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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. Ten years ago, Seth Meyers hosted the NBC show *Late Night* for the first time. His guests were his pal Amy Poehler, the band A Great Big World, and the man who at the time was Vice President, Joe Biden. Not bad. It's not going to blow your mind if I tell you that job is daunting. *Late Night* had been hosted by Jimmy Fallon, Conan O'Brien, and David Letterman. And in 2014, the competition was stiffer than ever—not just other network talk shows, but cable shows and streaming, too. Could you handle all that? I couldn't. But you who could? Seth Meyers. A decade, hundreds of guests, thousands of regular segments, a pandemic lockdown, and now perhaps his greatest challenge yet: a *Bullseye* with Jesse Thorn interview. Let's get into it, my conversation with Seth Meyers.

Transition: Pleasant, chiming synth.

Jesse Thorn: Seth Meyers, welcome to *Bullseye*, and congratulations on 10 years of your show.

Seth Meyers: Can't believe it. I can't believe it. Thank you very much. I'm happy to be here.

Jesse Thorn: I should say, I'm looking prospectively at the 10-year anniversary of your show as we record this.

Seth Meyers: Yes. Thanks for not getting ahead of ourselves here.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, if you get canceled in the next 10 days or so, I apologize for being the harbinger of—

Seth Meyers: It would both be very cruel of the network to do that, but I would tip my cap to the humor and the timing.

Jesse Thorn: When you started the show 10 years ago, did you have an idea of what you wanted to be?

Seth Meyers: No. Or if I did, I was wrong. I was really hesitant to take a job like this, because I felt I'd finally become comfortable at *SNL*—which is probably when you know it's time to leave *SNL*. But I liked being comfortable. And these jobs just looked so hard from the

outside. And I had people that worked on different versions of these shows, and they would always talk about how hard it was.

And so, I didn't have any sense of the right way to do it, and all the ideas I had turned out to be even more wrong than that. We thought we could bring some of Weekend Update into *Late Night*, but we picked the wrong part. Because ultimately, a year and a half into the show we started doing a monologue like Weekend Update, but the part we thought we could do is, oh, we'll bring writers out as characters the way I used to do on Weekend Update. And that was a bad idea, because it's one thing when Kate McKinnon or Bill Hader or Kenan Thompson, people the audience know, roll out. They have a patience for it. And it was very unkind for me to bring out writers people had never seen before and think that they would want to hear them do bits. So, I didn't know what I wanted it to be.

Jesse Thorn: You mentioned being a little nervous about the difficulty of hosting a daily talk show. And like, the part of doing a daily talk show that seems most daunting to me is that every time you do it, you have to then do it again right away.

Seth Meyers: That is very true, but then that has turned into the gift of it. And I didn't realize it right away, but because you have to do it, you cannot let bad ones stay with you. And, at *SNL* that would happen. There are still five episodes of *SNL* I'm upset about, (*chuckling*) and they're over 15 years old, because you just had to sit with them and let it stew in your head.

With these daily shows, it's sort of fun once you learn the rhythm of it to just churn out a show and then move on and churn out a show and move on and churn out a show and move on. So, I have fallen in love with doing it every day. And to me, it would be terrifying to go back to a weekly model.

Jesse Thorn: Do you let them go? I mean, you have a joke in your special from a couple of years ago. It is during a chunk where you are doing standup as your wife, from the perspective of your wife, where you describe two jokes going badly in your monologue, her saying, "Well, you'll get them next time," and you just going ugh and rolling over.

(*They laugh.*)

Seth Meyers: That is—I've gotten a lot better at that as time has moved on. But you know, when it started, I was the same thing as *SNL*.

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If I had a bad show on Thursday, which is our last show of the week, I would be worse to be around over the course of the weekend. And then it finally dawned on me that nobody who watches a show like mine tunes in on Monday saying, "Well, Thursday wasn't very good. I'll give him one more chance." Like, that's just not how people watch late night talk shows. I think you build a relationship with your audience, and they have a degree of faith in you to slowly build up what counts as an average show. I think what is an average show for us now is a great deal better than what was an average show for us when we first started.

And obviously you always are trying to do an above average show, but you just slowly try to bring up the quality of it. And it's been a fun journey to realize, oh, it's just sort of gradually gotten better. We have not done it by taking big swings or making massive changes, but you just get better at doing it the more you do it.

Jesse Thorn: What constitutes a good show, as far as you're concerned?

