

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.
00:00:20	Jesse Thorn	Host	It’s <i>Bullseye</i> . I’m Jesse Thorn. My first guests this week are Rob Thomas and John Enbom. With some friends, they created the TV show <i>Party Down</i> . Now, if you’re not familiar with <i>Party Down</i> , it’s a show with a pretty simple premise. It’s about a group of actors and writers, creative types. Only they don’t work acting and writing. They work at a catering company, Party Down. Every episode of the show is a different party: singles mixers, celebrity birthdays, super sweet 16s. And every week, the Party Down employees get into a mess. Usually, a pathetic mess.  <i>Party Down</i> ran almost 15 years ago, and the third season just premiered. All these years later, there are some new faces on the team. But mostly, things are the same. Or actually, things are worse. I mean, what’s sadder than a failing actor passing out canapés? The same failing actor passing out canapés, only it’s 12 years later. The cast of <i>Party Down</i> are of course not failed actors. Some were stars before the show’s first run. Several have become stars since—Adam Scott, Megan Mullally, Jane Lynch, Lizzy Caplan. Pretty much all of them are back.  Season three kicks off with a reunion. The Party Down team is catering an event for Kyle. He used to work with them. Now, he’s about to be a movie star. He’s played by Ryan Hansen. All the old gang is at the party—some of them doing the catering—so, they decide to grab a group picture.
00:01:59	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:02:00	Clip	Clip	<b>Music:</b> Upbeat music plays in the background.  <b>Ron (<i>Party Down</i>):</b> Okay, get the old team leader! You know, get the whole gang!  <b>Constance:</b> Yeah, but were you in the gang? Weren’t we the gang and you were more management?  <b>Rob:</b> No, I was in the gang!  <b>Sackson:</b> I just gotta say, this is really inspiring. Like, you all used to work at Party Down, and now—  <b>Kyle:</b> Yeah! I mean, I was you ten years ago, man. Now I’m Nitromancer!  <i>[They chuckle.]</i>  <b>Sackson:</b> I mean, Lydia’s a manager! Her daughter’s breaking in in a big way.

**Lydia:** Escapade Dunfree, starring in the *Spring Broken*, March 6<sup>th</sup> everywheeeeere!

**Kyle:** Yeah!

**Constance:** And I'm an actress/playwright. I'm also a widow... slash heiress! Patron and donor of the arts, helping make dreams come true.

**Roman:** And my dream is to be a waiter forever, so that's inspiring as well.

00:02:37 Sound Effect Transition

Music swells and fades.

00:02:41 Jesse Host

*[They chuckle.]*

Well, John and Rob, welcome to *Bullseye!* It's nice to have you on the show.

00:02:44 John Guest

Thank you, we're happy to be here.

00:02:45 Rob Guest

Thanks for having us! Yeah.

00:02:46 Jesse Host

I was pretty deep on *Party Down* when it originally aired, I think in large part because of the—

00:02:51 Rob Guest

You were the guy!

*[They laugh.]*

00:02:52 Jesse Host

Well, here's the thing! So, here's the thing, right? Like, I was still doing this show out of my apartment in Korea Town at the time. I had just moved to LA. And I would email these—it was just me, at the time. And I would email these publicists, and I would try and trick them into thinking my show was consequential. And the people at Starz, I think at the time, were just happy someone had emailed them.

00:03:19 Rob Guest

Right. You didn't even have to convince them. You just—it was just like, "Yeah, they'll—Rob and John'll show up with puppets."

*[They laugh.]*

00:03:25 Jesse Host

I mean, they sent the whole cast one after another in a row! I was like, "This is a great show! Send me the next guy. Send me the next lady. Like, let's do this!"

I read—and I wasn't sure how hyperbolic it was—but I read that the original series finale of *Party Down*, in 2000-whatever, was watched by 13,000 people? Is that real?

00:03:50 John Guest

I actually don't know. I don't—like, we only saw the sheet that had the rating number on it. It didn't have any actual viewer numbers. It was just—it was a 0.0, but I don't know how many units equals a percentage. So, we just looked at that and we were like, "We understand."

*[They laugh.]*

00:04:12 Rob Guest

But I don't know what the actual number was.

