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**Jesse Thorn:** Hey, *Bullseye* listeners. *Bullseye* is produced by [MaximumFun.org](https://MaximumFun.org). You've probably heard it in the credits. We are supported by membership, and this is the MaxFunDrive, the time that we come to you to ask you to join us. So, we'll have this interview with SiR in just a minute. It is a really good one. But right now I hope that you will go to [MaximumFun.org/join](https://MaximumFun.org/join) and become a part of Maximum Fun. [MaximumFun.org/join](https://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](https://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.

Most professional musicians decide they're really gonna go for it before they're even old enough to drive a car. My guest this week, SiR, didn't figure it out until he was well into his 20s. Now, that's unusual for just about any successful performer. For SiR, it was particularly so, because of his family. His brothers are musicians. His parents are musicians. And when I say that I don't mean like “put out a record in college and play with my buddies on the weekends” type musicians. His dad played with Prince. His mom sang backup for Michael Jackson and Anita Baker. Like, basically, this is a family where it's weird not to be a professional musician.

So, anyway, SiR. He got fired from his job managing a gym, and he was working on pushing songs to artists like Stevie Wonder and Ginuwine, Tyrese, Jill Scott, but he didn't have any huge hits. And eventually, he realized that there was only one person he trusted to lay down the songs that he was writing, and that was him. SiR cut his first record just before he turned 30. It was called *Seven Sundays*; it came out in 2015. Then he signed with Top Dog Entertainment, TDE—the label that launched the careers of Kendrick Lamar, SZA, and ScHoolboy Q. Now SiR has a new record, his fourth. It's called *Heavy*. It's personal. It's about depression, addiction, and loss. I'm thrilled to get to talk to him about it. Let's hear a bit from that album. This is “Karma”.

**Music:** “Karma” from the album *Heavy* by SiR & Isaiah Rashad.

*I don't think I'ma get used to this attention—no, not ever*

*Never been too shy for the limelight, but I never really cared much*

*Always knew a direction to fly right, but I never really cared much*

*Ooh, I need to stop treating hoes like I need 'em*

*I'm too busy making promises when I can't keep 'em*

*It's time I slow this 'Llac down to 100*

*I keep making the same mistakes when I should be learning from it*

*(Music fades out.)*

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

**SiR:** Thank you for having me.

**Jesse Thorn:** I like to see different reactions when somebody's own record comes on. You were a cool head-nodder. You went into your head space.

**SiR:** Oh man, I've listened to that song so many times over the last like couple weeks, man. It's just—it's kind of soothing at this point.

**Jesse Thorn:** One time Bonnie Pointer started singing along with herself.

**SiR:** That's awesome. That's awesome.

**Jesse Thorn:** And I was like, "Yes! Oh my god, there's a Pointer Sister six feet away from me singing to her own song!" We're in Northeast Los Angeles as we record this, and you're from Inglewood. People I think have a pretty monolithic idea of what Los Angeles is.

What's Inglewood like, and how's it similar to or different from the sand and palm trees and Muscle Beach idea that people have of LA?

**SiR:** Inglewood is—it's actually very laid back. Funny enough, it's airport city. So, it's the city that LAX is closest to or resides in, I would say. And there's a lot of, you know, moving around, hustling and bustling. But for the most part, it's laid back. There's a lot of money in Inglewood though, that people don't know about. You know, especially since the stadium was built over there. They just built SoFi over there, and they're building an arena for the Clippers. So, there's a lot of money in Inglewood. And the cities that we're attached to are also, you know, some of the nicest cities like Redondo—you know what I mean, El Segundo. And yeah, man, I've been there since I was nine.

My dad grew up in the same house that we moved into when I was nine. And like, you know, it's a family house. We've had it in our family since like 1964. So, you know, we know so much about the history of the city, and it's so good to be back. You know, I'm like two blocks from where I grew up. You know, in another house. But yeah, it's nice over there right now, man. And it's only getting better.

**Jesse Thorn:** Who was it in your family that was in your childhood home?

**SiR:** It was mom, dad, brothers—two brothers. Sometimes my uncle, sometimes my grandma. You know what I mean? We had people, you know, coming in and out, family, whenever they needed.

**Jesse Thorn:** Your mom was a very serious musician.

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**SiR:** Yes, still is.

**Jesse Thorn:** Was there a piano in the house?

**SiR:** Of course. Oh yeah. Always. Upright. My mom always dreamed of having a baby grand, and me and my brother actually got to buy her one last year which was—that felt great. But we always had an upright. We could never afford it or have the space, you know, for a baby grand. So.

