

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.
00:00:26	Jesse Thorn	Host	It’s Bullseye. I’m Jesse Thorn. Time now for a segment we call The Song That Changed My Life—a chance for musicians and artists to tell us about the music that made them who they are. <i>[Music fades in.]</i>
00:00:42	Music	Music	And today, we’ve got Todd Rundgren. “International Feel” from the album <i>A Wizard, a True Star</i> by Todd Rundgren. <i>Here we are again The start of the end But there’s more</i> <i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i>
00:00:51	Jesse	Host	Todd Rundgren is a soft rock superstar, like on 1972’s <i>Something/Anything?</i> .
00:00:58	Music	Music	“I Saw the Light” from the album <i>Something/Anything?</i> by Todd Rundgren. <i>‘Cause I saw the light in your eyes In your eyes</i> <i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i>
00:01:09	Jesse	Host	And the man is a fun pop singer, too. We all like “Bang on the Drum All Day”, right?
00:01:14	Music	Music	“Bang the Drum All Day” from the album <i>The Ever Popular Tortured Artist Effect</i> by Todd Rundgren. <i>Alright, everybody now!</i> <i>I don’t want to work I want to bang on the drum all day</i> <i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i>
00:01:41	Jesse	Host	He’s a Rock and Roll Hall of Famer. He’s recorded dozens of his own albums, produced dozens more for acts like XTC, Hall & Oates, Sparks, and others. At 74 years old, he’s still doing it all. He just released a live album called <i>The Individualist, A True Star Live</i> .
00:02:02	Music	Music	“Open My Eyes” from the album <i>The Individualist, A True Star Live</i> by Todd Rundgren. <i>Underneath your gaze I was found in The haze I’m wandering around in</i>

*I am lost in the dark of my own room
And I can't see a thing but the fire in your eyes*

Clear my eyes, make me wise

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

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| 00:02:18 | Jesse | Host | When we asked Todd Rundgren about the song that changed his life, he told us about a bunch of possibilities. But eventually, he landed on one of the most iconic and most improbable hit rock songs of all time. “Louie, Louie” by The Kingsmen. Here’s Todd Rundgren. |
| 00:02:38 | Todd Rundgren | Guest | Hi, everybody. This is Todd Rundgren. We’re talking about a song that changed my life—maybe not <u>the</u> song, but definitely a song that had a big impact on me and, in my opinion, a big impact on music in general. In a way, I’m sort of haunted by this song. <i>[Chuckles.]</i> I believe the first time I ever heard “Louie, Louie” was probably—I was in junior high school or high school, and my avocation had nothing to do with school, I just wanted to have a band. And early on, we had to learn, oh, 15 or 20 minutes worth of material. One of our salvations was the song “Louie, Louie”, because A) it was so simple to learn. It didn’t have a whole lot of parts to it. It also was unintelligible, from a lyrical standpoint—which meant that anybody could just get up there and fake their way through it. |
| 00:03:41 | Music | Music | “Louie, Louie” from the album <i>The Kingsmen in Person</i> by The Kingsmen.

<i>Louie, Louie, oh no, you take me where ya gotta go
Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, baby
Louie, Louie, oh baby, take me where ya gotta go</i> |
| 00:03:56 | Todd | Guest | <i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]</i>
I have heard rumors that there are certain songs—“Louie, Louie” being amongst them—in which the unintelligibility of the lyrics suggests that something lewd might be afoot. You know? And parents would make demands to actually find out what it was. And law enforcement was often involved. But it’s kind of—he kind of goes with that conservative kind of thinking that you don’t want your kids to know anything you don’t already know. And as a matter of fact, in our adolescent years, if a song came out and you couldn’t understand the words, you assumed that they were dirty, and it made you even more interested in the song. |
| 00:04:44 | Music | Music | <i>[Volume increases.]</i>

<i>Louie, Louie, oh no, me gotta go
Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, baby
Louie, Louie, oh baby, said we gotta go
Okay, let's give it to 'em right now</i> |
| 00:05:01 | Todd | Guest | <i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]</i>
And if you were in a band, you had to learn how to play “Louie, Louie”. And at the time, I didn’t realize how seminal it was, in terms of rock music in general. |

[The music plays along with his description.]

