

00:00:00	Jesse Thorn	Host	I'm Jesse Thorn. When you're a metal god, like Rob Halford is, and you're gonna make a holiday album, like Rob Halford has now several times, it's important that the songs are—you know, arranged to sound like metal songs. The front man of Judas Priest has a reputation to keep. But just as important? Song selection!
00:00:24	Rob Halford	Guest	We'll, we're not gonna do "Rudolf the Red Nosed Reindeer" or "Frosty the Snowman". That would have been ridiculous. What we wanted to make—we wanted to make a pretty serious record, quite frankly.
00:00:32	Jesse	Host	From MaximumFun.org and NPR, it's <i>Bullseye</i> .
00:00:35	Music	Transition	"Huddle Formation" from the album <i>Thunder, Lightning, Strike</i> by The Go! Team. A fast, upbeat, peppy song. Music plays as Jesse speaks, then fades out.
00:00:43	Jesse	Host	On this week's <i>Bullseye</i> Holiday Special, more with the legend Rob Halford—the most delightful man in metal. Plus, Micky Dolenz from The Monkees, and much more.
			It's <i>Bullseye</i> . I'm Jesse Thorn. We're celebrating the holidays this week. And who better to kick things off, to get us into that holiday spirit, than Rob Halford.
00:01:09	Music	Music	"Breaking the Law" from the album <i>British Steel</i> by Judas Priest.
			<i>Breaking the law, breaking the law Breaking the law, breaking the law Breaking the law, breaking the law Breaking the law, breaking the law</i>
			<i>So much for the golden future, I can't even start I've had every promise broken, there's anger in my heart</i>
			<i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i>
00:01:32	Jesse	Host	If you have a computer in front of you, here's something fun you can do. Go to Wikipedia. Search for the phrase "metal god". You know, like the god of heavy metal. And as soon as you hit enter, you will not be transported to the page for Ozzie Osborne or Lemmy or Eddie Van Halen. Because there is only one true metal god. At least, according to Wikipedia. That's Rob Halford, the lead singer of Judas Priest.
			Honestly, that's about all the introduction we need. We're gonna listen back to my 2009 conversation with Rob, because back then Rob had just released his first ever heavy metal holiday record. He called it <i>Halford III: Winter Songs</i> . Since then, he's released another holiday album! 2019's <i>Celestial</i> .
			Before we go into the interview, let's kick things off with a certified Rob Halford holiday classic: his take on "We Three Kings".
00:02:31	Music	Music	"We Three Kings" from the album <i>Halford III: Winter Songs</i> by Rob Halford.
			<i>We three kings of Orient are Bearing gifts, we traverse afar Field and fountain, moor and mountain Following yonder star</i>

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

00:02:54 Jesse Host You were born in 1951, which means that when you were finishing high school and, you know, you were in your late teens it was as heavy rock music was emerging from early rock and psychedelic rock. What was the music that you heard that made you think, “I like rock and I want it to be loud and hard”?

00:03:22 Rob Halford Guest Well, actually, Jesse, it was even before that, because I can remember my aunt Pat giving me an old record player that she wanted to get rid of and it was still in pretty good working order. So, I think I was probably—what? 10 or 11? When she gave me this record player. And I lifted the lid and there was a bunch of 45s in singles, in the deck. And it was Little Richard, Bill Haley & the Comets, and Elvis Presley. And I played them all back-to-back. And even at that age, at that moment, it was, “My god, this is it. This is it. This is me. This is electric. This is contacting me in such a—such a strong, personal way. You know, something’s going on here! Why’s it making me feel this way?”

I just felt alive! And felt genuinely excited and so, even from that point before—as I grew, you know, slightly beyond my teenage years, it was already in my system. So, yeah! You know, obviously Hendrix, the Yardbirds, Cream, King Crimson, early Led Zeppelin, early Deep Purple, the Who. All of these people were the ones that I was listening to.

00:04:39 Jesse Host The first couple of albums that Judas Priest made didn’t have any huge hits on them and it must have been a—it must have been a bit of a struggle to continue to be working as a musician. Did you feel confident that this was going to become something?

00:05:01 Rob Guest Yes. I think self-belief is absolutely vital, no matter what you do in life. Self-belief. Doesn’t matter what you’re gonna do, you’ve gotta have that—you’ve got to have that inner drive, you know? And particularly in the entertainment business. And I say that rather than the heavy metal business or the rock and roll business, because it is—that’s what we do. You know? There are so many pitfalls and there are so many days where, “Is it worth it? I’m gonna give up. This is crazy. I’m not getting anywhere,” that really puts you through, again, that kind of apprenticeship period of, “Look, if this means so much to you, you will do anything that you need to do. You will go through whatever you need to go through.”

And particularly in my role as Judas Priest. We did all of that. We did the sleeping in the back of the van. We did the barely having enough food for one meal a day type of deal. You know. KK scrubbing his teeth in the snow, in Scandinavia, is not a story made up. It’s a real thing! You know. And the first record that we made—*Rocka Rolla*, it was called—our first label, we went to them and asked them for—I think it was, like, \$20 a week each to survive, because if we didn’t have that, we’d have to have second sources of income. And they turned us down flat! So, right through the early part of the band’s career—and Priest, especially—we were doing multiple jobs, you know, just to pay the bills and put some food in your stomach.

But most of it went into equipment, obviously. New strings, new drum skins, a new mic, whatever it was. You have to—you have to

really figure that out. You really have to figure this out right at the early stage. The thing is, what happens there is your early music is probably sometimes the—your best music, because you’ve got nothing to lose. You’ve got nothing to lose. You’re not famous. You know, you haven’t got a gold record. Haven’t got a platinum record. You’re not playing in front of thousands of people. So, your creativity is coming from a very pure source. So, now, you know, in my 38th, 39th year of being a professional musician, I look back at those early days with a lot of fond memories.

00:07:19 Jesse Host

You came out in the early ‘90s. When and to what extent were you out as gay to your friends and your family and the—and the people that you were working with, in Judas Priest?

00:07:33 Rob Guest

Well, with family it was never discussed. It still isn’t discussed, now.

[They chuckle.]

And I’ve—me and my partner have been together 15 years. You know, it’s like *[laughing]* the elephant in the living room type of deal. I love my family dearly and they respect me as much as I respect them. And that, at the end of the day, is the issue, isn’t it? It’s respect. Respect each other for who we are. We’re all different. Different sexual orientation, different religion, different colors of the skin, different jobs, different social strata. It doesn’t really matter, if the respect is there, you know, we can get through a lot of things in life. But with me, you know, being a metalhead, being in a—in a—in a—in an essentially—and to some extent still essentially homophobic realm, in music, it was difficult. But again, you learn to deal with it. What I was doing, for the longest time, was putting a lot of things before myself.

And when I went through my drug and rehab thing, in 1986—I’ve been clean and sober since 1986—I was taught, “You’ve gotta put your own house in order first.” You’ve got to really—it’s not being selfish. You’ve gotta get yourself kind of figured out and then everything else will not necessarily fall into place around you, but at least you can take care of other things. But look after your own needs first. And I thought, “That’s—is that the right way to live?” But it is. It’s the only way you can remain sane and sensible. And in the—and in the end, connect and be helpful and useful to other people when you need to.

So, I struggled with all that, through many, many years until the moment came when very—you know, un-preplanned, I mentioned that, “Speaking as a gay man, yadda, yadda, yadda.” I was on MTV. And the, you know, the producer drops his clipboard and he’s like, “Did he just say that?!” You know. And then it was like a firestorm around the world. What we all found very, very quickly was that, in the metal community, it’s nothing more than the greatest place to be in terms of respect and tolerance and compassion and understanding. And I’m probably—it’s probably easy for me to say that, because I’d already reached a level of success. So—I also found out that a lot of people were going, “Yeah, we knew that anyway.” But I didn’t know that. I mean, it’s one of those, you know, you can’t see the wood for the trees type of deal.

