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(ADVERTISEMENT)

Jesse Thorn: Hey, it's Jesse. We have a pretty incredible interview with Lucy Dacus that you're about to listen to. Before we get to it, I just wanna let you know that it is Maximum Fun Drive time. That is the time of year when we ask you to go to MaximumFun.org/join and join us in paying for the production of this program.

The majority of our budget comes from members of Maximum Fun, the worker-owned cooperative that produces this show. So, go to MaximumFun.org/join and become one of those members right now.

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. We aren't really in the age of super groups anymore. I mean, every once in a while you'll hear that like Flea is playing with a Radiohead guy, something like that. But what was the last Traveling Wilburys we had? When was the last Bell Biv DeVoe? Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young? A band of stars that ends up becoming more than the sum of its parts and makes some 100% grade-A bangers? Well, I submit to you modern day super group: boygenius.

Music: “Not Strong Enough” from the album *The Record* by boygenius.

I don't know why I am the way I am

There's something in the static

I think I've been having revelations

Coming to in the front seat, nearly empty

(*Music fades out.*)

Jesse Thorn: Phoebe Bridgers, Julien Baker, and my guest, Lucy Dacus—three beloved indie singer-songwriters. Their 2023 record, called *The Record*, won three Grammy Awards, including Alternative Album of the Year. At the time the band formed, Dacus was working as a solo musician, but she wasn't really a household name. The band's success helped change that, though. It earned her a major label contract with Geffen, and this week, her first album on that label, *Forever is a Feeling*. It's a lush, beautiful record. I'm so thrilled to welcome Lucy Dacus to the show. Here's a bit from the album. It's called "Ankles".

Music: "Ankles" from the album *Forever is a Feeling* by Lucy Dacus.

What if we don't touch?

What if we only talk

About what we want and cannot have?

And I'll throw a fit

If it's all I can do

If it's the thought that counts

Let's think it through

So bite me on the shoulder

(Music fades out.)

Jesse Thorn: Lucy, welcome to *Bullseye*. So happy to have you on the show.

Lucy Dacus: Thank you.

Jesse Thorn: It's a very horny song, Lucy, especially relative to the rest of your catalog.

Lucy Dacus: *(Chuckles.)* It is funny to hear it with a bunch of people sitting around. I'm like, "Wow, I really said that out loud?"

(They laugh.)

Jesse Thorn: Did you like get halfway into it, and you're like *(uncomfortable noises)*.

Lucy Dacus: No, 'cause I was writing it for me, and no one was around. And now, recording it and putting it out, obviously people listen to it. *(Laughs.)* I don't know what it's gonna feel like to play it live either. I'll have to just get desensitized to it and not be embarrassed.

Jesse Thorn: What's the process like of rolling out a song that is—I mean, not all of your songs are that horny. Very few are. But they're often very intimate, let's say. What's the process like for you of rolling that out to others?

Lucy Dacus: I don't know if it's a process. I think you just push go and then deal with it. *(Laughs.)* I guess like I could be more discerning and be like, “I'm not up for that.” And actually, yeah, there are songs that I've written that I don't feel prepared for people to hear, so I just pretend they don't exist. Yeah, I guess these felt like I did want to share them enough, but it doesn't mean that it's like easy all the way.

Jesse Thorn: Are you writing by yourself at home, or you're writing the studio with the band?

Lucy Dacus: I write alone, usually on walks too. Like, just singing to myself. I really recommend this to people, especially if you're like a fearful person. I'm kind of an anxious person, and walking around and singing—nobody messes with you, because you seem a little bit crazy.

(They laugh.)

Jesse Thorn: Where are you walking? What kind of walk are you taking?

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Lucy Dacus: Just around my house. Or like, in every city that I've lived, I kind of like find a tread. Like, in Richmond, I have a ton of little walks, you know, where it's like, “Okay, four blocks left at this tree, two blocks right at this restaurant.” And I like visit all my favorite, you know, people's gardens or whatever. Same in Philly. I'm working on it in LA; I still feel new here.

Jesse Thorn: One day my friend and producer, Kevin Ferguson—who's sitting over there—was kind enough to give me a book that was written by the former San Francisco Giants manager, Bruce Bochy—I'm a Giants fan—and his wife. And it's just a collection of their favorite walks to take.

Lucy Dacus: That's really sweet!

Jesse Thorn: Isn't that nice? *(Chuckles.)*

Lucy Dacus: But also, are they now followed on all their walks?

(Jesse laughs.)

I don't wanna popularize any walk that I take, 'cause that's my walk. I don't wanna see you there. I don't see anybody there. That's actually part of why walking in LA is great is nobody walks here. And I tell people like if it's within an hour and the weather is nice, I'll walk to whatever I have to do, and people are like (*gasps*), like I did something impossible or like, “Are you okay?” like I went through a trial. And yes, it's certainly okay.

