

00:00:00	Music	Transition	Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue.
00:00:01	Promo	Promo	<b>Speaker:</b> <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of <a href="http://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> 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. The first issue of <i>Love and Rockets</i> came out in 1982. Its creators Gilbert, Jaime, and Mario Hernandez published it themselves. But it wasn’t a homemade operation for long. They almost immediately got a publisher, started racking up awards, and earned themselves a broad, passionate fanbase. Mario eventually took a step back to raise a family, but Gilbert and Jaime have been going strong for over four decades. If you’ve never read it, <i>Love and Rockets</i> isn’t just about one thing. It’s a collection of stories, sagas really. A lot of Gilbert’s stories take place in the fictional town of Palomar, in Latin America. A lot of Jaime’s take place in the United States, centering around the personal lives of two Chicano women, Maggie and Hopi.
			Inside the pages of <i>Love and Rockets</i> , there are themes of humanism, stories lifted from the Hernandez brothers’ life growing up brown and punk in the southern California farm town of Oxnard. At other times, the series goes on flights of magical realist fancy. There are a lot of things that make <i>Love and Rockets</i> important and groundbreaking. It’s a hit comic series that isn’t about superheroes or even action. The Hernandez brothers draw mostly people of color and a lot of women. That representation is often reflected in the comic’s fanbase as well. Fantagraphics publishes <i>Love and Rockets</i> . They recently commemorated four decades of the series with a new collection. <i>Love and Rockets: The First 50</i> is a boxset that compiles the first 50 issues of the series.
			Interviewing Gilbert and Jaime is our correspondent, Brian Heater. Brian is the host of the excellent interview podcast, <i>Recommended If You Like</i> . He’s also a part-time comics journalist and a lifelong fan of <i>Love and Rockets</i> .
			<i>[Music fades in.]</i>
			Without any further delay, let’s get into it. Brian Heater in conversation with Gilbert and Jaime Hernandez.
00:02:22	Music	Transition	Chiming synth with a steady beat.
00:02:29	Brian Heater	Host	Gilbert and Jaime Hernandez, welcome to <i>Bullseye</i> !
00:02:31	Gilbert Hernandez	Guest	Hey, guy. Nice to be here.
00:02:33	Jaime Hernandez	Guest	Thanks for having us.
00:02:35	Brian	Host	So, I imagine the both of you have gotten this a lot over the years, but whenever I tell somebody to check out <i>Love and Rockets</i> , I invariably get the same question, which is: where do I start? Your longtime publisher, Fantagraphics, is releasing a beautiful collection of the first 50 comics. I’d say obviously the \$400 price tag is going

to be a bit steep for some people. But when you're posed with that question of where to start, what do you tell people?

00:03:04 Jaime Guest I always tell them—you know. People have asked me that for a lot—well, now I just say start anywhere. If it's good enough for you, then maybe you'll be interested and go back or just continue from when you're reading. They look at me with a blank stare and then walk away. But—*[laughs]*.

00:03:35 Gilbert Guest Yeah, I would say start from the beginning. And that's when they walk away, yeah. You can't help it. It started 40 years ago, and that's where it begins. So, they're reprinting affordable reprints of our collections, which will mostly focus on—Jaime has his books, I have mine. Once in a while, we'll mix them up. But if you start with—what was your first one? Maggie and Hopi?

00:03:45 Jaime Guest *Maggie the Mechanic*.

00:03:46 Gilbert Guest *Maggie the Mechanic* was his first one. And it's a paperback. It's pretty inexpensive. And it's filled with a lot of the early Maggie stories. And then, mine is called *Heartbreak Soup*, and it pretty much starts out my Palomar series. You know. I mean, there's other stories that I've done, but those are collected elsewhere. But anyway, you have to start from the beginning if you really want the experience. You won't be sorry.

00:04:08 Brian Host Yeah, it's the—I mean, obviously it's the soap opera problem or it's even like the Batman problem of where to jump into this thing that's been going for so long. And you know, as you both mentioned, you've gotten that question probably more than a few times over the years. Are you generally concerned or do you think about giving readers on-ramps or entry points to get them started?

00:04:29 Jaime Guest No. I just try to make every issue inviting where it's—where you will like it and not care what happened before kind of thing. But that's kind of hard sometimes. But I do think about that.

