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Jesse Thorn: Hey, *Bullseye* listeners! It's Jesse. *Bullseye* is produced by the worker-owned cooperative MaximumFun.org. You've probably heard the name in the credits. Right now it's the MaxFunDrive. It's the annual membership drive for Maximum Fun. If you're a listener to *Bullseye* on the podcast, we would love to have your support. You can find all the information at MaximumFun.org/join.

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. My first guest this week is Peter Dinklage. You might know him best as Tyrion Lannister from *Game of Thrones*. That role earned him a Golden Globe, a SAG Award, and four—one, two, three, four!—Primetime Emmy Awards. He got that gig when he was in his 40s. His career had built up heat for decades, but why did it take so long to break through? Well, Dinklage has always been immensely careful about his choices, because he has dwarfism. He's 4'5". And so, every possible acting role was also a possible trap. Dinklage was always serious about his art, and he always had to check to make sure that that casting director was serious about him.

Dinklage was and is a great actor. He wanted to build an actor's career. And look! He pulled it off. It just took time. Dinklage is the star of a new movie called *American Dreamer*. He plays an adjunct professor—getting by, but only barely. And he has a dream. The American dream. A big, comfortable house. But he can't afford it. And he'll never be able to afford it. At least, that's what he's thinking when he stumbles into a newspaper ad: an aging woman selling her mansion for pennies on the dollar. The only catch? The buyer has to share the house with her until she dies. What could possibly go wrong?

Before we get into my interview with Peter Dinklage, let's listen to a bit from the movie. In this scene, Dinklage's character, Phil, just moved in. The elderly woman, played by Shirley MacLaine, has invited him up to dinner. Her daughter is there too.

Transition: A whooshing sound.

Clip:

Astrid (*American Dreamer*): So, tell me about yourself. Any past lives? Wives? Children?

Phil: I'm afraid I have been perpetually alone for quite some time now.

Maggie: By choice?

Phil: By happenstance. My wife died 12 years ago.

Astrid: I'm so sorry. I feel that pain.

Phil: *(Softly.)* Thank you.

Maggie: What was her name?

Phil: Molly.

Maggie: *(Beat.)* Here's to Molly.

Astrid: No, no, I've had enough.

Phil: Life is short.

Astrid: *(Chuckles.)* Nothing longer than life.

Transition: A whooshing sound.

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

Peter Dinklage: Thank you for having me. Pleasure to be here.

Jesse Thorn: This is the kind of question that I usually promise myself I will not ask, but I don't know when I'll get another chance—what is it like to work with Shirley MacLaine?

Peter Dinklage: Oh, wow. She has a gift. And it was so fun to get in the ring with her in terms of the one-on-one scenes. And the dynamic of our characters just lends itself to just a great deal of comedy.

Jesse Thorn: Was it a matter of mailing her a script and hearing back from her agent, or did—you know—you and other people from the movie like have lunch with her to talk to her about it?

Peter Dinklage: Yeah. The director did have lunch with her, and that helped. 'Cause he's a really great person. But you know, Shirley has a big birthday coming up next month. She turns—and she's not, you know, she's proud of it. She turns 90. And this was also during covid. We shot it in the beginning of—we shot it a couple of years ago, 2021. Right in the height of covid. So, it was the time where everybody on the crew had to wear masks and everybody but the actors. And you're sort of sensitive to the fact of anybody—especially somebody older—getting covid. But she was all in, unafraid, and it was such a joy.

Jesse Thorn: Were you afraid?

Peter Dinklage: Was I afraid of her or of covid? (*Chuckles.*)

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Jesse Thorn: Of her, of covid. Of bringing covid—I mean, the movie is about whether or not her character dies in some way. So. (*Chuckles.*) There's a part of me that would be terrified to be the guy that brought covid to the set and killed an American treasure.

Peter Dinklage: Oh god, yeah. Oh my god! Life imitating art, imitating life. No, fortunately everybody up in Victoria Island was very strict. We quarantined, each of us in the cast that were coming in from out of town. It was the time when you had to isolate for two weeks. So, I found a really nice little Airbnb by the water. It's a beautiful place up there. If you've never been, it's gorgeous. But I was alone for two weeks in this Airbnb, unable to see anyone. So, I befriended, you know, an elderly gentleman—like, a parole officer, comes in to check to make sure you haven't left. But I befriended crows. There's all these crows in the forest around where I lived, and I started talking to the crows and befriending crows. I fed them every morning. They were at my door.

