

00:00:00	Music	Transition	Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue.
00:00:01	Promo	Promo	<b>Speaker:</b> <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of <a href="http://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> and is distributed by NPR.
00:00:13	Music	Transition	<i>[Music fades out.]</i> “Huddle Formation” from the album <i>Thunder, Lightning, Strike</i> by The Go! Team. A fast, upbeat, peppy song. Music plays as Jesse speaks, then fades out.
00:00:17	Jesse Thorn	Host	It’s <i>Bullseye</i> . I’m Jesse Thorn. My next guest is one of the greatest cinematographers in the world, Roger Deakins. He got his start as a director of photography in 1977, on the pulpy British drama <i>Cruel Passion</i> . Since then, he’s collaborated with John Sayles, David Mamet, Martin Scorsese, Ron Howard, Sam Mendes, Denis Villeneuve, and perhaps most famously, Joel and Ethan Coen.  Roger Deakins helped shoot more than half of the Coen Brothers’ films, including <i>Fargo</i> and <i>O Brother, Where Art Thou</i> , and <i>No Country for Old Men</i> . Deakins won the Academy Award for Best Cinematography in 2018, for <i>Bladerunner 2049</i> . He won again for the war drama <i>1917</i> . He’s nominated for what could be his third Oscar this year, for his part in Sam Mendes’ <i>Empire of Light</i> . So, let’s just agree on this: this man is accomplished in his field—one of the greatest ever. And if he wanted to try his hand at something else, he’d probably be great at that too.  And it turns out, he has. A couple of years back, Roger Deakins published his first ever book of photography. <i>Byways</i> is a collection of photos Deakins has taken between 1971 and now. Unlike his meticulously planned onscreen work, these are casual street photographs. And you can tell his gift with a camera isn’t limited to motion pictures. Deakins isn’t just <i>[chuckling]</i> a great picture maker, he is also an incredible talker.  <i>[Music fades in.]</i>  It was so great to get to talk to him. Here’s my conversation with Roger Deakins.
00:02:05	Music	Transition	Chiming synth with light vocalizations.
00:02:08	Jesse	Host	Roger Deakins, welcome to <i>Bullseye</i> . It’s so nice to have you on the show. I really enjoyed looking at your book.
00:02:12	Roger Deakins	Guest	Thanks. Good to be here.
00:02:14	Jesse	Host	In the introduction to your book, you ask yourself the question of why you are making this book and suggest maybe vanity. But could we say maybe some pride, rather than vanity? I know that they’re both <i>[chuckles]</i> deadly sins or whatever. But—
00:02:33	Roger	Guest	Well, yeah, I don’t know. But you could also say it was something to do!
			<i>[They laugh.]</i>  No, you know, I mean, I’ve taken pictures on and off all my life. And you know, it was during covid lockdown. My wife, James, said—she said, um, “Well, now’s the time we could look for a publisher, see what we can do.”

00:02:53 Jesse Host Did you have a looot of pictures around? Or relatively few?  
 00:02:57 Roger Guest No, I'm very selective as I go through it. You know. Quite often—I mean, I don't have very many negatives. And nowadays, digitally, I wipe anything I don't like. So. *[Chuckles.]* I don't keep very many at all. And I don't take very many pictures, even when—you know, I go out for a day with the intent of taking pictures. And then, most days I'll come back without a single frame. You know, there's nothing that I really wanted to take a picture of. So.

00:03:24 Jesse Host I mean, I think of you traveling all around the world doing cinematography, and I'm like how could you possibly do an additional thing on a day when you are being the cinematographer of a movie! Like, I can't even imagine making it to eating lunch! You know what I mean?

00:03:42 Roger Guest Yeah, yeah, yeah. No, it is a—it's also a totally different mindset. I mean, even when I was shooting documentaries, when I was starting out in film—I sometimes would carry a stills camera, but I could never use it. 'Cause I was concentrating on what I was gonna shoot for the film. And it's—I think it is a different mindset. When I'm wandering around with a stills camera, I'm looking for those sort of odd, little quirky things that catch my eye. And that's different than telling a narrative story. You know.

