

[00:00:00] **Music:** Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue.

[00:00:01] **Promo:** *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn* is a production of [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and is distributed by NPR.

[00:00:13] **Music:** “Huddle Formation” from the album *Thunder, Lightning, Strike* by The Go! Team. A fast, upbeat, peppy song. Music plays as Jesse speaks, then fades out.

[00:00:21] **Jesse Thorn:** It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. Usually, the stereotype goes like this: there are character actors and there are stars. A character actor maybe shows up in a couple scenes, maybe even five minutes, and in that moment they make the film. My guest, Tony Shalhoub, can do that. A star though, you build the whole movie or a TV show around. They're relatable, charming, vulnerable. My guest, Tony Shalhoub, can do that too. He's a veteran of both the big and small screens. He's had unforgettable parts in movies like *Barton Fink*, *Men in Black*, and *Quick Change*. He starred in movies like *Big Night* and TV shows like *Wings*. And of course, for many years the hit detective series, *Monk*.

He's also starred in the Amazon show, *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*. It's a dramedy set in the late fifties. Rachel Brosnahan plays the title character, Midge Maisel. At the beginning of the show, Midge was a housewife living in Manhattan who put her old life behind her to take up standup comedy. She left her husband, took her kids, and moved back in with her parents. And in fits and starts, her standup comedy career takes off.

My guest, Tony Shalhoub, plays Abe Weisman, Midge's dad. It's a role that's won awards for Tony, including an Emmy. *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* just concluded its fifth and final season last month. When Tony and I talked in 2019, it was the launch of its second season.

In season two, Midge is still living with her family. Her mother Rose has moved out of the apartment. She fled to Paris. And at first, it hasn't really sunk in for Abe. After all, Rose has a big party coming up back home. But in the scene we're about to hear, it finally dawns on him.

[00:02:20] **Sound Effect:** Music swells then fades.

[00:02:21] **Clip:**

**Midge** (*The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*): Papa, are you kidding me?

**Abe:** What?

**Midge:** Mama moved to Paris?

**Abe:** What? Oh, that's ridiculous.

**Midge:** Did you hear what you just said?

**Abe:** What!?

**Midge:** You just told me that mama told you she was moving to Paris!

**Abe:** (*Defensively.*) I never said that.

**Midge:** “I don't feel like I have a life here. Everyone and everything that I have ever counted on has let me down.” And you said, “Okay!”

**Abe:** No, I said lamb was okay and it was!

**Midge:** Oh, good grief. Honestly, Papa, you don't listen.

**Abe:** Not true!

**Midge:** You don't listen to anyone.

**Abe:** Not true!

**Midge:** "I don't feel like I have a life here?!"

**Abe:** Stop repeating that! Alright. I'll admit that sometimes I tune people out, but mostly because they rarely have anything useful or interesting to say.

**Midge:** It's empty.

**Abe:** What?

**Midge:** Her closet's empty. Her drawers are empty. Her perfume's gone.

**Abe:** Where's her things? Where did they go?

**Midge:** (*Exasperated.*) I'm guessing Paris.

**Abe:** What was she gonna wear to the party tonight?

**Midge:** You didn't notice this?! You sleep right there.

**Abe:** You live here too! You didn't notice either.

**Midge:** You're her husband!

**Midge:** You're in her closet way more than I am.

[00:03:17] **Sound Effect:** Music swells then fades.

[00:03:20] **Jesse Thorn:** Tony Shalhoub, welcome to *Bullseye*. It's great to have you on the show.

[00:03:22] **Tony Shalhoub:** (*Chuckling.*) Thank you. Nice to be here.

[00:03:23] **Jesse Thorn:** I saw you wince at your character saying he doesn't listen to other people mostly because they don't have anything interesting to say.

[00:03:34] **Tony Shalhoub:** That sounds a little arrogant, I suppose.

[00:03:38] **Jesse Thorn:** (*Laughs.*) I mean, one of the funny things about your character on the show is I think the show is not about your character. Your character is a secondary character on the show, a supporting character on the show, right?

