

00:00:00	Music	Transition	Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue.
00:00:01	Promo	Promo	Speaker: <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.
00:00:13	Music	Transition	<i>[Music fades out.]</i> “Huddle Formation” from the album <i>Thunder, Lightning, Strike</i> by The Go! Team. A fast, upbeat, peppy song. Music plays as Jesse speaks, then fades out.
00:00:20	Jesse Thorn	Host	It’s <i>Bullseye</i> . I’m Jesse Thorn. Lesley Manville is an actor. She got her start on TV in the ’70s. At the time, she was a teenager in England. Then, she had a career in theatre. She’s been in many plays with the prestigious Royal Shakespeare Company. She’s also known for her work with the director Mike Leigh. She’s starred in some of his best movies, like <i>Secrets & Lies</i> , <i>All or Nothing</i> , and <i>Another Year</i> . These days, you can catch her on the newest season of <i>The Crown</i> . She played Princess Margaret.
			When Lesley Manville and I talked in 2019, she had just wrapped up the third and final season of the BBC show, <i>Mum</i> . In it, she plays Cathy—a mom in her 50s living out in the suburbs. The show begins with Cathy getting over the recent death of her husband. The tone of the show and Lesley’s performance are both grounded, though sometimes she is surrounded by madness. A lot of <i>Mum</i> is about Lesley’s character’s relationship with her best friend, Michael. They have significant romantic chemistry, but Lesley’s son, Jason, isn’t into the idea of the two of them hooking up. He’s still protective of his late father, and he gets a bit jealous when he notices there might be something going on between his mom and his dad’s pal.
00:01:47	Sound Effect	Transition	In this clip, Cathy and Jason are chatting after a dinner party wraps up. Cathy has maybe had too many drinks. Music swells and fades.
00:01:48	Clip	Clip	Cathy (Mum): A little bit giggly, wasn’t I? Jason: Uh-huh. Just a bit. <i>[They laugh.]</i> Cathy: And then I fell asleep. Jason: Mm-hm. No, you were fast asleep on the sofa. Cathy: <i>[Laughs.]</i> Oh god! Jason: <i>[Intentionally casual.]</i> Well, actually. Last night, the really funny thing was you, uh—you fell asleep on Michael. Cathy: How do you mean? Jason: Well, we were watching the film, and you fell asleep with your head on Michael’s shoulder. <i>[They chuckle.]</i>

Cathy: Oh, did I?

Jason: Yeah! Not like you.

Cathy: Oh dear. *[Chuckles then sighs.]*

Jason: I mean, everyone saw it. You think Michael would've moved or something. But he just sat there.

Cathy: Did he?

Jason: Yeah!

Cathy: *[Chuckling thinly.]* Weird!
Music swells and fades.

00:02:35 Sound Effect Transition

00:02:36 Jesse Host Well, Lesley, I'm so happy to have you on *Bullseye*. Thank you for coming and doing this.

00:02:39 Lesley Manville Guest You're welcome! Thank you.

00:02:40 Jesse Host One of the things that I enjoy the most about *Mum* is you and Peter Mullan, the protagonists of the show, both radiate kindness and warmth. And it's a very muted, quiet show for a sitcom. And everyone is a monster.

[They laugh.]

00:03:01 Lesley Guest Just act like monsters.
Yes. Yeah. Yeah, they do. I think that was the point, that—you know—that you'd have this calm, center to it with these people that the audience can really relate to. And particularly with Cathy, see the other people around her through her eyes. And their ridiculousness and their characteristics, which sometimes are very challenging. But yeah, it is this sweet couple who have slowly, over the three seasons that we've done, fallen in love with each other. And it's a very nice love story.

00:03:39 Jesse Host Are you as patient as your character, Cathy, on *Mum*?

00:03:42 Lesley Guest Hell no.

[Jesse laughs.]

00:04:04 Jesse Host I'm far more judgmental than Cathy is. Yeah, no, I find it hard to button my mouth. I really do. In all walks of my life. So, I mean, there are a lot of similarities. You know, I hope people think I'm kind and all of those things, but patient? No.

You left general education in your like mid-teens. Right? 15 or 16, something like that?

00:04:10 Lesley Guest 15, yeah.

00:04:11 Jesse Host Had you already then decided to be an actor?