**Jesse Thorn:** Did you play the piano when you were a kid?

**SiR:** No, I still don't. I still don't. (*Laughs.*) I can play by ear, but terribly still. You know, I don't practice enough. You know, that's one thing I know about any kind of instrument. You got to practice, and you got to stay consistent. So, at a certain point, I could play better than I can now, but I don't ever practice. But yeah, I mean, I know what I'm good at, and I stick to it now. I don't try to like do too much. You know, I'm getting old, man.

**Jesse Thorn:** Your mom sang professionally. Did she—was there like a family band situation? Like, was there a Von Trapp Family thing?

**SiR:** (*Laughs.*) So, me and my brothers were in a group when we were younger, and we were actually signed to DreamWorks a looong time ago. I was like nine or something like that, ten. But we were signed under Gerald Busby, who is—man, that's one of the biggest record executives of all time. And it was a weird situation. I just—I wasn't into it as a kid, but both my brothers were really excited about it. And you know, we did a demo. And you know, nothing really came of it. But—

**Jesse Thorn:** Are these older or younger brothers?

**SiR:** Older. I'm the baby. I'm the youngest. So, you know. I remember clear as day, we got demos and stuff. I would play it for you if I had it on my phone. It's hilarious. But you know, that was the start of my music career, I guess.

**Jesse Thorn:** Was it secular music?

**SiR:** Yeah. Oh, yeah, of course. Yeah. No, I mean, we grew up in church. But my parents, you know, they never really boxed us in. And they were the ones writing the songs! Which is hilarious. My mom and my dad, which I think is hilarious. My dad loves that he has a song credit on something that we sang on. That was like a dream come true for him.

**Jesse Thorn:** Was your mom working in secular music at the same time as she was—because she was music director of the church, right?

*(SiR confirms.)*

So, was she also on the road when you were a kid? Or singing in studios.

**SiR:** Uh, seldom. No, you know, most of the stuff that she did, she did before church or before she was the minister of music at our church in particular. So, a lot of that stuff, we were little kids. We were like one/two years old while she was traveling, you know, working with Michael Jackson, ChakaKhan, and stuff like that. But once she became minister of music at the church, that was her full-time job. But she traveled with the church. You know, they did a couple of records, and they would do church tours. And you know, I just remember her working Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday—which was Bible study, choir rehearsal, and actual church. You know what I mean? So, she did that 30 years straight. Still, still doing it.

**Jesse Thorn:** I mean, I watched a video of your mom singing. And I think I had imagined a small church ensemble. I had imagined, you know, a dozen-person chorus and your mom and a, you know, four-piece band of guys from the neighborhood kind of situation.

**SiR:** Yeah. Sounds about right.

**Jesse Thorn:** *(Chuckling.)* But what I saw in the video that I looked at was like 35 in the chorus.

**SiR:** Oh, you saw a big—*(chuckles)* yeah, you saw probably Bam Crawford's Purpose. There's a song, a gospel song that she wrote a long time ago that was huge.

**Music:** “My Help” from the album *The King is Coming Any Day* by Bam Crawford's Purpose.

*... even forever more*

*My help, my help*

*(Music fades out.)*

**SiR:** And there's all kinds of video of her singing that with the big choirs and stuff. And I mean, she's done that kind of stuff before. You know, like when she was younger, she was in a group called the PTL Singers. It's an old school—it's like '80s, bro. The only reason I know

about it is because she was a part of it. But you know, she's used to that kind of stuff. My mom is amazing. I love her.

**Jesse Thorn:** Even more still to come with SiR. Stay with us. It's *Bullseye* from [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and NPR.

**Transition:** Thumpy rock music.

**Jesse Thorn:** Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest is SiR. He's a chart-topping R&B singer, a songwriter who's worked with Stevie Wonder and Anita Baker, among others. His newest album, *Heavy*, just dropped. It's fantastic. Let's get back into our conversation.

Did you think that you had to be able to sing like your mom to be, yourself, fronting an act?

**SiR:** No, no, no. I mean, to be honest—

**Jesse Thorn:** 'Cause your mom can sing her tail off.

**SiR:** Oh yeah. And you know what's funny. My older brother—I feel like my older brother, Davion, can sing circles around me. You know what I mean? It's just what they have. And I never wanted to be a singer, honestly. I just wanted to write songs. The whole SiR thing came just because I was writing songs that no one else could sing. It was like I would demo songs, or people would demo my songs, and it just didn't sound right. So, I'm still, you know, a work in progress I would say, with my vocal—and like always trying to improve. And you know, very conscious, very self-conscious. You know, scared half the time. But you know, I definitely have had a lot of time to like just develop what I'm comfortable with in my voice and challenge myself too.