[00:03:46] **Tony Shalhoub:** Oh, at best. Yes.

[00:03:49] **Jesse Thorn:** And in a lot of shows like this, especially funny ones—which this show's very funny—it would be fine to let the protagonist have the journey, right? Like the protagonist gets to go on a journey. Everybody else has a funny thing about them that the audience recognizes.

[00:04:09] **Tony Shalhoub:** Yeah, and we support that protagonist's—you know—arc, I suppose.

[00:04:13] **Jesse Thorn:** And your character has changed a lot in two seasons of the show.

[00:04:19] **Tony Shalhoub:** Yeah, it's a very—it's rare for a character in series television, really. Because, as you say, normally you are—you know, you get hired and then you're kind

of—you're somewhat limited as to what you're, you know, being called on to do and what purpose you serve. And for actors, that can be frustrating at times because you're the guy that does this, or you're the sort of stupid guy, or you're the—you know, the Lothario or whatever it is. And you get kind of confined—you know, kind of constrained into playing two colors, three, if you're very lucky. And I've been fortunate, in this case, particularly that—you know, they're just—my character happens to be in a place in his life where he is in—he's in transition. Like—I think it's because of, of the transition that Midge is in, that—you know, that my daughter is going through. All her changes are impacting all of the people around her, and we're not just—we're not just stuck in our in our little mode.

[00:05:32] **Jesse Thorn:** I was watching the first episode of the second season earlier today, where you and your daughter travel to Paris. And you're wearing an overcoat—a brown overcoat with a blue check that—if they had just showed me that overcoat, I'd be like, yeah, okay. How many years is the contract for? I'm like, yes, I'm in. (*Laughs.*) I get to wear that overcoat. Yes. Sold.

[00:06:02] **Tony Shalhoub:** Yeah, and that speaks to this whole idea that—you know, this—I like—I love this idea that we're—you know, we're in the late '50s. I just, it's—I guess the forties and the fifties have always been a really good—good decades for me in terms of playing characters. And especially today, because I think we all need—as viewers and as certainly as actors—a respite from present day craziness. And what this—the other thing that this affords us is this, uh, you know—there are no cell phones in this show. There are no computers. I mean, the computers are the size of this room. You know, there's no—we're low tech. We're super low tech. And I just find that so refreshing.

[00:06:53] **Jesse Thorn:** We've got so much more with Tony Shalhoub still to come Stay with us. It's *Bullseye* from [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and NPR.

[00:07:01] **Music:** Relaxed synth with a steady beat.

[00:07:06] **Jesse Thorn:** Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. I'm talking with Tony Shalhoub. He is, of course, an incredibly talented actor. He's been in films like *Big Night*, *The Man Who Wasn't There*, and *Spy Kids*. He also starred on the TV show *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*. That show just concluded its fifth and final season. You can stream it now on Amazon Prime.

You were the star of *Monk* for many seasons. This won't be news to you, Tony. (*Chuckles.*) I said it as though it might be.

[00:07:35] **Tony Shalhoub:** (*Playfully.*) It sounds familiar.

[00:07:37] **Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. Which was a detective procedural on USA—a comic detective procedural, in which your character was the brilliant, genius detective, who—in part, his genius detecting was colored by his obsessive compulsiveness.

And I really think it is one of the best of this kind of show that has ever been made. It is so hard to make a show like this that is pleasant to so many people. That also is sharp and

specific and so on and so forth. You know what I mean? Like it sort of defined what the USA network, even to some extent, still is today. But like, it's about an incredible specificity and especially in your performance.

*(Tony thanks him.)*

And I wonder what it was when it came to you and how it came to you.

[00:08:39] **Tony Shalhoub:** Um. The pilot had been—it was first at ABC for a number of years and was kind of languishing there. You know, with a lot of these things—you know, you—it all has to kind of fit together. You have to have the right person and the right—at the right time. And you know, that script was just—was just not getting any traction. And then, I think an executive was departing ABC and going over to USA and asked to take this property and see if they could develop it. And that was fine.