Jesse Thorn: They're famous for scientifically, demonstrably remembering their enemies, intergenerationally. Like, that is an actual thing about crows!

Peter Dinklage: That's what their gift is. They know not to repeat history, unlike human beings. They learn from their mistakes, and they know who they've wronged. Unlike us, who just keep going back to the well of wrong.

Jesse Thorn: There were a bunch of crows that lived by my house, before I moved. And I was terrified of those crows, because crows loom in a way that other birds don't, you know?

Peter Dinklage: If you're like—especially, if you're like driving on the road and they're sort of at some dead animal. They don't take off. They know that the car—they just take off at the last minute if they have to. They're not—they're unafraid of an automobile coming at them at 50 miles an hour. And you know, the best thing is a group of them is called a murder. So, you know, it doesn't get better than or more sinister than that. But so, that's why you have to befriend the crow. Yeah. This is the talk of someone who was isolating for two weeks.

Jesse Thorn: That's what I was about to say. (*Laughs.*)

Peter Dinklage: Not only are you talking to crows; you're talking to yourself. You know, we all got through it though, hopefully most of us. And, you know, how I got sidetracked onto crows, I don't know. But, yeah, it was fun.

Jesse Thorn: We have so much more to get into. Stay with us. It's *Bullseye* from [MaximumFun.org](https://www.maximumfun.org) and NPR.

Transition: Thumpy synth with light vocalizations.

Jesse Thorn: Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest is Peter Dinklage. He is an actor—the star of movies like *The Station Agent*, *In Bruges*, and television shows like *Game of Thrones*. In his latest movie, *American Dreamer*, he stars opposite Shirley MacLaine. It's in theaters and on demand. Let's get back into our conversation.

Did you always think you were going to be an actor? Or did you decide at some point?

Peter Dinklage: I think it's in the DNA. You know, I hear stories of somebody walking by or seeing a pretty girl and following them into an acting class and finding themselves. But for me, I just liked the—I mean, I've been doing it since I was a little kid, the school plays and all of that and writing little plays and puppet shows. From day one, I just wanted to do that. And as long as you get the encouragement along the way from your parents or inspiring drama professors who see something that is sort of unique and worthwhile to continue on with it, then yeah, that's gratifying. But I never knew that I would have any success at it.

I think I always thought ambition was a sort of a foul word, because to me, it sort of meant like you would do anything to get the parts, stab people in the back. And I just didn't really—I sort of was wary of it. Because, you know, my size—I just didn't trust that it would allow me to do what I really wanted to do with it. And we're so reliant on the collaboration, unlike a painter or a musician, who can just play by themselves or paint by themselves. We have to have others around us in order to quantify what we're doing. So, when you find your tribe, that's what really kicks it all in. When you find your fellow peers of writers and actors and directors.

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You know, that's what does it.

Jesse Thorn: Because one of the things about being an actor is that you—it's very, very difficult to be the originator of your work, right? Somebody has to give you permission. Somebody has to cast you in something most of the time, in order for you to do the thing that you do. And that's very distinctive from other art forms. You know?

Peter Dinklage: Yeah! The audition process, I sort of—that's also—I didn't have the stomach for that. In no way did I feel like I could ever put myself out there like that. It's just too vulnerable. It's too insecure, too protected. But actors do it every moment of the day. Even like for movies that I'm producing to see people's tapes that they've sent in, I just I get a little knot in my stomach for them and for us watching. Who are we to judge what is right for the part or what—? It's just—there's so many reasons behind casting, why you cast a certain person, that it just—oh yeah. It turns my stomach in knots. I don't know how anybody survives it. (*Chuckles.*) But I was sort of fortunate enough to—I sort of—and it's not being egotistical. I think it's because I sort of had a very narrow window early on in my career about parts I could play or was sort of not allowed to play.