Actually, I don't know—I could be making this up. I thought that I had seen the finale number, and it was 60,000. Not 16, six-zero. So, I mean, let's not shortchange us. But we were not setting any records. It was—and then, the sad thing—and I think what really led

to our show's demise was that then they started airing *Spartacus* that attracted a million viewers. And until they—[chuckles] until they did *Spartacus*, they thought 60,000 is as good as it gets. And then, unfortunately, that changed the equation for them.

00:04:53 Jesse Host

You have to have somebody really special to play a sympathetic hero who wants nothing, is kind of a lump—like a real lumpus in the middle, doesn't really do anything funny per se, joke-wise. Like, there's not a lot of—and you, weirdly, had two of those people.

[They chuckle.]

Right? So, like Paul Rudd is the most adorable man on Earth.

[They agree.]

And just before air, you were telling me about something adorable he did that I hope makes it to the internet in time.

[They laugh.]

But like, he's the most adorable man on Earth, but you had also cast in this show Adam Scott. So, by the time HBO decided to not make this a television program and you decided, Rob, to finance shooting a pilot of it yourself—in like the ultimate showbusiness folly.

[They laugh and agree.]

You had a co-creator who had accidentally become a major movie star, and thus couldn't just do a backyard pilot. And you had another guy—Adam Scott—there, who happened to be able to do that thing.

00:06:08 Rob Guest

Right. Um, yeah. I mean, we were fortunate. I met Adam and Paul on the same night, in Austin several years earlier. Paul had done—at that point, had done—

00:06:22 Jesse Host

*Clueless*?

00:06:23 Rob Guest

*Clueless*. And he was big for *Clueless*. Adam had really done nothing, and Paul was—

00:06:30 Jesse Host

High school and—he graduated from high school and college.

00:06:32 Rob Guest

[Laughs.] Yes. And Paul was in Houston, shooting the movie *The Locust*. And he and Adam had heard that Austin was the coolest city—certainly in Texas, if not America. And they were in the [censored] bar, in all of Austin. I was there because I had a friend who tended bar there. And I kept looking at this guy, like I know him from something. And my friend, the bartender, said, "Oh yeah, he was in *Clueless*."

00:07:09 Jesse Host

And when we started talking, I said, "You are in the wrong place." Did you—? Wait, hold on. Did you go up to him and say, "Excuse me, are you the guy from *Clueless*?"

00:07:14 Rob Guest

I did not. We were both sitting at the bar, about four seats over from each other. So, it was—with a bartender in common, so it became very easy to start chatting. And my girlfriend at the time and I ended up taking Paul and Adam out to all the cool haunts of Austin, and ended the night watching *Space Ghost Coast to Coast* until dawn, at my house. And that's how we got to know them. And

then, I became a huge fan of Adam Scott the actor, and had brought him in to—I wanted him to be a series regular on a pilot I did for Fox that they ended up not casting him in. But I became a huge Adam Scott fan.

So, it was not—it was not a hard leap when Paul couldn't do it to go to Adam. I mean, he was one of our faves, both in terms of people and talent.

00:08:20 Jesse Host Now, I have to say, Rob—spending \$150,000 of your own money to shoot a pilot at your house is a stupid thing to do.

00:08:28 Rob Guest Oh my god, you have no idea how stupid. Yes. I used to do stupid things with money before I had a wife and children.

*[They laugh.]*

Those—that really tapered off my “stupid things with money” years. I used to throw one of the great Halloween parties in all of Los Angeles. Again, *[chuckling]* marriage and children ended that pretty quickly.

00:08:57 Jesse Host John, what did you think when your friend said, “Hey, remember that show we wrote? Let's spend all of my money to make our own pilot of it.” The one that—the one that the network didn't want?

00:09:13 John Guest Well, I mean, it wasn't—you know. I hadn't just—it's not like we discussed it and then I just like left town for a year or whatever. It was like we had been working on this and trying to figure out what to do pitching it around, doing all this sort of stuff. So, it had been part of the discussion the whole time. And you know, I went to the Halloween party. I was like, “Sure! Like, this makes sense, as well!”

*[They chuckle.]*

00:09:34 Rob Guest I will say, it's—it—I just so believed in this pilot. I loved it. Like, I was proud of that script. And it's the hardest—it's the hardest bit of writing I think I've ever done, because—you know, I played in a band for nine years, in Austin, before coming out here to be a writer. And the best thing about quitting being in a band was not having to be creative with four other guys. And then, suddenly, writing *Party Down*—it's being creative with three of your friends and suddenly having to fight for every joke, for every line, for every—and it was not—like, we weren't mean to each other. It never like got testy in the room, but it was just hard to please everyone all the time. And I think it made the show better, because everyone was invested. Everyone—

There's no show that I've ever done where we have worked harder on defining character before ever writing a line of the show. Like, who are these people we sat and talked about for three months? Were you building that around actors by then? Or—?