00:04:09 Jesse Host We have a former colleague who is a photography podcaster, and he like teaches street photography classes and takes beautiful, beautiful pictures. And one time, he—you know, I was like, "Ibarionex, come by the office and like we'll all just take three hours off. Take us out front on the street and show us some stuff." And I guess I just hadn't thought about it, but he would walk around until he saw just a pattern that he liked, and then he would say, "And then, I'll just stand here for an hour or so." *[Laughs.]*

*[Roger affirms.]*

And like, that is in itself like a very different process from cinematography, where everything is always in motion, and you're capturing time over—you know—long periods, and you're telling people what to do, or the director is telling people what to do. Like, Ibarionex would just set up in one spot where he saw something that might happen that he might like and wait for the tiniest moment ever. And a lot of the pictures in your book are that kind of picture, and it's such a different kind of thing.

00:05:29 Roger Guest Yeah. I don't often do that. I know the still photographer that inspired me most was when I was at art college with Roger Mayne. I don't know if you know his work. He's one of the first actually street photographers. He photographed northwest London in the '50s. And he said, you know, he would stand on a street corner for hours until people didn't take any notice of him. And they would just go along with their daily lives. I can't do that. And I feel very self-conscious. So, I kind of use the excuse of taking photographs as time to explore places. I'll like—when I go somewhere new, like we were in Norway, in Oslo, a few months ago for a documentary film festival. And when we weren't doing any part of the event, I would just wander around the city.

But I wouldn't stop anywhere. I'd just wander around 'til something caught my eye. And it was just a way of exploring the city, but also I

thought I did get a couple of photographs I really like! You know, it's that kind of thing.

00:06:31 Jesse Host One of your first jobs was as a still photographer, and a lot of these pictures come from that job. Tell me how you ended up taking all these pictures of the seaside in the '70s, I guess. Early '70s?

00:06:47 Roger Guest No. Well, actually, no. The first job I had, I was at art college, and I kind of—at art college, I kind of discovered that maybe I should—I discovered still photography. But then, I thought about documentary filmmaking, and I applied to National Film School. And it had just opened. It was the first year the National Film School opened in England. And I didn't get accepted. But I went to talk to the principal there and asked why I didn't get accepted. And they said, "Well, if you come back next year, you'll probably get a place." And I was lucky enough in the interim year to be offered this job at this art center in North Devon. And I'm from Devon. I'm from the countryside, really.

And so, I had this year just wandering around North Devon, photographing rural life, basically. That was the brief, to start a kind of record of rural life. I don't think I was very good at it, 'cause I—I mean, if something didn't catch my eye as a frame or a certain moment, then I wouldn't take the picture. But really, I was meant to be recording everything and anything. But that was a great year, I think, for me. And yes, in the book, some of the photographs are from there. But then, the seaside pictures—I mean, some of them I took just a couple of years ago.

00:08:08 Jesse Host Let me ask you about those oldest ones, the ones of the countryside. I mean, there are like—there's a really intense picture of what looks like a farmer burying some dead calves or dead lambs.

00:08:21 Roger Guest Lambs, yeah.

00:08:23 Jesse Host In general, they truly look like photographs from—to me—from another world. Like they could be pictures of something happening in *All Creatures Great and Small* in 1937 or they could've been photographs of something happening in 1895 or something.

00:08:41 Roger Guest Yeah, but I mean, we're sitting in Los Angeles.

00:08:45 Jesse Host Yeah, well, what I'm wondering is—when you took these pictures, you know, 50 years ago—and, you know, being from that part of England, to what extent did you see the people that you were photographing as being apart from you and like what—to what extent did you see them being native to you? You know what I mean?

00:09:05 Roger Guest Oh, very much part of me. And my grandfather had a small sort of building contractors' company that my dad took over. But he also had kind of a bit of a small farm. So, yeah, I seem very connected to that whole area. So—but I could take you to places now in North Devon, particularly on Dartmoor, and you would see more or less the same thing. You know, the people lambing in the spring and trying to—you know, and then the yew has too many lambs and can't look after them. They take one of the lambs and then try and put it with another yew that hasn't had a successful birth, and then that sort of thing. And they're burying these lambs or they're carrying them so that the mother will follow them up the field.

And so, all the pictures are—I could basically show you the same thing happening today. You know.