00:09:57 Rob Guest I need to backtrack slightly and address that statement about homophobic metalheads. That's not entirely true. That's not painting the whole picture. I think there's a small portion, as in all walks of life, where you have that level of intolerance and bigotry and sometimes it's curable. Sometimes it's not. For me, it was acceptance, and it was just a wonderful feeling. Everybody in the band, in Priest, knew. You know. I knew that my family and all my close friends knew. I get—because it was, you know, "Well, he—has he got a girlfriend? He did have a girlfriend. Well, da-da-dada." You know, and the second guessing and innuendo.

What you do when you set yourself free is just that. You set yourself free when you step out of the closet. It's not for everybody. Not everybody can do it. Some people never do. Some people prefer to live the way they live and, you know, again respect is the word. But if you can, if you—if you—if you're able, I always urge people to consider that moment, because it's the greatest feeling in the world: all the whispering behind your back, you take the ammunition away from people. You become a stronger person and that's what it's all about. And I'm assuming that a lot of young people listening to me talk right now—and I know that in my life, as a teenager, I was going through absolute hell trying to come to issues with my sexuality. And it's still a—it's still a problem, now, even in today's enlightened world. And the self-help groups and all the places you can talk this type of issue through, it's a horrible thing to try and come to terms with. But you've gotta come to terms with it.

There's nothing wrong with you. You're not a freak. You're not weird. You're perfectly normal. You're okay. That's just the way it's turned out to be. It's not a choice of lifestyle, as opposed to what the extreme right will say. "We can change you; we can cure you." Forget it. That's rubbish. You know. You are who you are. Be proud of who you are and step forward.

00:11:57 Jesse Host You know, I was thinking—as you were—as you were saying that, about, you know, the spirit of so much of metal and especially so much of Judas Priest is about... uh, is about this kind of outrageous, 11 out of 10, self-expression and, you know, vanquishing foes.

[Rob agrees several times.]

And freedom. It must have been very difficult to present yourself in that way, while—as a god of that—while you were struggling with those issues yourself.

00:12:34 Rob Guest Maybe that's why I put some of that—you know, this is like Jesse Dr. Phil here.

[Jesse laughs.]

Because maybe that's where it was. Because, you know, I'm the primary lyric writer for Priest, obviously, and all my solo activities. All of my lyrics are full of optimism. All of my lyrics are full of that confrontational situation. I believe the good will always win—will always win over evil. I believe that. I think that's the way of the world. And I use that. I use a lot of, you know, metaphors and kind of smokescreens and little bit of ambiguity in my lyrics, but you

know, when I'm talking about with *Painkiller*, you can put that up against anything: dictatorship, you know, bigotry, war. You know. Anything where you can overcome difficulty. So, maybe that's what I was doing, in all those years. I mean, I kind of sidetracked in the *Turbo* record. You know. And went a little bit more lightweight, so to speak. But I still think that was messages about evil, in terms of fantasy and escapism and rock and roll.

But the bulk of my lyrics have always had kind of a serious content to them. And fortunately, being in a metal band, I was able to utilize those messages in the lyrics in the right way.

00:13:57 Jesse Host

It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest is Rob Halford. He's best known as the front man of the legendary metal band, Judas Priest. Here's one of their signature hits: "Hell Bent for Leather".

00:14:07 Music Music

"Hell Bent for Leather" from the album *Killing Machine* by Judas Priest.

Hell bent, hell bent for leather

*Black as night, faster than a shadow
Crimson flare from a raging sun
An exhibition, sheer precision
Yet no one knows from where he comes
Fools! Self-destruct cannot take that crown
Dreams! Crash one by one to the ground*

Hell bent, hell bent for leather

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

00:14:37 Jesse Host

Starting in the late '70s, with one of your signature hits, "Hell Bent for Leather", you started wearing essentially—I don't know, like, *[chuckling]* basically—something between biker clothes and S&M clothes. And doing things like, you know, riding in on a motorcycle and all these—all these crazy things. When did you first start thinking, like, "You know what would be great for this band? Like, if we just went to the bondage store and just bought some crazy stuff."

00:15:12 Rob Guest

[Laughs.] Well, that's it. In those days, that was the only way you could get that kind of gear, yeah. Mr. S, in London. I think he's still there, actually. Um, but if you look on the YouTube and put in Judas Priest Japan 1970-something, you'll see a very different looking band. We didn't really establish that particular—the correct look.

[Jesse laughs.]

Until probably, um, *Sad Wings*? No, *Sin After Sin*? *Stained Glass*? There's—the song you mentioned, Jesse, "Hell Bent for Leather", which is a great song and actually it was Glen that wrote the lyrics to those—that particular tune. "A glint of steel and a flash of light," you know. Again, it's a very assertive, macho type of song. And I remember us talking about, "Hey, wouldn't it be cool—this is a biker song. Wouldn't it be great if we could bring a bike onstage?"

And I remember wherever we were at, we asked someone, "Is there anybody here who rides a bike?" And somebody did and we said,

“Hey. We’ll give you five quid, you know, ten bucks if we can—you know, use the bike onstage.” And that’s how it all started. And now, of course, that’s become kind of part of tradition and the heritage of the band. And so, suddenly, heavy metal music—the sound, the power, the dynamic, the aggression. All of the great aesthetics of metal. I had a look. So, now when you see somebody walking down the street, they’re not going to be decked out like we are onstage. But if you see somebody and you go, “There’s a metalhead.” You know, the attributes with the studded belts and the chains or whatever—the wristbands—that’s your—that was your colors, so to speak.

00:16:58 Jesse Host

Were you aware, in the early ‘80s, of the kind of—the kind of odd irony of the fact that this was the—that this was the metal costume?

[Rob agrees with a laugh.]

00:17:08 Rob Guest

But it was also like a gay subculture costume?

Yeah! You see, that’s just me! I mean—I mean, again, I kind of think that’s cool.

[Jesse giggles.]

There’s something about me—I don’t know whether it’s the inner child or the inner stupidity, but you know—or the naivety, but that never even crossed my mind. And I was walking out onstage with this—you know, a Village People type of vibe going and I thought it was extremely funny. Extremely funny. It’s bittersweet when you think of the torment I was going through, mentally. But yeah. And I’m kind of—I’m kind of glad, really. I mean, in essence, I mean I’m not a—I’m not a—I’m not into that kind of scene, of my particular world. Again, respect. It just doesn’t appeal to me. But it is ironic that there’s a correlation there and people were going, “Come on, Robbie. We knew all the time. You didn’t have to tell us.”

[They laugh.]

00:18:03 Jesse Host

You were really hiding in plain sight!

00:18:05 Rob Guest

Yeah, hiding in plain sight. Exactly.

00:18:07 Jesse Host

What was the—looking back, the most kind of ridiculous, amazing, delightful, you know, *Spinal Tap* moment that you had in your presentation?

00:18:18 Rob Guest

Well, again, you know. Again, it’s something that’s kind of tinged with sadness, because—here’s the deal, it’s the ultimate *Spinal Tap* moment. We were on the *Painkiller* tour. We were coming to the end of the tour. Remember, this is 1991. We’d just come off the back of that very, very difficult Reno trial. Prior to that, the band had been working pretty much nonstop for 30 years. Uh, without a break.

00:18:42 Jesse Host

I should interject here that you’re referring to—you had been, uh, sued in civil court by the parents of two children who had committed suicide and the suggestion was that it was your subliminal messages in your music that had driven them to suicide.

00:19:01 Rob Guest

Exactly. And of course, that was complete and utter rubbish, and it was an extremely difficult time to go through. We were in a court in Reno for a month. And we faced these accusers and basically told them that firstly, you should take—you should take responsibility for your kids. And I think that’s what parents should do. And I mean, I

know it's difficult. But you should still be—take responsibility for your kids until they're old enough, you know, to leave the nest. The kids were out of control. Drugs and booze. The only thing that they loved was their metal. They loved Judas Priest. That's the irony of that particular situation. They were hardcore Priest fans.

00:19:45 Jesse Host
00:19:49 Rob Guest

But they got messed up with booze and drugs, you know. So, you're coming off of this really difficult period. Coming off of that, you know. But we held back the release of *Painkiller*, but now it was time to release it. We released it. We had an incredibly successful tour all around the world and I think the last show was at—in Toronto. And we were playing in one of these baseball fields that, you know, doubles up as a—as an outside venue. Loads of people. 30,000 people, whatever. The stage was in the middle of the baseball field. The dressing rooms were obviously, you know, where the dugouts are. That type of deal. So, we—to get from that location to the stage, we had to get a golf cart. The lights go down. The fans start going crazy. We jump in the golf cart and we're all going off in different directions.