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You know, I push, and I pull all the time, just trying to get better, you know. But I have a lot of like great examples to look up to in my family and, you know, in the music industry there are a lot of amazing vocalists. You know, my favorite vocalist right now is Tori Kelly. God, she can sing. God, she can sing. I think seeing that last scene in the movie *Sing* broke me down, you know. But I pay attention, and I listen, and I try to take what I can from, you know, the people that I admire.

**Jesse Thorn:** Were you ever concerned that being an R&B singer was corny?

**SiR:** Nah, no, I do what I like. And you know what? I mean, to this day, I know I have people that don't like what I do. You know what I mean? And just there are people in general that just have their preference, and that's okay. But I do what I do because it feeds me. You know what I mean? And I know that it touches other people. But I love R&B music. I'm a fan of it. I mean, growing up, I think that's what I listened to more than anything because of my parents. You know what I mean? Yeah, we grew up in a church, but my dad is an old school gangster. He listened to everything. You know what I mean? He listened to a lot of soul

music. And my mother listened to a looot of R&B. Stevie Wonder, Donny Hathaway, Aretha, Ma, you know.

**Jesse Thorn:** I'm imagining your dad listening to DeBarge right now.

**SiR:** No, no, nah, nah, nah, nah. My dad was more of like a—

**Jesse Thorn:** Because that's the OG. Like, one time DJ Quik told me, he's like, "You know who's the hardest person I ever recorded with?" I was like who's that? He's like, "El DeBarge." (*Laughs.*)

**SiR:** I would imagine. I would imagine. My dad was more like a Teddy Pendergrass, Marvin Gaye type of guy, you know what I mean? But my dad loved the Stylistics. Let's say that, you know what I mean?

**Jesse Thorn:** Oh, I love the—you don't have to convince me. I love the Stylistics and the Spinners more than anything.

**SiR:** You know, my dad has a really like acquired taste. He's been around the block a couple times. So, he knows the right songs to play, man. But my mom? She knew the guys. Like, she knew the excellence. Stevie Wonder, you know what I mean, was her like idol. Which is cool, because we had him—we brought him to her 60th birthday party like last year. Amazing experience, bro. Amazing experience, bro. He sat down and played and sang "My Cherie Amour", and put my mom's name in it. He was like, (*singing*) "Miss Jackie, the woman of summer day." Everybody in the room stopped. The bar closed for a second. Everybody stopped moving.

You know, crazy (*sensor beep*) man. And what's funny is Daniel—D Smoke is the one that invited him, and my brother Davion got Tyrese to show up the same day. And I invited like Joe Blow from down the block! (*Laughing.*) So, I was like we had a \$20 minimum on gifts, guys! How did you get Stevie Wonder to show up?! (*Laughs.*)

**Jesse Thorn:** I mean, I would—honestly, like I would be most upset if I got Tyrese to come, and I'm like who does a mom want to see more than Tyrese? No one. This is the most beautiful human being in the world, right?

**SiR:** Right, right. And then Stevie walks in the door.

(*They laugh.*)

**Jesse Thorn:** Stevie Wonder walks in! Like—sorry!

**SiR:** What a day that was, man. What a day. And you know, my mom was always—going back to the question. My mom and dad like—I think as we grew up, they wanted to plant perfect seeds with what they were listening to by setting an example, you know what I mean? But they also like gave us free reign to like find what we wanted to, you know—minus, you

know, violence and guns and stuff like that. Like, yeah, you can listen to whatever you want, long as it ain't crazy. You know, so I did a lot of exploring. I listened to a lot of Metallica when I was younger, you know what I mean. I love John Mayer, you know. And just—I always just find things in different places that I never knew I would like. You know what I mean? And I think my parents fit that for sure.

**Jesse Thorn:** Was your mom musing when you were a kid?

**SiR:** My mom got sober... right after I was born. So, I was a preemie. I was three pounds, six ounces when I was born. All my brothers were preemies. But she got sober right after I was born. My dad got sober after he got out of jail. He got sober in jail. I mean, you really don't got a choice. (*Chuckles.*) He was, um... this was probably like '96 when he got out. But no, my mom—like, all of my life that I can remember, sober. Sober as a bird.