00:10:49 Jesse Host Not really. I mean, we were really just—you know, going very deep into just who these characters are, what makes them funny, what makes them funny together. You know, all these sort of things. But also, because we wanted it to be a comedy about—you know—interesting, weird people who are stuck together and that the comedy would come out of who they were and what that was like to see them stuck together or whatever. So, we had to—you know—go pretty deep into figuring out exactly what they were like and everything so that we could—you know—imagine any scenario and

why it would be funny or whatever. So, we spent a lot of time talking about that stuff. And it's actually one of the reasons that I think we didn't think it was completely insane to like—you know, do this little amateur pilot in the backyard was because—you know. You know, I continue to believe to this day that it's a great logline pitch—you know—idea for a show of cater waiters. Every episode's a different party. You know. We loved it.

And you know, it got us into every room. Everyone wanted to hear about it, but—you know, we would go in and you'd pitch it in that sentence, and everybody would have a different idea of what the show was, because right off the bat you can imagine—you know, if you're going into such and such network or whatever, they can imagine a very fun times zany version. They can find—you know. There's all sorts of different concepts of the show that you can get off the logline. And that's one of the reasons we were like if we wanna actually show what exactly we think this is, we kind of have to actually show them something.

00:12:30 Rob Guest I think the reason HBO responded negatively—like, *[chuckling]* and it's one of our—we've told the story of this particular notes meeting, 'cause it's one of—*[chuckles]* one of several disasters in our respective careers. But we had written the outline for the *Party Down* pilot episode, and we loved it. We were very proud of it. We came in to get notes on it from HBO, and the very first line out of the executive's mouth was, "Well, we realize that outlines to comedies aren't really meant to be funny."

*[Laughing.]* We thought ours was very funny! But HBO, you know, they like being inside Hollywood, and I think they heard our pitch and thought that it was going to be our group of cater waiters catering Hollywood events where they would bump shoulders with celebrities and that would be the—

00:13:29 Jesse Host They thought it would be *Entourage*, *Ballers*.

00:13:31 John Guest Like *Backstage*, *Entourage*, or something like that.

00:13:34 Rob Guest Yeah. And instead, our pilot episode is a Sherman Oaks neighborhood homeowner's association potluck. And we thought it was a great pilot episode, because it showed how Henry—our lead character—wanted—would love to have the house and the boat and the pool in the backyard and—you know, a wife and kids. Whereas the owner of the house just wishes he was a single actor guy out on the town, having fun. Which we thought distilled sort of what our show was about in a cool way. But HBO did not—did not agree with that assessment. Yes.

*[They chuckle.]*

00:14:18 Jesse Host We've got more with Rob Thomas and John Enbom around the corner. Stay with us. It's *Bullseye*, from [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and NPR.

00:14:27 Music Transition Thumpy synth with light vocalizations.

00:14:32 Jesse Host It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guests are Rob Thomas and John Enbom. They're two of the co-creators of the TV comedy *Party Down*.

I love Ken Marino more than anything, who plays Ron, the boss of this catering crew. And he has a quality to him of—like he always looks like he's about to lift his finger because he has a great idea.

[They chuckle.]

Even when he's like flinging his body into something out of sadness and frustration. At what point did he come up? Like, did you just audition people to do this, and he came in?

00:15:14 Rob Guest

Well, we pulled a lot of favors. And he had come in—he had probably at that point done six or seven episodes of *Veronica Mars*. Interestingly, playing a role that I had written for Paul Rudd [chuckles] that—to play a rival private detective in town and—you know, Paul was so hard to book, even with best intentions. You know. It was hard to get Paul in there. We eventually did, and he was great. But Ken Marino came in for what was supposed to be a one or two episode appearance as rival PI, Vinnie Van Lowe, and was such gold on the show that—and Paul had known him from *Wet, Hot American Summer* and was friendly with him as well.

