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

Promo: *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn* is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.

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: It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. There's a new movie out called *Monica*. Maybe you heard about it. Maybe you missed it. It was released last year. It wasn't a blockbuster, but it did get a record-setting standing ovation at the Venice Film Festival, and it's up for some awards. *Monica* stars my guest, Trace Lysette. She plays Monica. As the movie starts, she's on her own, in early middle age, doing sex work, just kind of getting by. And she gets a phone call. Her mom is sick, and she doesn't have much time left. Monica is estranged from her mom and has been since she came out as trans.

So, Monica goes home to help her brother care for her mother. And when she gets there, her mom doesn't recognize her. Monica doesn't tell her mom who she is. She just cares for her. It could have been a big melodrama. Instead, it's the furthest thing from that: a quiet, intimate, beautiful movie about family love. The film got Lysette nominated for Best Lead Performance at the Independent Spirit Awards.

Trace Lysette grew up in Dayton, Ohio. She found her first community in the few queer clubs that that area offered. She spent a good portion of her 20s as a sex worker, living in New York City. She's been a professional actor for about a decade. You might have seen her on *Law & Order* or *Transparent*. And as you'll hear later on, she is also a pretty decent rapper.

One quick note before we go on. As I mentioned, she worked as a sex worker, and we are going to talk about that work in some detail in this conversation. So, if you or someone you're listening to this with is sensitive to that kind of thing, we figured we would let you know. So, anyway, let's start with a clip from *Monica*.

Monica's just arrived home, and her mom has mistaken her for a nurse or a home care worker.

Transition: Music swells then fades.

Clip:

Mom (*Monica*): How long have you been standing there?

Monica: Oh, I—

Mom: Please, knock or just announce yourself. It's the proper thing to do when you're a guest in someone else's house.

Monica: I'm sorry. I just came to see if you needed anything before I—

Mom: You're all dressed up.

Monica: *(Beat.)* Yeah, I figured I would just step out for a little bit.

Mom: Well, that's good. You know, you don't need to stay around all the time. I can take care of myself.

Transition: Music swells then fades.

Jesse Thorn: Trace Lysette, welcome to *Bullseye*. I'm so happy to have you on the show.

Trace Lysette: Thanks for having me!

Jesse Thorn: This was your first time starring in a feature. Were you worried, or did you feel like you were good to go, or both?

Trace Lysette: I knew I was good to go, but I was a little worried about the constraints of indie filmmaking and the money of it all. And yeah. *(Laughs.)* There's a lot of things outside of my instrument and my power that I was initially worried about. But I was aware that like a shot like this is just rare for an actor, especially a trans actor. So, I was game for it.

Jesse Thorn: The part that felt like, as I was watching the film, that would feel like scary to me as an actor is that the film is so quiet, and also so much of it is shot tight on you. Like, there is so little that is about choreography and so much that is about your face.

Trace Lysette: Yeah. I had to let go of any vanity or—well, I feel like insecurity is the root of vanity. Which I don't know if everyone makes that correlation, but when you're trans, you've spent so many years of your life looking in the mirror and trying to figure out why you don't look like what you think you should look like or what you should have been born as, and I had a lot of time to sort through that stuff. So, when it comes to acting, I was studying back in New York. And I learned that I had to let go of all that really early on if I was going to focus on the truth and the heart of whatever story I was trying to tell or whatever character I was flesh out.

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And so, the tightness I guess was still difficult in a technical way, because there were times when I was like am I in frame? No? You don't want me in frame? Okay, cool. How do I reach the audience if I'm, you know, barely in frame? So, that was the challenge more so over just having the camera so close. It was just like how do I reach the audience with these limited

resources? You know, limited camera time. And what I realized is that there was just zero room for anything false.

And you mentioned choreography. There actually were certain scenes that were choreographed. Andrea is the most specific director I've ever worked with. And again, that was a challenge, but one that I welcome. And you know, there were times when he would say, "Okay, make sure you lean this way, and then lean back in frame, and then put the necklace on. And then like lean back and take a breath, and then just settle and let whatever comes out, come out."