But you know, it was a while ago, and people really didn't really think outside the box in terms of casting someone like me. And I didn't really have any interest in going out for things like that. I just—I didn't. I had just regular jobs that paid the bills. I'd rather do that than feel like I sort of didn't feel happy with my choices of the day. And then I did audition for my first film, *Living in Oblivion*, which is a Tom DiCillo film about the making of an independent movie, which has a bit of a cult following now. It's Steve Buscemi and Catherine Keener and James Le Gros and Dermot Mulroney. It was just such a wonderful environment of independent filmmaking in New York in the '90s.

And that was my first and only audition. And it didn't pave a golden path for me in my career whatsoever. I went back to my day jobs. It was like two weeks of work and maybe even if that. And then I—you know, it's not like some sort of, “And then my career kicked—” No, no. It was like 10 more years of theatre and day jobs and indie films that pay the bills.

Jesse Thorn: When you say your first and only audition—?

Peter Dinklage: That sounds egotistical, doesn't it?

Jesse Thorn: But I mean, (*chuckles*) have you been offer-only ever since? Like, do you mean that literally?

Peter Dinklage: Like I said, it was a really narrow casting thing for me. It's like, there was just a few things. And—or if like a friend—a couple of friends of mine who were young, independent filmmakers, writer/directors that I became friends with here in New York, the same age, same sort of bars we went to. And they would write a part for me in their movie, because they thought I was funny or whatever it was that had nothing to do with my size. And it was that.

So, that happened and that—you know, that's another couple hundred bucks here and there. But then I did a play, downtown on Chamber Street in an old bank. And it was, you know, another one of those \$300/\$200 a week. And I said, for some reason—I was closing in on 30; I was about 28. And I said, “This is the last. This is—I'm going to become an actor now. I'm going to have trust. I'm going to have faith in what I'm doing, and I'm not going to look back.”

And when I did that, did the play, a guy named Alex Rockwell saw the play. He was a friend of the writers. He was doing a movie. We did a movie called *13 Moons*, and then I just—suddenly, I was a working actor. And then this movie, *The Station Agent*, came along. And that really sort of hit. That was a hit. You know, something we had been working on for a while—me and the writer/director and a couple of the other actors in that film. And that was a successful film. And then sort of—I'm not going to say easy street, but you know.

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I was able to sustain myself, pay the bills in expensive New York City. In expensive Williamsburg, Brooklyn, in the '90s—which wasn't that expensive.

Jesse Thorn: I mean, I think especially early in your career, and especially if you wanted to do screen acting, you're kind of in a corner. Which is, when you go out on auditions for stuff—for smaller parts like in the screen—and this is something that, you know, they don't teach in acting school. But like, you walk in there, it's just kind of are you that thing that they're imagining for that one moment? And it is the briefest—whatever the briefest impression is, like a standup comic who walks on stage and says, “I know what you're thinking. So-and-so had a baby with so-and-so,” or whatever. And when you're four and a half feet tall, that's gonna be the first thing they see.

(Peter agrees.)

So, you know that if you walk into that room, you're gonna have to deal with that every single time.

Peter Dinklage: Yeah. Yeah. It's the matter of what—and that's where a lot of—you know, a lot of defenses kick in, and anger kicks in, and all of the above that tries to like fight that. Because you know—you see it on people's faces, no matter who you are, in terms of like fame or something. You know, like it's hard to hide. *(Chuckles.)* And all I want to do is hide and then not hide when I'm in a project. But off-duty, you want to hide, and it's impossible. So—but I choose to live in New York city, where there's a lot of people, and there's good days and bad. But yeah, sunglasses and a hat—that don't cut it for me. You know?

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. I mean, I think a lot of people go to New York City because they want to lose themselves in a sea of humanity.

Peter Dinklage: That's why I did. I grew up in New Jersey, and that's exactly why I moved here. Not only because of all the great films and theater and everything and art and that sort of dream of the bohemian lifestyle, but the anonymity of a crowded room—in this case a crowded city. Nobody looked twice at me. It was incredible. I found like my world. And I think that's true with everybody who isn't from New York and moves to New York. And there's also—the great thing about this city is there's—especially when you're young, is the possibility around every corner. Usually that means a relationship, love. But it can mean a variety of things. But yeah.