00:04:47 Gilbert Guest Yeah, I think the one weakness of *Love and Rockets* over 40 years is that it's always continuity. It's always—you know—hooked up with continuity. So, some let you read a later story that you like. There's 30 years of that story—the backstory. You know?

*[They chuckle.]*

It just works for us that way, 'cause every time we started a new format—you know, it was a magazine, a comic book, a book, and then it's the magazine again. We just kept pulling through. And people were going like, "Oh, why didn't you start over?"

I go, "We did that 40 years ago." We'll keep going. We're gonna keep going on this. And like you said, we work hard to make it clear. You know, if somebody's just jumping into an issue. But these characters have been around for a while, and new ones—you know—they have the same backstories. I gotta tell you.

*[They chuckle.]*

00:05:36 Brian Host For me, as somebody who's read a lot of your work over the years, it was really incredible going back to really the first issues in this new collection and realizing how many elements that have come to define your work were basically there from the start. I mean, it seems to me—obviously, you were very young at the time and we're talking about 1982, but even those early, early books seem like the work of very confident writers and artists.

00:06:07	Jaime	Guest	Oh, thank you. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:06:08	Gilbert	Guest	Thanks! We simply haven't stopped making comics since we were little kids. So, we were practiced that way. You know. We had the muscle memory. We had the—you know, as much as we can put into it—you know, at the time. You know. We never finished a comic. We never made a comic book for people to read. It was always for ourselves or to each other. But boy.
00:06:30	Jaime	Guest	It's interesting, because the stuff I did right before <i>Love and Rockets</i> is a little different, because when we decided to do our own comic and they told me how many pages they wanted from me, I kind of started from the beginning. And I said, "Who do I got? Okay, I got Maggie. She's a rocket mechanic. Okay, I can deal with that. Hopi is her girlfriend." You know. And so, I kind of created it new from the first <i>Love and Rockets</i> . That's why you see Maggie wake up in the morning and her hair's kind of long. And I have Hopi cut it, and then that's where you get the punk haircut. And so, I was just kind of winging it, because I didn't—I guess I learned to be a writer with the first issue, because before that, there was so many loose ends with my work. You know? I didn't have a complete outlook to it like Gilbert did. So, I was learning from the first issue—you know—of how to start and end a comic.
00:07:40	Brian	Host	That's interesting. You know, obviously, again going back and reading it, it's clear that the Palomar stories kind of really started taking shape later, but Jaime, it sounds like Maggie and Hopi were—how long were they with you before you actually started the series in earnest?
00:07:55	Jaime	Guest	Maggie was with me since I was in high school, before I went to the punk thing. I was just—I just wanted a space heroine. You know. So, she kind of evolved the more I evolved with the way I dressed, what I was into. She would change with that: her length of hair, her style of hair. Hopi came in punk days. I mean, she is a creation of the LA punk girls. So, I don't know. It was punk that kind of set me on my path. Like, fashion and stuff like that. But right before that, it was like—I don't know, I was trying to do like '30s/'40s/'50s science fiction, and I wasn't <i>[laughing]</i> really—I didn't really know what I was doing. Or—to my eyes, you know—like Maggie would dress a certain way and I'd go, "Well, that's not really the '50s, but here it is." <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:08:56	Brian	Host	Gilbert, at what point in the process did Palomar really take shape for you?
00:09:00	Gilbert	Guest	Well, I was doing the first issue. You know, when we published our own <i>Love and Rockets</i> at first, I was—I had a science fiction story I was doing. It was similar to what Jaime was doing. It was just—you know—everything, anything you wanted to put in it. Just wild. I just started doing it. But it wasn't really going anywhere, and that's what the story was sort of about at first. Then, when we did the Fantagraphics book, we added so many pages, I had to put a story to it. So, I just threw at it more and more and more. And there was a part where the characters go to a small Latin American town. And even if it's still part of the science fiction story, I remember getting the feel that I liked that better than the rest of what I was doing. I go, "Well, I'm gonna just do this town with the kids running around and people partying." 'Cause it was a fiesta.

And I just thought I would rather do that. So, even though I didn't do it the next issue—I was still doing science fiction. I was trying to

create a character I can follow, and it just wasn't happening even though—you know—I still like what I did in those early issues. But it just wasn't me yet. You know? Just—you know. So, I took—and so, once the third issue came out, there was so much anticipation, because the second issue—it was just an eye-opener. Everybody jumped on it like this is the comic, wow! This is the second issue and it's even bigger than the first.

