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(ADVERTISEMENT)

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

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

Music: “Huddle Formation” from the album *Thunder, Lightning, Strike* by The Go! Team—a fast, upbeat, peppy song. Music plays as Jesse speaks, then fades out.

Jesse Thorn: It's *Bullseye*, I'm Jesse Thorn.

(*Music fades in.*)

It used to be that in hip-hop, every place had a sound. There's a Bay Area sound, Chicago, Houston, New York, of course. You didn't usually need to read a rapper's Wikipedia page to figure out where they grew up.

Music: “Ultimate” from the album *32 Zel/Planet Shrooms* by Denzel Curry.

I am the one, don't weigh a ton

Don't need a gun to get respect up on the street (Okay)

Under the sun, the bastard son

Will pop the Glock to feed himself and family (Sheesh)

(*Music fades out.*)

Jesse Thorn: But my guest, Denzel Curry, was born and raised in Miami. And his music doesn't necessarily sound like Miami. You might hear a little bit of the influence of, you know, Trick Daddy or Pitbull or whatever every now and then. But you're just as likely to hear him pull from Waka Flocka Flame or Outkast or Three 6 Mafia.

Now, admittedly, Denzel Curry's a young guy. He grew up with basically every song ever at his fingertips. He's always been able to email a verse to somebody 5,000 miles away if he wants to. And so, he has a reputation as a SoundCloud rapper, a guy whose home isn't so much the neighborhood he grew up in as the website where he posts his music.

So, Denzel Curry isn't the next Uncle Luke, but he also isn't the next anyone else.

Here's a song from *King of the Mischievous South*. His latest album, it's called "Got Me Geeked".

Music: "Got Me Geeked" from the album *King of the Mischievous South* by Denzel Curry.

I'm leaving this club less sober (Ayy)

Got a Keke and my soda (Ayy)

Got a Keke on my shoulders (Yeah)

Said she need me, I don't want her geeked, geeked

Dollars on her (Yeah), gotta throw some more dollars on her (Yeah)

Gotta leave at three in the morning (Yeah)

She said, "Take me out to Florida," geeked, geeked

Every time there's money 'round, that — got me geeked, geeked

Every time she scrub the ground, that — got me geeked, geeked

Every time there's money 'round, that — got me geeked, geeked

Make that, make that go 'round and 'round, that bitch got me geeked, geeked

If you ever gave her your number, she won't call you...

(Music fades out.)

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

Denzel Curry: I'm glad to be here on *Bullseye*. What's going on?

Jesse Thorn: Well, I'll tell you—this new tape is a big change from the last record. So, you put out an album that was—you know, you had Robert Glasper on your record, the legendary jazz pianist. (*Chuckles.*) You had Saul Williams on the last album.

(*Denzel confirms.*)

This one feels like you just having a good time. Is that fair?

Denzel Curry: Yeah. It's very fair to say that. Yeah. 'Cause when I was making this project, I was working on another project at the same time. So, when I was making this one, it was supposed to be just like some side thing, just in case I didn't get the first album that I was initially working on made, I would just have this just to hold fans over until, you know, I could get the main album made.

And then it kind of just took a life of its own. And you know, here we are right now talking about the album.

Jesse Thorn: It really is a great time. Do you like writing a party record?

Denzel Curry: I mean, writing a party record? I mean, half of that was written, half of that was freestyle. But it was just me just like going back to what I usually used to do, back when I was like a teenager and stuff like that, and just kind of adding the stuff that I acquired over the years. Like, the techniques and vocal performances and different type of beats and type of sounds, and like trying to update them from over the years.

So, when I was making the record, I wasn't thinking about it as a party record. I was just thinking of something that was just like, okay, let me just try to make something simple and something that's just like—you know, cool. You know?

Jesse Thorn: Can we talk about that distinction between writing and freestyling? Different people mean different stuff when they say freestyling. What do you mean?

Denzel Curry: Okay, when I mean freestyle, I don't mean like, "Oh, I'm freestyling and all of that is like—" I mean, it's all off the head, but you know, there's no difference between like saying it from your mind and then putting it on a pad, because it comes from your mind. So.

Jesse Thorn: You're not talking about purely, just like straight off the dome, like you were supernatural or—?

Denzel Curry: Mm-mm, mm-mm. Not straight off the dome. And you'll hear some mess ups, if you hear that. It's just like more so of like I think, of a line and then instead of just writing it on paper and then to rehearse it, I'm just putting it straight to the mic. You know?