Jesse Thorn: So, what are you doing to take note of what you're singing while you're walking? Are you bringing out your phone and recording voice memos?

Lucy Dacus: I'll sing it like over and over until something like crystallizes. And then, yeah, I'll take out voice notes or just the notes app and then get home and like get with a guitar and try to figure it out. But usually it's lyrics and melody at the same time, and then the chords are kind of like just whatever sounds good under that.

Jesse Thorn: Do you take a walk with purpose? Like, are you thinking this is a songwriting walk, or are you just capturing it when it floods through your mind?

Lucy Dacus: Not usually. Yeah, I feel like I can't write songs on purpose. I can, and that's fun. It just feels like an assignment. Whereas like being kind of hit with a song—I don't know. I can kind of like respect that impulse more. But I do—I love writing for other people. It's so much fun, and it's kind of easier, because you're limited by what you think they would do. So, it's almost like easier to come up with options, because if I'm writing my own song, I could write anything. Whereas if it's someone else's work, there's boundaries.

Jesse Thorn: I think taking a walk is such a powerful body changer. My father had very serious post-traumatic stress disorder, and I think the thing that he learned helped him more than anything else that he did—and he did many things to address it in his life—was going for walks.

Lucy Dacus: Yeah, it seems like—I had therapy the other day, and I was talking about something kind of heavy, and my therapist was like, “Have you tried walking?”

And I was like (*choked unhappy noises*). Like, “You're gonna have to gimme something else!” (*Laughs.*) Like, it made me really mad, but then she was right. Like, I hadn't been walking. It did piss me off, 'cause it's a simple solution, and it does actually work.

Jesse Thorn: Did you have to learn to modulate the intimacy and personalness of your songs when you write them when you realized that a lot of people were going to listen to them?

Lucy Dacus: I don't really change anything. (*Beat.*) I've changed a few names, I guess. And usually if I'm writing about people who I love and care about, I'll bring them in on it before I put it out and be like, “What do you feel about these things I'm saying?” And that's had good results. But yeah, I try not to think about other people too much. Because if I do, then I'm just making like a product instead of doing something that feels like important to my experience of life.

Jesse Thorn: That's not everyone's process. There's a lot of people who feel like—if they are writing memoir or writing music or making art from their personal experience, even if it involves others—it's their prerogative to do whatever.

Lucy Dacus: Yeah. I mean, I do feel that I could do whatever, but it's like, yeah, you can do whatever whenever. It just affects people that you love. So, why not be careful?

Music: “Nonbeliever” from the album *Historian* by Lucy Dacus.

If you find what you're looking for

Be sure to send a postcard

You promised you'd never forget

The little ones when you got big

(Music continues under the dialogue.)

Jesse Thorn: Even more still to come with Lucy Dacus.

[00:10:00]

Stay with us. It's *Bullseye* for MaximumFun.org and NPR.

Music: “Nonbeliever”

No kindness without wanting something back

What do I owe you? What did I forget?

Are we even after all of that?

You shook my hand and said...

(Music fades out.)

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Transition: Thumpy rock music with a syncopated beat.

Jesse Thorn: Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest is Lucy Dacus. She's a singer-songwriter and guitarist originally from Richmond, Virginia. She's also 1/3rd of the indie rock super group boygenius, and she just recorded her fourth album, *Forever is a Feeling*. It comes out this week. Let's get back into our conversation.

Tell me a little bit about Richmond, where you grew up. I was there once for my cousin's wedding.

Lucy Dacus: Why?! Okay. Do you know where the wedding was?

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, at a hotel.

Lucy Dacus: Which hotel? The Jefferson? The Court Hotel?

Jesse Thorn: The Richmond... large to medium sized hotel. (*Chuckles.*)

Lucy Dacus: There's just a couple. So, yeah.

Jesse Thorn: It was downtown. It was in downtown Richmond.

Lucy Dacus: Okay, cool. Well, those two—it's probably one of those. It's such a small space that I was like, "I bet I know."

Jesse Thorn: Well, Richmond is an interesting town, because it is like a half sophisticated big city and half small town.

Lucy Dacus: Yeah. When you're living there—I heard multiple times like this is the biggest small town left in America, which is kind of quaint. Yeah, I think it's one of those towns that you have to be shown to love it by someone that knows it. Like, for instance, a lot of musicians go and play the National, which is a great venue in Richmond. But the surrounding area is just like skyscrapers. There's not a ton of good restaurants in that area, and you're missing out on like the river, which is beautiful. Or like the food, which is so good.

Jesse Thorn: I mean, culturally, one thing that struck me is that you are both in the like northernmost part of the south and in the heart of the Confederacy at the same time. Right?

