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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: “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. Time now for “The Song That Changed My Life”, a special segment where musicians share with us the song that made them who they are. Up this week is Casual. He was a founding member of Hieroglyphics—Hiero being one of the most legendary underground hip-hop crews of all time—including Souls of Mischief, Pep Love, Domino, Del the Funky Homosapien, and our guest, Casual.

Music: “Casual” from the album *3rd Eye Vision* by Hieroglyphics.

You can put me in a rhyming bout

Turn it out with-out no problem

MC's is like chemicals, watch me dissolve 'em

Petty individuals infesting hip-hop

I leave em all over the floor like cigar intestines

You better count your blessings, it amounts to less

Than zero, the Hiero hero

Hieroglyphic sequence hitting with rhymes that a regal

And we know...

(Music fades out.)

Jesse Thorn: The crew's 1998 album, *3rd Eye Vision*, is one of the greatest hip-hop records ever made. A personal favorite of mine, I bet I could rap along with the whole thing. Casual is also a prolific solo MC. In 1994, he released another classic, *Fear Itself*.

Music: “Thoughts on the Thoughtful” from the album *Fear Itself* by Casual.

Start with the boom!

That's the sound from the stuff that we puff

It's magic, I'm dragging a foe to doom

And still refrain from being blunt

The tough get snuffed for being lame

We men claim to be all that

Call back, I'll get with cha

All act fat, fronting they really are close to me

But I'm prone to roast a poster like I'm supposed to be

(Music fades out.)

Jesse Thorn: And 30 years later, he put out—well, we counted 13 records, although maybe we missed one. *(Chuckles.)*

Music: “Belly (Remix)” from the album *Stardust* by Casual.

I spend my time letting my mind find divine rhymes

The blind trying to fly, but it's a fine line

Lift the curtain, ain't nobody behind mine

I had biggest West Coast battle before primetime

Fine wine with nine nines who're all...

(Music continues under the dialogue.)

Jesse Thorn: *Starduster* combines Casual with producer Albert Jenkins. And I will say this for Cas: he still has it.

Music: “Belly (*Remix*)”.

... with armor like this nice armament

When the ornament is on him like an Egyptian amulet

Worn by the Pharoh

When the king was naked, I wore my apparel like

Whaaat?

I got more by the barrel

Bow and arrow, drive by out the Camero

I got the juice...

(Music fades out.)

Jesse Thorn: We're so thrilled to have Casual on the show. I'll pass the mic to him on the song that changed his life.

Casual: What up? What up? It's Casual, Hiero Crew. And the song that changed my life? Chill Rob G, “Ride the Rhythm”.

Music: “Ride the Rhythm” from the album *Ride the Rhythm* by Chill Rob G.

(Music fades in and continues under the dialogue.)

Casual: Chill Rob G was an artist from a group called the Flavor Unit. I don't know if he was one of the first Flavor Unit MCs to come out, but he was a Flavor Unit MC who left a big impact on me.

Music: “Roll Wit Tha Flava” from the album *Roll Wit Tha Flava* by Flavor Unit.

Speaker: So! Latifah, I really don't see what Flavor records are gonna offer the public.

Queen Latifah: First of all, it's Flavor Unit. Second of all, I got flavor for days. Check this out.

Once again, it's on!

'Cause where I'm from there ain't no picket fences pick it

Straight and ruff—

(Music continues under the dialogue.)

Casual: So, if people not familiar with Flavor Unit, we would talk about Queen Latifah. If you can think about Juice Crew and the way that crews would assemble with multiple MCs in the early times, Flavor Unit was one of them. And they had it popping.

Music: “Roll Wit Tha Flava”.

But BBD boxing up yang, giddy-up

Didduh-duh, didduh-duh, didduh-dum dum dum

I'm coming again and again a Ku-Fu vomit

Gosh, darn it! Like we're lying to bits

The John-John Jacob lyrical shaker

Yes and Jengle-ma-heimershmitz

(Music fades out.)