And then—and then I believe it was at ABC—I mean, I'm sorry, I believe it was at USA for a year, you know, before it came to me. You know, a number of people had—they had approached a number of different actors at both networks. Some actors had approached them and it just—it just never worked. I even think Michael Richards, I heard, was circling it for a while or they were circling him.

And I—you know, I just—it was just fortunate. My manager at the time was reading the pilot for another client of hers. She was actually reading it for the character of Sharona, the assistant. And then, while she was reading it, she thought of me and so sent it to me. And I had never heard of it. I didn't know anything about it.

And then I met with the network and the writers, and then we were off to the races. And we had to, you know—I was the first one attached, so they asked me—I mentioned that I would like to be involved as a producer too, so I could have some input and a voice. And so, they asked me to read with people, you know, audition when we were auditioning people for Sharona and Stottlemeyer and all the other regulars. Which I was happy to do, and that's how we put it all together.

[00:10:42] **Jesse Thorn:** What did you think about it when you first saw it?

[00:10:45] **Tony Shalhoub:** Well, when I first read it, I didn't really respond to it because I didn't—I thought it was good, but I didn't see my way into it. And I called my manager and I said that. I said, “Look, I get what you're—I don't—I don't get how—how is this me?”

And *(laughs)* she's very subtle, and she said, “You better read it. I think you should read it again, because this is more you than you probably want to admit.” And so, I did! And I read it a second time and then it started to become clear.

*(Jesse laughs.)*

And—you know, the truth is, the script that I read—the pilot script as I remember now; this is a long time ago, okay?—but the script that I read was—it wasn't really the pilot that we—it

wasn't exactly the pilot that we shot. It was written more—it was broader. It was written—I think it originally was conceived more—almost like—almost like an Inspector Clouseau-ish thing, except with OCD. It was broader comedy, you know? And that was the part that I felt was not a good fit for me.

And I spoke to my manager about this, and then she said, “Well, you should just sit down—you can sit down with the writers and express this and—you know—tell them what it is about it that works for you and how you would like to have them change it. And maybe they will.” And, uh—and that's exactly what I did.

And they were fantastic. They were open, and I said, “Look, I love comedy, but I think we should, you know, maybe tone down the really, really broad stuff and let the comedy come out of the guy's pain and out of the guy's problem.” And also, you have to remember we're talking about a time—when we did this is right after 9/11, not long after 9/11. So culturally, I think we entered a new level. We were entering an age of anxiety, of higher anxiety, which this character—I don't—I mean, you know, certainly the show, the script and the—and the idea was conceived before 9/11. As I said, it laid around for years. But it came down—came time to actually put it on—do it and put it on the air.

People were, you know, I think feeling—they were—we were all in a bit of a state of, “Uh-oh. What now? And, you know, how fragile is it all?” And so, we enter—we kind of enter the mindset of this character, how he's been living his entire life, really, until he met his wife and got better. And then she died, and then he got worse.

So—but then we were entering also—at the same time, we were—we knew that we were on a slippery slope because we're dealing with OCD, which is a very real and tragic kind of debilitating disorder. And so, you don't wanna send that up too much. You wanna honor the people who have it. So, we had to—you know, we just were kind of like, holding our breath that it was gonna be received by that—by those people, you know, that community—in the right way and do it in a way that...

We wanted—what we were trying to do really was to sort of destigmatize the disorder and—because the character had so many good qualities and was so talented in so many ways and could make all these gigantic contributions to society. You know, but maybe just getting out the door taking 15 minutes was—would be funny, you know?

But we did, we—I think the writers did a really good job, and also the whole creative team because, you know, in capturing the tone, we found that sweet spot. And we got a lot of very positive feedback from people who suffered from the disorder or people who had family members who did or even doctors. I'd get letters from psychiatrists and psychologists, and people'd say, you know, “I've referenced your show in our book, in my book that I'm writing about, you know, mental illness.” And oh my god! It was—it went way beyond what we intended.