And I'm like okay, was that not in frame in the last take? Like, what do you want? (*Laughs.*) He was very specific, but it was kind of cool to make art that way.

Jesse Thorn: There's a scene maybe a third of the way, 25% of the way, into the movie where you're at your mother's house putting on jewelry in front of a mirror.

Trace Lysette: Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: Is as like intensely intimate as it gets in a movie! (*Laughs.*)

Trace Lysette: Yeah, that was a hard scene. That was a very specific scene. You know, I was trying to emote but not do too much. Because I knew he wanted that in other places. I think as an actor, you try to make a roadmap for the character before you dive in. And then you get to set, and then you have to take in everyone else's notes and make everyone else happy too. And so, it was just a combination of that and also having one eye in frame (*laughs*) and hoping that the audience was going to feel what I was trying to give them. And I think they did.

Jesse Thorn: I think that trying on our parents' things is powerful thing for anyone, like a relatable thing for anyone. Like, I think all the time one of my kids used to go up into my office where my clothes were in my old house and put on my shoes and hat. And she would come down the stairs going, "Oosh, oosh, oosh. Ats, ats."

(*They laugh.*)

And you know, I think often for girls, makeup and jewelry is a big part of that. I mean, for everybody sometimes, but often for girls. And I would imagine that for a trans character and as a trans actor, that has, you know, double or triple weight.

Trace Lysette: Yeah. I mean, a lot of things were going through my mind shooting that scene in particular. I have my own memories of doing that with my mother's things as a young, you know, boy at the time, I guess. And you know, I remember she walked in one time—she came home, and I had like her backless mule heels on in the living room. (*Laughs.*) With my Fruit of the Loom briefs like hiked up into my (*censor beep*). I don't know what I was doing. I think I was rapping to Lil' Kim or something.

(*They laugh.*)

So, there's that visual for you. And she was just like, “What is going on up in here?” You know, she was a first-grade schoolteacher, single parent.

And I was like, “I don't know, just having fun!” You know. Thankfully, that didn't end too badly, but I know she had questions. Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: I think often it is an easy story to tell about trans people—a story of transformation. If the inflection point is someone's transition in some way, then it's just convenient for storytelling reasons. And so, that ends up being the story in a lot of trans stuff. This is a story about someone who is trans, has been trans. It's not about them changing. Was that meaningful to you?

Trace Lysette: Yeah. That was the hook for me when I got the script, end of 2016. I said, oh, she's a full grown, well lived-in woman.

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I think it was written for a 50-something-year-old trans woman. And I thought, oh, she's lived a life, and she's lived as trans for a very long time—meaning her transition, her physical transition, happened a long time ago for her. And that was something we don't get to see very often, because they do reach for the transition story. Because it's (*sighs*)—it's dramatic, and it's like—I don't know. It's sensational and it's easy for a wide audience to find it fascinating. Because people are superficial and shallow and—

Jesse Thorn: And you know, self-actualization is the theme of a lot of things of all kinds.

(*Trace agrees.*)

It's easy. Like, the biggest thing to my mind is it's easy. It's right there. It's just right in front of you. You don't have to stretch for it.

Trace Lysette: Yeah. And I don't mean to make light of the physical transition, if there is one. I don't always think that there has to be one. But for me, there was one. It was a very, very dramatic physical transition. But yeah, I really appreciated that this was not about that. This is about a woman coming home to see what was left with her birth mother in her mom's last day. See if there's anything there at all. And maybe not, maybe nothing. But she was down to take the road trip and see.

Jesse Thorn: We're going to go to a quick break. When we return, even more with Trace Lysette. It's *Bullseye* from [MaximumFun.org](https://www.maximumfun.org) and NPR.

Transition: Thumpy rock music.

