

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.
00:00:21	Jesse Thorn	Host	It’s <i>Bullseye</i> . I’m Jesse Thorn. My first guest this week is the great Bruce McCulloch. Bruce is, of course, one of the founding members of the comedy team The Kids in the Hall. Legends of 1990s weirdo sketch comedy. You’ll remember him as unforgettable characters like Cabbage Head, Gavin, Tammy, and of course, Kathy.
00:00:41	Sound effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:00:42	Clip	Clip	Speaker (<i>Kids in the Hall</i>): What are you doing, Kath? Kathy: Well, I’m gonna go to one of those popular movies with Jill, Betty, and Beth. Then, afterwards go three ways on a large pizza, and maybe watch a couple of hours of TV! Speaker: Ooh! Greeeat. Kathy: You wanna come? Speaker: Oh, no. Um. I’ve seen everything. Kathy: <i>[Sadly.]</i> Yeeeah. Speaker: Kath, I really wish we did more, you know? Kathy: Yep. Speaker: Used our free time better. Planned more things to do. Kathy: Yeeeah. Sometimes it feels like our lives are passing us by and we’re not even in them! <i>[The audience laughs.]</i> Speaker: Yeah. Kathy: Yeeeah. Speaker: Yeeeah! Kathy: Yeah, so do you wanna come? Speaker: Oh, no thanks. I’m in my own groove. You know? Kathy: Alright. Okay. Speaker: Well, whatever you do, have a good weekend! <i>[They giggle cartoonishly.]</i>

00:01:23	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:01:24	Jesse	Host	<p><i>The Kids in the Hall</i> wrapped their original TV run in 1995. Since then, Bruce has been very busy. He's had acting parts in shows like <i>Gilmore Girls</i>, <i>Trailer Park Boys</i>, and <i>Arrested Development</i>. He has directed a few feature films and many episodes of television. He has recorded albums, written for TV and movies, and earlier this year, he rejoined <i>The Kids in the Hall</i> for a brand-new season of television. Bruce also works as what they call a show business producer. His most recent project there is a sketch show called <i>Tallboyz</i>. It features four Canadian comedians who are [chuckles], as the show's title promises, tall. There's Guled Abdi, who is 6'8". Vance Banzo, who is 6'5". Tim Blair, who is 6'1". And Franco Nguyen, who is 5'11" and a half.</p> <p>The show's first season just premiered on Fuse TV, here in the States. Here's a bit from it. There are plenty of famous people from Toronto, including my guest, Bruce McCulloch. There's also Catherine O'Hara and Keanu Reeves and Joey Votto. But these days, there is one celebrity in particular who has captured the imagination of Torontonians, one so ubiquitous that <i>Tallboyz</i> made a PSA about it.</p>
00:02:43	Sound effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:02:44	Clip	Clip	<p>Music: Somber piano.</p> <p>Speaker 1 (<i>Tallboyz</i>): Mans finished working a 12-hour shift when my boy Finn linked me and said, "Yo! Come through. This party 'bout to be litty. Truuust!" Fell asleep though.</p> <p>[Police siren.]</p> <p>Next thing, woke up to a billion missed calls and a picture of him. I could've met Drake.</p> <p>Speaker 2: I just left a pop-up dispensary. And it was on my way to a pop-up art installation. When I arrived, the crowd was abuzz, and there was a black SUV leaving. I just missed him.</p> <p>Speaker 3: I quit American Apparel in '08. He shopped there in '09. So, so close.</p> <p>Speaker 4: I ride a bike. He rides a bike. So, yeah.</p> <p>All: [In unison.] I could've met Drake.</p> <p>Narrator: Every day, one in three Torontonians will talk about their Near Drake Experience. You don't have to be one of them.</p> <p>Speaker 4: All I wanna do is go on a tandem bike ride with Drake through the 6. Is that so much to ask?!</p>
00:03:45	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:03:47	Jesse	Host	[Chuckling.] Bruce McCulloch, welcome back to <i>Bullseye</i> . It's nice to see you.