Seth Meyers: It's hard for me, because I do still identify more with writing than any other piece of the show. So, that first act, where we've sort of put all our efforts of the day into writing the show, that is where most of the writing lives. And it would be very hard for me to say, if that went badly, we could save it with the interviews. But when the first act is really good and the jokes worked, and then you have two really good interviews with people that are very different, that—to me—feels like an above average show.

And it's nice when one of them is a guest that's good on all kinds of talk shows, and then you maybe have somebody who's only good on your talk show. Or maybe they've only ever been on your talk show, because one of the luxuries of being a 12:30 show is you can sort of take a chance on people who have yet to do this. And it's a really fun thing to watch somebody on their first late night appearance do well.

Jesse Thorn: I think Weekend Update is, in great part, a delivery system for obviously the character desk pieces but also just a bunch of topical jokes. In fact, not even all that many topical jokes. A dozen topical jokes or whatever. (*Chuckles.*)

Seth Meyers: Yeah, a dozen. It's very good that you recognize that. I think people are surprised when they realize, well, was it only 12? It was only 12.

Jesse Thorn: I think when you are going out on stage as yourself every single night and asking the audience to enjoy you—rather than a cast of beloved characters and 12 people and a celebrity doing something cute—it's sort of a different job. Have you learned anything about writing for yourself?

Seth Meyers: Well, I will say—I mean, that was the worst part or the hardest part of the early years I spent at *SNL*, where basically, my whole job was to write for myself and figure out how to make Seth Meyers a beloved cast member on *SNL*. Which for you comedy historians out there, didn't quite happen until I found my way to the Weekend Update desk.

So, I was best on camera when I also served as either a delivery system for jokes or as the straight man to more accomplished talented performers. And I'm not saying there's nothing to being a straight man; I'm just saying we're more replaceable than the others. So, when I got to *Late Night*, I was sort of worried that maybe the skills I had that I was bringing to it weren't as unique as you needed them to be. I brought the best joke writer, Alex Baze, who was a head writer for Weekend Update when I was doing that. And he came over with me. And so, I knew we'd have good jokes, and it was nice to be at the desk. And then I think we realized the way our show would work is if the comedy we were doing maybe had some caloric value to it, in that we were going to talk about news and why news was important. As opposed to the way we started the show, which was doing sort of desk pieces that could have been in any era of late night from, you know, the '60s onwards.

Jesse Thorn: I mean, when you described yourself just now as having done a lot of straight man stuff on *Saturday Night Live*, it took me a second to remember that you meant straight man in the comedy duo sense. (*Chuckles.*) Like, because you know, as a comedy performer, you're not long on persona. Does that make sense?

(*Seth confirms.*)

So, part of what you have to figure out is—

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If I'm not David Letterman, who brings huge Letterman vibes to anything that he does, then what do I do?

Seth Meyers: Yeah. It took a while to figure it out. I think that—you know, the other part of my journey is, you know, I was doing a two person show with my dear friend and former comedy partner, Joe Benjamin. That was what *SNL* found. And then I would say the first time that I felt like I was having success at *SNL* was when I was at the update desk with my dear friend and former comedy partner, Amy Poehler.

And so, *Late Night* was not officially the first time that I felt like I was on my own, because I had done things on my own. I'd hosted the ESPYs. I'd hosted the White House Correspondents Dinner. I'd had success as a person who was telling jokes. And to some degree, if there was a brand, it was writing and intelligence. And you know, I've often talked to my friend Tina Fey about the fact that we sort of feel like we're only ever as good as the jokes we have. Like, we are sort of incapable of charming our way out of bad material. (*Chuckles.*) So, that is one of the reasons I think we maybe overwork our jokes to the point of exhaustion, because we don't have those great escape routes that other performers have.

But it's a good question. As far as persona, it is constantly—I mean part of it is I don't want to lean too far into any one persona, because I don't like all the avenues it cuts off when you're only one thing. And you know, again—you know, we went through this weird pandemic time with the show, which was basically almost 15 months of doing it without an audience in the studio. And it was really fun without an audience to realize, oh, there's a lot of different things I want to do. I maybe didn't want to do them and have them bomb in front of 180 people every night, but it was fun, and I liked doing it. And I felt like the people who were watching at home did it. So, I do feel a little bit more liberated as a performer since that ended in a way that I probably wouldn't have made it to without, you know, that sort of forced absence from a live audience.

Jesse Thorn: Do you remember the first time you walked out on stage to do a monologue on your show?

