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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](https://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. Eugenio Derbez has arguably earned the title of the most successful comedy actor in all of Latin America. He's starred in dozens of movies, was first on the call sheet for five hit television shows. He created and wrote several others. He's the voice of donkey in the Spanish language *Shrek* movies.

Seriously, he could not go out in public in Mexico City without getting mobbed. Because—I mean, you know—that just comes with the territory of being the most successful comedy actor in all of Latin America. Then in 2013, he wrote, starred in, and directed his biggest movie yet: *Instructions Not Included*. And it was a hit. Not just in Mexico, but also in the United States. It was an idea that on paper maybe sounded bad? Go to the United States, get a house in Los Angeles, and try to become a movie star in a new country in your 40s. But that bad idea worked! Eugenio Derbez starred in *How to Be a Latin Lover* in 2017, *Overboard* in 2018, and the Best Picture winning *Coda* in 2021.

**Transition:** A whooshing sound.

**Clip:**

**Music:** Playful piano.

**Bernardo (*Coda*):** You have no discipline. You are late. You are unprepared. You wanna know how I'm gonna teach you? I'm good at this. But I can't do my job unless you do yours. And I certainly don't need a lesson in failure from someone who's too afraid to even try.

**Transition:** A whooshing sound.

**Jesse Thorn:** These days, you can catch Eugenio in *Acapulco*. It's a show entering its fourth and final season on Apple TV+. *Acapulco* tells the story of Las Colinas, a hot pink painted luxury hotel in the beloved Mexican resort town for which the show is named. Eugenio Derbez plays Maximo. He's the show's protagonist and narrator. *Acapulco* jumps between timelines: the '70s, when Maximo was just a boy; the '80s, when Las Colinas was in its

heyday; and today, when Maximo is rich, retired, and living the good life—but the hotel is in steep decline.

I'm so excited to talk with Eugenio Derbez. Let's get right into it.

**Transition:** Bright, chiming synth.

**Jesse Thorn:** Eugenio Derbez, welcome to *Bullseye*! I'm so happy to have you on the show.

**Eugenio Derbez:** Oh, thanks for having me! And by the way, you are one of the few Americans that pronounce my name perfect.

**Jesse Thorn:** Can I tell you the truth?

**Eugenio Derbez:** Yeah. *(Laughs.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** I went—I was looking for video of you doing comedy in Mexico, and I went on to one of the popular video websites. I shouldn't say which one it is, but it was that one.

*(Eugenio laughs.)*

And one of the shorts was just called “Gringos Try to Pronounce Eugenio Derbez”.

*(Eugenio cackles.)*

And I was like, “Uh-oh. I don't wanna end up in part two!”

**Eugenio Derbez:** *(Cackling.)* That's funny. I didn't know that existed!

**Jesse Thorn:** I was terrified. It really put the fear of God in me. I was really like, “I better get my act together.”

**Eugenio Derbez:** No, you know, I don't care. I truly don't care, because I know it's difficult, and nobody has— You know, they don't have to know my name or how to pronounce it. So, it's okay. You can—I always say that you can call me Eugene. That is in Eugenio in Spanish. So, Gene, Eugene, Eugenio.

**Jesse Thorn:** Well, in elementary school Spanish class, my name was Chewy. So, you're welcome to call me that. Yeah.

**Eugenio Derbez:** Chewy? *(Laughs.)* Well, yeah, Jesse, Jesus, Chewy. Yeah. Makes sense.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, it's a short road.

**Eugenio Derbez:** Okay, Chewy.

*(They laugh.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** As I was watching *Acapulco*, one of the things that I was thinking about was the way that you write to multiple languages. Years ago, I interviewed some folks from *Los Espookys*. And one of the things that they had to do to make a show in Spanish for an English-speaking audience was write—and that show was mostly, but not totally, in Spanish—was write English language subtitles with writers.

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Like, the writers on the show were writing the subtitles in addition to writing the Spanish language dialogue. Like, rather than just translating them, they had writers writing them. How did you approach that on *Acapulco*?