00:03:50	Bruce McCulloch	Guest	So nice to be here.
00:03:52	Jesse	Host	So, do you get like a text notification when there's a hot, new sketch comedy group in Canada?
00:03:58	Bruce	Guest	Yes. But there's actually 1000 comedy troupes here. I remember when we started, there was like three. Now, anybody who used to wanna be in a band, they're just in a sketch troupe. And there's a lot of them, here.
00:04:11	Jesse	Host	Did you see the <i>Tallboyz</i> at a festival or something?
00:04:13	Bruce	Guest	No, I actually teach sometimes at Humber College. I'd go and like they'd show me work and I'd say, "Oh, it should end there or let's reblock it," or whatever. And Vance Banzo, my friend who also was born in Edmonton, I was in the class, and I thought, "Wow, is he funny!" Then someone said, "Well, you should see his sketch troupe." And so, I saw them, and they were so funny. And I said, "Let's do a TV show."
			They said, "Well, we only have eight sketches."
			<i>[They chuckle.]</i>
			And I said, "Oh, well we've got some work to do! It's gonna need more than eight."
00:04:46	Jesse	Host	That was the origin of my sketch comedy career, was somebody coming on our show 20 years ago and saying, "Oh, do you guys do stage sketch?" And my cohost said yes. And we had not.
00:04:59	Bruce	Guest	So, you lied.
00:05:00	Jesse	Host	This person got us some gigs, and we had to <i>[laughing]</i> write some sketches.
00:05:05	Bruce	Guest	Did those not go well? I'm guessing those didn't go well!
00:05:07	Jesse	Host	They went fine! It went fine! We didn't get a television show, Bruce, but we did fine! We got paid to do sketch comedy. It was fine.
00:05:16	Bruce	Guest	Yeah. No, I mean, it was right place at the right time. And I was—I moved to Toronto where the houses are really expensive, and I spent literally all my money on a house. And I thought, okay, I'm gonna—I'm gonna—if something doesn't happen, I'm gonna starve. And just like, the next day CBC said, "We have to do this show!" It's like, okay! And that's what happened. Fascinating story.
00:05:35	Jesse	Host	So, Humber College has like a—they have like a comedy program, right?
00:05:39	Bruce	Guest	They have a comedy program, and it's like such—you know, some people are weird. Some people are just sort of like telling their dad that they're going to college, and this is the thing to go—and then, some people are so talented. So, it's like—it's pretty fascinating to see these kids. You know?
00:05:53	Jesse	Host	Eugene Mirman did that. He went to Hampshire or something like that. One of the colleges where you can make up a major. And he just said his major was comedy studies and just did comedy for college.
00:06:07	Bruce	Guest	Yeah, and it's pretty interesting. You know, I guess that's an old guy thing. It's pretty interesting to just see all these young people who don't quite know what they're doing. Some of them are really talented. Some of them are just figuring it out. And to watch people—and they don't even know how to be onstage or some of them are amazing onstage, it's pretty fascinating to watch young talent.

00:06:28	Jesse	Host	Does it make you think about what you were like or wonder what you were like when you were 21?
00:06:34	Bruce	Guest	Um, yes. It does remind me of that. And it's also—I remember when I started and how nervous I was. You know, I did Theatresports, which is competitive improv. And it was like oh, we got—my heart was racing and then I'd go, and we'd do a ten-minute game, and I'd think about it for a week. It's like I was obsessed and so scared. And it's like, wow! Why was I all that? And I can see that in some of their eyes as well.
00:06:57	Jesse	Host	What are the things that they need to learn about? What are the things that they don't get naturally?
00:07:04	Bruce	Guest	Well, one of the things I love to do with young people is like do things like just come onstage, look at us and leave. Because sometimes—stage presence. People don't understand stage presence or moving forward what that does literally in a space. And of course, you know, if you've seen my comedy, not—some of it ain't so funny—which is don't try to be funny. Don't—it's not about jokes. It's often about moments or something. You know? And one of the things I love to do the most is write sketches with a bunch of people. They'll pitch ideas and we'll go, "Okay, which one do we like more than the other one?" And we'll see which one we like more, and it's like, no, no, I think the young generation really have to learn competition as well. And one idea is gonna delight the group more than the other, which is what happens in a writers' room.
00:07:55	Jesse	Host	I get the impression that when you were younger and doing The Kids in the Hall, that that competition was always happening and always fierce.
00:08:06	Bruce	Guest	Well, yes. I mean, the contingent that came from Calgary, we were all mother[censored]. And we—no one taught us that we weren't supposed to fight. And I don't mean literally, but figuratively. Well, there was a few literal fights too. Oh yeah, [laughing] once Mark and I got into the fight at The Bottom Line. We were going out to do <i>Naked for Jesus</i> naked, and we started pushing each other with our little giblets out. But no, we—yeah, we competed. And no one told us not to, probably to a point of it being uncomfortable. But Kevin and Dave, when we came and we met them, they were really—they were like gentlemen. You know, they were like gentlefolk. And we were like [creature noises], "My idea, my idea!"
			And it was like it took them a little time to sort of stand up to us, 'cause we thought, "Oh no, they just kind of work for us." But you know, they eventually got into the groove of fighting for your stuff. You know?
00:09:04	Jesse	Host	I will never forget the look in Scott Thompson's eyes when I had him on this show maybe ten years ago. And he was talking about bringing in his own stuff to, you know, group meetings or whatever to the writing table at Kids in the Hall. And this was, I guess, 20 years after the events that he was describing. And just seeing the fire in this sweet man's eyes [laughing] as he like—just remembering fighting for his sketches.
00:09:41	Bruce	Guest	Well, you know, I do love Scott Thompson, but first of all, his stuff's always a mess. He always had like the wrong copy. It's like, "Bellini, this is the wrong copy!" And it's like, "Oh no it isn't. Oh, yes it is." And it's like twice too long, and he goes, "Ah, not even that. Not even that." It's like think it in your head, buddy! Like don't like,

“*[Frustrated sigh]* They didn’t even laugh at that. Okay, fine. Fine. *[Inaudible]?*”

Like, and he would—it’s like, do you know that you’re muttering during the entire—? You’re killing your own sketch by worrying about the reaction. And he—I had a poodle at the time, and I remember I would always bring her to all the readthroughs. And when everybody’s—Kevin got pretty nervous for sketches, too. And they would all pat her. And it’s like by the end of the readthrough, they’d wear out her fur, because they were all putting their stress into my poor Kelsey.