As opposed to when you're writing it, you can tell when you're reading it, and then you got to do it a few more times, and stuff like that. Because like it doesn't sound natural yet, because you're just now writing it, and it just—that's what it is. Until you kind of get the rhythm, and

sometimes you got to like listen to it, and sometimes the stuff that you wrote is not that good. Even some of the stuff that's freestyle is not that good.

So, you go back in, and sometimes you gotta fix whatever you freestyled, or make a whole new verse, or—you know what I'm saying?—make a whole new verse for what you actually written.

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So, either way it goes, like it's still—it's kind of a similar process; it's just two different approaches to it.

Jesse Thorn: Does it help you with your flow as well?

Denzel Curry: Oh, flow wise? You know, flow wise—it's just mainly I mumble first. Probably like mumble a few things, and like if I find a flow pattern that I like, I will try to figure out the lyrics to that flow pattern and write it down, and then like try to build around it.

Or I'll try to think of the hook first, and if the hook doesn't sound that good, then I'll try to like, you know, either make another song or try to fix the whole song in general.

Jesse Thorn: When you say you're mumbling, I mean, you're like finding a cadence before you're finding the words that you're plugging into it?

Denzel Curry: I mean, yeah. Well, am I trying to find the words while I'm mumbling is what you're asking?

Jesse Thorn: No, or some of—I'm just trying to—for people that don't know about hip-hop, what you're describing is kind of finding the rhythm of the words and then finding the words for the rhythm.

Denzel Curry: Right, right. So, I would say in that sense—like, for an example, I remember what I did on—I was freestyling, and I was just coming out with some stuff. I was like, (*scatting in rhythmic patterns*). That's how it starts off. Right? And then when I write the lyrics to what I just did, the (*repeats the beat*) it'll turn into this. (*Matching the beat.*) “This is the wrath of Aquarius. I be the black metal terrorist. Ain't no comparison.”

Music: “ULT” from the album *Imperial* by Denzel Curry.

Humanitarian, — I'm a veteran

Better than anyone comprehend

Snake in the grass, cut the copperhead

Hollow tips point at a copper head

Drop a head, popping the Glock 'til the copper dead

But Bishop killed Radames

That is the biggest hypocrisy

I don't see nobody stopping me (Uh-huh)

Bro, your whole life is a mockery

Denzel Curry: That's how it will come off when I actually write the lyrics to it. But initially, the mumbles and like, you know, scattin' to myself, that's how it starts off.

Jesse Thorn: What's something that you could do as an emcee now that you couldn't do 10 years ago or 12 years ago?

Denzel Curry: An example is like the sharper lyricism and like slowing things down. Because all of my stuff is like fast-paced. Or, you know, I'm rapping really fast. Actually, I take that back. I'm sorry. Songs like "Got Me Geeked". I wasn't able to do that before. You know, like singing and putting certain rhythm patterns in together. And you get certain examples like "This Life" or "Clout Cobain" or—you know, and that type of stuff. But never in a sense where the subject matter matched whatever I was doing. It would always be some off-the-wall subject matter.

So, now I'm starting to really hone in, and that comes from experience with that. So, years ago, I was just trying to rap from—I was rapping from experience, but I didn't have too many experiences. And then when I finally started having those experiences, now that was something I acquired to put into the music. And that's what I didn't have before.

Jesse Thorn: Do you keep a notebook? Do you keep notes on your phone?

Denzel Curry: Notes on my phone. I'm the type of person to plan everything, even if those plans don't see the light of day until two years or three years later—or five years later. Like, I just keep them there, because you never know when it's going to be utilized. You know? It's kind of like a failsafe. I just like planning stuff.

Jesse Thorn: What plans do you have in there right now?

Denzel Curry: I mean, I plan different albums. *(Laughs.)* You know, comic book stuff. Like, I'll keep all my own art in separate folders. So, I separate each folder into its own thing. So, I have a music folder. I have an art folder. I have—like, just for no reason, I have a comedy folder. *(Chuckles.)* Just if I think of something funny or something clever, I just put in there.

Sometimes I have just a note where I just think of like random things to say that may sound clever or like a punchline or something, you know, that I probably could utilize later.

Yeah. Even clothing. And even when it comes down to like—just other ventures. I keep them all in different notes. Even self-improvement notes, where I could self-improve myself.

Jesse Thorn: What's in the self-improvement notes these days?

