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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](http://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. William December Williams is my first guest this week. Billy Dee Williams, as he is better known. He's been an actor for 80 years. He made his debut on Broadway at seven. He's also a painter. He's a singer who's performed alongside Diana Ross.

**Music:** “Baby, (*You've Got What it Takes*)” from the album *The Magnificent 7* Four Tops and The Supremes.

*Melt away the snow*

*Well it takes two hearts a-cooking*

*To make our fire glow*

*And baby, you've got what it takes*

*(Oh yeah!) Yeah*

*(Music fades out.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** And he's also that guy from *Star Wars*.

*(Lightsaber sound.)*

**Lando (*Star Wars*):** What are you doing here?

**Han:** Ah, repairs. I thought you could help me out. What have you done to my ship?

**Lando:** Your ship?!

**Han:** Hey, remember, you lost her to me fair and square.

**Lando:** And how you doing, Chewbacca?

(*Chewbacca trills.*)

You still hanging around with this loser?

(*Laser sound.*)

**Jesse Thorn:** Billy Dee Williams recently published a memoir—*What Have We Here? Portraits of a Life*. It's a terrific tale about a true original. I'm so thrilled to get to talk with Billy Dee Williams. Let's get right into it.

**Transition:** Cheerful, upbeat synth.

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

**Billy Dee Williams:** Well, thank you for having me.

**Jesse Thorn:** You grew up in a very artistic family, and your mom was a performer. She was sort of a frustrated performer.

**Billy Dee Williams:** Yeah, she studied opera for many years.

**Jesse Thorn:** How did you understand that when you were a kid? Like, did you see your mom as a grand success, the way we all see our moms? Did you see the frustration of her being worried about actually pursuing a career in the arts? What did you see?

**Billy Dee Williams:** Well, I saw the frustration, but I guess for me, it was—she was just Mommy, and that was it. But I mean, I knew that she had these aspirations, you know. And in her own way, she—her own small way, she tried to pursue a career. But she was more a mommy than anything else. I mean, she just was there for me and my sister, my twin sister.

**Jesse Thorn:** She worked too, right?

**Billy Dee Williams:** Yeah, she was working for—let's see. Well, at some point she ended up working for Bush Jewelry Store; she was the secretary. But she was working at the Lyceum Theatre in New York City, that's one of the major venues. And in New York, for Ben Boyer and Max Gordon who were like managers, you know—probably managers and producers. She was an elevator operator, but they also knew she was a secretary, so she graduated from an elevator operator. Those were the days when you manually ran the elevators.

And she graduated from that to being a secretary. But at that time she was—they were doing a production of (*inaudible*) musical with (*inaudible*), and they were called the *Firebrand of Florence*. It was based on the life of Benvenuto Cellini, who was a great Renaissance sculptor who was a bit of a scoundrel. And so, they were doing this musical, putting this musical together. And so, she took me down to audition for the role of the page boy. And they had me walk across stage one time, twice. And I was really smitten, I think, at that

moment. I wanted to do it the third time, and they said, “No, Billy, that’s okay.” You know. But I insisted, and I started crying. And I always say I cried my way into show business. (*Chuckles.*)

**Jesse Thorn:** I mean, I can imagine being excited, but you must have been—it must have been an overwhelming experience too. You know, not just crying cause you didn't get to do it again—

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—but crying because it's such a big thing to be walking out on stage by yourself when you're seven.

**Billy Dee Williams:** No, I loved it. As I recall, my memory of that moment was—it was something—I didn't know how to explain it. And I don't even know if I know how to explain it now, but it was very special. It was—I felt like... I guess I felt like I was meant to be there, you know, without really understanding it.

**Jesse Thorn:** But you didn't become an actor like when you were seven years old. You worked as an actor in this show when you were seven years old, but it's not like that led to your mom, you know, driving you to auditions to be on the *Colgate Radio Hour*. You went back to school like a normal kid.

**Billy Dee Williams:** Which was—I always felt like that was really important, to be a normal kid. Well, I did one audition for Burgess Meredith, I remember. And he had some lines he wanted me to say, and I didn't want to say the lines, so I didn't get the job.

(*They chuckle.*)

I realized they were offensive, you know. At that age, you know, a seven-year-old.

**Jesse Thorn:** That's a lot to have the guts to say no at that age.

**Billy Dee Williams:** Well, you know, I come from very proud people. We don't—as my grandmother used to say, I never had a bone in my tongue. So, I mean, I said exactly what I felt.