[They chuckle.]

For a start off. That's *Spinal Tap*. Some of us are going North, some of us going South. We eventually somehow get to the stage, while the intro tape is running. I dash up, get onto my Harley Davidson, which is under the drum riser, at a cue in the intro tape these pneumatic steps come up underneath the drum riser and I'm able to roar out on the Harley. Everything was going to plan until suddenly somebody yelled, "We can't find KK, we can't find him. We gotta stop and start again."

Well, that's what we were attempting to do, but nobody told me this. So, I roared out on the bike. The guy that operates the stairs was bringing them back down, so I just belted into the bottom seat—bottom set of stairs, rather. I don't know how many miles an hour. Knocked myself—doubled back, you know, gymnastics, Beijing. [Chuckling.] Landed on my back underneath all this smoke and dry ice. The bike's fallen to one side, almost on top of me. And I'm practically—I'm literally knocked out. Everything's a blur. Everything's whoosh—zooming in and out for about a minute or so. Then I feel Glen kicking me trying to find where Rob is. And that was and still will be the only time that "Hell Bent for Leather" was an instrumental, 'cause it had no vocals on.

00:21:56 Jesse Host
00:22:00 Rob Guest
00:22:06 Jesse Host
00:22:11 Music Music

So, there it is! That's—that—I mean, how more *Spinal Tap* can you get than that? You know.

We should say, too, that you were knocked unconscious, but you finished the show!

Yeah! I did. I—well, you know. The show must go on, as Freddie Mercury used to say.

It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest is Rob Halford, lead singer of Judas Priest.

"Joy to the World" from the album *Celestial* by Rob Halford.

Joy to the world
The Lord has come

*Let Earth receive her King
Let every heart prepare Him room
And heaven...*

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

00:22:33 Jesse Host

Rob, we've talked a lot about things that are really super metal—like riding motorcycles and wearing outrageous outfits and rocking out and stuff like that.

[Rob agrees with a chuckle.]

On—probably towards the bottom of that list is “Christmas”.

[They laugh.]

00:22:51 Rob Guest
00:22:55 Jesse Host

So—

Well, actually, it's on the top of my list right now. Thank you.

[Laughs.] But I think the question needs to be asked. Um. W-w-what led you to think, “I should make a metal Christmas album”? Because I'm the metal god and I can do what I damn well want.

00:22:06 Rob Guest

[They laugh.]

I sometimes feel that way. You know. Um. I was talking to Jason Bonham the other day. We did a charity show in Los Angeles for the Midnight Mission, I think it's called. It was me, Jason, Slash, Steve from Toto. Keith Emerson from Emerson, Lake & Palmer. Toni White on bass, Ed Roth on drums. On the keyboards. It was like a supergroup. And Jason and I were talking afterwards, and we sounded like a bunch of grumpy old men, quite frankly.

[They laugh.]

And that—I thought—I said, “Jason! Just listen to us talk, bro.” You know, this is—this is Jason Bonham, the son of the late, great, Bonzo Bonham—the drummer from Led Zeppelin. One of the greatest bands of all time. And so, we just got a little bit sidetracked and then we said, you know, how cool it is that we can do what we do and that we can really pick and choose where we wanna go in our—in our career. And so, that's where I feel I have the great luxury, these days, to be able to do that. I'm able to look at where I've been and look at the opportunities that still have the sense of adventure attached to them. And so, it—that's what it is with me.

Right now, with *Halford III*, the first solo from the Halford band in about seven years. It's a Christmas record, yeah. It's ten tracks. Six of them quite famous, traditional holiday songs and four original pieces of music. And I love the season. I love the holiday season. It's a—it means a lot to me. I'll be there this Christmastime with my family, back in the UK. Mom and Dad and brother and sister and friends and relatives. It'll be great.

00:24:58 Jesse Host

There's something very charming about the mix of sort of older Christmas songs—I mean, not “Let it Snow”, but like—you know, “What Child is This”—and the sort of grand scale of your music.

[Rob agrees.]

00:25:27	Rob	Guest	Was that part of—was that part of what drew you to this—to the material? To the traditional songs that you chose, particularly. Well, thank you for acknowledging that. And sometimes, again, wood for the trees. But yeah, there's a—there's a vast—there's a vast dynamic canyon between “O Holy Night”, which is this gigantic opus with crushing guitars and keyboards and drums and big, massive vocals to that really delicate “What Child is This”. And it was like pick and choose. “We'll, we're not gonna do ‘Rudolf the Red Nosed Reindeer’ or ‘Frosty the Snowman’.” That would have been ridiculous. What we wanted to make—we wanted to make a pretty serious record, quite frankly. I mean, you know, I carry a lot of things with me. It's not baggage, it's who I am. It's what I do. It's what I represent. And I wasn't gonna let the team down by going, you know, completely off the—off the planet, whatever.
00:26:59	Jesse	Host	And so, um... those particular ones that I covered—“O Holy Night”, “Come All You Faithful”, “We Three Kings”—they're beautiful songs. They're great songs. A good song will always take interpretation and adaptation. So, you're able to put your own kind of impression and your own signature whatever you wanna call it onto the piece. And it was—it took a—took a bit of a time to figure out where we were—where we were gonna go in covering those beautiful, beautiful tracks. And then the other—the other tracks, the originals, were kind of spontaneous pieces that came together just because it was such an inspiring recording session. But this is me. You know. It's the metal god for the holiday season. And there it is. Rob Halford, everyone. His two holiday albums are <i>Winter Songs</i> and <i>Celestial</i> , both classics in the heavy metal holiday genre. Rob Halford also wrote a book earlier this year. It's called <i>Biblical: Rob Halford's Heavy Metal Scriptures</i> . It's full of words of wisdom from the metal god himself. Look, I—you just heard Rob Halford. I don't have to endorse Rob Halford. But one of popular music's most delightful human beings.
00:27:30	Sound Effect	Transition	Thumpy rock music with jingle bells overlaid on top.
00:27:26	Jesse	Host	More of this year's <i>Bullseye</i> Holiday Spectacular still to come. It's <i>Bullseye</i> , from MaximumFun.org and NPR.
00:27:44	Promo	Clip	[Jungle noises.]

Music: Relaxed, percussive music.

Ella McLeod: Hi, everyone! I'm Ella McLeod.

Alexis B. Preston: And I'm Alexis B. Preston.

Ella: And we host a show called *Comfort Creatures*, the show for every animal lover, be it a creature of scales, six legs, fur, feathers, or fiction. *Comfort Creatures* is a show for people who prefer their friends to have paws instead of hands.

Alexis: Unless they are racoon hands. That is okay.

Ella: That is absolutely okay, yeah.

Alexis: Yes. Every Thursday, we'll be talking to guests about their pets, learning about pets in history, art, and even fiction. Plus, we'll discover differences between pet ownership across the pond. It's gonna be a hoot on Maximum Fun.

00:28:22	Sound Effect	Transition	<i>[Music fades out.]</i> Thumpy rock music with jingle bells.
00:28:27	Jesse	Host	Welcome back to <i>Bullseye</i> . I'm Jesse Thorn. Time now for a special holiday edition of the segment we like to call The Song That Changed My Life. It's a chance for musicians, artists, and other creators to tell us about the music that made them who they are. This time, it's Sy Smith.
00:28:43	Music	Music	"Perspective" from the album <i>Sometime a Rose Will Grow in Concrete</i> by Sy Smith. <i>Yeah Your love takes me higher I don't wanna zoom out I wanna keep it in perspective Your love feels like fire I don't wanna burn out I'll keep it calm, cool, collected</i> <i>It seems like every time we touch</i> <i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i>
00:29:07	Jesse	Host	Sy Smith is a brilliant singer, songwriter, and producer who lives here in Los Angeles. She's been recording soul records for over a decade now, and she's collaborated with folks like Kamasi Washington and Thundercat. She's also an immensely in demand backup singer. Name a great, she's sung with them. Sheila E, Chaka Khan, Usher, Whitney Houston.
00:29:37	Music	Music	Her own records are fantastic. And one of them is called <i>Christmas in Syberspace</i> . "Christmas Time is Here" from the album <i>Christmas in Syberspace</i> by Sy Smith. <i>Christmas time is here Happiness and cheer Fun for all The children call their favorite time of year Snowflakes in the air Carols everywhere Olden times and ancient rhymes Of love and dreams to share</i> <i>Sleighbells everywhere...</i> <i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i>
00:29:54	Jesse	Host	That's "Syberspace" with an "S", by the way—as in Sy Smith. When we asked her about her Christmas album and if any of the songs on it had a story we could talk about with her on the show, she talked

about “My Favorite Things”. And she certainly did not let us down! We won’t waste any more time before we get into it. Here’s Sy Smith.