Denzel Curry: Can't tell you that. That's for me. Like, Jesse, that is for me. Like, everybody has their own thing. So, I keep that just so I could be in check, and I gotta, you know, check in periodically on that. See how I'm doing and where I was. And that's where I'm at with it.

Jesse Thorn: What's in your comedy folder?

Denzel Curry: My comedy folder? Oh, I just wrote a bit. Just a little bit, because I've been going to the Comedy Store a lot, out here in LA. So, they have this thing called Roast Battle that I go to. And you know, they'll have like, you know, comics as judges. And you know, sometimes I'll be a guest judge.

And I did it like, I think like four, maybe five times. Four to six weeks in a row. And I finally got one of my cousins to do it. He's also an artist. His name is Smino. And my other cousin is getting into comedy, so I kind of just fell back, and I was like, okay, I got this guy. Alright, cool.

But in my comedy folder, I was just writing a bit, because I wanted to try my hand at comedy. And me and my cousin always talked about like doing something or doing a show together or doing like something like that.

Jesse Thorn: So much more to get into with Denzel Curry. We'll be back after the break. It's *Bullseye*, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

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Transition: Thumpy synth with light vocalizations.

Jesse Thorn: It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. I'm talking with rapper Denzel Curry. His new album, *King of the Mischievous South*, is out now.

Tell me a little bit about your growing up. Which family members were around when you were a kid?

Denzel Curry: My mother, my father, and the majority of my brothers. They was all there. A lot of my cousins, both of my grandmothers, my grandparents. One of my grandmothers had a boyfriend. His name is Sleepy. And he was just like—he felt like he was my actual

grandfather. You know what I'm saying? Even though I knew who my actual grandfather was, Sleepy felt more like my grandfather than my actual grandfather.

Jesse Thorn: Denzel, honestly, if I just met a man on the street, and he told me his name was Sleepy, he would feel more like my actual grandfather than my actual grandfather.

(Denzel laughs.)

Just the mere fact that he's named Sleepy is enough for me. *(Chuckles.)*

Denzel Curry: Yeah, nah, he taught us how to fish. He used to play the piano. He was a good dude, you know. And that was my mother's mother's boyfriend. So, those were the main people that was around, like besides my friends and people I grew up with.

Jesse Thorn: How many of those were in your actual house?

Denzel Curry: Well, my mother, my father, my brother Treon, who passed away, my brother Moot. Man, and then we had my godbrother who lived with us for a few years.

Jesse Thorn: Tell me a little bit about the part of Florida that you grew up in.

Denzel Curry: Well, I grew up in Carroll City. Carol City is like the last part of Dade County before you get into Broward County, and the first part of Dade County, when you enter Dade County. It's right by the stadium where the Dolphins play.

And growing up, it was—you know, I'm saying?—it was not a super rural area, but it was it was—as I grew up, it became more rural as people started to move in. People started to move out. And like, we had our fair share of just messed up things happening in KaratCity, but at the end of the day like my upbringing was pretty simple. Like, playing manhunt, you know what I'm saying? Playing with kids on the block, fighting, playing football. Yeah, it was crazy growing up in KaratCity.

Jesse Thorn: I've only been to Miami one time, but I went somewhere on the bus, and I just remember getting off the bus. And it was like—I'm in Miami, right? Like, I had been in some touristy part of Miami where my hotel was. I take this bus out to buy a shirt, and I get off the bus, and I'm like, “Oh, here goes a rooster eating a dead dog.”

Denzel Curry: Oh yeah. Yeah. You're going to see that.

Jesse Thorn: I was like, this was fast!

(They chuckle.)

Like, *(snaps)* it changed quick!

Denzel Curry: It was like a 180.

Jesse Thorn: And it wasn't just—and I mean, like I don't mean to suggest that what changed was that it got like—you know, that it got like super hood, super fast. But just like the character of the place changed completely. It was still a city, but I felt like I was in the Caribbean.

Denzel Curry: Yeah, I mean—well, you technically was in the Caribbean, technically was.

(Jesse agrees.)

Because you have a lot of Dominicans, Haitians, Jamaicans, Bahamians, Puerto Ricans, Venezuelans. All of us living—Trinidadians. All of us living in one place. You know?

Jesse Thorn: Your family's Bahamian, right?

Denzel Curry: Yeah. From the Bahamas. Yep.

Jesse Thorn: So, what did that mean to you when you were a kid?

Denzel Curry: Well, I mean, to me—you know, we're just Bahamian descent. Like, my great grandfather came off the boat to Vidalia, Georgia. And then all his kids dispersed, which was my grandfather and everybody else. So, what that means to me is just like, you know, I was still—yeah, I'm born in Miami, but I was born in America. If you think about it, I'm still African American. You know what I'm saying?

