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(ADVERTISEMENT)

**Transition:** Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue.

**Promo:** *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn* is a production of [MaximumFun.org](https://www.maximumfun.org) and is distributed by NPR.

**Jesse Thorn:** I'm Jesse Thorn. It's *Bullseye*.

**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.

**Jesse Thorn:** Normally when into *Bullseye*, you hear interviews with people like Tom Hanks or Tina Fey, Rakim, Smokey Robinson. This week, though, we aren't interviewing any of those people. And in fact, we are doing no interviews at all. We are instead playing for you clips from some of 2023's best standup comedy records.

And first up is—I'm just gonna say it—the best of the best, Maria Bamford. If you've listened to *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn* for a while, you know that I—Jesse Thorn—am Maria Bamford's biggest fan. Nothing but love for the Bammer here. She's been featured on our show many times. Most recently, I talked with her about her delightful memoir, *Sure, I'll Join Your Cult*. Maria's comedy mixes deep feelings with almost surreal flights of fancy. It's intensely personal and also features a lot of funny voices, including—frankly—her funny voice, which is real but funny. Honestly, no greater genius in standup than Maria Bamford. Let's hear a clip. This is from her terrific 2023 record, *CROWD PLEASER*. And that title, this is important, is in all-caps.

She's talking about her mom.

**Transition:** Music swells then fades.

(*The audience laughs regularly throughout the performance.*)

**Maria Bamford (CROWD PLEASER):** I, uh—my first call was my family. Is your mom still around? Do you have a mom? Nice. What's your mom's main—(*stammering*) like, what would you say her message is to you of like in life?

**Audience Member:** Suck it up.

**Maria Bamford:** Suck it up! Woah! Nice. I like it. Now, under all circumstances? I mean, does suck it up go for, you know, head injuries as well, or—? Yeah, yeah, suck it up all across the board! What's her name? What's her name? What's your mom's name? Carrie? Karen. (*Softly.*) Oh, of course. Of course. She's sucking it up right now, isn't she? That's—

that's a hard name to have right now. Many blessings to your mother. (*Whispered.*) Suck it up.

This is my mom's main message to me over the course of her life: (*quietly distraught*) "Oh, god. (*Beat.*) Alright. Okay."

My mom died two years ago. And what really (*censor beep*) is that she loved life! She loved life! She loved living. And I see it on people's faces. People—some people really love it.

(*Laughter.*)

I've always been on the fence about the whole thing. I could go at any time! And yeah. Yeah, my mom could squeeze joy out of an AT&T customer service call. (*With a cheerful Minnesotan lilt.*) "You know, Reggie, can I—I just gotta ask you. We have been on the phone for over three hours. Is your phone hot?! Now, I know you're in Mumbai. And I'm just gonna be a curious kitty. Are you Hindu? Well, are you going to the river pilgrimage? You're going. You're going. It's called the Kumbh Mela. Kumbh—Kumbh Mela. Well, that's great. But it's hard. Yeah. Oh, I get it. No, we don't do Thanksgiving out of town anymore, because it just gets crazy. But yeah. Yeah. Well, the bridge collapsed. Now that's—oh my god. Oh! I will put you on my prayer list, kid. You are on my prayer list. And—no, no, the Wi-Fi is still not working."

[00:05:00]

"(*Laughs.*) Well, of course I will hold!"

My mom could tell a very exciting story with no discernible beginning and middle or end.

(*Imitating her mother.*) "I was just in the elevator, and I saw this young man wearing a coat. And I says to him, I says, I know you. And he said, 'Oh, I don't know you.' And I says, My name is Marilyn, Marilyn Bamford—B as in boy, A, M as in Mary, F O R D, D as in dog. 'Bam' like the noise, 'ford' like the car. And—but that is my married name. And my given name is Halverson. That's what my sister Dee does, that lives in an Alzheimer's care facility. You know, on Dearborn. And that's—you know, she enjoys chocolate. So, that's quality of life."

"And he said, 'I don't—I have a familiar face. Yes, I do not know you.' I had had half a glass of wine, so I just said we met in 2014 on an Airbnb boat called the Thirsty Turtle in Grand Marais, and your name is Neil! And he said, 'No.' That's right. That's right. (*Sighs.*) Oh. Oh. Oh."

**Transition:** Music swells then fades.

**Jesse Thorn:** Maria Bamford, from her album, *CROWD PLEASER*. Her memoir is called *Sure, I'll Join Your Cult*. It's a delight. Go check it out.

**Transition:** Thumpy synth with a syncopated beat.

**Jesse Thorn:** I'm Jesse Thorn. It's *Bullseye*. Up next, Desirée Walsh. Her first album came out this year. It's called *Everybody Panic*. Walsh grew up playing competitive sports. She was a swimmer, among other things. But her sports career was complicated by two notable factors. One, she has cerebral palsy. Two, she has a twin sister. So, no matter what she was up to, she always, always had a rival.

**Transition:** Music swells then fades.

*(The audience laughs regularly throughout the performance.)*

**Desirée Walsh (*Everybody Panic*):** And she is disabled too, because God has a sense of humor. And when we were little, we used to play wheelchair basketball, because we couldn't walk. Her position was she was a forward, and her basketball number was 43. And my basketball number was 13, and I played a little bit of a different position. It was left bench. Sometimes I'd switch it off and play right bench, but always on the bench.

Parents at basketball tournaments—people are always like, “Kids are so mean to the different.” No, all the people that I've ever said mean things to me, I was 10, they were 35, all suspiciously named Brenda. So, parents would be like, “Hey, how come when you wear 43, you can hit the hoop, you can set a pick, and you know what's going on? And when you wear 13, you can't hit the hoop, you can't set a pick, you don't know what's going on?!”

And I would sigh and say, “That's because 43 is a completely different person.”

And my favorite would be they would answer with, “Are you sure?”

And I mean does anyone really know who they are? I do think I know my own name though. And I would say, “Yes. Did you not wonder why I asked you to call me by a completely different name at halftime?”

And they would say, “Yes, but we just assumed you were one of those eccentric children. You know.”

