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

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

Music: “Eve of Destruction” by Eve from the album *Bulworth: The Soundtrack*.

Jesse Thorn: It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. I'd like to play a song for you.

Music: “Eve of Destruction”.

I wonder who, which one a dem a carry news

An' a gwan like set, they wan dis-dis ya crew

But the lie, other emcees dem ready die

When we grab the microphone and praise his like Selassie

Me say me walk like walk like a champion, talk like a champion

Emcees try fi test but dem no ready fi di outcome

Guard your windows, close your doors

Dig that? My verbal skills should be against the laws

You wit that?

(Music fades out.)

Jesse Thorn: That song is called “Eve of Destruction”. It’s from the soundtrack of the 1998 Warren Beatty film *Bulworth*. That soundtrack was produced entirely by Dr. Dre. It is the first, and as far as I know, only collaboration between Dre and Warren Beatty.

On the microphone there is Eve. At the time, she still called herself Eve of Destruction. She's my guest today, a West Philly rapper whose sound helped define early 2000s rap. But fame wasn't an overnight thing for Eve. She started rapping in high school. She was mostly a battle rapper hitting ciphers around Philadelphia. She was good—very, very good. And eventually she got to audition for Dre. He signed her to his label, Aftermath. She got a few features, but she never actually put out a solo record. Time went by, eventually she got dropped.

So, it was back to square one for Eve. No record deal, no plan. That is, until she got a call to record a verse on a song for another act from Philly: The Roots. She helped make that group's biggest hit.

Music: “You Got Me” from the album *Things Fall Apart* by The Roots.

What club I went to with my homies

Baby, don't worry, you know that you got me

Yo, I'm the type that's always catching a flight (Uh-huh)

And sometimes I got to be out at the height of the night

And that's when she flip and get on some old "Another lonely night?"

Seem like I'm on the side, you only loving your mic

(Music fades out.)

Jesse Thorn: That's Eve on The Roots' “You Got Me”. That song went on to win a Grammy. But Eve didn't get to share in that glory. When the track first dropped, she wasn't even credited. Some even thought that the other guest vocalist, Erykah Badu, was the one rapping. It was another close call with fame and another miss. But the third time's the charm, right?

Not long after “You Got Me” dropped, Eve got an offer to join one of the biggest rap collectives of the early 2000s.

Music: “Ruff Ryders' Anthem” by DMX.

Stop, drop, shut 'em down, open up shop

Oh, no, that's how Ruff Ryders roll

Stop, drop

(Music fades out.)

Jesse Thorn: That's right. Rev up that quad. It's Ruff Ryders, baby. It was the crew that launched the careers of DMX, Swiss Beats, and—finally—Eve. She made three gold and platinum albums for Ruff Ryders. Eve has a book out, a memoir, about hip-hop, acting, motherhood, and mental health. The title is *Who's That Girl?*, just like her iconic single.

Music: “Who’s That Girl?” from the album *Scorpion* by Eve.

Got mine, took it from you, and now you slot mine

Exec to my own—, dawg, I'm owning dot-coms

Who's that girl? (C'mon, c'mon)

Eve's that girl (Uh, yo, yo, yo)

Who's that girl? (Huh? Uh, uh)

(Music fades out.)

Jesse Thorn: Eve, welcome to *Bullseye*. I'm so happy to have you on the show. It's so meet you.

Eve: Thank you! Nice to meet you as well. Thank you for having me.

Jesse Thorn: How long have you lived in London? You're talking to me from London.

Eve: I know, it's crazy. I have been here over 10 years now, which is weird. Every time I say it, it's weird. But I love it.

Jesse Thorn: Do you notice yourself sort of combining dropping Rs at the end of words because you're from Philly and dropping Rs at the end of words because you've lived in London for 10 years?

(They chuckle.)

Eve: Yeah. No, you know what? Not that so much as I definitely have picked up some words. Like, sometimes it's just easier to say queue or rubbish or jumper. It's just easier. *(Laughs.)* So, now I say it, and sometimes if I'm talking to my friends back home—if I go back to Philly, it comes out. And people are like, “Oh girl, uh-uh. What’d you just say?!”

You know, I get teased about it now. So, yeah.

(They laugh.)

Jesse Thorn: What are the things that you, from West Philly in Germantown, have to explain about yourself to rich British people that you hang out with?

Eve: *(Laughs.)* That's a good question. I don't know, really.

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I mean, I definitely get questions about hip-hop. I do feel like it is a skill that British people have that they can literally make—they can make a subject out of anything and make it a conversation. So, I have definitely been asked some interesting things. Just more so about hip-hop than Philly per se, I guess.

Jesse Thorn: What does that mean? Like, do you know—like, people asking you, “Do you know Tupac?”