00:10:32 Jesse Host *[Laughs.]* What did the Tallboyz ask you when you agreed to—you know, produce and direct the show? Like what did they wanna know from you?

00:10:42 Bruce Guest Like they didn’t—it took them a while to know that it was their show. And so, they didn’t know like what to do. And then it took them about like the first half of the season to go, “Hey, this is our show!”

And I kept going, “Whatever you wanna do, buddy! Like, I’ll just help. I’ll support you and I’ll get you what I can.” ‘Cause I know the joy of having your own show. So, I don’t know if they wanted to know anything. They didn’t know like—you know, they didn’t know how to act for camera. They were all real naturals. So, I had to teach them how to act for camera. I put marks down on the floor of the rehearsal room, and I talked to them about eyeline. And they asked about like the difference between TV and sketch or stage. And it’s like, well, they were doing a lot of group going, “Huh!” at once. And I said, “No, no, no. You don’t do that on TV. You can do that onstage if you want, but you can’t be corny on TV in a different way, ‘cause the camera’s gonna be right there. It’s gonna find you anyway. So—

But they hadn’t—they had a very short life. And they just thought, “Wow, this so easy! We just—we met Bruce and then now we’re doing a show! Great!”

00:11:45 Jesse Host More still to come with Bruce McCulloch. Stay with us. It’s *Bullseye*, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

00:11:52 Music Transition Thumpy rock music.

00:11:56 Jesse Host Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I’m Jesse Thorn. If you’re just joining us, I’m talking with Bruce McCulloch. Along with Dave Foley, Scott Thompson, Kevin McDonald, and Mark McKinney, he is one of the founding members of the Canadian sketch comedy group The Kids in the Hall. They created a beloved television show in the ’90s, along with a movie, numerous uber successful live tours. They also recently returned to television on Amazon Prime with a great new season of their show.

Bruce is also producing and directing the new TV sketch show *Tallboyz*. Let’s get back into our conversation.

So, we were talking before we went on the air about how I think that the new *Kids in the Hall* episodes that are on Amazon Prime Video are really hilarious.

00:12:43 Bruce Guest Overrated.

00:12:44 Jesse Host Does your—*[chuckles]* fair enough. Does your—has your mind stayed in sketch comedy mode throughout? I mean, you’ve been

00:13:06	Bruce	Guest	<p>directing films and doing solo shows and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. But like, do you—did you, in the interregnum, still like see something in the world and think, “Oh! Sketch idea.”</p> <p>I do. I think it slowed down a little bit, because before—you know, I was an idiot with my little books writing down every idea and like looking for ideas and is that sketch? Is that a sketch? Hm! Bank machine. Is there a sketch about a bank machine?</p>
00:13:41	Jesse	Host	<p>But yes, I’ll get some—Kevin and I do a thing where we go—when we weren’t doing the show, we were going, “Oh, that would be a good sketch. Ooh, we don’t have a show anymore.” And so—but yeah, I think in sketch, and I think in titles. Like, if you look at the kind of things that I do, like “Superdrunk”. Oh, that’s a good title! I think in sketch titles, and I often get some. You know?</p> <p>I wanna play another sketch from <i>Tallboyz</i>. So, in this one, they’re—they’re essentially playing themselves hanging out together. And one of them sleepwalks and sleep talks, and they discover that it’s—his sleep talking is very real.</p>
00:13:59	Sound effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:14:00	Clip	Clip	Guled: Vance.

Vance: Oh, yeah, buddy?

Guled: You can be really off-putting.

Tim: Oh no.

Vance: Huh.

Guled: I’m constantly ranking and comparing the three of you in my head. You usually come out last.

Vance: Huh!?

Tim: We should wake him up.

Franco: Why? Finally, we get to know what Guled really thinks of us.

Guled: Franco? That’s all I got. I barely think about you.

Franco: [*Angrily.*] Well, I don’t think about you, either!

Vance: Geez, that’s rough, man.

Franco: Well, at least he doesn’t hate me.

Vance: He doesn’t hate me. He just finds me off-putting.

Franco: Well, suck it up, baby!

Guled: Where’s all this anger coming from, Franco? You used to be so much more relaxed.

Franco: Shut up, shut up!

Tim: Alright, that's it. I'm waking him up.

Guled: Tim, I think you're an awesome guy.