Lucy Dacus: It's pretty wild. Definitely growing up in like the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts—where I used to go all the time, and it's free—there's a historically Confederate chapel on the grounds that is preserved as like a part of history. But there are like Confederate people that like wave flags outside this church to protest the fact that the Confederate flag

isn't on the church steeple anymore, and they protest all sorts of things. Like, in June 2020, when people were fighting for the monuments to be taken down on Monument Ave.—which was all Confederate people on horses and generals and stuff—which did happen; I like didn't know if that was gonna happen in my lifetime. Amazing that it did. It makes me proud.
(Laughs.)

Jesse Thorn: I mean, as a Californian and as a native San Franciscan, like the Civil War was so far from my experience. You know, I just—it was a—it might as well have been the Revolutionary War or, you know, World War I in Europe or something. Like, it's a thing from a book.

And when I was in Richmond—which was before many of the statues came down—walking around, I really, truly wasn't prepared for the extent to which the history of the Civil War and the Confederacy was like front and center everywhere in downtown Richmond.

Lucy Dacus: Absolutely. Yeah, and what's “interesting”—quote/unquote—is that there are people who are straight-up Confederates. There's people who would call themselves leftists or liberals who don't like that, and then there's like this contingent of people who swear they're impartial and that if any place in the world should be preserving Confederate history, it should be Richmond, as a lesson against—or whatever. You know, which... it seems to complicate the conversation, but I don't find it complicated.

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I'm like all history is passing with—you know, where there's not a monument to everything. Why would we have monuments to this terrible thing? I don't know. Maybe I'm—I don't need to get like super into it, but I am just like, “Why protect space for a bigoted history?”

Jesse Thorn: What were you proud about, about being a southerner, when you were a kid or a teenager?

Lucy Dacus: Well, when I was a kid, I wasn't proud, because media just like shows you that you're stupid or like backwards or—I don't know—poor, like comparatively to other places. But now I really miss the south, and there's kind of like a lack of pretension. And I always feel weird about speaking generally about huge groups of people, because like they're made up of individuals. There are pretentious people for sure in the South, (*chuckles*) and there's unkind people. But I do like kind of the automatic “we take care of our own” feeling. Like, it feels like people try to really take care of each other in a way that feels harder in these bigger cities that I've now lived in.

Jesse Thorn: I mean, I think a lot about a *Radio Lab* from years and years ago, where they dramatized on the show the fact that it has been studied that there is a direct relationship between the speed at which you walk and the density of the population where you live. In denser population centers, people walk faster.

Lucy Dacus: I was gonna say, based off my New York friends, you're walking fast.

(They laugh.)

I gotta keep up. I got long legs too, and I gotta keep up with my New York friends walking.

Jesse Thorn: I'm from the city. I'm like, "Come on! What are you doing back there?! What—? We're going somewhere!"

Lucy Dacus: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

(They chuckle.)

I'll go on a walk with my dad and be like, "Slow down!" You know? Or we'll just sit for a second. Yeah, I do—I miss like a slower pace.

Jesse Thorn: In Richmond, you must have had access to lots of cool kids stuff. I mean, you got college town stuff, you got big city stuff. As I said, there's plenty of big city in Richmond for a not-that-big city.

Lucy Dacus: Yeah. Definitely a lot of cool kids. In fact, I would have friends come and visit. I lived in a house that threw shows for a while, and so bands would be coming from outta town. And a lot of bands would be like, "Everyone's so hot."

I'm like, "Yeah, there's a lot of hot people in Richmond."

(They chuckle.)

But yeah, they're good venues. Some are no longer with us. Like, Strange Matter was a great venue—I say to maybe no one, or maybe 12 people. But yeah, lots of cool kid stuff. There's a great college. I'm a dropout of VCU Arts, but it brings a lot—it's the number one public art school in the country, I think. And number four, public or private. So, take that. I don't know.
(Laughs.)

It was definitely a point of pride at the time. But I didn't wanna be in student debt, so I just dropped out. But yeah, there's like very cool art. And at least when I was living there, there were shows every single night of local bills and like different genres. And I'm still friends with tons of people that I met in college or just living around town, and I do miss it.

Jesse Thorn: Did you plan when you were a teenager to stay in town or get outta dodge? What was your fantasy?

Lucy Dacus: I really liked the idea of staying there forever, but then I also would take like the night bus to New York with friends over the weekend. I was just saying this to a friend of mine. I was like, "I can't have kids, because all the like experiences that really shaped me when I was young, I would never want them to have." Like, I would not be okay with— Like, on a Friday after school, I'd walk from my high school to the bus stop, pay like \$15, take the overnight bus to New York, spend all of Saturday there, get one container of—is it Wah Fung

No.1 Fast Food? Anyways, like a \$5 giant thing. Eat that the entire time. And then like for Saturday night, take turns sleeping face down at the McDonald's and watching each other's backpacks. Wake up on Sunday, have the full day, take the night bus for \$15 back, and then go to school on Monday morning. I did that like a few times.

