

[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 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. This is the story. And I don't know; it may be apocryphal. It's a famous baseball story. In 1962, Richie Ashburn and Elio Chacón were playing for the New York Mets, and they ran into a problem. Each other. Pop fly after pop fly, they would collide on the field. Ashburn, the veteran center fielder, tried to call Chacón off, but still—ka-bump. Until Richie found the key. Chacón, who was born in Venezuela, didn't speak much English. So, Ashburn switched from saying “I got it” to saying “yo la tengo”. It worked until Ashburn ran into Frank Thomas, who I guess didn't get the memo. Reportedly, Thomas stood up and said, “What the hell is a yellow tango?” That story ended up being the inspiration for one of alt rock's great bands, Yo La Tengo.

They've been around for almost 40 years, the pride of Hoboken, New Jersey. The band is made up of Georgia Hubley, James McNew, and my guest, Ira Kaplan. They're beloved by rock critics and artsy dads far and wide. They've just released their 17th album, *This Stupid World*. Before we get into my interview with Ira, let's hear a song off the new record, “Fallout”.

[00:01:41] **Music:** “Fallout” from the album *This Stupid World* by Yo La Tengo.

I won't tell you how it's gonna be

I don't have what you want from me

I want to fall out of time

Reach back, unwind

(Music fades out.)

[00:02:10] **Jesse Thorn:** Ira Kaplan, welcome to *Bullseye*. I'm so happy to have you on the show.

[00:02:13] **Ira Kaplan:** Happy to be here!

[00:02:15] **Jesse Thorn:** Can I tell you that I—in my head, I always think of Yo La Tengo as a Mets band? And I don't even know what that means exactly. *(Chuckles.)*

[00:02:26] **Ira Kaplan:** Well, that's—I mean, you know, we're big fans. So, that's—I'm comfortable with that, no matter what it means.

[00:02:34] **Jesse Thorn:** I know how much you love the Mets broadcast team. That's something that many, many Mets fans share. Like, I think there are a lot of rockstar stories about favorite sports teams that probably involve meeting, you know, Kareem AbdulJabbar or whatever. And you know, what I hear you excited about is meeting the Mets play by play guy.

[00:03:02] **Ira Kaplan:** Well, I do think, you know, that it's a big part of why it's so much fun to watch the games, win or lose. Those three guys do such a—you know, I think it matters tremendously to them. You know, I think they're all baseball fans, obviously, and to see good baseball. But I think there's a perspective just in the other things they talk about and in their tone of voice that—you know, it is actually only baseball. (*Chuckles.*) Like, it's—I don't know. It's just there's a tone to the broadcast that I have not heard anywhere else. I wish I could remember what it was, but a few years ago Georgia and I were driving our equipment back after a festival show, and it was a Sunday afternoon.

So, we just kept looking for baseball games on the radio. And you know, one would come in for a couple of innings, and then it would switch to another one. And probably at the time didn't even care what I was listening to. But there was one where they had a really great like rapport in that—you know, I mean I don't want to critical of others, but they sounded like they were having fun being at a baseball game. And that's what I love about listening to Gary Cohen and Ron Darling and Keith Hernandez.

[00:04:27] **Jesse Thorn:** Years ago, I was on my friend J. Keith van Straaten trivia podcast. And the premise of this trivia podcast is they bring a public figure on, and they quiz them about something that they claim to be a nerd about. And then they bring on someone who is a great expert in that field to quiz them. And I had picked the San Francisco Giants. And you know, I'm standing there on stage. This is like a live recording in front of people, and they're like, "Okay, we're going to put our celebrity guest on the line for you, Jesse."

And they—you know, it clicked through, and it was the Giants' play by play announcer, Jon Miller. And I just about melted on the stage.

[00:05:17] **Ira Kaplan:** (*Laughs.*) And then he demolished you, right?