**Transition:** Music swells then fades.

**Jesse Thorn:** Desirée Walsh. You can check out her debut album, *Everybody Panic*, on Apple Music, Amazon Music, Spotify, and elsewhere.

**Transition:** Thumpy synth with a syncopated beat.

**Jesse Thorn:** It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. We're playing some of the best standup comedy of 2023. But before we get to our next comic, a question. Who would you guess has the most streamed comedy special on Prime Video? I'm looking at its catalog. There's Jim Gaffigan, Maria Bamford, who we heard earlier. But I'll give you a hint. It's not one of those!

[00:10:00]

It's *Hello World* by Nate Bargatze. In fact, Bargatze's special set an Amazon record for the most streams in its first 28 days. It's a lot of fun, and it's mostly free of grown-up specific stuff, so it's a good listen for the whole family. *The Atlantic* even called Bargatze "the nicest man in standup". Let's hear some of *Hello World*.

**Transition:** Music swells then fades.

*(The audience laughs regularly throughout the performance.)*

**Nate Bargatze (*Hello World*):** Look, I say a lot of dumb stuff. I try to keep it in front of large groups; it seems to go better that way. When you say something dumb one on one, it's a lot for that person. I'll say it, then I can just feel that they feel the weight of my life on their shoulders.

I had it happen. I went on a hike with a comedian. And it was a very flat hike. I'm not trying to be better than anybody. The whole hike was paved. It was paved. We could see our car at all times. It was in front of a hospital.

So, we're out there. We're trekking along, and it's going good. We're having a fun day. We're laughing, making fun, and then—it was a little chilly that day. So, we walk by this turtle, and then there's a pond. And so, the turtle jumps in the water. So, right when the turtle jumped in the water, I was like, "I bet when he got in that water, he was like, 'Woo, it's cold today!'"

Yeah, I don't—I don't know what I wanted out of that. I thought we were having fun, you know. I didn't expect a real answer. And he told me—for real—like, it was like too dumb for him, and he was like, "Well, turtles are cold blooded, so it probably just feels like bathwater."

And I had to say, "Okay." Like I—I'm 10 years older than him. Like that's... and the day was ruined! I mean, you don't just go back to having fun. Now it's weird. You know, I'm thinking, why would you even say it? Do I know that? No. But you know I don't know it? No, either. So.

I haven't talked to him since that day, to be honest. *(Chuckles.)* Last thing I said to him was that day, and I just go, "Sorry about that turtle stuff."

It's because your brain—like you have left brain, and you have right brain. And one part of your brain is super smart, and the other part is dumb as rocks. And I think that's true. Look, I don't—anything I say up here does not come from a building of education. This is all stuff I've overheard at Target or Lowe's. So, one part of your brain is smart, and the other part is dumb. You can trick your own brain. That's how dumb the dumb part is. It's in the same head. That's embarrassing. It's like, you don't hear this going on, dude? If you're in a bad mood, they tell you to fake smile, and your dumb part will think it's a good day. I mean, you don't hear the planning going on? Like, you're a part of the planning. That would be like if you were a conjoined twin, and you got thrown a surprise birthday party by the other twin.

*(Cheers and applause.)*

I get stuck with my dumb part all the time. I do have a smart part, but it just barely works. It helps me tie my shoe in the morning. Then he's like, *(with a thick country accent)* “I gotta get out of here. Y'all gonna be alright?”

I got stuck with my dumb part. So, one time I did a show in like some hotel. It was in the ballroom of the hotel. So, afterwards, I get done. And the show was great. I go up to my room. I'm watching TV. And when I'm gonna go to bed, I turn the TV off. I go brush my teeth, turn the bathroom light off, and then I'm looking for the switch for the main light in the room. And I can't find it, and I'm looking everywhere. And I'll be honest with you, I think I'm unbelievable at turning lights off. I take it for granted!

[00:15:00]

I mean, I swear to you, I think I could go to all your homes tonight and get all your lights off without any of your help.

So, 15 minutes go by. I start crying a little bit. I mean, I have a family that depends on me, and I can't make this room dark. I finally left the room and went in the hallway. That's how much I couldn't find it. I thought, maybe it's in the hallway. Never found it, and just slept with, I mean, just this much light on my face. To this day, I don't know how to turn that light off. I knew I couldn't ask. You can't just the next morning just be like, “Hey, how do you turn the main light off in the room?”

And everybody—“Did you not turn it off?”

You're like, “No, I—of course, I got it off. How would you—what if like someone was having trouble with it though? Like, how would you tell them?”

**Transition:** Music swells then fades.

**Jesse Thorn:** Nate Bargatze from his album, *Hello World*. Go give it a listen. When you're there, I'd also highly recommend checking out his comedy album from last year, *The Greatest Average American*, which was nominated for a Grammy.

**Transition:** Thumpy synth with a syncopated beat.

**Jesse Thorn:** Even more from *Bullseye's* Best of 2023 Standup Comedy Spectacular still to come. Stay with us. We've got Marc Maron, Laurie Elliott, and Hari Kondabolu coming up. It's *Bullseye* from [MaximumFun.org](https://www.maximumfun.org) and NPR.

**Promo:**

**Music:** Fun, brassy music.

**Andrew Reich:** Hey, this is Andrew Reich, the host of *Dead Pilots Society*, the show that takes comedy pilots that were sold and developed at networks and streamers but never produced and gives them the table reads they never got a chance to have. If you've never checked out *Dead Pilots Society*, this month's episode might be the place to start. The cast is incredible, headlined by the one and only Zooey Deschanel, and also featuring Paget Brewster, Michaela Watkins, Hamish Linklater, Asif Ali, and Maximum Fun's very own Hal Lublin.

So, go to [MaximumFun.org](https://MaximumFun.org) or your favorite podcatcher and check out this incredible cast on the latest episode of *Dead Pilots Society*.

*(Music fades out.)*

**Transition:** Chiming synth with a syncopated beat.

**Jesse Thorn:** Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. If you're just joining us, we're playing excerpts from some of the best standup comedy albums of 2023. We listened to them all! I mean, like pretty close to literally them all, I don't know. Many of them. And we are bringing you the best of the best. Next up, Marc Maron: the irascible, crotchety crown prince of podcasting himself.