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And that's like—what?—\$35 for like a full weekend in New York? That's awesome. And if I was a parent I would be horrified. (*Laughs.*) You know, like I'm just like—I can't believe that that was fine. I like wanted to live in New York. And every time I go I'm like, “Hm. I wonder if I'll make that childhood dream come true someday.” But it is loud and crowded and makes me feel anxious.

Jesse Thorn: (*Laughs.*) What did your parents think about the night bus?

Lucy Dacus: I mean, sometimes they would come. Sometimes like my mom and I would go to New York. The first time I went to New York was with my dad when I was 10. And for Christmas—or was it my birthday?—he made like a book that was like, “Once upon a time, a dad and his daughter took the train”—and it was an illustration of a train—“and then ate big pancakes”—and like, illustration of pancakes (*chuckles*)—“and stayed at a hotel, such a big deal. And then saw...” Dot, dot, dot. And then I flipped the page, and it was like tickets to *Wicked* the show, which I was like so obsessed with when I was 10. And we went and—yeah, went to New York for the first time and saw *Wicked*.

I recently saw the movie with him, and he was like singing all of the songs under his breath, and I was just weeping! (*Laughs.*) Even right now, even your face, I'm just like—ugh, it makes me wanna cry again. But yeah, really magical memory.

Jesse Thorn: You made a record that was very retrospective a few years ago, and this record feels very different to me.

Music: “Hot & Heavy” from the album *Home Video* by Lucy Dacus.

Led me to the floor even though I'm not a dancer

Asked me all the questions that your parents wouldn't answer

How could I deny a diamond in the rough?

You let me in your world until you had enough

You knew that I wanted you to bend the rules

How did I believe I had a hold on you?

You were always stronger than people suspected

Underestimated and overprotected

When I went away, it was the only option

(Music fades out.)

Jesse Thorn: Let's start with that older album. You like literally sat and went through your childhood diaries and typed them out and stuff. What could possibly have motivated you to do that? *(Laughs.)*

Lucy Dacus: Uh, COVID. *(Laughs.)* I was like, "I wanna digitize these things." 'Cause I am terrified of the idea of like a fire, or I've had a backpack stolen with like three years of journals gone. And it just feels like a part of me that leaves. So.

Jesse Thorn: Do you still journal now?

Lucy Dacus: Yeah, not as much. And that's a bad sign. I gotta get back into it. I mean, I do like a couple times a month, but I was like sometimes journaling every day or every other day and just really keeping up with everything. But it's harder to know how I feel without journaling. Like, I didn't realize like, "Oh yeah, that made me in touch with myself." And now when I don't do it, I'm less in touch with myself. Like, it sounds obvious, but I'm kind of just learning that.

Jesse Thorn: It must be odd to look at your adolescence in particular when your feelings are so strong, or childhood when you don't know anything, and not be seeing it through the accumulated decade-plus of life experience and processing—like, to go back to it as it was then, in your very subjective eyes.

Lucy Dacus: Well, what feels really weird is I'll be like—the thing that was important at this time was this really difficult thing I was going through, but the journal entries are like, "Went to the mall, saw this person." Like, I wasn't like deeply processing. Or I'll write so much about something, and I'm like, "Wow, that really didn't matter." And just like realizing over time that the size of things just changes kind of unpredictably.

Jesse Thorn: Were there dumb things, little things, that were intense? I, yesterday, saw a painting of a taqueria by my father's house and started crying. *(Laughs.)*

Lucy Dacus: Oh my gosh! Well that's good. I think that's a good emotion that you had. *(Laughs.)* That's awesome.

Jesse Thorn: Burrito cries?

Lucy Dacus: Yeah! No, 'cause that's positive. You know, if you can cry for any positive, awesome. *(Laughs.)* I mean, yeah, it's all really dumb. I'm like, "Which dumb things am I even comfortable sharing?" Like, there was this thing like—I don't know who I thought I was writing for, but whenever a boy liked me, I would be like—

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"I just don't understand. Like, how could he like me? I'm all these things." You know, whatever. And I'm like— I'm reading it, annoyed at myself. I'm like, "Oh, come on. Like, who are you performing for?" But then I'm like, "Did I really think that?" That I was just like at such a young age thinking like, "Oh, I'm worthless. How could this boy actually like me?" There was a lot of that, and I'm like, "This is tired." I don't know. *(Laughs.)*

Jesse Thorn: That sounds hard. I mean, you're laughing, but it sounds hard to me to see yourself thinking about yourself that way.