00:04:14 Lesley Guest No. I was a very good classical singer. And since the age of about eight or nine, I was trained classically. And I really did have an exceptional voice. And I think if I'd have done—taken that course, which would have been a very natural course to take, I would've moved into opera, easily.

00:04:33 Jesse Host How did you figure out that that was the case when you were eight or nine years old? Was it like singing in church or something like that?

00:04:39 Lesley Guest Well, I did actually go to a church school, but it—yeah. And so, I did sing the choir and I did sing a lot of solos. My father had a very good voice. So, there was always singing at home. And my middle sister sang, as well. So, there was a lot of singing going on. And when I went to have singing lessons—you know, the teachers that I had were getting me to sing more complicated stuff and Mozart and so, it became apparent early on that I had this good voice. But you know, I didn't grow up in a middle-class household. We were working class. We weren't poor, but we were working class. My father did all sorts of jobs, and my mother stayed at home and looked after the three of us.

00:05:37 Jesse Host But nobody really—well, nobody did take me to the opera. So, I made a really ill-informed decision that it was boring, having not seen it ever, having never seen an opera in my life. I'm gonna be frank with you, I worked at the San Francisco opera when I was a teenager. I was 16/17 years old. I don't think you would've found it not boring at the time. I can't promise you, based on my experience as a 16-year-old at the opera—

00:05:51 Lesley Guest Well, there must be a lot of 15/16-year-olds that do see it and do want to go and study it, because by the time they're 20, they're doing it.

00:05:57 Jesse Host And god bless them.

00:06:00 Lesley Guest But you know, no. I mean, for me—you know, it was—it just wasn't rock and roll for me. You know. At all.

[Jesse laughs.]

So, I thought—well, look, I have got this good voice. I could use it. I could do musicals! So, I sort of said to my mum and dad, "Look." I grew up in Brighton, which is on the south coast of England. I said, "I really want to go to a stage school in London." Which is a kind of odd place where you can—you can go for all four. And you do general education in the morning, and then singing, dancing, acting in the afternoon. Well, I left school at 15 to go to this stage school with the idea that I would continue my education in the mornings. And I did! But the education was not good. So, I didn't end up sitting any exams or doing any of the things that the friends I'd left behind in Brighton were doing. So, I actually don't have a qualification to my name. So, thank god I can act!

[Jesse chuckles.]

But the singing and dancing and acting teaching was very good! And I learnt to dance with a great choreographer, called Arlene Phillips. I was singing and I met a really good acting teacher, who I'm still friends with now. And I was only there for about nine months or so. And then, I left, and my first job was a musical in the West End, directed by John Schlesinger—the late film director who was making a very rare foray into musical theatre. And then, I did all sorts of odd jobs. I was presenting a bit. I was doing pantomime, which is a thing we have in England. It's a Christmas show. I was doing a bit of acting here and there. But it was mostly musical stuff.

I did a lunchtime soap for a while, which was a really interesting learning curve. Because we shot most of it outside on proper, single-camera film. Which was quite rare for television.

Anyway. That said, cut to six years later and I had a very happy six years just bumbling around, doing lots of different jobs, enjoying myself, earning a bit of money. And then, I met Mike Leigh, and then it all kind of changed, really. Because we just got on like a house on fire. And he made me see that I could play people that weren't like me. And that made me more happy than anything. And I loved the way he worked and the fact that, you know, to get to an end result of a script, we'd get to that point by many improvisations and creating characters and all of that. And I just loved it! And it made sense to me. I thought, "Yeah, if I'm gonna play somebody real, I need to—I need to create them from scratch and fill out all their background and all of this stuff."

So, it really—it really got into my bones. And working with him then, at that very formative time, it was like—the first film I did with him was made for the BBC, and it was called *Grownups*. And when it went out, despite the fact I'd been acting for about six or seven years by then, it was like I was a new kid on the block. Because the kind of work I'd been doing before that, nobody'd really noticed. But suddenly, here I was with this prestigious director and doing this great film that was on the BBC. And you know, after that it just—it—my career just got more and more interesting and went from strength to strength.

00:09:34 Jesse Host

We'll be back in just a second! It's *Bullseye*, from [MaximumFun.org](https://www.maximumfun.org) and NPR.

00:09:40 Music Transition

Thumpy rock music with light vocalizations.