I talked with Marc earlier this year on the show, both about his album and special, and about his life. He's been through a lot lately. Marc's most recent effort is called *From Bleak to Dark*, and it is bleak and dark, but it's also very funny. Here's Marc Maron.

**Transition:** Music swells then fades.

*(The audience laughs regularly throughout the performance.)*

**Marc Maron (*From Bleak to Dark*):** My dad's still alive. My dad is 84 years old.

*(The audience begins to applaud.)*

Don't—no, don't. I get—don't—hold your applause. 'Cause I have to preface this material with some honesty. For most of my life, my father was a very self-centered, bipolar, emotionally abusive, narcissistic (*sensor beep*). Now the only reason I'm telling you that is because I don't want you to have the wrong amount of empathy when I do these next few jokes. I don't want you—I don't want you rooting for the wrong guy.

My father's 84, recently diagnosed with dementia. We're all pretty excited. Everyone's dealing with this. Everyone's dealing with this. And I gotta be honest with you, he's right at the beginning. So, he's still got almost all his old memories. Day-of stuff's a little tricky. But to be honest, he's very pleasant to be around right now. He's open. He's kind of funny. He's warm. Look, I guess what I'm saying is I know it's a terrible disease, but don't miss the sweet spot. I think it's right at the beginning. It's just lovely. It really is just lovely. I'll just walk up to him and be like, "How you doing, Dad? How you doing?" And rub his little head.

People get uncomfortable when they think of me rubbing my dad's head. What am I supposed to be doing? (*Shouting.*) “What's my name?! Where do you live?! Do you know where you live?! What day is today?!”

[00:20:00]

That's what they've earned at 84, is for you to selfishly yell at them thinking it helps, as they look at you confused and crying. But I'm showing up for him, which is interesting. You know, 'cause we did have a difficult relationship. And it's kinda nice to live to be my age and have your parents alive. Because look, I'm one of those people—I have a hard time when people my age say, “Aren't you a little old to still be mad at your parents?”

No. (*Beat.*) They did it.

(*Applause.*)

I love my audience, because I just know this is a room full of people that were—only had maybe one good parent. Maybe. Just a big room full of broken toys in here, battling dread all the time and wondering if you're talented.

So, my dad—so, he's like—okay, so here's the thing. I'm like I'm showing up for the guy like I said before. And it is weird, but something gives way no matter how difficult the relationship was between you and that parent or both of them. Like, you get old enough and, you know, in your mind you're sort of like, “I kind of won. So, I'm gonna go out there, you know?” But I go out there, and I hang out with him. You know, the dementia is new to him. It's new to me. You know, I don't know his life that well. And I'll take him out to this Chinese place. The last time I was there, we go to the Chinese place. And I order, you know, soup and some entrees.

And we're just sitting there, me and my dad, just sitting there. And he just picks up his soup spoon, and he fills it with soy sauce. And he's looking right at me, right in my face. (*Slurp sound.*) And he just sucks the spoonful of soy sauce down. And my only thought in that moment was, “I didn't know my dad did that! I really haven't gone out to Chinese with him in a long time, I guess. You know what I'm saying? That's wild, right out of the spoon.” Yeah. I watched him fill it up again. He filled it up again. He's looking right at me. (*Slurp.*)

And I said, “Is that good?”

And he said, “I like it.”

He did it three times before my brain was like, “He has dementia! Take the spoon away from him, or he'll drink all the soy sauce one spoonful at a time.”

So, I said, “Put the spoon down. Dad, we're gonna have food coming.”

He's like, “Alright.” Now, there he is! Every time I do that to his head, he's like heh-heh-heh!

**Transition:** Music swells then fades.

**Jesse Thorn:** Marc Maron from his 2023 standup album, *From Bleak to Dark*.

**Transition:** Chiming music with a syncopated beat.

**Jesse Thorn:** It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. Next up, we've got Laurie Elliott. When she's not performing standup, she's a writer for TV and movies—probably best known as a writer for the Cartoon Network show, *Total Drama*—an animated series that spoofs reality competition shows. Earlier this year, after nearly a decade off the air, *Total Drama* returned for a reboot with Laurie back as a writer. Also in 2023, Laurie released *Sexiest Fish in the Lake*. Maybe the best comedy album title we got this year. Here's a bit from it.

**Transition:** Music swells then fades.

*(The audience laughs regularly throughout the performance.)*

**Laurie Elliott (*Sexiest Fish in the Lake*):** Oh, indeed. It's been a—it's been such a weird time. I had a weird start to my day. You know when the—you know when you put your eye drops in in the morning and you're just like, “Oh my god! Oh, ow, ooh, it burns, it burns!” And then you're like, “Oh, *(censor beep)* I'm driving! *(Laughs awkwardly.)* Did that again. That's not—that's not the best.” It's not the best! And I do—I'm not a good driver. I'm a very terrible driver. Do we have any bad drivers in the crowd?

*(A few enthusiastic cheers.)*

Yeah, there's usually a few of us, right? There's usually a few of us. Couple of people going like this. Yeah, I am. I'm awful. I'm bad! In fact, if you're ever driving or walking anywhere, it doesn't matter whether it's a street or not, and you just go like, “Ugh!” That's me. I just passed you, and you survived. So, you're lucky! You're lucky. And I'm always getting into little accidents. I had one incident a little while back where I'm driving to Niagara Falls, ran over something small, and it got stuck in my wheel well. And you know when that happens and your car starts going all gah-dunk, gah-dunk, gah-dunk. And I was like, oh my god, what have I done?! And I pull over, and I look at my wheel well, and it turns out I ran over a—um what are they called? Um—

[00:25:00]

A Smart car! Stuck in there. But don't worry, the 20 clowns inside were fine! They were okay! They were just all angry and dizzy. *(Chuckles.)* You owe me two tickets for that ride.

