

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.
00:00:18	Jesse Thorn	Host	It’s <i>Bullseye</i> . I’m Jesse Thorn. Sudan Archives is my first guest this week. She’s been making music all her life. She grew up in Ohio, where she played violin and sang in church and school bands. Her stepdad was a label guy, and he tried to make a pop duo out of Sudan and her twin sister, but it didn’t take. Sudan needed to do her own thing, to be an artist in her own right. So, when she got her high school diploma, she headed out to LA. She started hanging out at a club called Low End Theory, home to beatmakers like Flying Lotus, Daedalus, and No Such Thing. It was there, at Low End, that she found her voice as an artist. Sudan Archives is a violinist who—I mean, of course, breaks new ground with what that instrument can do in pop music. But she’s not just a violinist. It’s only one color from her palette. One arrow in her quiver. <i>[Music fades in.]</i> When that fiddle combines with her voice, her beat making, her songwriting, Sudan Archives makes mesmerizing music. “Nont for Sale” from the album <i>Sink</i> by Sudan Archives. <i>But stay out of my flight path</i> <i>Never feelin' lonely only glidin', flyin'</i> <i>Always being constantly reminded</i> <i>Time is running up, don't waste your luck, sucker</i> <i>This is my life don't mix that up</i> <i>This is my light, don't block the sun</i> <i>This is my seat, can't you tell</i> <i>This is my time, don't waste it up</i> <i>This is my land, not for sale</i> <i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i>
00:01:19	Music	Music	
00:02:07	Jesse	Host	That’s “Nont For Sale”, Sudan Archives’ breakthrough single off her 2018 EP, <i>Sink</i> . Her newest record is called <i>Natural Brown Prom Queen</i> . It came out this fall. She recorded it at home during the covid-19 pandemic. Let’s listen to a single from that record, “Selfish Soul”.
00:02:26	Music	Music	“Selfish Soul” from the album <i>Natural Brown Prom Queen</i> by Sudan Archives. <i>If I cut my hair, hope I grow it long</i> <i>Back long, back time like way before</i> <i>If I wear it straight, will they like me more?</i>

*Like those girls on front covers
Long hair make 'em stay little longer
Stay hair, stay straight, though we feel ashamed
By the curls, waves, and natural things
Curls, waves, and natural things*

*Okay, one time, if I grow it long
Am I good enough? Am I good enough?*

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]

00:02:55	Jesse	Host	Sudan Archives, welcome to <i>Bullseye</i> . It's great to have you on the show.
00:02:58	Sudan Archives	Guest	Hello!
00:02:59	Jesse	Host	Your hands are facing me. Are those tattoo tattoos or henna tattoos on your hand there?
00:03:03	Sudan	Guest	Tatsssss.
00:03:04	Jesse	Host	All the way up both of your arms.
00:03:06	Sudan	Guest	Yeah, I'm about to get tatted all over, too. Like, I used to think that I was gonna go to Hell if I ever got tattoos, but yeah.
00:03:14	Jesse	Host	When you say that, do you mean that sincerely? Did you sincerely believe you would go to—?
00:03:17	Sudan	Guest	I sincerely believed I was gonna go to Hell. Like, I was a super church girl. But that's not true. I'm not gonna go to Hell. And I really love tattoos! I want—I don't really like jewelry, 'cause I lose it. So, like I wanna adorn my body and not have to worry about like losing it.
00:03:41	Jesse	Host	So, what have we got going on here? I see a jellyfish on one side. Is that what that is?
00:03:44	Sudan	Guest	Yeah, this is a jellyfish. So, I realized I'm doing like land, water, fire—like, the elements or something. 'Cause like this arm is a tree. It's an inverted tattoo, so the skin is the art. So, you see like a branch.
00:04:01	Jesse	Host	Oh yeah! Right.
00:04:03	Sudan	Guest	And then, this one's a jellyfish. And I think I'm gonna get my chest piece.
00:04:07	Jesse	Host	So, you say you were a heavy churchgoer. How heavy are we talking about? How serious?
00:04:11	Sudan	Guest	Three times a week. Bible study, choir rehearsal, Sunday. So, that's like three times a week. Yeah.
00:04:21	Jesse	Host	And was that your folks' doing?
00:04:24	Sudan	Guest	Yeah! They're like—my dad was like a pastor at one point. So, yeah. I was like a preacher's kid.
00:04:29	Jesse	Host	What did that mean, to be a preacher's kid?
00:04:31	Sudan	Guest	Read the bible, write stories about it.
00:04:34	Jesse	Host	Wait, write stories about the bible?
00:04:36	Sudan	Guest	Like, read the bible and then like write—
00:04:37	Jesse	Host	Like fanfiction?
00:04:38	Sudan	Guest	Like summarize what you read in your own way.
00:04:41	Jesse	Host	Oh, okay. Not like a thing where Buffy and Willow kiss.

[Sudan laughs and confirms.]

Like, a thing where—

[They laugh.]

00:04:55 Sudan Guest Not like an alternate ending to the David and Goliath story or something.
No, but yeah. I was like not really like—when I started playing like violin in the choir, that’s when I actually started liking it, though. ‘Cause aside from that, I would just be in the back just chilling.

00:05:06 Jesse Host You picked up the violin at school, right?
00:05:08 Sudan Guest Yeah, like I started in school. Then we moved around a bunch of times. Then they never had orchestra, so then I just kept playing in church, basically.