00:10:00	Jesse	Host	We have so much more to get into. Stay with us. It's <i>Bullseye</i> , from <a href="http://MaximumFun.org">MaximumFun.org</a> and NPR.
00:10:08	Music	Transition	Thumpy synth with light vocalizations.
00:10:12	Jesse	Host	Welcome back to <i>Bullseye</i> . I'm Jesse Thorn. If you're just joining us, my guest is Roger Deakins. He's an Academy Award-winning cinematographer who's worked with the Coen Brothers, Martin Scorsese, Sam Mendes, and many, many more. He's also a still photographer. He recently released a collection of his photographs. It's called <i>Byways</i> . Let's get into the rest of our conversation.
			A lot of your early cinematography work was in documentaries. Did you get those jobs out of the photography or—? You're shaking your head no.
00:10:49	Roger	Guest	No, I didn't. No. It was nothing to do with that, really. The photography got me in the National Film School. And there's no question about that. That and actually I wrote a couple of scripts. I don't know what they were like, but I'm sure the photography got me in! Actually, somebody said they liked the script! I should go back to it. But the film school—I went back to North Devon. Some of the people that are in the photographs, I went and saw them. And I made a film about a stag hunt, which is—now doesn't happen, but it was a stag hunt in North Devon, and the people involved in it and how much it was part of rural life. So, I made that film at film school. And then, from that film, a lot of other students asked me to shoot their fiction films.
			So, I shot a lot of films while I was at film school—maybe 15 different kinds of movies. And that's what got me work later, when I left. I did a couple of documentaries early on. I did one with some photographs from it—it was actually in the book—about the 'round the world yacht race. I helped crew on a yacht for nine months in this race around the world. But I'm making a film at the same time. And that, I think—it was interesting, 'cause actually you might know Chris Menges, but he was—he was offered the film, but he didn't wanna do it for this TV company. And he was starting to do drama. So, I had met him, and I think he recommended me to the TV producer that was producing this.
00:12:24	Jesse	Host	I watched some of that movie. It's on—I'm sure you can get it by paying for it. I happen to have watched it on a, uh, popular video watching website.
00:12:33	Roger	Guest	Oh, really?
00:12:34	Jesse	Host	Yeah. And it is <u>really</u> intense, because—I think—well, first of all, I mean as with the still photographs of that time in your life that are in this book—and there are a few—you know. There's just the ocean, who's very intense and threatening. But <i>[chuckles]</i> —
00:12:54	Roger	Guest	It certainly felt that way when I was on that boat, yeah. <i>[Chuckles.]</i>
00:12:57	Jesse	Host	But besides that, it's like the juxtaposition of this like infinite water of the ocean and just the closeness of being on a boat with other people. And the emotional intensity of being on a boat with other people.
00:13:16	Roger	Guest	That was really the brief. That's what we were—we were trying to get—I say "we". I was there with a sound recordist, Noel Smart, who is a better sailor than I was. I had never sailed in a yacht really, apart from a small dingy in Torquay one time. <i>[Clears throat.]</i> So, suddenly sailing around the world on this 55-foot catch was kind of a new experience! But yeah, what we were trying to get was the

feeling of this: how do people cope? How do they relate in a confined space under sort of extreme conditions? But of course, we were part of the subject as well as *[chuckling]* trying to make the film. And we were also—we were doing our watches. We were doing our bit. We were crewing the yacht like anybody else.

00:14:27 Jesse Host So, it was kind of—it was kind of a hard film to make. It was hard to get up when you weren't on watch, when you were sleeping in your bunk. It was hard to get up and get the camera and go out on deck and start shooting. You know? It was—that was a tough one. But I—that was the idea, to get some sense of what it's like to be there and the characters and how they related to each other on that boat. When you're shooting film especially, particularly when you don't have a lot of control—like in a documentary—how do you know that you're doing a good job? Like, how do you know that you're getting what you want?

00:14:42 Roger Guest *[Sighs into a laugh.]* But how do you know? I mean, it's just sort of instinctive I guess. You know. Experience and instinct. I mean, maybe I never did! You know, I don't know I guess.