**Jesse Thorn:** And if she was deeply involved in the church, that must have been kind of part of her testimony.

**SiR:** Oh yeah, definitely. It still is to this day. You know what I mean? Which I think a lot of people, you know, look at church as a place where everyone's, you know, doing great and stuff like that. Nah, church is the exact opposite. Church is where you go to find God. You know what I mean? When you need them the most, you know? So, I think my mom was always good at, you know, treating people as her equal. She stood in a place of authority in the church, but she never made anybody feel like that, because she knew she was human. You know? And I think that's something that I carry with me to this day is that as much as I've done and I do, I'm a normal guy. And you know, I'm very emotional. I go through things. I've had a really tough like couple days, man.

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Now, I'm feeling very human in here, you know? And you know, it's just—I appreciate, you know, having an example like my mother to kind of keep me grounded.

**Jesse Thorn:** What did it mean to you that your mom was sober when you were a kid?

**SiR:** Everything. I mean, sheesh, my mom was—she was the rock, man. She was the breadwinner. You know, my father with his—you know, he had two strikes when I was a kid. He had been to jail twice, and you know, he did everything he could to provide, but my mother had a great job and a great career that did a lot for us. And you know, I hear the stories of my mom doing drugs, but could never—I couldn't picture it. I couldn't picture her going through what she said she went through or the picture—the stories my grandma tells me about how she couldn't leave the house, and she had her wallet. My grandma had to take her money, take her keys. You know? And I can't imagine it. It doesn't even sit well in my spirit; you know what I mean?

But it happened and it's—you know, that's crazy to think about.

**Jesse Thorn:** I grew up going to meetings with my dad, who got sober when I was a toddler. And I think that experience really shaped how I thought about a lot of things in my life. And my dad was sober my entire life, as far as I know. But that experience of hearing those stories is really—even though I don't remember my Dad ever taking a drink. You know, he got sober before I can remember. And I have a hard time imagining it. But also, I know how central it was to his life.

**SiR:** Yeah, no, for sure. And you know, I think one of the weirdest things was when I started going to meetings. Going to a meeting with my dad, you know, who's still in sobriety—he does meetings all the time. Now, mind you, I don't knock AA, but it didn't really work as much as I wanted it to for me. So, I more so go to meetings like when I need to, when my emotions are down—you know what I mean?—I'll go to a meeting. But my dad, he's consistent. And I just remember the first time we went to a meeting together, and I saw him break down telling his own story. And it was a story I had never heard, you know. And it just shook me to the core, man. It really—that was a good thing. It was the worst pain I could feel at the moment, you know, and I was—pff, barely sober at the time. I was probably like a month sober, but yeah, it shook me to the core. It messed me up, man, and really kind of helped keep me on the path that I'm on now.

**Jesse Thorn:** Did you speak in front of your dad?

**SiR:** No, not that day, no, no, no. I have since, and ball. I cry. I'm an emotional wreck, bro. You know, and a lot of it comes from the experiences. You know, the transition from losing control to fighting for control to gaining control is a rollercoaster. So, you know, right now I could see, you know, any kind of like reunion or any kind of like mom coming back from war and surprising her daughter on the basketball court? I'm on the floor. I'm out of here. Any of that. (*Laughs.*) You know, the power that it gives me is great. You know, I'm having control over my emotions and being willing to lose them all at the same time, because of what I've been through, it's just—it's a powerful thing.

**Jesse Thorn:** How long have you been clean now?

**SiR:** A year and—man, I have to really think, because it's March. So, a year and three months. Yeah.

**Jesse Thorn:** First of all, congratulations. One day at a time.

**SiR:** Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

**Jesse Thorn:** Was there something that changed your path? Why'd you get sober?

**SiR:** Ah. The why, to me, is so much less important. The “how” is more important. You know what I mean? Time and forgiveness. Therapy was huge. I think therapy worked worlds better than rehab would have worked for me. You know what I mean? Because a lot of stuff that I was going through was so personal, you know? And yeah, my therapist did a lot with just helping me forgive myself and, you know, finding the roots of the problems. You know



what I mean? Depression and, you know, relationship issues, communication issues. And yeah.

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

**Jesse Thorn:** Hey, *Bullseye* listeners! It's Jesse. I'm joined by Richard, one of the producers of *Bullseye*.

**Richard Robey:** Hey, Jesse, how's it going?

**Jesse Thorn:** Also, my dog is in the studio right now if anybody hears him. His name is Junior. It's MaxFunDrive time. Of course, Maximum Fun is the company that produces *Bullseye*. I used to say it was the company I own, but now I'm a worker-owner alongside you and all of the other employees of Maximum Fun.

*(Richard confirms.)*

And we are supported by direct membership.

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Some *Bullseye* listeners might know about this, some might not. But you can go to [MaximumFun.org/join](https://MaximumFun.org/join), sign up, send us five bucks a month. And that's what makes this show possible. Richard, what do you do on the show?

