

[00:00:00]

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. Many actors aspire to stardom, to play—I don't know—an action hero, or a romantic lead, or the protagonist in a big, crazy comedy. That's true even of character actors! I mean, what would *Paris, Texas* have been without Harry Dean Stanton? *Monk* without Tony Shalhoub? *Boardwalk Empire* without Steve Buscemi? You get my meaning.

My guest, Richard Kind, is not a star. He does not want to be a star. His dream is, as it has always been, to be the guy that shows up, lays down four or five pages of unforgettable dialogue, and peaces out. And for my dollar, there is no one in the world better at all of that than Richard Kind. Look at his IMDb. You will find 300 credits. Way too many to read in our hour-long radio program. Some highlights include *Only Murders in the Building*. *Spin City*. *Curb Your Enthusiasm*. *Everybody's Live with John Mulaney*. *A Serious Man*. He even sings and dances! He was in a Stephen Sondheim show. Okay, I'll stop.

The point is Richard Kind has done a lot of great work. He's the kind of guy that shows up onscreen, and the first thing you say is, “AW, LOOK! It's Richard Kind! I love Richard Kind. Man, I bet he's got some stories to tell.” And you know what? You'd be right. Along with performing in a million different movies and TV shows, Richard Kind has been touring across the country with a show that combines an interview, song, and an audience Q&A starring the man himself.

It's called the *Richard Kind: How Not To Be Famous* tour. Let's get right into it: my talk with the legend himself, Mr. Richard Kind.

Transition: Bright, chiming synth with a syncopated beat.

Jesse Thorn: Richard Kind, welcome to *Bullseye*. I am so happy to have you here. It's so nice to see you.

Richard Kind: It's so nice to see you again.

Jesse Thorn: Indeed. We've seen each other before. I've seen you ride a bicycle.

Richard Kind: Well, that's nothing unusual. I can ride a bicycle. But yes, I know. I rode up—as you mentioned earlier, I rode up to the Lincoln Center. You were so thrilled. But I used to ride my bike all over New York. All over!

Jesse Thorn: We had a show in New York City, the *Judge John Hodgman* show. We had a show at Lincoln Center in New York City. You were kind enough to appear as a guest. But we had just texted you that day or the day before to ask if you could come by. It was not carefully planned, and we weren't sure if you were going to be able to make the time. You're an in-demand performer. And—

Richard Kind: No, it's—John asked me, and I said, “I can't believe—” I think I must have said yes. And did I ride up in shorts and sneakers and a (*unclear*)?

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. And you were wobbling a little bit on the city bike, I think.

Richard Kind: That's not true.

Jesse Thorn: You were going slowly. It was—you were on the sidewalk.

(*Richard agrees doubtfully.*)

It was the last bit of your approach. I'm not saying at all times, here.

Richard Kind: Oh, oh, oh. Oh yeah. Because when you're on the sidewalk, you gotta be careful of the people. You gotta find the parking. You know, you don't know where the parking stuff is. But no, I know exactly where the parking stuff is. It's right across from the hotel. No, I was not wobbly!

Jesse Thorn: Okay. I apologize. I withdraw that.

Richard Kind: That's okay. When I walk, I wobble. When I'm riding a bike, I'm very smooth.

Jesse Thorn: Okay.

(*They laugh.*)

Anyway, just seeing you approach and knowing that you were gonna be on the show was just an absolute joy for me, and I was very happy to have you there.

Richard Kind: Thank you. Thank you, thank you.

Jesse Thorn: You have this job right now as the announcer on John Mulaney's television program. You know, you had done some things with Mulaney before.

Richard Kind: Oh, quite a few things! Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: You had been a couple of times on *Oh, Hello* on Broadway, I think. And you—

Richard Kind: Uh-huh. Oh, I actually opened *Oh, Hello* Off-Broadway and got a rave review in the *Times*.

Jesse Thorn: Really?

(Richard confirms.)

What did they say?