Jesse Thorn: Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest is Trace Lysette. Trace is an actor, a rapper, and a former drag performer. She has appeared in movies and TV shows like *Hustlers*, *Transparent*, and one of my personal favorites, *Blunt Talk*. She stars alongside

Patricia Clarkson in *Monica*, a quiet and haunting drama about a trans woman caring for her sick, estranged mother. Lysette has just been nominated for Best Lead Performance at the upcoming Independent Spirit Awards. Let's get back into my conversation with the wonderful Trace Lysette.

You have a producer credit on the film, and I know that you worked on the script. What did you have to say about it? Like, what changed in part through your contributions?

Trace Lysette: Well, I gave page-by-page notes pretty early on. So, there was different things that stayed and went. But I remember after we shot it even, there was some sex work that got lost. They had taken out the webcam scene altogether, and they had taken out another trick at the top of the movie where I gave a guy a massage and I (*sensor beep*). And they just kind of whittled it down to me answering the door and like—you know, I think a few seconds of massage. And then the webcam scene was gone altogether.

Jesse Thorn: And that webcam scene is pretty intense, because it's, you know, in a spare bedroom that might have been your childhood bedroom in your mom's house.

Trace Lysette: I know. It's so layered, right? Like, the innocence of that room. You know, it's clearly gone now, because she has to do what she has to do to make a living. Probably not by choice. For most of us, it was not by choice. And then to have to go and run and nurture her mother with those same hands that she turns tricks with. I needed that in the film, and I fought for it. And Andrea, thankfully, was collaborative. And after we had that conversation—it was a tough conversation, but I said, “Look, these people have to know what some of her life is like now. It's not all roses.” And they also need to know her duality, you know, that she can still be nurturing. Because we never see sex workers in that way, not very often anyway—in a maternal, nurturing way. So, I was like, “I really need you to at least show this to people.”

He did. He showed it to people, and he was like, “Okay. We're gonna show it to people.” And everyone was like, “Put that back in!” So, they did. But as far as like—back to your original question about the notes. Yeah, there was page-by-page notes, different things like deadnaming came up, and we 86ed that and decided to just call her Monica. You know, there's no need for her old name. But you know, I did what I could. I was kind of like one of two trans people on set. And yeah, I think it's important for trans people to have some say so, beyond just being the actor. And you know, maybe that is the same person. Maybe it's another person.

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Maybe it's several people. I think that is the direction we need to move towards in storytelling.

Jesse Thorn: Did you think about the relationships between these really sort of first-person intimacies, these like really direct human things, and the enactments that are necessary for sex work? The sort of self-awareness that's necessary for expressing your gender in public. Because that feels like a really significant part of this movie, like dying bodies and like doing makeup. (*Chuckles.*) You know what I mean?

Trace Lysette: I mean, I did think about it. But it wasn't that foreign from my own life in some ways. I mean, Monica and her shell—how she walked, talked, dressed, what her friend group probably looked like, the amount of money she grew up with was all different from me. But the sex work part of it was not foreign to me, unfortunately. (*Chuckles.*) The survival piece was not foreign to me. The familial journey with acceptance was not foreign to me. But you know, I had to kind of find the bridge, because nothing was exact. I mean, you know, I didn't lose 20 years with my family. Thank god my mother is an amazing and adaptive person, and we figured it out. Right? And I know she loves me.

But there were things that I had to kind of like—it's like a *Tetris* game in my head of trying to figure out where the parallels are, and how do I convey that, and—yeah. So, makeup and dead bodies—that sounds like a song or something.

(*They laugh.*)

Yeah. I mean, I think that's what's so beautiful about the film. Yeah. Makeup and dying bodies. I don't know. Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: I feel like Lil' Kim could make a record called that, right?

Trace Lysette: She absolutely could! I'm waiting for her big comeback.

Jesse Thorn: I'm ready for it. We've tried to—I can't tell you how many times I've tried to get Lil' Kim to come on *Bullseye*. Lil' Kim, if you're listening, go on *Bullseye*!