**Richard Robey:** I am a producer on the show. I actually started as a fellow. I was in the year-long fellowship program with Maximum Fun. And—

**Jesse Thorn:** What's the fellowship program?

**Richard Robey:** So, the fellowship program is basically you work on *Bullseye*, and you learn the ins and outs of how to produce a radio show and a podcast. I'm not gonna lie, before I started working on *Bullseye*, I had really no idea what went into editing. So, I kinda just came thrown right in. And I learned a lot. I learned how to edit, I learned how to book guests. I work on scripts for the show, you know, producing the two episodes that we release every week. It was a lot! And since then I've become a producer here at Maximum Fun, and I'm a worker-owner.

**Jesse Thorn:** So, this episode is an interview with SiR.

**Richard Robey:** Right, TDE.

**Jesse Thorn:** And this was one—thank you for shouting them out.

*(Richard laughs.)*

This was one that you spearheaded, along with our rap month. You and I worked a lot together on the rap month.

*(Richard confirms.)*

Why did you wanna have SiR on the show?

**Richard Robey:** I wanted to have SiR on the show—well, one, 'cause I'm a fan. I'm not even gonna lie. Two, I was really—

**Jesse Thorn:** You don't have to lie about that. It's fine. We're fans! That's what we do!

**Richard Robey:** Yes, that is true. And I was really anticipating his new album. It had been a while since he released his first project. And he was, you know, talking about what went into making this new album and why it took so long. I also just think he's super talented and someone that I thought our listeners would enjoy to listen to on the show.

**Jesse Thorn:** Can I say something that might sound like a brag, but I think it's just the honest truth? I think *Bullseye* is the best public radio program in the world on urban music.

**Richard Robey:** Mm! I'm gonna second that.

**Jesse Thorn:** I don't think there's anybody else doing what we're doing. Rap month was a big example of that.

*(Richard agrees.)*

This is something I've wanted to do for forever. It's something that I'm motivated—that I was inspired to do every time we got an email from somebody who said, *(chuckling)* “Please, no more rap on public radio.”

**SiR:** Oh, I remember that. I think we got some tweets too.

**Jesse Thorn:** We get the occasional—but this was a big effort. It involved the whole production staff of *Bullseye*, you and our booker, Mara—who's a big addition to *Bullseye*.

*(Richard agrees.)*

Both to the cost of production of *Bullseye* and to the quality of production of *Bullseye*, I think. So, what was your goal for rap month?

**Richard Robey:** Last year was the celebration of 50 years of hip-hop. And I think what was really cool about rap month is we, you know, celebrated the anniversary of hip-hop, but we also were just celebrating rap like in general. And one of the things I worked on was, like I mentioned before, booking guests. And we brainstormed some artists that we wanted to have on the show, rappers. And you know, reaching out to publicists and trying to make that

happen. And we got, I feel like, a pretty solid lineup for rap month. It was really cool. I mean, Master P, Rakim.

**Jesse Thorn:** Something I was really proud of about rap month is, you know, we made a big list and worked our butts off getting people into the studio. Which, you know, in rap world, people are going a lot of different directions, let's say.

*(Richard agrees.)*

*(Chuckling.)* It can be challenging to get people into the studio. But I think like one of the really cool things is we didn't just get people—like, you and I are both really passionate hip-hop fans. And I don't think that we just got people into the studio that you might expect. Right?

*(Richard agrees.)*

Like, even somebody like Rakim. Like, you might expect to hear Rakim on a, you know, series of public radio interviews for the 50th anniversary of hip-hop. Right? But would you expect to hear Jeezy and Master P? Maybe not so much. Right? Right. And I, that's something,

**Jesse Thorn:** that I'm really proud of with our coverage of hip-hop in particular on *Bullseye*. Of course, all of this is made possible, because Richard's salary and Kevin's and Daniel, who's outside the studio right now—and Mara's are all paid for not by NPR—we love NPR; you should join your local station—but by Maximum Fun. And Maximum Fun is a membership organization. So, you can be part of it by going to [MaximumFun.org/join](https://MaximumFun.org/join). And in fact, speaking of rap, we have a special bonus episode only for members that is completely hip-hop themed.

**Richard Robey:** Yeah, yeah, we have our conversation with Boots Riley that went on for—I think it was three hours that day? And yeah, we talked about the Coup, and—

**Jesse Thorn:** We did six hours with Boots?

**Richard Robey:** Yeah, it was a good day, but it was fun.

**Jesse Thorn:** I know there was mandated overtime, legally mandated overtime. I have a great time anytime Boots is in here. I've known Boots for, uh, 20 years? Holy mackerel. Yeah, I've known Boots for 20 years. So, you know, Boots used to come—my mom taught at Santa Rosa Junior College in Santa Rosa, California. He used to get on the bus and ride up to Santa Rosa.