00:30:13 Sy Smith Guest

The first time I heard “My Favorite Things” was in the movie *The Sound of Music*, of course.

00:30:18 Music Clip

“My Favorite Things” from *The Sound of Music*.

Maria: Raindrops on roses and whiskers on kittens.

[Music cues in.]

*Bright copper kettles and warm woolen mittens
Brown paper packages tied up with strings
These are a few of my favorite things*

00:30:32 Sy Guest

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]

I think the first time I saw *The Sound of Music*, I was about six or seven years old. I was in my mother’s bedroom, watching it on TV in our apartment, in Hillcrest Heights, Maryland.

00:30:44 Clip Clip

[Volume increases.]

*Cream colored ponies and crisp apple strudels
Doorbells and sleigh bells and schnitzel with noodles
Wild geese that fly with the moon on their wings
These are a few of my favorite things*

00:30:59 Sy Guest

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]

You know, that melody caught my ear because it was such a distinct melody. As a child, that melody just sounded like a dance, to me.

It just sounded like—*[singing along with the tune]* la dada, dada—it just sounded like a dance.

00:31:18 Clip Clip

[Laughs.] If a dance could sing, that’s what it would sound like.

[Volume increases.]

*These are a few of my favorite things
When the dog bites
when the bee stings
when I’m feeling sad
I simply remember my favorite things,
And then I don’t feel so bad*

00:31:37 Sy Guest

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]

Even on paper, when you look at it, it looks like a dance. You know? And the things that she was singing about were quite abstract, to me. You know? Cream colored ponies and, you know, like—I didn’t know anything that she was talking about. I didn’t know what a schnitzel was. But that melody made me wanna know, you know? *[Laughs.]*

00:31:55 Clip Clip

[Volume increases.]

And then I don’t feel so bad

[Music swells to a conclusion.]

00:32:05 Sy Guest So, the next time that I heard “My Favorite Things” and it really, sort of, changed my life was when—I might have been about eight or nine. I had an aunt—my aunt Bobbi in Teaneck, New Jersey. She had a little radio in the kitchen and the Coltrane version came on the radio.

00:32:23 Music Music “My Favorite Things” by John Coltrane.

00:32:35 Sy Guest *[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]*
I didn’t recognize it as “My Favorite Things”, but she began singing it on top of the Coltrane version. And that’s when it, sort of, resonated with me. That’s when I went, “Wait! That’s that song from the movie.”

I hadn’t seen the movie repeatedly, so I didn’t walk around singing the soundtrack of—you know, *The Sound of Music*. But when she sang it, it just reminded me of that song and all of the sudden—I don’t know, like, it made sense to me. You know what I mean? Like all of a sudden, all of those, sort of, abstract concepts made sense. Like, “Oh, wow, I can just think of something that I really like and anything that’s frightening me will go away.”

[A long beat as the music swells.]

I wasn’t listening to jazz, at all, when I was kid. And that was the thing—when she started singing this—on top of this? It made, all of a sudden, jazz accessible to me. I think, at that point, jazz was just, sort of, you know. Music that—that older people listened to. It wasn’t something that I would go and put on the record player, you know? But when she started singing it, I was like, “Oh! Jazz is something that you can sing along to. Jazz is something that, you know, you can sort of interpret songs that you already know. Jazz is a—can be a template.” That was, sort of, a new understanding, for me. Like, it was also—it was a discovery.

[A beat as the music plays.]

Everything about that song made me curious. The melody made me curious. When I started listening to really what those words were? That made me want to sort of embrace my own writing a little more. And so often I would replace those lyrics with my own, long before I did this. You know. My current project. I would always just, sort of, make up my own lyrics in that same pattern. Because I thought it would be cool to sing something that really resonated with me. Things that really were my favorite things, you know?

[Singing] “Jumping on something, swinging on playgrounds, la-dada, dadada, hanging a-around.”

Like, it was probably really silly *[laughing]* like that. There was always something like that. Things that I really liked to do. *[Laughs.]*

[The Coltrane version fades out to be replaced by Sy Smith’s version.]

00:35:44 Music Music “My Favorite Things” from the album *Christmas in Syberspace* by Sy Smith.

Raindrops on roses and whiskers on kittens

00:35:55	Sy	Guest	<p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]</i> So yeah, when I decided to do a Christmas project, I knew I wanted to record “My Favorite Things”. It had been on my mind for 20 years. <i>[Laughs.]</i></p>
00:36:03	Music	Music	<p><i>[Volume increases.]</i> <i>These are a few of my favorite things (la, la, la-la, ba-ba-baba)</i></p>
00:36:09	Sy	Guest	<p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]</i> To finally sit down and record this song—it was the easiest thing to me, because I felt like I’ve been thinking about this for so long. So, it didn’t take me long to, sort of—even rewriting the lyrics, that was, like—I did it in the car on the way to the <i>[laughs]</i> studio.</p>
00:36:24	Music	Music	<p><i>[Volume increases.]</i> <i>Shoes with flat laces and oversized glasses Watching my people rise up from the ashes Sharing a smile with that guy on the train These are a few of my...</i></p>
00:36:38	Sy	Guest	<p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i> And I didn’t have to think too hard, because I think those items had been, sort of, running around my head on and off for the last 20 years.</p>
00:36:45	Music	Music	<p><i>[Volume increases.]</i> <i>Sun shining down on my sisters and brothers</i></p>
00:36:51	Sy	Guest	<p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i> It—you know, whenever I sing this melody, I just immediately am transported back to my childhood. That—just because the melody, you know, Rodgers and Hammerstein, they just created something so beautiful, with that lilting melody. It just lilts, like a—like, I don’t know, what <u>lilts</u> in nature. <i>[Laughing.]</i> You know?</p>
00:37:39	Music	Music	<p>It just <i>[singing]</i> dadada, ba-da-la—it sounds like a stick figure just sort of becoming curvy, all of the sudden. You know what I mean? It just sounds like air all of the sudden becoming a form. You know? It sounds like magic. And I—and so when you sit at the piano and sing this, it’s just liberating. It’s just a lot of fun. I can’t describe it any other way. <i>[Laughs.]</i> <i>[Volume increases.]</i> <i>These are a few of my favorite things Knowing you can’t keep a good woman down These are a few of my favorite things Catching a breeze on that old porch thing These are a few of my favorite things</i></p>
			<p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then ends.]</i></p>