Lucy Dacus: Oh my god. I think I just had a realization. Which, you know, who knows? These are things that like I would just think privately and not say out loud, but since I'm here right now, I'll just say it out loud. Which is like maybe I was not allowing myself to be like, "I'm gay." And so, being like, "How could this be happening?" I don't know. I'll think more on this in my own time, but it could be a factor.

Jesse Thorn: I mean, when I was reading about you sort of realizing or coming into your own queerness, one of the things that you described was the feeling of having relationships with people that were short of romance, and not being able to figure out as a kid—or as a teenager, as a young adult—what they meant. Because you had not put those pieces together and were maybe scared to or uncomfortable doing so.

Lucy Dacus: Mm-hm. Yeah. I'm starting to wonder if that doesn't really go away. Like, people who are like, "Yeah, I figured it out. I know what all relationships are, this or this or this." I know people in their 40s, 60s, 80s that are like, "What?" You know? Like, I think that love confuses us all the time, no matter if it's—whatever you call it, like friendship or romance or dedication, obligation, family—like, real love or the lack thereof is very confusing. And I'd like to think that I have more clarity, or I have more tools to figure out how to shape the love in the best way it can be, but I don't think that it's actually beneficial to be like sorting it.

So, I'm not gonna say I am like—it's more clear now. It just stays unclear.

Jesse Thorn: I mean, most of your new record is about intimate relationships of various kinds, and there's not a lot of clarity on it.

Lucy Dacus: Nope.

(They laugh.)

There's a little bit. Clarity for the time being, which is enough and kind of all that you can have. Which I feel like I—sometimes I hear myself talk, and I'm like, “Damn, I'm really being me right now.” *(Laughs.)* Meaning like, “Well, clarity doesn't ever stay.” It's like the album's called *Forever is a Feeling*. Like, it's so—I feel redundant, but it is like a point that I believe in, and I always come back to. It's just like certainty is temporary. And then the last song— Have you heard the whole record?

Jesse Thorn: Yeah.

Lucy Dacus: Cool. Like, “Lost Time” is maybe like the closest thing to clarity. Which is like, oh my gosh, all the time I spent like quibbling how to behave and like what to do is like—no, I just love you, and all the time that I didn't say it is a waste. And so, that is like a type of clarity that is very useful and usually pretty sticking if you can just remember holding back love is a really painful thing to do. So, that's been a lesson that has stuck with me, actually, that hasn't been passing quite yet.

Music: “Limerence” from the album *Forever is a Feeling* by Lucy Dacus.

If I stay busy

Maybe I'll forget how I feel and go on living life as I planned it

So bring on the parties, I wanna go dancing

My arm 'round the waist of a friendly acquaintance

Toeing the line of betraying your trust

Why do I feel alive when I'm behaving my worst?

(Music fades out.)

[00:30:00]

Jesse Thorn: Did the experience of being in boygenius and being Capital F Famous with a sort of fan culture and that kind of thing change the way that you felt about expressing intimacy in your songs?

Lucy Dacus: I don't know yet, because it hasn't affected the songwriting. It didn't affect the recording. I wrote a lot of the songs recorded during boygenius. Honestly, I'm gonna see how this goes, and if I need to retreat forever, I will. *(Laughs.)* I'm really optimistic that since like my intentions are good and my heart is pure, *(laughing)* that it'll go well. But I don't know if it always works out like that.

And yeah, I'll be honest, it's pretty unpleasant, having to do this—having to do this. *(Chuckles.)* But it's also like very rewarding in other ways. But yeah, anytime— Capital F Famous is such a crazy phrase, and...

Jesse Thorn: I mean, I'm not suggesting that you're Ariana Grande here. God bless her. But there is a different quality to the type of public figure that you were sort of swept into being. I can't imagine it was the goal, but it's like a different kind of thing.

Lucy Dacus: Yeah. I wouldn't wish it on anybody.

Jesse Thorn: And not just in scale either. Like, in its quality, in its tone.

Lucy Dacus: Yeah, that's very true. It's a little, you know, more obsessive. Or like, I think one aspect that is really hard is being asked to represent archetypes when really I can only represent myself. And if anybody is hoping that I'm representing them, I will always fall short of that, because everyone is like a unique pastiche of everything that has ever influenced them. So, I can't be a mirror to everyone, even though like I try that a lot, even my personal life. I feel like I've lost a lot of time to just mirroring people and people-pleasing.

But yeah, at least up until this point, like everything that I've made and put out, I just feel very good about it in and of itself. *(Chuckles.)* This is all—like, doing press and stuff and talking about it is part of the job, and I love talking about it. And I would have this conversation with you if no one was watching, and it would be pleasant. *(Laughs.)* You know what I'm saying? It's just kind of this weird subfactor that like people are witnessing everything.

Jesse Thorn: Once, years ago, my old therapist said to me, “These people”—he was an only-asks-questions therapist. He said, “These people, Jesse, do they know you?”