Eve: Oh, I've had that. Or if I know certain other people. I remember one time I went—I had to take one of my bonus kids, Jagger, to a dance, because her dad couldn't, and her mom was out of town or something. And this woman came up to me and literally was like, “(Gasps.) You're the rapper! You're the rapper, yes. Honey, come here—” talking to her husband. And her husband came over and she's like, “He listens to Tupac all the time. Don't you, honey? Tell her about it. Tell her.”

And I was like my life's a sitcom. My life is a sitcom. I am in the middle of *Notting Hill* right now at a dance. Like, what is my life? And this was yeeears before—like, this was before my kid, my baby and all that. I was still doing like club shows. So, going to like a kid's dance was insane to me already. But yeah, I mean, I have—and you know, it's funny, because I have some friends who may have known me from my music, obviously before. And now some of them have seen me perform, and they just are like—because I kind of take off the superhero suit, because I call my stage persona my superhero. When they see me kind of just hanging out—if I'm at their house, I'm playing with my kid, they're like, “Who are you?! (Laughs.) Like, how do you just do that? How do you just put that on?”

And I'm like, “That's just my job.” That's just who I am; it's always who I've been. So, I think sometimes that can freak them out a little bit.

Jesse Thorn: I just watched the Sam Raimi *Spider-Man* with my kid. And there's this scene after he gets bit by the spider and before he goes in the—does the professional wrestling cage match, where he's sewing together his Spider-Man suit. And I wonder like did you always have that suit, or did you have to sew it together?

Eve: That's a good question. I've never been asked in that way. That's such a good question. I think I needed to sew it together. I think when I started, I always had this energy. I had the energy, but I think I didn't know how I wanted to show up. So, yeah, I think I kind of had to piece it together and sew it together. Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: When you started rapping, were you rapping in talent shows? Were you rapping in ciphers on the street corner? Where—? Were you banging on lunch tables?

Eve: Yeah, I was doing—banging on like lunch tables, ciphers on this corner, and any talent show that would take me. So, I was basically doing all the things. I was a battle rapper. I am—that's where I come from. And battle rapping is basically just cursing people out and showing your skills and you know, how lyrically—especially because I was a girl, and most

of the people I used to battle rap against were guys. So, I was always obsessed with like my lyrics have to be good, because I don't want to just be “good for a girl”. That was always an obsession of mine. Like, don't tell me I'm good for a girl. I just want to be good.

So, I did everything. I literally did everything. Because also I knew I wanted to pursue it, or pursue music as a career. So, yeah, I literally did everything.

Jesse Thorn: My picture of Philly rap at the time when coming up—like, I'm talking about post Jazzy Jeff era, is just super hard street dudes just insulting a camcorder.

(They laugh.)

Just like a camcorder—there were these street DVDs—

Eve: I love it. *(Laughing.)* That's so true!

Jesse Thorn: And it was just like these dudes hanging out, just going at this lens.

Eve: Yeah. No, but that's basically—yeah, that is the cipher. I mean, a cipher is—I don't know—six people, maybe more. I don't think more than six usually; six to eight in a circle, and you are basically just going at it. So, yeah, I remember that when it started being filmed, and it was like assault the camera, assault the camera. And that was—yeah, that's basically how I rapped. You know, going back to the whole kind of putting the superhero cape together or superhero costume together, I had to learn how to properly rap into a microphone. Because I was so used to screaming and being aggressive. *(Laughs.)* Like, that's okay on a street corner, but it's not cute on stage—

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—when people want to hear the song that they're used to hearing a certain way, and you are swallowing the mic. Sorry, that sounds crazy, but—

(They laugh.)

Jesse Thorn: Rappers on stage are all about taking an SM58, the sort of standard stage mic that people imagine, and holding it by the silver part—the ball at the end—like they're gonna punch it, and then it's going up into the air. Like they're gonna punch a butterfly out of the sky.

Eve: *(Cackles.)* I love these descriptions! But it's so true. I mean, listen, I think—you know, back then there was no sound guy. If there was a sound guy, he was like, *(disappointed)* “Man.” Because there's nothing you can do. You can't make anybody sound good when they're holding the mic like that. Yeah, you had to learn. It was something you had to learn.

You know, I had to learn how to write songs. I had to learn how to actually write verses, hooks. Because you just wrote bars. As a battle rapper, you had 24 bars. That's it. There is no

hook. There's no melody. (*Laughs.*) You know, it's just attitude and—what they say now—aura.

Jesse Thorn: When you were in the cipher, how often was there another girl or woman there?

Eve: Never. I was usually the only girl. So, like in Philly, I started becoming the, “Oh, do you know Eve? That girl with the blonde hair that knows how to rap?” That was like my whole name, for years. And then I actually—I mean, there was something. You know, there'd be one or two, but every Blue Moon. And then I, in high school—I'd always been in like little groups, but in high school I had a group called Egypt. And so, she and I would do these battles after a while together at lunch. And that used to be fun, because it was like the tag team.