So, we ran with that, and so here's the third issue. Jaime's doing his thing, and so it's already being watched. It's already being looked at. And I go, "Oh, I have half the book." You know—or mostly half of the book. "I could do anything I want, 'cause it's already gonna be looked at." So, I took a chance with Palomar. I go, "There's not an audience for this yet." You know, I predicted there might be. You know. And luckily, I was—you know, [chuckles] right. But it was just like I can do this. I can make my little movie—you know, in a comic book of Latin American country and all the characters. And it was really easy to do that, although we were still—you know—struggling to finish stories. You know? We had never done really epic type stories and finished them ever. So, they took a long time to do. But the rewards—you know—turned out really well. You know. People liked them.

00:11:03	Jesse	Host	So much more to get into with Gilbert and Jaime Hernandez, creators of <i>Love and Rockets</i> . Stay with us. It's <i>Bullseye</i> , from <a href="http://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> and NPR.
00:11:14	Music	Transition	Chiming synth with a steady beat.
00:11:19	Jesse	Host	Welcome back to <i>Bullseye</i> . I'm Jesse Thorn. If you're just joining us, we're talking with Jaime and Gilbert Hernandez. They're the co-creators of the acclaimed comics title, <i>Love and Rockets</i> . That series just had its 40 <sup>th</sup> anniversary, and the brothers have released a box set of its first 50 issues. Interviewing them is our correspondent, Brian Heater. Let's get back into it.
00:11:41	Brian	Host	A big part of the reason why you did end up growing up in a comics household is I think your mother was a big comics reader. Did she get what you were doing early on?
00:11:52	Jaime	Guest	Um, when we started <i>Love and Rockets</i> ? Yeah, she was mostly happy that we found jobs. [Laughs.] That was the main thing.
00:12:02	Gilbert	Guest	Yeah, we found something to do.
00:12:04	Jaime	Guest	But she looked at it romantically. You know? But she stopped reading when it got too rough. You know, as far as adult material. You know. And [chuckles] you remember the day she came—she came up to me and gave me her stack of <i>Love and Rockets</i> and goes, "I can't read these anymore."

And I just went, "You're lucky that I'm a grown man, because this would've crushed me!"

00:12:30	Gilbert	Guest	Oh yeah, as a child! Yeah, yeah, yeah.
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I just shrugged my shoulders. I go, well, she doesn't watch R rated movies anyway. She doesn't—you know—read certain books anyway. She's just not there. So, right away, even though it hurt a little bit, it was more like, well, she doesn't get it. She doesn't want it. Okay. And we've had to accept that for 40 years. People still don't want it, but we don't care.

[They chuckle.]

00:12:53	Brian	Host	Gilbert, I know your daughter is an artist and she's tabled with you at shows. On your end, is there a kind of line that you need to walk both in terms of I guess being an encouraging parent when it comes to her art but also being very pragmatic about how difficult a path this can be?
00:13:10	Gilbert	Guest	She's aware about the path. She's aware how many hours I work and how much—you know—we had money troubles here and there. Only because—you know, comics—you can't make a living doing comics, just doing comics, unless you do three comics at once or you have a side job in commercial art or something. It's very difficult to do it. And she's aware of that. But she believes in art. She believes in the art. She believes in pursuing and perseverance, which—you know, hopefully I instilled that—her mother and I instilled that in her. And I think—so, she's just—she's a typical artist, though. And I gotta nudge her all the time to get things done. You know. Sometimes I'll say, "Oh, okay. Hey, let's do this—let's do something and I'll work with you on it." Then she'll get going, only because she needs that nudge.
			I didn't—we didn't really have that nudge in the early days, so we never finished anything. We had a lot of comics. We drew a lot of stuff. A lot of the stuff we did, we didn't finish, 'cause we just had no real like incentive to finish it because it would just sit there, in the early days before <i>Love and Rockets</i> . So, anyways, she knows what Daddy did for 40 years, whatever. And now, she's a grown woman. She does her own art, and I encourage her as much as I can. And what's great—what I like is that she can do her own thing and it's nothing like what I do. She just didn't copy what I did, the same kind of layouts or storytelling or anything. She has her own vision, and that's what I encourage even more. It's like, you have your own vision, you have your own name.
00:14:44	Brian	Host	Viewing comics history from a distance, I get the sense that the alternative landscape was in a bit of a lull by the time <i>Love and Rockets</i> came along in the early '80s. Much of the underground comic scene—you know, [ <i>inaudible</i> ] to a certain extent run its course, what was your sense of the comics community during that time?
00:15:07	Gilbert	Guest	I felt that it was—a small part of it anyway—it was ready for something like <i>Love and Rockets</i> . I didn't expect it to be, you know, the way it grew during the '80s and became—you know, that's what comics are, indie comics. And that was considered more important. So, the mainstream had to fight with getting the attention with <i>Dark Knight</i> and <i>Watchmen</i> and that sort of thing. But the indie comic scene was just growing and happening, and there was a whoole generation of people who didn't care about superheroes. You know? So, that was—that was pretty great! You know? But you know, like I said, it's a struggle 'cause you have so much against you. You've got so many opinions against you. So, we just—like Jamie said, we would just back off and go back to doing our comic and keep doing it. You know?
00:15:51	Brian	Host	Were you aware that there was an audience for this kind of thing when you started?
00:15:55	Jaime	Guest	I don't think I cared. I just wanted to have my comics.