But I guess with fame, it's sort of—I think I've probably mentioned this when I've yammered on before, but it's that they don't look at me because of my size. Now they look at me because they know me from a show or something. And I guess that's—although it happens now a lot, I get to own it. I have ownership of the reason why they're looking at me or wanting to approach me. But you know, depends on the day, depends on who's approaching me. And you know. *(Chuckles.)* It's all of that.

Transition: Thumpy synth with a syncopated beat.

Jesse Thorn: Hey, *Bullseye* listeners. It's Jesse, and I am joined by the senior producer of *Bullseye*, Kevin Ferguson. Hey, Kevin!

Kevin Ferguson: Hey, everybody!

Jesse Thorn: Kevin, how long have you been working on *Bullseye* now?

Kevin Ferguson: I started in 2016. It was just before the election then.

Jesse Thorn: 2016?! This is like eight years.

Kevin Ferguson: God, you're right. Yeah. Eight years.

Jesse Thorn: Holy cow.

Kevin Ferguson: In this beautiful office, in this tiny booth.

Jesse Thorn: I think sometimes people imagine that *Bullseye* emerges fully formed from my head or my podcasting fingers or something. But actually, there is a big team behind *Bullseye*. Not just you, Kevin, but I'm also looking at Richard, Jesus, and Daniel outside of this booth right now. And all of you are employees, most of you worker-owners, of Maximum Fun, the company that makes *Bullseye*.

Kevin Ferguson: That's right. Maximum Fun has been around for a long time. We went worker-owned last year. It's a really exciting development. We're one of the first ever companies in the podcast space to do that. And it's such a thrill!

Jesse Thorn: Maximum Fun is member supported. So, *Bullseye*, of course, is supported in part by the revenue that comes from your local public radio station—of which we hope you are a member.

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It and all the other shows that Maximum Fun produces are also supported by folks who sign up to be members of Maximum Fun. So, this is the MaxFunDrive. It's the one time a year when we go to you, the listeners, and ask you to become a member by going to MaximumFun.org/join.

Kevin Ferguson: The support that we get from members of Maximum Fun is part of what keeps the lights on in here. It's part of what keeps this show really excellent. It's, you know, not an easy show to make. There's a lot of stuff that we have to do. We have to prepare for interviews. We edit them, we promote them. It's a full-time job for a lot of people, and it is really important that we get your help right now.

Jesse Thorn: It's really unusual that *Bullseye* is not produced by a station or by the mothership in Washington, DC. It's one of very few national public radio programs, lowercase letters, that is produced completely independently. So, Maximum Fun—which I founded, and I am now a worker-owner of, is the outfit that makes this show. Soup to nuts. We're very grateful to NPR for distributing the show to stations. But you know, Maximum Fun makes the show, and Maximum Fun is supported by members.

So, Kevin. People go to MaximumFun.org/join, of course they get the good feeling in their heart of knowing they're directly supporting *Bullseye* that they listen to. And I'm not going to discount that, because as a member of Maximum Fun myself, as a guy who directly supports a lot of my favorite podcasts on other platforms, as a guy who's a member of LAist—my local public radio station—I know that good feeling is a real and significant thing. Like, I want to directly support the stuff that I consume. But in this case, in the case of Maximum Fun, when you become a member, you don't just get that good feeling. You also get access to special bonus content that's only for members. And for *Bullseye*, we not only have years of bonus content that you can access, but also brand-new bonus content that we created this year.

Kevin Ferguson: And I think this is some of the best bonus content we have done in my, again, eight years of being here. Wow. We kicked things off with a kind of director's cut interview of Boots Riley.

Jesse Thorn: When Boots came in, he and I talked for almost two hours. (*Laughs.*) Because we're old pals, and I love the guy, and there was a lot to talk about. But ultimately, you can only put so much of that on the air. And so, Jesus, one of our producers was like, “There's a lot of good stuff here, and I would love to share it with the audience.” So, we decided to make a special cut of that interview just for members of Maximum Fun.