Seth Meyers: I do. I mean, I think I remember... it to some degree. We did a couple test shows, and so I had some sense of what it felt like to walk out. It felt very unnatural. Because I—look, I've done standup, and I certainly had done plenty of standup before I walked out to do that monologue, and I'd done Weekend Update. But that weird thing about doing

Weekend Update jokes standing up was so bad at those transitions that I feel like the Jay Lenos of the world became very natural with, but having to ask an audience things like, “Have you guys heard this?” Was just so—(*chuckles*) to this day, yeah, I wasn't capable of doing that with any authenticity.

Jesse Thorn: We're going to take a quick break. When we return even more with Seth Meyers. It's *Bullseye* from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

Transition: Thumpy synth with a syncopated beat.

Jesse Thorn: Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest is Seth Meyers. He is, of course, a veteran of *Saturday Night Live* and the host of *Late Night with Seth Meyers*. The talk show celebrates its 10th anniversary this week. Let's get into the rest of our conversation.

I wonder when you thought it might be a good idea that part of your responsibility is telling people what's going on in the world, rather than making a joke about the thing that the most people already know about the setup. You know what I mean?

Seth Meyers: Yes. Well, look, we have these two different pieces. In the monologue—I'd put our monologue up against anybody as far as the joke writing. And we have really good joke writers, so even though we're talking about things everybody knows—for example, right now, we're living in an era where you can tell a lot of jokes about Alaska Airlines. And when you start talking about it, people sort of know where it might be going. And so, then what's incumbent upon our writing staff is you have to—I mean, just the punchline, the use of language, the joke structure—there has to be something unique about it to make it worth us doing, because it's not unique to comedy both in other late night shows and on social media, which sort of serves as another place where jokes didn't used to exist that they do now.

But then with *A Closer Look*, that's when we can slow it down, and that's when we can have a beginning, middle, and end, and a thesis statement, and we can lay out arguments, and we can still make room for jokes.

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But we can do in *A Closer Look* what would be impossible to do in the monologue, and it's nice to have one of each for us.

Transition: Music swells then fades.

Clip:

Seth Meyers (*Late Night with Seth Meyers*): For two days the nation was paralyzed by an existential crisis the likes of which this country has never seen, a crisis so dire it threatened our institutions, our political system, our very way of life. A waking nightmare that has left us frightened and confused. A watershed moment that has changed America forever. There was a balloon.

(Laughter.)

For more on this, it's time for A Closer Look.

(Musical stinger.)

By now, no doubt, you've heard about the Chinese spy balloon. It flew across the continental US. It monopolized the media's attention for days, and it made an electrifying appearance at last night's Grammys!

(Laughter.)

Well, it electrified everyone but Be Affleck. How can you drink that much Dunkin' Coffee and still look like someone stole his bike? Anyway.

Transition: Music swells then fades.

Jesse Thorn: Have you learned anything about what it means to do a daily topical show in a form that was largely developed when the choices were this or *Nightline*, if you were up at midnight, in a world where people have lots of other choices?

Seth Meyers: Look, everybody who's making linear television right now is up against—no matter what time slot you make it for, you're up against the fact that people have this massive library of choices they can turn to. Now, the part of it that benefits us is we have people who watch us when we're on at, you know, 12:37 at night. And then we also have a couple million people who watch us the next day on YouTube. So, the reach of our show is still fairly big, even though probably not in the way that is most desirable to the people who put it on television. But you don't make it any differently because there are other options for people out there.

I think that we found, and we believe it to be the case, that we are trying to be specific. We are trying to be a show that, for the people who engage with it, know what you're gonna get. And the idea of what used to be, say, a big-time show—I don't think that would work for us either. I think if we were sort of a “we're a show for everybody and everything” in an era where everybody can sort of get really granular with what they want to watch and how they can watch it—it's very hard to be what used to be a big-time show, where everybody could show up and have a grand old time.

Jesse Thorn: Do you really not make it any differently? For reals?

Seth Meyers: Like, for reals. How would you make it differently because Netflix exists? I mean, I think we make it—

Jesse Thorn: I mean, Seth, I'll give you—like, we're on the radio right now. We're on National Public Radio, right? People listen to the radio, according to research, in 7–12-minute

chunks, when they get into their car, drive a little while, and then park at the grocery store. People listen to the podcast version of this show very differently.

And so, when I make a podcast, I think about it very differently than when I'm making a radio show, even though this is both of those things. And that tension is a constant challenge to navigate, right? It's not like I'm just like, "I'm just gonna make a radio show, and put it out on the podcast, and make it the same old way I always did."

And I don't honestly believe (*chuckling*) that's how you're making your television show.