And we literally—like, when I say we battled, we battled even the Jamaican guys. We battled the dance hall guys in Patois. Okay? Like, I was serious about my battling! (*Laughs.*)

Jesse Thorn: More still to come with Eve, stay with us. It's *Bullseye* from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

Transition: Chiming synth with a syncopated beat.

Jesse Thorn: Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest is the rapper and actor Eve. She's responsible for some of the biggest rap tracks of the early 2000s. Songs like “Let Me Blow Your Mind”, “Satisfaction”, and “Tambourine”. She just released a memoir called *Who's That Girl?*. It's out now. Let's get back into our conversation.

One of the things that I felt from the kind of world that you came up in as an outsider, as a West coaster, is that there is this kind of like unique situation in Philly in the '90s, which is—in terms of hip-hop—which is you are shouting distance from New York city, the birth of hip-hop. It is, you know, every bit as real a town as New York City is. You know. Philly can be very real. But also its own world, right? So, like that world of, you know, battle rap on the street was very much a Philly thing.

Eve: Definitely.

Jesse Thorn: You know, there was some versions of it in New York, but it was like the real Philly thing. And so, there was this sort of generation of these really intense Philly rappers who had up in this world that was like—had access to New York, but was not New York. You know what I mean?

Eve: Yeah. And New York—to be honest, a lot of New Yorkers didn't really respect Philly hip-hop. And that is the truth. You know, I remember I used to go up there to try to be taken seriously at the high school, and people were like, “Oh, you sound country,” and all kinds—And I'm like, “I'm an hour and 45 minutes away from y'all! I do not sound country at all!”

You know, it took a while. But then, you know, Philly has always had its own heartbeat, sound, culture, when it comes to music all around—R&B, and soul, and funk, and everything. And I also think that a lot of... where there is this whole battle rap culture of Philly that I think was slightly more respected—like, the Roots vibe of Philly for some reason was slightly more respected than the battle rap side. Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: Black Thought of the Roots was your first sort of rap crush, right?

Eve: Yeah! Yeah, he was. He was and still is. I mean, I have to say Black Thought is literally—man, he's another GOAT. You know, there's not many people who can go up against Black Thought, you know. To this day. I've known him since I was 14, probably 13.

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I was going to their concerts, Roots concerts in Philly. Yeah, he's just one of the greats. Definitely. Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: Do you remember seeing their videos on *Rap City* or whatever? Like—

Eve: Oh my god, *Rap City*!

Jesse Thorn: Like, “What They Do” comes on or something, and you're like, “Oh, that's—” You know, in a way that maybe Will Smith doesn't feel like that. Like, that's the people from my home.

Eve: No, it's funny though, because for me—because I think I personally knew the Roots, like—well, once I got to know them, I would go to their concerts and hang out at the studio, even if it was in the background. I kind of knew people that knew them, so I kind of was almost connected to them. With Will Smith, it was like, I had no—no one knew—(*chuckles*). You know, I had no one in my life who knew him, but it was still the same type of proud. You know? Like, whoa, like Will Smith is this superstar who's gone off to Hollywood and like lives this life, this bigger life.

But for me like I wanted to be there, but with The Roots, it just felt a little more attainable, a little more—(*chuckles*) I mean, for lack of a better word, it was like—it just felt more rooted to me. (*Laughs.*) Root?

Like, cause it was just there. They were more in my grasp, I guess. But proud of both. I mean, I used to lie and say that Will Smith was my cousin. I used to tell people all the time that Will Smith was my cousin. Did not know that man. I did not meet Will Smith ‘til I was like—man, I might've been 27 or something.

Jesse Thorn: When you signed your first record deal, it was with Aftermath and Dr. Dre. How did you get that deal?

Eve: So, I—at the ripe old age of 17—decided that I was done with rap. Because I had been doing all the talent shows and everything and had made this promise to myself, if I got to 17 and I wasn't signed, then it must not be meant for me.

(They chuckle.)

And in this time—I know.

Jesse Thorn: That's a teenager's vision of the world!

Eve: I know, it's so ridiculous! Ridiculous. And so, at this time, one of my really good friends was going to NYU. And I said to her like, “Hey, I think I want to come start taking some classes. Can you send me some info?” I'd already kind of made up my mind that this is what was maybe going to happen.

And I gotten a phone call from another friend just like, “Hey, you still rapping, right?” And I'm like, yeah. She was like, “Look, such-and-such wants to get your number.” I knew these guys. They were like neighborhood kind of drug dealer/in the music business, guys. But they had real connections.

And so, one of them—they called me. She gave them my number; they called me. And he was like—the guy was like, “Hey, we got Dre's right-hand man in town. I need you to come audition for him. Like, I know he's gonna love hearing you.”

And I was like, “No, I'm cool.”

And he's like, “No, I'm telling you need to do it.”