And I was like, “*(Grumbles.)* They don't know me, no.” *(Laughs.)* But—

Lucy Dacus: Do you want them to?

Jesse Thorn: *(Strained noise.)* I don't need them to, no.

Lucy Dacus: Yeah. Okay. So, your therapy worked. *(Laughs.)*

Jesse Thorn: No, I don't know that it did! It was that—because this was a long time ago—I still struggle with that insight. When people are not liking my public persona for whatever

reason, I have to check in with myself and say, “Not only do I not know these people, they do not know me.” It doesn't always work.

Lucy Dacus: Yeah. The other thing that's interesting to hold is that when they like you, they also don't know you. Like, that's not just a salve for when people are not liking you. 'Cause I actually get a lot of—I'm really lucky. Like, I get a lot of affirmation, and I feel blessed. I even feel like most of my fanbase are people that I would legitimately be friends with, (*laughs*) just from vibes alone. But to remember that also doesn't make me who I am. We don't know each other, and they don't know me, so I can't put so much stock into that, even when it's positive.

Jesse Thorn: But it's like if you didn't want that, you wouldn't be performing. (*Chuckling.*) I mean, I'm speaking for myself here. I'm not speaking exclusively for you. But I'm like, “Yeah, I want people to like me! That's why I'm a professional performer!”

Lucy Dacus: Oh my gosh, yeah. But in every job, even without performance, of course you want people to like you. What's the opposite? You want people to hate you? It's instinctual as human beings that we want people to like us, and take care of us, and respect each other.

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Like, on basic community-building, staying-alive type levels. We want to be liked, so we stay alive (*laughs*) and that we don't feel lonely. And I don't know, when people are like, “I don't care what people think,” I'm like, “You are absolutely lying.”

Jesse Thorn: I mean, there's a certain amount of realizing that you have a utility to people, which is an interesting way to think of yourself. But it is a kind of comforting way to think about your relationship to people that you don't know.

Lucy Dacus: Yeah. It is like odd being rendered a symbol of something. Especially since COVID, and we're all saying that the internet is the place where your life is, and that's where you're doing social things instead of the real world. I think that people react to things to see what hits for their own building of self. And like there's things when I was a teen, I'm sure I was like, “I hate—” Whatever as like a “and that's who I am.” And then now, like 10 years later, I'm like, “Wow, I really don't hate that person. That was so judgmental.”

But when you are the symbol, it's hard to remember that it's like people of all ages in all states of mental wellness and in all states of their reading that they're doing. You know, like I'm reading right now about like how most renewable energy is a hoax, whereas I've spent a lot of time—I used to be so into like advocating for voting or advocating for renewable energy. And like both of those things are highly bought and—you know, we're gerrymandered to the point of disenfranchisement. Yeah, like if the grid is still on coal—like, your electric car is still using coal, but now with a battery that's lithium, whatever.

Um. (*Laughing.*) How did I get here? How—?

Jesse Thorn: Nothing is pure.

Lucy Dacus: Yeah. Just—or you know, basically I'm now realizing like, “Oh my gosh, these things that I really passionately advocated for at a time don't hold the promise that I thought they did.” And so, vice versa too. Things that I like was really upset about, I'm like really not upset now. And when you're a public figure, you can be caught up in that hailstorm of becoming. And I guess you gotta be cool with it or peace out.

Jesse Thorn: We'll finish up with Lucy Dacus after a quick break. Still to come, who do you call when you want to get a massively huge dress made for your music video? And also, can you write off your massively huge dress as a business expense? News you can use; service journalism on *Bullseye* for MaximumFun.org and NPR.

(ADVERTISEMENT)

Transition: Chiming synth with a syncopated beat.

Promo:

Jesse Thorn: Hey gang, it's Jesse, but it's not just me. I'm also joined by the senior producer of *Bullseye*, Kevin Ferguson. Hey, Kevin.

Kevin Ferguson: Hi.

Jesse Thorn: And by our production fellow, Hannah Moroz! Hi, Hannah.

Hannah Moroz: Hello.

Jesse Thorn: So, you cut this interview, Hannah?

Hannah Moroz: I did. This is my first interview that I cut as a part of the team.

Jesse Thorn: What is the production fellowship?

Hannah Moroz: It's an opportunity to get a lot of hands-on experience on kind of all parts of *Bullseye*—including editing, but also including social media, some of the video stuff, research. Yeah, a really great learning opportunity for me.

Jesse Thorn: I'll say this: Kevin and Jesus and Richard and I are all graduates of public universities. Kevin runs a sort of Cal State Long Beach Mafia here at Maximum Fun.

Hannah Moroz: I'm part of that. (*Laughs.*)

Kevin Ferguson: Go, Beach.