**Jesse Thorn:** You went to arts high school in New York. You and your sister both did.

**Billy Dee Williams:** Yeah, music and art high school. It's like performing arts. It was one of those very special schools like Bronx Science and, you know, venues—I mean, places like that.

**Jesse Thorn:** Did you think you were going to become a painter?

**Billy Dee Williams:** I didn't know what I was going to become, really. I just didn't know. I didn't know. You know. I was just busy chasing girls, like any little young person. I guess—yeah, I mean, I always had some feeling that my world was a world where I wanted to do something interesting with my life that involved the arts, painting, drawing. That was very much a part of my life.

**Jesse Thorn:** I mean, when you left high school, you got a pretty prestigious fine arts scholarship to go to college. I mean, it must have been reflective of some kind of ambition, because those things don't happen accidentally. You know what I mean?

**Billy Dee Williams:** Yeah, well, I mean I just enjoyed what I did, and people recognized what I did, and they encouraged me. And so, I pursued it, you know, without really knowing where it was going to lead. I mean, I had to do something with my life, you know. My sister was on her way to NYU, and I didn't want to go to a regular college. So, I got a scholarship to the National Academy of Design and Fine Arts, where I spent two years on a scholarship painting. That was more suitable for me, because it gave me a certain amount of freedom. I never really enjoyed being stuck in some institution, you know, like school. Even when I was studying acting, the whole idea of going to classes was... it was robbing me of my freedom. You know, I preferred being out in Central Park, taking a walk and row boating or doing something like that. You know, just sort of leading this kind of leisure kind of lifestyle. *(Laughs.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** I mean, the audience at home doesn't know this, but we're recording this at one o'clock in the afternoon. You're wearing a jewel green velvet evening jacket, so.

*(They laugh.)*

**Billy Dee Williams:** You know, I've had this jacket for 40 years. And I decided to put it on today. This is the first time I've put it on I think maybe—I don't know if I've ever worn it.

**Jesse Thorn:** You look like a million dollars.

**Billy Dee Williams:** *(Bashfully.)* Oh, well.

**Jesse Thorn:** You got it accessorized too. You got a pocket square that matches. You got sunglasses that match. You got a bracelet and a ring on your right hand that all compliment the jewel tones. You're not fooling around.

**Billy Dee Williams:** *(Laughs.)* I always say that I'm a canvas. You know.

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**Jesse Thorn:** You did end up doing some more formal acting training, but I wonder when you started to get into acting—and it was really a function of, you know, you were painting, and you needed work, and you started being an extra, 'cause you could get five bucks for it. And you started getting auditions and getting cast and stuff. Were you always able to access the kind of interior presence that is required to be a really great actor? That ability to just—

**Billy Dee Williams:** Well, I was a cutie pie (*inaudible*), you know, and I was adorable for a lot of people.

(*They laugh.*)

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, I'll stipulate to that. Absolutely! I've seen photographs. In fact, Billy, I'm going to tell you this: you're a cutie pie right now.

**Billy Dee Williams:** Oh, well, you're a sweetheart. Thank you. No, I mean, listen—you know, I was just—you know, I wanted to know what the world was about, and I just put myself into situations that I found interesting and valuable and just see where it all went.

**Jesse Thorn:** We have so much more to get into. Stay with us. 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. I'm talking with actor Billy Dee Williams.

You worked in some really major and significant stage productions at the beginning of your acting career, when you were in your early 20s. You then ended up having what we might now call a quarter life crisis. Your relationship with your first wife fell apart, and you weren't working a lot in the—I guess this would be the mid-60s. What was going on in your life at the time?

**Billy Dee Williams:** Well, I was gaining, you know, some recognition. And I thought that it was going to be relatively easy for me. But—only to find out that, you know, when you're living in a world that sees you in a certain kind of a way, and you're not necessarily a part of the mainstream, it's a bit of a disappointment. And you find yourself thinking, “Well, what do I do? How do I function within the confines of that kind of thinking?”

But when it comes to prejudice and discrimination and bigotry and things of that nature—I mean, you know, my grandmother was probably the biggest bigot that I've ever met in my life. I mean, it was the beginning of bigotry for me. She was from the West Indies, and she was a—used to sit around singing, “Rule Britannia, Britannia rule the waves. Brit and never, never shall be slaves.” And I used to look at her and think where did that come from? But she never became a citizen of the United States. She remained a Britisher, an Anglican, and she came from a very sort of upper crust people. I got great photos of her in Victorian outfits and stuff like that. But anyway, she was the first person that ever really introduced me to bigotry. I mean, she didn't like Americans, Black or White.