But I do, and my biggest pet peeve when I'm driving is when a pedestrian makes me stop or slow down when it's my right of way. Hoo boy, that makes me upset. So, what I've decided to do is—and I'm looking for investors—I'm going to— It's true, I am! I'm going to invent a car horn that sounds like screeching brakes. Okay. Okay? Alright. Good, some of you are onboard there already. I like it, I like it. Because they're never paying attention, right? They're

never paying attention! They're just walking across the street all (*dopily*) do-do-do-dodo on their smartphone. They're like, "Do-do-do, I own the world, dodo-do-do."

And then I'd pull up, and then I'd just honk my horn. And they'd just hear eeeee! And then they'd be like, "Aaah!"

And then I'd just be all, "Hi! I'm an inventor!"

**Transition:** Music swells then fades.

**Jesse Thorn:** Laurie Elliott, from her 2023 standup album, *Sexiest Fish in the Lake*.

**Transition:** Chiming synth with a syncopated beat.

**Jesse Thorn:** It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. You're listening to our 2023 End of the Year Comedy Spectacular.

Our next comedian, Sarah Ashby, has appeared in the Just for Laughs Festival, the 420 Comedy Festival, and the Bi Arts Festival. She's also a veteran of the roast battle scene around Toronto. So, be warned if you run into Sarah and you think you cannot duel them. And while Sarah's comedy career has eclipsed the 10-year mark, their debut comedy album, *Ew, What Is This?*, came out just this year. Let's hear a bit.

**Transition:** Music swells then fades.

*(The audience laughs regularly throughout the performance.)*

**Sarah Ashby (*Ew, What Is This?*):** I love the fall, I really do. I'm not a big summer person either! I'm very much not. Mainly because I'm like this disgusting shade of pale. (*Chuckles.*) I'm not like the like fun one though. Like, not the one where like old people just like unpromptly come up to you on the street and are just like, "Ooh, a little porcelain doll! Oh, so dainty, so feminine, so beautiful!"

I'm like this gross, uncooked chicken pale. Like, if my shirt was a little higher, you could just see the rum and cokes digesting in my tummy. (*Chuckles.*) I had to stop taking walks late at night through my neighborhood, because every Facebook group I was a part of kept being like, "Did you guys see a ghostly Victorian child?" Literally, on the way here, a bus drove past me, and I had to chase it down. And when I did and he opened the door, he was just like, "Sorry, thought you were a Halloween decoration."

Let the skeleton man board, please.

I love it though. I truly—like it is—I won't lie. I won't lie. My favorite fall holiday is coming up. Halloweeeen. Right?

*(Scattered cheers.)*

Yeah. Yep. It'd be weird if I had a different favorite fall holiday. (*Chuckles.*) It'd be weird if I came up here and was just like, “Hey, guys, my favorite fall holiday is coming up. Remembrance Daaay. Get those poppies a poppin’. We're having a party!”

No, but I love Halloween. I do. I love Halloween, right? Because on Halloween you get to be something you're normally not, right? So, I get to be emotionally stable and worthy of my parents' pride! (*Inaudible.*) Sick. But I don't have to be me, right? So, my dad does come into my room and is like, “Hey, Sarah when are you thinking about going back to school for a trade to get a real job?”

I can just turn to him and be like poof! “Ah-ha-ha-ha-ha! I'm not Sarah.”

**Transition:** Music swells then fades.

**Jesse Thorn:** Sarah Ashby. Her album, *Ew, What Is This?*, is out now on Apple Music, Amazon Music, Spotify, and elsewhere.

**Transition:** Thumpy synth with a syncopated beat.

**Jesse Thorn:** It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. First jobs. Everybody's had one. I changed a lot of light bulbs at Davies Symphony Hall in San Francisco. My producer, Kevin Ferguson, was a game room attendant at a Shakey's. Sounds like a rough scene. And our next standup, Meg MacKay's, first job was at Tim Hortons, the Canadian donut chain.

This bit is Tim Hortons related. It comes from Meg's terrific debut album, *Clown Baby*. Let's listen.

**Transition:** Music swells then fades.

(*The audience laughs regularly throughout the performance.*)

**Meg MacKay (*Clown Baby*):** One day I was working at that Tim Hortons.

[00:30:00]

I was a 14-year-old child when I was working there. And they told me for the very first time, “Okay, you are responsible enough to go mop the bathrooms.” And I was a little bit nervous about that, because I'd never been inside of a men's washroom before. And I went into the men's washroom, and I was mopping the floor, and there was a guy I knew from school. His name was Tim, but everybody called him Chomper, because he wore braces once. Well, okay, if you want a picture of what this man looked like, he looked like if Eminem was Anne of Green Gables. That's what he looked like. And he had a 60of vodka, and he was just drinking it straight sitting on the sink. And I didn't think that was weird, because I thought like maybe every men's washroom is like a *Mad Men* style lounge. They go in and talk about being bossy.

So, I left him be. Left him be. Turns out he was trying to get some courage. ‘Cause he comes out of the stall bathroom there about one hour later. And he pulls out what I now know to be a steak knife but at the time felt like a katana. And he says (*mumbling angrily*), “Give me all the money in the register.” In that moment of pure fear, my training came out.

So, I said, “Sir, I cannot open the till unless I make a sale. So, unless you'd like a donut with your robbery, I cannot help you.”

And so, there we were in a standoff. Stabby man vs. the worst protector in the D.P. Murphy chain of restaurants. And he stumbles back and into the arms of a police officer that no one called. Not only is this a place where of course you're gonna find police officers at; they're gonna be getting doughnuts. The other thing is you've just made this man mad, because he has to work now.

**Jesse Thorn:** Meg McKay, from their debut standup album *Clown Baby*, out now on Howland Roar Records.

**Transition:** Thumpy synth with a syncopated beat.

**Jesse Thorn:** It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. Next up on our Best of 2023 standup special, Hari Kondabolu. He's been a standup for a long time. You might have seen him on *The Late Show* or *Kimmel*. In 2017, he put out the documentary *The Problem with Apu*. The Apu in question, of course, being the *Simpsons* character, who was voiced by Hank Azaria. Kondabolu's documentary and its repercussions eventually led to Azaria giving up the role on the show.