**Eugenio Derbez:** It's exactly what you said. People think that it's just a matter of putting subtitles and translate to the other language, but that's not the way it works. I learned that when I moved here and I started doing movies that aren't bilingual. The first thing that I did just before *Acapulco* was a movie called *How to Be a Latin Lover*. And I had a huge fight with the director, because the movie was written in English. But in Spanish, I was supposed to do the translation to Spanish. And I was like, "This is not funny in Spanish." And then I gave the director an option. I was like, "This is funny."

And he was like, "Hm. What does that mean?"

I was like, "It means this, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah."

He was like, "That's not funny in English."

So, we were always fighting. Like, this is not funny in Spanish, but I need to say it in Spanish.

And he was like, "Yeah, but if we subtitle it, it's gotta be funny in English."

So, we were fighting so bad that we ended up deciding that. Let me, if I'm talking in Spanish, I will write it, so I can make it funny in Spanish. And then we can subtitle your joke in English, even if it's a different thing.

*(Jesse laughs.)*

Completely different line! And that's what we did.

**Jesse Thorn:** What's an example of a joke like that that was written in Spanish and didn't work in English or the other way around?

**Eugenio Derbez:** I'm gonna put an example that I just remembered with *Shrek*. Because I'm donkey's voice in *Shrek 1, 2, 3, 4*. I'm Donkey's voice. And I did—for the first time ever in Latin America, I did the adaptation of the script from English to Spanish. And I remember there's a line where they are torturing the ginger cookie.

**Transition:** A whooshing sound.

**Clip:**

**Gingie (*Shrek*):** Do you know the muffin man?

**Lord Farquaad:** The muffin man?

**Gingie:** (*Near tears.*) The muffin man!

**Lord Farquaad:** Yes, I know the muffin man—who lives on Drury Lane?

**Gingie:** Well... she's married to the muffin man.

**Lord Farquaad:** The muffin man?!

**Gingie:** THE MUFFIN MAN!

**Transition:** A whooshing sound.

**Eugenio Derbez:** I think it's a kid's song or something here. And I was like, “What is that?”

And they were like, “It's a kid's song,” or whatever.

And then I completely translate to Spanish song that's, “Pin Pon es un muñeco muy guapo de cartón.”

**Transition:**

**Clip:**

**Gingie:** Tú conoces a Pin Pon?

**Lord Farquaad:** Pin Pon?

**Gingie:** Si, Pin Pon!

**Lord Farquaad:** Si, es un muñeco muy guapo y de cartón.

**Gingie:** Si! Se lava su carita con agua y con jabón.

**Lord Farquaad:** Con agua y con jabón?!

**Gingie:** SI, SE LAVA LA CARITA!

**Transition:** A whooshing sound

**Eugenio Derbez:** (*Chuckles.*) So, it's completely different, but you can't imagine how many laughs it gets. Because people in Spanish understand much better that song than the original one. That's an example. It's a completely different line, because it's a different song. But the purpose of the writer—that is, to mock the song—is what is important.

**Jesse Thorn:** I've seen the *Toy Story* movies in Spanish many times for complicated reasons that have to do with buying the wrong DVD. But, um—

(*They titter.*)

—and small children not caring what language the movie they're watching is in. Like, the *Toy Story* movies are funny and wonderful, of course. But they're plot and character-driven in a way that is not that culturally specific, and their performances aren't that culturally specific. Like, as wonderful as, you know, Tim Allen is as a comedian, you can imagine the Tim Allen of another country performing that role with essentially the same dialogue.

**Eugenio Derbez:** Yeah.

**Jesse Thorn:** Eddie Murphy is the one of the funniest people ever, but he's so culturally specific. (*Chuckles.*)

**Eugenio Derbez:** Yes! (*Laughs.*)

**Jesse Thorn:** Like, leave aside the fairytale part—which is also very culturally specific—but like Eddie Murphy, as a guy, lives in a specific world of Eddie Murphyness. You know what I mean?

**Eugenio Derbez:** Yes, yes. Absolutely. And you know what? For some reason, the donkey feels more Mexican.

[00:10:00]

So, I hope you can, one, switch to Spanish *Shrek*. And you'll be surprised, because I feel that the voice the donkey in Spanish fits better, because it's— I feel that donkeys are Mexican, basically.