And so, you know, when all of these things were happening to me, as far as finding my way in the world of the theatre, I wasn't in shock. But I was... confused. But I was also a young man like most young men, you know, in search of myself and trying to find out where my life was going to go. I mean, I always kind of knew, I suppose. I knew, but I didn't know in a sense. I don't know how to explain it, really.

**Jesse Thorn:** How depressed did you get?

[00:15:00]

**Billy Dee Williams:** Well, I mean, I got to a point where, you know... I don't know. I mean, lots of things go on. You know, you think about, "If I'm not gonna succeed, there's no reason for me to hang around." But I was very... melodramatic as a boy growing up, really. Listen, I remember one time when I was staying at the academy, and I got sick, and I started losing weight. And I was intrigued with Modigliani, and he died when he was in his early 20s. And I thought, well, I'm dying. And I came to find out that all I had was a bad case of diarrhea. (*Laughs.*) But I went and did a self-portrait, you know, as a way of... memorializing myself.

**Jesse Thorn:** Is that the one that's in the book? That's a good picture.

**Billy Dee Williams:** Yeah, yeah. It's a nice little portrait.

**Jesse Thorn:** How did you get out of the depression that you were in and the sort of career mess that you were in the middle of the '60s?

**Billy Dee Williams:** Well, you know, I met a woman, Rachel Esrick, who—at a party. And that afternoon she turned me on to LSD.

**Jesse Thorn:** And when you say she turned you on to LSD, specifically, she said— (*chuckles*).

**Billy Dee Williams:** Well, she gave me a cup of tea. It was as simple as that.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, she said, "Sit tight for a minute," came back with two cups of tea.

**Billy Dee Williams:** Yeah, it was as simple as that.

**Jesse Thorn:** And pretty soon you were hallucinating.

**Billy Dee Williams:** But it was—in those years—I mean, we're talking about the '60s, you know. In those years, I mean, it wasn't—I guess LSD was on the map at that time, you know. I mean, the CIA and what's his name—

**Jesse Thorn:** Timothy Leary.

**Billy Dee Williams:** Timmy Leary, you know. And Rachel used to go up there to Leary's compound or home. But it was not—it didn't seem unusual, especially for somebody like me who is open to a lot of different things, experiences. But anyway, I mean, you know, I went to my friend, Carol's, gathering, and there were all of these ladies. And they were all gay, they were all lesbians, and I was the only guy there. And so, she introduced me to Rachel, and Rachel just sort of meandered over to me and just handed me a cup of tea. And all of a sudden I was like into another space. But that experience served to—because I wasn't just

getting high. I mean, you know, I was into a whole spiritual quest. You know, I was really looking for a spirituality, and that was my introduction to this world of Buddhism and Eastern philosophy and stuff of that nature. Ohmmm...

**Music:** “A Taste of Honey” from the album *Let’s Misbehave* by Billy Dee Williams.

*Cold winds may blow o’er the icy city*

*(Music continues under the dialogue.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** One of the things that I did not know about your career until I read your book was that you had a period where you were working as a singer in the Playboy Club. You cut a record. I listened to your record.

**Music:** “A Taste of Honey”

*A taste of honey*

*A taste much sweeter than wine*

*(Music fades out.)*

**Billy Dee Williams:** Well, when I did “A Taste of Honey”, that song was written for me. I was the first to ever sing that song when I did it on Broadway with Joanie Plowright and Angela Lansbury. The president from Prestige Label—Prestige is a jazz label—was starting a new series called The Lively Arts Series. He signed me, and he signed Hermione Baddeley, and (*inaudible*) one of the movie stars at that time.

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He was a little boy. McDowell? I forget his name. Anyway. He signed me. He asked me if I wanted to do an album. I said, okay, I do it! (*Chuckles.*) Yeah.

So, I started working with two friends of mine, George Cory and Douglass Cross, who wrote “I Left My Heart in San Francisco”. They were close friends of mine. So, George—they decided to make me into a chic Eastside nightclub singer, a chanteur. And at that time, I was really friendly with Herbert Jacoby, who owned the Blue Angel and the Bonsoir with Max Gordon, who had the Village Vanguard. But anyway, and I ended up doing a couple of nights at the Bonsoir or the Blue Angel. But yeah, I ended up doing, you know, an album called *Let’s Misbehave with Billy Dee Williams*.