00:37:58	Jesse	Host	Sy Smith on the song that changed her life, “My Favorite Things”. Sy’s Christmas record is called <i>Christmas in Syberspace</i> . You can buy or stream it, now. If you live in New York or San Francisco, you can see her live. She’s performing with the trumpeter, Chris Botti, at the Blue Note in Manhattan and in San Francisco at the SF Jazz Center this month and next. We’ll have a link to dates on the <i>Bullseye</i> page at MaximumFun.org .
00:38:27	Music	Transition	Thumpy rock music with jingle bells.
00:38:33	Jesse	Host	It’s <i>Bullseye</i> , I’m Jesse Thorn. My next guest on our holiday special is Mickey Dolenz of The Monkees. <i>The Monkees</i> was, of course, a TV show that aired from 1966 to 1968. A Hollywood version of <i>A Hard Day’s Night</i> . Four lovable goofs in a band playing songs, bumming around LA, solving mysteries, and of course, spending the night in haunted houses. The band members—Davy Jones, Mike Nesmith, Peter Tork, and Micky Dolenz—weren’t a band before the show started. They auditioned for their parts. Most of them didn’t really play instruments at the time. But man, they sure had some absolutely legit all-time hits.
00:39:14	Music	Music	<p>“Last Train to Clarksville” from the album <i>The Monkees</i> by The Monkees.</p> <p><i>Take the last train to Clarksville And I’ll meet you at the station You can be here by 4:30 ‘Cause I’ve made your reservation</i></p> <p><i>Don’t be slow Oh, no, no, no Oh, no, no, no</i></p> <p><i>‘Cause I’m leaving in the morning</i></p> <p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i></p>
00:39:34	Jesse	Host	<p>Honestly, those records were so good that it’s no surprise that the band lasted a lot longer than the show.</p> <p>They learned their instruments. They started writing their own songs, the whole deal. When I talked with Micky Dolenz in 2017, The Monkee’s had just recorded their 13th studio album: <i>Christmas Party</i>. It’s a holiday record full of standards and covers, even a few originals. It’s got contributions from Rivers Cuomo, Peter Buck, and others.</p> <p>Here’s the lead track on the album, with Micky on lead vocals. It’s called “Unwrap You at Christmas”.</p>
00:40:09	Music	Music	<p>“Unwrap You at Christmas” from the album <i>Christmas Party</i> by The Monkees.</p> <p><i>I can’t wait to unwrap you at Christmas I dream of nothing more So, dear Santa, when you read my letter Please drop her at my door I’ve been waiting All year now, baby</i></p>

*For the snow and
You to return
So, I'll hang the mistletoe and stand right here
Cross my fingers*

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

00:40:47	Jesse	Host	Micky Dolenz, welcome to <i>Bullseye</i> ! It's great to have you on the show.
00:40:50	Micky	Guest	Great to be here! I am such a big fan of you, your show, um—actually all of NPR. I even did a challenge, a couple of years ago. Big challenge. I'm a huge fan. So, it's so nice to be here, with you.
00:41:08	Jesse	Host	Oh, that's awesome! Thank you for saying that! I have an important question for you. Do you, or—do you like Christmas? Are you a Christmas person?
00:41:15	Micky	Guest	Yeeeah. Yeah, I am. Born and raised in the Valley. LA. Not in a huuuge religious sense, just celebrating the equinox <i>[laughs]</i> , I guess. Celebrating, you know, winter and all that. But yeah. We always had a big, big Christmas.
00:41:36	Jesse	Host	Do you have fond memories of Christmas, when you were a kid?
00:41:40	Micky	Guest	Oh, of course. Yeah. Wow. Yeah.
00:41:42	Jesse	Host	Was it—was it—was it, in the Valley, was it, like, the most classic 1950's suburban Christmas imaginable?
00:41:50	Micky	Guest	Yes. Absolutely. Hit the nail on the head. My mom—we had this huge picture window looking out over the backyard. Small house, but nice, big picture window. She would do a incredible painting, and she was quite a great artist. And she would do some incredible Christmas—actually, she did it at Easter, also. And, you know, other moments. And she would do this beautiful, you know—what do you call it? Not graffiti. <i>[Laughs.]</i> A big painting! You know? On the window. And then with—you know—poster paint. And then wash it off.
			Oh yeah, so we actually had very, very classic <i>American Graffiti</i> Christmases. And Halloweens and Thanksgivings and, you know, all that stuff. Yeah. Very Norman Rockwell.
00:42:45	Jesse	Host	Did you listen to Christmas music at Christmastime, when you were a kid?
00:42:48	Micky	Guest	Yeah. Not necessarily 'cause I wanted to, but that—
			<i>[They laugh.]</i>
			That's what they put on! Because when you're a kid, your parents run the machine, right?
00:42:57	Jesse	Host	Well, I mean, some of that stuff is—some of that stuff is really good! Especially at that time!
			<i>[Micky agrees.]</i>
			I mean, you can't argue with your—with your Nat King Coles and your, you know, the crooners made some really great Christmas music.
00:43:09	Micky	Guest	Oh—no, and funny you should mention him, because he is one of my favorite—my influences, vocally, musically—were people like Nat King Cole. Johnny Mathis, who I just met, actually. You know.

Sinatra—who I did meet. Yeah. My influences were, um—were all that stuff. And yeah. I love all that stuff.

00:43:37 Jesse Host What was the best Christmas present you ever got as a kid?

00:43:39 Micky Guest Ooooh, wow. Great question. I think it probably was a Lionel trainset. A big one. The original, full-size. You know. Massive—I don't know what gauge it was, but... and my dad, who was very handy with building stuff, he built me a big platform, in the garage, where the trainset would—you know—be set up. So, that was probably it: a big Lionel, a full-gauge—I don't know what they're called now, but probably a trainset. That was probably it.

00:44:15 Jesse Host Did you get involved in all the mechanics of it? That was, like, the dawn of computer programming, was people who were really into switching their trainsets.

00:44:24 Micky Guest Well, back then, you know—it was still steam-powered. *[Laughs.]* It was—we had to actually put real coal *[laughs]* in the—in the engine. I've always been very, very into building stuff. I have a, actually—a woodworking furniture company, with my daughter, called Dolenz and Daughter's Fine Furniture. And we make handmade, real high-end kind of custom furniture stuff, in a workshop that I have.

I've always been into it. My dad was—and over the years I got into it even deeper and deeper. And now I have this business and I do it for the love of it, you know? I was gonna be an architect. That was my plan.

00:45:09 Jesse Host Really? Because you started acting as a kid. I mean, both your folks were actors—

[Micky interjects with a confirmation.]

—if I'm remembering correctly. Did—was that, like, the family business? Or was that something they were trying to keep you away from?

00:45:19 Micky Guest No, quite the contrary, it was the family business. My dad was an actor. Quite successful. My mom was a singer, actress, until she started having kids and then she became a stay at home mom—which thank goodness for us, of course. It was wonderful.

But my dad did real well. Signed to Howard Hughes, of all people, for a while. And I had my first television series when I was ten. It was called *Circus Boy*. It was on NBC—a national, you know, big network show. In the 50's. About 1955. Around that time of *Rin Tin Tin* and *Flicka* and *Fury* and all that. And did very well. We ran two or three seasons, until I kind of outgrew the part. And then my parents, very wisely—and by the way, they had never pushed me into it. We weren't that kind of Hollywood, Beverly Hills lifestyle. Which is fine for some. You know, "Eyes and teeth, honey. Eyes and teeth."

I was brought up in the Valley and in a very rural, suburban environment. You know, I would come home from shooting on the set and my father would say, "You have to clean the pool." Had horses on the property and, you know, things like that. So, he was from Italy. Off the boat from Italy. And my mom was from Texas. So, they were kind of no-nonsense people and didn't let me get away with—well, I was gonna say *[censored]*, but I won't. Because—

[They laugh.]

00:47:01 Jesse Host Just to bleep it.
00:47:04 Micky Guest Because you know what a classy operation I'm running, here?
00:47:13 Jesse Host *[Giggles.]* So, no. They never—I don't ever remember being, you know, pushed and—any sort of pressure, at all.
Did you like it?

[Micky confirms enthusiastically.]

00:47:17 Micky Guest I mean was it something that you really wanted?
No. I followed in my father's footsteps, but how could you not like—you know—being—well, now, that series, *Circus Boy*, it was this kid... the spine of it was that it was a orphan kid at the turn of the century, who'd been adopted by a clown, in a circus. And they took care of him and he turned out being the one that would also solve the—you know, save the day.

So, I'm living for three years, basically, I was living as a ten or twelve-year-old kid, in the circus as the *[laughing]* turn of the century. So, I mean, how can you not like that? I mean, with an—and animals. I learned to ride an elephant. In fact, that was the first thing they said to me. They said, "Okay, well you know you're gonna have to ride an elephant?"

And I said, "Okay! Where do I start?"

[They laugh.]

00:48:11 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Jesse:** *[Through laughter.]* That's like—

Micky: It's kinda like when I got *The Monkees*. They said, "Well, you're gonna be the drummer." I said, "Okay! Where do I start?"

[Micky agrees several times as Jesse speaks.]