00:14:41	Sound Effect	Transition	Tim: Let the man finish. Music swells and fades.
00:14:44	Bruce	Guest	<i>[They laugh.]</i>
00:14:48	Jesse	Host	“Let the man finish.” What I really enjoyed about <i>Tallboyz</i> is—you know, a lot of sketch these days is made for social media and is really—is really sharp. It's really intense, and it's brief, and you know, there's kind of a—there's kind of a gag that people are gonna tell other people about. And often, that's really great. And what I really like about the <i>Tallboyz</i> show is how sort of sweet tempered it is. <i>[Laughs.]</i> And like relaxed. And I wonder how much of that came naturally with them and how much of that is introduced by your direction. Because it fits with your aesthetic.
00:15:28	Jesse	Host	Well, yes. I mean, we connect with sense of humor. You know, like that Drake one was like, “No, guys.” And they had a bad habit of like they'd get a great idea, and they'd go, “Naaah.” It's like, no! I almost met Drake! A near-Drake experience! That's a great—that's great! Don't “nah” to that! But they are, you know—they were the opposite of The Kids in the Hall. When I got with them, I kept saying, “When do you guys fight?” Like, and they don't! They're kind to each other. And I think that comes out. So, they're really sweet, and when they do like—they do some fairly edgy race stuff, where they call it point of view stuff. And it's coming from these very sweet, sweet guys. And—I mean, they can—they can be mother <i>[censored]</i> sometimes. And they can get a little stubborn about their ideas, as everyone can, but they're really sweet! And they're like, “Oh, Vance, did you not eat? Well, we have to stop and make sure Vance like—”
00:16:32	Jesse	Host	You know, they take care of each other in a way like—Kids in the Hall wouldn't even notice if, you know, somebody was bleeding from the eye, we wouldn't have noticed. We'd just be reading our sketch and wanting our way. So, I think that comes off—their niceness, you can see it in their comedy. How much of the relationships of 10, 20, and 30 years ago—among The Kids in the Hall—were the same making a sketch comedy television show in the 2020s? And how much of those relationships were different?
00:16:50	Bruce	Guest	Well, interpersonally, they're not that different. I mean, the wonderful thing—the change that's happened in the world is like, you know, we were in the '80s when we started. And it's like, people on set would yell at each other. And if somebody—if the prop guy brought you the wrong prop, you'd go, “Hey, didn't we talk about this at the meeting?!” You don't do that now. They'd kill you. The union would shut you down! <i>[Laughs.]</i> You have to be kind to everyone. Which is fantastic! But I think together—I think we used to compete with each other more the first time around. And then, I think now we just wanted—with this season, we just really wanted the best for each other. So, we wouldn't—like, we'd always talk

behind each other's backs, and Kevin and Dave would be wondering what Mark and I are doing. What's that weird thing where they're shoveling coal? There's no jokes in it.

And now they just go, "Oh, we appreciate each other, and I want their scene to go well."

And I go, "Kevin and Dave? Oh, their thing's really good!" As opposed to, *[irritated]* "Ugh! Are they doing that vaudeville stuff again?" And so, I think we really—it was us against—not the world, 'cause the world was quite nice to us about our comedy or the way it was received this time, but I think it really was us—we were together in a different way this time 'round.

00:17:57 Jesse Host Were you worried that it was gonna be an embarrassment? And I ask that because I was.

00:18:02 Bruce Guest Well, it's like when I went to see The Who the other night. You know. I had seen them 47 years ago, when I was 13. And it was like, "Oh! They're still really good." No, of course we do in a way. But we're kind of fearless, and—you know, I remember—'cause we weren't sure if we were gonna do it or not, and then I—and Mark's always the most reluctant. He's the one—I say he's the man who is a bag of flies, 'cause it's—he's brilliant, but you gotta talk him into stuff sometimes. And we went out for lunch, and then he told me one idea. I think it was one that ended up going in the show. And I said, "Oh, he's got an idea, so we'll be fine."

So, I think we just think, "Idea, idea, idea." And if you have an idea, it can keep you warm at night. It can keep you comfortable. And then you're not worried about how your show's gonna be received, because you know you like "Superdrunk" or whatever. It'll take care of itself. But of course! You know, and listen, we're not young—handsome young men, anymore. I guess we were worried, but not really worried. You know? What was the—what's the alternative?

00:18:57 Jesse Host Bruce, you're every bit as handsome.

00:19:00 Bruce Guest Thank you. I thought you'd say that.

00:19:02 Jesse Host You look gorgeous. I'm looking at you through the video camera here, and you look spectacular.

00:19:05 Bruce Guest If you wanna say Paul—if you wanna say young Paul Newman, I'll take it!

00:19:09 Jesse Host You've got a few sort of whisps drooping down on your forehead. You've got really gorgeously shaped eyebrows.

00:19:18 Bruce Guest It's a wig. And I'm wearing—

00:19:19 Jesse Host And a little bit of—

00:19:20 Bruce Guest I'm wearing two girdles.

00:19:21 Jesse Host You're wearing an eyebrow wig?

00:19:24 Bruce Guest *[Laughs.]* Yeah. Of course.