[00:15:27] **Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. I mean, I think that the challenge—the fact that the challenge that the character faces is what leads to the resolution and that the challenge and the pain inherent in the challenge is real, makes the hopefulness of it—you know, which is fundamental to this kind of TV is that like part of what you're offering is that the problem

will be resolved. So, it's comforting in that way. And so, the fact that you know that you will get that comfort, but that you will get it from something that actually feels like it might mirror pain that you might have or fear that you might have—

[00:16:06] **Tony Shalhoub:** Exactly. Because we all—I think we all do—many, many people do, to a degree. You know, we have these kinds of obsessive-compulsive tendencies. But—or we just get fixated on things or—but many of us have ways of dealing with it and coping with it and filtering it so that it's not as obvious to the rest of the world, and we don't voice or demonstrate these kinds of things, where Monk doesn't have that filter. He just says it and does it, and feels it, and demonstrates it.

[00:16:46] **Jesse Thorn:** Let's hear a scene from *Monk* and my guest, Tony Shalhoub. So, in this episode—this is from the seventh season of the show—Monk's personal assistant, Natalie, helps a thief steal the bicycle—accidentally helps a thief steal the bicycle of a biotech CEO. And so, in this clip, Monk and Natalie are getting a tour of the biotech company from one of the lab assistants, who's played by a past guest of this show: brilliant actress, Pamela Adlon.

[00:17:12] **Tony Shalhoub:** Oh, love her.

[00:17:13] **Sound Effect:** Music swells then fades.

[00:17:14] **Clip:**

**Lab Assistant (Monk):** Dean? Dean Barry? Founded Beta VeggiTech five years ago.

**Monk:** So, what exactly do you do?

**Lab Assistant:** We're saving the world.

**Monk:** Oh, good for you. I was getting a little worried about the world. (*Beat.*) Is that a square tomato?

**Lab Assistant:** Yes, it is. It's a pet project of Dean's. The square shape means that farmers can pack 35% more tomatoes per carton. It's cheaper. More efficient.

**Monk:** So—so that means... every slice is exactly the same size?

**Natalie:** How's it taste?

**Monk:** Who cares!? It's a square tomato! You're doing the Lord's work.

**Natalie:** Literally.

(*The hiss of a mechanical door being opened.*)

**Natalie:** Dean—uh, Mr. Barry, I just wanted to say I'm sorry about the bike.

**Lab Assistant:** We're testing new corn seed. They're genetically engineered to sprout in 20 minutes.

**Dean Barry:** Or less.

**Lab Assistant:** What you're seeing is gonna revolutionize the agriculture industry as you know it.

**Monk:** Congratulations on the square tomato.

[00:18:09] **Sound Effect:** Music swells then fades.

[00:18:11] **Tony Shalhoub:** I'd forgotten that.

(*Jesse laughs.*)

I love Pam. God, I'd forgotten the square tomato. That was—

[00:18:18] **Jesse Thorn:** It is a—it's a great line when he says, "I've been feeling a little worried about the world," (*laughing*) or whatever it is that he says there.

I wanna play a clip from a movie that you were in. It was much earlier in your career that I—

[00:18:36] **Tony Shalhoub:** Uh-oh.

[00:18:37] **Jesse Thorn:** No, no! This is—I love—this is one of my favorite movies. It's a movie called *Quick Change*, from 1990.

(*Tony sighs.*)

And it's a really—it's a really wonderful movie, all told. I think maybe one of, if not Bill Murray's best. Maybe *Rushmore*, but maybe besides *Rushmore*, Bill Murray's best movie that he ever did. And he co-directed it, and it was a really great movie.

You played a character in this movie that could have been so awful. You played—you're Lebanese American and your character is basically "ethnic cab driver". He speaks in nonsense words in—

[00:19:22] **Tony Shalhoub:** Yeah. They didn't want it to be an identifiable ethnicity. So.

[00:19:25] **Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, like, it's a—it's very surreal. I mean, like partly the tone of the film saves it from being the awful thing it could have been, but I think largely it's saved from the awful thing it could have been by a really wonderful performance by you. Both really funny and like human and humane in a way that it didn't necessarily have to be, for a cab driver character in a comedy in 1990, when those characters often were just—you know—broad ethnic jokes.