Hari put out the album *Vacation Baby* this year. He also recently became a parent. And when he did, he gave a lot of thought to what he was going to name his child. There was one name that definitely wasn't on the list of possibilities: Hari Kondabolu. Let's listen.

**Transition:** Music swells then fades.

(*The audience laughs regularly throughout the performance.*)

**Hari Kondabolu (*Vacation Baby*):** I would never name my kid after me, mainly because of ego. Right? Because I like being the most famous Hari Kondabolu in the world. If my son has an amazing life, he might screw that up for me. This is important to me. I'll explain why, right? My name is Hari Kondabolu, but I sign my name Hari K. Kondabolu, because as a child, my mother told me to keep my middle initial in my name in case there was another Hari Kondabolu, there wouldn't be any confusion!

What I find most disturbing about this is she assumed if there was another Hari Kondabolu, I would have to keep the middle initial in his name! I would be the less famous Hari Kondabolu. My mother thought I was gonna be the Michael B. Jordan of Hari Kondabolu!

(*Scattered applause.*)

I love my name, man. Hari. I love my name. I fought for my name. They used to call me Harry in elementary school. I (*sensor beep*)ing hate that name, man. That's a stupid name. If anyone's named Harry in here, I apologize. I thought you were given a stupid name. I hate that. I used to go to elementary school. Kids would be like, "Oh, it's Dirty Harry! It's hairy Harry!"

Hairy Harry used to bother me, but I'm cool with it now. It's like, "Oh, am I hairy Harry? Is that right, bald Greg? Oh, you're using Rogaine? That's cool. This is good genetics and coconut oil!"

[00:35:00]

That was a little South Asian dog whistling. They said our hair was greasy because of the coconut oil, (*sing-song*) but we still have iiiiit! Coconut oil sales go through the roof. Hari Kondabolu, new face of Parachute coconut oil!

(*Cheers and applause.*)

"Parachute, it's not just for cooking." There it is.

I remember this one day, I went to school. It was during Black History Month. And this kid thought he was clever—and to be fair, he was like eight. And I walk in, he's like, "Hey, look! It's Harriet Tubman!" And he said it like an insult?! Oh no, not famed abolitionist Harriet Tubman! What am I to do with that historical burn?

Every semester of college it was the same thing. I'd go over my name with my professors. You know, I'd be like, "It's Hari, not Harry. It's Hari. I'll accept Hah-ri. It's Hari. My last name's Kondabolu. We're not gonna worry about that right now, alright? That's a master's level course."

Two weeks into this one semester, professor walks in. He's like, "Is Harry here? I'm looking for Harry." I'm like what is this Harry business? We've gone over this already. My name is Hari! All of a sudden, out of the corner of my eye, I see this other Indian dude stand up I've never seen before. And I'm like woah! Two roads diverge! Like, you know your name isn't Harry, man! You know it's Hari! You don't need to assimilate for anybody, man! Be who you are! Don't Bobby Jindal this (*sensor beep*). Don't Nikki Haley this (*sensor beep*). Be who you are! Follow me. I will take you to freedom! I am Hari-et Tubman.

**Transition:** Music swells then fades.

**Jesse Thorn:** Our old pal, Hari Kondabolu from his recent album, *Vacation Baby*.

**Transition:** Chiming synth with a syncopated beat.

**Jesse Thorn:** It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. You're listening to our 2023 End of Year Comedy Special. Next up is Chase O'Donnell. Her most recent special is called *People Pleaser*. Let's hear.

**Transition:** Music swells then fades.

*(The audience laughs regularly throughout the performance.)*

**Chase O'Donnell (*People Pleaser*):** I'm so happy to be here in person and not on Zoom. Do we remember? My high school reunion was on Zoom. Which was truly no fun at all. 'Cause I was homeschooled, so it was just me. You know?

*(Sweetly.)* That was my first joke, thank you.

*(Cheers and applause.)*

Thank you. But not my last! Buckle up. Okay. *(Giggles.)* I recently moved, and my living situation—it's so much better. I was living with a couple, which was really uncomfortable. Because the guy, he kept trying to get me... to do things. You know where I'm going? That I was not interested in at all. Like, the dishes, and the laundry. I was just like, "Dad, that is—that is Mom's job!" I'm so glad to be out of that 'sich, let me tell you. Never good living with family. So, I moved in with my sister, and she's killing it. She's amazing. She's an overachiever. Always has been. But my parents did the best job making me feel like we were at the exact same level.

And the perfect example is—we were out to dinner celebrating, because my sister had just been written up in the *New York Times* and the *New Yorker* in the same week. We were very proud. London K., you can look her up.

*(Cheers and applause.)*

Anyway, we were so proud. And then my dad turned to me and, equally as proud, goes, "And Chase, you've been dog sitting!"

[00:40:00]

My mom was like, "That's our businesswoman!"

*(Cheers and applause.)*

They're so proud. They hold us to different standards. My sister's always been a go-getter, you know. I've always just been—mm, just. Just a stay-putter. Just very lazy.

**Transition:** Music swells then fades.

**Jesse Thorn:** Don't worry Chase, we're proud of you too. Check out Chase O'Donnell's comedy album *People Pleaser*, which the *New York Times* called one of the best YouTube specials of 2023.

**Transition:** Thumpy synth with a syncopated beat.

**Jesse Thorn:** We've got more from this year's End of Year Standup Comedy Spectacular still to come. Stay with us. It's *Bullseye* from [MaximumFun.org](https://MaximumFun.org) and NPR.

**Promo:**

**Music:** A bouncy beat.

**Dave Shumka:** (*Rhythmically.*) If you need a laugh, and you're on the go, try S-T-O-P P-O-D-C-A-S-T-I—ugh. (*Sighs.*) Hm.