00:19:27 Jesse Host What didn't you expect about—look, you had toured with The Kids in the Hall a few times. You had made some stuff with The Kids in the Hall since the television program and movie. It's not like you guys hadn't seen each other. But what didn't you expect about going back to make a sketch comedy television show? Doing the thing that you do.

00:19:50 Bruce Guest Well, I didn't expect it would seem as normal as it did. Right? Looking over and going, "Hi, Fran."

[High pitched.] "Hi, Gordon!"

And you know, it's like, oh, it's—it was 25 years ago or whatever, 30 years ago. It feels like it was two days ago, as well. So, I think it's normal, because it felt normal. And also, ideas—you know, ideas can be dated, I suppose, but they don't age. They're timeless in a sense. Like, I don't know. I think it was shocking it felt so normal to us to just be doing this again.

00:20:24 Jesse Host Let's play a new Fran and Gordon sketch from the Amazon Prime *Kids in the Hall* show. Bruce McCulloch plays Gordon in these sketches and they—you know, they ran on the original *Kids in the Hall* show as well. In this one, they're celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary. Gordon is gonna take Fran, whose played by Scott Thompson, over the threshold of their home as a—you know, to honor that anniversary. But you know, when you're old and maybe some people are less strong and some people are a little heavier than they used to be, um, it doesn't always go smoothly.

[Bruce laughs.]

00:21:01 Sound Transition Music swells and fades.

00:21:02 Clip **Gordon:** Okay, new plan. I'm gonna lower ya down through the basement window. Fine! Kick the window open!

Fran: Oh! But what if Mr. Luis is home?!

Mr. Luis: What are you doing?

Gordon: No big deal. I'm just gonna lower my wife in through your window.

Mr. Luis: Oh, I don't know how comfortable I feel about that. What if I accidentally touch something I shouldn't? Like a naughty bit?

Fran: Ooh!

Gordon: Oh, why would you worry about that?

Fran: Oooh!

Mr. Luis: I'm the only baritone in my church choir. I can't be "Me Too"ed.

Gordon: You don't look like a baritone.

Fran: Not really.

Mr. Luis: *[Singing.]* "Onward Christian soldiers, marching—"

Gordon: That's the most beautiful thing I've ever heard! Okay, let's do it!

[Mr. Luis continues singing in the background.]

Fran: Let's do this!

Gordon: Ugh! Something popped!

Fran: What do you mean?

Gordon: I smell pennies!

Fran: Oh no! Gordon, I think you're having a heart attack! My husband's having a heart attack!

00:21:43 Sound Effect Transition

Music swells and fades.

00:21:46 Jesse Host

[Giggles.] So stupid, Bruce.

00:21:47 Bruce Guest

[Chuckling.] So stupid. "I smell pennies" is when you have a heart attack, apparently you're supposed to smell pennies or toast.

00:21:53 Jesse Host

I thought toast is what you smell when you have a stroke.

00:21:56 Bruce Guest

Oh, well, maybe that's it.

00:21:57 Jesse Host

I think "troubled dad" is pretty much 50% of your comedy. Look, there's other things. I'm not saying that's the only thing.

[Bruce agrees.]

00:22:14 Bruce Guest

It's just there are a lot of different troubled dads. Yeah. Well, and it's—aren't dads the funniest? Aren't they the funniest, weirdest people in the world? I mean, moms are kind of funny too, but dads are the—you know. And I had a hilariously—actually funny but miserable *[censored]* of a father. And it's an easy place to go and it's enjoyable, too.

00:22:34 Jesse Host

Did your father think that he was funny? As a—either of making jokes or that he, himself as a person, was funny?

00:22:43 Bruce Guest

Oh, he knew he was funny. And he—but he was—he made himself a joke a little bit. First of all, he had false teeth, which would always whenever he got mad would start to slip and would fall out. And he also had—in the old days, when you used to have ulcer operations—they don't give them, now. He had an ulcer operation, and then it didn't go well, and then so he had a weird thing—like a balloon from his tummy, and these like—this scar going down his chest. And he'd always wear just like little shorts that were always showing his what we call a sack. You know. And it's like, "Dad, put it away."

And so, he would walk around with no shirt with this horrible body. Yeah, I think he knew *[laughing]* he was kind of a weirdo. You know? But he was funny. He made jokes. He liked and appreciated—I mean, I love that his favorite thing from the *Kids in the Hall* show was a thing that was in the first episode, which is surreal, which is a weird joke I had, which is, "Hey you, millionaires! Get out of that garbage!" And then cut to a bunch of like guys in yachting wear and stuff, and they're in the garbage and then they run into a limousine. It's like—he said, "That's the best—that's your best joke."

00:23:54 Jesse Host

It's like really?! I mean, I love it 'cause it's so surreal, but I didn't think he would. So, he did obviously have a good sense of humor. Did he think you were funny in general?

00:23:56 Bruce Guest

Yeah. I mean, he was shocked that I got successful, but he was—*[sighs]* and he was trying—I remember after I did a season of *Saturday Night Live* as a writer, and then Lorne wanted me to go and meet with him again. 'Cause I think he was gonna ask me to

come back to the show. And I said, “Nah, I don’t wanna come meet with you.” *[Chuckles.]*

And he said, *[angrily]* “You get on that plane and meet that important man!”