[00:19:57] **Tony Shalhoub:** Yeah. Stereotypical. Yeah.

[00:19:59] **Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. So, I wanna play a clip from it. I don't know how this plays in audio because you're mostly—you're mostly quiet except when you're making nonsense sounds.

[00:20:06] **Tony Shalhoub:** Because I'm making big—I'm making big faces. Yeah.  
(*Chuckles.*)

You gotta see the shameless faces I'm making.

[00:20:13] **Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. So, Bill Murray is a bank robber. He dresses as a clown, robs a bank.

[00:20:20] **Tony Shalhoub:** With Geena Davis.

[00:20:21] **Jesse Thorn:** With Geena Davis and his best friend, Randy Quaid. And then, they all get into a taxicab and they're having a hard time telling what you—they're trying to get away. They're having a hard time telling what you're saying.

[00:20:34] **Tony Shalhoub:** They're trying to get to the airport. Yeah.

[00:20:35] **Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, exactly.

[00:20:36] **Sound Effect:** Music swells then fades.

*(Street noise and distant music in the background.)*

**Grimm (Quick Change):** He's got it.

**Phyllis (Agitated.):** Oh, great. And why don't you take us straight to Sing Sing?

**Grimm:** Please don't say that. You're gonna upset Loomis.

**Phyllis:** Oh, god forbid!

**Cab Driver:** *(Speaking a fake language.)*

**Phyllis:** *(Sighs frustratedly.)*

**Loomis:** IT'S REEED! STOOOP! STOOOOOP! *(Inconsolable.)* You don't even understand colors, do you? You don't know red from hell!

**Cab Driver:** *(Explains in fake language.)*

**Loomis:** *(Sobbing.)* There's a real cab. STOP! TAXIIII!

*(The car door opens. Phyllis, Loomis, and Grimm scream along with the sound of breaks squealing.)*

[00:21:08] **Sound Effect:** Music swells then fades.

[00:21:09] **Jesse Thorn:** Randy Quaid freaks out so much that I think he jumps out the passenger just door. You—this was probably a part in your—a part of your career where if you get a multiple-scene part in a movie—

[00:21:19] **Tony Shalhoub:** It's my first movie, really.

[00:21:20] **Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. You're not in a position to question it. But did you think about it at the time? Like how many movies have a, you know—a broadly unidentifiable Middle Eastern guy who yells things, as a taxi driver.

[00:21:37] **Tony Shalhoub:** No, it didn't—I was, so—first of all, I love the script. And I really think it is a great movie, an underrated movie.

[00:21:44] **Jesse Thorn:** I think it's like a legit great movie. Like I think, even leaving aside its rating—which I think is under—I think it's a great movie.

[00:21:53] **Tony Shalhoub:** It's, a very, very clever movie. The premise itself is brilliant. And it's—you know, it reflects New York City in the '80s very beautifully and in a really



genuinely funny way. And, um—but no, I love the idea, and I love the idea that when I read the script, when it came to my part, it—there were no lines. It just said the cabby speaks and we don't understand.

And so, when—but I had to audition for it. So, I went in and met the casting and the director—and Bill was there, Bill Murray was there. And I had to, you know—it was basically a gibberish language, but instead of just, you know, like mumbling and blah-bleh-buh-blah-blah, I actually—wrote it—I wrote out my lines. I just made up a gibberish language so that I could—so that I would have repeated words or repeated sounds for, you know, what I was supposed to be talking about.

[00:22:55] **Jesse Thorn:** You're like, “I'm gonna Tolkien this thing.”

[00:22:57] **Tony Shalhoub:** Yeah. I just—I just, look, this is the only way I'm gonna do it and not just look like I'm blathering and mumbling and— Because the cabby knows what he's saying. (*Chuckles.*) The cabby's a real guy. And it was my first—and it was—I gotta tell you this too, it's my first movie, I think. And I had auditioned for things. I was doing mostly theatre, but I had auditioned for a lot of things. And it's the first time and maybe the only time where I was offered, you know—was offered the job in the room.