And he just became sort of the obvious choice. And you know, we were—we were really just kind of calling in favors. Jane Lynch had done an episode of *Veronica Mars* as well. And the funny thing about Jane—and I always love telling this story—is that Dan and John and I—Dan Etheridge and John and I co-directed the *Party Down* pilot that we shot at my house. And really, whoever had written the bulk of that scene got to direct that particular scene. And we were all such huge fans of Jane. And when she came in, she sort of played Constance as this tough broad who'd been around Hollywood a long time. And it was a six-day shoot.

We did not give a note to Jane until like day three, until we finally worked up the nerve to say, “Hey, actually—you know, Jane, we were thinking of maybe a softer take on Constance? Almost like her head is filled with like down fluff? Like kind of—you know? That she's more of a den mother and a warm-hearted human?” And she made that change on a dime, and Constance was born. It just—we were so intimidated by Jane's talent that it took us days.

00:17:44 John Guest

Yeah, no, we were just big fans of—you know, all the Chris Guest stuff and everything. And so, when she showed up, we were all just like, [whispering] “I guess we just let her do her thing. And we just hang back.”

[They laugh.]

And so, yeah, it's true. We were all very—kind of scared to actually say anything.

00:17:58 Rob Guest

But then—but she, of course, was like eager to take the note and I'm so glad that she did, because when we lost her to *Glee*, it would've felt like she was doing a similar character to *Glee*. And so, I'm glad that we carved out that piece. The weird thing was Jane had already shot the *Glee* pilot. They were not—they held onto that pilot for like a year without picking it up. And we got to use her until they picked it up. And so, I'm so happy that we managed to—

00:18:38 John Guest

Yeah. That was literally our deal was that we had—I think they had—I forget if it was one or two weeks' notice of when she would be taken away. So, you know, we just kind of kept going until we got that call. And you know, we were fortunate in that we got—you know—eight episodes when it could've been like two or...

00:18:59 Jesse Host I've talked to a lot of actors about something that they were in that turned out to be really good that maybe was a little thing or an early thing or a surprising thing. And they're always proud of it, because they know it came out good. But the people that I have talked to about *Party Down* who were on *Party Down*—that's like what they wanna talk about.

[They chuckle.]

Like, they wanna talk about the 18 months or whatever total where they were on this television program. And I don't think it's just because people liked the show, although people did like the show, especially once it hit streaming and they were able to watch it—you know—more conveniently. But I got the feeling that they were very happy there. So, what do you think was different about the show other than it having come together well that made people happy there?

00:19:57 John Guest I mean, I think it was a lot of the just—you know, we were in that sweet spot at the end of the day where we had—you know, a group of people who all—like, they kind of all knew each other, you know, tangentially here and there. You know, some more than others. You know. Actually, Martin and Lizzy went to school together back as small children and all this sort of stuff.

00:20:15 Jesse Host Martin Starr and Lizzy Caplan, two of the stars of the show.

00:20:17 John Guest Yeah, so they—

00:20:19 Rob Guest They'd done *Freaks and Geeks* together.

00:20:21 John Guest You know. So, everybody—you know—meshed together very well, very quickly. And then, we also just—we didn't have—we had exactly enough money to actually just kind of shoot the show with not much—you know, with no more. And so, it was just kind of a relatively stress-free, fun—you know. And we were trying to kind of really just let people—you know, find the characters in their own versions and all these sort of things so that it was—and, you know, we were trying to make it as funny as we could so that—we wanted it to be—we didn't want to play like dramedy or anything like that. We were eager to sort of—you know, find the funniest way to do things and everything.

So, I think—you know, there was just a real kind of, you know, whatever, theatre camp vibe to it. [Chuckles.] Where, you know, we were just kind of hanging out and goofing around a lot. And so, it was a really—you know, it was a really great just job to have. You know, above and beyond whatever it was we actually were doing. One thing, at the time that we were doing *Party Down*, John was really running *Party Down*. It was his baby. John writes the bulk of that show. Dan and I had a show on ABC called *Cupid*, with Bobby Cannavale. They both got picked up at the exact same time. I love Bobby Cannavale. He was great. That year at ABC was the low point of my career. Everyday, I wanted to come home and kill myself. It was the—it was everything that you don't want in television, where you see the show differently than the network, where they're grinding you to the bone to try to get to the show they want. You hate the show that they want. You're trying to fight them. It is miserable.