Trace Lysette: Oh my god!

Jesse Thorn: NPR is ready for you. Let's go.

Trace Lysette: Oh wow, that would be major.

Jesse Thorn: It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. I'm talking with Trace Lysette. She's an actor, rapper, and former drag performer. One of her favorite tracks to perform back in her drag days was “How Many Licks” by Lil' Kim. I'll let Trace tell you all about it.

Trace Lysette: That was one of the drag songs I did when I was working in the clubs as a teenage drag queen.

Jesse Thorn: Really?

Trace Lysette: Yeah. “How Many Licks”.

Jesse Thorn: That song jams. (*Laughs.*) It goes.

Trace Lysette: Yeah. Yes. Definitely helped me pay my rent.

Jesse Thorn: What was the act?

Trace Lysette: Ooh, I mean, it was back when they—(*chuckles*) it was just a lip sync, you know. There was a club called Wall Street in Columbus. And I used to work in 1470 West, which is a club in Dayton, Ohio. And I used to do “How Many Licks”. And it was the era of the kind of like flip-out Mary J. Blige wig. It was like a throwback to ’70s hair that had a resurgence in the early 2000s. And I would make my own wigs. They were called like a quick weave, and I was in hair school at the time. And I would go by the tracks and like glue them to a stocking cap and just like make whatever colors I wanted and throw them on.

And my best friend from high school, Charles—he would be my background dancer. And I did everything from Lil’ Kim to Janet to Destiny’s Child, the list goes on. (*Laughs.*)

Jesse Thorn: It must have been a tight scene in Dayton, Ohio.

Trace Lysette: It was. I mean, the clubs—and this is pre cell phones, even. Yeah, all we had was the clubs. I mean, historically nightclubs have been like our church for LGBTQ folks. And it was where I went to find myself, find friends, find love, find entertainment, find my womanhood. I found so many things in the nightclubs of Dayton, Ohio, Columbus, New York City. I think drag was like an extension of theatre for me. I guess I discovered entertainment young, when I was like 5 years old at my elementary school play. We did a play called *Melvin the Magnificent*.

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And for whatever reason, the music teacher thought I should be Melvin. And so, that was my first leading role, you know. And then you grow up and you get bullied heavily. And you lose something. You lose that spark. And then I saw it flicker back in certain ways, like choreographing the high school halftime dance with the cheerleaders at the basketball game. You know, and it was a mashup of like “Maria Maria” by Santana and “Thong Song” and like “The Percolator”. And I choreographed the whole thing and got a standing ovation.

Jesse Thorn: I don’t think you could have put a harder point on the time period.

Trace Lysette: (*Laughs.*) And I got a standing ovation! Like, you know, the entire gymnasium like stood up and went crazy. And decades later, I’m getting standing ovations in Venice, which is really cool. But it all stemmed from like just a very unconventional route with theatre, whether it was *Melvin the Magnificent* or “Thong Song” or the drag clubs, you know, as a teenage drag queen. I mean, I didn’t go to college. I did not go to prestigious, you know, Yale or Tish. But I did get a real-life kind of experience in ways that you cannot pay for.

Jesse Thorn: You mentioned sort of finding your gender identity in the drag world. How did you find it? I mean, the drag world is such a mixed bag of gender identities and gender expressions, right? So, how did it help you figure out who you are?

Trace Lysette: Well, in Dayton, Ohio, in the mid/late '90s, I had a fake ID. And I was dating someone who worked at this particular club, called 1470 West. And I—it's etched in my brain the night that he introduced me to a woman by the name of Jareje Rashad, who is a local Dayton legend drag entertainer but also a trans woman who works in the context of drag. And she was stunning. I mean, she had this Toni Braxton aesthetic, and she was so elegant and kind and just embraced me. And so, it was women like her that I met early on that—I don't know—planted a seed in me.