00:05:17 Jesse Host Were you moving around because your dad was a pastor or because of money stuff or—?

00:05:21 Sudan Guest Money stuff. Basically, my dad sold cars and my mom—like, she was like working in insurance or something at the time. They just basically kept making hella money. And then, they’d just want us to like—they kept upgrading their life, and they wanted us to be in the best schools. So, it just like—I don’t know. It just got more suburban and suburban and suburban.

00:05:43 Jesse Host Were you going to church three times a week the whole way through, into your teenage years and everything?

00:05:47 Sudan Guest Yeah. Until like I moved, when I was 19. You know.

00:05:51 Jesse Host Were you a firm believer that whole time?
00:05:54 Sudan Guest Yeah! Like, it was just like installed in me. And then I just started like doing psychedelics and like going to experimental shows and raving, and then I just kind of like—it opened me up and I was just like, “Yo! I’m about to move.”

[They laugh.]

00:06:08 Jesse Host That’s not—that’s not unfair. What did you do with a violin in choir at church?

00:06:14 Sudan Guest I was basically like—they were like—I was just soloing. Like, I had—they basically learned songs that had violin in it. So, I would just play those songs. I would just teach myself how to like play those songs. And I think that’s how I just learned how to just be very like improv-y and learn-y. You know? Like, in the church—in the Black church, like they just let anybody go up there. And they can sound like horrible. They’re just like, “Yes, Lord!” So, for years, I like sucked. Like, it was like—I don’t know how they dealt with that.

00:06:44 Jesse Host What songs that you would sing in a church choir have a violin part?

00:06:49 Sudan Guest Okay. *[Singing.]* “When we pray, we believe, we receive what we have—” *[Trailing off into wordless vocalizing.]* And then it’s this violin solo that goes like, *[hums the solo]*. And then they sing that part again.

00:07:12 Jesse Host Did you have an aspiration with the violin? I mean, did you think you were gonna be a concert violinist? Or did you think you were gonna work in the touring company of Riverdance? Or did you think—?

00:07:24 Sudan Guest Yeah, I definitely think I was not gonna be in no orchestra, but I was feeling some Riverdance. I was thinking maybe I’m gonna be like a fiddler on the roof and I’m gonna be playing all these fiddles, and I’m gonna be jiggling around. Yeah!

00:07:37 Jesse Host Was that something going on in Cincinnati, where you grew up?
Like, were there—?

00:07:40 Sudan Guest Yeah, that was something going on!

00:07:44	Jesse	Host	Are we talking about—are we talking about country—like Appalachian music fiddling? Are we talking about—
00:07:47	Sudan	Guest	We're talking about—we're talking about Irish jigging!
00:07:50	Jesse	Host	Yeah, for real Irish jigging.
00:07:52	Sudan	Guest	We're talking about jigging. There's this little town in Ohio, called Wyoming. And that's where I first picked up the instrument. And they had like fiddle club and stuff, and you know. They—
00:08:03	Jesse	Host	There was a fiddle club?!
00:08:04	Sudan	Guest	Yeah, there was an after-school program called fiddle club.
00:08:07	Jesse	Host	<i>[Disbelieving.]</i> No.
00:08:08	Sudan	Guest	Yeeeeah!
00:08:09	Jesse	Host	For real?
00:08:10	Sudan	Guest	And I was fiddling, okaay? Yes! And I remember I was so sad, 'cause I moved. And then, I never had like any kind of like classes or anything to go to. So, I just kept playing in church. But yeah, I had a little taste of that.
00:08:22	Jesse	Host	And the fiddle club, was it like with step dancers with ribbons on their calves and—?
00:08:27	Sudan	Guest	It was like—we're walking around, okay? We're two-stepping. We're playing the fiddle. We're jigging. And then, we're learning how to like improv in the songs the learn. And then, that's all I remember. And then, I left.
00:08:42	Jesse	Host	So, when did you figure out that your violin was useful for something other than church, Irish folk music, and what if I was in an orchestra?
00:08:55	Sudan	Guest	One day, I realized that—
00:08:56	Jesse	Host	Yeah, that it was good for other stuff too.
00:08:58	Sudan	Guest	Oh, exactly. Really early, 'cause I had the fiddle experience at such a young age. So, I started to like just YouTube a lot of like fiddle stuff. So, I learned about like African fiddling, and how the Irish jig music I liked because it was basically like in me. Like, African fiddle or something. And they basically have their traditional songs, and it's like wild and like beautiful like the Irish jig music. And then, I just discovered so much more playing in Sudan and in Czech and just everywhere. Then, I realized, "Oh, like violin is like a culture—" It depends on where you're at, and you don't have to just do it in this White way, like in the classical orchestra just playing all these people's musics. You can kind of like—you can branch out. You can do it in your own way. And it's been done already, actually.
00:09:49	Jesse	Host	So, let's start with you said Czech.
			<i>[Sudan confirms.]</i>
00:09:55	Sudan	Guest	What's going on in Czechoslovakia? Well, there's this artist named Iva Bittová, and she is like the Bjork of violin. Like, one of her—if you go on Spotify, like the very first album, she's just like singing and playing violin, and it's like very like—really cool. I don't know. Stuff like that, you find people like that and then you're like, "Oh, I don't have to be in an orchestra. I can just do what I wanna do!"
00:10:20	Jesse	Host	What was the incident that got you out of the house?
00:10:23	Sudan	Guest	Like, out of—?
00:10:25	Jesse	Host	Out of Cincinnati?
00:10:27	Sudan	Guest	I told you, I was doing psychedelics, and I was like, <i>[dreamily]</i> "I need to move to LA and just be free and live on the ocean and do open mics and get a job."