[They chuckle.]

You know, I didn't know how big or little this thing would be. I was just so happy to do exactly what I wanted. And maybe that's not realistic, but—and it just happened to work out, but yeah! I was just like, "Are we gonna get rich off this? I don't know!" *[Laughs.]* You know?

00:16:17 Gilbert Guest Yeah, it was like that was an afterthought of, "Oh, I guess. I don't know. Maybe. Maybe not. Probably not." *[Chuckles.]* You know.

00:16:26 Brian Host When was it clear that it was working? Was it really that second issue?

00:16:29 Gilbert Guest That it was moving forward. We still had a lot more to do. I mean, it was only the second issue. You know. So, what's the third? Well, luckily that the timing was the Palomar story, that was the—you know, the main story in that issue. Unless you collect Jaime's stuff that was also in that issue, then there was all that. So, *Love and Rockets* had a lot going on. Also, Mario had stories in there, our older brother. So, there was a lot going on in *Love and Rockets*, from different points of view, that I think made it like sort of like a treasure chest type comic. That's what we wanted. This is a treasure chest. This is the history of comics, filtered through our eyes. You know? Filtered through B movies, comic books, rock and roll, punk, just basically coming through us and we're putting it on the page.

Whereas like say the rock and roll didn't really show up in Palomar, but the energy and the life it has—rock and roll has always had its own lift, so it just infused me! I mean, in the early '70s, I was so into rock music, and like Jaime was saying, all these certain people got it or wanted it. And so, that kind of petered out in the mid-'70s. And then, once punk exploded, this was new because in the early days, you'd have favorite bands, but there was only one or two at a time. Right? And so, once the punk thing happened, it was The Ramones, Pistols, the Clash, ba-ba-ba-ba. And then, the local bands. And every—and then there were just more and more and more happening all over the place. So, this was something that couldn't be stopped, otherwise—in the early days—they could stop certain kinds of music. You know, early punk rock or whatever—you know. Yack, yack, yack.

00:18:03 Brian Host Yeah, there's another important element of that, too. I mean, you know, you were obviously both involved in the Oxnard hardcore scene—the 'Nardcore scene, as it was known. And the other aspect of all of this is the DIY element and the idea that you can just go ahead and do this. For them, it was—you know, starting a band if you can't necessarily play an instrument. For you, it's hey, we can just go to—you know—the Xerox store and photocopy these things and put them out.

00:18:32 Gilbert Guest Yeah, that's—*Love and Rockets* was that. It was DIY. It was like, well, we don't—if we don't like comics, make them. You know? Luckily, we have that background. You know. A lot of indie cartoonists in the old days, the first comic they drew is when—you know, was when they tried to get something out there. You know. And so, they had to come up with stylized art, because it takes a long time to learn to draw. You know? So, luckily, we had that background, Jaime and I had that background of just drawing all the time. And so, when we drew our first comic, we were ready. You know? I mean, it took a while to get it together but—you know.

00:19:04 Brian Host I assume any time a book hits a big, round number or any time someone puts out a big collection like this, it's an opportunity to really go back and reread some of those early works and reconnect with them. Did you have that experience? Did you reengage with the early issues?

00:19:21 Jaime Guest Oh, I used to look at my early work all the time. *[Chuckling.]* I used to love reading my stuff. And then, now it's like hard. Well, 40 years have passed, and there's so much of it. But yeah, I remember artists always saying, "Ugh, I can't even look at my early stuff."