[00:05:19] **Jesse Thorn:** Oh, yeah, no. He tore me a new one. Yeah, absolutely. No, he—and the thing that made me think of announcers in talking to you is because the story that gave Yo La Tengo its name, which is this old Mets story, I heard as a sad nerd teenager—a 19-year-old, I think I was—at a Society for American Baseball Research Conference. (*Chuckling.*) In—maybe Phoenix? And it was like the dinner speaker. You know, the headliner of the conference was John Miller, and he told that story. (*Chuckles.*)

[00:05:50] **Ira Kaplan:** Wow. (*Laughs.*) I'm a little stuck on a different detail, that you went to a SABR function. But—

[00:06:01] **Jesse Thorn:** By myself, as an 18-year-old? (*Laughs.*) Yeah, I did. It's true. Just hanging out with elderly guys who can't stop talking about the Brooklyn Dodgers.

[00:06:12] **Ira Kaplan:** Yeah. And Wins Against Replacement.

[00:06:16] **Jesse Thorn:** This was comfortably pre Wins Against Replacement.

Let's talk a little bit about music. You're coming up on 40 years now, with Yo La Tengo?

(Ira confirms.)

Does that ever stop you short? Do you ever count it up in your head?

[00:06:36] **Ira Kaplan:** We're well aware that the 40th year approaches. So, I guess the answer is yes.

[00:06:45] **Jesse Thorn:** How does it feel when you think about it?

[00:06:46] **Ira Kaplan:** It feels great! I mean, it's unbelievable to me that— This was such a lark. And the idea that we're still doing it and still love doing it—I mean, it just seems like a gift all the time that it's remarkable.

[00:07:07] **Jesse Thorn:** Was it really a lark?

[00:07:09] **Ira Kaplan:** Well, kind of. I mean, I think Georgia and I started—we played at a couple of parties with friends of ours, primarily in the New York band The dB's, and it was something we just loved. We loved playing. We were not in any way adept at doing it. So, we just kind of kept to ourselves, playing cover songs and tried to put a band together and eventually tried to write a song. But you know, we didn't—weren't out to teach the world to sing or anything. You know, we just kind of—it was fun! And challenging. I mean, sometimes it wasn't fun at all, because we felt so incapable of doing something we liked. But yeah, a lark is not particularly an exaggeration. *(Chuckles.)*

[00:07:59] **Jesse Thorn:** I think on the first record, your guitar is credited as like “primitive guitar” or something like that.

[00:08:07] **Ira Kaplan:** I think naïve I think is maybe the word, yeah.

[00:08:08] **Jesse Thorn:** Naïve, yes, thank you. *(Chuckles.)*

[00:08:11] **Ira Kaplan:** Yeah, there were a few things that worked there. I mean, I've said this many times. The dB's and The Feelies, were so important to our development as friends, as bands we loved, and their support. And on *Crazy Rhythms*, they describe the guitar parts. You know, there's—I can't remember what they are now, but there are all sorts of creative ways of getting around the word lead guitar, rhythm guitar. And there's no doubt in my mind I was thinking about that. But at the same time, I don't really think I was playing rhythm guitar, and Dave Schramm certainly was playing lead guitar. But it just seemed a more descriptive way of describing what was going on.

[00:08:59] **Jesse Thorn:** I think most people who are young adults playing in rock and roll bands, their ambitions are grandiose, right? Like, isn't the goal of starting a rock band to like rock out and rule the world usually?

[00:09:19] **Ira Kaplan:** I don't know. (*Laughs.*) You know, I hope what I'm about to say doesn't sound too canned, because it does strike me as something I've said on a number of other occasions. But I think—you know, I mentioned The Feelies, and I mentioned The dB's, and I just felt like at a certain point—the music that we cared about the most, those acts were not ruling the world. And you know, on occasion a group like—well, not a group like—REM would break through. But that always felt like such a fluke. And it seemed to me pretty early on that a good strategy to have would be just to manage your expectations and try—and I think I've gotten—I know I've gotten better at this as life has gone on—but not really obsess about things that are out of your control.