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To do the like arts and lectures series at Santa Rosa Junior College. Every year, my mom would bring him up once a year. You know, she got like \$700 to bring somebody or something. Boots would always come, god bless him. A good man, a man of the people.

Yeah, now you also get other cool free stuff if you become a member of Maximum Fun. For example, pins!

**Richard Robey:** Right, we do have pins. Pins are back.

**Jesse Thorn:** What is our pin this year? It's really cool.

**Richard Robey:** Our pin, it says "speaking into microphones", I believe. So, yeah, that's pretty cool.

**Jesse Thorn:** (*Chuckles*) Speaking into microphones, by the way—like, one time I floated the idea of no longer saying that. Because originally, the joke of that was that there was no producer on this show. It's just me making the whole thing in my apartment. And there was a listener riot! This was in the *Sound of Young America* days—12/14 years. Like, people would not accept that they wouldn't hear their favorite in-joke at the end of the show. So, I had to leave it.

**Richard Robey:** We can't have it. We can't have it.

**Jesse Thorn:** So, if you become a member at the \$10 a month level, you can get that pin that you can only get by becoming a member. You get access to years and years and years of members only bonus content. Most importantly, you are supporting the production of this show, which absolutely would not exist without the members of Maximum Fun. So, I hope that if you are listening right now, you will take this opportunity to go to [MaximumFun.org/join](https://MaximumFun.org/join) and become part of this.

**Transition:** Thumpy rock music.

**Jesse Thorn:** It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest is the R&B singer, SiR.

I wanna play a record from your new album, called "No Evil".

**Music:** "No Evil" from the album *Heavy* by SiR.

*What's your superpower?*

*Show me what you're made of*

*I been lonely for days and days*

*But we're one and the same*

*Pardon my superstition*

*But with my supervision*

*I see so much of myself*

*My past, my pain, my pride and my ego*

*But I see no evil*

*(Music fades out.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** So, the video of this song is a sort of tribute to D'Angelo's "Untitled" video. Which, for folks who haven't seen it—you know, D'Angelo on his second album, *Voodoo*, had put out a single that had done fine but not remarkably. And "Untitled" is a very beautiful ballad. And they made a video where he's apparently nude. And he's very muscly and shiny. He had always been kind of a soft, cute guy before that. And you know, it transformed his career in a lot of ways. But it also—because it was an extraordinarily successful video, but I think it was also something that he struggled to live with to this day.

How do you feel about being in conversation with... ripped D'Angelo and the idea that if you're an R&B singer you have to be gorgeous?

**SiR:** Eeh, I don't agree with that per se. I think you know artists like Xavier Omär and—you know what I mean. There are other artists that aren't the symbol of sex that are they're doing just fine in R&B. But I think it was it wasn't even about that for me. It was more so about me, you know, showing the new version of me. And dude, I got up to 248 pounds. If you look at the pictures at Daniel's wedding, D Smoke. You know, I keep—I'm calling him Daniel so many times. I have to refer to him as D Smoke. But the pictures at this guy's wedding? I was 248 pounds. This year I dropped down to 179 at my smallest, and I was shredded. I was like ripped. But then I was on this stupid, crazy diet to get there, you know?

But like, I don't think I shot the video with that intention. The director, you know, kind of planted that seed, and we ran with it. And when we saw the visual in action, we were like, "Oh, this might actually work." You know? But I wasn't like trying to copy D'Angelo or trying to like say I'm a sex symbol. 'Cause that's not even—(*chuckling*) people that know me know I'm not. I'm just a goofy, you know, nerd. You know, but I definitely wanted people to see that I was doing great. Not just doing good. I'm doing great. I'm taking care of myself. I'm happy. I'm healthy. And you know, we're gonna continue to like stay on that path. And that was just a little Easter egg just to show people that, you know, Darryl's back. You know, that's all.

**Jesse Thorn:** What's your relationship like with your body? I mean, you say—I feel like a lot of muscle dudes are nerds.

[00:30:00]

'Cause it takes a certain kind of nerdery to make—you know, you don't just exercise a lot and then become a muscle dude.