00:05:32 Music Music That particular pattern of “Louie, dot, dot, dot. Da-da, da-da-dat, da-da.” [Chuckles.] That would, years and years later, appear in if not a few, maybe dozens of pop songs that became usually popular. “More Than a Feeling” by Boston. You know? [Hums the tune.] “More Than a Feeling” from the album *Boston* by Boston.

*It’s more than a feeling
(More than a feeling)*

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

00:05:44 Todd Guest A few little changes in the chord, but that same kind of “bop, bop, bop, bop-bop” thing. You know? “Smells Like Teen Spirit” by Nirvana.

00:05:53 Music Music “Smells Like Teen Spirit” from the album *Nevermind* by Nirvana.

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

00:06:01 Todd Guest When I say that “Louie, Louie” is a haunting song, it’s just that you hear it in other things. It’s probably subconscious, most of the time. But that points out kind of that seminal, almost subconscious nature of it—the way it—you hear it the first time and then you don’t understand the words. You don’t actually know what the song’s about, but you never forget it. As the years go by, you realize that it’s stuck in a lot of people’s heads. And it may be subconscious to most of us, but there’s something actually mystical in those—in those three chords and the way they’re played.

00:06:42 Music Music “Louie, Louie” from the album *The Kingsmen in Person* by The Kingsmen.

Louie, Louie, oh no, you take me where ya gotta go

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

00:06:56 Todd Guest My humble opinion is that “Louie, Louie” is kind of one of the seminal songs of what we’ve come to know as jock rock or frat rock—a kind of song that men mostly like to sing and mostly like to sing when they’re drunk. It doesn’t have the same effect on them when they’re sober, but when they’re drunk [laughing] they can’t help themselves. You know, I’ve seen it happen in other contexts. Like, if you’ve ever been to Oktoberfest, in Munich. You know, you would think it would be nothing but polka music. No, but the audience sings the loudest and gets up on their feet the most for a song like “Country Roads, Take Me Home”.

00:07:38 Music Music “Take Me Home, Country Roads” from the album *Poems, Prayers & Promises* by John Denver.

Country roads, take me home

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]

00:07:40 Todd Guest You know. [Chuckles.] Because of that one. [Singing.] “Where I belong.” Everyone wants to yell that thing out.

00:07:46 Music Music [Volume increases.]

I belong

West Virginia

00:07:52	Todd	Guest	<p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]</i> And I think that, you know, “Louie, Louie” has that certain quality about it.</p>
00:07:56	Music	Music	<p>“Louie, Louie” from the album <i>The Kingsmen in Person</i> by The Kingsmen.</p>
			<p><i>Louie, Louie, oh no, no, no, we gotta go</i></p>
00:08:03	Todd	Guest	<p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i> I’ve heard stories about why the vocal seems so garbled on the song. And what I heard was that the owner of the studio had just gotten a brand new and very expensive microphone and that the singer of The Kingsmen tended to spit a lot when he was singing. And the guy with the brand-new microphone got so upset about it that he just kept raising it higher and higher in the room so that the lead singer wouldn’t be able to reach it with his spit. And so, by the time he was satisfied that the microphone would not be sullied, it was about a foot and half above the singer’s head. And like everything else in the room was getting into it. So, I love that kind of stuff. You know? Because you think everything is purposeful when you’re listening to a record.</p>
			<p>One of the things that I learned as I became a record producer is you don’t get too anal about the sound and stuff, because when people hear a record for the first time, they think, “That’s exactly how it’s supposed to sound.” And that it sounds that way because they meant for it to sound that way. And then, to find out—you know—that it was something as kind of petty <i>[chuckling]</i> and pedestrian as the guy not wanting to get spit on his microphone that defined the entire sound of the record.</p>
00:09:26	Music	Music	<p><i>[Volume increases.]</i></p>
			<p><i>Let’s go!</i></p>
00:09:30	Todd	Guest	<p><i>[Song ends.]</i> When I was asked to recall a song that changed my life, there were quite obviously a lot of alternative answers I could’ve given that would’ve been equally honest and ultimately equally obtuse, because you live in your own subjective reality and every change that you go through is a change in your life. So, I thought it could have been “The Chipmunk Song”—the Christmas songs by The Chipmunks, because that was the first song that I ever learned to play on the guitar.</p>
00:10:07	Music	Music	<p>“The Chipmunk Song” from the album <i>Let’s All Sing with The Chipmunks</i> by Alvin and the Chipmunks.</p>
			<p><i>Please, Christmas, don’t be late!</i></p>
00:10:17	Todd	Guest	<p><i>[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue then fades out.]</i> I was like maybe six or seven years old. I couldn’t play any chords. The guitar was a really cheap sort of acoustic knockoff. And I not only didn’t get to the chord part in the few lessons I took, but also</p>