And I'd go, "Oh, I read my stuff all the time!"

*[They laugh.]*

00:19:52 Gilbert Guest And it was partly for research too. I mean, knowing when a character went to jail or something. You know. Well, for me it's the same thing, but it's almost mostly for research. You know? Because I am doing some characters and I'll bring back a character that I hadn't done in 30 years. So, I have to research is he alive? What did he do? What was the last thing he did? What did he look like? And I gotta do that, and sometimes I'll get caught in reading the part of the story that he's in or she's in. And I look at it thinking like, well, I put a lot of work in this. I should be happy about it. But I'm not crazy about the proportions here. I'm not crazy about how this person looks here. I like the way I draw them now better. So, like most characters—if I'm drawing old characters, I'll draw them better or the way I want to now, just because I think I'm better—my eye's just better at it. But it's mostly research.

00:20:54 Brian Guest The thing that bothers me about it is that I will read sections of it because I'm researching a character, and I think, "I wrote that?! I couldn't write that now!" It's weird. But then, once I—you know, after the sadness passes, I think, "Well, it's there. Yeah, I did it. So, I don't have to do it again."

00:21:23 Jaime Guest Jaime, you said something in an interview years ago that's really stuck with me ever since. You've got this job—you both have this job that can be extremely repetitive, just the act of making a comic and drawing—you know—characters and panels over and over again. But what you said is—you know, you might as well find something that you wanna draw over and over. For you, in those early days, it was—as Gilbert alluded to, you know, rockets and cars and dinosaurs. What is that thing now?

00:21:23 Jaime Guest Oh! Whew. I guess just body language and the characters moving, moving through the story. That helps, because I'm thinking about the story as well. You know. Sometimes I think I'm more a storyteller than an artist—than a guy who draws well. You know? Sometimes I don't care what the drawings are doing. *[Chuckles.]* You know. I just want the story to move and in the most natural way possible. I still like to draw, you know, figures and stuff like that. But it's gotta be a character I like, you know, for the most part. Like one of my newer characters, Tonta. I just love drawing her, because she's just this clown. So, she fills up the page and makes it look interesting, even if she's just saying something stupid.

And I love a character that can carry a comic that way, where it's like, "You're not gonna survive this next story, because you don't

know what the hell you're talking about." Well, that doesn't matter. I just love watching her go through the motions. And that's a lot of fun for me now. You know? And then, I like to stick, say, Maggie in there, who's got a conscience. And so, she's like, "Why is this kid doing this?" You know? "Why is this kid acting like a clown?" Or "I like this kid, 'cause all she cares about is acting like a clown." You know. And so, that's what carries me through these comics.

00:23:11 Brian Host  
00:23:13 Gilbert Guest

Do you have that thing, Gilbert?

Pretty much. I don't—I do get tired. And it's been a long time, you know. So, I do get tired toward the end of an issue's story or an issue and thinking like, "I'm not doing this anymore." But you know, it's just the lie you tell yourself, 'cause what else am I gonna do, you know? Even if I retired completely from comics or whatever, I have nothing to do other than fix up the house. You know? That's a good thing, but where's my creative drive going? Where's my—you know, my imagination? 'Cause I have an overstuffed imagination, obviously. My imagination is a hamster on a wheel. I gotta control it. It just goes so nuts, and it's always being poured out into the comic, and I really have to—you know—pull in the reins. You know? I'm able to do that more so now, 'cause I'm getting lazy. But I just like—I like drawing. I like drawing monsters and spaceships and all that stuff only once in a while, 'cause I get bored very quickly. 'Cause I know there's nowhere to go with that—for me, anyway.

So, I just like to draw. I like to draw the new characters—the younger characters—'cause they don't know what's going on. They're kind of—the old Palomar stories and the old character's shenanigans are new to them. So, I explore those old stories and old characters with these younger characters who are learning about them. You know. About the older characters. And that's fun to do. I guess that's what makes it kind of new.

00:24:34 Brian Host

In the early days, it seems like perhaps there was more collaboration and maybe that was a result of Mario being in the mix. Did you work together more closely back then?

00:24:46 Jaime Guest  
00:24:47 Gilbert Guest

You and Mario did.