I was like, “Nah! I’m not gonna do that.” *[Laughing.]* And so, it drove him crazy, and he could never give me any—you know, I raised myself essentially. Right? ‘Cause he was such a boozier. So, I did whatever I wanted since I was 12. You know. Just take a sleeping bag and go sleep outside in the park with my friend. Like, do whatever I want. And he’d never go, “Oh, where were you?!” You know. And so, that continued throughout my life.

00:24:46 Jesse Host

When my dad would come to my shows and he would have a good time, it made me so happy.

[Bruce agrees.]

Like, not because I—I don’t think because I needed to impress him, I just was really glad to like be able to give him something that really meant something to him. Like, what a nice thing to have your dad like your weird joke. *[Laughs.]*

00:25:13 Bruce Guest

Right! And you know, it was so funny, ‘cause—you know, when I was talking to *Saturday Night Live* people when Mark and I got hired as writers, and so I went in to see Mark at Second Cup, which is a coffee shop that he was working. And I said, “Oh yeah, we got it. We’re going tomorrow morning.”

Which he said, “No, no, we gotta get our paperwork.” Well, we didn’t get our paperwork. And so, the first thing out of his mouth was, “I can’t wait to tell my dad.” And I thought, “Huh! That is so curious.” ‘Cause I didn’t tell my dad. Like, I was in New York for about two weeks when I finally—like, it didn’t—but I thought that was a such a curious thing to come out of his mouth. “I can’t wait to tell my dad.” Like, and of course it’s such a—it’s such a bare thing and vulnerable. I was shocked he was that vulnerable with me, ‘cause we were more like brothers where you don’t—*[with a macho affect]* “Well, of course I care about you.” But like, to say that—

00:26:06 Jesse Host

So, yeah. But I’m glad that you have—you pleased your father. *[Laughs.]* He’d say, “When are you coming back and doing another one of those shows with your friend, Houseman?”

[They chuckle.]

Now, my partner John Hodgman, forever known as my friend Houseman and will never be known as anything else.

When you said raised yourself, did you have that thing that many children of alcoholics have, where you are torn between taking care of yourself and taking care of your family?

00:26:39 Bruce Guest

No. I shot—like, I shot out of there. Like, I shot out of town. I was out of there. I just went home to eat. Do you know what I mean? And like change my clothes for my other punk clothes or whatever. And all I want to do is move to Toronto, which was—and it ended up being for comedy, but it was for music, ‘cause I was obsessed

with music at the time. And I'd gone out when I was 18 and got two black eyes at Larry's Hideaway. One from a woman and one from a guy.

[They chuckle.]

00:27:15	Jesse	Host	And I just—Toronto is the place I had to be. So, no, I didn't look back on my family in a sense.
00:27:20	Bruce	Guest	How did you eat when you got to Toronto? Well, I was always—I've always found money. I don't mean literally found it, but I—you know, I always had like warehouse jobs. I'd worked at Canada Dry. I was a truck driver. I framed houses. And also, there's a great thing in like warehouses in Alberta at that time where you'd go to the forum and then you'd say, "Um, I'm gonna move to Toronto. Could you say I'm on compensation."

And they'd say, "Okay, sure." And then you get like checks sent to an address and then mailed to you for like nine months. And also, the theatre that we'd worked at—Loose Moose Theatre—is still there in Calgary. Amazing theatre. We had started doing our show, and it was like UCB where no one gets paid. Evil UCB. Or maybe some people get paid at UCB. And Theatresports didn't pay any of the performers. And so, we started doing our own show. And then we left. They gave us each \$4000. They said—'cause we'd been doing shows there for like a year and a half. And they said, "Well, we saved up all the money you made, 'cause we knew you'd be leaving one day, and you would need it." It's like *[gasps]*.

00:28:26	Jesse	Host	And so, we all had this—we had this cushion, which was amazing. We'll wrap up with Bruce McCulloch after a quick break. When we come back, he'll tell us about the time he got into a knife fight with a cowboy over a feather. It's a rich life he leads. It's <i>Bullseye</i> , from MaximumFun.org and NPR.
00:28:40	Promo	Clip	Music: Upbeat piano.

Jackie Kashian: Hi, I'm Jackie Kashian.

Laurie Kilmartin: Hello, I'm Laurie Kilmartin.

Jackie: We do a podcast called *The Jackie and Laurie Show*, and you could listen to it anytime you wanted, 'cause there's hundreds of episodes.

Laurie: Yeah! I mean, we've been doing comedy forever, and we should both quit. So, why don't you listen to *[inaudible]*.

[Jackie laughs.]

Before we leave this not only terrible business, but this awful world.

Jackie: And find out why we can't!

[Laurie laughs.]

It's because we love it so.

Narrator: *The Jackie and Laurie Show*, every week, here on MaximumFun.org.