And we created a brand-new show. This is something that I was doing during the height of the pandemic. I was going on Twitter Spaces and doing basically a call-in show called, *Hey, What's Your Job?* And basically, I would just say, “If you're listening to this right now, and you have an interesting job, raise your hand in the Twitter Space, and I'll talk to you about it.” And we had such a great time doing that that we decided to make it into a kind of a proper show just for Maximum Fun members. And you guys went out and recruited some of the most fascinating workers in the entire audience of *Bullseye*.

Kevin Ferguson: Yeah, we found a professional tea mixer.

Jesse Thorn: Yep, tea sommelier.

Kevin Ferguson: Yeah. We found a really sweet lady who knits Buddhist monk robes.

Jesse Thorn: There's no knitting involved, but yes. Makes.

Kevin Ferguson: Yes, thank you. And we found an electrician.

Jesse Thorn: It is really, really cool, really fun. And of course, there's—like I said—many years of bonus content for *Bullseye*. So, stuff like “Interviews with Me” I think is something we did. What else is in there?

Kevin Ferguson: We have an interview from *Pop Culture Happy Hour*'s Linda Holmes with you that I particularly like. We have—

Jesse Thorn: Where Linda interviewed me.

Kevin Ferguson: Yes. We have roundtables about what the production of *Bullseye* is like. We talk about the deliberation and thought that went into some of our—like, you know, proudest episodes, but also some of our most difficult to make episodes. It's a lot over there.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. What really matters is that *Bullseye* is really and truly independently produced. Maximum Fun, as I said, is a completely worker-owned cooperative. Kevin and I are proud to be worker-owners. And it is a really tough media environment out there. You may have noticed that not only are lots of podcast companies closing, but lots of journalistic outlets of all kinds are closing. Almost all kinds of web publishing is in danger right now.

And the one thing that has saved us, and we hope will continue to do so, is direct support from our audience. So, people who listen to the show say, “This is worth something to me.”

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“And I can come up with \$5 a month to support it.” The way to do that is to go to MaximumFun.org/join, MaximumFun.org/join. There's also a link in your podcast description, obviously. And we hope that you will do that and help make *Bullseye* possible.

Kevin Ferguson: Alright, let's get back into our interview with Peter Dinklage. We're so excited for you to hear the rest of it.

Transition: Thumpy synth with a syncopated beat.

Jesse Thorn: I was thinking about, as I was preparing for this interview—like a couple of months ago, I was on I think a New York to LA flight, a classic see-a-celebrity flight. And Tony Cox was sitting in first class. And he's both really small and African American. And he's like holding court. And I thought, well, of course, he's such a funny actor. Like, probably he's a really charming guy. And then I just, as I sat down in my seat—not in first class, sadly—I thought to myself, gosh, what a hassle it—like, when you're a celebrity, there is a certain expectation that you have to maintain a friendly front to everyone, because it might be their only interaction with you, and they will extrapolate from that.

(Peter agrees.)

And remember it in a way that they wouldn't if you were a random person. But then I'm like if you're as distinctive as him, like you're responsible for being that charming all the time. You know what I mean? And like—

Peter Dinklage: It's exhausting. It's exhausting. And nobody can do that all the time. It's exhausting. But it depends on the individual. I've worked with some actors who—they're so charming inherently, just in their DNA. They're just—that's who they are, and they love being an actor. They have no like wounded self-doubts about it like I do. *(Chuckles.)* So, they put themselves out there, and they understand that's part of the game. It's almost that's what you get paid for. You act for free, and you get paid to do all these types of things—press and deal with the fans and all of that. But yeah, I guess I'm just coming at it from a very specific corner of the sandbox in terms of having dealt with it since day one. How it's sort of—how

fame has sort of changed it, but also like I'm—I don't have the energy level perhaps that if it was some sort of new thing.

But it's great to hear that he was engaging and charming and holding court. But yeah, that's exhausting. It can be.

Jesse Thorn: When you signed up for *Game of Thrones*, how long was the commitment? What were you signing up for?