Yeah. Mario needed—*[sighs]* it sounds bad, of course. Mario needed help. He needed—he never worked the way we did in trying to finish stories and stuff. He would always have part of a story partially done, and he didn't really have a figure—he couldn't really figure out how to do the rest. So, I was just simply there to like, "Okay, this—I'll letter this for you or I'll just—you know, could you just draw this hand?" Like, he was having trouble with a hand while he was drawing something else. It wasn't like, "Draw this and I'll watch you." No, no, he was working. But I would try to fix something he had, and it was just something simple. But sometimes when you don't—you can't see your own art sometimes, 'cause you're so tired. You're just sort of bleary-eyed from it. And so, he just couldn't get this hand right. It was a very simple drawing, and I could—but I'd been there.

So, when he went off to do his stuff, I would just simply lightly pencil that hand, and he'd look at it and he goes, "How'd you do that?"

I'd go, "I know how that is. I know how it is. You just don't see it when you're just—so much going on." Especially Mario's stories and my stories, the way we told them, we really overloaded those



things with stuff going on. *[Chuckles.]* And so, they're very crowded, as you can see. So, anyway, things like that. You know. Like, he had his own ideas. He had his own thing, but I would just be there to be like, "Okay, let's just get this thing together or whatever." So. But Jaime was away from that.

00:26:10 Jamie Guest I was away from that because Gilbert's a big boy and he can take care of himself, and he proved that early on in the comic. And the other part is I didn't want anybody stepping on my toes.

00:26:25 Gilbert Guest *[They laugh.]*  
Well, there you go.

00:26:26 Jaime Guest So, I just kept to the back kinda. And I'm wondering if it has to do with you guys were the older brothers. And since I was little, you guys controlled everything, and I would just stand in the back and go, "Okay, well, I'll do mine and I hope it's—I hope it's good enough." You know. I mean, maybe I still got that in my head.

00:26:47 Gilbert Guest I guess we don't outgrow it, but see, it's a thing that we use though, which is good. We use that to get things done and to look at it like, "Well, I better do this." Like I said, it's always been a sense of duty for whatever reason. You know.

00:27:02 Brian Host Why did Mario end up walking away from the book?

00:27:06 Gilbert Guest Well, part of the reason is like what I was talking about. It was difficult for him to finish work, to get work, 'cause he put so much into it. And he wasn't a very good self-editor. You know? I wasn't a very good one for a long time. I'm a little better now. But he just—he just would put so much stuff into something, he couldn't finish. And he just got behind. 'Cause like I said, he didn't practice the way we did, growing up making comics. He did his own. He's a great idea man. That's one thing about Mario that's missing from *Love and Rockets* is that he was a great idea man. He could come up—he always gave his characters something to do, whether it was exciting or interesting or whacky or serious, he always gave them something to do.

00:27:51 Jaime Guest For Jaime and I, we always had to figure out *[chuckles]* giving them something to do.  
Yeah, and I would rely on the characters to write the stuff most of the time.

00:27:55 Gilbert Guest Yeah. So, anyway, it just was a burden. And he had—and then when we were younger, I was still living at home. I shouldn't have been, but I was still living at home with Mom. Jaime was there for a while. And then, you know, he moved out. And Mario was married with kids! You know? He had a regular job. And it's really hard to do comics when you have a regular job and you're trying to put out regular comics on time. It's very difficult.

00:28:18 Jaime Guest Yeah, when you have a day job. *[Chuckles.]*

00:28:22 Jesse Host *[Gilbert agrees.]*  
We'll wrap up with the Hernandez brothers in just a minute. Like we said earlier, they have been writing stories for *Love and Rockets* for over 40 years, living with these characters longer than some of the longest running TV shows in history. Have they thought about how those stories might end? We'll get the answer after the break. It's *Bullseye*, from [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and NPR.

00:28:45 Promo Clip **Music:** Cheerful, inspiring music.

**Tom Lum:** Which animal has the most bones?

**Caroline Roper:** Why isn't Pluto a planet?

**Ella Hubber:** Why are bees electrically charged?

**Tom:** Let's find out together on our show, *Let's Learn Everything!*, where we learn anything and everything interesting.

**Caroline:** My name's Caroline, and I studied biodiversity and conversation.

**Tom:** My name's Tom, and I studied computer science and cognitive [*stumbling over his words*] bleh-bleh-bleh-blah.

**Ella:** Mm! Did you?

[*They laugh.*]

**Ella:** And my name's Ella, and I studied stem cells and regenerative medicine.

**Tom:** On our show, we do as much research as you would for a class, but we don't get in trouble for making each other laugh.