Richard Kind: “Richard Kind was, you know, the guest with the tuna fish.” Whatever. I don't know what they said. However, you would figure, with such good reviews, they'd carry you to Broadway. They did not! They used AlanAlda.

Jesse Thorn: Oh, well.

Richard Kind: Well, what?! I was proven commodity!

Jesse Thorn: I mean... but that's central to the...

Richard Kind: Of course, it is. I was thrilled.

Jesse Thorn: AlanAlda is central to their mythos.

Richard Kind: I was thrilled. And I think it's great. I'm kidding. I'm kidding. But I did do it on Broadway too.

Jesse Thorn: The thing of from *Oh, Hello* that I think about the most and have not stopped thinking about since—I mean, I think it was in one of their web videos or something—is when they say *(chuckling)*, “On a scale of one to Alan Alda, he's an Elliott Gould.”

Richard Kind: *(Cackles.)* Oh gosh.

Jesse Thorn: I think you could be on that scale! You could be somewhere on that scale, Richard.

[00:05:00]

Richard Kind: You know, every time I'm on the show, and I have to do these promos, or I have to improvise—and I used to be a good improviser. I was never great, but I was good. You know, enough to work at Second City and stuff like that. And I'm a good actor. I always say—by the way, I tend to go on different strands, so please remember where I'm going. Because I'll forget.

(Jesse affirms.)

But I think in order to be a good improviser, you must be a good actor. But in order to be a good actor, you don't have to know how to improvise. But I'm a good actor, and I could—I can improvise, I can react, stuff like that. As I've gotten older, my vocabulary is not as good. I'm going, “Oh, what's that word?” And when you have a joke that's so perfect, and you know the perfect word that belongs in that joke, and you forget it—and that's what has happened with my improvisational skills.

John is simply magnificent. Okay? His mind is great. His sense of humor is great. His observations are great, and he's really a good improviser—a comic improviser too. And I just keep going, “Why aren't I Nick Kroll? Why aren't I Nick Kroll?”

(Jesse cackles.)

And that's—he is so good with this perfect Oliver Hardy, Laurel—whatever, this perfect pairing, this peanut butter and jelly of comics—of comic minds and of comic vocabulary. Their choice of the right words is so good.

I'm good. I'm fine.

Jesse Thorn: I think there is something to be said for the role that you play on the show.

(Richard agrees.)

Which is—you know, Mulaney is very brilliant. One of the most brilliant comedy minds out there.

(Richard agrees.)

If I was going to say what is a challenge for Mulaney as a performer, it's that he could read as distant. And—

Richard Kind: And I ground him?

Jesse Thorn: And you ground him! And I think that—*(stammering)*.

Richard Kind: I like that. I like that idea. I don't know whether I agree, but I like it! If it's true.

Jesse Thorn: I sometimes think that he probably enjoys your act of being, you know, shambolic, because it compliments his act of maybe being a little bit too tight. You know what I mean?

Richard Kind: Okay. I agree with that, but I'll tell you this. Like, he— Well, the other night we rehearsed the bit with Peter— Did you see the show the other night with Peter Gallagher?

Jesse Thorn: I haven't seen that one.

Richard Kind: Oh, it's very funny. Peter Gallagher comes back as the John Mulaney from the future. No, he's not Peter Gallagher, he's John Mulaney from the year 2055.

Transition: A whooshing sound.

Clip:

Older John Mulaney (*Oh, Hello*): You're asking me too much! I can't recall conversations that I wasn't present for.

John Mulaney: That's fair and true. It's not like my memory was gonna get better with age, especially with—

John & Older John: (*In unison.*) —all the cocaine we did in our 20s and our 30s!

Older John: And our 50s!

(*A collective gasp.*)

(*Audience laughter.*)

Transition: A whooshing sound.

Richard Kind: Now, it was just 20s and 30s. And on the floor, John said, “Add this, and go onto this.”