That never happens. You know, they say thank you very much. You go away. You wait a few days. Your agent calls you, “Yeah, you have a callback. Yeah, you blah-blah-blah. You have the offer. They want to give you the part.” That's how it goes. But this was—you know, I did actually have a callback for this, maybe two. And—but finally on the—whatever the final callback was, Bill Murray says, “You wanna do this? Because we're good. Let's do it.” And we had a blast. We shot it all. Most of it was night shoots and in Queens. And I got to work with Jason Robards, who was a god to me, an inspiration when I was younger. And a lot of people in this. Stanley Tucci's in this movie. A lot of great people in this movie. And—but that was it. I made up my own language.

[00:24:25] **Jesse Thorn:** Even more from the great Tony Shalhoub after a quick break. Still to come: what inspires Tony Shalhoub to make art? Like what really gets his juices flowing? He'll tell me when we return. It's *Bullseye* from [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and NPR.

[00:24:42] **Promo:**

**Music:** “Pomp and Circumstance” plays under the dialogue.

**Janet Varney:** My fellow graduates, for 500 episodes, my podcast—*The JV Club with Janet Varney*—has gathered story after story of all the scandalous things we've done throughout our childhoods.

(*Mumbling from the crowd.*)

**Staff Member:** Wait, what's happening?

**Janet:** Stories like how Jameela Jamil survived a horrific house party, and she was on crutches!

**Student:** This is great!

**Janet:** Or how Hal Lublin learned a Shakespearian monologue in his pajamas.

**Staff Member:** This is not the speech we approved.

**Janet:** Without your love and life tragedies, there would be no podcast. In fact, I have an exclusive look at how Maggie Lawson's mom confronted her after a sneaky basement meetup with her crush.

*(Someone gasps.)*

**Student:** Spill the tea, JV!

**Staff Member:** Security!

Janet: Uh, listen to *The JV Club with Janet Varney*, Thursdays on Maximum Fun! Class of—*(microphone feedback)*—forever!

*(Music ends with thunderous applause.)*

[00:25:26] **Music:** Thumpy synth with light vocalizations.

[00:25:31] **Jesse Thorn:** It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. I'm talking with Tony Shalhoub. He was the star of *Monk*, *Wings*, and recently, *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*, which is streaming now on Amazon Prime.

Did you ever watch the movie *A Thousand Clowns*, with Jason Robards?

[00:25:45] **Tony Shalhoub:** Only about 50 times. It's the reason I became an actor. And that was—*(stammering)* that was at a time when I was in high school when, you know, you couldn't—we didn't have, you know, VHS and there wasn't any of that. When you saw a movie, you waited a year. You know, it was on TV. You waited another year for it to come around on TV again, maybe. And I was devoted to that film. And it was a—it really moved the needle for me.

[00:26:16] **Jesse Thorn:** Now, when you say *A Thousand Clowns* made you wanna become an actor, I need—it's a movie about—Jason Robards plays a moderately unsuccessful comedy writer who needs to get a job because he's responsible for taking care of his teenage son—his teenage nephew.

[00:26:35] **Tony Shalhoub:** It's his sister's kid. His sister left.

[00:26:38] **Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. And so, he is basically facing this choice in his life, which is he has the opportunity to get a job on something that does not meet his artistic standards. Which, you know, are difficult to pin down maybe, because he's a comedy guy, you know? (*Chuckles.*) And he is struggling to accept the responsibilities of adulthood. It's—he knows that he has to, and he knows how important it is, because there's this kid. And he's falling in love, as well. And it is very, very painful for him and difficult for him to be frank with himself about that and do what he has to do.

[00:26:23] **Tony Shalhoub:** Compromise. Yeah.

[00:26:25] **Jesse Thorn:** And I know a ton of comedy people who love this movie. I've had many a conversation with longtime Conan, now Colbert, late show writer—Brian Stack—about it, for example, real funny guy. And I think for a lot of comedy people, it is a deeply difficult film to watch, because it asks them to confront their own complicity in the kind of irresponsibility of creating art, especially completely frivolous art with their life.