*[They laugh.]*

I suppose it's personal taste, isn't it? You know. I mean, where you put the camera. I put it somewhere over here and you put it somewhere over there. I mean, it's just—it's personal choice, really. How do you know you're getting something good? I used to feel this on documentaries. I did—one of the early films I shot was in Zimbabwe when it was still Rhodesia. And it was like, we went in there sort of undercover during—this is during the war, really. When Ian Smith was the—you know, White guy in power. We went in as though we were shooting a tourist film, which was quite ridiculous at that point in the war. And we got thrown out, as it happened. But I remember shooting stuff with—I didn't speak Swahili, but I remember shooting stuff, and you just get an instinct for when something's interesting and when it's actually better to be on somebody's reaction rather than the person talking.

The sense—you get a feeling of what's happening in the environment around you and how those people are really feeling. And you just get a sense through looking at them, visually. And sometimes—I mean, I remember just shooting some people talking and just thinking, "God, that was really good." But I have no idea what they said. And then, you have it translated and you think, "Yeah, that was—that was funny." That's strange how that worked. You know.

00:16:21 Jesse Host So much of the work of a cinematographer in a scripted feature film is about like preparation and establishing control over what's going to happen—like the director wants this. You have these sub ideas that you're executing. You want this many lumens or candle powers from this light. And you know, *[inaudible]* like show up early to plan it out or you make a diagram or something.

00:17:06 Roger Guest By the time you have done all of that, how do you retain the feeling of, "I'm gonna capture an accident."

Yeah, well, that's the trick really. Isn't it? You've gotta be open to throwing it all away. Yeah, no. That is the trick. But I love the idea of

studying a scene or studying the overall concept of the film and having a very—you know, because when you—like when you do storyboards, you think about a scene and talk about it over and over again. You really analyze what you need to make that scene have its most effect on an audience. But when you've got the essence of it and then you can throw that away if you see something that's gonna give you that but in a different way—if you get what I mean. I think that—it is a trap when you do storyboards and you stick religiously to those storyboards.

I did do one film where the director said, "I don't wanna change anything from the storyboards." So, all the actors had to stand in exactly the place they were drawn in a drawing! Weeks beforehand we'd done all these storyboards. And I thought they were quite good, but I wouldn't have stuck to that, 'cause some of the actors would come and say, "Yeah, but I mean, if I was over here—"

And you go, yeah, that's great. And maybe I'd be setting up a shot and the director wasn't there, and the director would come and say, "No, no, no. It's gotta be—that's not the storyboard. This is what we're gonna do." And I find that really constricting.

00:18:27 Jesse Host

I was listening to your podcast with Robert Eggers, the director, and his cinematographer. And their movies are sooo aesthetically intense, visually intense. And your wife, James, I think, sort of suggested to them they must storyboard a lot. And Robert Eggers immediately like—it was—he's a very—seems like a very pleasant man. He was when he was in here.

*[Roger agrees.]*

But he like recoiled to clarify that like actually, his great inspiration is Werner Herzog who says like if *[chuckles]*—if you storyboard a film, the best you can produce is kitsch, or something like that. But then, he admitted that like at a certain point of complexity and like the number of animals in a movie, he does actually storyboard everything. *[Chuckles.]* But I thought of your job, which there's so many points on that spectrum that you're coming in. There are movies where you're involved in the storyboarding. There are movies that are storyboarded out where your job is to execute that storyboard. There are movies where there is relatively little storyboarding. There's a shot list, and you're there. And you and the director are figuring out what the shot is when you get there.

00:19:43 Roger Guest

Yeah, just to clarify, I've never shot a film where I've been given storyboards and told that's what we're gonna shoot. I wouldn't have taken the job. You know, Joel and Ethan sometimes would storyboard a film, and I wouldn't be there in the early process, but then we'd all sit down and—

00:20:56 Jesse Host

That's Joel and Ethan Coen. Yeah.

00:20:58 Roger Guest

Coen, yeah. But then, we'd sit down and go through it. And on *Barton Fink*, the first time I worked with him, we sat together in a hotel room for five weeks, I think, while we were scouting for locations. But we would sit there and go through the storyboards and do it together. So, you know, I've always been involved in that process. I mean, we spent months with Denis Villeneuve before we did *Bladerunner*. I mean literally spent months with him talking through the script and ideas and doing storyboards. But then, the

other side of it is also I love—because when I first worked with Sam Mendes on a film called *Jarhead*—which I think is one of my favorite films I’ve ever worked on—I had heard from Conrad Hall, who had worked with Sam a couple of times previously, that Sam liked to storyboard everything and really do a lot of prep.

