

00:00:00	Music	Transition	Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue.
00:00:01	Promo	Promo	Speaker: <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.
00:00:13	Music	Transition	<i>[Music fades out.]</i> “Huddle Formation” from the album <i>Thunder, Lightning, Strike</i> by The Go! Team. A fast, upbeat, peppy song. Music plays as Jesse speaks, then fades out.
00:00:20	Jesse Thorn	Host	It’s <i>Bullseye</i> . I’m Jesse Thorn. Time now for a segment we call The Song That Changed My Life. It’s a chance for us to hear from some of our favorite people in show business about the song that made them who they are. On deck today is Rainn Wilson. Rainn Wilson is an actor. You probably know him best for his part on <i>The Office</i> , where he played Dwight. Maybe the closest thing that show had to a villain. Certainly, the weirdest character on that show.
00:00:47	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:00:48	Clip	Clip	Dwight (<i>The Office</i>): Every year, my grandfather would dress up as Belsnickel at Christmas. He was... okay at it. I am <u>great</u> . You know how they some people were born to be bad? Well, I was born to be Belsnickel. <i>[Chuckles smugly.]</i>
			<i>[Scene change.]</i>
			Dwight: <i>[In a nasally, cartoonish voice]</i> Ooh! Belsnickel has traveled from distant lands to discover how all the boys and the girls have been behaving this last year. Ooh-ho-ho-ho-hoo! Oooh, too much strudel!
			Jim: So, he’s kinda like Santa? Except dirty and worse.
			Dwight: No! Much better! No one fears Santa the way they fear Belsnickel.
00:01:20	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:01:22	Jesse	Host	Rainn has starred in a bunch of other stuff. He’s done TV comedies like Allison Janney’s <i>Mom</i> , indie dramas like <i>Blackbird</i> , and now one of the biggest biopics of the year.
			<i>Weird: The AI Yankovic Story</i> tells the tale of the most beloved parody artist of all time, Weird Al. Only, since it’s a Weird Al movie, it is a parody of the biographical drama genre. Al, who’s played by Daniel Radcliffe, enters into a toxic relationship with Madonna, develops a nearly life-ending addiction to drugs and alcohol, and barely survives a violent encounter with Pablo Escobar, among other things. One more or less true story from the movie, though: Al’s relationship with beloved weirdo radio DJ Dr. Demento, the first person to put Weird Al on the air. And who portrays Dr. Demento? Our guest, Rainn Wilson, of course.
00:02:17	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:02:18	Clip	Clip	AI (<i>Weird: The AI Yankovic Story</i>): Um, did you see the show?
			Music: Inspiring, orchestral music swells.

Dr. Demento: I did! And let me tell you something, kid. Every once in a great while, I can spot a talent that I know is headed straight to the top! Nervous Norvus, Wild Man Fischer, and now, you! What I saw you do on that stage tonight blew. My. Mind. I'm telling you; you've cracked the code! You're onto something special!

AI: *[Bashfully.]* Wow, I mean—you—you—you have no idea what it means for me to hear you say that! Thank you so much!
Music swells and fades.

00:02:48 Sound Effect Transition

00:02:49 Jesse Host
When we asked Rainn Wilson about the song that changed his life, he picked what might be the shortest tune we've ever run. It clocks in at just over 90 seconds. That song is "Mystery Dance" by Elvis Costello. Here's Rainn Wilson.

00:03:03 Rainn Wilson Guest
Hi, I'm Rainn Wilson, and this is the song that changed my life. I first heard the song "Mystery Dance" at age 16. That would put it at around 1982, when I got the album, *My Aim is True*, by Elvis Costello. And I was in a period of incredible change and transformation. I was just moving from Seattle to a high school just north of Chicago.

[Music fades in.]

00:03:44 Music Music
I had grown up on a steady diet of hard rock and classic rock in suburban Seattle. A lot of like Foghat.

"Slow Ride" from the album *Fool for the City* by Foghat.