I don't think she meant to. She was just being herself and just effervescent and beautiful and so entertaining. And I knew that there was something in me that identified with her. And so, I started to entertain. I started to do whatever I could to just get in and, you know, throw on a wig and do a number.

Jesse Thorn: I feel like if I had your costar in this movie, Patricia Clarkson, in here, I probably wouldn't have to ask her about anything that's this exhausting to talk about.

Trace Lysette: Yeah, (*chuckles*) yeah, probably not.

Jesse Thorn: I'm grateful to you for talking with me about it, but I'm also mindful of that. That like, look, we're out here. It's awards season. Hopefully you get nominated for some awards, and I bet a lot of the awards that you get nominated for, part of the story will be “first trans woman gets nominated for this award”. Right? And that is a lot of crap to carry around from radio studio to radio studio. (*Laughs.*)

Trace Lysette: Yeah, the whole first of it all. I mean, it's a double-edged sword. Obviously, it can be an honor, and obviously we want to break down those doors. But then it's also like heavy. You know, it's heavy. When we got the standing ovation in Venice, I think it was—it was history being made as the first time a trans woman had ever led a film at that—the oldest film festival in the world. And you would think that that would make—it did make some headlines, but then when we got the standing ovation, I mean, they—it was 11 and a half minutes, which was the longest of the festival that year so far. And the next day they wrote about Spit-gate with Harry Styles and Chris Pine instead of writing about us.

And you know, that made it harder for us to get distribution. And it's just seeing the awards game of it all now also is just like such a trip, because it's so money-driven and campaign-driven. It's like politics. And I guess I was a little naïve. I mean, I thought I knew, but I didn't know. I didn't know how bad it was. But the press game of it all. Like, recently, we tried so hard to get in on like the roundtables with the *Hollywood Reporter*.

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And you know, we just—they wouldn't make space. And so, it blows my mind. And I'm probably going to take heat for this, for even talking about it, but so many people claim to be an ally, and then they don't really know what that means to actually make space for a marginalized person—specifically trans people, in this specific time in history. We don't get opportunities like this. And it's not like the work isn't good, and this has been a handout. Like, you know, making room for trans excellence should be something that we all want to do, just like we would with any other minority. And the press opportunities—like, pitching all these

different late-night shows and being told no, pitching the roundtables and being told no, pitching cover stories, whatever, and being denied a lot of things all leads into the awards conversation. Because then the voters think there's only five or ten, you know, people to choose from or vote for. And—

Jesse Thorn: Those are the screeners at the at the top of the pile on their DVD player.

Trace Lysette: Exactly. Exactly, the ones that have made the roundtables and have the most money and whatever and whatever. And it's not all performance-based, and it's not always based in what is timely in a historic way, like for whatever group or whatever—yeah, whatever group is really just starved for a seat at the table. And that's been hard for me. That's been harder for me than anything else in this whole process, harder for me than the art we actually made. It's been seeing how the business side of Hollywood operates and the press game and the money game. It's been really challenging, so I've been giving it all I have, and we have like two more weeks left before Academy voting starts or something. I don't know. I'm just like—I'm running on fumes.

Jesse Thorn: Then you can just take a break from self-revelation.

Trace Lysette: Yeah. (*Laughs.*)

Jesse Thorn: We'll finish up with Trace Lysette after a quick break. When we return, you might have heard me mention that Trace is also a rapper, and I am pleased to report the following news: she has charm, she has verve, she has bars. We're gonna hear them. Stay tuned. It's *Bullseye* from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

Promo:

Music: Bright, triumphant synth.

Jeremy Bent: The Eurovision Song Contest. Hundreds of millions of people watch it every year.

Dimitry Pompée: It played a part in a democratic revolution in Portugal. It introduced the world to Riverdance, and it launched Celine Dion's career!

Oscar Montoya: But you might have never watched it.

Jeremy: It's got so much history and so many storylines that it can feel overwhelming to get into.

Oscar: Mm-hm. It's like a *Real Housewives* season, but everyone's a better singer.