**SiR:** No, no, no, no. There's so much education that goes behind it and time. But my relationship right now with my body is okay, you know. Everybody at the gym has a little dysmorphia. (*Laughs.*) You know, it happens. But I'm like okay. I'm 198 right now. Over the last few weeks, I've been putting on, because I was traveling. And I was about 183/184, which is small for me. And it wasn't like the way I wanted it to look. I was starting to lose muscle, and I wasn't, you know, able to get to the gym. So, I was like, okay, it's bulk season. So, I've been bulking as of lately, so right now I'm happy! I'm gonna leave here, I'm gonna eat good, you know, and then I'm gonna try to get a workout in later.

**Jesse Thorn:** Me too, SiR. I'm also in bulk season. I'm in the perpetual bulk season of the soul.

**SiR:** Year-round. (*Laughs.*) Oh man.

**Jesse Thorn:** We're going to take a quick break. We'll be back in a minute. When we return, SiR will tell us about the last time he performed in church. It's *Bullseye* from [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and NPR.

**Transition:** Thumpy synth with light vocalizations.

**Jesse Thorn:** It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest is the R&B singer, SiR.

What changed you to become serious about pursuing a music career? Because most musicians I interview on the show, they're serious about becoming a professional musician when they're 15/16 years old. And you were well into your 20s.

**SiR:** I don't know, man. I think I was—I had just gotten fired from my job at the gym. Like, you know. And I was just in a stage in my life where I didn't know what I wanted to do. And my brothers looked like they were having fun more than anything. They were making money, and it was impressive. You know what I mean? And you know, (*sighs*) we always liked to challenge each other. So, I looked at it as a challenge back then. Like, maybe I could do this. If I could, I bet you I could do it better than them. You know? And it started as curiosity. I can't even tell you like I had a—you know, a raging fire inside of me that—no. No, I still, to this day, struggle with being an artist, bro.

**Jesse Thorn:** Which part of it?

**SiR:** The business, the people. The way you get looked at, the way you get treated, the way you get talked to sometimes. You know, the...

**Jesse Thorn:** On which end? The part about people, you know, wanting to admire you as a symbol of their own emotional lives? Or the part about being a commodity?

**SiR:** Both. You know what I mean? And as far as the people—you know, like we deal with labels all the time. I have to answer to people. You know what I mean? I make mistakes that, you know, I have to move forward from. And like, it's just a lot of stuff that I didn't think this through before I decided to become SiR. I just was doing music, trying to like feed my family

at the time. You know? And trying to make more of what I had. You know? And it turned into something way bigger than I could have ever expected. And I'm just trying to hold up on my end of the bargain.

**Jesse Thorn:** Did you think you were just going to be a guy that works at Guitar Center when you worked at Guitar Center? Like, were you—? Because everybody that works at Guitar Center, I presume, has an EP on Soundcloud, right?

**SiR:** For sure. No, I got that Guitar Center job after I was SiR. I already was a working musician and, you know, had somewhat of a fan base. Which is weird, because I was going to Guitar Center every day, and people were like, (*shocked*) “No.”

**Jesse Thorn:** Did people recognize you at Guitar Center?

**SiR:** All the time. Yeah. Yeah, and I get that all the time. “Are you—?! Oh my gosh, can I take a picture?” Especially, you know—back then, my audience was like California, Arizona, and Portland, because I dropped through with Kenny Fresh, who's out of Portland. You know what I mean? So, I was more locally known than anything. I did a lot of local shows, so definitely got recognized, you know. But when I was at Guitar Center, I was already—you know, we'd already dropped music, and I was already talking to TDE. So, we were already involved, I just wasn't signed yet.

And I got signed while I was still at Guitar Center. Aaaand then about a month or two after that, after they announced, I was like—I quit my job. You know what I mean? So, you know, I definitely didn't like go into Guitar Center like, “Well, this is it!” (*Chuckling*.) No, it wasn't like that. It was like I was broke. I was still a broke musician, and I needed to pay my bills, and I didn't have enough coming in at the moment. But seeds were planted. Things were moving, you know. But I think that was the smartest thing I'd ever done was get the Guitar Center job.

**Jesse Thorn:** When you signed a deal with a big deal label/management company, in Top Dog Entertainment—who, you know, represented and made records with some of the biggest and best in—especially in LA, but in urban music in general. How was it like what you expected and how was it different?