And so, John stops, and Peter goes “and our 50s.” When he did that, the world became a better place. It is as perfect a joke as “I'm thinking, I'm thinking” from Jack Benny. It just was perfect.

Jesse Thorn: Okay, let's stop talking about how great Mulaney is, 'cause I'm here to talk about you and how great you are.

Richard Kind: (*Begrudgingly.*) Okay, okay. Yeah, but I wanna be that. I want to be that, and I just marvel at him. Okay. Talk about me, please. Enough.

Jesse Thorn: When you were a child, did you think you were going to become an actor?

Richard Kind: No! I dreamt of becoming an actor. I never thought I would be an actor.

Jesse Thorn: Did you think you were gonna have a practical job?

Richard Kind: I could name the practical job. My dad's store. He had a jewelry store in Princeton. That's what I was raised to do, and I could figure that I could do that. I was—my dad was a really good salesman in a very classy way. He taught me to be— It was a very, truly—I've talked about this before—a very classy store, his competition being New York jewelers, including Tiffany and Cartier.

Jesse Thorn: Because Princeton is a very affluent place.

Richard Kind: Is a very—that's a good word. I was gonna say wealthy, but of course affluent is a better word. It's more descriptive. It was a very affluent place, and is only 50 minutes, let's say, from New York. So, they could either go to their local jeweler who they trusted and loved and was a huge plus for their community—because it was really classy—or they could go to New York. But support your local vendor. And they did.

Jesse Thorn: And your dad was a merchant, not a tradesman. Right?

(Richard confirms.)

He was not actually a jeweler himself.

Richard Kind: That's correct. Although he was quite learned in jewelry; he could look at any stone and “This is what it is,” and then determine its quality.

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But that's exactly right. He was not—like, in the garment district, you know, you have Shimada salesmen. On 46th to 47th, you have the Hasidic Jews who were going around with briefcases filled with diamonds. My dad was not that. My dad owned a beautiful, classy only one store shop on Nassau Street in Princeton.

Jesse Thorn: Did your dad want that for you?

Richard Kind: Yes. grandparents had a very nice store in Trenton. My dad wanted to separate himself from his parents, and so opened a store in Princeton in 1956. And you could say, “Oh, wasn't he—couldn't he see the future?” What is it? He had—he was prescient to know that Trenton was gonna go under. But who knew? It was 10 years/15 years later that Trenton made a downturn and was not as affluent as it once was, and Princeton remained. But you know, it was like Newark and Elizabeth and Princeton and Trenton were huge! Huge and beautiful neighborhoods. And now they're not. And did he see the future? No, he just wanted to escape his parents. So, he opened in Princeton.

Jesse Thorn: Did your family live there in Princeton?

Richard Kind: No, we lived in Yardley, Pennsylvania. Raised for a few years in Trenton, and then right across the river is Bucks County, Pennsylvania. A very nice and great, great area. So, we moved from Trenton to Pennsylvania. And it's only 20 minutes from Princeton.

Jesse Thorn: You could have had a career doing what your father did.

(Richard confirms.)

You could have taken over your father's store or—

Richard Kind: Might have even been happy.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, so that's my question. Did you want that for yourself?

Richard Kind: Sure. Absolutely. It was secure money. It was the stability of a job. My dad used to say, “Nobody buys jewels for a bad occasion.” That's right. There's never a sad time. It was beautiful things, and was raised to have classy—not big, old, honking stones that are gaudy. These were really fine pieces of jewelry. That's what I was raised to sell. And I opted not to; I opted to become an actor. I opted to try becoming an actor.

And for a very liberal man, I'm very conservative. I don't like change that much. You know, I still have the same agent, certainly the same manager, that I've had for decades. And they say you should change your agent every time you buy new underwear. I don't; I have the same agent. I'm fine. I don't like that change. I'm not a hoarder, but every time I'm gonna throw something out, I go, “*(Sucks in a breath through his teeth.)* Do I want this, really? Do I—? This is part of who I am.”

So, in any case, I just didn't quit acting. I just kept going.