**Music:** “Let’s Misbehave” from the album *Lets Misbehave* by Billy Dee Williams.

*You can have a great career, and you should*

*Only one thing stops you, dear—*

*You're too good*

*If you want a future, baby*

*Why don't you get a past?*

*'Cause that fatal moment's coming at last*

*We're all alone*

*No chaperone can get our number*

*The world's in slumber*

*Let's misbehave*

*(Music fades out.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** What could be a more classic adventure than getting offered a record contract and a gig at the Playboy Club and saying like, “Oh yeah, Dick Gregory's wrapping up his run? Yeah, sure. I'll get a band together. Let's go!” *(Laughs.)*

**Billy Dee Williams:** I just wanted to see where it was all gonna go, you know. And that was pretty much—it was just another adventure for me.

**Jesse Thorn:** We're going to take a break. When we come back, yeah, we're going to talk about *Star Wars*. Don't worry, we're going to talk about *Star Wars*. It's *Bullseye* from [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and NPR.

**Promo:**

*(Sci-fi beeping.)*

**Adam Prianca:** *The Greatest Generation* has been going on for more than eight years, and while it's the world's most beloved *Star Trek* podcast, we know it can be a little impenetrable.

**Benjamin Harrison:** If you've been *Greatest Gen* curious but have never taken the leap, you could be forgiven for being a little bit intimidated.

**Adam:** We recommend exploring your *Greatest Gen* curiosity in a safe, fun environment with partners you can trust. And right now is one of the best times ever to become a new listener.



**Benjamin:** That's because we just started covering a new series—*Star Trek Enterprise*, one of the weirdest editions of *Star Trek* ever released.

**Adam:** This is your chance to ease into the *Greatest Generation* lifestyle.

**Benjamin:** *The Greatest Generation*, now covering *Star Trek Enterprise*—the one with Scott Bakula—every Monday on MaximumFun.org or in your podcast app.

(*Sci-fi beeping.*)

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

**Jesse Thorn:** Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. I'm here with Billy Dee Williams. He's an actor with an 80-year resume. He's worked with Sidney Poitier, Diana Ross, and of course, in *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi* as Lando Calrissian. Let's get back into our conversation.

When I told my daughter that I was going to interview you today, she said, “Oh, who's that?”

And I said, “Oh, well, I mean, you might—you probably saw him as—he was Lando in the *Star Wars* movies.”

And she goes, “Oh, that's your favorite *Star Wars* guy.”

And I said, “That is my favorite *Star Wars* guy! Yes.”

(*Billy chuckles.*)

And I was thinking, well, why is Lando Calrissian my favorite character from *Star Wars*? And like, I really like *Star Wars*. I'm not a *Star Wars* nut, but I do really like *Star Wars*. And I thought, well, gosh—there's a lot of great performances in the *Star Wars* movies. And there's a lot of great aesthetics. There's a lot of beautiful stuff to look at in the *Star Wars* movies. But other than that which is enlivened by great performances, there's not a lot of character and character development in the *Star Wars* movies. It's mostly either good guys or bad guys, right? (*Chuckles.*)

**Billy Dee Williams:** It was all about good and evil, yeah.

**Jesse Thorn:** So, it's pretty straightforward. And for all of George Lucas's many gifts, maybe dialogue is a lesser one.

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But Lando Calrissian is a true—is a rich text, right? Like, Lando is the guy in the *Star Wars* movies who gets to live in between the good and the evil, who gets to be something that has its own enlivening force—not just an instrument of, good guys or bad guys. Or even just of—

**Billy Dee Williams:** Originally, that's why he was brought into that mix. Because George was getting so much flack about this big dark figure, Darth Vader—you know, this ominous figure—that he had to somehow correct it.

**Jesse Thorn:** That was played by the only Black actor in the movie.

**Billy Dee Williams:** Right. Because what he was thinking about, he was thinking about the old cowboy attitude. You know, the thing of the—

**Jesse Thorn:** Black hats and white hats, yeah.

**Billy Dee Williams:** Black hat and white hat, yeah. When I got the role, when they asked me to do it, and they told me his name—you know, Calrissian, Lando Calrissian—I said, “Hm, that's interesting.” I said, “That's an Armenian name. I don't know, let me see what I can do with that.”

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, space's number one Armenian, for sure.