Casual: When I was younger—because we didn't have the same technology to find music, you know, it was an attribute for a young man to be able to have music other people didn't have. You know what I mean? Like, and it would come from not necessarily digging in the crates, but maybe you have somebody on the East Coast, or you might have a person who was closer to the source of the music in your family who could get it to you. This would help you be cool in the hood. So, it was certain people in the neighborhood who you knew you could go to who had a line on different types of music. And one of them people was Del the Funky Homosapien.

Music: “You Never Knew” from the album *3rd Eye Vision* by Hieroglyphics.

It's like that, yeah

My Hieroglyphics, yeah!

It's like that, yeah

It's like, it's like

Del—been rhyming for more than a decade

Onto the next day, while MCs need aid

(Music fades out.)

Casual: Del the Funky Homosapien is the founder of Hieroglyphics, Ice Cube's cousin, and the one who got us all our record deals. He was also a childhood peer.

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And you know, we were trading like Atari games in elementary school. I think he was one of the first people who played Chill Rob to me. Chill Rob G had another song called “Future Shock”, and that also left a strong impression on me.

Music: “Future Shock” from the album *Ride the Rhythm* by Cool Rob G.

My word's food for thought, the mind is like a cafeteria

Some rappers are inferior, but none are superior

My voice is choice, I'm one of the chosen

I might be Chill, but I'm not frozen

Self-preservation, survival of the better

Chill Rob plus the seventh letter

(Music fades out.)

Casual: When I first heard “Ride the Rhythm”, first it was the sample.

(“Ride the Rhythm” fades in and Casual hums along with the opening bars.)

Music: “Hard Times” by Baby Huey as remixed in “Ride the Rhythm” by Chill Rob G.

Cold, cold eyes upon me they—(record scratch)

(Music continues under the dialogue.)

Casual: The track was one thing, but when Chill Rob starts spitting?!

Music: “Ride the Rhythm” from the album *Ride the Rhythm* by Chill Rob G.

Here's a prog-notion, stop the commotion, I'll have my dose in

We cruising, the beat and bruising, you need coaxing

Fluid as I do it, the motion is similar to the ocean

Bringing waves of emotion

This feeling that I'm dealing is so appealing

It's shocking, look how I got you rocking and reeling

My ripple and rhythm is reminiscent of a river when it's pouring

The King is reigning, I'm pouring

This music...

(Music continues under the dialogue.)

Casual: And so, when I heard that I was already—my eyes got big.

Music: “Ride the Rhythm”.

I was full of powerful percussion get you rushing on line

When it's 45 King time

Master of the Game, marks his fame, Mark's his name

The 45 King is the self-same

Man who made the music that matched with the lesson

When I said, "Court is in session"

Feel it, ride the rhythm

(Music continues under the dialogue then fades out.)

Casual: He did so much in there! Sometimes you could just say a sentence that all start with the same—not syllable, but even the same letter. In how he was like, “Man that made the music that matched with the—”

Still, I was like, “Ohhhh, all them Ms! That sounds smooth!” (*Chuckles.*) You feel me? And I’m not saying it’s the start of the double entendre. I’m not anywhere to that. I just liked his presentation, how he came off. “Here’s a bright notion, stop the commotion. I’ll have my dose in. We cruising the beat and bruising. You need coaxing. Fluid as I do it, the motion is similar to the ocean, bringing waves of emotion.”

It’s set off, for me, you gotta go to higher metaphorical heights, because that statement could be said in a Langston Hughes poem. (*Chuckles.*) You know what I’m saying? That—it was a poetical statement, and it was kinda like not what you would be hearing on the radio. At that point, hearing somebody rhyme like that, and—to put it in so many words—I found somebody I could style and pattern myself after, in Oakland, that wasn’t from Oakland. And I could put my Oakland twist on it.