So, I did it. I was like, okay, whatever, why not? I didn't get excited about it. And we go to this house. And the guy puts the music on, and I start rapping out of nowhere. And Dre's right-hand man, whose name's Mike Lynn, was just like, “What the hell is happening right now?” ‘Cause he thought I was there to sell him some weed. And I wasn't. *(Laughs.)* And he was just like—and I was like, they quickly kind of was like, “Listen, no, you need to hear her. She doesn't have any weed, but I'm telling you, you're going to love her.” And he let me finish.

Jesse Thorn: Wait, did they think that, because they had promised that? Like—? *(Laughing.)*

Eve: Yes. They promised. Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: “We're gonna get this girl over here to—” And then they pulled the switcheroo on the guy from Aftermath?

Eve: Yeah. And pulled out a radio and a cassette tape and put on some music. And he was just like, “What is happening? I do not understand why the weed girl is rapping in my face right now. Like, this is crazy.”

So, yeah, but they convinced him to let me continue. And after I finished, he called Dre right there and was like, “Hey, I think we found our girl.” And I was literally flown out to LA. I think—I don't know, it might've been a Tuesday or Wednesday. I was flown out to LA on a Friday to do a demo for Dre. Met him on the Sunday.

And he was like, “Yeah, we wanna sign you.”

Music: “Eve of Destruction”.

You think you can capitalize on lies; surprise, open your eyes

Baby girl from Illadel here to enhance your lives

Doubted my skills, bet you mad now; should've snatched me up

I'm in LA now with Dre now, ain't coming back 'cause I'm stuck

Had enough of all the bull of selling me dreams

Had enough of fake cats trying to shine off these schemes

But I'm laughing last, down to get this cash with the Aftermath

You happy being local superstar showing your—

It's how you politicking moves and

I crept to the top, shouldn't've let me catch you snoozing

Me and my management team, laughing at you while we cruising

Cause we ain't got nothing to do none of the choices you be choosing

[00:20:00]

It's the eve of destruction, tracks I be—

Cats be fascinated by the styles I be busting

Got you— open, got you— lusting

(Music fades out.)

Jesse Thorn: My mind is blown every time I hear one of these hip-hop how I got signed stories. Like, I think it's probably different these days, 'cause people get signed off a song that goes viral. But I mean, you weren't in a position to turn down a record deal from Dr. Dre and Aftermath. But when you got out to LA—you know, you got the setup. You know, you had an advance, you had an apartment. But then as now, Dr. Dre was not known for his productivity.

Like, there have been a lot of, you know... we're still waiting on the Bishop Lamont record. But like, we're also—you know, like I interviewed Rakim about what it was like to sign to—this is the greatest rapper of all time.

Eve: Of all time!

Jesse Thorn: To sign to Aftermath and then just be around and be like, “Hey, can we, uh, make an album?”

Eve: Literally. Yeah. Yeah, I definitely experienced that. And I was so annoying. (*Laughs.*) I was so annoying, because I would just pop up to studios and be like, “Yo, is it my turn? Like, what's up? You got me out here in LA.” Like, I was so feisty Philly, like that feisty Philly girl. (*Chuckling.*) And he definitely didn't like that, which is definitely why I got dropped. But yeah, you know, I think back—when I think about—(*sighs*). I think was at that time probably better with artists that kind of came fully formed in a way. Whereas for me, I did need the A&Ring. I did need the artist—you know, well artist development. I did need that. And—

Jesse Thorn: Well, you were 18 years old or whatever.

Eve: Yeah, exactly, exactly. Literally just. And I tell people like for me—I mean, listen, I definitely wasn't ready. I'm happy I didn't—I'm happy nothing sparked then. I'm very happy. I would not be sitting here, talking to you right now if I had come out at that time fully. If I had come out as Eve of Destruction and—you know, my career would have been over.

Jesse Thorn: What was it like when you—well, first of all, did you get a call? Did you get called into somebody's office to say we're dropping you?

Eve: It was—no. Well, yes, not into an office. I got—it was just the call. It was the call and possibly—was it a lunch? And it was kind of one of those things where like, you know, oh, you're gonna go home. Like, I gotta go back home? I gotta go back to my mom's house? That money that I had in the bank? I had a bank account! Like, I had a bank account. I'd never had a bank account before. That was so depressing, because we also had a going away party.

Jesse Thorn: Like, they set you up with a bank account.

Eve: They set me up! Full bank account, two-bedroom condo,

Jesse Thorn: They were like, “You're going to need a bank account to cash this check.”

Eve: Literally! I mean, I was bawling. Like, it was literally—I was like, wow, I've made it. Of course. You know, I was like, I've made it.

And to be humbled and literally have to go back home after I had this big going away party was a very horrible... experience. But I needed it. I needed it. I'm happy I had it. I am. In hindsight, of course.