*(They laugh.)*

So, it sounds more Mexican in Spanish.

**Jesse Thorn:** We've got more to get into with Eugenio Derbez. After the break, we'll talk about why and how he made the jump from being a movie star in Mexico to a movie star here in the United States. It's *Bullseye* from [MaximumFun.org](https://MaximumFun.org) and NPR.

**Transition:** Thumpy synth with a syncopated beat.

**Jesse Thorn:** Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest, Eugenio Derbez, is one of the biggest actors in Latin America. He starred in the movies *Instructions Not Included*, *How to Be a Latin Lover*, and *Coda*. You can catch him on *Acapulco*. That show's fourth and final season is airing now on Apple TV+. Let's get back into our conversation.

You grew up with a mother who had been an actor, right? Was she working when you were a kid?

**Eugenio Derbez:** Yes, yes. She was the soap opera queen. She was probably the most popular actress on television when I was a kid. Yeah.

**Jesse Thorn:** That explains why you're too handsome to be funny.

*(They laugh.)*

**Eugenio Derbez:** Thank you. Yeah, but she was like a soap opera queen. She was in every single telenovela. And you know, back then we just had like three or four channels in Mexico, Open TV. So, my mom was really popular. And so, I was born— And my classmates were always asking me, “How do you feel that your mom is on TV? Should be exciting!”

I was like, “Well, for me it's like natural, normal.”

**Jesse Thorn:** Did you always intend to go into show business yourself?

**Eugenio Derbez:** Yes! I remember that I loved going to sets with my mom. Every time I had a day off at school, I didn't want to go to my dad's office, because it was full of desks, and I didn't get it. I always wanted to go to the television sets with my mom, and I was always asking her, “Can I be part of the—?” You know, if there was a train or a bank or whatever

with people involved, I was like, “Mom, can I be an extra in this scene?” I was always asking her for that. So. *(Chuckles.)* I really wanted to be an actor since I was a kid.

**Jesse Thorn:** Was actor specifically what you wanted to be?

**Eugenio Derbez:** Yes! Because I was fascinated by my mom. My mom, she was so committed to her job that I remember once, she was gonna do a telenovela where she was gonna play a maid that was literally— She came from a small town. She was like indigenous, and then she ended up marrying the boss. So, she went for a week. I remember that we dropped her off in the middle of nowhere, because she wanted to learn how to walk barefoot. And then she wanted to learn how to speak the dialect there. So, she was really committed. So, I was always like in awe every time I saw her crying.

Actually, there's a myth that she was able to cry either with her left or right eye, depending on where the camera was.

*(They laugh.)*

Yeah, you can Google it! It's there.

**Transition:** A whooshing sound.

**Clip:**

**Speaker:** Se pone bien verdad?

**Doctor:** Desgraciadamente no podemos saberlo. Precisamente vengo a avisarle que Mariana está en estado de coma.

**Speaker:** *(Distraught.)* Ah! No! *(Unclear)* coma! *(Weeping.)* Está no puede ser...

**Transition:** A whooshing sound.

**Eugenio Derbez:** She had this amazing ability to cry at any moment, any second, with both eyes. So, she was really, really good at it. And I wanted to be an actor, but I wanted to be a dramatic actor. I never wanted to be a comedian. Ever. It was not on my radar. It wasn't until I was 27 that someone hired me for a show—like a kind of a sketch show—when I realized that I was funny. But before that, I just wanted to be a dramatic actor like my mom.

[00:15:00]

**Jesse Thorn:** You just wanted to walk barefoot and speak K'iche', or whatever?

**Eugenio Derbez:** Exactly. Exactly. That's what I wanted. (*Laughs.*)

**Jesse Thorn:** Were you a serious person? Is that why? Were you pretentious? Were you a pretentious young man?

**Eugenio Derbez:** Yes. I was pretentious, probably. Because I was funny. That's what—I remember that I was funny. But I never made the link between, “Okay, I'm funny, but—” Probably because of my mom. I was like, “If I wanna be an actor, I have to be a dramatic, serious actor and take this really, really”—I had to commit, to be serious, to— You know, I didn't relate comedy in my life to comedy in my work. So. Until I was 27, and I realized that I was funny—kind of funny.