Peter Dinklage: I kind of had no idea what I was signing up for in terms of what actually that show ended up becoming. I knew the writers, David Benioff and Dan Weiss, were two of the most intelligent people I've talked to. I didn't really know Dan; I knew David. But they both were such skilled writers from work they had done that I knew I was in good hands. And I didn't really—you know, the fantasy world... you know, *Lord of the Rings* is incredible, but it does pigeonhole short people as a certain mythical character. And I think Tolkien is, you know, to be applauded. He's genius at what he did, but it does put it into young readers. It does—you know, that people with dwarfism are mythical and not from reality. And you know, I used to get some looks from kids like—you know, like I was some sort of mythical creature. Because I think we have to watch that in our fiction.

I'm not politically correct whatsoever, but I think it does put it into the frontal lobe at an early age of like, you know, they're not real. You know. They're one thing. They're grumpy warriors. But in *Game of Thrones*, the character was incredibly multidimensional. But it's funny that we're always put in the same category as centaurs and elves and goblins and all that (*ensor beep.*) You know, it's like, wow. Wait a minute. Hold on. Hold on. There's a term there that actually is in our reality.

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But you know, that's outside of fantasy world. That exists in reality too, with freak shows back in the day. And you know, it's just—yeah, it's not—it's something that I didn't—I wasn't like—I didn't have an agenda when I wanted to become an actor about changing everybody's views about it. But if it happened naturally with a great role, then I have no problem with changing people's perceptions.

Transition: A whooshing sound.

Clip:

Music: Ominous orchestral music.

Tyrion (*Game of Thrones*): I wish to confess.

Speaker: You wish to confess?

Tyrion: (*The clinking of chains.*) I saved you. I saved this city and all your worthless lives. I should have let Stannis kill you all.

(*Boos and commotion from the crowd.*)

Transition: A whooshing sound.

Jesse Thorn: I mean, the thing that I was thinking about signing up for *Game of Thrones* is, you know, often when you sign up for a television program—and I don't know if this was the case for you, but I'm guessing it was. You know, you're signing a deal that gives them the option to extend you for years and years, right? If there are, you know, five or seven seasons of the show, you're signing a contract that allows them to keep you onboard for years.

(*Peter confirms.*)

And this was a show that was one way or another going to be a huge production, shooting outside the United States. And you know, maybe it's one pilot or one season, and it's not a huge commitment. But like you're signing yourself and your family up to potentially be in a thing that lasts a long time, that is really complicated, really—you know, you're not just signing up for a movie that shoots for three weeks. You know what I mean?

Peter Dinklage: No. Of course. But it's all about timing. Everything's about timing in terms of those commitments, in terms of—and what I mean when I say timing, I mean in your own life. It's crazy to say that—not because of any sort of like “I'm past it”, but if that came—I'm 54 now. If that show came to me now with my children the age they are now, with the distant, far-off locations where we shot and the amount of time in which it took—many, many—about eight years, all said and done. I would probably have to turn it down now. But because it came 11 years ago, at a time in my life where I had just had my first kid. She was really young, and you can take them anywhere. That's—it sort of fit my life. And that also, obviously, the genius of the show sort of made it an easier decision as well, of course.

But it really is—it's hard to get actors of a certain age to drop everything and go somewhere, even for a couple of months. Because when you're 25 and single—anywhere, anytime, sure. I'll be there. Albuquerque for three months, why not? It sounds great. But when you're, you know, older and with children of a certain age, and they're in school, and they can't come with you anymore, because you can't take them out of school, and la-dee-da—it's a much more difficult decision. Yeah. And I've had to make those decisions and turn things down. Yeah. Because life sort of takes priority, really.

Jesse Thorn: We gotta go take a quick break. When we return, we will wrap up with Peter Dinklage. Stay with us. It's *Bullseye* for MaximumFun.org and NPR.

Transition: Thumpy synth with light vocalizations.

Jesse Thorn: This is *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. I'm talking with Peter Dinklage. He starred in *Game of Thrones*, *The Station Agent*, and stars in the new movie *American Dreamer*.

Can I ask you about your early 20s band that I listened to the demo of on YouTube?

Music: “I’m Dead” from the demo *Clear Up Acne, Pimples: Step Out with... WHIZZY* by the band Whizzy.