So, what other people we're going to make of our group and what lofty show business heights we were going to attain was largely not our control. So, it just seemed like not a wise thing to focus on. If the movie *Bedazzled* has taught us anything, it's that your wishes coming true don't always work out the way you think they will.

[00:10:44] **Jesse Thorn:** Did you have wishes? Like, were there particular things that you were dreaming of? Even if—did you think, “Gosh, it would be nice not to have a job”?

[00:10:54] **Ira Kaplan:** Kind of. I mean, probably. But the kind of work I did was so—you know, it was a different time. And I never fortunately had to do—I never had an office job ever. So, there was no kind of “take this job and shove it” moment for me. Even when I was able to start living off the band, it just meant that I proofread and copyedited less and less trashy novels until I didn't do any. So, even that as—as aspirations go—was not a particularly evocative one.

[00:11:32] **Music:** “I'll Be Around” from the album *Fade* by Yo La Tengo.

When I stare into space

I'm looking for you

And I can see you

At times

I'll be around

To pick up your phone

I'll be around

See the kaleidoscope girl

In the doorway

(Music continues under the dialogue.)

[00:12:15] **Jesse Thorn:** More with Ira Kaplan of Yo La Tengo after a quick break. Stay with us. It's *Bullseye* from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

[00:12:22] **Music:** "I'll Be Around" by Yo La Tengo.

At times

I'll be around

To pick up your phone

I'll be around

(Music fades out.)

[00:12:40] **Transition:** Thumpy rock music.

[00:12:45] **Jesse Thorn:** I'm Jesse Thorn. You're listening to *Bullseye*. My guest, Ira Kaplan, is co-founder of the band Yo La Tengo.

We found this review that you wrote in the late '70s about an Elvis Costello concert in a newspaper called *Soho Weekly News*. And I'm going to read this little excerpt from it, and I'll tell you why as soon as I read it—other than to embarrass you by reading something out loud.

[00:13:10] **Ira Kaplan:** Yeah, I know. The pit in my stomach right now is—I'm sure you can hear it.

[00:13:17] **Jesse Thorn:** You did a great job. There's nothing particularly embarrassing in this.

“As for fears that a big hall would corrupt his music, forget it. Elvis and the Attractions set up as close together as they could, the size of the stage be damned. Elitists may have been shocked by the inappropriate yells accompanying Allison, especially in Jersey, ‘natch. But the intensity of the performance belied the need for worry. Elvis wants to be more than a cult figure. It's no coincidence that he performed better in front of 3,000 people than he did when there were but 450 watching.”

And I'll tell you the reason why I liked it. It's like what a winning attitude about a guy you love getting famous. (*Chuckles.*) You know what I mean?

[00:14:00] **Ira Kaplan:** Well, you know, but I do think a lot of that goes back to that time when I think there was that kind of proselytizing and evangelizing. Like, you know, how can you not hear how great the Ramones are? How can you not hear how great Television is? Like, you know. And if only you would hear them, you would know too. So, there was I think a lot of that kind of—you know, (*chuckling*) maybe later I got more selfish and wanted to keep certain groups to myself. But certainly not then.

[00:14:39] **Jesse Thorn:** It's clear that hearing music that moved you was so important—and not just hearing music that moved you, but like getting deeper and deeper and deeper. And you know, you were a 21-year-old concert critic. Do you think you ever felt paralyzed by taste? Like, do you think that part of why, when you started, you said you and Georgia had never felt like you could make something that was good enough was because you were so—you know, you were so deeply committed as a consumer of music?

[00:15:25] **Ira Kaplan:** Hm. I don't know that I've ever thought of that. Hm. I don't know. I mean, I used to read—or probably still do—but interviews with people who would say that, you know, everything on the radio is terrible; that's why I was all but forced to write my own songs, so there would be something good out there. You know, that was just (*chuckling*) not part of my personality and not part of Georgia's. And so, I don't know. What you're saying sounds a little too like directly causal for me to be comfortable agreeing to it. I think we're just shy.