(*Music stops.*)

**Graham Clark:** Were you trying to put the name of the podcast there?

**Dave:** Yeah, I'm trying to spell it, but it's tricky.

**Graham:** Let me give it a try.

**Dave:** Okay!

(*Music resumes.*)

**Graham:** (*Rhythmically.*) If you need a laugh, and you're on the go, call S-T-O-P P-A-D—ah, it'll never fit!

**Dave:** No, it will! Let me try.

(*Music resumes.*)

(*Rhythmically.*) If you need a laugh, and you're on the go, try S-T-O-P P-O-D-C-O-O-UGH! We are so close!

**Graham:** *Stop Podcasting Yourself.*

**Dave:** A podcast, from [MaximumFun.org](https://MaximumFun.org).

**Graham:** If you need a laugh, and you're on the go.

(*Music ends.*)

**Transition:** Thumpy synth with a syncopated beat.

**Jesse Thorn:** Welcome back to *Bullseye*, I'm Jesse Thorn. This week we are celebrating some of the best standup albums of 2023. We combed through dozens of records to find some of the best bits. We're bringing them to you today. Next up, Jenny Zigrino. Jenny made her

late-night debut on *Conan* with Conan O'Brien back in 2015. Since then, she's been named to Just for Laughs' new faces list and has been featured on Comedy Central. Her brand-new standup album, *Jen-Z*—that's Jen as in Jen, Jenny, Jennifer—tackles the ever-present generational divide in our great nation.

**Transition:** Music swells then fades.

*(The audience laughs regularly throughout the performance.)*

**Jenny Zigrino (*Jen-Z*):** I'm 34. I'm a Millennial, and I'm like getting to my mid-30s Millennial. Where's the Millennials in here?

*(Cheers.)*

Hell yeah, Gen X?

*(Scattered cheers.)*

Boo. Um, Gen Z?

*(A single clap.)*

You told them not to come? You just cancelled them all? I see one—I saw one. Did you wave? How old are you? 25? Ugh. I don't like you. I'm sorry! I don't. I don't like Gen Z. First of all, okay, let me say something. As Millennials, there was a moment a few years ago—before we went inside for some unknown reason. So, we went inside. And it felt like before that, us as Millennials, we were like primed to like finally get our slice of pie, right? Like, we had survived 9/11. We survived the housing crisis. We survived the election. And if you're asking me which one, all of them. Every single one. Every one as a Millennial has been a dumpster fire nightmare, okay?

Our parents' elections were easy, right? They were just like, "Which candidate would you share a jellybean with?!" Like, that was our parents' elections. Every election for us has been "Which pedophile do you prefer?" Like, those are the only options that we have! Right? And then suddenly, we go inside, and then—just like the phoenix from the ashes, with the help of TikTok, Gen Z rose to power! Right? And claimed the throne. And forgot about us, completely.

Gen Z, I'm jealous of them. I'm so jealous of you. Right? Gen Z has the best role models. They have Lizzo. Jonathan Van Ness, Aidy Bryant. Who did we have? Limp Bizkit? Kid Rock? And like a Fruit Roll-Up. Like, the multicolored ones from school that tasted like chemicals. Gen Z also—I didn't know this—they drink for fun, not to forget. That's wild! That is wild, okay?

[00:45:00]

I remember when I was coming up as a young drinking person, everyone was like, “Oh man, girly drinks are the weaker drink. Blugh.” And I’m like, okay, have you ever actually had a girly drink? Those things will (*sensor beep*) you up. Yes, I could have 12 beers, pass out, wake up in a fountain, smug a yeast infection, sure! I could do that. Or I can drink 2/3rds of an appletini, black out, wake up the next day. I’ve started a small business! Okay, that’s how (*sensor beep*)ed up I got. I’m just like, (*blearily*) “Oh man, did I incorporate again last night? (*Sensor beep.*) Oh, there’s so much paperwork. These dudes in my bed, they’re my shareholders.”

**Transition:** Music swells then fades.

**Jesse Thorn:** Jenny Zigrino’s *Jen-Z* is available now on Comedy Central’s YouTube, on Apple Music, and everywhere else.

**Transition:** Chiming synth with a syncopated beat.

**Jesse Thorn:** It’s *Bullseye*. I’m Jesse Thorn. Our next comic on our End of Year Standup Spectacular is Ben Roy. His new record is called *Hyena*. And I want to say, this next bit might not be for everyone. It’s about a particularly rough encounter with norovirus, and you may or may not know what norovirus is. If you don’t, we’ll give you an opportunity to google—or not Google and just let it lie. And suffice it to say, it’s not something you’d wish on your worst enemy. If you’re listening to this podcast and would rather not know more about norovirus and its, let’s say, emetic properties, just skip ahead about five minutes. But if you’re brave, enjoy! Here’s Ben Roy.

**Transition:** Music swells then fades.

(*The audience laughs regularly throughout the performance.*)

**Ben Roy (*Hyena*):** While I was coming down, I got norovirus. Which—yeah, those of you that have had it, you just—if you heard everybody in here, you heard a very low, bass groan. Like a (*shudders*). Because if you have had norovirus, you know it. It is the worst illness. If you don’t know what it is, it’s that virulent stomach illness that lasts only like 20 hours, but it docks cruise ships, right? I didn’t think you could get this (*sensor beep*) unless you came into contact with a limbo stick that hadn’t been properly sanitized, but you can get this (*sensor beep*) on dry land. And oh my god, was it bad! I mean, that’s the most sick I’ve ever been. I’ve not been—I learned (*sensor beep*) from norovirus, seriously.

For instance, man has pondered for generations whether it is possible for one’s own soul to exit out one’s own (*sensor beep*). And I’m here to tell you all, I know the answer now! And the answer is no. It can’t. (*Chuckles.*) But it can poke its head out. And my soul got a gander around, ‘cause it almost came out of me! I’ve—holy god. Not a very—not a very, very technologically—very primitive illness, that one. A king killer. The kind of illness that halted the exploration of continents. It was bad. Like, I like to imagine if norovirus is a person, (*chuckles*) he’s just a real straight shooter. You know what I mean?