Jesse Thorn: You must've been a mess then.

Eve: Yeah, it was bad. It took me—I didn't want to come outside. I didn't want to—like, I was like, “How do I get places? How am I back home when I got to get on the—? I can't get on the bus again.” Like, I was like, “I gotta get—how do I get on public transportation after everybody knows that I've been in LA. I was signed to Dre.” Like, it was embarrassing. It was embarrassing. It was very—I was very sad.

And I think that—it only lasted, though, for about a month. I'm not quite sure. It didn't last that long. But then I did get another phone call from my management. And it was Jimmy Iovine's idea to have me be signed to Ruff Ryders. Or at least go meet them to see if we would mesh. And I went up to Yonkers and had to rap for my life in that battle. And I got signed.

Music: “What Ya Want?” from the album *Ryde or Die, Vol. 1* by the Ruff Ryders.

Rubia huh? Papi screaming out of they mouth

Bombshell, just a second mami, wanna speak out

What I need in my life, make your body freak out

Baby seem like the type, married—sneak out

Like, I'm balling y'all—yes, I be appalling y'all

[00:25:00]

Type hold it down, wanting all of y'all

Callin y'all, never chasing me down

Three weeks, heartbroken—yes, you hating me now

She speaks, soft spoken, 'til she dating the clown

I'm taking 'em down, reel 'em in and making 'em drown

Mistake, I said gimme, bet; I'm takin it now

What I need from a— negative in his sound

Au-dacity, even, asking me for—

I laugh, this— is fast and free

Swatting em off, when I see this— a flea

Plotting of course for riches, millionaire wannabe

Uh-huh

(Music fades out.)

Jesse Thorn: Was it like, “There’s that girl,” or “There’s that girl that got dropped”?

Eve: No, it was like, “There’s that girl.” Only because I think there was the brief thing from Jimmy in the beginning of like—'cause they know, at the very least they knew I was signed. Okay, she must be good enough to be signed. If Dre signed her then, all right.

And at that time, because they were looking for a girl—I mean, it made tons of sense. I was on the East Coast as well, you know? So, I think they were genuinely interested. And I'm sure X probably put in a good word, because he had heard my music as well. He heard me rap. So, that helped, definitely.

Jesse Thorn: That all—where in all of this did you record your verse on the Roots record, “You Got Me”, that turned out to be a huge hit?

Eve: Yeah, that—so, it's weird. It's like this weird timing of like I recorded while like in between signings in a way. *(Chuckles.)* I was dropped, so I was like, “Oh, she's not really signed, so we can hurry up and get her on this record.” I was a free agent.

But when the song came—like when it was about to come out, I had just gotten signed to Ruff Ryders. Like, just. But at the same time, no one cared. Because it's like there's no track record for me. *(Chuckles.)* There's no—you know, nobody essentially knows who I am. And of course, they had Erykah Badu on the track, so it's like—it doesn't matter. So, I never got any recognition for that song.

Music: “You Got Me”.

While politicking with my sister from New York City

She said she know this ball player, and he think I'm pretty

Psych, I'm playing, boo, you know it's just with you, I'm staying, boo

And when cats be popping game, I don't hear what they saying, boo

When you out there in the world, I'm still your girl

With all my classes, I don't have the time for life's thrills

So when you sweating on stage, think of me when you rhyme

And don't be listening to your homies...

(Music fades out.)

Jesse Thorn: It's a song with a really complicated history. For folks who don't remember or don't know the song, the hook was originally written and performed by Jill Scott, who at the time was not famous yet. The label had The Roots replace her with Erykah Badu. And I think a lot of folks presumed—because you weren't credited on the track—that that was Erykah Badu rapping.

I remember on rap message—I mean I was on The Roots' rap message board.

Eve: Love.

Jesse Thorn: So, I remember who it was. But like that was like Questlove posting about, “Oh, and we got this rapper named Eve to do the verse.” But then the record came out, and your name isn't on it.

Eve: No name, not in the video. It's funny, because it's one of those things where now it's like a joke in a way of like—you know, because we see each other; we hug each other, and it's fine. It's fine, but—*(laughs)*.

Jesse Thorn: Well, because they won a Grammy, and you weren't onstage. You know?

Eve: They won a Grammy; I wasn't on stage. And you know like—yeah, Black Thought wrote a lot of that verse, but I definitely took out things and made it mine and like whatever. And also it's my voice. *(Laughs.)* So, regardless of anything.

But I think, you know, it's just one of the—listen, it's one of those record label, music industry—I won't say record label—music industry things that has happened many, many times before where there's a singer on a track that like never gets any recognition. And you know, like I said, I didn't have a track record at that time. So, for them—you know, and I get it. For a record label or for whoever—'cause it could've—it might not have even been them. It could've been the execs that were like, “Bro, nobody knows her. Like, it's fine. Don't worry about it.”