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It's just like, being from Miami, you have a different type of pride. Like, when you're in front of 305, you rep the 305, no questions asked. You know? That's like—and wherever you go, you just take it with you. You just take that Dade County energy with you.

That's what I feel like. You know, just me being, you know, Bahamian and everything? It's like, okay, it's more than that. You know, I just feel like I'm Bahamian, yes, but I feel more so like somebody from Miami. Like, I rep Miami. That's what it is.

Jesse Thorn: As an old man—I mean, I associate music in Miami with bass music and, you know, like real heavy party music. You know, Trina and Uncle Luke and etcetera, etcetera.

Did you grow up with that music, or was it more the kind of next generation?

Denzel Curry: Oh, what? Yeah, I grew up on Trina, Trick Daddy, Rick Ross, Flo Rida—early Flo Rida. Pitbull, early Pitbull. Grew up on all that Death Slot, Piccolo, Ice Berg, Ball Greezy. And I'm gonna just throw this out there, you know, shout out to the new people. I mean, not new people, but shout out to Ace Hood as well. He was the first person from Broward that was representing Broward at the time. And then if it wasn't for people like him, you know, you wouldn't probably have people like Kodak Black coming out, you know?

Jesse Thorn: There's a big step between your style as an emcee. I mean, like obviously the aesthetics of the beats are different; it's 25 years later. But there's a big difference between your style as an emcee and, you know, at least that generation from 20 years ago. Those, you know, Trick and Trina and so on and so forth.

I can only imagine that you must have been taking in music from other places as well.

Denzel Curry: Yeah, definitely. I took from a lot of places, because a lot of the music I grew up on was—it was different than what I was like listening to. So, the first album I ever bought was a Lupe Fiasco album. And the style of rap that I liked the most was New York rap. Nas was my favorite rapper next to Lupe, actually—if we being honest, you know.

And then when it came down to beats and production and like albums that I like thoroughly enjoyed besides them, you had Kanye West; you had Pharrell Williams when he was doing the ICECREAM, Neptunes and all that stuff. And like, when it came down to just pure rap, Big L, Children of the Corn, Jay-Z—who else? I used to listen to RA the Rugged Man, and Killah Priest, and Timbo King.

(Jesse laughs with delight.)

And then—I know. I know it sounds crazy.

Jesse Thorn: I support it! RA the Rugged Man, go on *Bullseye*.

Denzel Curry: Yeah, that was music I was listening to as a kid, 'cause I would find it through the internet. And then, you know, just spending a lot of time at my cousin's house. He put me on to a lot of stuff. He put me on to Wiz Khalifa, and he put me on to Lil B the Based God. And I remember hearing that, and then next thing you know, I'm listening to iFuture, and I'm yelling out “*(censor beep)* radio”.

Next thing you know, I meet this guy named Mike Dece, and he was telling me about A\$AP Rocky. And then he shows me SpaceGhostPurrp, and then I found out Purrp was from Carol City, the same place I was from. Because we knew a mutual person that got killed down the street from the park, and that was his best friend.

And that was crazy, because that's what started my whole trajectory into music.

Jesse Thorn: And you were just a teenager, right?

Denzel Curry: Yeah, I was 16.

Jesse Thorn: That's young to have any idea of who you are. You know what I mean?

Denzel Curry: Yeah, I mean, I got kicked out of art school, and that was like the last thing. I was like, “You know what? Let me give this *(censor beep)* a shot, you know?”

Jesse Thorn: What got you kicked out of art school?

Denzel Curry: Well, usually I tell people I don't know. But now I know. So, *(laughs)* they acquitted to—they credited the bad grades and whatever the case may be, and that I wasn't a fit for the school anymore, and that I would do well at my home school in order for me to graduate or whatever the case may be.

So, I'm like—you know, I accept it and stuff like that. My parents swear that, “Oh, you just was over that school, just down in third.”

I was like, “No, they kicked me out.” I was over that school? I tried to go back. I tried to reapply. And I didn't. They just sent me to this other art school that was across the street from them. And they wouldn't take me. And then there was another school that I applied for called AM Art School, where I did an art test and whatever. That school doesn't even exist anymore!