00:10:42	Jesse	Host	Did you know somebody?
00:10:45	Sudan	Guest	Oh yeah! I knew Cat 500. So, basically, I was like pen pals with Cat 500 on Soundcloud. And we both thought each other were men. So, we were like messaging like, <i>[speaking deeply]</i> “Hey, dude. You wanna like jam? Blah-blah-blah? Yeah, come to LA! You wanna like play dublab with me?”
			I was like, “What is dublab?” Yeah, so I flew out. Then, I stayed with her. And then, I just never came back. <i>[Makes an “I don’t know” sound.]</i>
00:11:08	Jesse	Host	Where were your folks in this?
00:11:10	Sudan	Guest	They were at the house. They were like, <i>[cartoonishly sad]</i> “Why are you leaving? Just stay here.”
			I was like, “I gotta go, because y’all are telling me I can’t go out late.” My curfew’s like 9:30 or 10 or something. Some crazy time. Like, they used—
00:11:23	Jesse	Host	How—and you’re an 18-year-old or something?
00:11:26	Sudan	Guest	Yeah! Something like that! 17, 18, 19. You know? I’m like, “Look, y’all! No!”
			And they were like, “If you’re not gonna respect the rules, you gotta get out.” So, I’m leaving! I’m going to LA, though! It’s sunny. Even more still to come with Sudan Archives. Stay with us. It’s <i>Bullseye</i> , from MaximumFun.org and NPR.
00:11:38	Jesse	Host	
00:11:47	Promo	Clip	Music: Dreamy synth.
			Jo Firestone: Manolo, guess what?!
			Manolo Moreno: What, what, what?
			Jo: <i>Dr. Gameshow</i> has made it to 100 episodes on Maximum Fun!
			Manolo: Oh, that’s true. I knew that.
			Jo: Well, to celebrate, we’re releasing our entire Earwolf archive to Max Fun members, that’s anyone who gives \$5 or more monthly to support podcasts like <i>Dr. Gameshow</i> .
			Manolo: That’s 63 episodes with in-studio comedian guests, like Jason Mantzoukas, Bowen Yang, Matt Rogers, Joe Pera, Todd Barry, and Janeane Garofalo, Conner O’Malley, Chris Gethard and more.
			Jo: Plus three bonus episodes that include two pilot episodes. Wow! Two pilots! Must be good.
			Manolo: Find the feed at MaximumFun.org/boco . B-O-C-O.
			Jo: Stands for bonus content, mm-hm!
			<i>[Music ends.]</i>
00:12:32	Music	Music	“Chevy S10” from the album <i>Natural Brown Prom Queen</i> by Sudan Archives.
			<i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]</i>

00:12:34	Jesse	Host	Welcome back to <i>Bullseye</i> . I'm Jesse Thorn. If you're just joining us, my guest is Sudan Archives. She is a violinist, a singer, a songwriter, born and raised in Cincinnati, Ohio. She now lives in Los Angeles. Her most recent record is called <i>Natural Brown Prom Queen</i> . Here's another song from it. This is "Chevy S10".
00:12:55	Music	Music	<i>[Volume increases.]</i> <i>... turns into gold</i> <i>And she didn't ask for it, so why throw in the towel?</i> <i>She watched the bands stack up, so no one can stop her now</i> <i>'Cause rich girls don't know what they ask for</i> <i>Don't know what they here for</i> <i>Don't know what they judged for</i> <i>Don't know why they hate her</i> <i>But they the one with the halo low</i> <i>Only call you when they feeling low</i> <i>Only judging 'cause they kinda slow</i> <i>Only hating 'cause you icy as snow</i> <i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i>
00:13:20	Jesse	Host	You had a stepfather who had been a record producer and was like recording music with you, and he—they were still on the "you gotta be home by 10" situation?
00:13:28	Sudan	Guest	Exactly! Like, it just wasn't adding up. Like, I was like, "I don't know." Like, he wanted us to like focus on our craft and stuff. But it was just like the rules around it were a little bit too tight for me. 'Cause I'm still like a teenager. I'm still trying to like—like, I wanna do music, but I don't have to do it this way. I just know—I just need to figure out what it is.
00:13:49	Jesse	Host	Right. Like, it sounds like your stepfather knew very well a lane. He had worked for LaFace, one of the most important urban record labels in American history.
00:14:01	Sudan	Guest	Yeah! Like, he came over with Babyface. And then he was like, "Perform for them!" And I was just like no. And it was like really bad.
00:14:08	Jesse	Host	Wait, Babyface came over to your house?!
00:14:11	Sudan	Guest	Yeah! Because you know, he was married to my stepdad's sister at one point. So, they're like kind of close. You know, they still—like, when they're in town. I think he was doing a show, so then he just stopped by and said hi to all the family. You know?
00:14:25	Jesse	Host	And your stepdad was like, "Go get your violin. Let's do this." <i>[Sudan confirms.]</i>
00:14:31	Sudan	Guest	And you did it?! I did it with Catherine, yeah. And it was like I—in my head, I was like, "I do not—"
00:14:35	Jesse	Host	That's your twin sister?
00:14:36	Sudan	Guest	Yeah. It was just bad.
00:14:39	Jesse	Host	Why was it bad?
00:14:40	Sudan	Guest	Because! I just didn't—I didn't like the songs we were doing and stuff. And I just felt like, ugh, I'm so nervous. I don't feel like doing this. This doesn't feel—this feels weird.
00:14:50	Jesse	Host	Were you making music out of the house besides that when you were still in Cincinnati?