[00:16:13] **Jesse Thorn:** How do you think you got through that?

[00:16:16] **Ira Kaplan:** We just got more comfortable. I don't know. I mean, once again—you know, I bring up The dB's and The Feelies. To have people we admired think we were doing something worthwhile meant a lot to us. But the quantum leap is meeting James. And that's when—you know, when we became a band, just the three of us—and especially because there were no day jobs, there were no outside other bands. And we just started getting together and playing most afternoons in Hoboken. And the place—we played in like a complex, which—so, if you went at night, there would be a lot of people playing. And it wasn't like the perfect milieu for doing something quiet. But once we had the building to ourselves, we were able to do kind of whatever we wanted and just feeding off of each other. And not only feeding off each other, but James has always been more enthusiastic about what we're doing than—and you know, it takes Georgia and I longer to come around to something than it does him.

And that made a big difference. Like, somebody who sings so great and plays so great, is just like being really encouraging, and just—so, when the three of us started working together, that just changed everything. And anything it didn't change, it allowed to change later.

[00:17:58] **Jesse Thorn:** Do you think the band would have been different if—or do you think you even could have started a band when you were 18 instead of 28? I'm fudging the dates but approximately.

[00:18:10] **Ira Kaplan:** Yeah. I don't know. I mean, I have thought about that, and you know. The answer is obviously yes, but I do think—certainly, to go back to the first thing you asked about the longevity of the group—I don't think the fact that we started it so late in life is coincidental. I think as volatile as particularly I could be and can be, I think it would have been even worse if I was younger. And so, I think it, you know, could have happened. But it would have happened very differently.

[00:18:50] **Jesse Thorn:** What kind of volatility are you talking about?

[00:18:52] **Ira Kaplan:** Eh, just ask someone who knows me.

(Music fades in.)

[00:18:57] **Jesse Thorn:** *(Laughs.)* Let's hear some music from the first Yo La Tengo album, *Ride the Tiger* from 1986. This is “Big Sky”.

[00:19:04] **Music:** “Big Sky” from the album *Ride the Tiger* by Yo La Tengo.

People lift up their hands and they look up to the big sky

But the big sky's too big to sympathize

Big sky's too occupied

Though he would like to try

Then he feels bad inside

Big Sky's too big to cry

(Music fades out.)

[00:19:29] **Jesse Thorn:** Are there things that you like and admire about the music that you made almost 40 years ago and things that make you feel weird or cringe?

[00:19:41] **Ira Kaplan:** Certainly, the latter. You know, I'm at peace *(chuckling)* with those records.

[00:19:49] **Jesse Thorn:** You mentioned that you felt like the band came together or something like that when James McNew joined the band. That's not until the early '90s. And I—you know, I'm sorry to harp on this, but it's so unusual to feel like you were at the point in your life when most bands are falling apart and, you know, people are losing the adolescent

passion that drove them to try and make a career in music, and you were just finding yours. Was it really just he was encouraging?

[00:20:32] **Ira Kaplan:** Well, I mean, we were—I mean, different things happened along the way. I think in whatever way, Georgia and I were doing some things that worked. (*Chuckles.*) We started—speaking of volatility. If we felt that we were not getting the respect that we were due from a club, just would—instead of doing a set of songs, we would just take this two-song medley which would be kind of maybe—it was long. It was like some of the longest things we would play at the time, maybe like 10 minutes—and stretch it out to an entire set and basically just play noise. Which you know, is probably not—you know, I don't think it's something we invented. But it was a big deal for us from a kind of personal statement, to just kind of assert ourselves in that way.

And then on the other side of the spectrum we had—there was so much personnel change within the band. And at a certain point, there was no band. It was just me and Georgia. And along the way—you know, prior to that, when we were on tour, we would sometimes play at a radio station or a record store. You know, the sort of things one does to promote a show or a record. And we would do it as just the two of us, and we would basically sing cover songs. And Georgia, who didn't sing live maybe at all at that point and if she did, very sparingly—sang a great deal on these record store and radio station shows. So, we had a completely different repertoire of songs where we sang harmony together.