*Slow ride
Take it easy*

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

00:03:53 Rainn Guest
Gosh. Van Halen, and obviously, you know, The Who and The Stones and whatnot, but a lot of like Billy Squier crapola of the period. And my musical horizons changed greatly during the summer of '82, when I moved from Seattle to Chicago. It was really hard in Seattle. I'd heard of punk rock and new wave and some of these new bands, but it was really hard to hear them, because there was no internet. There was no Spotify. There were no podcasts about songs. There was your big radio stations. There was KISW and KZOK, and they played rock and roll. And that was it! So, a friend of mine—she made me a cassette tape of The Clash and of Squeeze and of The Police. Like, early Police—*Zenyatta Mondatta*.

And those cassette tapes changed my life. It just absolutely opened me up, and then I was like, "Ooh, there's a whole other world of music that doesn't have guitar solos!" It opened up my mind and kind of shifted like who I was in the world, 'cause that's what you're doing when you're 16. You're kind of defining yourself, identifying yourself, and figuring out who you are and where you are in the world. And all of the sudden, I found my tribe. And my tribe was in punk and new wave.

00:05:15 Music Music
"Bang Bang" from the album *Squeeze* by Squeeze.

*Bang, bang, bang, bang (bang, bang, bang, bang)
I would like to be like Peter, Peter*

Pan, Pan, Pan, Pan (bang, bang, bang, bang)

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

00:05:27 Rainn Guest In the midst of all of this—you know, and I loved The Police. I loved Squeeze and hardcore punk and Dead Kennedys and—you know, Siouxsie and the Banshees. And you know, all of this stuff that was going on right there, I stumbled upon this guy, Elvis Costello. And here he was. Here was a guy who looked like me. He was nerdy and weird and had big glasses. He was angst-ridden, and he was kind of angry, and he was really hyper intellectual and kind of stuck in his head, but he could rock at the same time! And this really landed heavy in my heart, and I listened to all of his stuff, over and over and over again on the turntable.

00:06:09 Music Music “Welcome to My Working Week” from the album *My Aim is True* by Elvis Costello.

*Now that your picture's in the paper being rhythmically admired
And you can have anyone that you have ever desired
All you got to tell me now is why, why, why, why?*

Welcome to the working week

Oh, I know it don't thrill you; I hope it don't kill you

Welcome to the working week

You got to do it till you're through it and so you better get to it

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

00:06:37 Rainn Guest What happened was—like I said, I moved to this new high school, and I took my very first acting class. And the first assignment, in a brand-new high school—and by the way, New Shore High School was this kind of fancy, rich kid’s high school. And I had been from this blue-collar, working-class Seattle high school and just moved in. The odd duck. It was literally like being in a John Hughes movie. And the first assignment in the acting class was *Private in Public*. And that means that you wanna bring in an episode from your private life and share it in public. But you’re not performing it, you’re just living it. You’re just being it. So, people—you can just kind of be doing your thing, and people are witnessing you doing your thing.

So, I brought in my little turntable, and I brought in *My Aim is True* to the acting class, in my first week of acting class. Here I was, this pimply kid from suburban Seattle. Like, in Seattle, I was on the chess team. I played the bassoon in high school. I was in Model United Nations. I was just a total stereotypical nerd. I was in the ceramics club. Yes, we had a ceramics club, and I was a card-carrying member. And here I was, at this fancy new high school that had a lot of arts. It had a radio station, and it was very well known. It had a big—you know—acting and theatre department. And I, for my *Private in Public* performance, so to speak, it was kind of me in my bedroom. And I was just kind of like goofing off in my bedroom, and then I put on the record, and I brought in my record player and had like a built-in speaker. And I put on the record and put on “Mystery Dance”. And I lip-synced to it.

00:08:15 Music Music “Mystery Dance” from the album *My Aim is True* by Elvis Costello.