**Ella:** Subscribe to let's learn everything every other Thursday on Maximum Fun.

[*Music ends.*]

00:29:20 Music Transition  
00:29:24 Jesse Host

Thumpy synth with light vocalizations. This is *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. Our guests are the creators of the *Love and Rockets* comics: Jaime and Gilbert Hernandez. They're being interviewed by our correspondent, Brian Heater. There's been much written about the way both of you portray female characters. In fact, in the book, there's a great letter by Trina Robbins, the great cartoonist, on the subject. It seems like early in those days, when people would ask you about it, you would have some difficulty explaining why you were rare and able to write women well. Do you have a better perspective on that now, a few decades later?

00:30:03 Jaime Guest

Well, now my answer is I just love women and I want to put them on the page. You know.

[*Gilbert chuckles.*]

00:30:22 Gilbert Guest

I mean, I'm serious. Visually and—I don't know, personality. You know. I just like writing women and drawing women. And that's the bottom line. [*Chuckles.*]  
Yeah, it's just—I think it's just the wiring, that we were wired for that. 'Cause when we grew up reading comics or looking at comics, a lot of them—anyway, you saw them all. You know, superheroes. You know, westerns, war comics. Whatever it was. *MAD Magazine*. But we also read comics that were supposedly for girls. *Betty & Veronica*, *Lois Lane* comics, *Little Dot* comics. We liked those just as much. So, it was fun to read a *Betty & Veronica* comic or a *Lois Lane* comic for me, because it was just so much fun to read, even

though a lot of it—you know, it's kind of goofy, written by old men. You know?

I just liked it. It was just normal, and I liked the art in them especially. And I always—I gravitated to, say, *Betty & Veronica* or even *Lois Lane* 'cause they had to be conscious of how they dressed. You know, that they dressed well or fashionably, at least for the day. Fashionably for the day. And in the *Betty & Veronica*'s case, they liked rock and roll that was real. If you look at rock and roll in a Marvel or DC comic, it's like—*[chuckles]* you know, you run into the street screaming. It's just like so stupid! I like it now, 'cause it's so stupid, but it was incredibly stupid in Marvel and DC comics. The Thing and the Torch wearing Beatle wigs and—you know? But that's as far as they knew what the kids were into. You know?  
*[Laughs.]*

So. But anyway, like the comics that leaned a little bit more towards girls, they were more interested in different things. And we were interested in those things too.

00:31:53 Brian Host

You've also both received a lot of praise for your representation of Latin American culture. Palomar specifically, you know. Something that certainly—up 'til that point, we hadn't seen in comics. And one might argue that we still don't have enough of it. Was that something you were very cognizant of at the time?

00:32:13 Jaime Guest

Sure. It was—mostly, it was just draw what you know. You know? And then you find out not very many people behind me know about this subject and about this culture and this—just this southern California that we knew that most people didn't. So, it was very important to tell our family story and our—just share what it was like to be us. You know? Because we weren't seeing it anywhere. So, we took advantage of what we knew and put it in the comics. Luckily, people were interested. I mean, I'm sure there were a lot of people that weren't.

*[They chuckle.]*

You know, I still wonder how many people don't read our comics 'cause we're Mexican.

00:33:04 Gilbert Guest

Yeah! Oh, sure. I'm sure that happened. You know. But you know, like we were talking about earlier, we don't care. *[Laughs.]* We don't care about anybody who doesn't like our comics.

*[They laugh and Jaime agrees.]*

I'm not saying that they're the bad people, but if they don't like it, bye-bye. You know. We're gonna do our—I'll say it. They're bad people.

00:33:19 Brian Guest

*[They laugh.]*

You've both settled into what I would call these really epic stories. You know, certainly from a time perspective—the amount of time that either of you have been working on them. For Gilbert, it's Palomar. For Jaime, it's Maggie and Hopi, the Locas stories. I have this picture of you both having these kind of—again, these things

planned out to a certain extent. How far down the road are either of you really thinking?

00:33:51 Jaime Guest I just know some people are gonna live longer than others. But I don't know how and when and stuff like that. I don't know. It's not a really big plan. I mean, maybe because we've been doing this 40 years [*chuckles*] that I should start thinking about the long-range plans. You know.