00:48:17 Jesse Host It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest is Micky Dolenz of The Monkees.

We have a clip of *Circus Boy*. The show in which you starred, as a preadolescent. Or I guess an adolescent. It was, as you mentioned, about a young man whose parents were killed in a trapeze accident. Your character was named Corky. Adopted by Joey the Clown, played by the late Noah Beery Jr. And in this scene, Corky is the water boy to Bimbo, the baby elephant that we've discussed. And in this clip, Corky is there with Bimbo and Joey.

00:48:59 Sound Effect Transition Music swells and fades.

00:49:01 Clip Clip *[The sounds of many people talking, muffled in the background.]*

Corky: Bimbo! You gotta brush your teeth after every meal! 'Cause if you ever got a toothache, that'd be too bad!

Joey: Hey, Corky. Have you—have you seen JoJo anyplace?

Corky: Gosh, Uncle Joey, is he loose again?

Joey: Oh, you know, I—he figured out how to open up his cage all by himself. *[Laughs.]* Ah, half the time I can't tell who's training who. Here I've been trying to make a clown out of that monkey, and he's making a monkey out of me!

Corky: Oh, you make a good clown, Uncle Joey. Why aren't we teaching him how to put on his own makeup in your wagon and—

[The sound of a crash and breaking glass. Music swells. The crashing continues.]

Corky: Uh oh!

00:49:37	Sound Effect	Transition
00:49:38	Jesse	Host

Joey: Let's go! Let's go!
Music swells and fades.

Oh, you were so cute.

[They laugh.]

I like that—I like your line delivery. I mean, it is the classic-est 1956 child-on-a-television-show line delivery. Like, *[pitching his voice high]* "Gee whiz!"

00:49:58	Micky	Guest
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[They laugh.]
Y-yeah. Absolutely right. I ended up doing a lot of voice overs in the 70's over cartoons, and it was that same kind of thing. You know, it was—I was, like, always the kid named "Skip" doing Hanna-Barbera cartoons going, *[undulating his pitch up and down]*, "WOOAH! Oh no! Look out! Here we GOOO!"

00:50:20	Jesse	Host
00:50:28	Promo	Clip

We'll wrap up with Micky Dolenz of The Monkees after a quick break. It's *Bullseye*, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

Music: Up-tempo guitar and harmonica music plays in the background.

Justin McElroy: Hi, everybody. My name is Justin McElroy.

Sydnee McElroy: And I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin: Dr. Sydnee McElroy.

Sydnee: That is true.

Justin: It's important in this context, 'cause we host a medical history podcast called—

Sydnee & Justin: *Sawbones*.

Justin: Oh, I thought we gonna—we should have worked on that.

Sydnee: *Sawbones*.

Justin: *Sawbones* isn't afraid to ask the hard-hitting questions. Like are vaccines as safe and reliable as they want us to believe?

Sydnee: Yes.

Justin: Do I have to get a flu shot?

Sydnee: Yes.

Justin: Okay, is science a miracle?

Sydnee: No?

Justin: We have a lot of great history for you and a lot of laughs. And sometimes the history's so bad that there's no laughs. But!

Sydnee: You'll learn something. You'll feel something.

Justin: And it's always *Sawbones*.

Sydnee: That's right.

Justin: Every week on MaximumFun.org.

00:51:13 Music Transition
00:51:18 Jesse Host

Thumpy rock music with jingle bells.

Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. If you're just joining us, we are celebrating the holidays this year with some of our favorite holiday interviews from years past. Right now, my guest is Micky Dolenz, the drummer from The Monkees. When he and I talked in 2018, that band had just released *Christmas Party*. Let's get back into it.

00:51:43 Micky Guest

[Laughs.] Tell me where you were, in your life, when you got the part on *The Monkees*.

I had gone back to high school, after *Circus Boy*. My parents, very wisely, took me out of the business. I had been offered another show, they told me, years later. But I was turning 13, going into puberty, and I—they sent me to a child psychologist. They said it was an educational counselor, but looking back now, I know it was a shrink. With Rorschach and all that. And I guess, you know, he must have [laughs] said, [with an exaggerated, cartoonish German accent] "You must take this child out of the business immediately!" Because, as we've heard, the horror stories—the problems come, with child stars, after the fact. Not during. During the, you know—during the success you're glorified, they love you, everybody loves you, and you're taken care of, cossetted. And then, all of the sudden one day, you're a has-been. You're out of work and you're just entering puberty, which is tough enough as it is. But now, you're not only entering puberty, but you're a has-been entering puberty!

And my parents, I don't know. They just, wisely—I guess with the aid of this child psychologist—said, "No, we're not gonna let him do another show. He's going back to school." Public school, right off of the set. And I literally, one morning—one Monday morning—ended up back in junior high school—what they called it then—as a ninth grader, with my roots—my brown roots growing out from my blonde, bleached hair from the TV series.

And so, they threw me right back into the real world. And then, after high school, I went to college doing anthropology, psychology, a

couple of other—I got into science, you know? I got into electronics and was really getting into science and building stuff and I—you know, my father then passed away, the year after I got out of high school. Which did present some problems, obviously. And I was at a bit of loose end. I would be doing little guest shots. I had an agent and the agent would get me a little job on *Peyton Place* or *Mr. Novak* or one of these late-50's, early-60's shows. And—but my—but that wasn't my plan, you know. I was doing it kind of for summer money.

And a friend of mine said, "You know, we both like building stuff." Which I—we did, both of us, and I—you know, I had workshop even then. And he said, "Let's be architects! And start a little architectural firm." So, I enrolled into LA Trade Tech. I just got an honorary award. Not award. What do you call it? Honorary degree from them. I did about a year and half—two, three semesters—but in the summers, when I wasn't, you know, going to school, I would do these little TV shows. And, you know, guest shots. And—but I wasn't stupid. I mean, I knew the power of showbiz. I'd had a series. I knew how, you know, valuable and important and lifechanging it can be.

00:55:09 Micky Guest

And so, one pilot season, in 1965, comes along. And my agent—I had an agent and I was going to school every day. And he would say, "Hey I got an audition for you, three o'clock on Thursday, blah [*drones unintelligibly*]."

Some I would go to, some I would say, "I'm sorry, I got a test." [*laughs*.] And I didn't. So, the Monkee audition comes along. I did, even at the time, sort of sense this was kind of different. Especially in the fact that you had to be able to sing and play—and act—to get into the audition or get through it. So, clearly they must have had in mind, at the time, that they were going to, kind of, you know—create this sort of, you know, real musical entity, I guess. My audition piece, on guitar, was "Johnny B. Goode" by Chuck Berry. I still do it, to this day. And then there was acting and scene study and improv. And the improv, I had the most trouble with. Mostly I'm uncomfortable. And I am still, to this day, with improv. 'Cause I was raised, you know, to learn the script, read the lines, and show up and do the scene and go home.

And so, the audition process was quite extensive. But my agent calls and says, "You got the pilot!" And I was in school, studying to be an architect.

And I said, "Great!" And I took off ten days, to do the pilot. And then I went back to school! [*Chuckles*.] Because I knew that nine out of ten pilots don't sell! And I wasn't gonna take a chance, so I went back to school, studying to be an architect. And then when we got the order for the first season—the 26 episodes, so the first season—I didn't—then I decided I better quit school.

00:57:07 Jesse Host

I have a clip from the TV show, *The Monkees*, and it's from an episode called "The Monkees Watch Their Feet", in which you—Micky—are abducted by aliens!

[*Micky laughs and confirms.*]

In a classic Monkees' storyline. So, we're about to hear, either you are on a—you've been beamed onto a flying saucer. You are then cloned by the blue-skinned captain and his assistant. Then your evil robot double is unleashed back into the world to spy on the other Monkees—Peter Tork and Michael Nesmith.

[Micky confirms.]

00:57:45 Sound Effect
00:57:46 Clip

Transition
Let's take a listen.
Music swells and fades.

Davy Jones: Hey, Micky, isn't that a spaceship over there?

Narrator: That was the powerfully persuasive argument of the space alien.

Speaker 1: What does a spaceship look like?

[Audience laughs.]

Davy: Well, I don't know! I never saw one before!