If norovirus was a guy, he's like, "Covid? (*Chuckles smugly.*) That's a designer illness. I mean, really, think about it. What does covid do? You know what I mean? Long covid. You have all these crazy symptoms, you know? You got lost of sense of smell or taste. You've got brain fog, neuropathy, the shakes, right? Fever. Every illness is different for every person. It tailors it to you. That is a nice illness. That is—covid is the J. D. Power Associates Illness of the Year. That is a nice illness. But not me. Norovirus? Not me. I'm a meat and potatoes type of guy. Just give me a lot of liquid out the face and butt. That's what I like."

'Cause I (*cancel beep*)ing died. 18 hours, oh my god. Have you ever been so sick like that?! That at some—you're just sitting there, and at some point you're just like, (*wailing*) "There's nothing left! (*Sobs.*)"

At one point, I had been (*cancel beep*)ing and barfing for so long, so aggressively, that at one point I heard my own voice. I don't remember saying it. I heard it reverberate off our bathroom tile.

[00:50:00]

I just heard my voice shrill and go, "Oh, now you're just showing off! (*Bawls.*)" It's like my body was out doing donuts on the 50-yard line in its El Camino. "Check it out, bro! Oh, there's more down here!" Whenever human beings get too high on themselves, norovirus is there to remind you of what you are. We're always—we're too—we believe ourselves to be too much. We're always like, "Oh, human beings? The most evolved species on the planet."

Whenever I hear somebody say that, I want to be like, "Oh, really?" And then hold up a Polaroid. Just the profile of them. Naked. Their (*cancel beep*) sealed to a porcelain hole in a house. Legs up on a Squatty Potty. They look like a gargoyle outside a Bed, Bath and Beyond like—hair scraggly. In their hands, a giant steel pot, usually reserved for slow-simmering family stews. But not today. It's for the front half of you to leak in like a yoga studio ceiling. I want to hold up a photo of that person. "Oh, we're the most evolved species, are we? (*Vomit noise.*) I'm one of God's miraculous creations! (*Vomit sound.*)"

(*Cheers and applause.*)

We are primitive. Just watch somebody have diarrhea to tell you how primitive we are.

**Transition:** Music swells then fades.

**Jesse Thorn:** Ben Roy, from his standup album, *Hyena*.

**Transition:** Chiming synth with a syncopated beat.

**Jesse Thorn:** It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. We're playing some of the best standup of 2023. Next up is John Mulaney. Mulaney is one of the most celebrated comics in the United States. You might have heard him on this show as George St. Geegland, half of *Oh, Hello*. Or you might have seen his film and television work in all kinds of places. In his new standup special, an album called *Baby J*, Mulaney is very personal and very real. He recorded it after

very publicly going through rehab. And on the record, he admits that he has struggled with addiction pretty much his entire life. And as you're about to hear, he tells us where he got the title for his special.

**Transition:** Music swells then fades.

*(The music laughs regularly throughout the performance.)*

**John Mulaney (*Baby J*):** I worked hard in rehab. I did what my counselors told me. When I first got there, my counselor asked me to write an autobiography of my substance use and abuse. I said, what do you mean? He goes, “Write all the big life points where you used drugs and alcohol.” I said, you mean recently or starting at age six? He said, “Did you start drinking when you were six?” I said, yes. And then he gave me more paper.

Tried alcohol when I was six. I don't mean I was at a bar having a Manhattan or something. We were allowed to try beer and wine. My dad told us when we were kids, he said, “We have a European approach towards alcohol in this house.” That was the only thing we had a European approach towards. Everything else we had a very Midwestern approach. Including Europe. We're like, “We're not going to that place.” By the time I was 13, I got drunk every weekend. My friends and I would go out on the streets of Chicago, on Lincoln Avenue, and we'd stand in front of liquor stores and try to get adults to go in and buy liquor for us.

This was always a very dramatic process. Because we were 13, we looked 9. We'd be sitting out there like little Charles Dickens urchins. Just like, “Sir, please, sir, sir, please.” They'd sometimes try to give me money. I'd go, “No, I give you money! And you buy me beer in this store. The one where the cashier is watching this entire exchange through the window.”

In 8th grade once, I said to my friends, I go, “We should only ask couples on dates. ‘Cause the guy will want to buy beer for us to look cool in front of the girl.” I did not understand adult first date dynamics.

As if when he's dropping her off she'd be like, “You know... I wasn't sure about you in the beginning of the night, but when I saw you buy those two 24 packs of Natty Light using quarters and dimes—”

[00:55:00]

“And that one bottle of Boone's Farm for that really specific child, I was like this guy might be a keeper.”

I started doing drugs when I was 14. With my two best friends, John and John. They're not me; they're other people. They were both named John. There was John O'Brien, John McNulty, and then me. My name is John Mulaney. And if you didn't know that you were probably in rehab with me. One time when we were 16, me, John, and John—we were in a parking lot at night. And we were smoking a joint. We were getting high, and then a police car pulled in out of nowhere like *(imitates a short siren)*. And we went *(censor beep)*. And

we threw the joint we had down a sewer, and we got rid of all of our weed. But they still called us over and made us put our hands on the patrol car.

They're like, "Line up and put your hands on the hood."

So, the three of us line up, and we put our hands on the patrol car. The police officer walks up to John O'Brien first. And he starts to give him a pat down. He goes, "What's your name?"

And he goes, "John."

Then he goes to John McNulty. Starts to give him a pat down. He goes, "What's your name?"

He goes, "John."

Then he got to me. Before he gave me a pat down, he leaned in and whispered in my ear, "Your name better (*cancel beep*)ing not be John."

"They call me *Baby J* out on these streets."

(*Cheers and applause.*)

**Transition:** Music swells then fades.

**Jesse Thorn:** John Mulaney from his latest album, *Baby J*. Mulaney is touring the US currently, including a date coming up at the Hollywood Bowl for the Netflix is a Joke Fest in the spring.

**Transition:** Thumpy synth with a syncopated beat.

**Jesse Thorn:** It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. You're listening to our 2023 End of Year Comedy Special. Next up, Sasheer Zamata. You might know her from her four seasons as a cast member on *Saturday Night Live* or for her years at the Upright Citizens Brigade Theater. Maybe you, a public radio fan, heard her segment on *This American Life* with her mom. That was really nice. Since she left *SNL*, she's also hit the standup circuit. Her comedy album, *The First Woman*, focuses on post-pandemic life as a woman in America and asks why companies love shoehorning feminism into advertising.