00:29:18	Music	Transition	<i>[Music ends.]</i>
00:29:23	Jesse	Host	Relaxed synth with a steady beat. It's <i>Bullseye</i> . I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest is Bruce McCulloch of The Kids in the Hall. He's producer of the new TV sketch series, <i>Tallboyz</i> .
			I went to Calgary one time to do their—there's a big folk festival there, which is not a folk music festival, but a big music festival. And I had a great time doing that. And I was asking—you know, it's all these rock musicians and stuff and people that book rock musicians. All these cool, hip people in this room. And I've never been to Calgary, and I don't have anything to do until tonight. Like, where is the neighborhood where it's like record stores and used bookstores or whatever. And all these like very hip rock and roll people all kind of looked at each other and said, "Uuuh. You can go tubing?"
			<i>[Bruce cackles.]</i>
00:30:41	Bruce	Guest	Like, you can go tubing, they said. Nothing against tubing. Tubing's great, but you can go tubing. <i>[Chuckles.]</i> And I can't imagine that it was better, hipper 45 years ago. So, what made you think that you could be hip? Was it like listening to albums? Did you like get a subscription to <i>NME</i> or something? I did, and <i>Creem Magazine</i> was my bible. Right? And anything—you know, I had two older friends who ended up being Shadowy Men from a Shadowy Planet. They were two years older, so they said, "No, first you're gonna buy T-Rex. You can listen to Slade, too. But like that's okay. And then, next you're gonna listen to Lou Reid." Oh, okay. "You can listen to Mountain, but not too much."
00:31:12	Jesse	Host	And so, I knew that there was a world—like I haaated Calgary. Like, society is so messed up. You people are all cattle. You're all sheep. You're all stupid. And it was really in reaction to—
00:31:14	Bruce	Guest	I mean, Calgary Cattle specifically. Yes, which is like—the heterosexual guys there were so—I do remember thinking, "I wish I was gay." Like, not because I really liked—you know, I didn't like guys. It was just like I don't—I so reject what these men are, these cowboys. And so, I just couldn't be like that city. I didn't—I didn't realize its charms until I started going back after I'd moved to Toronto, but I hated it there. And I was—and I—you know, I provoked people. I—you know, I got in fights all the time. I would wear nurses' shoes and pink t-shirt and weird—three weird ties and a rope belt. And I knew that cowboys would chase me and wanna fight with me. And I somehow—I guess I was so angry that I took that on. So, yeah, I was—I knew that there was a place out there—and also, we got all those bands. I saw T-Rex and I saw The Who and all these cool bands that came by. It was like there's another world somewhere out there!
00:32:12	Jesse	Host	I got called the classic gay slur while I was walking down the street in Calgary. I think it's the only time that that's happened to me as an adult.

00:32:20 Bruce Guest Yeah, I think that can probably still happen. And also, they were playing a song called “Patio Lanterns” by Kim Mitchell, which is the only place *[chuckling]*—it was so funny, when we were touring with the troupe was we took the bus—many years ago—from Edmonton to Calgary, and then we got to the outskirts. We saw a guy get out of a cement truck and pull a guy out of a truck and put his shirt over his head like they do in a hockey fight and started just pounding him. And they were just—they just started like a full-on, hardcore fist fight. And I said, “Yep! We’re in Calgary!”

00:32:59 Jesse Host *[They chuckle.]* Did you ever— The other day, I was listening to the podcast *Stop Podcasting Yourself*, and one of the hosts—Graham Clark—is from Calgary. And I was very surprised to hear this hip thrift store comedian describe his intermittent dalliances with cowboy hats. Did you ever put on a cowboy hat and give it a try?

00:33:21 Bruce Guest Oh god, no. No, I hated cowboy culture when I was there. I eventually wore cowboy boots when I moved out to Toronto sort of ironically. No, I actually got into a knife fight once in the Calgarian Hotel, because there was a phase where guys would have little weird feathers on the front of their cowboy hats, and I guess I felt—you know—a couple beers, many beers in that I needed to liberate that feather from that guy’s hat. And I guess I didn’t realize that this—I guess this cowboy had a knife! And there we were.

00:33:56 Jesse Host *[They chuckle.]* So, when you say you got into a knife fight, you mean that you got into a fight with a guy who had a knife.

00:34:01 Bruce Guest Yeah. Oh, there was no knife for me. No, there was—I had no knife. And also, I’d get into bar fights, but that would imply that I was better at it than I was. I would mostly—I’d get pounded the odd time by somebody bigger. Right?

00:34:15 Jesse Host You had brought a stolen feather to a knife fight, as they say.

00:34:19 Bruce Guest *[They laugh.]* Exactly! But then I was—and then I wrap my jean jacket around my arm—it’s still got a scar on it—and then I just kept drinking. And then, I was working at the warehouse at the time, and then I phoned my dad on Monday, and I said, “Oh, I just fell off the dock and I really cut my arm.” It’s like I guess that’s what you do when you’re 18.