Jesse Thorn: We're gonna take a quick break. When we return, I will talk with Richard Kind about his performance and what I would describe as one of the most intense movies ever made. Is it a war movie? No. An artsy psychological thriller? Mm-mm! It's a comedy: *Clifford*. The movie where an adult Martin Short plays a sociopathic child by wearing children's clothes and, I guess, standing on his knees.

It's *Bullseye* from [MaximumFun.org](https://www.maximumfun.org) and NPR.

Transition: Thumpy synth with light vocalizations.

Jesse Thorn: This is *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. I'm here with Richard Kind. He's appeared in over 300 movies and television programs, including *The Simpsons*, *Only Murders in the Building*, and most recently as the announcer on *Everybody's Live with John Mulaney*.

Tell me when you made the choice to give acting a real try.

Richard Kind: Sunday afternoon in January. I was—I believe I was at Northwestern, or—? Yeah, I was still at Northwestern. Home, and I was watching a football with my dad and our neighbor, Steve Holzman—who was a great man who was my dad's best friend. And he gave me the advice that “Try acting before you go to law school. Because when you're 40, if you

didn't give it a shot, you will resent your wife and your children. You will look back and say, 'What could have been?' The road not taken."

So, I said, "Okay." And I did. I tried it for a year, and one year turned into two, into three. And like I say, I'm shockingly conservative with change.

[00:15:00]

And I just kept on. And it just—I'm telling you, all of a sudden, one year turned into 45.

Jesse Thorn: Did you know that you were a funny character actor, and thus your career really would start when you were 31 years old?

Richard Kind: Another interesting story, I think. There was a teacher at Northwestern, a wonderful playwright and a brilliant, brilliant director named Frank Galati who was an advisor at Steppenwolf, he was a director at Steppenwolf. He was a teacher at Northwestern. A great man. Great. I went in, and I spoke to him. And I said, you know, "My dad wants me to be—you know, go into jewelry and into the store and everything, and I wanna be an actor."

He said, "Well, why don't you be a producer? So that you got business, and—"

I said, "No, you don't understand. I either wanna be an actor, or I wanna go be rich and be like—you know, with the store and everything like that."

He goes, "Well, you're not gonna really be successful 'til you're around 33/34, because Hollywood isn't looking for what you are right now. But you will."

And so, I did do my time in New York. I wasn't that good an actor. I was good in my high school plays, because I was good! But I wasn't that good. My heroes were Robert Preston and Zero Mostel. So, oversized actors. (*Chuckles.*) And my grandmother, she used to go, "I heard every word."

(*Jesse cackles.*)

"You were the only one I heard." And I used to think volume was great acting.

So, that's—if you wanna know why I'm so loud, it's because of that. And I do know how to use my diaphragm when I speak. So, I can be loud. And I said, okay. So, four years of taking classes in New York, working. Then I went on the road, and then I went to Chicago to do Practical Theatre, which was the company in Chicago that was an adjunct—it wasn't associated, but it was next door to Second City. And then they saw me in Second City, and they asked me to be in Second City. And all of a sudden, I'm 32! (*Laughs.*) I've put in my time. Okay? The road was taken up.

Usually people leave around 26/27, especially college graduates. They realize they're smarter than these successful people. They got a chip on their shoulder. They say, "Why aren't I

acting?” Or they realize, “I want two kids and a house, and I’m not gonna get it this way. I’m waiting tables and starving.” So, they become producers. They become showrunners. They become agents or managers. I was onstage! I didn’t even have the time to think “what else could I do?” And then I went out to LA, and I got work.

And then about 10 years of all of that—and I worked, and I worked. 'Cause I was okay. I'm okay. And I pulled the wool over their eyes. And then, through work on camera—especially on single camera—I became an actor. I found out that acting was—there was a reality to it, and that you—I used to present all the words. I'd present the characters. I'd wear every emotion on my sleeve. Then I— And that's so interesting, 'cause at Northwestern I was taught by some very good teachers, 'cause I took electives. Even though I was a pre-law major, I took classes. And I saw what—what do you call it? Playing levels, playing different wants. You know, and in classes in New York. Learning about that and learning why Chekhov was so good—because a person would be one way, but you know underneath he's harboring something else.