**Jesse Thorn:** How would you describe what's different between the comedy on television in Mexico and the United States?

**Eugenio Derbez:** Oh my god, it's completely different. It's insane. And in Mexico—and I would say in Latin America—no, I would say in Spanish. But even if you watch Univision, for example, here in the US— If you turn to the television shows, you'll see that comedy is really different. Everything is broad, big, loud. And here in the US everything's contained, grounded, real. So, I remember when I came to this country for first time, (*chuckles*) I made a big mistake. In Mexico, even though the style is broad and big, I was doing a show that—for Mexico—it was broad. Like, a live, cartoonish show that is very, very popular. You can ask any Latino in the US, and they know *Familia P. Luche*. It is like a—it's a show about a dysfunctional family.

**Music:** “Familia P. Luche” by Aleks Syntek.

*Familia peluche todos*

*Veremos cuanto tiempo van a soportar...*

*Hey! (Whoo-hoo!)*

*Hey! (Whoo-hoo!)*

*Eres un insecto, y hueles mal*

*Tu eres la tarada que yo quiero más*

*Eres un gusano triste e infeliz...*

*Delante de los niños no me digas así!*



*(Music fades out.)*

**Eugenio Derbez:** And I was very proud of *Familia P. Luche*, because it's very popular in all Latin America. So, I came here. I used to show my demo with *Familia P. Luche* to all the producers and directors. Of course, no one hired me. They were like, “What the hell is this?!” It was over the top, extremely broad. So, *(laughing)* every time I—when I finally got hired here in the US and I started doing my own productions, directors were doing a lot of research, and they found *Familia P. Luche*. So, when I got to set, they were always asking me, “No, don't move your face! Don't move your eyebrows! Don't move your—nothing! Don't move anything!”

*(Jesse laughs.)*

So, I had to, you know, like to retrain my face, my muscles, in order not to move—nothing!—to make comedy here, because here's completely different. Everything is contained, grounded. So, it's been a trip.

**Jesse Thorn:** I think *Acapulco* is a little bit of a hybrid in terms of tone and style, in addition to being multilingual. Not because the performances are super broad, but the way the show is presented, like it is the most plot-driven comedy I've ever seen on American television, for example. *(Chuckles.)*

*(Eugenio agrees.)*

And that's much more Latin American than it is from the United States.

**Eugenio Derbez:** Yeah, yeah. Absolutely. And yeah, that's right. It's exactly what you said. And we are trying to find the balance, because we have to please both audiences. And for some reason—I'm not kidding—the numbers that they gave me about the ratings of the show? We have more fans in the general market and more Americans loving the show than Latinos. So, I'm in awe. Every time I go to the park with my daughter, every time I see an American, I always bet my kids—or my family. When I see an American watching me, I'm like, “That guy is gonna ask me if I'm the guy from *Acapulco*. You'll see.”

[00:20:00]

And it always happens.

“You are the guy from—!”

I say, “*Acapulco*.”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah!”

And they know me for *Acapulco*. And Latinos? They don't mention *Acapulco* ever!

*(Jesse laughs.)*

They talk about my movies or my TV shows or whatever. But so, it's really funny. And I think that *Acapulco* is like the perfect mix.

**Jesse Thorn:** Eugenio, you were one of the biggest stars in all of Latin America, and you decided to come to the United States in your 40s.

**Eugenio Derbez:** Yeah.

**Jesse Thorn:** You're not someone who, you know, was 25, and somebody said, "Hey, this kid is hot. Let's put him into American showbusiness."

*(Eugenio chuckles.)*

You were a guy who had had a full career in Latin America that you could have just continued.