Seth Meyers: Well, so I should say, like we found our way to A Closer Look organically. Which is we had an idea, and we realized it wasn't an idea for a monologue, and so we wrote something about I think the Greek debt crisis. And then the next one we did was maybe about hearings about Planned Parenthood, and it was a month later. And then I think we called that one A Closer Look. And we said, "You know what? Every month we'll do something, you know, maybe that's a little bit of a longer story." And then, when I was out in the streets—and you know me, Jesse. I'm always out in the streets, ear to the ground, trying to find out what—

Jesse Thorn: If I know anything about you, Seth, it's that you're always out on the streets with your ear to the ground. I don't know much about you. We've only just met, but.

Seth Meyers: Right. But that was—all of a sudden people were saying, "Hey, I really like that. I really like that Closer Look you did." And I also realized they had all seen it online. And it had been a thing that, because it was different, and because it was about something that had just happened, and it was a little bit of a deeper dive, and it was longer—I think the conventional wisdom when we started our show in 2014 is that the things that would go viral were short. A lot of times they were celebrity based, game based, music based.

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All things I would have been bad at. And then all of a sudden, we do this 15-minute piece about Planned Parenthood, and that's our first thing that goes viral. So, maybe I incorrectly answered your question earlier, because we're not sacrificing anything because of the way TV is consumed now. I think we're more delighted that there's an appetite for the thing we like making the most. But we also appreciate that, you know, there's a great many people who, for example, only watch A Closer Look and probably don't watch the rest of the show at all.

Jesse Thorn: I was thinking about this as I watched your long running internet segment, Corrections. And it's really funny. It's—you know, the premise is that you are responding to people who have corrected you over the course of the week. But its most distinctive element is not that. You know, that's honestly, like—that, to some extent, is a bit I've seen before. Not in this exact form, but you know, the idea of responding to people's comments. Right? The most distinctive part about it is that you are doing it on your stage on a non-shoot day and wearing your regular clothes, and you have a drink next to you. And it is a very different feeling. And that is, I think, much more of an internet feeling than it is a linear television feeling.

Seth Meyers: That's very true. And I should say, because maybe people are hearing about this for the first time right now, Jesse. Corrections, we do every week, as you said. We do tape it on a show day, Thursday after the audience leaves. So, we don't bring the crew in just for Corrections. But in case people are listening and saying, wow, this sounds interesting—the problem for you right now is there have been 94 episodes of Corrections, and it only works if you start from the beginning. So, just that's for your listeners. But it was again—this was very much born out of the pandemic. When I was doing the pandemic shows, I was genuinely trying to surprise and make my crew laugh all the time, because they were the only audience I had left.

And the other nice thing about the pandemic shows is when you have 180 people in the room, you want jokes to play with them. And I sometimes feel the people that come to a live taping, they probably know the show and like the show, but there's less of a chance they watched the night before than the people at home watched the night before. And the crew has to be there every night, so all of a sudden we were calling things back. We were doing week-long bits, and I realized from reading YouTube comments that people were enjoying that at home. They were liking that we were sort of world building in a way that I think—you know, look, talk shows used to do all the time. And maybe in the internet era, it started to happen less. But we took advantage of that, and when we came back and we got the audience back, we kept Corrections, because I liked the fact that there was still this thing at the end of the week where it was me in an empty studio, trying to make the crew laugh, doing inside jokes, doing impressions of crew members people at home I've never met.

But I think there's something really fun about when you hear a bunch of people laugh. Even if you don't get it, you know it's funny and good, and you like that you're part of an inside joke.

Transition: Music swells then fades.

Clip:

Seth Meyers: People are obsessed (*tap, tap*) with the way I hold and operate my pencil during corrections. People think I tap (*tap, tap, tap, tap*) it too much on the desk. Someone said, “Is your desk covered with pencil marks?” Of course not. We switch out the desk every week.

(Laughter.)

Which is probably why NBC is always harping on us about the budget.

Transition: Music swells then fades.

Seth Meyers: I cannot tell you; I spend so much time working on Corrections. Which, as you have pointed out, is not on television. But it does give me a great amount of joy every week.

Jesse Thorn: Stick around, more *Bullseye* around the corner from [MaximumFun.org](https://www.maximumfun.org) and NPR.

Promo:

Music: Fast-paced, futuristic synth.

Brenda Snell: Have you ever wanted to know the sad lore behind Chuck E. Cheese's love of birthday parties?

Austin Taylor: Or why Saturday mornings are reserved for cartoons?