It just so happened to be, though, after that song came out—I think a few months, there's like some—a few months after that is when my name started popping a little bit because I was in the Ruff Ryders; I was the new girl in the Ruff Ryders. And we had started doing, you know, songs together or shows together, and people were like, “Oh, okay.” But yeah, it's all good.

Jesse Thorn: What was the record that you remember being on where you felt like, “Oh, people know who I am now”?

Eve: Ummm, probably the Ruff Ryders—like, “Ruff Ryders’ Anthem Remix”.

[00:30:00]

Music: “Ruff Ryders’ Anthem (Remix)” from the album *DJ Clue: This is It Part 2* by Ruff Ryders.

... caramel, heavy spender

Groupies be saying I'm they sister, hush your mouth 'fore I hit ya

Sickening wise guys, fake thugs

Take you for a ride, cover up your eyes, then I get you

Used to be shier, now I'm a Ruff Ryder

Play me close when they used to ride by her

Snatching up your figures...

(Music fades out.)

Eve: That’s the verse for me that I remember vividly writing in the truck and recording and then hearing it on like Hot97 and was like, “Yo!” And then hearing it the whole summer. Like, I remember that was the record that summer. And you know going on stage and doing that verse, it was like, oh, okay. People are definitely checking for me, wanting to know who I am. Which—excuse me. Which is why I wind up—because there were a few of us artists, up and coming artists, on that record. And the way that Ruff Ryders did things was kind of to let the public pick the next person.

And it just seemed as though people were like, “Yo, we need to hear more from Eve.” So, yeah. It was like, okay, we got to hurry up and do this album now. That's when I knew like, okay, this is serious. We got to get this album done.

In two months, I think we had to do it. So.

Jesse Thorn: I mean, that's like a genuinely iconic record. You know what I mean? That's like being on *The Simpsons* or something.

Eve: It's so good. It's still one of my favorites. Like, I love it. When I hear those drums, like beat?! Ugh! It's so good. It's so good.

Jesse Thorn: I loved reading in your book that you had—that your first two CDs were also the first two CDs of everyone that attended my alma mater, UC Santa Cruz.

(She cackles.)

Which is to say *Nevermind* by Nirvana and Bob Marley's *Legend*.

Eve: Yeah, man! Those were my first two CDs.

Jesse Thorn: I'm basing that on the sounds on the quad. But—

Eve: Those were my first two CDs. Yeah, because I had my cassettes. I had my dance hall. My dance hall was all my cassettes. But my CDs, I was like—my mom was like, “You get two.” And I was like, alright, well, these are the two I want.

Jesse Thorn: But I wasn't surprised, having read that, that it was idea to put Gwen Stefani on your record. I think at the time that was—I mean, I was surprised by it. And I also assumed this must be like a weird label triangulation. That they want, you know, Gwen Stefani to appear to appeal to an urban market, and they want Eve to go pop. But it was actually you asking for it.

Eve: Yeah. And that was—they totally were like, “What are you talking about? That's never gonna work. People won't believe it.” Not that it so much won't work as a song, it was more the belief of it.

And I was just like, “Why not? What do you mean? Like—” And I think I do say this in the book, that I just felt like she was like me. Like, she was around a bunch of dudes all the time, and she wants to play! Like, wanna go hang out with another girl and go just have some fun. And I had always been a No Doubt fan. I loved No Doubt. And I just thought she was dope. And I was like, “She's on the label. We could ask. She might even say no. And if she does it, and we don't like the song, no one ever has to hear it.”

But of course, once the song was done—and of course, Dre on the beat—it's hard to say no. *(Laughs.)* So, yeah. That song is like still one of my favorites of all time. Even for me to perform, it's like one of my favorite songs ever.

Music: “Let Me Blow Ya Mind” from the album *Scorpion* by Eve.

Yo, yo, Drop your glasses, shake your—

Face screwed up like you having hot flashes

Which one? Pick one, this one, classic

Red from blonde, yeah, I'm drastic

Why this, why that, lips stop asking

Listen to me, baby, relax and start passing

Expressway, hair back, weaving through the traffic

This one strong, should be labeled as a hazard

Some of y'all hot—psych, I'm gassing

Clowns, I spot 'em, and I can't stop laughing

Easy come, easy go, E-V gon' be lasting

Jealousy, let it go, results could be tragic

Some of y'all ain't writing well, too concerned with fashion

None of you ain't Giselle, catwalk and imagine

A lot of y'all Hollywood, drama, casted

Cut, camera off, real—, blast it

If I had to give you more, it's only been a year

(Music fades out.)

Jesse Thorn: But you didn't meet her until the video, right?

Eve: Yeah, we didn't meet until literally the video. We talked on the phone. And I said to Gwen like, "Oh, you can change the hook. Like, you can change the lyrics or whatever."