[*Chuckles.*] And so, I’m meeting with Sam. We’re out in the desert, looking at locations. And he said, “I don’t wanna storyboard. You know, we’ll choose the location, but I think we should shoot it all handheld and just shoot rehearsals. And just figure it out as we go along with the actors.” And I went okay, that’s great! You know. That’s fine. So, I’m shooting it handheld like I was doing a documentary. You know. And I loved it.

00:21:13 Jesse Host

I wanna ask you about some of these filmmakers that you’ve worked with. And I’m glad you brought up the Coen brothers, ‘cause you shot a lot of Coen brothers movies. Coen brothers movies, the visual aesthetics are very like distinctive, very mannered often. And I don’t mean that negatively, but like they really aren’t afraid to go for it in terms of the camera. Right? Not just that the picture on the screen is beautiful, but they will really—they’ll have bold choices. [*Chuckles.*] To the point where like, you know, before they made so many good movies that nobody could ever complain, the complaint about them—right?—was that they were like self-parodic or they were parodying good movies by being too cute or something, with which I disagree.

But what’s it like to work on a movie with guys who are that kind of inventive visually?

00:22:18 Roger Guest

Well, I’ve been very lucky to work with them for so long. I mean, I had a really great time. I mean, the first one I was also talking about earlier, *Barton Fink*—I mean, such a stylized—I mean, the camera in that film is a character. It’s like a character itself, observing this world. But you say they have a particular style. I mean, I guess they do, but then if you look at *Fargo*—when we started talking about *Fargo* and the look of *Fargo*, they said, “Well, it wants to be observational. We’re telling a true story.” You know? The header at the front says “this is a true story”. I mean, obviously it’s not. But they wanted to shoot it like on a 40-mil. They want it to be more observational. They didn’t want to do tracking shots. And you know, they wanted—I mentioned doing it more like a Ken Loach movie.

00:23:08 Jesse Host

Let me be the first to say, *Fargo’s* a great movie. [*Chuckles.*] But like, it has a very flat quality that matches the milieu of the northern Midwest. And like, it has a lot of natural beauty, but all of that natural beauty is presented very flatly. You know, it’s like blood in the snow you can almost imagine spreading out on the screen at 90 degrees from the ground. You know what I mean? Like—and that is a really significant choice in the context of that film that is, you know, about these crazy things happening and crazy ways of talking and things that are, you know, funny happening in a plain world.

[*Roger agrees.*]

You know what I mean? A real simple, slow world.

00:23:59 Roger Guest Yes. Exactly. And then, you contrast that with, oh, *Lebowski* or *Hudsucker Proxy*, you know—which I think is a great movie, but—you know, people don't. But—

00:24:11 Jesse Host I think it's a hoot and a half.

00:24:12 Roger Guest Yeah. I think it's great. I mean, as you were saying—I mean, there are filmmakers that really go for it. You know? And even their films that are deemed failures are far more interesting than 80% of what's out there. But you contrast a *Fargo* with one of their more stylized movies. So, it's not—they don't have a particular one kind of way of shooting. You know. And that's what's so interesting. You know, the style of the cinematography and the feel of the film fits the story. I remember scouting on *Fargo*, for instance, with him once. And we would go to—I'd go try to find a hotel corridor and a reception desk. And [chuckles] we were standing in this corridor and the production designer was saying, "Well, how about the location?" And I heard her saying, "Well, how about this?"

And Joel and Ethan would walk across the corridor. "It's far too interesting." And you'd look in the corridor and it was like a sofa, a chair, and a picture on the wall. [Chuckles.] And they would say, "Well, maybe if we got rid of the picture and the sofa and just left the chair, maybe it would work." And you would know they were trying to just strip it all down to its barest elements. And I always remember that. That was—that was, I thought, quite brilliant at what it—how it expressed what they were trying to achieve with *Fargo*.

00:25:39 Jesse Host We've got more with Roger Deakins after a quick break. When we come back, we'll talk about whether Deakins's process for shooting movies has changed overtime, especially given how differently we watch films today. It's *Bullseye*, from [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and NPR.