So, I ended up going back to my home school. But here's the thing, you know, about the school I got kicked out of—which is Designer Architecture Senior High. They kicked me out. They kicked out a girl I knew named Toni, and they kicked out my friend at the time—this dude named Deron. And they kept one kid. I'm not going to name his name, because he was always cool with me. They kept this one kid, they flunked him, but they kept him because of his art.

And I'm just like, “Oh, I see what this is. You could have just flunked me and could have kept me for the art.” But then again, I didn't want to be known for being held back a grade.

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That makes me feel like an idiot. You know? The one thing they didn't count on was me being—you know what I'm saying?—like, getting to this level where I could talk about it, and it backfires on them, you know?

So, yeah, I just acquitted. They was just like, “No, he'll do that at his homeschool. We don't want him here.” This, that, and third, that. And I was just like—there was nothing I could do. They already made their mind up. And then there was a couple of teachers that fought for me to stay there because of my FCAT writing score. I got a six out of six.

And they was just trying to pass me off as some dumb kid, and I wasn't dumb at all. I just got ADHD. I got focus problems, but I'm not stupid!

Jesse Thorn: Did you know that when you were that age?

Denzel Curry: I did not know that at the time. I know that as an adult, that I have ADHD.

Jesse Thorn: Did you wonder if you were stupid?

Denzel Curry: I mean, the way it was—like, you know, it got to a point where my mom was worried that I wouldn't graduate.

She was like, “I was kind of scared a little bit.”

And I was like, “Damn, you were scared that I wouldn't graduate? I'm not dumb! You know? I just have focus problems.”

And it just made me want to go forward into like proving that I wasn't dumb, that I knew what my worth was already. And then when all that happened, next thing you know, I'm rapping. Next thing you know, I meet Mike Dece. Next thing you know, I meet Purrp. And then after that, like the rest was history. Ended up joining Raider Klan, dropped the fire mixtape—the first one. And then continued dropping tapes.

And then eventually, my 12th year of high school, my first song blew up. Which was “Threatz”.

Music: “Threatz” from the album *Nostalgic 64* by Denzel Curry.

Klan be the set, we don't take kindly to threats

We don't take kindly to threats

S.S. be the set, we don't take kindly to threats

We don't take kindly to threats

Klan be the set, we don't take kindly to threats

We don't take kindly to threats

S.S. be the set, we don't take kindly to threats

Nah, we don't take kindly to threats

(Music fades out.)

Denzel Curry: Everybody at Harris City High at the time, they knew me from rapping at the table. And I remember I showed one class—I showed this one dude. He was like, “What you watching?”

I was like, “Man, I'm watching this, um—my video, my music video.”

And honestly, if I'm being totally honest, he was like, “Man, let me hear that!” He wanted to hear it just so he could laugh at me, just to see if I wasn't like good. He was like, “Man, what the (*sensor beep*) you got to talk about?”

And then I see his face facial expressions change from trying to laugh to not laughing at all and was like, “Whoa, whoa! Hold up, hold up! Hey! Hold up. Nah, nah, nah. Run that (*sensor beep*) back.

Music: “Threatz” by Denzel Curry.

... in an underwater tank

'Cause — die right now, bullet or a — shank

Always tryna be the hardest in the fucking paint

Never take kind to the threats

I be off for your neck 'for you reach for the TEC

(Music fades out.)

Denzel Curry: And then it got on MTV *RapFix*. And I remember this girl named Raquisha. And she was known for being popular amongst everybody, and she knew me as well. So, I was like, “Hey yo, I need you to share this on your Twitter.”

And she was like, “I got you.”

And I was like, “Share this on your Twitter, ‘cause I know everybody's gonna see it if you shared it.”

Come back, it was like, boom. The whole school knew.

Jesse Thorn: How old were you when your folks broke up?

Denzel Curry: Funny enough, it was right around the time when I got kicked out of art school. So, I was like 16.

Jesse Thorn: That's a lot to have happen at once.

Denzel Curry: Yeah, my mom ended up moving to Miramar. She wasn't too far from the house, but she ended up moving to Miramar, because—you know, her and my father wasn't seeing eye to eye. And she gave me a choice. She was like, “Yo, you could either come with me, and live with me, or you could stay here with your father.”

I chose to stay with my father, because I'm already—I got kicked out of school. I got to go back to my home school. I didn't feel like going all the way to Broward and taking all my stuff. I'm not doing all that. You know?

Jesse Thorn: That's still a big change in your life though, at that point.