*Romeo was restless, he was ready to kill
He jumped out the window 'cause he couldn't sit still
Juliet was waiting with a safety net
He said, "Don't bury me 'cause I'm not dead yet."*

*Why don't you tell me 'bout the mystery dance?
I want to know about the mystery dance
Why don't you show me?
'Cause I've tried, and I've tried
And I'm still mystified
I can't do it anymore and I'm not satisfied*

*Well, I remember when the lights went out
And I was trying to make it look like it was never in doubt
She thought that I knew, and I thought that she knew
So, both of us were willing, but we didn't know how to do it*

00:08:49 Rainn Guest *[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]*
And just went crazy. I just—my body was just jerking. I was salivating. I was like, you know, furious twerking and spasming and some air guitar.

00:09:30 Music Music
And a little bit of a snarl. And you know, Elvis Costello in a way—obviously named himself after Elvis Presley and he's kind of—there's a little bit in his early stuff of kind of sending up Elvis a little bit. And he's got that same kind of *[impersonating Elvis]* "huh-hey, hey, hhhey" kind of snarl with the lip rising. The lip—so there was a lot of that. He was kind of using the upper lip to wrap around the syllables.
[Volume increases.]

*And I'm still mystified
I can't do it anymore and I'm not satisfied
I can't do it anymore and I'm not satisfied
I can't do it anymore and I'm not satisfied
I can't do it anymore...*

00:09:41 Rainn Guest *[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]*
And the class went crazy! They went wild. They went ballistic. They were laughing! They were howling! And I finished. And I was all sweaty. They all came over and patted me on the back. And all of the sudden, these outrageously attractive drama nerd girls were like shaking my hand, patting me on the back, saying, "Hey, what's your name? You're moved in. You're new here." And they were like, "Come sit with us at our lunch table!"

And I was like, "Oh my god." Here was this pimply, model United Nations nerd being invited to sit at a lunch table of very attractive young women, and I just made an entire audience laugh their *[censored]* off. And I'll never forget the sensation. There was a very particular and peculiar thing that happened in my brain. It was a little bit like a gong going off. And it was kind of like this moment of clarity. It was a transcendent experience. It was—it went *[gong noise]*. And it was kind of like, "I'm not gonna do that other stuff

anymore. This is my path. This is it. I'm not looking back. This is what I'm gonna do."

Because really, I was like, "Are you kidding me?! It's fun as hell. I get to make people laugh." I was always a little of the nerdy class clown. "And the girls dig me at the same time?!" And I'm 16, a little pimply, ungainly. I'm still ungainly. Not as pimply. I was like, "There's no looking back! This is it! I have a new life! And I have a new road in front of me! I get to sit at Vanessa and Charlotte and Tria's lunch table. This is awesome."

00:11:22 Music

Music

"Mystery Dance" from the album *My Aim is True* by Elvis Costello.

Why don't you tell me 'bout the mystery dance?

I want to know about the mystery dance

Why don't you show me?

'Cause I've tried, and I've tried

And I'm still mystified

I can't do it anymore and I'm not satisfied

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

00:11:34 Rainn

Guest

I don't know what it was in me. I was just like, "I'm just gonna go for it." Because normally I would've been way too self-conscious to do something like that in front of a bunch of strangers. But I was really so sick of my old identity and how self-conscious I was and how limited I felt and what low self-esteem I had. I just needed to kind of blow things open a little bit. And that was also the spirit of punk at the time. At the same time, like just hearing it now being replayed here in the studio, I was thinking about how amazing the song was for 1982 and how different it was from the music of the '70s that I grew up with on KISW: Seattle's Best Rock *[announcer voice echoing into a whisper]* rock, rock, rock, rock. Which was all about how sexually powerful—you know—Aerosmith was, or these singers were. Right?

Guess what, kiddies? The song is about sex. The mystery dance he's talking about? It's sex. Get over it. But the whole thing was like I don't know how to have sex, and I'm not very good at it, and I'm fumbling, and it's very mysterious. And that was also what I was undergoing around that same time. I was not a smooth lover.