00:25:56 Promo Clip **Music:** Folksy acoustic guitar.

**Evelyn Denton:** Hello dreamers, this is Evelyn Denton, CEO of the only world class, fully immersive theme resort: Steeplechase. You know, I've been seeing more and more reports on the blogs that our beloved park simply isn't safe anymore.

**Emerich Dreadway:** [Stuttering.] M-murdered them?

**Beef Punchley:** I'm gonna wreck it!

**Evelyn:** They say they got mugged by brigands in the fantasy kingdom of Ephemera, or highjacked by space pirates in Infinitum.

**Montrose Pretty:** I mean, I could have a knife.

**Speaker:** My papa said that I needed to do a crime!

**Evelyn:** Friends, I'm here to reassure you that it's all part of the show! These criminals were really just overzealous staff trying to make things a little more magical for our guests. We're just as safe as we've always been. This isn't a county fair, dreamers. This is Steeplechase!

**Justin McElroy:** [As himself.] *The Adventure Zone*, every Thursday at [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org).



00:26:41	Music	Transition	<i>[Music ends.]</i>
00:26:45	Jesse	Host	Thumpy synth with light vocalizations. It's <i>Bullseye</i> . I'm Jesse Thorn. I'm talking with Roger Deakins, the Academy Award-winning cinematographer.
			I wanna ask you about this James Bond movie on which you were DP with Sam Mendes. How do you shoot differently for something that is going to be moving a lot? 'Cause there's—you know, James Bond movies are full of vehicles, fighting, guns and things that go fast, running. When you have to shoot things that are in motion rather than relatively static, how does it change what you have to do?
00:27:25	Roger	Guest	Well, like I said—again, part of the first conversation I had with Sam was he said, "We're not gonna do it any different." And we'd shot, you know, <i>Jarhead</i> and <i>Revolutionary Road</i> by then. He said, "We'll try and do most of it single camera. You know, 'cause— <i>[sighs]</i> I like working single camera. I like that sort of precision of this is the shot for this moment in the film. Obviously, there was scenes in <i>Skyfall</i> where we had multiple cameras. There's a train crash—an underground train crashes in a sort of Victorian underground area. We had 11 cameras on. You know. And every shot is used. And we had a second unit that was working a lot of the time.
			But almost everything we did with the main characters was done first unit and, I said, a lot of it was single camera.
00:28:18	Jesse	Host	There are scenes in that movie that are really incredible that are—there's a fight against like a—shot against a screen with lights moving around.
00:28:31	Roger	Guest	Yeah, jellyfish.
00:28:32	Jesse	Host	Yeah. And it made me think that a lot of the time in movies that you've shot, there is a loot of that frame is in focus. We can see a lot of it. And I wondered if that's something that you in particular think you might like—to be able to see all the stuff that's in the frame rather than, you know, have a subject that's focused and other things that aren't.
00:28:58	Roger	Guest	Yeah, I do tend to like see surrounds. I like seeing a character within an environment. Yeah. I don't like hugely wide lenses very much. I find that a bit self-conscious. You know? It's done quite a lot now—wandering around on a big, wide lens. It doesn't really do much for me.
00:29:15	Jesse	Host	What difference does that make when you make that choice or don't, in terms of how it looks?
00:29:18	Roger	Guest	I feel that it makes it feel unreal to me, that that's not the way I see the world when I'm walking around. I don't feel I'm looking through a fisheye lens or a extreme, wide-angle lens. So, I'm—maybe I'm a bit conventional like that. I like to put the audience in what I feel is a kind of real space. You know?
00:29:38	Jesse	Host	One of the things that's really cool to me about cinematography is it is a visual art—like, absolutely a visual art, like painting or whatever. It's narrative as well, obviously. But it's this beautiful artist's thing. And it is also like architecting and doing math. <i>[Laughs.]</i> Like, you just got so excited talking about building stuff. And I'm sure that every morning when you go to the set, you're like waving those light meters around and writing things on graph paper and stuff. Do you think you would get the same satisfaction out of

00:30:28 Roger Guest your work if there wasn't this piece of it—this big piece of it that is a kind of like problem solving?  
No. I mean, that's what I really love about it. It's—you know, you're hopefully being creative and expressing something of yourself emotionally, whatever. But it also is a technical challenge. There's no doubt about that. But you know one of the things I get most from it is actually the collaboration with other people. I mean, it can be—I don't know who said it—it's the closest thing to socialism when you're doing a film and everybody's working together for a common end. You know?

