who are like bilingual—'cause most people that grow up into the US will learn English in school. So, I feel like a lot of like my family, at least in Panama, like they all speak English. And so, people—I think if you speak both languages, you'll get like certain little jokes—you know—will come across more in Spanish than in the text. Like, it's still like funny one way or the other, but I think if someone's bilingual, they will pick up on like a little more things here and there that are like almost like an extra little joke that if you get it in Spanish and you can read it in English, like it just like pays off almost like a little bit better.
01:24:52	Ana	Guest	Are there any things that you cut from the show because they were too weird?
			No! I mean, anything that's cut is 'cause we don't have enough time for it. Like, we haven't ever really had anything come up like that in the writing process where HBO was like, "Now, wait a minute, guys. This is too much!" Like, they're very like hands off, like make the show you wanna make. And we're—like, I don't feel limited in like, you know, oh, well we can't write that, because how are we ever gonna do that? Like, our production crew down there and our art production designer, Jorge Zambrano, and our wardrobe head, Muriel Parra, are like so talented and so funny, and they can like do anything. And so, it's like very fun to write sort of knowing like yeah, maybe I don't know exactly how we will shoot an eclipse, but Jorge will figure it out. And he does. You know?

01:25:45	Jesse	Host	<p>So, it's like a very fun and free sort of way to write. I was very scared that the show wasn't going to get a second season, particularly when, after the first season was announced, it got shut down right at the very beginning, because of covid. I wonder if you kind of had your—if there was any point in there where you had your life flash before your eyes, so to speak. Where you were like, <i>[laughs]</i> "Look, here I am with my friend. We both—we have two of the most specific comedic sensibilities in all of comedy. We're making this show that is a really beautiful expression of both of them. We may never get this opportunity again."</p>
01:26:24	Ana	Guest	<p>Well—so, after the first season came out in the summer of 2019, we started writing the second season. And we wrote all of the second season in the fall of 2019. And then, at the beginning of 2020, we go down to Santiago. We shoot almost four full episodes. And then the pandemic starts. So, we leave with like two episodes and a handful of scenes left. And that was kind of frustrating, that like, "Oh my gosh, we were so close to finishing." Like, truly, if we had stayed like three more weeks, we would've finished. And so, then—you know, we come back here and it's just a waiting game—you know, at that time, everyone's like, "Oh, maybe in like a month, it'll blow over." Obviously, that's not the case. And HBO kept telling us like, "Don't worry, you're gonna finish. Don't worry, you're gonna finish."</p> <p>And so, I did have some sort of peace of mind that like we will finish, I just didn't know when. And so, after one year of waiting, like—'cause we were also dependent on what the covid protocols in Chile were like. They were a lot more strict than they were here, in the US. So, like we wouldn't go and shoot the way that people could—you know—shoot after just a couple months, in the States. And so, yeah, we were just like, "Alright, well I guess we'll hope that cases and things are like under control in Chile and that they let—you know, open the border, and that we can go back and finish up." And so, yeah, once we hit the like two-year mark and we got the green light that like everything is like—you know. 'Cause there were times where we felt like, "Okay, now we'll be able to go." And we would start planning, and then they would roll back the reopening, 'cause cases rose. And then it was like, "Okay, I guess we're waiting again."</p> <p>So, yeah, it wasn't like—I didn't think like, "Man, what if we never finish." I just thought like, "What if it's a really long time before we finish?" 'Cause I think HBO was like—you know, "It's just two more episodes. So, just go finish it." But yeah. I mean, I know that there were other productions that were just kind of like, "That's it. You're done. Sorry if you didn't finish." So, I am very grateful that we were able to finish what we started. It felt like it was maybe gonna be never ending.</p>
01:28:19	Jesse	Host	<p>In a broader sense, did you ever have that feeling? Like, leaving aside whether you were gonna finish the second season, were you—have you had the feeling like, "How could I—how could I ever get to do something like this again?"</p>
01:28:32	Ana	Guest	<p>Yeah! I mean, like there's—I didn't realize how sort of unique the opportunity was that we had. I just kind of thought like, "Oh yeah! I got to do a TV show! Cool!" Like, I didn't realize that like—until I</p>

started to pitch other projects—that people were gonna go like, “Wait, what?! Why is this—why is that happening?” You know? And it really feels like such a gift to have this show where we can really like write whatever we want, and—you know—have the trust from the network in us to like make the show that we wanna make. But yeah, I mean, I have times where I’m like, “Man, is anyone ever gonna buy anything else from me?” Because everyone thinks it’s too niche. You know? That’s what my main sort of thing is like—it was too niche and I’m like yeah, but...

I wish I was more broad, but I’m not! *[Laughing.]* So, like—you know, it’s gonna be niche the way *Los Espookys* is niche, but it finds its—it finds its audience.

01:29:31 Jesse Host I’m looking at my imaginary list of questions I was gonna ask you, and there’s only one left. It says, “Will Tati be my friend, and can we hold hands?”

01:29:40 Ana Guest Uh, yeah, Tati will be friends. Although, I think Tati’s the type of person that if you hold her hand, she’s gonna think it’s romantic.

01:29:46 Jesse Host I mean, I watch the show with my wife, so I think she would understand.

[They laugh.]
In Tati’s head, any sort of physical contact with a man is romantic.

[Jesse laughs.]

01:30:13 Jesse Host That’s how Tati moves through the world, is like—yeah. It’s—she’s... she’s not someone to do—to like flirt with if you’re not ready to jump into something serious.

01:30:23 Ana Guest Well, Ana Fabrega, I’m so grateful to you for coming on the show. I just couldn’t be a bigger fan of *Los Espookys* and of your work. I’m so happy I got to talk to you.

01:30:23 Ana Guest Thank you so much! It was so nice talking with you.

[Music fades in.]

01:30:27 Music Transition And yeah! Thank you for having me!
Bouncy synth.

01:30:30 Jesse Host Ana Fabrega, folks. You can stream both seasons of *Los Espookys* on HBO Max, and you absolutely should. It is so fantastic. I will tell you this: I texted a very snobby comedy writer friend of mine, the other day. “Hey, are you watching *Los Espookys*?”

And he texted me back, “Yes, that is the only comedy show that makes me laugh.” *Los Espookys*, it rules. You don’t have to be a weirdo snob, either.

[Music fades out.]

01:31:00 Music Transition Brassy, relaxed music with a steady beat.

01:31:05 Jesse Host That’s the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye* is created from the homes me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California. My house was built in 1888, and I think it is safe to assume it is haunted, but I just wanna let ghosts know that I’m super cool and chill about ghosts and really pro-ghost, and they shouldn’t freak me out. Not ‘cause I’m scared of them. It’s not that I’m scared of them. It’s just that they should know

that I'm super chill, and I'm on their side. And they shouldn't scare me.

Our 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 was written and recorded by The Go! Team. Thanks to them and Memphis Industries, their label, for providing it.

Bullseye is also on YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook. Find us there. Follow us, and 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.

01:32:22 Promo Promo

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

[Music fades out.]