These are things that were not easily understood by me until I started acting on single-camera and started being an actor, acting okay. I really wasn't very good, and I became good. I really did. You know, I'm gonna tell you something—and I don't bring him up. A good friend of mine, George Clooney—and everybody loves to hear this story. I believe he was the same way. He, through a lot of work—a lot of hard work—He became a great actor. He'll admit that he was not that good. He became great. He still doesn't think he's great, but he's great. He's a great actor.

Jesse Thorn: Did you know his pig? He had a pig, right?

Richard Kind: Sure, Max.

Jesse Thorn: Tell me about this pig. I'm not interested in hearing more about George Clooney as an artist or performer.

Richard Kind: You want the pig?

Jesse Thorn: I am just so happy to know that he had a pig for a long time.

Richard Kind: He did, and I'm gonna tell you: at the end? Good eatin'.

[00:20:00]

(They laugh.)

Max was a great pig given to him as a birthday gift by a girlfriend. He loved Max. He really, really loved Max. And he would—Max would sleep at the foot of his bed, and it was great. He would hop up on the couch while we're watching football. And his skin was dry, so you could draw—you know, write things in his skin.

(*Jesse titters.*)

And he was great. And it was—you know, it was sad when he passed. He was a pet. You know? What am I gonna say about a pig? A man and his pig.

Jesse Thorn: (*Giggles.*) That makes me happy! I love thinking about a pig in the house. It makes me so happy!

Richard Kind: Oh, yeah. It was great.

Jesse Thorn: It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. I'm talking with actor Richard Kind.

When you started at Second City, were you an improviser?

Richard Kind: No. Not at all. Not at all! Never improvised.

Jesse Thorn: How did you get cast?

Richard Kind: I will tell you. This is why we're interviewing me.

(*They chuckle.*)

I went and did a show that was formed out of improvisation, of which—it was called *Mega Fun*. We had about eight people in the cast. We would meet for every night for about two months and improvise, blah, blah, blah. But! Any idiot can become good. Was I great? I was never great, but I was always pretty good. And then I became the big macher there. I was the big, I was the go-to guy. Everybody knew who I was. After so many years of being there, I was the big guy on the thing.

Now, many people were very upset at Second City that I didn't tour, 'cause they had a touring company—which is how you cut your teeth. Then they had a space in the back, called the ETC company. I didn't do that. I went right to mainstage. And there were people who had been there for a couple of years and were still not on mainstage. Why did I get to go? I don't—I'm not in everything. If I'm doing a film, maybe I work three days tops. *Only Murder in the Building*, I—blah, blah, blah. You know, so many—it's an hour, it's a half hour. I'm gonna be in two minutes of it. But I want my two minutes to be so good that you remember me in the scene. That is my goal. And if you're playing tennis with a better player, you might have a game where you can play better than he does, and that's what I wanna do.

Jesse Thorn: You have an IMDb page with 300 credits on it. I'm not gonna go through your IMDb, but I do want to talk briefly about *Clifford*.

Clifford is a film that folks may or may not remember, in which Martin Short played—adult Martin Short played a child.

Richard Kind: A 10-year-old boy.

Jesse Thorn: By essentially wearing shoes on his knees. I mean, a little bit more than that, (*chuckling*) but essentially by wearing shoes on his knees. The character is one of the most intense and abrasive central characters in a comedy that I've ever seen in my life.

Richard Kin: It's *The Bad Seed*. It's *The Bad Seed* funny.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. It is madness, that movie. I really like it. My friend Tom Scharpling, it's his favorite film, and he one day told me, "You should actually watch it."

Richard Kind: Have you ever seen it with an audience?