00:14:54	Sudan	Guest	Yes! I was. So, I was doing that with my twin, and then I just kind of was like hanging out with like a group of rappers and like going to like this night called Synthesizer Night. So, that was the first time I saw a SP-404. And then from there, that's when I discovered, oh, I wanna make music like this. Like, be in control of the production and kind of like—I guess it's like experimental music in a way. Like, you know? I was going to all these experimental shows. It's like not—it's like hands on.
00:15:25	Jesse	Host	What's an SP-404?
00:15:27	Sudan	Guest	It's a drum machine. And you can like make beats on it, and you can also like put backing tracks on it. And you can like effect a lot of the sounds. Like, you can put a lot of crazy effects on them. And then, you can also put a microphone in it or an instrument in it and you can like mess with that, too. So, basically, I started like getting gear like that, and like the looper. Once I got the looper, then I discovered I can be my own orchestra and layer loops of loops and loops of violin and kind of like just perform like that.
00:15:56	Jesse	Host	To what extent were the people around you in that scene making beats? Like, making music that you would call hip-hop? And to what extent were they making weird noises?
00:16:09	Sudan	Guest	They were just going in. They were like all of these like dope Black men like doing cool <i>[censored]</i> . They were like—Blackie was his name, and then Kafari was throwing synthesizer nights. He like made "Home Maker" and "Freakalizer" with me. He like—I took some of his piano samples. But they were inspired by, I think, the LA experimental beat scene. They would like talk about like <i>Low End Theory</i> and stuff. They would like make—they would be inspired by like, you know, J Dilla and stuff like that. So, they were making like these really cool like hip-hop beats, and they were like really good. And they were just like—that's all they would do.
00:16:45	Jesse	Host	So, when you got to LA, did you have a plan?
00:16:47	Sudan	Guest	Yeah. I really didn't get—I just didn't care. I just wanted to go to LA, go to college, and maybe get some good grades so I could transfer to a—you know, a music college or something. And that's what I was gonna do! And I was just gonna like live and be an independent person. You know?
00:17:04	Jesse	Host	So, let's talk for a minute again about what kind of violin stuff you heard that you were into. So, we talked about Czechoslovakia. Right? There's a variety of kind of violin-y instruments in west Africa, right?
00:17:19	Sudan	Guest	Yeah! There's gojis, there's ritis. There's a lot of like one-string fiddles that I would say are like the first violins. They're like stone-age violins that have been like invented—you know, a long time ago. And the way that they play, it reminds me of fiddle music. It's like they play—they make it seem like they're playing on like a violin, but it's really on one-string.
			<i>[Music fades in.]</i>
00:17:54	Music	Music	So, when I discovered that music, it really inspired the songs like "Come Meh Way". Because like, it's just like wild riffs. "Come Meh Way" from the album <i>Sudan Archives</i> by Sudan Archives.

*And I can't escape, I get blown away
When you come my way (when you come my way)*

*And I can't escape, I get blown away
When you come my way (when you come my way)
And I can't escape*

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]

00:18:17	Sudan	Guest	Yeah! That was like a huge like moment, discovering African fiddles. So yeah. Skip that, in Sudan, they're actually playing the violin, but they're doing it in their own way. And like, their music is just so good, and there's like really, really strong violin culture there. And it's like—it really like fascinated my mind that there's strong Black violin culture, like even as like—during slavery, there was a lot of like fiddlers and stuff. And like, I read that if you were like a fiddler, you were worth more. That's trippy.
			But yeah. African American fiddle music, like there's some music like that, and then there's west African, Gonjey fiddles from like the northern Ghana, and there's like traditional Sudanese violin music. And there's like Ethiopian violins. And all around Africa, there's basically—there's these like one-string fiddles, and then they also play violin. And like, when I discovered all that, I just felt like seen or something. 'Cause I was like, "Oh, like I'm not the only Black person in my orchestra. I'm just like in a place right now. And I need to just like find my sound. Yup!
00:19:32	Jesse	Host	You're not the only one where you are. You're one of many, you just happen to be 6000 miles away.
00:19:36	Sudan	Guest	Exactly! Like, I'm not an enigma.
			<i>[They laugh.]</i>
00:19:46	Jesse	Host	I'm just a cool <i>[censored]</i> . Can you cuss on here?! I mean, we'll beep it out. I can't imagine we'd cut that; it was too good.
			<i>[Sudan laughs.]</i>
00:20:05	Sudan	Guest	We'll have to beep it, I think. How important is it to you that your music jams? Like, how important is it that it's danceable, that's it's like— It's like really important. Like, it has to bop. Like, I will make a beat all year just making sure like—it would be like a really like <i>[censored]</i> beat, but I will like make sure I got the swing right. And then it bops. And like, the ideas are there, and then like I'll like get other people to like redo the bassline or this or that. But it's like it has to have some feeling. You know?
00:20:28	Jesse	Host	'Cause it's not a natural—it's not an easy, obviously instrument, the violin, to make bang. You know what I mean? Like, in—
			<i>[Sudan agrees.]</i>
00:20:38	Sudan	Guest	In western pop music, it often—it's corny—
00:20:41	Jesse	Host	In western pop, yeah. It's not banging.
00:20:43	Sudan	Guest	It's corny fill, right? It's not banging. And like, that's what I'm saying. I discovered it bangs. The fiddle used to be the music that you go in a club and it's the fiddler, and everybody's just—it's raunchy, like little raunchy, hot

little pub thing. And that's what I'm doing! But in a Black girl way.
[Laughs.]