Dimitry: Well, sometimes. But that's where we come in! I'm Dimitry Pompée.

Oscar: I'm Oscar Montoya.

Jeremy: And I'm Jeremy Bent, and we're the hosts of *Eurovangelists*.

Dimitry: If you're new to Eurovision, we'll tell you everything you need to know to start enjoying the world's most important song competition.

Oscar: And if you're already a fan, we'll dive deep on its wildest moments—like when Ireland sends a turkey puppet to sing for them.

Dimitry: *Eurovangelists!*

Oscar: New episodes every Thursday!

Jeremy: On [MaximumFun.org](https://www.maximumfun.org) or wherever you get your podcasts.

(Music ends.)

Transition: Thumpy synth with light vocalizations.

Jesse Thorn: It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest is actor Trace Lysette. She's the star of the new movie *Monica*.

So, you rap a little bit. And—

Trace Lysette: Oh my goodness! *(Laughs.)* I do.

Jesse Thorn: And you're a pretty good rapper, too.

Trace Lysette: Oh, thank you!

Jesse Thorn: And I'm a real snob about that. But—

Trace Lysette: Oooh, okay!

Jesse Thorn: I wanted to play a little bit of a song that you're featured on that's called “Taser in My Telfar Bag”.

(Trace laughs.)

Because it's such a fun track. And it's—you know, it's about something. So, let's take a listen.

Music: “Taser in My Telfar Bag” from the album *Taser in My Telfar Bag* by Trace Lysette, Cazwell, and Chanel Jole.

Bothered how I repping near the trade sniffing for it

He got me a little wet, but if he try it with me

I'm gonna have to tase him in his neck (uh-huh)

Hitting (censored) on the block when I walk

I don't even want them men that (censored) when I walk

Looking (censored) they're pressed while they talking

What they really need to do is take notes as I walk

Analogue girl in a digital world, so if you talk that ish...

(Music fades out.)

Trace Lysette: *(Laughs.)* Oh my goodness, that song. That's probably my least favorite song of all my songs, but I do love the narrative of like walking down the street and like just having to put on that character, because it is a character.

Jesse Thorn: A trade is like—so, you rapping that song, “the trade sniffing for it; he got me a little wet. But if you try it with me, I might have to tase him in the neck.” And trade is like—it's a little broader maybe than john, but that's like core of it.

Trace Lysette: It's similar. Usually, there's no money exchanged. I feel like, yeah, a trade could turn into a john or a trick. But trade is like the boy on the corner. Or like—you know, you put your—you know, you put your armor on when you leave the house.

[00:30:00]

This is kind of like if you're a New York girl and you're walking to the bodega to get a bun and cheese or whatever—*(chuckles)* like, your groceries, a snack, whatever. And you know, the trade is on the corner, and he's sniffing for it, and he's looking at you or cat calling you or looking you up and down. You can tell there's some sexual energy going on. Maybe he doesn't want to like holler at you out in public, because that wouldn't be socially acceptable—if it's known that you're trans on the block that you live on. It's all of that energy. It's you're the forbidden fruit, and you have to be stern when you walk down the street. And—

Jesse Thorn: But you have to be cute too. Like, that's like—

Trace Lysette: You have to be—well, yeah. You wanna be cute so you can feel good about yourself. And that's what that verse was about. When they asked me to come and do 16 bars or whatever that was, you know. I was like, well, I'm gonna tell what it's like when I walk down the street with a taser in my bag, which I still do. *(Chuckles.)* When I go to the gym to shoot hoops, I have a taser in my backpack. 'Cause you just never know. I think every woman should. That's just—that's not just for trans women. But of course, it gets heightened

sometimes as a trans woman. Because sometimes I think people think of us as like trying to trick people, and we're just existing. Like, I'm literally just going to the store or to shoot hoops. And yeah, that's what that's about.

Jesse Thorn: There's a lyric on one of your own songs that we 100% will have to run past Standards and Practices at National Public Radio.