Jesse Thorn: I haven't.

Richard Kind: I encourage you to seek it out and watch it with an audience.

Jesse Thorn: Did you know what you were signing up for is my question?

Richard Kind: Ohhhh, no! Marty has been very kind to me my whole career. He's really a good man. He likes me. And he, I think, was responsible for me playing the father. Not a very funny role. I was—you know, I was not—I don't want to say a straight man. I was a foil. Okay? Do you remember who Edgar Kennedy is?

Jesse Thorn: No.

Richard Kind: Do you remember the Marx Brothers scene where Chico is—where they're at the popcorn stand and they burn—I think it's "A Day at the Races", and just Edgar Kennedy just goes (*growls and grumbles unintelligibly*).

(*Jesse agrees with a laugh.*)

All he does is he slaps his face (*groans angrily*) like that. These guys are wreaking havoc on him. That's who I was. And I did it well. In any case, *Clifford* was a movie at an early age in my career. So, did I know—? I can't read—I read a script, and I don't know really what the tenor of the movie is or what the tone will be. And if you ask me? (*Dropping his voice.*) It's a terrible movie. It's terrible. But over time, the anarchy of it was by design, and I appreciate it. But when I saw it with an audience? Oh.

[00:25:00]

Transition: A whooshing noise.

Clip:

Father (Clifford): (*Furiously.*) Well, you did it, didn't you?! You did it again, didn't you? You're banned from the flight.

Clifford: No!

Father: (*Snowballing angrily.*) They're not gonna allow you back on the plane, which means that I'm gonna miss the convention tomorrow, which means that I'm gonna lose thousands of dollars in speaker's fees. Do you understand me?! Do you understand what—(*stops suddenly*). Where did you get that Walkman? Did you steal it?

Clifford: No.

Father: (*Through gritted teeth.*) Oh my god. Is there no end to your madness?!

Clifford: N-no. A kindly old priest gave it to me, Da.

Father: You're lying.

Clifford: No!

Father: You are lying to your own father's face! I have a good mind to leave you right here, you little animal!

Speaker: What a terrible thing to say to such a sweet child!

Transition: A whooshing noise.

Jesse Thorn: It's madness. It's sort of a trial too. Like, it's so intense. (*Chuckles.*)

Richard Kind: It's so intense. Oh, well thanks to me. But really, Chuck Grodin. It's—oh, Marty's just—Marty is relentless too, as a person. He'll— During that movie— I've told this story before. He—well, I'm sitting in an airplane seat, and he has to climb over me to go to the bathroom. And of course, he steps on my crotch and he's going, “Oh no,” and I'm going “(*Strangled yelling.*) Augh! Clifford!” Like that.

And every time he would pass by, into my ear—so that the on the microphone didn't pick it up, but I'll do it here—he went (*blows a raspberry*) like that.

(*Jesse erupts into laughter.*)

Just in my ear, very subtly. (*Blows a raspberry.*) Just a little noise.

And it would make me laugh—the sound, the vibration, because he was so close. And I would break. And I can't break, because I'm so angry! And take after take—and I mean, take after take—he was relentless! The director begged him, “Marty, please, let's just get one.” He would not do it. He was really— And I've—we brought it up before, (*chuckling*) and he just laughs! Because he knows how mean and funny he could be. Oh, it was killing me! But I encourage the movie with an audience. But ehh, it's a good movie on its own. It's fine.

Jesse Thorn: We'll wrap up with Richard Kind after a quick break. Keep it locked. It's *Bullseye* from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

Promo:

Jesse Thorn: The following are real reenactments of pretend emergency calls.

Music: Dramatic, ominous music settles in.

Operator: 911.

Caller 1: My husband! It's my husband!

Operator: Calm down, please. What about your husband?

Caller 1: (*Sobbing in terror.*) He—he loads the dishwasher wrong! Please help! Oh, please help me!

(*Scene change.*)

Operator: Where are you now, ma'am.