00:21:07 Jesse Host You know, I—your music, because I am old, your music makes me think a little bit of Timbaland.

00:21:12 Sudan Guest Oh yeah, I love—look, I love Timbaland. Timbaland, I love you.

00:21:19 Jesse Host I love you too, Timbaland.

00:21:22 Sudan Guest *[Laughs.]* Like, I lowkey—like, that era probably was the—aside from like all the stuff I was doing going to shows, that era is—I'm trying to be like that.

00:21:32 Jesse Host Well, I mean, that—the “that” of that era is basically Timbaland.
[Laughs.] There's not much—

00:21:38 Sudan Guest Yeah, like I just wanna be like Timbaland. I wanna be like Timbaland. I wanna be like Timbaland, and I'm going to be like Timbaland. And Timbaland—yeah. Now you know.

00:21:48 Jesse Host Timbaland made a record with Bubba Sparxxx that I really love that has a looot of fiddles on it. And they're—

00:21:54 Sudan Guest Oh, I've not—I have not heard that.

00:21:56 Jesse Host They're fiddle-fiddles. Like, he used a lot of pretty straight country music in making the beats. And I think that must be why it reminds me of your music, that like—the idea of taking these sounds and turning them into dance sounds. And like, urban dance—like, there are things about the kind of Irish jig kind of dance music, but there's also like hip-hop beat aesthetics that you make the sounds into.

00:22:24 Sudan Guest Yeah! Like I'm sampling myself all the time. I'm basically getting high, playing violin, putting a bunch of like guitar posts through it. “Oh, that's weird.” And then I'm resampling that, and then making it bop. *[Laughs.]*

00:22:39 Jesse Host What kind of getting high are we talking about? What are the paths here?

00:22:42 Sudan Guest I love weed. And I love psychedelics. Psychedelics is gonna heal the world. Every Black person should do psychedelics, because we're already just so traumatized, we need to do psychedelics. Actually, everybody just needs to do psychedelics.

00:22:57 Jesse Host What did your “be home by ten” family think about all that?

00:23:01 Sudan Guest I don't even think they knew I was on these things. She thought I was out there just having sex and stuff, but I was discovering God in a way I've never—you know?! I was talking to God! *[Laughs.]* And I talked about it to my mom. I'm like, “Did you know I was doing shrooms and stuff?”

She was like, “No! But then I kind of got hip, and then it's like there's nothing I can do!”

And I was like, “Yeah, you're right. There's nothing you can do.” But now, we healed her disk—like back thing that she has. And she, you know, it helps her back. And I just think it's so funny that all of my like family members are asking me to send them like weed and stuff, this weed cream, because they all like got aching body stuff. You know? And now it's just funny, 'cause y'all was judging me! Y'all was like really judging me, though! And now you doing what I'm doing! Huh! *[Chuckles.]*

00:23:59 Jesse Host In this new record, there's a lot of you trying to figure out what home is and create home. There's a great song on here, called “Home Maker” that is a sort of mixed-up bowl of those different feelings.

[Sudan agrees.]

			Was that partly about, you know, a lot of us were just in our houses a lot.
00:24:21	Sudan	Guest	Yeah. My home looked like a Ikea trap house before covid happened. And then, when covid happened, I actually had time to decorate! I started doing stuff. Ooh! It's a vibe, now. So, then I made that song, 'cause I was like <i>[singing]</i> , "Won't you step inside my house." 'Cause you know, I was like—I was like I want someone to come over. Like, I was like I want someone to come over! Like, it's so cuuute! And I remember like that was the first song I made on the album. And I knew from there, I was like this album is gonna stem from that song. And that's when I—yeah, I remember like making it and starting with the claps and like... remember I started getting a bunch of plants, so I just started singing about the stuff in my house!
00:25:04	Music	Music	"Home Maker" from the album <i>Natural Brown Prom Queen</i> by Sudan Archives. <i>I just got a wall mount for my plants And hoping that they'll thrive around the madness Won't you step inside my lovely cottage? Feels so green, it feels like magic Only bad b— in my trellis And baby, I'm the baddest Wake me up when this gets to the action When the place a mess, I get the maddest I'm so sorry, baby, it's a habit When you go away, I get the saddest</i> <i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i>
00:25:28	Jesse	Host	Was it really, truly like a look around, start singing about the first four things you see? <i>[Chuckling.]</i>
00:25:37	Sudan	Guest	Was it? No, because I was in the basement, and I was talking about what was upstairs. I was just—but I had just bought a wall mount for my plants. So, I was probably just singing about that. Like, I was probably just singing about what was on my mind. Like, kind of freestyling it. And then finished it, yeah.
00:26:55	Jesse	Host	There is also a lot on this record about like home beyond the physical place. You know what I mean? <i>[Sudan confirms.]</i> Like, I imagined you must have been thinking, as you were sitting in an apartment or recording in a basement in LA, about what you had left in Cincinnati, what that—what you wanted from there, whether you wanted to be there. <i>[Sudan confirms.]</i> I knew a lot of people who moved home during the pandemic from places like New York.
00:26:27	Sudan	Guest	Yeah, me too.
00:26:29	Jesse	Host	And I'm like—I'm from San Francisco. I can't afford to move home. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:26:33	Sudan	Guest	Right! Yeah, you can't go home.