**Billy Dee Williams:** And then when I got the cape, I said, “Oh, this is Errol Flynn time.” So, I just took those two ideas, and I just put it together and said, “Let me make something more than just the usual, stereotypical, cliché kind of character that everybody was looking to do.” I wanted to make him bigger than life, you know. To me, he was like Steve Wynn, you know, honing Las Vegas. You know, and all of a sudden he was confronted with all of this—with Darth Vader and Boba Fett. So—and how to make it interesting was a real interesting challenge for me. And I think I succeeded in doing that.

**Jesse Thorn:** Absolutely. And I'm gonna tell ya, as far as I'm concerned, you're America's number one cape actor. The cape—your cape work is tremendous.

*(They laugh.)*

**Billy Dee Williams:** I agree with you. It works every time.

**Jesse Thorn:** The cover of your book is one of the best cape photographs you'll ever see.

**Billy Dee Williams:** It's a great cover. Perfect cover.

**Jesse Thorn:** But I—you know, that quality of cape wearing. I mean, gosh, who else might wear a cape? Douglas Fairbanks or Douglas Fairbanks Jr. maybe, right? Like, you are—that cape and *Star Wars* in general lives in that world of classic American cinema, right? Like, *Star Wars* is in many ways a thing from the '30s or the '40s. It's—

**Billy Dee Williams:** Well, it's *Dogtanian*. It's—

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, it's like very specifically old, like it was very intentionally old fashioned. You know, there's a reason it's a long time ago in the past and not a long time in the future.

**Billy Dee Williams:** Very good.

**Jesse Thorn:** That it's this kind of—and it's that—

**Billy Dee Williams:** That's a good way to put it. Yeah.

**Jesse Thorn:** That happened to be the thing that you wanted to be the most as an entertainer.

**Billy Dee Williams:** Well, he transcends, you know. I mean, he transcends all of it. I mean, he's no longer in a part of the discussions and the arguments that we find ourselves mired in. I mean, he's way past all of that. He's in space, you know.

**Jesse Thorn:** And he has his own place where he makes his own rules. Even though he's burdened by these forces of good and evil—you know, he's trapped in between them, but he's the guy in *Star Wars* that has his own world.

**Billy Dee Williams:** Yeah. Well, you always need good and evil. I mean, it creates a lot of drama, melodrama. But yeah, he's—I said, “This is a great opportunity to do something that you would normally not see on screen.” Well, it's like, you know, with Colt 45.

**Transition:** A whooshing sound.

**Clip:**

**Music:** Upbeat, playful music.

**Narrator:** Billy Dee Williams talks about having a good time.

**Billy Dee Williams:** When it comes to having a good time, I've got it down to a science. First you get yourself into the right clothes. Then you get Colt 45. And make sure you've got enough for you and that someone special. And then you get yourself to a good time place. The rest is easy.

**Narrator:** The dynamite taste of Colt 45.

**Transition:** A whooshing sound.

**Billy Dee Williams:** I mean, even when I had my fragrance—you know, Undeniable by Billy Dee Williams—I wanted to create—

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You know, this was an opportunity to do something that nobody's ever seen before and make it work and have everybody enjoy it. Not just a segment, you know, but everybody.

**Jesse Thorn:** One of the little stories that I enjoyed most in the book was a story of you and James Baldwin hanging out and going—you taking him to your tailor—

**Billy Dee Williams:** Roland Meledandri.

**Jesse Thorn:** —who was famous for—I mean, he's not as well remembered as perhaps he should be now as a designer, but he was famous for being the mentor of Ralph Lauren. Ralph Lauren like worked in his shop and Meledandri was like the guy who really created a lot of what became the Ralph Lauren look with—you know, Ralph Lauren's career started with basically him being the guy that was willing to make wide neckties. And Meledandri was the guy who made the suits that went with the neckties, you know. (*Chuckles.*) And just the idea of you and one of the greatest personalities in American history—one of the most extraordinary public intellectuals and also just forces as a person. And you're like, “Let's get you fitted. Let's get you suited and booted.” (*Laughs.*)

**Billy Dee Williams:** And he had never experienced anything like that, so it was adorable to watch him enjoy that whole moment of being fitted for a couple of suits. I had such a ball and such a joy watching him enjoying that experience, which he'd never had before.

**Jesse Thorn:** What was it like for you to go—to like enter a room with him? ‘Cause he's a small dude and conspicuously gay. At the time that was a big deal, although it wasn't necessarily something that was talked about much in public, but very clear.