Caller 2: At the kitchen table. I was with my dad. He mispronounces words. Intentionally.

(*Scene change.*)

John Hodgman: There are plenty of podcasts on the hunt for justice, but only one podcast has the courage to take on the silly crimes. *Judge John Hodgman*, the only true crime podcast that won't leave you feeling sad and bad and scared for once. Only on MaximumFun.org.

Transition: Thumpy synth with light vocalizations.

Jesse Thorn: Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. I'm talking with Richard Kind. He is, of course, a character actor of long standing. You might have seen him as one of the stars of the sitcom *Spin City* back in the '90s, or for that matter on *Mad About You*. He's been a regular on *Curb Your Enthusiasm* for years and years. He's the announcer on *Everybody's Live with John Mulaney*. He was in the most recent season of *Poker Face*. He worked with the Coen Brothers in *A Serious Man*. I could keep listing credits, or we could get back into my conversation with the beloved Richard Kind. So, let's do the latter.

You're touring the nation and world with your own solo performance.

Richard Kind: That's... not the right word.

Jesse Thorn: Okay. Now, my understanding is you're playing Mark Twain, is that correct?

(They laugh.)

Richard Kind: I'm Mark Twain as done by Paul Robeson.

No, it's um—I won't—I don't want to go do those Comic Con things yet. You know, the signing the autographs. Because then you are only—you are asking people for money because of your fame. Now, I know they're happy to meet and everything, and I'm not gonna deny them or disparage what they like. But I don't wanna be a part of it.

Jesse Thorn: *(Interrupting.)* But they're wrong to like you.

(They laugh.)

Richard Kind: But it's— My career has been really interesting. And I got stories that come out of it. Or I know stories. I hang around with other actors in the makeup room, you know, while you're waiting for the lighting to be set up, and you swap stories. So, there are stories I remember, or stories—I hope that some of these things were interesting! Dear god! And I got plenty more. You know, how many things out of 300 have we talked about? I got plenty of stories.

[00:30:00]

So, I wanted to tour with a program called *How Not to Be a Star*. Okay? Because I'm not a star. I am a supporting actor. It's what I love being. I think the *New Yorker* called me a second banana. *(Unclear.)* I'm not a second banana. I'm a supporting actor, supporting character. That's what I do. Eh, okay. So, we start out with a clip reel that sort of shows—so you don't have to go on the IMDb page. We have a moderator who asks me questions. What he really is is the string of a lawnmower, which goes vroom! Vroom! Vuh-rum-vava-vava! And I just start talking, and I just tell these stories. Like I've done here!

You know, you said, “Richard *(babbling sound)*.” And I could have—I didn't need you here. You could have gone out and got a cup of coffee. I can keep talking!

Jesse Thorn: I did. Did you not notice? You missed it.

Richard Kind: Really? Oh, okay. Oh, wait ‘til you hear about me! Okay. Then after, eh, 50 minutes of that, I’ll read a short story written by Simon Rich, which we did in a Broadway play called *All In*—which was me, John Mulaney, Fred Armisen. It was Renée Elise Goldsberry, and then Chloe Fineman took over for her.

Jesse Thorn: Simon Rich, one of the funniest people in the world.

Richard Kind: In the world! In the world.

Jesse Thorn: Brilliant. A kind, lovely man as well.

Richard Kind: And—yes. So, we read that short story. And then I do a question and answer, a la Carol Burnett. You know, just walking the front of the stage, having a conversation with the audience, coming back, maybe being funny that way. I like to think it goes quickly. I have heard from audiences who have seen many of those things it's really good. I think it is too. That's my goal here is to entertain. So, that's what—it's a seminar and funny stories, and maybe you'll learn something.

Jesse Thorn: Am I invited? That sounds like a great time.

Richard Kind: Always!

Jesse Thorn: Great.

Richard Kind: Oh, if you got the 40 bucks, absolutely. Of course.

(They laugh.)