**Transition:** Music swells then fades.

(*The audience laughs regularly throughout the performance.*)

**Sasheer Zamata (*The First Woman*):** I'm getting tired of the way companies advertise to women. There's this thing called fem-ertizing where they put a feminist lean to commercials to sell more stuff. And it works sometimes, but the way they're doing it now keeps getting weirder and weirder and farther away from the product. Because they want to tug at our like feminist heartstrings. So, they're essentially like, (*stiltedly*) "You enjoy being girl, right? And

you like that girls were able to girl before you, girl? And you want girls to be able to girl after you, giiiiirl? Then buy Friskies.” What?! The cat food?! Was this like a (*sensor beep*) joke the whole time?

(*Scattered cheers and hoots.*)

And there's one campaign that haunts me to this day. It came out years ago. It was for Brawny paper towels. For years, they were putting a man lumberjack on the packaging. And they decided for Women's History Month, we can do it too! They were like, “We're gonna solve a problem no one thought of.” So, they started putting a woman on the packaging. But it sucked, because they didn't even show this woman's full face. It was just her mouth to her (*sensor beep*).

(*The audience “oh”s.*)

You know, the important parts! And there was one commercial for this campaign that was so intense. It was like shot in a black warehouse, and there were these glass panes suspended from the ceiling—which I assume represent the glass ceiling.

[01:00:00]

And then women from history would be projected on the glass, and the camera would zoom through and smash it. Or break the glass ceiling. So, it'd be like Harriet Tubman, SMASH! Marie Curie, SMASH! Amelia Earhart, SMASH! Serena Williams—which, yes, absolutely deserves to be on that list. But that is a huge jump in time. There was no one in between Amelia Earhart and Serena Williams? Like Mother Teresa didn't do anything for you? Or Cher?!

(*Scattered cheers and applause.*)

And then it gets to the last glass, and it's a picture of this ethnically ambiguous model. And it's like, “Is she next? Hashtag #StrengthHasNoGender,” and all these website links. And I was like what was I watching? Oh yeah, a paper towel commercial. They've gone too far.

**Transition:** Music swells then fades.

**Jesse Thorn:** Sasheer Zamata. You can stream her standup album, *The First Woman*, on YouTube or on her website. You can also catch her podcast, *Best Friends*, which she cohosts with her best friend, Nicole Byer, every week.

**Transition:** Chiming synth with a syncopated beat.

**Jesse Thorn:** It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. We've got one more comic on our End of Year Standup Special. A little bit of Kenny DeForest's album, *Don't You Know Who I Am*. DeForest died just a few weeks ago, after a bike accident. He was only 37. He was a very beloved guy. Maximum Fun's senior producer, Laura Swisher, knew him from back in her

standup days. She said Kenny was always a warm and gracious presence and always had a wonderful smile. He was also, as you are about to hear, very, very funny. Let's listen.

**Transition:** Music swells then fades.

*(The audience laughs regularly throughout the performance.)*

**Kenny DeForest (*Don't You Know Who I Am*):** This might be a good time to mention I'm in an interracial relationship, in case you were wondering why my skin looks so good. I know, you were wondering. I've been on a Black woman's skincare routine for eight years.

*(Cheers and applause.)*

Thank you, absolutely. Shout out, shea butter. And shout out, cocoa butter. Shout out, regular unsalted butter. I just grab any butter I see, and I just smear it on my face. Because I'm trying to age gracefully with a Black woman. That's very scary. Black women age like wine, and White men age like milk. So, it's scary. *(Laughs.)*

I'm like, *(shouting)* “Don't leave me out in the sun, babe! I'll curdle! You gotta keep me cool and dry!”

We're trying. *(Chuckles.)*

It was crazy to travel across this country with someone who's not White, man. Because when you're White, you hear about racism, but you don't experience it. It doesn't happen to you. Now that I've traveled the country with her, I've experienced it. And I gotta tell ya—it is bad! I think maybe we should do something about it!

And we stopped to get a coffee in Amarillo, Texas—which was our first mistake. We were going in the coffee shop, and the owner saw us coming. I opened the door, and he stepped up to my face and he just said, “You ain't from around here, are ya?”

I was like, *(shocked and confused)* “Are you... real? Are you a caricature from a Mark Twain novel? I didn't know they made guys like you anymore.”

“You ain't from around here, are ya?” is what he said. Now, I will say, in his defense, we were wearing matching velour tracksuits. So, it was obvious we weren't from there. A lot of people don't know this. When you're a White dude and you start dating a Black woman, a mysterious tracksuit just appears in the mail with a note that says, “Prove you're about that life.” And it's crazy. You have to put it on and complete a series of dance challenges. You have to have your spice cabinet investigated.

[01:05:00]

And if you pass, Erykah Badu just comes floating down your chimney.

**Transition:** Music swells then fades.

**Jesse Thorn:** The late Kenny DeForest, from his album *Don't You Know Who I Am*.

**Transition:** Cheerful piano.

**Jesse Thorn:** That's the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye* was created in the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California. Here at my house, as 2023 passes into 2024, I will be asleep for like the 10th or 12th year in a row.

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 at Maximum Fun is Bryanna Paz. We got some extra production help on this episode from Raghu Manavalan. Thanks to the employees of Maximum Fun for listening to many of these albums with and for us. That includes Daniel Baruela, Julian Burrell, Christian Dueñas, Marissa Flaxbart, Kira Gowan, Stacey Molski, Laura Swisher, and KT Wigman. We get our booking help from Mara Davis. Our interstitial music is by DJW, also known as Dan Wally. Our theme song is called “Huddle Formation”. It was written and recorded by The Go! Team. Thanks to them, and thanks to Memphis Industries, their label.

*Bullseye* is on Instagram, [@BullseyeWithJesseThorn](#). We're also on Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook, and I think that's about it. Just remember, all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.

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

*(Music fades out.)*