00:21:24 Rob Guest

Meanwhile, John and all of our friends on *Party Down* are having the time of their lives doing a show that they are proud of, and I'm—you know, I get to watch cuts. And it was just this—that first season was just the year of abject jealousy that all my friends are over there making great television, and we're churning out a very subpar ABC show. So, that was rough on me, then.

*[They chuckle.]*

			That particular year.
00:22:46	John	Guest	Yeah. We felt bad out in <i>[chuckling]</i> like wherever we—like the elk's lodges of the valley that we shot most of the show in.
00:22:55	Jesse	Host	Why would you make more of them when you already made all those great ones before?
00:23:01	John	Guest	I mean, we like doing it!
00:23:02	Rob	Guest	<i>[Chuckles.]</i> Yeah! It's fun.
00:23:04	John	Guest	Well, and we also—I mean, we never thought of it as—I mean, one of the things we loved about the idea—and even in the very early days when we—you know. 'Cause, you know, we got along well with stars and—you know, we felt like we were succeeding on our terms, certainly. And we were happy about that. And just the template of the show felt like infinitely renewable, just in the sense that—you know, you can bring new people in as guest stars every week. You can—you know, if you lose somebody, you can bring in a new character. All this—and you know, that the themes in a broader sense felt like—you know, eternally relevant or whatever. And so, we—
00:23:43	Jesse	Host	This is the dream! A refillable prestige show! You guys—
00:23:46	John	Guest	Solved television!
			<i>[They laugh.]</i>
00:23:48	Jesse	Host	You guys and Ryan Johnson have figured it out!
00:23:51	John	Guest	But yeah, so—you know, we always were thinking. You know, when we were—like the second season went really well, and we felt like we'd learned kind of how to—you know, what we were doing. Everybody was very dialed in to kind of what they were doing with their characters and everything. Crew had kind of figured out all the systems and everything. So, we were feeling very good and we were getting along very well with Starz. And we were thinking about a third season then, and we were talking with them about it. And we—you know, we were just thinking like, "Oh!" And you know, even started making our weird little lists of—you know, what party ideas and all those sort of—all the things that we would start with for a third season or whatever.
00:24:28	Jesse	Host	And this is even though you were aware that when you looked at the ratings list, it was a 0.0.
00:24:32	John	Guest	We didn't look at the ratings. We hadn't seen the 0.0 yet.
00:24:36	Rob	Guest	But I—but still—
00:24:37	John	Guest	They only did that after they canceled us, as just like what are you gonna do?
00:24:40	Rob	Guest	There—but there was no doubt we were doing a season three. Like, it—Starz was both the studio and the network for this show. Those executives were talking about season three. We were making plans for season three. There was no doubt, and for very specific reasons. We made Starz a cool place to do television. Like, maybe

not many people were watching our show, but people in LA were. You know? People in television were. And so, you know.

But what happened is there was a regime change. Chris Albrecht came over from HBO. And when a network executive that has no ownership of your show—when they didn't have a hand in creating it, where they can't point to it and say, "That's mine," then they just look at the numbers that it does. And so, that was really the demise of the show. If—even with our 0.0 numbers, we would've been doing a season three had the regime not changed there.

00:25:42 John Guest

But yeah. So, we never stopped thinking about it. We never stopped trying to find ways that we could, you know, basically just do more. And you know, 'cause we all—you know, we kept in touch with all the cast and everything. We all—you know—had great fondness and nostalgia for what we had been able to do, not just in terms of making the show, but also being able to get together and just mess around again. 'Cause it was just—you know, like you said, it was a really fun thing to do. And being able to kind of combine those two things is—you know—as good as it gets when you're making TV or whatever.

00:26:14 Rob Guest

Yeah. It really is.

00:26:16 John Guest

So, I think every—we were always looking for a way to get back and do that again, just because—you know, why not? *[Laughs.]*

00:26:24 Rob Guest

It is—being a television writer/producer is a strange job in that I've had the most fun of my life doing shows that I'm proud of where I'm happy to go to work every day despite the very long hours and the grind. And then it can make you miserable. It can—like, that year of doing *Cupid* at ABC in 2009, I moved back to Texas I had such a miserable time *[chuckling]* with doing that show. Like, I never—I wanted to own a house that was inexpensive enough that I could continue to live just writing failed pilots. Like, where I would never—I would never have to keep saying yes to going into a job that I hated as much as I hated doing that show.

00:27:21 Jesse Host

But now you're a success.