Speaker 1: Then how do you know it is a spaceship?

Speaker 3: He's right, man. Probably some new drive-in.

[Audience laughs. Banjo music begins.]

Narrator: Another way to recognize an alien is to take note of strange behavior. Takes some notes on this next scene.

00: Clip

[Audience laughs.]

Robot Micky: Hello, *[inaudible]*. I'm here in enemy *[stuttering, voice strained]* head—headquarters. They have harmonic destructors here, like we do on Slavig and when they use them, they emit terrible—ah, horrible, sounds! They also have insufferable tortures here, on earth.

[A phone rings.]

Whenever a pussycat cries, they tear off its head!

[Audience lets out some "ooh"s and "oof"s.]

Narrator: Definitely not.

Robot Micky: Then they holler in its ear!

Narrator: Oh no.

Robot Micky: Then they put the head back on the body. I don't know how it stays alive!

[A discordant note plays.]

Davy: Micky? Who were you talking to, just then?

Robot Micky: No one.

Davy: Well, you're acting very strange, you know.

Robot Micky: I'm not acting strange; I'm acting perfectly normal. There's nothing strange about me.

[A metallic screeching sound followed by a phone ringing. The audience laughs.]

00:58:48	Sound Effect	Transition	Don't tear off that cat's head again, I can't stand it! Music swells and fades.
00:58:49	Jesse	Host	<i>[They both laugh.]</i>
00:58:54	Micky	Guest	That is a lot nonsense for a television show in the mid-1960's. Ho-boy! A lot! But, you know, interesting you should say that. If you look back—and I've studied it. I've done lectures, now. People have asked me, you know, for years—you know, what was it? How was it? How did it happen? It wasn't that—if you look back, it really wasn't that—I don't know, what's the word? I guess surprising! Because the producers had made some very clever early-on decisions, when they were doing their bible. Which is the essence of a show. For starters—and funny enough, I was just listening to an interview you did with Eric Idle, who I know—have known for years. And he was talking about <i>Monty Python's</i> , and the mentioned how the humor was not topical. <i>The Monkees</i> humor was not topical. Nor was it satirical. And I think that's one of the reasons why <i>The Monkees</i> —and <i>Monty Python</i> <i>[laughs]</i> , and <i>I Love Lucy</i> and other shows—stand up for so long. Because they're not topical. And that was a conscious decision that the producers made. We're not gonna talk about anything in the news, this week. We're not gonna do anything too satirical. It was another friend of mine—a guy named John Lennon—op! Did I drop that name? <i>[Amused.]</i> I'll grab it for you. I got it. Um, who said The Monkees are like the Marx Brothers. And if you look at <i>The Monkees</i> show—the project, the whole thing—as this sort of half hour Marx Brothers musical movie, on television, everything makes a whole lot more sense. If you think of an old Marx Brothers movie, where everybody ran around and danced and sang and had a plot and there was a bad guy and good guy and people were doing silly stuff. And, you know, that scene you just played could have been right out of a Marx Brothers movie! We were screened Marx Brothers movies, during the preparation process, for instance. So, it was not coincidental. I mean, there was some thought put behind this that the show would not be topical. It would not be satirical. 'Cause that would date it very quickly. And also, a very important point—I think—is that The Monkees were never successful. It was the struggle for success. 'Cause that, I think, is what endeared it to all those kids around the world, was
01:00:16	Jesse	Host	
01:00:17	Micky	Guest	

that we represented all those kids in their garages and their basements and their kitchens and wherever. In their garage trying to be The Beatles.

01:01:53 Jesse Host And that is essentially what *The Monkees* show was about. This band that wanted to be The Beatles. And on the television show, we never made it. It was always the struggle for success that I think is, like I said, one of the things that endeared it to so many people. Did you want to be loveable, Marx Brothersian goofballs? Or did you want to be cool rock stars, when the possibility that you actually maybe could be cool rock stars came up?

01:02:11 Micky Guest In my case, it was—I woke up one day and the—I fell asleep one night as a working actor, entertainer, singer. You know, musician, 'cause I had to do all that. And I woke up in the morning as a cool rock star! *[Laughs.]* And I hadn't—I was like, "Woah! When did that happen!?"

It's kind of exemplified in a story I've told a bunch of times. During the—the show went on the air in September of '26. *[Breaks into startled laughter. Jesse chuckles.]* Wh-what—what century are we in, here? Uh. *[Laughs.]* In the, uh, in September of '66. And we'd been filming since June or July. And recording, of course, all the time. Day and night. I was doing most of the lead singing. So, I would go on the set from seven in the morning to seven at night and then have dinner and then go into the studio and record vocals. Sometimes two or three a night. 'Cause they needed so much material for the—for the television show.

And um, *[clears throat]* one—and then that, uh—that Christmas. That—this time, that year. '66. They gave us a hiatus to—the show'd been on the air since September. We'd heard that it was doing very well. We'd heard that "Clarksville" had gone to number one, but we're working 12, 14 hours a day. In those days, of course, without social media and all that other kind of stuff, you know I get in my car in the parking lot and drive home and never see anybody. Never interact. The fans didn't know where we were or how to found—how to find us. You know. You just went home.

And that Christmas, I was gonna drive up to San Jose—where my parents and family lived, at the time—with my Christmas presents and have about a week or ten days, whatever it was, off. And a little hiatus. So, I get my little Christmas list together and I get in my car and I drive down to the local mall, there in the Valley, in Los Angeles—where I'd shopped every year, for decades, with my family. And I get out of my car with my little list, and I walk through the big glass doors. And all of the sudden, people come running at me screaming. And I thought it was a fire! *[Chuckles.]* And I'm holding open the door going, "Slow down! Don't run! Don't panic! It's—"

I literally did think it was a fire! And they were running at me! And I had to leave. I was really pissed off! *[Laughs.]* I had to go and give my Christmas list to my roadie and have him go do the shopping. Got in my car and had to go home. Well, that was the first inkling that I had of what was going on.

01:05:07 Jesse Host I mean, it sounds... neat, but it also sounds hard.

01:05:13	Micky	Guest	<p><i>[Chuckles.]</i> Oh, it was a lotta work! Oh boy. Each episode took three days. And then start the next one the very next day. And then we started rehearsing for the concert tour, 'cause they obviously had in mind that if this thing happened, they wanted us to be able to play or they would not have cast people that could! They wouldn't have bothered. They would have just cast actors and done it all, everything else—you know, kind of old school.</p> <p>But they clearly had in mind that they wanted—they hoped!—that if the thing happened, if the show went, that we would go on the road and record. I mean, and—so I—and perform. And sure enough! You know, we did! And our first concert was in Hawaii, in Honolulu, at the HIC Auditorium. I don't know how many thousands of people were there. And I think that their plan was, "Well if we do it in Hawaii <i>[laughing]</i> and it doesn't work, no one will know!"</p>
01:06:15	Jesse	Host	We'll have three weeks before news reaches the mainland.
01:06:18	Micky	Guest	<i>[Laughing.]</i> Yeah! That's right! But it did. And it was huge. Mike Nesmith, I think, put it very, very succinctly once. He said, "You know, at that point, Pinocchio became a real little boy."
01:06:32	Jesse	Host	Micky Dolenz, thanks so much for being on <i>Bullseye!</i>
			<i>[Music fades in.]</i>
01:06:35	Micky	Guest	It was great to get to talk to you.
01:06:38	Music	Music	Well I hope that was okay for you guys! Thank you. "I Wish It Could Be Christmas Everyday" from the album <i>Christmas Party</i> by The Monkees.
			<i>When the snowman brings the snow</i>
01:06:42	Jesse	Host	<i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]</i> Micky Dolenz of The Monkees. Their holiday treat is called <i>Christmas Party</i> .
01:06:47	Music	Music	<i>[Volume increases.]</i>
			<i>... on somebody's face</i>
			<i>If you jump into your bed Quickly, cover up your head Don't you lock the doors</i>
01:07:01	Music	Transition	<i>[Song fades out.]</i>
01:07:06	Jesse	Host	Thumpy rock music with jingle bells. It's the <i>Bullseye</i> Holiday Special. I'm Jesse Thorn. And it's that time of year again. What time? Well, of course it is the holidays, but also the time during <i>Bullseye's</i> holiday episode where we turn to our three favorite brothers for some seasonal wisdom. Justin, Travis, and Griffin McElroy are the hosts of the Maximum Fun podcasts <i>The Adventure Zone</i> and <i>My Brother, My Brother & Me</i> . The latter of them is billed as an advice show for the modern era. It's one of the funniest podcasts out there. The advice is—uh, let's say a mixed bag. Uh, but it's always fun!
01:07:39	Travis McElroy	Guest	<i>[Interrupting with faux indignance.]</i> Alright! Okay! No! Whatever! Whatever, Jesse!
01:07:44	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	Jesse: <i>[Laughing.]</i> I have, on the line with me—

01:07:45 Griffin McElroy Guest **Griffin:** Let's walk. Let's walk.
[Stammering.] To—it—to be disrespected like this on the holiday episode. We're outta here!