Jesse Thorn: And we love to hire people that went to public schools. We've also hired people who didn't go to college at all. Our goal is not to buff up a pipeline that already exists, it's to create a new pipeline. And we're really proud that we do that.

Hannah, what are some of the things that you've learned so far as a production fellow at Maximum Fun?

Hannah Moroz: I'm a DIY content kid. (*Laughs.*) I love making videos; I've certainly like dabbled in making my own podcasts in the past. But I had no access to or idea how distribution to public radio works, for example, which was an opportunity unique to the Maximum Fun Fellowship.

Jesse Thorn: What surprised you about the Lucy Dacus interview?

[00:40:00]

Hannah Moroz: I love the part where she's talking about her ginormous dress and how one even acquires one.

Kevin Ferguson: Yeah. You haven't heard this part yet, but stay tuned.

Hannah Moroz: Stay tuned. I've never had to acquire a giant dress. And if you've ever had to acquire—or if you're looking to acquire a giant dress, this might be some insight for you.

Jesse Thorn: And it features—it is a story that features past *Bullseye* guests, the Rodarte Sisters.

Kevin Ferguson: Yeah. And some top tips on how you can save money through tax law and dresses. You'll get what I mean later on.

Jesse Thorn: This is called service journalism, friends.

(*Hannah laughs.*)

Kevin Ferguson: We're basically *Planet Money*.

Jesse Thorn: Kevin, why does the MaxFunDrive matter?

Kevin Ferguson: The MaxFunDrive is what separates Maximum Fun from every other podcast network in the game, in my opinion. It lets us talk to our audience about what we are about—which is them, and the content, and getting the audience to support the stuff they love. We don't have a ton of ads. You aren't hearing a ton of ads. We're not doing—I don't know—like an entire sponsored episode about like meal kits that are made by AI or anything like that.

We are a listener-supported—we are an audience-supported network. And because of that, we can make what we want. We are artist-owned; we are employee-owned. But it takes that audience showing up. And you need to show up right now.

Jesse Thorn: It's easy for us to say we couldn't do this without you, but that is like the actual, literal truth. We work for you. It is an incredible arrangement that we feel immense gratitude for. We hope that we hold up our end of that bargain, that we give you a show that you really love and are passionate about. And we also hope that if you do love our show, if you are passionate about it, you'll become a member of Maximum Fun by going to MaximumFun.org/join.

Because you're not just supporting me; you're supporting a whole staff of people that work on this program. You're supporting the next generation of people who work on this program in shows like this. And you're supporting the bringing of this kind of content into the world for free, for anyone to enjoy and learn from.

Kevin Ferguson: We are at the home stretch of the MaxFunDrive today. The day we're dropping this episode is Friday, March 28th. This is the last day of the drive. So, if you're listening to this episode, first, thank you for listening. But now is the time to show your support. Go to MaximumFun.org/join. We have a ton of great gifts. We have pins; we have beach towels; we have a very stylish bucket hat. At the highest levels, we even have a beautiful cooler featuring many drinks, just in time for the sun and the fun you will have in it.

Jesse Thorn: Please join us at MaximumFun.org/join, and do it now.

Transition: Chiming synth with a syncopated beat.

Jesse Thorn: It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. I'm talking with singer-songwriter Lucy Dacus.

In your latest video, you wear this grand dress. And I was very thrilled to find out that dress was from the sisters who make Rodarte, the fashion brand. They were guests on the show one time. They're the best. What's the remit for that? Like what's the CFP, the call for proposals? Just like call and say like, "I need a grand dress"? (*Laughs.*)

Lucy Dacus: Yeah. Well, I knew about this woman, Shirley Kurata, who did the costumes for *Everything Everywhere All at Once* and a bunch of other really cool stuff. And she was recommended to me through friends and through my label. And so, we chatted about it, and she brought in Ashley Furnival, who she works with a lot, who's a stylist. And they brought me the Rodarte sisters. And at first, you know, they were like, "You could do, you know, something we've already got."

And I was like, "I'm talking big. Like, a really big dress."

And they were like, “Okay. I don't know if we can even get enough fabric in time.” But they really made it work. And it was like almost one-to-one what was in my head.

Jesse Thorn: This dress would be big if it was being worn in a Civil War drama.

Lucy Dacus: Oh my gosh. I mean, I didn't fit through doors, for sure. Sitting in a car was hilarious. It had to be flown to Paris in two giant cases. I want to weigh it. I have scars on either side of me from the weight of it just weighing on my hips. I fainted the second day of filming. It's a menace. It's a monster. It's so good. *(Laughs.)*

Jesse Thorn: How did it—? Yeah. I mean, you're sitting in front of me in a blazer, a dress shirt, and trousers, wearing penny loafers.

[00:45:00]

(Lucy confirms.)