Trace Lysette: (*Laughs.*) I love that.

Jesse Thorn: So, it is—I couldn't leave it unremarked upon. It is “Meka Leka Hi, Meka Hiney (*censored*).”

Trace Lysette: (*Laughs.*) Yes.

Jesse Thorn: Which, forever respect to John Paragon, the deeply legendary Jambi from *Pee-wee's Playhouse*.

Trace Lysette: Yes. I had to immortalize Pee-wee. Yes.

Jesse Thorn: (*Laughs.*) I found that very touching!

Trace Lysette: Yes. You know where that came from? Missy Elliott. I was a huge Missy Elliott fan.

Jesse Thorn: I like that that was your go to bit of nonsense phrase. Like, when you were ready for your Missy Elliott “just make some noises” turn.

Trace Lysette: Yeah. Well, it was important for me to—being a White woman in hip-hop and a White trans woman in hip-hop. I mean, there's no precedent. So, it's like I'm gonna have to be my own thing. I'm gonna have to maybe disarm people with some humor a little bit, not take myself too-too seriously. I mean, I am a pretty serious hip-hop head, but like people aren't gonna understand that right out the gate. And I'm also just kind of getting my feet wet, and that was my first song actually—“SMB”, Self-Made (*sensor beep*), which means so many things for me. (*Chuckles.*) But I'm really proud of that song.

I'm sure my sound, if I continue to do music—which I hope I do. I'm sure my sound will keep evolving. And I don't know where I'll land, but I've been wanting to do like a proper EP.

Jesse Thorn: You show off pretty good on that record.

Trace Lysette: Thank you.

Jesse Thorn: It is distinctly not an embarrassment. Like—

Trace Lysette: Thank you. I appreciate that.

Jesse Thorn: When it comes to people putting out their first record in their late 30s, it is a very impressive performance.

Trace Lysette: Thank you so much. Gosh. Okay. That's giving me motivation to maybe get back in the studio.

Jesse Thorn: Well, I sure am grateful for your time, Trace. It was really nice to get to talk to you, and congratulations on this really beautiful movie.

Trace Lysette: Thank you so much. You know, it's a labor of love.

Jesse Thorn: And speaking of great beauty, maybe we should go out on “SMB”

Trace Lysette: Oh, okay! (*Chuckles.*)

Music: “SMB” by Trace Lysette.

You came up in here hungry, thinking mother going to feed you

But if you came with empty hands, then I'ma say, “See ya”

‘Cause I’m Meka Leka Hi, Meka Hiney (censored)

I hustle too hard for some grimy (censored) Joe

Why you waste my time thinking it's a slow go

I’ll (censored) around and ghost on you, baby

It's a no go (goodbye)

Hollywood glam with a side of...

(Music fades out.)

Jesse Thorn: Trace Lysette. As we mentioned, she is up for Best Lead Performance at this year's Independent Spirit Awards. We'll find out if she won February 25th. You can watch her in *Monica*, which is available to rent everywhere and to stream on AMC+.

Transition: Bright, chiming synth.

Jesse Thorn: That's the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye* is created from the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California. I'm still working from a little bedroom in the front of my house, but I'm moving to a shed out behind my house.

[00:35:00]

And my friend, Stefan, was nice enough to let me come over to his house and check out projector screens. Stefan knows everything about projector screens. Pretty soon I'm going to be watching screener movies on a real screen!

Our show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our senior producer is Kevin Ferguson. Our producers are Jesus Ambrosio and Richard Robey. Welcome to our new Maximum Fun production fellow, Daniel Huecias, who just joined us this week. We get booking help from Mara Davis. Our interstitial music is by our pal Dan Wally, aka DJW. Our theme music is called "Huddle Formation". It was written and recorded by The Go! Team. Thanks to The Go! Team. Thanks to their record label, Memphis Industries.

Bullseye is on Instagram, [@BullseyeWithJesseThorn](#). We are also on Twitter and 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.)