00:09:44 Jesse Host

Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. I'm talking with the great Lesley Manville. You might know her from the films of director Mike Leigh. She starred in *Another Year*, *Vera Drake*, and *All or Nothing*. She also received an Academy Award nomination for her part in *The Phantom Thread*. These days, you can see her on the fifth season of *The Crown*, in which she plays Princess Margaret.

When we talked in 2019, she'd just wrapped up the final season of the TV show *Mum*. Let's get back into our chat.

It seems to me like a lot to do—to like go off and do all that stuff on your own, as a teenager. You know, particularly if you don't already have a lot of grounding in that world. I mean, having grown up outside London in a non-showbusiness family. I have a buddy that grew up in Sherman Oaks, California, here. When I got to college, he became my friend. His parents are screenwriters, and it's—his neighbor was—his neighbor, as a child, was Brian Cranston.

[Lesley laughs.]

And to him, working in showbusiness is normal. [Chuckles.] And he still does. He does now. But like, I went to an art school as a teenager. I couldn't conceive that it could be a thing you did for your life. Like maaaybe I could kind of imagine regional theatre. You know what I mean?

00:11:12	Lesley	Guest	<p>Yeah, I do! Well, I mean, when I went to stage school, I really just loved it. I mean, I was still living at home, in Brighton. And it's about an hour's commute on the train every day. So, I was traveling backwards and forwards. But I loved it! I felt I'd found my groove. I mean, I was quite shy. I mean, there were a lot of girls there that were very... um, jazz hands and loved performing, and they were very big characters. And I wasn't any of those things. But I always was the quiet one, really. But I suppose, when I did feel—when I know that when I did feel a bit lost, and a bit alone was when I started working. And I wasn't working in London, which I was beginning to get to know. And I wasn't working near home, in Brighton. I was all over the place! All over the country. And I was really quite alone then, and that was difficult. You know, 16 years old, fending for myself.</p> <p>There was a program I did in the southwest of England, which was like a kid's show, but I was presenting it. So, I'd film all these extracts during the week. You know, going to a zoo, talking to the zookeeper. And then, we'd go into the studio once a week, and we'd record the show live. I don't know if you have a comparison show here, but that was the nature of the show. It was kind of magazine program for kids. And I loved doing the show! But nobody there looked after me at all. And in hindsight, it was shocking that nobody took care of me. And I was staying in a really not very nice hotel, which—back in the—when was this, then? This was the mid/late '70s. It's all a bit seedy, and it was full of traveling salesmen in terrible, smelly suits, and blokes and men who would look at me at breakfast. And it was really not very comfortable; and there were no mobile phones—cell phones. There were no TVs in the room.</p> <p>I mean, it was basic. And I was lonely. And finding places to eat on my own in the evenings, when restaurants were not really a thing—and certainly not 16-year-girls going out on their own to eat. But you know, I did it! So, I suppose I kind of—it gave me backbone. And it gave me an absolute sense of myself. And I think that it's been really good that I had all of that. I mean, it wasn't always great at the time, but it's kind of made me. You know, I don't—I don't take any mess from anybody. And I know that those years of my life were really formative—you know, until I got in my mid-20s and, you know, got myself somewhere to live in London and got more settled. You know. Those early days of traveling around so young were hard.</p>
00:14:19	Jesse	Host	<p>So, what were the circumstances of you meeting the filmmaker Mike Leigh—with whom you've worked so many times in the decades since?</p>
00:14:27	Lesley	Guest	<p>Well, the circumstances were kind of odd. I was doing a play in London for the Royal Shakespeare Company. I wasn't doing Shakespeare—'cause they don't just do Shakespeare. I was doing a new, modern play. And Mike had been asked to go to the Royal Shakespeare and do a play. But for various reasons, he had to cast it—economic reasons, I guess—he had to cast it from within the current company. And I don't think I was an obvious candidate. You know, I—as I said, prior to meeting him, I was kind of a one-trick pony.</p>

00:15:01 Jesse Host I read him describe what you had done to that point, as playing nice ladies like yourself or something like that.