*[They laugh.]*

I mean, like I hate to tell you guys this, you're a success and the only possible outcomes of making more episodes of *Party Down* are either, "Yeah, those are more good episodes of *Party Down* like the other ones!" Or, "They've ruined *Party Down*."

00:27:41 John Guest

No, we're definitely anxious about that, because it is something that—you know, we're proud of. We like it. We—you know—want to be true to its legacy and all that sort of stuff. But at the same time, you know, we also—you know, there's always something—you know. There's always something that we feel like we can do and that that's kind of the fun part of the challenge or whatever. So, you know. Like back years ago, there was kind of—we circled around the idea of maybe trying to do a movie or something like that. But you know, we—it got hung up on this idea that we could not crack translating this half hour kind of, you know, formulaic show that actually I think—you know—made good use of the formula and kind of relied on its formula for its success.

Turning that into a feature film with all the—you know—demands of—you know, story demands of a feature film or whatever, that it

would almost turn the show inside out where it—you know. It would take like our background stories and turn them into the main—you know. And we just—we couldn't figure out how to make it kind of work like on our terms and in a way where we felt confident that we wouldn't be doing just what you suggested, of kind of shooting ourselves in the foot and kind of tarnishing something that we—you know—had held very close.

00:29:03 Jesse Host

Stick around! More *Bullseye* around the corner from [MaximumFun.org](https://MaximumFun.org) and NPR.

00:29:09 Promo Clip

*[The sounds of clinking silverware.]*

**Music:** Playful piano.

**Diner 1:** Oh, I hope they've got the bread bowl. Have you seen the bread bowl at this place?

**Diner 2:** Mm-hm.

**Waiter:** Good evening. Welcome to Maximum Fun. Have you been here before?

**Diner 2:** It's her first time.

**Waiter:** Very good. Might I recommend our special?

**Diner 1:** Oh, please!

**Waiter:** Can I interest you in the Max Fun Drive? I'm told they're cooking up something quite extraordinary this year!

**Diner 1:** I've heard about this! With limited time thank you gifts for new and upgrading members?

**Waiter:** That's right!

**Diner 1:** We'll take it!

**Waiter:** How would you like your episodes?

**Diner 2:** Uh, can I get them excellent? With new BOCO on the side? Oh, are there livestream events?

**Waiter:** Absolutely. You know, if you're interested in events, meet up day is returning.

**Diner 2:** What?! Oh, you're gonna love meet up day. It's the best.

**Waiter:** Okay, let me make sure I have everything. Max Fun Drive 2023 with limited time thank you gifts, livestream events, meet up day, excellent episodes, and of course, new bonus content.

**Diner 2:** Sounds perfect!

**Waiter:** Great! We'll get it started and it'll be ready in two weeks. March 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Diner 1:** Oh! Can we also get a couple of waters?

**Waiter:** Of course.

00:30:10 Music Transition  
00:30:15 Jesse Host

Thumpy synth with light vocalizations.  
Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. If you're just joining us, my guests are Rob Thomas and John Enbom. They're co-creators of the sitcom *Party Down* about cater waiters in Hollywood. The show was canceled in 2010. Now, all these years later, it's back. Let's get into the rest of our conversation.

00:30:51 John Guest

It has been a long time since you made the first two seasons of the show, so you've had a lot of time to ruminate and marinate. What did you think when you finally got a third show you should do differently? Like, what had you learned in all that time?  
I mean, uhhh. It's interesting, because in a certain way, a lot of it didn't apply, because our circumstances were very different. 'Cause you know, I do feel like—you know, as we mentioned before, like by the time we got to the end of the second season, I think we had felt like we'd kind of worked out that version of the show. And we'd worked out making that version of the show and all that kind of stuff. But you know, when we got to season three, we felt like—you know, the world had changed a lot. You know. We had changed, you know. Everyone was 12 years older. Our perspectives on things had changed and all that sort of stuff.

00:31:41 Jesse Host

So, I think more than anything it was just us trying to just embrace at least a new version of the world or whatever instead of just repeating ourselves too much.  
You also—I mean, you also had to deal with a new show not just from what the show was 12 years ago, but a new show from the show that you thought you were making for season three, when you have—Jane Lynch gets covid, so there's a—some of her scenes have to be on a screen. Lizzy Caplan got a starring role on an FX show, which is like basically the best acting job in showbusiness. Megan Mullally got something too, I think, for part of the time and was only—like, you have to—you had to sort of remake the plan even after you made the new plan.