Denzel Curry: Yeah, it was a crazy change, actually. It was—I didn't think that would happen at that age, you know. Didn't think that would happen at all. At least, not at that moment. Could have happened at any time. Could have been after I graduated, maybe. You know, my mom wasn't having it. So, she was like, “I had to go.” So, that's what it was.

And the crazy thing is they are still best friends to this day. My mom and my dad are still best friends. Like, I was just with both of them at the house. Like, they hang out; they still date, which is weird as (*sensor beep*). ‘Cause they're like—it's like, what the (*sensor beep*) I go through all that for? (*Laughs.*) You know? I'm like, I'm suing y'all.

Jesse Thorn: We'll finish up my conversation with Denzel Curry after a quick break. When we return, what gets Denzel Curry's blood boiling? What really irks him? Is it sucker emcees? Bad traffic? Soup served cold? Wrong. It's when *Magic the Gathering* players play land destroyer decks. You will get a taste of his passion on this subject in just a moment on *Bullseye* from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

[00:25:00]

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Promo:

Music: Funky, upbeat banjo music.

Dan McCoy: *The Flop House* is a podcast where we watch a bad movie, and then we talk about it.

Elliott Kalan: Robert Shaw in *Jaws*, and they're trying to figure out how to get rid of the ghoulies. And he scratches his nails and goes, “I'll get you, ghoulie.”

Dan: He's just standing above the toilet with a harpoon. No, I was just looking forward to you going through the other ways in which *Wild Wild West* is historically inaccurate.

Stuart Wellington: You know how much movies cost nowadays?! When you add in your popped corn, and your bagel bites, and your cheese fritters.

Elliott: Sure. You can't go wrong with a Henry Cavill mustache. Here at Henry Cavill Mustaches, the only supplier!

(They laugh.)

Narrator: *The Flop House*. New episodes every Saturday. Find it at MaximumFun.org.

(Music fades out.)

Transition: Thumpy synth with light vocalizations.

Jesse Thorn: It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest is rapper Denzel Curry.

Can I ask how old you were when your brother was killed?

Denzel Curry: I was—it was fresh out of high school. I was 19. I just turned 19, and I buried my grandmother at that age. And I was just like, you know—got to say goodbye to my grandma. So, I was like, alright, I'm up to that age where I'm like, alright, yeah. I could deal with things like that.

And then boom, my brother dies. Like, probably like a couple of weeks later.

Jesse Thorn: When you were 19, your life must have already been moving pretty fast with your career and stuff. Must have been hard to sit with those huge changes in your family life—losing your grandmother and your brother—when the train was rolling down the tracks. You know what I mean?

Denzel Curry: Mm-hm. So, it was like three deaths that happened in my family at one time. So, that was a hard time for our family. Like, it was a hard time for my brother. It was a hard time for my mom and everything like that. So.

Jesse Thorn: Was it strange to be having career success that I'm sure you never anticipated at the same time as you and your family were going through like pretty much the darkest stuff they could possibly be going through?

Denzel Curry: Yeah, it was very hard, because I like didn't have time to grieve. I have to bury my brother. I have to go on tour right after that, because the tour happened in March, and we had to bury him in March, because he died at the end of February.

And then also dealing with leaving Raider Klan and having potential problems with the leader of Raider Klan, SpaceGhostPurrp. And he's attacking me on the front. Didn't even come to the funeral! But want to attack me for leaving the group. Which is crazy as (*cancel beep*) if you really think about it. And dealing with like working through it.

And I never dealt with any of this. It was like the first time the world hit me all at once.

Jesse Thorn: How did you deal with it?

Denzel Curry: I didn't deal with it immediately. I was becoming very angry as I kept going, and I kept becoming more and more angry, and more and more angry, and more and more angry. And in 2019, I had a breaking point where it was just—a lot of stuff was just stacked, and I was just working through it. And then, boom. Like, it hit me like a ton of bricks that I just wanted to self-delete a little bit, you know? So.

And my girl ended up finding therapy for me, and I started going to go and see her. And then at first I was like, “I don't want to do this (*cancel beep*).” And I'm just thinking like, “Okay, I just got everything out. That's it.” But no, it was like a lot of things I had to work through in order for me to just understand.

And I'm just like, yo, I'm going to deal with this for the rest of my life. Right? But I'm getting the tools to know what to do. At least, like I could be cognizant of the choices I make. You know? And understand like some things are just out of my control. And some things that are in my control, I could deal with.

But that was a very hard journey. That's why when you hear the first few albums I've done—after *Nostalgic*, it was very dark and aggressive and angry. And I was dealing with a lot of things at once.