00:34:39 Jesse Host So, I once—when I worked at San Francisco Sketch Fest—filled in for a stage manager on your one person show. And I remember that my job involved bringing you a Wendy’s biggie meal that I think you put in a blender and drank?! But now I’m worried that that’s—

00:34:58 Bruce Guest That’s exaaactly what I did.

00:34:59 Jesse Host Is that really what you did?! *[Laughs.]*

00:35:01 Bruce Guest Yeah! I added ketchup packages and everything to “I Am a Lineman for the County” by Glenn Campbell. I thought that was just—that was just the funniest thing. And of course, I would make somebody also drink it with me every night. *[Laughs.]*

00:35:17 Jesse Host Um, so—

00:35:18 Bruce Guest I don’t know why I did that.

00:35:19 Jesse Host I didn’t actually get to see much of the show, ‘cause I was backstage getting a Wendy’s value meal. You’ve described what happened, but not why.

00:35:31 Bruce Guest *[They laugh.]*
I just thought it was hilarious! And it's one of those things that when you're doing it, the audience can't believe—they don't know what you're doing, and then they realize soon that you're gonna be doing what you're doing, which is you're gonna drink this at some point when you start to pour it into a cup. And it's just the greatest—it's the greatest scream that you've ever heard.

00:35:54 Jesse Host What gave you the temerity to put something that was mostly you being weird with not a lot of joke in it—or an image that you thought was amusing or whatever—on American network television?

00:36:13 Bruce Guest I just think it's my thing! Like, you know, I—you know, my—you know, "Thirty Helens Agree" which is a piece in the show—the original *Kids in the Hall* show, I'd actually written that as a promo for *Saturday Night Live* the year I was there. And it was "Thirty Helens Agree" that *Saturday Night Live* is fairly good. And I remember everyone there went crazy. It's like, first of all I didn't realize you can get 30 people to do that. And it's like what do you mean it's fairly good?! And where's the joke?! Where's the star?!

It's like, well, I think it's funny. I don't know, I've just always been, "Well, I think it's funny."

00:36:50 Jesse Host *[They laugh.]*
The prospect of you pitching that at—look, *Saturday Night Live* is one of the greatest things. This is not about *Saturday Night Live* not being good, but just the idea of you sitting there pitching this as an idea *[chuckling]*—that's... vaguely—

00:37:06 Bruce Guest Well, I didn't get it and it was—I know.

00:37:07 Jesse Host —vaguely emotionally disconnected fantasia you've created.

00:37:12 Bruce Guest I know. It was actually George Meyer, who went on to do *The Simpsons* and a bunch of other stuff. He said like, "What?! Why are you doing that?" And then it was interesting, 'cause we didn't fit in at *Saturday Night Live*, really. We didn't do that well. And then, he came and saw the show—the *Kids in the Hall* a few years later and he said, "I get it now. I get it now. I didn't get you. I didn't get you. I get it now." Which was very kind.

00:37:33 Jesse Host Do you get a lot of people coming up to you and saying, "It took me a minute to get it, but I get it."

00:37:37 Bruce Guest Well, sometimes people come out and go, "I like *most* of your material." And it's like oh, okay.

No, uh—no, I think if they are gonna come up to me, they're gonna say something nice. And one of the nice ones always now is like, "My dad and I couldn't really talk, and we'd watch your show and that's how we could communicate." Or, of course, a queer kid going, "You know, I was up on the reservation, and we saw your show and I was queer, and I didn't know. And thank you." Like, that's the great one. You know.

00:38:06 Jesse Host Bruce, I sure appreciate you coming in to talk to me. It was really nice to get to talk to you.

00:38:12 Bruce Guest Thank you, Jesseeee.

00:38:15 Jesse Host Bruce McCulloch. The new series *Tallboyz* is out now on Fuse TV. It is immensely charming, very funny. Go watch it. And we also—we talked about the reboot of *The Kids in the Hall*—the new season of *The Kids in the Hall*. It is great! It is so funny. *[Laughs.]* Honestly, I

00:38:40	Music	Transition	was worried what if it wasn't so funny, and actually it's <u>really</u> funny. You can stream it on Amazon Prime.
00:38:42	Jesse	Host	<p>Thumpy synth with light vocalizations.</p> <p>That's the end of another episode of <i>Bullseye</i>. <i>Bullseye</i> is created from the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California. Thank goodness, we finally reached sweater weather here in Los Angeles, which is anything below 80 degrees. <i>[Laughs.]</i> And uh, unfortunately, it rained the other night. I don't know who you call when there's no storm drain by your house, so the rain just stays there. Eh, if you've got an idea, tweet at me! @JesseThorn. How about that?</p> <p>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 Max 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. They've got a brand-new single out. Go check it out. Thanks to them and to their label, which is Memphis Industries. Nice of them to let us use that great music. Special thanks this week to Sarah Milton for recording Bruce McCulloch in his home in Toronto.</p> <p><i>Bullseye</i> is also on YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook. Find us there, give us a follow. We will share with you all of our interviews. I think that's about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.</p>
00:40:04	Promo	Promo	<p>Speaker: <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.</p> <p><i>[Music fades out.]</i></p>