**Billy Dee Williams:** But his gay was acid.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, and he could—yeah, I mean, he had an extraordinary force. He could destroy anybody he wanted to.

**Billy Dee Williams:** For him it was like, “I know something that you don't know.” (*Laughs.*) You know, he was very clever.

**Jesse Thorn:** So, what was it like to just show up somewhere with him or show up somewhere where he was?

**Billy Dee Williams:** We were just good buddies, good friends. And he wanted me to play Malcolm X. So, that's—you know, and he was writing it for Columbia Pictures at the time. And I remember him having his problems with the executives over there. And he had no qualms about, you know, expressing his feelings to everybody. I used to have to say, “Jimmy, please, just—I got to work in this town.” (*Chuckles.*)

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, you're like, “I gotta get a next job. You can go back to being James Baldwin, but I gotta audition for another movie next.”

**Billy Dee Williams:** But I loved Jimmy. He was—we had a good time traveling together. Me, Jimmy, and his lover. And we had a good time.

**Jesse Thorn:** So, one of the reasons that you wrote this book is that you were in your mid-80s, and you wanted to do what a lot of people do, which is sort of—

**Billy Dee Williams:** A legacy. I started thinking, you know, maybe it's time to do the whole legacy thing.

**Jesse Thorn:** Did the process of writing the book lead you to think new ways about your past?

**Billy Dee Williams:** You know, I was writing a book for over 20 years, and I still want to do—it's a coffee table book, but it tells my story, my life and my interests through my paintings. It's going to be a fantastic book. You know, and it's almost done. I spent a long time on it. You know, transcribed tapes, bits and pieces of stuff that have been written over the years. I don't know, you know, for me... I'm like a little child. I'm a walking absurdity. And I like being a walking absurdity. It gives me a lot of places to go. So, I don't know if I really say to myself—

[00:35:00]

“Okay, well, how did I turn out? How did you turn out, Billy?” (*Chuckles.*)

**Jesse Thorn:** Even when you're on page 280 or whatever of writing a book about your own life, you don't think to yourself, “How did I turn out?”

**Billy Dee Williams:** Well, for that moment, yeah. For that moment, you know, when I'm in the middle of doing it. You know, all of a sudden you find yourself becoming a little bit philosophical here and a little this over here and a little bit of that over there. You know, and all of a sudden, you sound like somebody who's a person that really knows what the (*sensor beep*) he's talking—excuse me. (*Chuckles.*) You know, what the hell he's talking about, you know. And most of the time I have no clue.

**Jesse Thorn:** Well, I sure appreciate your time. Thank you so much for talking to me.

**Billy Dee Williams:** Well, thank you for having me!

**Jesse Thorn:** And thanks for the book. It's a great time. It's a great read.

**Billy Dee Williams:** Well, I appreciate that. Thank you so much.

**Jesse Thorn:** I'm glad that I got you to swear.

(*Billy laughs.*)

You promised me before we started that you don't really swear. (*Laughs.*)

**Billy Dee Williams:** Ah, yeah. You know, in my family—do you know nobody swore in my family? My father didn't swear. My mom never swore.

**Jesse Thorn:** Well, thank you so much. I really appreciate it.

**Billy Dee Williams:** Well, thank you.

**Jesse Thorn:** Billy Dee Williams, folks. His memoir is called *What Have We Here? Portraits of a Life*. It's in bookstores now. And I'm going to be honest with you, I didn't even get into 20% of the wild stories that are in this book. (*Chuckles.*) It is amazing.

**Transition:** Pleasant, upbeat synth.

**Jesse Thorn:** That's the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye* is created from the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California. Here in my home office in my backyard—well, I have this lamp that looks like bulrushes. The bulbs are the, you know, the seedy part of the bulrush, and I had to buy new bulbs. My mom had the same bulbs in that lamp since she moved to San Francisco from Washington DC in like 1979. So, RIP to those bulbs. Legendary light givers.

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. Thanks this week to Thomas and the gang at Studio City Sound in Studio City, California where we taped my conversation with Billy Dee Williams. If you are over 80, we are willing to come to you. That is the *Bullseye* promise. 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. Thanks to their label, Memphis Industries.

*Bullseye* is on Instagram. We have pictures from behind the scenes and videos and more. Find us there, [@BullseyeWithJesseThorn](#). You can also find me on Instagram, [@JesseThornVeryFamous](#). 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.*)