Music: “THE BLACKEST BALLOON | THE 13LACKEZT 13ALLOON” from the album *TA1300* by Denzel Curry.

Ooh, ooh, feel like a horror movie

Ooh, ooh, why my brother calling to me?

Ooh, ooh, acting like I never knew me

Ooh, ooh, put that on my brother Mookie

Ooh, ooh, feel like a horror movie

Ooh, ooh, why my brother calling to me?

Ooh, ooh, acting like I never knew me

Ooh, ooh, put that on my brother Mookie

Put that on the gang...

(Music fades out.)

Jesse Thorn: What's an example of a tool you learned?

Denzel Curry: An example of a tool is just like taking note of your feelings, taking note of my breathing.

[00:30:00]

You know what I'm saying? And just like being mindful, which I was not doing. I was not very empathetic on anything in certain situations. I didn't have those tools at that moment. I thought therapy was for crazy people. And I was like, "Man, I'm not crazy!" But I realized it's not crazy at all just to go, you know?

And the tools that I learned is just like mindfulness and like understanding, taking account of your feelings, and then understanding how to apologize, understanding how to know your choices and know what's in your control, and doing your best to like kind of figure that out.

But yeah. That's what I learned in therapy and just understanding like be present. You know, if you keep thinking about what happened—whatever happened already happened, and then if you look at the future, it only brings you anxiety. And to be honest with you, I didn't feel anxiety until I got famous.

Jesse Thorn: Do you think there's a particular part about fame that has led to that?

Denzel Curry: Yeah, everybody want to be in your business! I don't like people in my business like that, and I've realized I don't like people in my business like that. But people will still go out their way to (*sensor beep*) with you and try to learn your personal business.

You know? And I don't like that kind of I don't like that kind of (*sensor beep*). Like, bro, focus on you. Don't worry about what I'm doing. I'm doing me. I'm doing Denzel. That's all I

need to do. You need to focus on yourself. Don't try to be all in my business. Like, why you need to be in all my business for? You know?

Jesse Thorn: I can understand that. Sorry for being up in your business, by the way.
(*Chuckles.*)

Denzel Curry: Yeah. You know, it's your job to be up in my business. But at the same time, just like if I'm not telling you what's going on, don't try to snoop around to figure it out.

Jesse Thorn: Well, speaking of everybody being up in your business, before we started talking, you were talking to somebody on the phone about playing *Magic* cards. You a big *Magic* card player?

Denzel Curry: You play *Magic the Gathering*?

Jesse Thorn: I haven't since middle school.

Denzel Curry: Oh man!

Jesse Thorn: I mean, I did in middle—it was new when I was in middle school. It was the hot thing when I was in middle school.

Denzel Curry: I literally just started playing and my homie, Kashan, and another friend of mine named Zilla, they were talking about it like crazy. They was like, “Yo, *Magic the Gathering*, *Magic the Gathering*, *Magic the Gathering*.”

So, I'm like, man, what is this game? Like, what are they playing? I thought it was *Yu-Gi-Oh!* at first. And funny enough, I remember these guys was playing *Magic the Gathering* at a comic book/card shop, right? And we thought it was *Yu-Gi-Oh!!*

And it was like, “Oh, y'all playing *Yu-Gi-Oh!?*” And they kind of just brushed us off. Like, they gave us the stankest look. And I was just like, “(Censor beep) y'all!” I'm just like, “I don't like y'all anyway!”

And then when I finally get into the game, and I got my cousin into the game, right? Like, we're both like getting somewhat good at playing *Magic*. And then somebody came in and was like, “What y'all playing? Y'all playing *Yu-Gi-Oh!?*”

Psht! We're like, “Dude, this is *Magic*.”

(*Jesse laughs.*)

And then I was like, “Oh my god! This is a full-circle moment! Those nerds were mad because we called it *Yu-Gi-Oh!!* And I was like, ohhh, I see why they were so mad. We have become those nerds!

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, Denzel, you may be a nerd. I'm not—

Denzel Curry: I am a nerd.

Jesse Thorn: What kind of deck do you play?

Denzel Curry: Oh man, all colors. Slivers. And then, you know—no, I'm gonna just say right now, now that we're on it. There's this dude named Josh. He has a destroy your lands and destroy your creature deck. I don't like that (*cursor beep*)!

(*Jesse laughs.*)

So, I'm letting you know right now. Every time we play *Magic*, and he decided to play, we jumping him!

Jesse Thorn: (*Chuckling.*) Oh, for real?