And we thought, well, we don't have a band; why don't we just record that repertoire? And we were on Coyote Records at the time, which was owned by Steve Fallon, who was the owner and booker of Maxwell's. And Steve thought that was kind of a bad idea, because the previous record—*President Yo La Tengo*—had started to get more attention than any of our other records had gotten—or the rock songs on it. And he thought it was just too different from the previous record, that it wasn't sound business sense. But we were like, “Well, you know, maybe we'll—(*laughs*) I guess we'll do it anyway.” And then that record, you know, became such a successful record for us, the *Fakebook* record. By then Coyote was gone, so it came out on Bar None Records in Hoboken. And so, you know, I think there was kind of growing confidence in what we were doing.

[00:23:32] **Jesse Thorn:** But you still felt like you changed when James joined the group.

[00:23:35] **Ira Kaplan:** Oh, yeah, yeah. I mean, the difference—James plays on *May I Sing With Me*. But those were the songs that, by and large, we taught him when he started playing with us. Even when he started playing with us, the notion was—he was playing in the band Christmas, from Boston. And they were having their own like record company issues and were kind of on this forced hiatus. So, James was just like filling in on a couple of tours with us, and we taught him a bunch of songs, including the ones that ended up on *May I Sing With Me*. But then we developed the songs on the record *Painful*, our first record on Matador. We developed them together over a long period of time.

And that's the big sea change is us working together and trying to figure out what we can do with the songs we're writing. And the songs went through a lot of permutations and a lot of energy went into that, learning that stuff.

[00:24:40] **Jesse Thorn:** I mean, that time was also a time when the landscape of rock music changed so dramatically. In that, you know, the idea of college rock became kind of alt rock and became the sort of... very close to the last popular form of rock music, the last like chart-topping form of rock music. That kind of alternative rock radio exploded in those same years. You know, 1991, '92, '93, '94, in there. You know what I mean? It must have been odd, because at that point you were both veterans and felt like newbies in a way. And also, you know, it wasn't just REM that was making weird, noisy records and like selling millions of them.

[00:25:35] **Ira Kaplan:** Right, but even so. I would agree—you know, to go back to earlier things we were talking about—that there were feelings of, “Well, maybe we could break through in a bigger way.” But on the other hand, most of the bands that were, were not bands that we really felt like, you know, “Look at them. They did it; why not us?” I think even then, we did not feel part of—with some exceptions that I sort of don't really want to name, because I don't really want to be that specific—but most of those groups, I think, that the top of the charts, we didn't feel that much of an affinity for.

[00:26:17] **Jesse Thorn:** Let's hear some Yo La Tengo from the mid-'90s, getting into the late '90s, from the album *I Can Hear the Heart Beating as One*. This is “Autumn Sweater”.

[00:26:29] **Music:** “Autumn Sweater” from the album *I Can Hear the Heart Beating as One* by Yo La Tengo.

When I heard the knock on the door

I couldn't catch my breath

Is it too late to call this off?

We could slip away...

(Music fades out.)

[00:26:55] **Jesse Thorn:** Ira, are there things that you think you are better than ever at now?

[00:27:03] **Ira Kaplan:** *(Laughs.)* Oh, yeah. Everybody—what artist, what performer isn't deluding themselves to think that they've never been better? Uh. But you know, I was listening to that, and the cringing I did when you played “Big Sky”—particularly listening to myself sing—and I listened to that, and I enjoyed hearing myself sing it.

And I think about like Roger Moutenot. Because that was the third record we recorded with Roger. And another thing that really helped everything was having the time to make records and—you know, instead of being on this like tight budget where you just kind of go in there and record the song that you've worked out as best you can and then get out, like starting with

Painful, which we did with Roger and Fred Brockman, and then continuing in a progression on the many records we did subsequent to *Painful* with Roger, we had a pretty generous amount of studio time and could experiment.