00:15:07 Lesley Guest Yeah! No, he's absolutely right. That's is the bottom line. I played—you know, sweet, nice-looking girls, squeaky clean. And that was me! Anyway, he asked me to do this play. And I don't think he thought I was gonna be a great Mike Leigh candidate, really. I think he thought it was gonna be a bit of hard work with me. But once we started doing it—as I said just now—I just thought this was amazing! And I loved it, and I was good at it! And he was the first person, after being an actor for about seven years by that point—he said to me, "You're really very good at this." And the sense of achievement that I had, and the thrill of him saying that to me was huge. So, the play actually—for reasons which we don't need to waste time talking about now—actually never happened. So, he said, "Well, look, I think you better come and work with me again."

00:16:15 Jesse Host And then, we did—in the days when he was mostly making films for the BBC and Channel 4—we made *Grownups*.

00:16:38 Lesley Guest Now, he is very well known for his unusual method of making films and theatre, which often involves developing characters and a story with the cast through, in part, improvisation. Had you improvised before you started working with him?

00:16:38 Lesley Guest Only at stage school a little bit. But not really. Not extensively. And it was never to do with it coming out of a character that you'd created. I mean, when you work with Mike, you don't just kind of day one start improvising. I mean, you spend many weeks creating a character that you're just talking about and chewing over with each—you know, each—one-to-one. And then, you start improvising. And even then, it's on your own. You know, you don't start suddenly improvising with people. So, I—you know, with him, I kind of realized that, of course, I always used to find improvising without Mike a bit of a waste of time. Because—and subsequent people that I worked with after having done a few jobs with Mike, used to think, "Oh, you're good at improvising. Come on, let's try and make this scripted play that doesn't work very well at this point, let's improvise it and see what—"

And of course, it's nonsense! Because all you're doing is thinking what to say. So, nothing can be trusted. Nothing's coming from an organic place. You're just trying to think of what to say. And of course, with him—with Mike—what's imperative is that you thoroughly and wholly create these characters and then very slowly—I mean, you're just—you know, a whole day just walking around as them not saying anything. And you might just—you know, you have mockups of wherever they live or where they work, and you slooowly, slowly, slowly start to bring them to life. And eventually, there'll be other characters in the piece that he'll bring you together with that you might be related to or having a friendship or marriage with, whatever. And you fill out all of that backstory. And then, you'll start to do some improvisations which—but there's never any pressure.

In fact, it's absolutely crucial that you don't try and make the improvisations interesting. Because then, he's not gonna—you're not gonna discover anything. And I've done very long improvisations with him where not a lot happens! But through those,

			he starts to see where tensions are, where relationships are floundering or where a relationship is good. You know, I've done four, five, six-hour improvisations where you might just—an hour of that might be spent with your character sitting watching TV and not saying anything.
00:19:14	Jesse	Host	That's terrifying to me.
00:19:15	Lesley	Guest	Well, yeah, but you haven't done the work that precedes it to get you to the place where you actually feel comfortable.
00:19:21	Jesse	Host	<i>[Playfully.]</i> Well, you're being presumptive, but in this case you're right.
00:19:25	Lesley	Guest	<i>[Laughs.]</i> But you know, it—but that's—but that, of course, if somebody said to me tomorrow, "Okay, we're gonna do this piece and you're gonna be this. So, let's start improvising," I'd be terrified! Because that is what I was saying just now. All you're doing is thinking of what to say! Whereas if there's no pressure of being—to be entertaining, it kind of takes care of itself, because of the work you've done.
00:19:48	Jesse	Host	We'll wrap up with actor Lesley Manville after a quick break. When we return, we'll talk about her work in the brilliant Mike Leigh film <i>Another Year</i> . It's <i>Bullseye</i> , from MaximumFun.org and NPR.
00:20:01	Promo	Clip	Music: Exciting, upbeat music.

Ify Nwadiwe: I'm Ify Nwadiwe, the host of *Maximum Film*.

Alonso Duralde: I'm Alonso Duralde, also the host of *Maximum Film*.

Drea Clark: And I'm Drea Clark, yet another host of *Maximum Film*. Every week, we hosts huddle up.

Ify: Usually with an illustrious guest.

Alonso: And we talk about films.

Ify: We have film news!

Alonso: We have film quizzes!

Drea: We answer your film questions!

Ify: It's like the maximum amount of film talk. That's why we call it—

All: *Maximum Film!*

[Drea laughs.]

Speaker: *Maximum Film*, the movie podcast that's not just a bunch of straight White guys. New episodes weekly, on MaximumFun.org.