So, you saying that it makes you—made you want to become an artist—(*laughs*) like, it's a movie about the horrors and pains that come from the self-centeredness of wanting to be an artist.

[00:28:12] **Tony Shalhoub:** Exactly. Yeah. That's how sick I am.

(*They laugh.*)

[00:28:24] **Jesse Thorn:** Where did you—where did you first see it? Did you first see it on TV?

[00:28:27] **Tony Shalhoub:** Yeah. I grew up in Green Bay, Wisconsin. It was—I think it was in high school when I first saw it. And I just remember being so struck by it and those performances and just the whole message behind it, the whole idea about it behind it. You know, in a sense—you know, that's always—that's always the dilemma of the creative person, I think. You know, it's what *Big Night* was about and—you know, that sort of balancing act that you have to—that you have to deal with between art and commerce. It's—that's, you know, one can rarely exist without the other. And it's an ongoing challenge.

[00:29:19] **Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, I mean, not even just art and commerce, but also the solipsism and self-regard that's required to think, “Oh, I could make things. And that could be my whole life.” Like, you know, the amount that you have to dedicate yourself to being an artist to be an artist, you know, and the kind of presumptive of that and the tension that that creates with your responsibilities to others. To your community, to—and that's, I think, why I—whenever I watch *A Thousand Clowns*, I cry just like a river.

[00:30:00] **Tony Shalhoub:** But I think it's even beyond that, because what you're talking about is—it implies a choice, a decision, kind of an intellectual decision. And from my experience—you know, the reality is, is that that's certainly—that's there, but you know, the part—part of the thing about creativity and the pursuit of arts is, you know, there's a compulsion there, too. You know, people can't help it. They have to do it. They—I mean,

real—you know, the really great people, the good people, and even maybe not-so-good people who just have the compulsion, I'm not sure. But there's a thing where it's less of a—it's less of an intellectual decision. This is just, "I need to do something. I need to create this. I need to do it." And if that's there, you're screwed. Because then you're—you know, then you can't stop. And if you do stop, then you're just setting yourself up for a life of a different kind of torture.

[00:31:10] **Jesse Thorn:** Well, Tony, we're out of time. I didn't even ask—

[00:31:13] **Music:** Damn!

[00:31:12] **Jesse Thorn:** I mean, you got nine brothers and sisters. I didn't even mention it this whole time.

[00:31:17] **Tony Shalhoub:** I've just gotten started!

[00:31:19] **Jesse Thorn:** Normally, that would've been the whole hour. I'm very grateful to you for taking all this time to be on *Bullseye*. Thank you so much for coming by.

[00:31:25] **Tony Shalhoub:** Thank you.

[00:31:27] **Jesse Thorn:** My conversation with Tony Shalhoub.

All five seasons of *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* are streaming on Amazon Prime, right now. You can also catch him in the new movie *Flamin' Hot*. It's the film story of Flamin' Hot Cheetos. Stream it now on Hulu.

[00:31:45] **Music:** Bright, buzzy synth plays under the dialogue.

[00:31:48] **Jesse Thorn:** That's the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye* is created from the homes of me in the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California. Although, this week we went to Ann-Margret's house to interview her.

So, look forward to our interview recorded live on tape from Ann-Margret's house coming up in a couple of weeks. Our show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our senior producer is Kevin Ferguson. Our producers are Jesus Ambrosio and Richard Robey, our production fellow here at Maximum Fun is 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! Team. It's called "Huddle Formation". Thanks to them and to their label, Memphis Industries.

*Bullseye* can be found on all of your favorite platforms. YouTube, Twitter, Facebook. Follow us there. Share our interviews. If you liked one of the interviews today, please share it with a friend. It makes a big difference for us. Tell somebody you like the show. Don't keep it secret. I think that's about it. Just remember, all great radio hosts have a signature sign off.

[00:32:55] **Promo:** *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn* is a production of [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and is distributed by NPR.

*(Music fades out.)*