And when a song like “Autumn Sweater”—I can remember being dissatisfied with way I sounded singing. But Roger, who would always just loved rolling up his sleeves and helping to find way to work around things that, you know, I couldn't really put into words. So, I wouldn't be surprised if James remembers, and I'm sure Roger does, just what microphone I'm singing into there. But it's some weird microphone, and it was kind of like, “Well, try this.” And it ended up capturing a sound and helping me express an emotion that I don't mind hearing all these years later.

[00:29:02] **Jesse Thorn:** We'll finish up with Yo La Tengo's Ira Kaplan in just a minute. After the break, he's not an old guy yet, but he can see it coming around the corner. So, what kind of old guy musician does Ira Kaplan want to be? A back to the roots blues man? Maybe the guy who makes ambient album? Join a supergroup with Jeff Lynne? You'll never know! Unless you listen to the rest of this episode. It's *Bullseye* from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

[00:29:35] **Promo:**

(Fantastical tinkling and sparkle sounds.)

Narrator: *(Echoing.)* Somewhere, in an alternate universe where Hollywood is smarter.

(Harp chords fade into applause.)

Presenter: And the Emmy nominees for Outstanding Comedy Series are *Jetpackula*. *Airport Marriott*. *Throuple*. *Dear America*, *We've Seen You Naked*. And *Allah in the Family*.

(Applause fades into harp chords.)

Narrator: *(Echoing.)* In our stupid universe, you can't see any of these shows. But you can listen to them on *Dead Pilots Society*.

(Rock music fades in.)

The podcast that brings you hilarious comedy pilots that the networks and streamers bought but never made. Journey to the alternate television universe of *Dead Pilots Society* on MaximumFun.org.

(Music fades out.)

[00:30:19] **Transition:** Thumpy synth with light vocalizations.

[00:30:24] **Jesse Thorn:** Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. If you're just joining us, my guest is Ira Kaplan. He's a guitarist and singer, and the frontman of the beloved New Jersey band Yo La Tengo. Their latest album, which is their 17th, is called *This Stupid World*. It's out now. Let's hear the rest of our conversation.

All these years later, the three of you are—for pretty much the first time—making your own records. What's that like for you?

[00:30:57] **Ira Kaplan:** Well, it's been the culmination of a process we—James has always been the person documenting what we're doing at rehearsal, even if it became just recording some of our rehearsals on a four-track cassette player or a minidisc player. And then, you know, with the advent of Pro Tools, we started making more elaborate demos. And we were fortunate somebody helped us get some much better equipment. So, you know, the recordings we were making got more and more elaborate to the point that when we recorded the record *Fade* with John McEntire in Chicago, we brought some pretty elaborate demos that James had recorded and ended up using quite a few of them, of the tracks, on the finished record.

And then when we got back together to start making—well, I mean, we're always recording things, even if we don't know that we're making a record. So, when we decided maybe it was time to think about the record that became *There's a Riot Going On*, we had this whole backlog of recordings that we started listening to and thinking about what we could do with them. And I think at a certain point in the process, we thought we would do what we did on *Fade*, which is just a bunch of stuff to John and build it up from there. But then we thought, well, you know, maybe we like what we're doing, and we can skip that part of the process. We'll mix the record with John. And we recorded the whole thing—almost the whole thing ourselves. A couple of vocals and maybe a couple more overdubs with John.

And then on this last record, there again, we just thought, okay, we'll record it, and then we'll go somewhere and mix it. And then, you know, especially because James just dives into the recording and the mixing and—you know, we'd show up at practice, and he would, you know, tell us all the mixing and mic techniques he'd been reading about the night before. So, it just—it wasn't something we actually planned on doing. It was just something we kind of fell into doing. And given the logistics of the last few years, it worked out perfectly to record music that way.

[00:33:26] **Jesse Thorn:** I mean, it's certainly been a strange time. Lonely for a lot of people, and it's narrowed a lot of our circles. It must be nice to feel like you had some agency to make something in that context.