00:32:22 Rob Guest  
00:32:25 John Guest

It's why John didn't sleep for four months. *[Chuckles.]*  
Yeah. No, that was definitely—I mean, that was a new challenge of doing that like—you know, 'cause we were—you know, our shoot date literally was like right in the peak of whatever the omicron surge or whatever. So, we had a full department that was like managing all our covid safety and everything. We had all these regimens in place. But we also had—you know—the morning surprise of just like, nope! You know, where's this person? You know. Where's whatever?

*[Rob laughs.]*

And then, you know, sometimes—for me—that meant, you know, "Oh, by the way, this actor is not available these days," or something like that. So, there was a lot of—I spent a lot more time in my trailer this time than I did. Just like hanging out and having a goofy time with everybody. So, you know, that's why it was definitely a more arduous experience for me or whatever. But I think—you know, also... you know. We really—you know, we had

the bones of it or whatever. And most of these were just logistical challenges. So, it wasn't like we were so thrown that we just never knew what to do. It was always just like, "Alright. Well. I guess we'll stay up a little later and finish this," or whatever.

[They chuckle.]

00:33:39 Jesse Host It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guests are Rob Thomas and John Enbom.

As we record this, the season hasn't started airing yet, but how do you feel having wrapped season three of *Party Down*, relative to how you felt 12 years ago or 13 years ago having wrapped season two of *Party Down*?

00:34:05 Rob Guest It's interesting, because you get, um—you sort of get a heads up on how you did before it starts airing, because you start doing press, and a lot of the press has seen the show. And it's almost the tone of the questions or the enthusiasm with which they're asked or—  
00:34:29 Jesse Host I was relieved that I liked it.

[They laugh.]

I'll just go ahead and say it. I'll put it out there. I was very relieved at how much I liked it. It didn't feel awkward. It was—tighter, I would say, than it was before?

00:34:38 Rob Guest And I will say—right, we—I mean, we did—before we start hearing that reaction, there is a nervous—at least, there is for me. You know. I felt like I knew I was enjoying the episodes, but I needed to hear some of that validation coming back before I could sort of relax and go, "Okay. The bulk of the people that are gonna sort of inform public opinion are behind us. It feels like it's gonna be well-received. I can now relax."

00:35:17 Jesse Host Is your plan just to, every year like everybody gets on a conference call on New Year's Day, outlines their year.

[They laugh.]

00:35:26 John Guest What's your year looking like? Yeah.

00:35:28 Jesse Host You find that 14-day period when—?

00:35:31 Rob Guest Um, yeah. I guess, yeah. Rob will make his phone call to Hersh and then—

00:35:34 Rob Guest There could be worse things. Right. That's my job is the tough one.

[John laughs.]

"Hey, Jeff! You feel like more *Party Down* episodes?"

00:35:44 Jesse Host Well, guys, I think you really—you did justice to the great stuff that you created. And thank you so much for taking the time to be here.

00:35:50 John Guest Oh, thank you. It's been really our pleasure to be here.

00:35:51 Rob Guest Yeah, thanks. It really is, yeah. This has been fun.

00:35:55 Jesse Host Rob Thomas and John Enbom. The latest season of *Party Down* is airing now on Starz. I loved *Party Down* before. Somehow, all these years later, it is just as good if not better. So funny. Go check it out.  
00:36:10 Music Transition Relaxed, jazzy lo-fi.

00:36:12 Jesse Host That's the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye*, created from the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California. Here at my house in Lincoln Heights, I planted some trees out front and I was pretty sure that

they were dead, because I must have planted them wrong or whatever. Anyway, all the leaves fell off pretty much right when I put them in the ground. I was very worried. But it turns out, nope! They're just deciduous trees! Now that it's almost springtime, they are budding full of flowers and new leaves right outside my window. And it turns out I don't kill everything I touch.

Our show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our senior producer is Kevin Ferguson. Congratulations to Kevin! He is on parental leave! He has obtained a child. We're so happy for Kevin and Kelly. 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, also known as the great Dan Wally. Our theme song is by The Go! Team. It's called "Huddle Formation". Our thanks to them and to their label, Memphis Industries.

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

00:37:39    Promo            Promo

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

*[Music fades out.]*