00:20:38	Music	Transition	<i>[Music fades out.]</i> Thumpy rock music.
00:20:42	Jesse	Host	This is <i>Bullseye</i> . I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest is Lesley Manville of <i>Phantom Thread</i> , <i>Another Year</i> , and the latest season of <i>The Crown</i> . Let's get back into our chat.

I wanna play a scene from a Mike Leigh movie in which you starred. And I'm gonna be honest, we've only got a certain amount of time here. I could just play clips of your performances in Mike Leigh movies for the rest of the time we're here.

[Lesley laughs.]

I would be happy about that. I'd be perfectly glad to just sit here and enjoy your performances in Mike Leigh movies. But we picked one called *Another Year* that came out about a decade ago.

[Lesley hums and affirms.]

And I was walking back to my car after having eaten lunch today, and I was thinking to myself—and this is, you know—don't ask me to defend it, but I do sincerely believe it. I was thinking to myself, "I don't know that I have ever seen a more—I can't even meet your gaze while I say this, but it's the honest truth. I don't know that I've ever seen a more compelling acting performance in a film than your performance in this film.

00:21:45 Lesley Guest
00:21:47 Jesse Host

Well, thank you very much.

Which I found just to be a breathtaking movie. So, in this movie, basically there is this—a couple named Tom and Gerri who are in like late middle age. And one of Gerri's coworkers is Mary, who you play. And she is spending time with them and trying to put up a façade of—you know, of bon ami. But it is very—it is very clear, as the film unfolds, that she is just desperately sad and lonely, and probably an alcoholic.

00:22:32 Lesley Guest
00:22:33 Jesse Host

Oh, definitely, yeah.

And so, I just wanna play this scene from the movie. So, this is—this is my guest, as Mary, talking about her taste in men over a glass of wine with Gerri.

[Lesley chuckles.]

And Mary says that she's never dated a man who would cook for her.

00:22:49 Sound Effect Transition

Music swells and fades.

00:22:50 Clip Clip

Gerri (*Another Year*): You could put an ad in the paper. Chef wanted.

Mary: Yeah. Chef, stroke, boyfriend required for gorgeous girl. No! Mature woman with cat.

[They laugh.]

Gerri: No, mature-ish. We don't wanna put them off, do we?

[Laughter peters off.]

Mary: Oh, it's really lovely the way you and Tom do everything together.

Gerri: We're very lucky.

Mary: Yeah. You are. But you deserve it! You're both such lovely people.

Gerri: Oh, well, I certainly hope so.

Mary: Yeah, Saint Gerri. *[Chuckles.]* No, but I'm really comfortable with where I am in my life, as you know. I've got my lovely little garden flat. I've got a good job. I've got my health—touch wood. I've got me independence. I haven't got anybody telling me what to do. I mean, don't get me wrong. It's not all rosy. I have good days and bad days, like everyone else. Don't I? But hey!
Music swells and fades.

00:23:35 Sound Effect Transition

00:23:38 Jesse Host It is, um... I think it would be very easy for your performance or the film to just let her be pathetic or just let her be a joke. And it's a funny movie, too.

[Lesley agrees.]

00:24:14 Lesley Guest And it doesn't. And I wonder what it was like to spend all that time developing and then embodying a character who is, in some ways, just defined by just crippling loneliness.
Yeah. It was, um... it's—I think that film, um, stayed with me. I don't mean on a day-to-day basis. I mean, I didn't go home and cry into my pillow 'cause I was playing Mary. But that woman stayed with me: her predicament, her pain. Because so many people said to me when they'd seen the film that they'd been like that at times in their life or they knew people that were like that or people that were like that and were still like that. And I sort of think that, for me, she was the most complete piece of work that I did with Mike, really. When we were doing what became big parts of the film, like for example the scene when she arrives late to their barbeque.

00: Sound Effect Transition

00: Clip **Gerri:** We've saved you some food, Mary. I hope it's still warm.

Mary: Aw, thanks, Gerri. Oh, yeah! It'll be fine!

Tom: We'll heat some fresh, if you like.

Mary: Oh no, Tom. Don't worry about me!

Joe: You didn't get arrested then, Mary?

Mary: No, I didn't, Joe! He was very kind to me, actually.

Joe: What CC is your car?