00:26:34 Jesse Host But you know, everybody moved to upstate New York or whatever, because they reevaluated their lives. Did you have that feeling, as somebody who had so rejected where you were from?

00:26:44 Sudan Guest Yeah, exactly. No, I was like—look, I'm not going back, or I'll turn to stone. Okay? So, I'm gonna ground myself even if it kills me.

00:26:59 Jesse Host What was your sister's role in all of this? 'Cause you have a twin sister with whom you had made music when you were teens.

[Sudan confirms.]

00:27:05 Sudan Guest She was back in Cincinnati?
Yeah! She like moved back to Cincinnati, 'cause like her lease was up. So, she was like, "I'm going back to Cincinnati at this time." So, she just moved back to LA right now. So, we live four minutes away from each other. So, she was just in Cincinnati that whole covid time. So, that really—I had—so, I had like no family. I was just like, look, I'm gonna make a home. I'm just gonna stay here. I'm gonna hold down the fort.

00:27:29 Jesse Host Had you been as close with her as people imagine twin siblings to be?

00:27:35 Sudan Guest Yeah. Like, we get close and then we hate each other, then we get close, then we hate each other. Right now, we're close. I basically forced her to come on tour with me and quit her job and do the merch.

00:27:47 Jesse Host What's it like to have your sister on tour with you selling tapes and LPs in the back?

00:27:52 Sudan Guest It was like amazing. She basically was like the best. She drove most of the time and was slinging the merch. And then, we just slept in the rooms together, saving money.

00:28:05 Jesse Host My wife and her sister will sleep in a bed together at a moment's notice. You couldn't pay me enough to get in a bed with my brothers. They smell terrible.

00:28:14 Sudan Guest *[Laughs.]* That's hilarious.

00:28:15 Jesse Host I love them very much.

00:28:16 Sudan Guest That's hilarious, yeah. *[Laughs.]*

00:28:19 Jesse Host I love them so much, but.

00:28:20 Sudan Guest She was doing really good on tour. Like, she works really well under pressure. It was great. Everyone kept thinking it was me, though, when they would walk in. They would hug her, and then she'd be like, *[sheepishly]* "I'm not Sudan."

00:28:34 Jesse Host Are the two of you identical?

00:28:36 Sudan Guest No!

[Jesse laughs.]

00:28:39 Jesse Host You know how people be.
You're talking about White people?

[Sudan confirms.]

00:28:41 Sudan Guest Yeah.
Mm-hm. *[Whispering.]* They think everybody looks the same.

00:28:43 Jesse Host Mm-hm. *[Beat.]* Guilty!

[Sudan laughs.]

00:28:50	Sudan	Guest	Oh my god. But I'm a visual person, so I could never—I, when I see a face, like twins—identical—I can tell them apart. Because they act different! They're like moving different. Like, you know?
00:29:05	Jesse	Host	Well, your sister could be on stage with you.
00:29:07	Sudan	Guest	She could! I keep telling her, "You better learn to fiddle again. 'Cause you could come out; we could do a little thang."
00:29:14	Jesse	Host	So, the plan is for her to learn the fiddle so she can do your fiddle parts, so you can do more arm dancing?
00:29:21	Sudan	Guest	Well, I was thinking—you know how dudes be on stage with the guitar. They got a backup guitar. Like, somebody can hold me down while I go like, <i>[mimics the violin]</i> and someone's like <i>[mimics the violin]</i> and I'm like <i>[mimics the violin]</i> and she's just like <i>[mimics the violin]</i> .
00:29:38	Jesse	Host	Sure! Makes perfect sense.
00:29:41	Sudan	Guest	It really does.
00:29:42	Jesse	Host	You gotta just save your money and hire Miri Ben-Ari, the hip-hop violinist.
00:29:47	Sudan	Guest	Oh my god! That's such a funny story. That's the first CD that my uncle Ted gave me. He bought my violin, and he gave me a Miri Ben-Ari CD, and that was the first time I saw a violinist doing their own thing. And I was like, "Oh! Oh, I can be like <u>that</u> !"
00:30:06	Jesse	Host	Do you like working the road?
00:30:08	Sudan	Guest	I mean, I really like it, because basically—I don't like it because I be missing home, but I really like it because I basically practice the violin a lot. When I'm on the road, it's like that's the time where I'm like really serious about practicing scales and stuff. Like, for every song, I make like an exercise sheet that has like "Chevy" is in this song in this scale, here are the exercises I practice. And like, I just feel like I love playing the violin and I love learning the violin. And I love knowing like, ooh, I'm getting better! 'Cause it's been a slow growth for me. Like, I haven't been like—you know, it's been very like freeform and just kind of like just live experiences really just have trained me.
00:31:04	Jesse	Host	But right now, I'm in my like routine bag where I feel like I could like stay the same or I could just <i>[whispering]</i> go crazy! I imagine it's a very different kind of skill to play your records when you're making your records and to play them on a stage. That like because your sound is so much about manipulating the sounds that the violin makes—you know, you might just be standing there playing the same four notes 20 times until they sound exactly the right kind of way you want them to sound. It's a very different skill than going onstage and playing a whole thing straight through.
00:31:37	Sudan	Guest	Yeah! I know! So, I got these exercises that basically help me—it's like these crazy exercises. And my music and my melodies are really simple, but I'm like now trying to like practice these like intricate scales. So, when I'm onstage, it just feels like I can do it and sing at the same time. Like, it's like nothing. Well, I'm trying to get to that point. But it's kind of working! And it's kind of fun. Like, even songs that don't have violin, I've like created violin things to play. And it's just like really fun. I don't know. I just love violin.
00:32:12	Jesse	Host	So, when you're onstage and you're performing, do you have a band these days?
00:32:16	Sudan	Guest	Well, right now I just have like a Moog player who plays samples on SPDx and drum stuff on it. And then, I have my SP-404 that I do samples—melodic samples on—and play the violin. And it's been