Of course, you are. Yeah, I'm doing it in various cities. I'm doing it in Atlanta. I'm doing it in Tacoma, Washington. San Francisco. In Bergen, New Jersey. Yeah. I got a couple. And they're good.

Jesse Thorn: You have come to a point in your career where people are sitting across small tables from you and telling you how wonderful you are. I'm one of those people. I think you're the best, Richard. How does that feel? *(Beat.)* Do you want every time to say, “I’m lucky,” or are you able to process it and accept it?

Richard Kind: I still think I'm pulling the wool over people's eyes. As I told Terry Gross, it's bottomless. I need to be told, and yet I don't believe it all. I worry that there's a role that's gonna come that I can't do. I love it. That word, process—you're right; a wall goes up a little bit. But I do love it. I wanna love it so that my kids can hear it from other people. And yet when they do hear that, I think they're going, “Alright, enough, Dad. Enough about you.”

And yet, I'm an actor. I do think I'm selfish that way. How do I feel about it? I don't know. I guess so. I guess so. I don't know. I really—I like being admired. I like being loved. But like, yeah. Okay. Enough. Yeah. That's how I feel.

Jesse Thorn: Love seems strong. I would say like a fondness is what I feel. Like, a strong fondness?

Richard Kind: Yeah. Yeah. And you wanna know something? People do tell me, “Oh, I hear you're the kindest man in showbiz. I hear you're so nice.” (*Sighs.*) I'm pulling the wool over their eyes not as much, but I think I'm a good guy.

Jesse Thorn: Is it possible that you are the good kind of salesman?

(*Richard agrees.*)

That you are leaving everyone better off?

Richard Kind: I'd like to think that. Even if I'm doing a role where you don't like me—as in you don't like my character, I'm entertaining, and I've enhanced your life. Absolutely. Yeah. Especially with comedy! My gosh. Boy, I can see this clip. This is like—but it is what it is! I have enhanced your life. That makes me feel really, really good.

Flip side of that, which I feel guilty about: somebody will stop me on the street.

[00:35:00]

“I was in the hospital. We watched you on the—you brought me such joy.”

And I go, “Thank you. Thank you. I appreciate that so much.” And inside my guilt is going, “I didn't do it for you. I did it because it was my job, and I like doing it.” So, there's that flip side too.

Jesse Thorn: Well, Richard Kind, I'm sure grateful for your time, and it's always really nice to see you. I hope I'll see you again soon.

Richard Kind: I hope so.

Jesse Thorn: Richard Kind, everyone. He's on a break from touring right now, but you can catch him on the most recent season of *Everybody's Live with John Mulaney*, where he has a surprisingly big part for an announcer. It's a hard show to describe, but it's very funny. As well as on the most recent season of *Poker Face*. But you know, everybody has a favorite Richard Kind part. Senior producer Kevin Ferguson says Uncle Arthur from the Coen Brothers movie *A Serious Man*. I really liked him on an Amazon show that I thought was very under-watched, called *Red Oaks*, alongside another wonderful character actor and old friend of Richard's, Paul Reiser.

Transition: Bright, dreamy synth.

Jesse Thorn: That's the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye* is created from the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun—as well as at Maximum Fun HQ overlooking beautiful MacArthur Park in Los Angeles, California. You may have heard MacArthur Park in the news. Maybe you even thought of us. I was actually in the studio the other day when the park filled with military vehicles and what turned out to be federal law enforcement personnel, including ones riding horses. The park was very quiet. It was mid-morning. And to see vehicles that looked like tanks—I don't know what tanks with tires are called; armored personnel carriers? But to see military-looking law enforcement personnel fill up the park in front of our office was genuinely terrifying, and I wouldn't wish it on anyone.

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 Hannah Moroz. Our video producer is Daniel Speer. We get booking help on *Bullseye* from Mara Davis. Our interstitial music comes from our friend Dan Wally. He's also called DJW. In fact, you can even download music from this show. Pay what you want at 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 and is distributed by NPR.

(Music fades out.)