Mary: What do you mean?

Joe: How big's engine?

Mary: Oh! I don't know! Uh. It's about this big, I think.

[They laugh.]

Mary: *[Chuckling awkwardly.]* What's so funny?

Gerri: Don't be cruel.

Tom: He means how powerful is it, Mary. How many cubic centimeters is it?

Mary: Oh!

Joe: You should know that.

Tom: On the back, there's numbers like 1.6 or 1.9.

Mary: Oh, yeah! I know! Well, that's boy's stuff, isn't it?

Joe: It's not important.

Mary: Hello, Tanya. *[Chuckles.]* I'm think I'm gonna have a cigarette before I eat this.

Joe: Excuse me. I'll get out of your way.

Tanya: Should we take Isaac over there?

Tom: Okay.

Mary: Oh, well, I thought you wouldn't mind 'cause we're outside?

Gerri: Oh, we don't, Mary! You carry on.

Tom: You're alright. You're alright.
Music swells and fades.

00:26:06 Sound Effect Transition
00:26:08 Lesley Guest

And we did that as a major improvisation that lasted the best part of the day, really. So, you know, for Mary it would start in her flat, getting ready. You know. All of that. And I remember—I remember this very well. And I don't remember lots of things. But this, I remember very well. Mary used to listen to a lot of sad Dusty Springfield. And she used to sing along to it. Quite well. Which was good, 'cause—you know, I've got a bit of a voice on me. And I thought, "Well, actually I'm gonna use it. Mary can have quite a good voice." She's belting out this—and she sort of loved the loneliness in a perverse way. You know? She loved singing the Dusty Springfield and crying and using that as an excuse to go and get another glass of wine, even though she knew she had to drive across London. 'Cause then, she arrives in this car that she's got. And the car is—you know, everything's chaos with her! Chaos! Nothing is ordered.

And that's really not like me. I'd never played somebody drunk before. And we did a few scenes where she was—she was drunk. And that—oddly enough, it was the only time—and I shared this with Mike. I said, "The only thing I'm finding really tricky is that normally—" You know, you do the scene. You come out of character. You go and have your lunch, and you come back, and you do it again. Whatever. But when I was doing the drunk Mary, I

sort of needed to stay in that zone. I found going in and out of drunk very tricky.

So, he said, "That's alright. You know, just—we'll find a little place for you to go and keep it on the go." And I did. And it really helped. But there was a lot about playing her. And I think over the years, some people have misinterpreted this, that it meant that—you know—I was lonely, or I was—you know, in some sort of pain. And we've all been in pain in our lives and lonely at times. But I really knew how to play her. I brought a lot to those scenes when she was desperate. And it kind of was an extension. It was like going to places beyond where I—Lesley—had been. But I knew the route. So, yeah. If I had—we have a show in England, called *Desert Island Discs*, that you might be familiar with. My desert island disc of my movies would be Mary. But that's 'cause there's something so wonderful about her, as well—that she isn't just totally pitiful, and she puts on a—she wants—she wants to present something to the world that is positive. She hasn't completely thrown in the towel. She clings to—she's gonna claw herself back up, you know. Or try to.

00:29:17 Jesse Host And she's beloved, too. I mean, like that's another thing about the film is that she wouldn't be there, even in that state, if those friends didn't love her.

00:29:30 Lesley Guest Yes. I mean, they do eventually get rather irritated, 'cause she's interrupting the kind of order and family stability of their life. You know, here's this tornado that turns up on a Sunday and behaves quite badly, at times. Especially towards their son and his new girlfriend.

00:29:55 Jesse Host You know, one of the themes that that movie shares with *Mum* is kind of engaging with the question of what are the possibilities and lack of possibilities of late middle age.

[Lesley agrees.]

Like that—*Another Year* feels like this story of contrasts of people—these people who are engaging that part of their lives in very different ways. You know, *Mum* is about someone who is—who has both like learned to be generous with everyone around her and is also being generous with herself about starting a new thing, having lost her husband. And *Another Year* feels like a really deep—at least felt to me, when I watched it—like a very deep engagement of the tragedy of late middle age, which is that you don't always get to make a new choice. You don't always get to open up a new road.