Brenda: Or have you wanted to know how beloved virtual pet site Neopets fell into the hands of Scientologists?

Austin: Or how a former Mattel employee managed to grow Sega into a video game powerhouse?

Brenda: Join us, hosts Austin and Brenda, and learn all of these things and more at (*echoing*) *Secret Histories of Nerd Mysteries!* Now on Maximum Fun!

(*Music fades out.*)

Transition: Chiming synth with a syncopated beat.

[00:25:00]

Jesse Thorn: This is *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest is Seth Meyers. He's celebrating a decade of hosting *Late Night* on NBC.

When do you have the most fun on the show? What part of it is the most fun? Is it talking to people? Landing a joke?

Seth Meyers: I think landing a—I mean, again, there's a thrill to a bit working that you've spent the day writing. That's still my favorite thing in the world—to, one, write it, and to have it then work when you perform it. I love it so much. I still get goosebumps. With that said, when we move on to interviews, that then stops feeling like work to me. I decided to let that just be the enjoyment of a conversation. That if I don't think about it like work, and I think about it like I'm this really lucky person who's going to talk to someone who's interesting to me, that's where the best interviews happen. And so, that's really fun in a different way.

Because the stress of the written comedy part of the show is higher, and when it's just an interview, I try to not be stressed out about it. I mean, there are times where I get stressed out about it. I mean, we had Letterman on, you know, for the 40th anniversary of *Late Night*, and I was very stressed about being a bad interviewer with one of the people that I feel like I learned how to interview from. So, that was high stress. But mostly I just try to be in the moment during the interviews, and it's the best. It's really fun.

Jesse Thorn: That is the bit of doing your job that most terrifies me. I think there are a lot of *Late Night* hosts over the years who have had segment producers produce those segments. And they just—you know, they deliver a setup to something that the segment producer has found, right? And that protects you from the downside to some extent, right? Like, that

covers the low end or whatever. But you know, I went to a couple tapings of *The Daily Show* and watched Jon Stewart. And the part that impressed me the most is that's a six-minute segment, that interview segment on the show. You know, even when it was a little longer, because it was Jon Stewart, and he was enjoying it. And in that six minutes, you have to like do something, be funny, make your guest interesting, like communicate information. Right? Like, it's a lot of stuff to do in five or six minutes.

Seth Meyers: It is! And I will say, harder than ever, because we do live in this podcast era where if there's someone you really like, you're probably better served by listening to them talk for an hour than those seven/eight-minute chunks we have now. And again, you're trying to accomplish a different thing. But I do approach it from my improv comedy days. Which is, I'm out there; this is a performance of a conversation. I'm not saying we're making up our answers or making up the questions, but it's not the conversation you'd have if nobody was there. And so, you have a scene partner, and the most important thing you can do with a scene partner is be a good listener. So, I try to really be a good listener.

And obviously, as you said, I've been served, I've been provided with interesting things, funny stories they might want to tell. But at the same time, I don't want to just go out with my sequencing in place. "I will ask them about skiing. After skiing, I will ask them about haircut." Like, I try not to live that way, because so much of the fun is those moments that are unexpected. And there are also a hundred different kinds of talk show guests, and the longer you get to be a talk show host, the more you realize what kind you have. There are some people who come on, and the minute you ask them a question, they just play out, and they don't look at you again.

Jesse Thorn: They just play out to the audience.

Seth Meyers: Yeah, they just play out to the audience. And that's wonderful. And there are other people who come and just look at you the whole time and act like the audience isn't there.

Jesse Thorn: When have you felt out of control making your show?

Seth Meyers: When have I felt out of control? I mean, I don't know if it was out of control; it was maybe helpless. We did a show January 6th. The January 6th. I know we've had a few since, but I think everybody—I think your NPR listeners will know which one we're talking about. And that was really intense. Because, you know, we tape our show at four in the afternoon, and it was one, and we realized there was no way to tape and talk about what was happening, because there was no sense as to what the resolution of this was going to be. And there never felt like a time where, if we had done something at four, it would feel like a million years ago when it aired at 12:37.

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And so, we decided to go live that night. And I will say it's maybe—and all credit to Sal Gentile—the proudest I have ever been of our show, because what Sal wrote that day in really a short period of time, beautifully written and has aged incredibly well.

Transition: Music swells then fades.