01:07:50 Travis Guest *[Jesse laughs.]*
 We just got here and you're like, "Maybe their advice isn't good advice!" Whatever! I don't need this.

01:07:57 Jesse Host
 I wanna set you guys up for success, not failure. So. If I'm promising great advice and you guys don't deliver, you look like fools!

[The McElroys hum in understanding.]

01:08:10 Travis Guest
 But if I promise a mixed bag and you deliver, then you're exceeding customer expectations. We have—I learned about this when I worked retail. Under promise and over deliver.

01:08:15 Jesse Host
 Exactly.

So, we have the McElroy brothers on the line, as you can hear. We have a list of holiday conundrums here from *Bullseye* and *My Brother, My Brother & Me* listeners. Here's the first one: "When I was tucking in my three-year-old tonight, he suddenly said to me, 'Are you excited for Batman to come and give us presents?'"

[Justin bursts into laughter; Travis hums thoughtfully.]

01:09:07 Travis Guest
 "What's my responsibility here? He didn't specify when Batman would be coming, so I don't know if he's invented his own new holiday or if he's just mixed up on how Christmas, the holiday our family celebrates, works. Can I assume he'll wake up tomorrow and have completely forgotten this idea? Or am I going to have a crestfallen little guy in the morning or whenever he thinks this is happening if I don't pull together some kind of feast day of Batman? Also, what kind of gifts would Batman bring?"

Aw, these are all great questions. First—first and foremost, what you got here, folks, you got four dads. And let us tell you, the thing you want your kid to forget they're excited about, they'll never forget!

[Justin and Griffin agree. Jesse laughs.]

That's the thing your child will carry with them forever. Four days ago, my kid looked at me—offhandedly, Bebe said, "I'd like to get a snow globe." I have heard that—about that snow globe so many times since then!

[Justin wheezes with laughter.]

01:09:38 Griffin Guest
 And it's a snow globe! I don't know why she's excited about it, but now it's all she wants!

We can more or less set aside the option of not having Batman come to your house. Like, right now the question has evolved into, "How can we get Batman at your house?"

[Jesse laughs.]

01:09:55 Crosstalk Crosstalk
 Because if it doesn't happen, that's—that Christmas is gonna be talked about in therapy, you know, 25 years from now.
Jesse: Could you get one of the lesser Batman figures? I know there's a—
Griffin: Oh, I thought you were gonna say Batman actors.
Jesse: There's some kind of—no. *[Laughing and stammering.]* Could you get Val Kilmer? I think you could get Val Kilmer. He's just hanging out on his ranch in Tahoe!

01:10:08 Travis Guest
Travis: Yeah, you could get—
 You could get Val Kilmer. But you don't need a Batman! Like, every year you don't have someone pose as Santa in your house! All you have to do, as the parent, is say Batman came! Bury a batarang in the wall. Maybe, you know, project the bat signal onto a window or two and you're golden!

01:10:28 Justin Guest
 Leave out a rare steak and some scalloped potatoes, which is Batman's favorite meal.
[They chuckle.]

01:10:35 Travis Guest
 We all know!
 And leave one bat-shaped bite out of it! What would Batman bring? Um, I don't know. A gadget. He likes gadgets, right? He's probably brought you—oh, you know what?! He's probably brought you, like, a coupon for some mixed martial arts lessons.

01:10:51 Justin Guest
 I'd be careful of going down this path, as a parent. 'Cause the thing Batman really wants is more Batmans running around and there's only one way to make a Batman, baby.
[They laugh.]

01:10:58 Crosstalk Crosstalk
Travis: That's what I'm saying!
Justin: You know what it is. I know what it is!
[They laugh.]
Justin: The first thought—

01:11:02 Justin Guest
Travis: Oh no!
 The first thought—the first—the first thought any new parent always has is, "Boy, I hope you don't do a Batman! I would do—I just would love that. Be any other hero."

01:11:12 Jesse Host
 Here's one last question for the McElroy brothers from *My Brother, My Brother, and Me*. "Every year for Christmas, for many years now, my aunt's main gift to me is a giant package of Ghirardelli peppermint bark. When I was kid, I loved it. I couldn't get enough of it! But this has been going on for years now and unfortunately my tastes have changed with age. I guess I had too much of a good thing, because now I can't stand the sight of that peppermint bark. My problem is, I don't know how to tell my aunt that I want different candy for Christmas. If she's going to buy me candy, I'd like to actually enjoy the gesture. Please help me, brothers. From Peppermint Bratty, in Pittsburgh."

01:11:55	Travis	Guest	Great name.
01:11:57	Justin	Guest	You... you do know where candy is sold, right? I mean, you're an adult, I'm assuming. You know where to go to get it yourself, I bet. Come on.
01:12:05	Travis	Guest	That's not the problem, Justin. The problem is—
01:12:07	Justin	Guest	It is the problem!
01:12:09	Travis	Guest	No, no, no, no. This is classic. It's the classic problem where a family member who doesn't know you well—extended family member—thinks they locked onto something that they feel comfortable getting you for Christmas, for holidays, and that they believe you enjoy. And there's been an unspoken agreement between the two of you that you like it, and they haven't felt the need to push past that. Right? And—
01:12:36	Justin	Guest	I think we can all agree that's an excellent summation of the question we all heard. For sure.
01:12:40	Travis	Guest	Well, now, the problem is: how do you then break that covenant? Because as soon as you say, "Hey, I think I might like some different candy this year," it will ripple back through your aunt's mind and what she will hear is, "I've never liked this candy. It's all been a lie. Everything up 'til now has been hollow." And if that's the case, who knows what else, Aunt Vickie, hasn't been enjoyed by other people you know?
01:13:09	Griffin	Guest	I think you could do, like, a, "I got struck by lightning this year and when I got to the other side of that electric tunnel, I liked different foods."
01:13:21	Justin	Guest	I would sooner petition the Ghirardelli company to stop making peppermint bark. That is, like, your only actual solution at this point.
01:13:30	Jesse	Host	Justin, Travis, Griffin McElroy—always a joy to have you guys on the show. The podcast is <i>My Brother, My Brother & Me</i> . They're also the hosts of <i>The Adventure Zone</i> . The 2022 <i>Candlenights Streaming Spectacular</i> is available to watch now, through January 2 nd . We have a link to stream it on our website, at MaximumFun.org . Justin, Travis, Griffin. Thank you so much. Always nice to see you.
01:13:57	Griffin	Guest	You too.
01:13:58	Travis	Guest	Thank you.
01:13:59	Justin	Guest	Thanks, Jesse. Same—same to you.
01:14:00	Music	Transition	Thumpy rock music with jingle bells.
01:14:04	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. Here at my house, my oldest child keeps switching what she wants for Christmas. The latest is a Dr. Pepper fridge—like a tiny fridge. She doesn't even drink Dr. Pepper. But my son is very consistent. He just wants more fish. For his fish tank, not to eat.

Our 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 booking help from Mara Davis. Our interstitial music is by DJW, the great Dan Wally. Our theme song is "Huddle Formation" written and recorded by The Go! Team. Thanks to them and Memphis Industries for providing it to us.

Bullseye is on YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook. So, go find us in those places. We share all our interviews there. If you heard

01:15:15

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something this week that you liked, share it with a friend. I think that's about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.

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

[Music fades out.]