banging, because bass is important in my music, and now when you walk in my show, you hear and feel the bass shaking your heart up. And I'm just like yessss. But in LA, I had my homie play guitar on "Chevy S10". He like produced some of the songs with me. And it looked so good! A three piece, too. So, I feel like what I really want is like a drummer that knows Ableton really well, the same bass player who samples stuff, and then me, and that'll be the complete trio.

00:33:06 Jesse Host

We'll wrap up with Sudan Archives after a quick break. When we return, how does she imagine herself in 20 or 25 years? Maybe like playing violin on *Saturday Night Live* when Puffy does that Led Zeppelin "Cashmere" song? Something like that? Well, anyway, we'll find out. It's *Bullseye*, from [MaximumFun.org](https://www.maximumfun.org) and NPR.

00:33:31 Promo Clip

Music: Playful, old-timey piano.

Speaker: *[With a 1930s radio accent.]* Presenting the new [MaxFunStore.com](https://www.maxfunstore.com)! We've got shirts for your torso! Hats for your head! Drinkware for your finest beverages! And so much more! Starring your favorite Max Fun shows with new and classic designs. Find the perfect gift for the podcast fan in your life. Heck, that could be you! We're not judging. Head to [MaxFunStore.com](https://www.maxfunstore.com) now. That's [MaxFunStore.com](https://www.maxfunstore.com).

00:34:00 Music Transition

[Music fades out.]

Chiming synth with a steady beat.

00:34:05 Jesse Host

I'm Jesse Thorn. This is *Bullseye*. My guest is Sudan Archives.

00:34:19 Sudan Guest

Are there like electronic music violin club meetups? Like do you ever like have lunch with Laurie Anderson?
Um, no, but I do—I did this kind of meetup with—oh! Lora Escudé, yeah. So, basically she is like a play—she's the owner of this like playback company. Like, she'll do playback for like Honey and West and like stuff like that, back in the day. But she knows everything about Ableton and violin. And I do know this guy, Trevor Noah, who's like—he is just like that. So, when I find people like that, I definitely try to like meet up with them, and I'm just like *[whispering]* you wanna talk about violins, but electronic violins and dirty stuff? And can you lowkey like help me make it better?

00:35:02 Jesse Host

There was a dude in my neighborhood when I was kid, in the Mission district in San Francisco, who would wear like... kind of like a loincloth sort of like you might see an Aztec dancer wear. And he was I think multi-ethnic, but probably read as African American and had big, long braids that he wore up above his head. And so, he would just be wearing this loincloth and boots, and he had these big, intense—I googled a picture of them so I could show them to you—had these big, intense braids up on top of his head. And his name was Thoth.

[Sudan "ooh"s.]

And he'd just be jamming out on the street. And then, one time I think he won an Oscar or something. I think that it was like a documentary about him that won an Oscar or something. But anyway.

00:35:54 Sudan Guest

Oh wait, I gotta look that up.

00:35:56 Jesse Host

Yeah, that dude—that dude would just be—

00:35:57 Sudan Guest What's his name?
00:35:58 Jesse Host Thoth. Yeah. I googled Thoth, 'cause I was like, "I think that guy's name was Thoth." And it was! It was Thoth.

00:36:07 Sudan Guest That's amazing.
00:36:08 Jesse Host SK Thoth, or often just Thoth. He's a New York based prayformance artist.

00:36:16 Sudan Guest Prayformance?! [*Whispering.*] What does that even mean?
00:36:18 Jesse Host It says he's an eclectic mix of violin, voice, and dance performance.
00:36:21 Sudan Guest Hell the hell yeah!
00:36:23 Jesse Host It's pretty badass. I mean, the other thing about him is he's only wearing the loincloth, and he only wears a loincloth very well. Looks like a million dollars only wearing a loincloth. He's pretty yolked, pretty handsome guy, Thoth.

00:36:40 Sudan Guest So, Thoth was the god of the moon, it says.
00:36:46 Jesse Host Yeah, you gotta search for "Thoth violin" or something.
00:36:51 Sudan Guest So, he looks like the god. Like, the Thoth god!
00:36:55 Jesse Host Sorta does. Sometimes he wears a cool dress. Here's one with him wearing a cool dress.

00:36:59 Sudan Guest Oh my god!
00:37:00 Jesse Host He looks pretty good in that.
00:37:01 Sudan Guest It's crazy! This is crazyyyy! Oh my god! Taking a picture of this.
00:37:03 Jesse Host I'm just gonna talk about Thoth, now. It's gonna be you and Laurie Anderson and Thoth having your crazy violin club.

00:37:15 Sudan Guest Yeah, I really wanna like start like a weird little meetup thing. That would be cool.