Denzel Curry: Oh, no, this is like a thing. Whenever somebody has that kind of deck, you better build like an indestructible deck or something. So, none of that matters. Like, they can't be destroyed. Your lands can't be destroyed. They can't be destroyed. Bah, bah, bah, bah! You know what I'm saying?

Jesse Thorn: I learned about this kind of deck from my friend, John Darnielle, from the band The Mountain Goats. If you want to get him animated, you either bring up death metal, about which he has very strong feelings, you bring up Earth, Wind & Fire, which he believes to be the greatest band of the 1970s, or you bring up land destruction decks. (*Laughs.*) And the fire in this 55-year-old man's eyes.

Denzel Curry: Like, “I would kill anybody with a lands destroyer deck, man.”

Nah, but I don't like that (*cursor beep*) man. That SUCKS! Like, it really does. ‘Cause I'm thinking like we gonna play a regular game. Next thing you know, “Alright, I'm gonna destroy all your lands. Matter of fact, I'm gonna make you pay two mana cards, just so you can attack me every turn.”

And then you add on top of that! And then you take everybody's artifacts. That's what kills me. You know what I'm saying? You take my artifacts, you make me pay two mana to kill you, and then on top of that you destroy my lands?! Every single time?! YOU MUST DIE!

That means you have to get jumped every time. Because me, my girl, him, we was playing. But she was so mad that I killed her the last game, the night before, and I still had 40 points, and she had 0? She kept attacking me!

[00:35:00]

And I was like, “No! He's gonna take away our lands if we don't attack him! We have to jump him!”

She was like, “You know what? I'ma spread the wealth. I'ma attack him for two, and I'ma attack you for four.” No! Attack him for four! What are you doing?!

Jesse Thorn: That's what love is supposed to be. Well, Denzel Curry, I sure appreciate your time. Thank you for talking to me.

Denzel Curry: Oh, thank you, Jesse. And thank you for hitting the bullseye. (*Getting hype.*) You know, because we're with you right here on your podcast, *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn*. Make some noooise!

Jesse Thorn: Denzel Curry, everybody. What a guy. As we mentioned, his new album is called *King of the Mischievous South*. He's also kicking off a massive international tour next month. He is monumentally big. I just read the other day, in Australia, in the Antipodes—Australia and New Zealand love Denzel Curry, among other places. We'll have a link to dates on the *Bullseye* page at MaximumFun.org. Let's go out with one more track from his new album. This one's called “Hot One”.

Music: “Hot One” from the album *King of the Mischievous South* by Denzel Curry.

I can make money fro—

I can make money fro—

I can make money from the comfort of my sofa (Yeah, ho)

So much drive (Yeah), so-so much drive (Yeah)

So much drive, now I gotta get a chauffeur

I can make money from the comfort of my sofa (Sofa)

So much drive, now I gotta get a chauffeur (Chauffeur)

One day, I'll be big, but I know I'm getting closer (Closer)

Call me Denzel, AKA Big Ultra

The wo—, the world in my hands 'cause I took it off ya shoulders (Shoulders)

Marni on my fit, you know I got this — from Lower (Lower)

I'm balling like Mike when you see him on the poster

(Music fades out.)

Transition: Upbeat, chiming synth with light vocalizations.

Jesse Thorn: That's the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye*, created from the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun—as well as at Maximum Fun HQ, overlooking beautiful MacArthur Park in Los Angeles, California. Obviously, as we record this, Los Angeles is still struggling with out-of-control fires. It's been very tough for all of our fellow Angelenos. We are all safe and doing okay considering. But we are hoping that, if you hear this, you will take some time to do something nice for someone in Southern California, whether that's a mutual aid project or just making a donation.

One great way to help the folks who are suffering is a donation to the California Community Foundation's Wildlife Recovery Fund. They fund both the sort of immediate disaster efforts and also recovery projects both statewide and locally here in California. Very trustworthy organization.

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 is Daniel Speer. We get booking help from Mara Davis.

Our interstitial music comes from our pal Dan Wally, also known as DJW. You can find his music at [DJWsounds.bandcamp.com](https://www.djwsounds.bandcamp.com). Our theme music was written and recorded by The Go! Team. It's called "Huddle Formation". Thanks to The Go! Team, and thanks to their label, Memphis Industries, for providing it.

You can follow *Bullseye* on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, where you will find video from just about all our interviews, including the ones you heard today. 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](https://www.MaximumFun.org) and is distributed by NPR.

(Music fades out.)

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