Dear Mom and Dad

I've been in the City of Angels a week now

And I've already gotten my first acting job

Like you always said—

“Son, you're gonna be famous someday!”

By the way, how's the cat?

(Music fades out.)

[00:35:00]

Peter Dinklage: You gotta have an outlet, you know. There was a couple of the guys in the band. It was about six of us. David, our bass player, and Jim, our drummer, and myself. And then the other two knew each other from before. And we just met in Brooklyn and started horsing around. And suddenly, we were a band. But the three of us weren't as—we realized we weren't as serious about it as the other two were. I'm not a musician. I just sort of like, you know, had fun and got up there and did some rapping and singing. And I played trumpet, and it was a lot of fun, and you got free drinks. Unfortunately, we had too many guy fans. It was like a lot of dudes. And I was like, “Oh boy, what is—? (*Grumbling.*) You know, you become a musician, you know, hopefully there's some women in the audience. But we attracted the frat boys maybe perhaps too much.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, you have to be more of like a Jack Johnson type.

Peter Dinklage: Yeah. You have to be sensitive. We weren't sensitive. We were like Beastie Boys. We were like a raucous, loud party band.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, a little Fishbone-y, there's some horns. There's a song on that demo where one of the guys that's not you is saying—say-singing, somewhere in between—“That's my armadillo; he's the talk of the town.”

Music: “Armadillo” from the demo *Clear Up Acne, Pimples: Step Out with... WHIZZY* by the band Whizzy.

Yo, that's my armadillo

He's the talk of the town

Oh, armadillo, oh-oh-oh armadillo

(Music fades out.)

Jesse Thorn: Somebody is barking like a dog, and I thought it might be you. It sounded like you, barking like a dog, yeah.

Peter Dinklage: I think that was me. Yeah, I'm still barking like a dog. No, it was early '90s.

Jesse Thorn: There's no business like showbusiness. *(Chuckles.)*

Peter Dinklage: It was fun. We played CBGBs before it became a clothing store. And yeah, it was just fun. It was just reckless.

Jesse Thorn: Do you still have a CBGB's scar?

Peter Dinklage: Oh man, yeah, you heard about that one. Maybe I've said that before. Yeah, it's on my eye, by my eyebrow. I got kneed in the temple by my fellow bandmate. I guess it had nothing to do with drinking, obviously. But yeah, there might still be blood down in there in that building. Because it was bleeding quite a lot. Head wounds, you know, they just keep bleeding. But the show went on and on. And you know, you can't stop the show. And there was something very, very punk rock about that—bleeding on the stage. Giving—you know, that's what an artist does. They give their blood on the stage. So, I literally did that, I guess.

Jesse Thorn: I feel like if I had a scar from playing a show at CBGBs, it would be the first line of my bio. Like, it would say, "Thorn, 42, who has a scar from playing a show at CBGB's, is the host of NPR's *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn*."

(They laugh.)

Peter Dinklage: I should really lead with that next interview. That's true. That should be something I should be proud of, right? Yeah. We've all got scars. We've all got scars, man. We've all got scars.

Jesse Thorn: Peter, I sure appreciate your time. It was really great to get to talk to you, and I've enjoyed your work for so long. So, I was really glad we got to have you come on the show.

Peter Dinklage: Thank you, Jesse. It's really—I mean, I love your show, and it's really great to be here. Thank you.

Jesse Thorn: Peter Dinklage. His new movie, *American Dreamer*, is out now. You can watch it in theaters or rent or buy it at home.

Transition: Upbeat, playful synth with light vocalizations.

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. The wind has been crazy here. Somebody's mad at us.

Our show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our senior producer is Kevin Ferguson. Our producers, 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 Dan Wally, aka DJW. Our theme song is "Huddle Formation", written and recorded by The Go! Team. Thanks to The Go! Team. Thanks to their label, Memphis Industries.

Bullseye is on Instagram, [@BullseyeWithJesseThorn](#). We're also on Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook. 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.)

Jesse Thorn: Hey, you listened to an entire episode of *Bullseye* during the MaxFunDrive. I hope that means that you really love the show and that you will go to [MaximumFun.org/join](#) to become a member.

[00:40:00]