[Laughs.] And just kind of having my first relationships with, you know, kind of those lip-smacking make out sessions that would go on forever. So, I love the idea that he's singing a song about sex and he's like, "I'm not good at it. I don't know how to do it very well." And what an incredibly revolutionary act that was in that time period.

And I just couldn't believe that anyone would talk about sex in that way. I'd never heard that before or really since.

00:13:21 Music

Music

"Mystery Dance" from the album *My Aim is True* by Elvis Costello.

Why don't you tell me 'bout the mystery dance?

I want to know about the mystery dance

Why don't you show me?

'Cause I've tried, and I've tried

And I'm still mystified

*I can't do it anymore and I'm not satisfied
I can't do it anymore and I'm not satisfied
I can't do it anymore and I'm not satisfied*

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

00:13:38 Rainn Guest I have such a sense of gratitude when I hear the song “Mystery Dance”, because it literally is the song that changed my life. It literally, lit-er-ally changed the course of my life and made me know that I wanted to become an actor. And had I not moved at that time, had I not gotten into Elvis Costello, had I not chosen that song, had I not performed that song—who knows! You know? Who knows what I would—I’d be on a fishing boat, or I’d be an English teacher, or I’d be in advertising. I don’t know what the hell I would’ve done.

So, “Mystery Dance” by Elvis Costello changed my life, because it made me become an actor.

00:14:24 Music Music “Mystery Dance” from the album *My Aim is True* by Elvis Costello.

*Romeo was restless, he was ready to kill
He jumped out the window 'cause he couldn't sit still
Juliet was waiting with a safety net
He said, "Don't bury me 'cause I'm not dead yet."*

*Why don't you tell me 'bout the mystery dance?
I want to know about the mystery dance
Why don't you show me?
'Cause I've tried, and I've tried
And I'm still mystified
I can't do it anymore and I'm not satisfied*

*Well, I remember when the lights went out
And I was trying to make it look like it was never in doubt
She thought that I knew, and I thought that she knew
So, both of us were willing, but we didn't know how to do it*

*Why don't you tell me 'bout the mystery dance?
I want to know about the mystery dance
Why don't you show me?
'Cause I've tried, and I've tried
And I'm still mystified
I can't do it anymore and I'm not satisfied*

00:15:12 Jesse Host *[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]*
Rainn Wilson on the song that changed his life, “Mystery Dance” by Elvis Costello. If you haven’t seen *Weird: The Al Yankovic Story*, it’s very funny. It’s free on the Roku Channel. And guess what? We have interviewed Elvis Costello! It was a really good one. We’ll have a link to that on the *Bullseye* page at MaximumFun.org.

00:15:32 Music Music *[Volume increases.]*

*Why don't you tell me 'bout the mystery dance?
I want to know about the mystery dance
Why don't you show me?
'Cause I've tried, and I've tried
And I'm still mystified*

*I can't do it anymore and I'm not satisfied
I can't do it anymore and I'm not satisfied
I can't do it anymore and I'm not satisfied
I can't do it anymore and I'm not satisfied
I can't do it anymore and I'm not satisfied
I can't do it anymore and I'm not satisfied*

00:15:58	Music	Transition	[<i>Music fades out.</i>]
00:16:03	Jesse	Host	Resonant, thumpy synth. 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. I was in the city of Commerce today, where I visited Business Costco. I love Business Costco. I bought those rubber mats that are in like commercial restaurant kitchens, the ones with the holes in them. I love it. 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 music is "Huddle Formation" by The Go! Team. Thanks to The Go! Team and thanks to Memphis Industries, their label. You can find <i>Bullseye</i> on YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook. Give us a follow in all of those places. We will share our interviews with you, and thence you may share them anon with others. And I think that's about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.
00:17:08	Promo	Promo	Speaker: <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR. [<i>Music fades out.</i>]