How did it feel to be in something that was such an almost absurdly grand expression of a particular kind of femininity?

Lucy Dacus: Well, it was ridiculous, and that was awesome. Like, it's just immediately funny—like, it's humor. Femininity though, I do like. I like maintaining my path to masculinity and my path to femininity. Both are very interesting to me. And if I had to do only one, I would be wanting the other. And whenever I'm masc for a long time, I wanna femme it up. When I'm femme for a long time, I wanna masc it up. And that's just kind of always how I've been.

So, it's cool on this record to like—back-to-back “Ankles” is this giant, gorgeous gown, and then the “Best Guess” video, which came out yesterday, is like suits.

Music: “Best Guess” from the album *Forever is a Feeling* by Lucy Dacus.

After all, it's a small world

You may not be an angel

But you are my girl

You are my pack a day

You are my favorite place

You were my best friend before you were

My best guess at the future

You are my best guess

If I were a gambling man, and I am

You'd be my best bet

(Music fades out.)

Lucy Dacus: And like, the point of that video was to have like a happy view of masculinity and just like have a good time in suits. *(Laughs.)* And so, it felt great. And I mean, it's like a one-of-a-kind museum piece dress, so I don't know when I'll ever put it on again. But I hope it sees the light of day.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. Are you keeping it in the warehouse?

Lucy Dacus: Yeah, it's in the vault. I mean—what?—throw it away? *(Laughs.)* Like, no, that's mine.

Jesse Thorn: There's this rule in tax law that you can only write off clothing that you could only use for work purposes. It's like—*Roots* goes to like costumes that Earth, Wind and Fire wore in 1980 or something like that. And I think you could make a reasonable argument to write this one off.

Lucy Dacus: That is not a bad idea, and I need to be making note of that.

(Jesse laughs.) I'm almost reaching for my notebook and like—

Jesse Thorn: I think this album makes you, in my view, the poet laureate of writing about roommates playing video games.

(Lucy laughs.)

Do you have roommates now? Are they playing any video games?

Lucy Dacus: I don't have any roommates. I had eight roommates over COVID, which was cool, 'cause we had like a mini society. And there were definitely video games being played. That particular song, “Limerence”, that you're referencing was actually at a friend's house, at a party. *(Laughs.)* The Natalie that I referenced is Natalie of Wise Blood. And when I showed

it to her, she's like, "I don't want people to think that I'm weak on my feet with smoking weed." So, I'm putting it out there that she can hold her own.

(Jesse laughs.)

And I hope I've handled this information respectfully, Natalie.

Jesse Thorn: Do you play video games?

Lucy Dacus: I played *Super Mario Brothers* on DS a long time ago, like middle school. *(Chuckles.)* And then I've done like Wii games, and I've watched some video games, but it doesn't click for me. However, *Kentucky Route Zero*, one of the most beautiful video games and like pieces of art I've ever seen. And I have yet to actually even finish it—but that's my one. Like, really good video game recommendation.

Jesse Thorn: Is that a driving simulator?

Lucy Dacus: *(Laughs.)* It's like there's a little guy, and he's trying to deliver some furniture in like a desolate land, and then the details of like where he's supposed to go get weirder and weirder, and it just goes to a place you would not really ever expect. There's a play-within-a-play aspect. The music is so cool. It's really good.

Jesse Thorn: Lucy, thank you so much for talking to me. It was really nice to get to know you.

Lucy Dacus: Yeah, this was silly and fun. Thanks, Jesse.

Jesse Thorn: Lucy Dacus. Her new album, *Forever is a Feeling*, drops this week.

Transition: Upbeat, funky synth.

Jesse Thorn: That's the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye* is created in 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. I happened to be at the Warehouse store the other day.

[00:50:00]

And I bought some of that combination grass seed/mulch/fertilizer, whatever. And I spread it on my lawn. We'll see if it does anything. I'm not much of a gardener.

Our show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our senior producer is Kevin Ferguson. Our producers, Jesus Ambrosio and Richard Robey. Our production fellow at Maximum Fun, Hannah Moroz. 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. He's sending us some new music! You can find his beats 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. Thanks to their label, Memphis Industries.

You can follow *Bullseye* on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, where you'll find video from just about all our interviews—including the ones you heard this week. And I think that's about it. Just remember, all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.

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

(Music fades out.)

Jesse Thorn: This is the very last time during the MaxFun Drive that I will ask you to join Maximum Fun. Will you do it for me? Go to [MaximumFun.org/join](https://www.maximumfun.org/join).

That's [MaximumFun.org/join](https://www.maximumfun.org/join), because this show cannot exist without your support. And look, I know it's a tough world out there. I know it 'cause I live in it too. But if this show brings some light to that world for you? Please support it. [MaximumFun.org/join](https://www.maximumfun.org/join).

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