Clip:

Seth Meyers: Welcome to *Late Night*. It's 12:37. We're live and very grateful to be here with you. I swear we were writing jokes today. And then, as everyone knows by now, today was a day filled with surreal and horrifying scenes of armed insurrection and attempt to destroy, through violent means, American democracy. It was a sequence of events unseen in the modern history of this nation, and the images should be seared into our collective consciousness for the rest of our lives.

Transition: Music swells then fades.

Jesse Thorn: One of the things about having your job that worries me is that you have a job that can be all-consuming. And it would be very easy to end up, you know, in your office like Letterman was at the peak of his personal challenges, just like occasionally taking visitors from a certain small group of people, and then occasionally like going out and making a bad personal decision, because you're so freaked out about how closed your world is. I talked to Letterman about these things. I don't think I miss characterizing them that much.

And like your job is so much work. And then you're like, oh, and also I'm gonna do some road work as well. That it would be easy to get lost in that. And you've been doing that since *Saturday Night Live*, another all-consuming job.

Seth Meyers: Yeah, I will say maybe the best thing is that I did *SNL* first. Because I think being head writer for *SNL* was the most all-consuming I have ever felt, by a job. And part of this show and the development of this show was trying to make sure it didn't personally get to that place. And I did not feel the responsibility of being one of the stewards of an American institution, like I did at *SNL*. The weight of that was very burdensome over the course of my time at the show. I bore it happily, and I'm really glad I did it, and I'm incredibly proud of the time I spent on that show.

But this was something where we did want to make it a show where you could also have a life. And you know, I built *Late Night* with my partner and my best friend, Mike Shoemaker, who was a producer at *SNL* when I started there. And then he had worked on *Late Night with Jimmy Fallon*, and then he helped me get this show off the ground. And basically, we've spent 10 years being next door to each other and being best friends who hang out and being in a good mood and wanting the people who work here to be in a good mood. And we don't want it to be an environment where we're bummed out when we see people in the hallway. And so, one of the reasons we try to keep them happy is so that we're happy to see them.

And that's always been the way this show has been. The other thing is I—you know, different than my time at *SNL*, is I have a family now. And I'm really happy to say that that's a bigger part of my life than this show.

Jesse Thorn: Well, Seth Meyers, I'm so grateful for your time. It was really nice to get to talk to you.

Seth Meyers: You know what? Here's the thing. I said it's harder to get interviews than be an interviewer, and now I'm sitting here, Jesse. I'm worried that I was too boring, and—

Jesse Thorn: That was fantastic, Seth. I sure appreciate it.

Seth Meyers: It was really nice talking to you!

Jesse Thorn: Seth Meyers. All this month, his show is celebrating a decade on NBC.

Transition: Chiming synth with a syncopated beat.

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. This week, here at my house, I have been thinking a lot about Bob Edwards. He was, obviously, one of the most legendary voices in the history of public radio. He was also one of the first real public radio people I ever met. He came to my college radio station, KZSC, in Santa Cruz, California, and did an interview with me not long after he got fired or removed from hosting at NPR. He couldn't have been more brilliant and charming and gracious. And I saw him again years later when both of our shows—his show, *Bob Edwards Weekend*, and my show, *The Sound of Young America*—were distributed by Public Radio International. I saw him at a conference. And he said, “I remember you. That weird station in the woods in Santa Cruz. You did a good job.”

[00:35:00]

And I couldn't have been more awed. And then a few days later in this conference, we were supposed to do this big event where the idea was a PRI party going down this—all of us PRI hosts were going to go down this big red carpet into the hotel conference room where the PRI party was, and there was going to be fake paparazzi on either side. And then once we got in there, we would turn, and we would welcome all the program directors into this room. And so, me and Faith Salie and Kurt Andersen and everybody were going down this red carpet wall. The PRI staffers were pretending to take flash photographs of us. And as we crossed into the conference room, I saw—maybe 40 feet away—that Bob Edwards was the only person in there already seated at the bar with a scotch in his hand.

And he pointed at me, and he said, “Thorn, I made you.” And then he laughed. And it was one of the highlights of my entire public radio career. So, thanks for that, Bob. You'll be very well remembered.

Transition: Playful, bouncy synth.

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 Daniel Huecias. We get booking help from Mara Davis. Our interstitial music is by DJW, also known as Dan Wally. Our theme song is “Huddle Formation”, written and recorded by The Go! Team. Thanks to them and to their label, Memphis Industries.

Bullseye is on Instagram. We're sharing interview highlights, behind the scenes looks, and more. We are [@BullseyeWithJesseThorn](#). We're also on Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook. I think that's about it. Just remember, all great radio hosts have a signature sign off.

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

(Music fades out.)