00:30:57 Jesse Host Do you think that your passion for collaboration is why you have worked primarily as a collaborator, as one of the workers in the socialism rather than the potential despot or benevolent leader?

*[They laugh.]*

00:31:16 Roger Guest Do you think that's why you've mostly been a cinematographer and not a director?

00:31:16 Roger Guest I don't—I don't think I've got the confidence to do that. I feel at home on a set, behind a camera. I don't feel at home in studios and talking to—yeah.

00:31:33 Jesse Host Do you think about the ways that people are gonna experience movies when you think about how to shoot them?

00:31:40 Roger Guest Yeah, but I'm still—I mean, whatever, regardless. I mean, the films I've done; I haven't shot that many movies lately. I'm still working the same way I've always worked, really. You try and create the best image—whatever you think is the best image possible. And yeah, I'm not compromising for somebody watching on their iPhone, which I know people do. But I'm not. I'm composing for a reasonable sized screen, even if it's not a—you know, 45-foot screen anymore. I think—you know, we were talking about this earlier, outside. I mean, even if people are watching it on a 60-inch TV, they're still sitting in the same relationship to that screen as they would be in the middle of a cinema in an audience.

00:32:23 Jesse Host I was about to say, like I love to go to a movie theater because I like cherry coke.

*[They chuckle.]*

And it's hard to find fountain cherry coke otherwise. But I like going to the movie theater because I have ADHD and it makes it easier for me to be immersed in the film and not do something else. And I love the experience of seeing a film. So, that helps. But you know, as much as there is talk about the death of the movie theater and people watching movies at home, the flip side of that is the experience of watching a movie at home is pretty great now! Which it was not. Like, when I was watching all the—you know—movies that I learned about movies from, it was watching them on a—you know. I had a color television, but like—you know, one that's not even the size of a manhole cover or something. You know?

*[Roger agrees.]*

00:33:23 Roger Guest Like I had like an 18-inch TV and a VCR.  
Yeah. I mean, I do love being—you know, in the dark with a group of people and all that and the big screen. Yeah, there's nothing

quite the same. But on the other hand, you know, the other day I just fancied watching *Stalker*. You know, Tarkovsky's *Stalker*. I mean, I love his movies. Now, where could I have seen that? But I sat there, watching it on a 60-inch TV and it was a wonderful experience. So, I'm glad of that. And if it's going that way, I mean [*chuckles*] you know, everybody is of their own time, aren't they? You know, I was brought up watching more movies than people do now in the cinema, because there were more cinemas. In Torquay where I grew up, there used to be five or six cinemas that I could walk to. Okay, it was quite a long walk, but five or six within walking distance of an evening.

Now, there's kind of one. You know. And that was happening way pre covid. It's not covid that's done it, it's just the people's ways of being entertained and taking in information and stimulation has changed. And you know, it's just to say we're creatures of our time. I loved going to the movies and watching all those—in England, watching all those European films. And I'd watch them in a little film society in Torquay, and it would be on 16-mil, 'cause that's all the copies would get. And it would be on a portable screen they just put up in this—it was a gas showroom for god's sake—at night, and it was right on the street, but it was dark. So, it didn't matter. And they put it up, and you'd watch all these wonderful movies, like *Alphaville* and Peter Watkins's *War Game* and [*inaudible*]. All these kind of weird movies that I—you know, they just blew me away.

And so, that's my memory of movie experience. And it's different for people now. Of course, it is.