00:34:13 Gilbert Guest I actually am! I actually—in the next—roughly next 10 years, should it work out my way, I have an ending for things. Not all of it. I think the Palomar stories are over within 10 years from now. I mean, for real over. You know. It might get mentioned. It might be—you know, a reference to it. But Bobby won't go back there. But then, you see, this is what's great about it. You never know. Tomorrow, I might have an idea for a story that [*laughing*] will last 10 years. You know? That's what's good. You never know. You contradict yourself.

00:34:48 Jaime Guest And you never announce it. [*Laughs.*]

00:34:49 Gilbert Guest Yeah, you try not to announce it, but you never know! You just—you contradict yourself constantly, but it's almost always to the positive end. You know? We'll figure something out. Like, "Oh, well, I didn't need to be so—you know—controlled over where this story was going. I can open up." You know?

00:35:05 Brian Host You've both lived with these characters for so long. Gilbert, you in particular, you said that you effectively see that light at the end of the tunnel. Is it—is it scary? Is it exciting knowing that there's a point when that story might come to an end?

00:35:21 Gilbert Guest For me, it's a little bit sad. Because it has to happen. You know, at my age, it has to happen. We're not gonna do this forever, and I wanna still be good at the end. You know? Whenever that is. Whenever that is! Who knows? But yeah, there's things I just have to stop repeating and going back to—characters, situations. You know, like Palomar. I mean, unless I have something to say about Palomar or something happening in Palomar, I'm just gonna leave it alone. There's still gonna be bits here and there of it, but I don't have the Palomar story anymore. Like, both of us—I mean, we don't have—I don't have the—Luba's story's over. Hopi's story's over. And it seems a little sad, because I really liked the vitality of those characters. You know, when they were—you know, when they were up there.

00:36:16 Jaime Guest Now, it's like, well, Luba's older and she's just a little tired and she doesn't have a story anymore. It's her extended family. So. Yeah. So, yeah. And so, for Maggie—'cause I still love drawing Maggie. I still like writing her and stuff. I have to now come up with stories about a person who doesn't do anything.

*[They laugh.]*

00:36:40 Brian Host That's how the stories are focused now that Maggie's a person who doesn't do anything, how do make that interesting? You know. [*Chuckles.*]

00:36:46 Gilbert Guest On that note, Gilbert and Jaime Hernandez, thank you so much for joining us on *Bullseye*. [*Music fades in.*]

00:36:46 Gilbert Guest It was great. That was—this was fun!

00:36:47	Jaime	Guest	Thanks for having us.
00:36:48	Gilbert	Guest	I blabbed like a maniac. I hope that that was coherent.
			<i>[Jaime chuckles.]</i>
00:36:51	Music	Transition	Chiming synth with a steady beat.
00:36:55	Jesse	Host	Jaime and Gilbert Hernandez. The 40 <sup>th</sup> anniversary box set of <i>Love and Rockets</i> is called <i>Love and Rockets: The First 50</i> . You can buy it on the website of its publisher, Fantagraphics. Our thanks to Brian Heater for interviewing the Hernandez brothers. Brian's other podcast is called <i>Recommended If You Like</i> or <i>RIYL</i> . It's a great interview podcast. Lots of compelling interviews with musicians and artists. If you're into comics or punk rock, it's an especially rich vein to mine, a great show. Glad to have Brian with us. Go find him wherever you get podcasts.
			<i>[Music fades out.]</i>
00:37:40	Music	Transition	Relaxed piano with a steady beat.
00:37:44	Jesse	Host	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 have been compulsively collecting Victorian doorknobs. And I finally have enough to replace all the doorknobs in my house. Took a lot of flea marketing, folks. But I did it.
			The show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our senior producer is Kevin Ferguson. Our producers are Jesus Ambrosio and Richard Robey. Our production fellows at Maximum Fun are Tabatha Myers and Bryanna Paz. We get help booking from Mara Davis. Our interstitial music is composed and provided to us by DJW, also known as Dan Wally. Our theme song is by The Go! Team. It's called "Huddle Formation". Thanks to them and Memphis Industries, who are their label.
			<i>Bullseye</i> is on social media. On YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook. Find us in any of those places. Follow us. We will share with you our interviews. And I think that's about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.
00:38:46	Promo	Promo	<b>Speaker:</b> <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of <a href="http://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> and is distributed by NPR.
			<i>[Music fades out.]</i>