And she was like, "No, no, I love it. Like, it's perfect. I want to keep it."

And I just thought that was so dope. Because to me—obviously, also she had been in the business before me. So, I kind of was just like, oh, that's cool that she thinks like my lyrics are dope!

[00:35:00]

And respectful. Like, I thought that was just so respectful. 'Cause she is a songwriter. So, I kind of—now I look at it in a way of like she's such a great—she is a really great songwriter. So, you know, that's why she didn't want to change it up. But yeah, we didn't meet until the video set, and it was a looong shoot. But it was fun. We actually had fun. It was such a fun shoot. Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: We're going to take a quick break. When we return, Eve struggled with panic attacks early on in her rap career. She'll get into how she learned what they were and how she deals with them. It's *Bullseye* from [MaximumFun.org](https://www.maximumfun.org) and NPR.

Promo:

Music: Sophisticated electronic harpsichord.

Travis McElroy: Hello, Internet. I'm your husband host, Travis McElroy.

Teresa McElroy: And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy. And this is a promo for *Schmanners*. It's extraordinary etiquette—

Travis: —for ordinary occasions. Every week, we're going to tell you about a bit of culture, a bit of history, how etiquette still applies in the modern day. All that stuff!

Teresa: We also love to do biographies and histories of, and—you know, general procedurals: how to do etiquette in today's society.

Travis: So, come check it out every Friday on [MaximumFun.org](https://www.maximumfun.org) or wherever you find your podcasts.

Teresa: Manners, schmanners, get it?

(Music ends.)

Transition: Thumpy synth with light vocalizations.

Jesse Thorn: It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. I'm talking with the rapper and actor Eve. She just released a memoir called *Who's That Girl?*

You started having panic attacks earlier in your career.

Eve: Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: Had you had them as a kid or as a teenager?

Eve: No, never. Ever, ever, ever. I mean, I was probably always a high-strung kid. (*Laughs.*) I'm a high-strung person. Like, I am very like bleh! But I'd never had any pressure like I had being in the business. You know, being a kid—like, I never had that. But I also didn't drink and smoke weed the way that I did when I was in the business. (*Laughs.*) You know, I did, actually. When I was young, I smoked, and I drank. But have to go do anything. I didn't have to be on stage or do an interview or show up to something.

Like, I also wasn't—(*sighs*) yeah, I didn't have to make decisions. There was so much—I wasn't as exhausted. I'd never felt that level of exhaustion before. And then you just get up, smoke, drink again. And you're like—yeah, walking through a haze.

Jesse Thorn: One of the things I read in your book that hit me was, you know, you're going out on your first big tour—big Ruff Ryders tour, I think. And you're gonna bring your pals from back home. And like, that's a common story, right? Like, you're freaked out; you want some people that you know. Whatever, right? Everybody gets a job, also, is a common story. And you know, open question as to whether anyone does it.

But like, the thing that struck me was not that. It was—you were like, “I felt like I needed to prove that was still Eve from Philly.” Still nothing unusual about that. You said—and the next part is, “—who could party all night.” And so, like you've got your people with you. They don't have to go to work the next day.

Eve: No.

Jesse Thorn: They just need to sleep on the bus.

Eve: Literally. All—until we get to the next venue. That's all they're doing. Meanwhile, I had to speak to accountants, lawyers, styling. Like, not even styling, actually. Like, just—you know, just all those elements of things that—makeup. Like, all that stuff that you have to do that I was like, “Of course, I can do it. Of course I can do both!” And you just can't. You just honestly cannot, and I just burnt out.

Jesse Thorn: And perform.

Eve: And perform. Like, literally I was exhausted in a way—it was so crazy. I remember one time I had a meeting with my accountant. And I don't know where we were, but they came to see me, and he was just like, “You look skinny.” He was like, “Are you good?!”

I'm like, “I'm good! I'm good. I'm chilling. I'm good.” Like, you know. But I remember sometimes being so—it started then. 'Cause I remember there were times on the tour where I'd be nervous. I'd have this nervousness, then I'm like—I hit the wall. I hit the wall, and it was terrible. It was so terrible. I was so sad.

[00:40:00]

But I was also so tired and so like broken in a way of like my friends started telling me I changed. I thought that was fake. You hear that stuff. Like, “You watch; your friends are gonna—they're gonna tell you changed or they're not gonna recognize—or you're not gonna recognize them in a way.”

And I was like, (*click teeth*) whatever, these are my people. Like—and it happens. It happens. And that, psychologically, is insane as well, when you're that young. And you think you all have this dream together. So, you think you owe them something. And to start seeing them in a new light, but in a light of like, “Dang, I think they hate me now. I think they hate me now!” It was too much. It was a lot.

Jesse Thorn: You can never deliver whatever it is that exists in the imagination of people who aren't you. You know?

Eve: Never.

Jesse Thorn: You're just never going to be able to do that, whatever it is.