But he was—you know, I don’t know if you remember adolescence or even before adolescence, but we would subconsciously look for characters to pattern ourselves after. First would be your father, but then after that, you go into your community. And somebody did a cool gesture or movement, you might go amongst some other people and do that same gesture or movement. And with Chill Rob G, lyrically, I was like, “Dang! He got a format that I could actually build on!” I didn’t have a big brother, so the way you would look up to a big brother, I was looking up to Chill Rob G.

Music: “Ride the Rhythm”.

Instead I use my head to stay fed

Never starving, Master-charging past the margin

Whatever price you paid, it was a bargain

Freedom is priceless, knowledge is twice that

That goes for everybody—Latin, White, Black

Depends on who you are and how you living

But in the meantime, just ride the rhythm

(Music continues under the dialogue.)

Casual: Can we stop that real quick?

(“Ride the Rhythm” record scratches to a halt.)

All of them bars right there was off the hook. But let's go and get technical with it. So, he said a few things. "I'm never starving, Master-charging past the margin. So, whatever price I paid, it was a bargain." That's a bar! And then he said, "Freedom is priceless. Knowledge is twice that. That goes for everybody—Latin, White, Black." But let's think about "twice that" with "White, Black" and how hot that just hit right there in order to make his statement. Sometimes you can rap, and you can say words, but you're not getting off what's in your heart.

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But you can hear a statement like that was what he was trying to express to the people. "Freedom is priceless. Knowledge is twice that. That goes for everybody—Latin, White, Black." I really love how he set that off.

Music: "Ride the Rhythm".

Muscleheads on a mission cold be wishing they been flipping

This passion, I'm not asking, I'm just whipping

I'm real, and I'm the deal, now how you feel?

You beg, borrow, or steal, you got appeal

Step off, get lost, or get tossed

Like a salad, your rhyme has no value

An invalid waste of breath, a taste of death is all that's left

When I get these rhymes off my chest

Indeed, I have exceeded what you expected

(Music continues under the dialogue.)

Casual: I wish that other people felt the same way that I feel when I hear it. I wish that some of the experiences that I went through when being led and instructed by this type of music—that's how I turned out a little different. You know what I'm saying? And like just being from Oakland, and cats be wondering, and be like, "Hi." You know, because we was getting juiced off something else that led us in a different direction. And even some of the words he would

use would expand my vocabulary. And so, I'm saying a lot of this in hindsight; I wasn't looking at it like that back then. But he contributed what he needed to contribute in order to help hip-hop.

Music: “Ride the Rhythm”.

You know that I'm dope, but can you accept it?

(Music fades out.)

Jesse Thorn: Casual on the song that changed his life, “Ride the Rhythm” by Chill Rob G. You can stream Casual's latest record pretty much everywhere. It's called *Starduster*. Let's hear one more track from it. This is “No Good to You”.

Music: “No Good to You” from the album *Starduster* by Casual.

Overflow

I'm in a prominent position

Their premonition of an ominous condition is stopping this

The mental operative I'm rocking with

My thoughts outnumber the powerless of any modern metropolis

You can't topple us

The tech, here, that's the obelisk inscribed with the hieroglyph

That some have a problem with

A read hieroglyphs quick, like a (inaudible)

Catch a bullet, Mr. Rap God is predicated upon

I meditated upon it, it's well-calculated

I salivated when I stated all the gods have been amalgamated

(Music continues under the dialogue.)

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. Tonight, I'm headed to the Elysian Theatre to see the Hike Bros improv show with past *Bullseye* guests Nick Kroll and Owen Burke, Jason Mantzoukas—I think Mantzoukas has been on *Bullseye* at some point—and Seth Morris. All absolute improv legends.

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 is Hannah Moroz. Our video producer, Daniel Speer. Hey, watch those videos on YouTube and elsewhere. Just search for *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn*. We get booking help from Mara Davis.

Our interstitial music comes from our friend 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. Thanks to their label, Memphis Industries.

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 this week. And I think that's about it. Just remember, all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.

Music: “No Good to You”.

But you keep a millionaire on your playlist

Too many Black men getting locked up in cages, fam

Thought about it when I made this jam, I said

Damn...

(Music fades out.)

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