00:30:59 Lesley Guest No. No. I mean, obviously Mary—in *Another Year*—was about ten years ago, so I was ten years younger. So, there was something more desperate about Mary. I mean, you're right; those comparisons are absolutely spot on. But she was—you know, the ship had sailed to have a child. And she was just a different personality. You know. She desperately wanted to cling onto her youth and her looks. And you know, she dressed—some would say, some would not—that she probably dressed a bit inappropriately for her age, and she wasn't very sophisticated. She wasn't embracing getting older. And she—which she could've done. You know. She was not a bad looking woman. She was just desperately clinging on and really, totally misjudging the situation with her friends' son who

she seriously thought she could get into some kind of relationship and that he would find her attractive and want to be with her.

And it's not that she wasn't attractive. But it was that there was no way this stable young man was going to be attracted by this totally chaotic, alcoholic, desperate woman. And what's different about Cathy in *Mum* is that she has had a full and fulfilled life. She was married to a man who she had a good relationship with. She had love. She's had a child. She does—you know, a nice job. She works in children's school. You know, it's all gentle, positive things. So, her reevaluation of her life, post the death of her husband, is a very different scenario. But what I love about *Mum* and what's I think one of the reasons why it's been received so enthusiastically and brilliantly—certainly in the UK thus far—is that it looks at people over 50, over 60, who are just forming a love affair. You know, they're—that part of their lives is not shut off and done with.

I think a lot of women are very happy to see something like that portrayed. They feel they're being represented. And also that—you know, as I've said in the press before, in a slightly exaggerated way—'cause I'm trying to make a point—you know, in a *Guardian* interview recently [*chuckling*], I kind of, in a rather extravagant way, said, "I wanna go out and dance 'til three in the morning and get drunk and drink too much and have sex." You know. Which people have taken a bit literally.

[*Jesse laughs.*]

But I'm sort of making a point that—you know, just because you are over 50, it doesn't mean that those feelings stop and that you don't—you know, you don't want a good time. You don't wanna misbehave. You know, some people think, "Oh, well, you're a 50-year-old woman. Should you really be dancing and getting sweaty and flirting?" Hell yes, you should! And if you want to, you can do it! I mean, Cathy's not like that, obviously. She's much more well-behaved, and she wouldn't—

[*Jesse laughs.*]

She wouldn't even think that she would go out and get drunk. She'd probably stay at home and get drunk, but she might not wanna go dancing like I do. But it's just—you know what I'm saying. I'm just—isn't it great that—like *Fleabag* is about a woman—a very different generation—but who's—the great thing about that show is that she doesn't care! You know, that anything goes! And that the show has shown a woman of that age not caring. It's just breaking some glass ceilings, really.

[*Music fades in.*]

00:35:00	Jesse	Host	Well, Lesley Manville, thank you so much for being on <i>Bullseye</i> . It's so great to get to talk to you.
00:35:05	Lesley	Guest	Thank you! It's been really nice talking to you too.
00:35:07	Jesse	Host	Leslie Manville from 2019. You can catch her in the most recent season of <i>The Crown</i> . That's on Netflix. The British sitcom in which she starred, <i>Mum</i> , is on Hoopla and BritBox, among other platforms. And hey, I'm gonna drop a recommendation here. If

00:35:38	Music	Transition	you've never seen <i>Another Year</i> , it is just an absolute character masterpiece. It is funny and sad and sweet. It's just an incredible movie. And Lesley is extraordinary in it. So, go rent that.
00:35:44	Music	Transition	Buzzy, chiming synth.
00:35:46	Jesse	Host	Brassy, relaxed music. 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. Although, I will say, today I was in our office in MacArthur Park, because my daughter got obsessed with the idea of buying a bootleg DVD. So, I bought—for \$2 on MacArthur Park—a bootleg copy of <i>Star Wars: The Last Jedi</i> . Rian Johnson, if you're listening, my apologies. I owe you \$2.

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 help booking from Mara Davis. Our interstitial music is by DJW, AKA Dan Wally. Our theme song is "Huddle Formation" by the band The Go! Team. Thanks to The Go! Team. Thanks to their label, Memphis Industries.

Bullseye is on YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook. You can follow us in any of those places. We will share our interviews with you. And we do hope that if you heard something you enjoyed on this week's show, you'll share it with somebody. I think that's about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.

00:36:59	Promo	Promo	Speaker: <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.
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[Music fades out.]