[00:35:00]

**SiR:** I had no expectations. I was on the outside. I was green. So, it's been a really hard learning curve. And it's more so—like, these is gangsters. It's not even like—(*sensor beep*), I mean, forget about the music, you know. I had to learn how to move and operate inside of that realm of the Mafia of TDE. You know what I mean? And that's real. You know what I mean? I'm green. I'm not no gang member in LA. You know, I come from a place where my brother gang banged. You know, I had people around me. But I'm like—(*chuckling*) I was sheltered as a kid. I was taken care of. Pish posh! I don't want to fight! You know, so I had to learn how to like communicate and just move properly in my circle of people and made countless mistakes when I first, you know, showed up. So, that was first, but—

**Jesse Thorn:** What kind of mistakes are you talking about?

**SiR:** I mean, trying to show off and, you know, get online like, “I’m digging this,” and talking above myself. And you know, trying to prove points that didn’t need to be proved. And you know, I learned a lot about when to speak and when you need to speak up.

**Jesse Thorn:** Do you think you’re going to be SiR forever, or do you think there’ll be a time when you hang that hat up?

**SiR:** I wish you didn’t ask me that today. Man, I—ah.

**Jesse Thorn:** Do you want to tell me why?

**SiR:** No, no, no, no, no. I just—certain days I love it, certain days I don’t. I just... you know, being SiR is hard. Being Darryl is, is cool. Darryl is chill. SiR—Darryl, the one that’s at the house, he’s chill. He plays *Call of Duty*, plays *Tekken*. He just sits at the house with video games with his—you know, watches *Mickey Mouse* with his daughter. My life is easy, you know what I mean? And yeah. You know, the name of the game is longevity for me. So, I definitely want to see how far this goes, but I’m always curious about what life would look like outside of this. And I think that’s a good thing. I think I have something to look forward to in my 60s or 70s, maybe.

But you know, I’m going to be SiR for a long time, just because I—like I said, I’m holding up my end of the bargain, man. I’ve already planted too many seeds. I’ve already done too much work, and there’s so much more to be said and done. So, I know this isn’t my last album. I know that I’m still enjoying creation. And as long as I’m enjoying creating the music, it’ll be my job to follow through. So, man, I’m SiR now! You know, but this is like sobriety for me. So, it’s one day at a time.

**Jesse Thorn:** What’s the last time you sang in church?

**SiR:** Woah! No comment! No, I’m just kidding. (*Cackles.*) When was the—? You should’ve asked me when was the last time I’ve been to church. Sheesh. It was at a funeral. So, three years ago. It’s tough. It was my godson’s funeral. It’s the last time I sang at church.

**Jesse Thorn:** What did you sing?

**SiR:** Ooh. (*Sighs then sings.*) “Not a second or another minute, not now or another day. But as this moment with my arms outstretched, I need you to make a way as you have done so many times before, through a window or an open door. I stretch my hands to thee, come rescue me, I need you right away.”

**Jesse Thorn:** Well, I sure appreciate you making the trip up here and taking the time to talk to me. It was really good to—



**SiR:** This was the best interview I've done in a long time. I'm sorry if I seem like my spirits are a little low. I really appreciate it. You kind of pulled me out of a rut today, man. I appreciate that, brother.

**Jesse Thorn:** Well, thank you very much.

SiR, his new album, *Heavy*, is available to buy and stream now. Go grab it.

**Transition:** Cheerful, bouncy piano.

**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. Although, we have had the pleasure of being in the office a lot more lately, where—I was just there yesterday, and the question was could we get our colleague, Danny, into a particularly large promotional tote bag. The answer was yes!

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. Special thanks this week to Gemma Castro at Stones Throw Studios in Los Angeles for recording Me and SiR while our own studio was under construction. Our interstitial music is by DJW, known as Dan Wally. Our theme song is “Huddle Formation” by The Go! Team. Thanks to The Go! Team. Thanks to their label, Memphis Industries. *Bullseye* is on Instagram, [@BullseyeWithJesseThorn](#).

[00:40:00]

You can also find us on Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook. And I think that's about it. Just remember, all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.

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

*(Music fades out.)*

Jesse Thorn: I hope you enjoyed that interview with SiR. I sure did. He was giving out daps and hugs after that interview. What a sweet man.

**Richard Robey:** I got a picture.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah. *(Laughs.)* Richard did ask for a picture and get one.

**Richard Robey:** It's my phone wallpaper now.

**Jesse Thorn:** It was very cute.

I would love for you to support Maximum Fun and this work that we do. Go to [MaximumFun.org/join](https://MaximumFun.org/join) to do it. And the honest truth is, as adorable as Richard is right now—and you can't see him, but he's bright red and looking cute as a button. And this poor young man would be out on the street without your membership. Just be eating banana peels out of garbage cans.

**Richard Robey:** Those actually aren't that bad.

**Jesse Thorn:** (*Laughs.*) [MaximumFun.org/join](https://MaximumFun.org/join).