my hands were not strong enough to play whole chords, so I would pick out melodies. And the very first one that I picked out was “The Christmas Song” by the Chipmunks. And I think the next one that I picked out—although I believe it was the reason why I pressured my parents into getting me a guitar. It was the Ventures’ “Walk, Don’t Run”.

00:10:56 Music Music “Walk, Don’t Run” from the album *Walk Don’t Run* by The Ventures.

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

00:11:06 Todd Guest And then, that was the second thing I learned to play, just the melody of it. I couldn’t play the chords. But it’s just a weird combination of things that drive you forward or that inspire you to try and learn them. My guitar lessons, they never taught me anything that I wanted to learn. So, I just started picking out the things that I most enjoyed hearing or that I thought I understood, musically. And that’s what got me started as a guitar player. I think at one point, we got a fraternity gig. We had to go drive into downtown Philadelphia and set up our stuff. And I think it was somebody’s apartment—fairly large apartment, ‘cause it was very crowded. And it was probably the ideal audience for a song like “Louie, Louie”.

[“Louie, Louie” fades in.]

Because it’s got that singalong quality about it and the fact that they’re all drunk, and they don’t know the words anyway doesn’t alter what happens. We didn’t have any original material at all. We would do a lot of Beatles and Rolling Stones and whatever it is we thought we could comprehend. And that set the stage for my eventual success, I guess, as a guitar player. Starting out, I wasn’t a songwriter. I wasn’t a singer. All I wanted to do was be a guitar player. So, I started emulating and following and copying other guitar players like Jeff Beck and Eric Clapton and started learning blues material, which is essentially what “Louie, Louie” was. *[Chuckles.]* You know? It was kind of a typical 12-bar thing.

Actually, “Louie, Louie”’s much simpler than that. But we weren’t interested in doing it because of the fact that it fit into any particular sort of genre or time period or cultural ethic or anything like that. It just had that thing. It had that thing where you think, “I can do that.” You know, even when you’re young, sometimes you’re able to detect when something is like pretentious or self-consciously trying to get you to like it. And the sense you just got was that these guys were having fun. You know? That they realized that the music was for fun and they embodied that in that moment that they recorded “Louie, Louie”, they embodied all the fun that it could be. And that was as much a reason why we wanted to do it as anything.

00:13:57 Music Music “Louie, Louie” from the album *The Kingsmen in Person* by The Kingsmen.

*Me see Jamaica, the moon above
It won’t be long...*

[Volume decreases and continues under the dialogue.]

00:14:04 Jesse Host Todd Rundgren on the song that changed his life: “Louie, Louie” by The Kingsmen. Todd’s new album is called *The Individualist, A True*

Star Live and it's available to buy or stream right now. And hey, how about this? If you're a fan of "Louie, Louie", our old pal and former Bullseye producer, Nick White, made a great music podcast for KCRW, called *Lost Notes*. And it had an awesome episode about "Louie, Louie".

00:14:33 Music Music

[Volume increases.]

Let's go!

[Song ends.]

00:14:39 Music Transition
00:14:44 Jesse Host

Chiming synth with a steady beat.

That's the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye* is created from the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California. Here at my house, I have decided that playing *Skyrim* is self-care.

The show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our senior producer is Kevin Ferguson. Our producers are Jesus Ambrosio and Richard Robey. Our production fellows at Maximum Fun are Tabatha Myers and Bryanna Paz. We get help booking from Mara Davis. Our interstitial music is composed and provided to us by DJW, also known as Dan Wally. Our theme song is by The Go! Team. It's called "Huddle Formation" The Go! Team rules. Thanks to them and their label, Memphis Industries.

Bullseye is also on YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook. You can find us in any of those places. Follow us. We will share with you all of our interviews. And I think that's about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.

00:15:45 Promo Promo

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

[Music fades out.]