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|----------|-------|-------|--|
| 00:35:15 | Jesse | Host  | You don't feel like, man, I dedicated my 50 years of doing this and all my expertise and gifts and art into this beautiful film that I'm really proud of, and somebody's gonna watch it with motion smoothing turned on.   |
| 00:35:32 | Roger | Guest | Eh, you know. If they watch it, that's good enough, really. You know, I—you live your life and enjoy the moments. And I go back again to the idea of collaboration and feeling that you achieved something together with other people. And that's the best of it, really. Yeah. I mean, what people think of the movies—I mean, they're not my movies. I shot them, yeah. But—yeah, that's fine. |
| 00:35:58 | Jesse | Host  | There's a picture in your book that is also, I noticed, the cover art of your podcast. It's this picture of a dog. Can you tell me about this picture of a dog?  |
| 00:36:10 | Roger | Guest | Well, somebody came up to us the other day—well, the other day, a few weeks ago we were in Poland, 'cause we had a photo exhibition in Poland. And somebody said, well—something to the effect, "Well, how many dogs suffered to get that shot?" As though somebody was up on the promenade throwing dogs off so we could get this shot of this dog.   |
| 00:36:31 | Jesse | Host  | [ <i>Chuckles.</i> ] And this—the dog in this picture is—you are seeing it from the sort of perspective of someone on a beach and looking up at the berm or whatever it is.  |
| 00:36:42 | Roger | Guest | Yeah. It's a wall.   |
| 00:36:43 | Jesse | Host  | And there's a dog jumping—so, our field of vision is this wall on the left, the sand and beach on the right, the sky up to the upper right, and then just a dog profiled in the middle—in the air, looking at the camera.  |

00:36:59	Roger	Guest	<p>Yeah, well that—the trick was, he’s looking at the camera! And what it was—I mean, James and I were just going for a walk on the beach there at Taymouth. And somebody threw a stick over, and a dog went after it. And I got a quick shot, but it’s just a dog in profile with a stick going down. So, we just stopped there to see what would happen. And sure enough, another stick came over—the same stick. The dog took the stick back up. The guy threw the other stick, and this dog came down. The stick went out of frame, and the dog looked at the camera! And I just thought, wow, that’s really—I hope that comes out! So, it was just—you know, it’s those little serendipity moments where you just get something and you think, “Oh, I really liked that.”</p> <p>But if the dog hadn’t looked at the camera, I don’t think it would’ve been anything.</p>
00:37:43	Jesse	Host	<p>I sure liked seeing the twinkle in your eyes and the corner of your mouth as you thought about that little serendipity of the dog looking at the camera.</p>
00:37:50	Roger	Guest	<p>Yeah! Well, it’s those moments. You know? There’s another shot in the book where I was painting—I’m painting a seafront and they changed it around, and they put this kiddie’s playground in, and they had a carved, wooden lion or some beast-like animal like that. And it was—the lion was there. It was a kind of cold sort of autumn day. But a lion was sitting there. And then, there was this white gull looking up at it. And I only managed to get a shot before the white gull flew off. But I—to me, it was so funny and so interesting that they put in this new playground, the gull was wondering, “What is this thing?” And it’s two creatures—one animated and the other not. You know, looking at each other.</p>
00:38:37	Jesse	Host	<p>I just thought that was—I love that photograph.</p>
00:38:44	Roger	Guest	<p>Well, Roger Deakins, I sure am grateful to you for your amazing work and the great book. I really enjoyed it.</p>
00:38:47	Jesse	Host	<p>Thank you. Thank you so much. That’s great.</p>
			<p>Roger Deakins. His beautiful collection of photography is called <i>Byways</i>. You can buy it on his website or order it from your local bookstore. And we didn’t get much into it today, but Roger is also a podcaster, muscling in on my turf. Roger and his wife, James, cohost the podcast <i>Team Deakins</i>. It is a really fascinating show. They get very inside baseball with incredibly gifted people from the world of film. Famous ones, too. It is really exciting to hear gifted artists speak their own language about their art. Uh, yeah. It’s a really cool show. I listened to a bunch of them as I was preparing for this. Go check it out wherever you get podcasts.</p>
00:39:33	Music	Transition	<p>Buzzy, upbeat synth.</p>
00:39:34	Jesse	Host	<p>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. Look, here in Lincoln Heights, I gotta jump in the van. It’s almost time for the farmer’s market.</p> <p>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 composed and provided to us by DJW, also known as Dan Wally. Our theme song is by The Go!</p>

Team. It's called "Huddle Formation" Our thanks to them and to Memphis Industries, their label, for sharing it with us.

*Bullseye* is on YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook. Follow us in any of those places. 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.

00:40:31    Promo            Promo

**Speaker:** *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn* is a production of [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and is distributed by NPR.

*[Music fades out.]*