00:37:22 Jesse Host Do you have a dream goal? Do you wanna be a MTV popstar?
00:37:26 Sudan Guest I wanna learn the violin like—I wanna be so good on violin! I don't really care about anything else. I just wanna be so good. You know. I wanna master my instrument, and that's never gonna happen, but yeah!

00:37:42 Jesse Host What does "so good" mean for you?
00:37:44 Sudan Guest I want to know a lot of like material that I like. I wanna learn it. And I also want to be able to understand the theory of music, and my music specifically. I wanna be able to like just be able to play any scale right now and actually understand what that means. I think that would be pretty cool!

00:38:07 Jesse Host Could you see yourself ten years from now being Miri Ben-Ari, the hip-hop violinist? Like, can you see yourself being a person who's like whoever the big, national headliner of urban music is, you're the one that goes on tour with them and plays the violin parts? Or is it gonna be your thing?

00:38:27 Sudan Guest I don't know. I think it—if it's like a dope thing then, yeah, maybe. But I always wanted to just be like in a band where people are screaming.

[Jesse laughs.]

Like, and be that violinist. Like, looking hot in the corner like...

[They laugh.]

00:38:48 Jesse Host If anyone is wondering, Sudan Archives just offered a sort of physical interpretation of ripping out a sweet violin solo. Sort of like Eddie Van Halen style. [*Laughs.*]

00:39:01 Sudan Guest I think that'd be so dope. My friend, Karan, said she wants to start a band, and she wants to scream. And I told her I'd be in it.

00:39:09 Jesse Host This could be big!

00:39:10 Sudan Guest Yeah, I think it's gonna be big.
00:39:12 Jesse Host Do you go to church now?
00:39:14 Sudan Guest No, I don't go to church!
00:39:15 Jesse Host Do you think about it ever?
00:39:17 Sudan Guest Yeah. Seems like I just don't ever have time, to be honest.
00:39:23 Jesse Host Do you think you would if you had time?
00:39:27 Sudan Guest Yeah! Why not? I also would go to the mosque. Try it all out.
00:39:36 Jesse Host Do you believe in the same kind of God that you believed in when you were 14?
00:39:42 Sudan Guest Yeah! I mean, subconsciously yeah. Like, it's all the same to me. So, yeah. Definitely feel like I'm a little ant and the world is bigger than me. And then, there's the ocean. And that's god. Like, if you don't think that, then that's cool. But that's what I think, and I think that makes me sleep good. *[Laughs.]*
00:40:06 Jesse Host 100%, I thought that you meant that you think of yourself as an aunt—A-U-N-T. Like a fun aunt. Like an auntie.
[Sudan laughs.]
00:40:17 Sudan Guest Like you're gonna have nieces and nephews.
00:40:19 Jesse Host No, like I'm a little ant bug! Like, I'm the—
00:40:20 Sudan Guest You're gonna take 'em to concerts.
I'm an ant to this world. And I am humbled by my experience!
[Music fades in.]
00:40:29 Jesse Host Well, Sudan Archives, I sure appreciate you taking the time to be on *Bullseye*. It was really nice to get to talk to you.
00:40:33 Sudan Guest Thank you! I was—I'm like really nervous!
00:40:37 Jesse Host It's gonna be okay.
00:40:38 Sudan Guest And I hope I didn't say anything crazy! But I just had to be myself! So, bye NPR.
[They laugh.]
00:40:51 Music Music "Freakalizer" from the album *Natural Brown Prom Queen* by Sudan Archives.
*My feet can't touch the ground
'Cause I can't seem to grasp on what's going wrong*
[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]
00:40:57 Jesse Host Bye, Sudan Archives! Her great new album is called *Natural Brown Prom Queen*. It's out now on vinyl and digital. Go get it. It's really something else.
00:41:07 Music Music *[Volume increases.]*
*And what's up with the frown?
'Cause I know we'll pass this test, we'll be alright
The world is spinning 'round
And we don't go time to sit and dwell on lies*
[Chorus]
*I got that energizer (Yeah)
That freakalizer
You got that tranquilizer (I got that tranquilizer, baby)
That frequalyzer
I got that energizer (You got that freakalizer)*

*That freakalizer (That tranquilizer)
You got that tranquilizer (That frequalyzer)
That frequalyzer
I got that—
I got that energizer
That freakalizer
You got that tranquilizer
That frequalyzer
I got that energizer
That freakalizer
You got that tranquilizer
That frequalyzer
I got that—*

*No, I don't wanna be lonely
But these hormones are making me horny
And the full moon is driving me crazy
Can we please try again in the morning, darling?*

00:41:14 Jesse Host *[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]*
That's the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye* is created from the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California. This week, here at my house, I planted three trees out front. And man, that was a lot of digging—not least when we found a gargantuan rock about six inches under the ground where one of the trees was going. And me and my neighbor, Ruben—who I found out is about to turn 80, had to get two of his enormous crowbars. I mean, I'm talking about like five-foot long crowbars to jack this thing out of the hole! Woof! It was rough, but we got that tree in there.

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 "Huddle Formation", written and recorded by The Go! Team. Thanks to them and their label, Memphis Industries, for letting us use it. If you're in the UK and you happen to be listening to this, The Go! Team are about to hit the road there in the UK. And it's a killer show, so you should go see it.

00:43:44 Promo Promo *Bullseye* is also on YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook. Find us there. Follow us. We'll share with you all our interviews. And I think that's about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.
Speaker: *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn* is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.

[Song fades out.]