[00:33:42] **Ira Kaplan:** Oh, it was amazing. Even before we started working on *This Stupid World*, when we figured out very quickly that, “Well, there's only three of us, and two of us are already living together. So, for us to get together is really not a rash, unsafe thing to do.” So, we started getting together a couple times a week. And you know, just on a personal level and a social level, it mattered so much. And it was so great just to kinda have somebody else to talk to. (*Chuckles.*) And then we would just make some music with no thought other than, you know, just almost like a—just part of being social is “let's play something”. And thought, oh, you know, this is actually not just good therapy, I kind of like it!

And we shared it with Matador to see if they were interested in putting it out like as a digital piece. And they were enthusiastic enough about what they heard. And they said, “Well, you know, why not make a whole record of it? We're like okay. And so, we put out this thing of just these one-track recordings—James was just using one microphone—that we were doing

in our rehearsal space during the height of the lockdown, just to kind of keep us as close to sane as possible.

[00:35:14] **Jesse Thorn:** Have you thought about what kind of old guy musician you'd like to be?

[00:35:24] **Ira Kaplan:** (*Laughs.*) I think I am an old guy musician.

[00:35:26] **Jesse Thorn:** You're on the edge, Ira. I'm going to give you a minute to look back on middle aged musician and look forward on old guy musician.

[00:35:34] **Ira Kaplan:** Well, I don't know. I'm getting a lot of senior discounts when I go shopping. So.

[00:35:43] **Jesse Thorn:** (*Laughs.*) But what do you think? What would you like to be?

[00:35:48] **Ira Kaplan:** I don't know. I just want to keep whatever I enjoy. I mean, that's really the—you know, we're in a very envious position. We do what we want. And that's great. So, I just want to keep doing what I want to do. I mean, you know, one of the things that's kind of amazing and I don't take lightly is how much the three of us agree on. And that's lasted a long time. And you know, maybe it won't. Maybe as we get older, the agendas will diverge a little more. So, you know, I hope we find a consensus—continue to find a consensus and just do what makes us happy.

[00:36:38] **Jesse Thorn:** Well, Ira, I sure appreciate you doing this. Thank you very much.

[00:36:41] **Ira Kaplan:** Yeah, my pleasure!

[00:36:43] **Jesse Thorn:** Ira Kaplan of Yo La Tengo. Their new album is *This Stupid World*. It's amazing how much great music they have made in their career. They're kicking off an eight-night Hanukkah residency at the Bowery Ballroom in New York this week. The shows are all sold out, but don't worry! They're also gearing up for a big tour in February. We'll have more information about that on the *Bullseye* page at MaximumFun.org.

Believe it or not, I happened to be looking for what the first episode of our show to be podcast was—or at least the oldest episode in our original podcast feed. And it had Ira Kaplan on it! 18 years ago. Wowie-zowie. Let's go out on one more song from *This Stupid World*, “Apology Letter”.

[00:37:30] **Music:** “Apology Letter” from the album *This Stupid World* by Yo La Tengo.

I was wrong

I knew right away, but I played it cool

That trick never works

Took too long

And then I got mad because you got mad

Another one of my delightful quirks

What a jerk

If I were to smile at you

Would you smile at me?

(Music continues under the dialogue.)

[00:38:44] **Jesse Thorn:** 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. I've been having a nice time driving my tiny Japanese van around. But my car's been in the shop for a month, and I just got it back. And uh, I'm happy to drive on the freeway again.

[00:39:02] **Sound Effect:** Revving engine noise.

[00:39:04] **Jesse Thorn:** 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 get booking help from Mara Davis. Our interstitial music is by Dan Wally, DJW. Our theme song is called "Huddle Formation", written and recorded by The Go! Team. Thanks to them, and thanks to their label, Memphis Industries.

Bullseye is on Instagram. We share interview highlights, behind the scenes looks, and more [@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.

[00:39:43] **Promo:** *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn* is a production of [MaximumFun.org](#) and is distributed by NPR.

(Music fades out.)