Eve: No. Never. It was a big life lesson of the friendship breakup, of also understanding that most people just aren't meant to be on your journey. And (*sighs*) everybody's not supposed to be on your journey. That's the biggest takeaway I think I got from that. It just is what it is.

Jesse Thorn: You still struggled with drinking though, right?

Eve: Yeah, definitely. Drinking for me became just that thing that I did, but then I just continued to kind of drink, because that's just what everybody did. So, that was always—I think the drinking thing was a constant for me through career. Like, though different parts of my life it got worse or—and sometimes it was okay. As I got older, I learned how to kind of be like, alright, I need a break a little bit. But then when went in, I went in. You know? Like, yeah. And to the point where I just didn't realize—I didn't even know what sober was for like probably a few years.

Jesse Thorn: At some point you had to be sober.

Eve: Yeah, I mean, I was really one of those people that was like—if I knew I had to work, I was really good at being like, “Bro, I got to work tomorrow,” or “I have two days of this, and I need to be good in my head.” Like, and then I would drink after work. You know, after the work was done. Yeah, like I never would show up to a gig—to this day, I never drink—I don't drink before I write a song. I don't drink before the stage. And even when in my worst times, I wouldn't do that. I would not. I felt like that was like sacrilege. You cannot do that.

Jesse Thorn: What did you want from the going out after you were done working?

Eve: I realize now through healing and therapy and also just allowing myself to kind of be and admit some things to myself—was not just the anxiety. I'm a very sensitive person. I think most artists are, but I don't think—these are words that no one talked about. Or no one talks about mental health or anxiety or, you know, anything like that.

But beyond that. It was that weird feeling of being alone. I didn't know who to talk to about it. And I had had moments in my life where I had gone to people—and crying—or trying to have that conversation of like, “Yo, I'm really feeling crazy. Or I'm really feeling—”

And people being like, “Nah, you'll be alright. Nah, you'll be all right. You'll be—”

You know, no one really taking it as serious. So, then I'm like, “Well, maybe I'm tripping.” But I definitely was feeling... I was just feeling a lot. I was just feeling confused. I mean, you know, when I got dropped from—eventually. I was with Interscope through Ruff Ryders, but that ended as well, and that was deflating. There's just a lot of life moments, I think, that I just wasn't equipped to talk about, understand. I just felt really lonely.

Jesse Thorn: I've been thinking about a lot—as a man in my 40s—you know, what hip-hop means as a grown up. Right? When you're a hitmaker—when you're a pop hitmaker, and you get dropped from your label, and you're like, “Oh, I guess I'm a grown up in my mid-30s. I have to figure out what my life is.”

Eve: Literally.

Jesse Thorn: “What my career is, and who I am. Because I've just been on this train.”

Eve: Yep. And that's weird. It's a lot. It is a lot. Because you're not prepared. You're not—you don't think it's gonna end anyway. Because it is—like you said, you're on the train. It's moving so fast.

[00:45:00]

And then when it stops, it stops in almost like a violent way of like—pff, reality. You know? And that gets crazy. And sometimes it's easier to go party, and go to the club you've been to 100 times, because everybody knows you anyway. You get straight through. You're gonna sit in your favorite spot. You just—you know, it's super unhealthy, but it also makes you feel like you're still in it, in a way. You know what I mean?

And that's why I am so—it's why I am the way I am now. And I've said this before, but I don't take the office home with me. I just don't. Because when that part of you becomes your only identity, it's not healthy. It's not good. You have to have a different perspective of yourself as a whole person, beyond the music, beyond the fame. I think that's important.

Jesse Thorn: Well, Eve, I sure appreciate your time. Thanks for taking the time to talk to me.

Eve: No, for sure. Thank you. Thank you for having me.

Jesse Thorn: Eve, her new memoir, *Who's That Girl?*, is out now. Head to your local bookstore. Pick up a copy.

Transition: Bright, chiming synth.

Jesse Thorn: That's the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye* is created from the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California. Although, I just got back from San Diego, where I went to the world-famous San Diego Zoo. And on the way back, I remembered to sit on the correct side of Amtrak's Pacific Surf Liner—which is the west side. Because then you get to watch the sun go down on the ocean. It's just the best.

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. Our video producer, Daniel Speer. Special thanks to the crew at London Broadcast Studios for recording our interview with Eve. We get booking help from Mara Davis. Our music is by DJW, also known as Dan Wally. Our theme song is “Huddle Formation”, written and recorded by the band The Go! Team. Thanks to The Go! Team, thanks to their label, Memphis Industries Records.

Bullseye is on Instagram. You can find us at [@BullseyeWithJesseThorn](#). And on YouTube, we have full video of our interviews. So, go there, check them out, share them. They're only getting better. Search for *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn*. Smash those like and subscribe buttons. You know how it works. 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.)