**Eugenio Derbez:** Yeah.

**Jesse Thorn:** Why wouldn't you just stay?

**Eugenio Derbez:** Since I was a kid, because my mom and I were in love with showbusiness, we were—every single week, we went to the movie theaters. And we watched three or four movies a day. I mean, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. And I just fell in love with movies, with Hollywood. And I watched the Oscars since I was a kid. I loved watching the Oscars. So, I have this obsession with Hollywood. And then I started working in Mexico. I had a very successful career, finally. And I forgot about my dream. And it wasn't until my mom passed away when I was 42 years old when—just two weeks after my mom died, someone from an agency in the US called me.

I always say that it was my mom from Heaven telling me, "Remember that you have a dream! Go for it!"

And that day, when I was 42 and I received that call, I said, "Wow, of course. I had a dream!" And that day I took the Yellow Pages and started looking for English lessons, because I just had the basics. That's why my English is a little bit broken, because I'm still learning. And I started like learning English, and I started flirting with Hollywood and trying to get into the, you know, movies or series or whatever. But! It wasn't until I was 52 when I finally did a movie that opened to me all the doors in Hollywood—a movie called *Instructions Not Included* that I directed, starred, and produced, and co-wrote. And that movie became the highest grossing Spanish language film ever, worldwide. And that's when my agents and my managers and everyone were like, "It's now or never."

And I remember that I told my production, my—everyone in Mexico, I told, “I think I'm gonna go to the US and start from scratch.”

And everyone was like. “Are you crazy? I mean, you have everything here. You are the biggest comedian in Mexico! Your shows are number one here. Are you gonna shut down your career and go to the US and start from scratch?” And I said yes, and I did it! And everyone was against it, because I was 52 and (*unclear*) have kids.

**Jesse Thorn:** Yeah, because it was a bad idea.

**Eugenio Derbez:** It was a bad idea, but for some reason I felt— Inside of me, my excitement was so big that I was like, “I don't care if I fail. I need to try.”

**Jesse Thorn:** So, before *Instructions Not Included*, were you flying to Los Angeles and, you know, auditioning in pilot season?

(*Eugenio confirms.*)

Alongside other, you know, handsome Latino 48-year-olds, for the job of Dad on a CBS drama?

**Eugenio Derbez:** (*Chuckles.*) Yeah, I was constantly flying from Mexico to LA. For example, before *Instruction Not Included*, I did a *Jack and Jill* with Adam Sandler.

**Transition:** A whooshing sound.

**Clip:**

**Felipe (*Jack and Jill*):** This is my friend, Jill.

**Jill:** Hi.

**Felipe:** That's my father, my mama, my brother Juan, my other brother Juan, Juan Jr., my sister Juanita, my Grandma Juangelina. And that's—(*playfully*) eeey!

(*Laughter.*)

**Jack:** I was gonna say, that's a lot of Juans!

**Transition:** A whooshing sound.

[00:25:00]

**Eugenio Derbez:** I end up marrying Adam Sandler in that movie. (*Laughter.*) I played two characters there—the gardener and the grandma. I did a Broadway play at the Helen Hayes Theater. So, after I tried television, theater on Broadway, and movies, and nothing happened, that's when I said, “Okay, I tried. I'm going back to Mexico, and I'm gonna do my movies and my TV shows, et cetera.” So, I quit the American Dream. I did my movie, *Instructions Not Included*, in Mexico. Boom. Exploded. And that's when I got this call that it's now or never. And that's when I said, “Okay, I'm gonna go for it. But now, not from Mexico. I'm gonna move to the US.” And that's when I decided to.

**Jesse Thorn:** Why did you decide to go from that to making movies that were in both English and Spanish? Why do both at the same time?

**Eugenio Derbez:** Because when I finally came to Hollywood, and doors opened after *Instructions Not Included*, everyone wanted me to replay the success of *Instructions Not Included*. And they were like, “Okay, let's do another Spanish language film.”

And I was like, “Nnnno. I'm not moving to the US to keep doing the things that I was doing in Mexico. I'm moving to the US, because I wanna conquer another audience. So, I want to do English speaking movies or shows.”

And everyone was like freaking out like, “Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. Wait. Because you don't have an audience in the US. So, we came up with this idea.”

“Well, okay, let's do this bilingual thing, so I can have my core audience. I can please my core audience, but at the same time, I'm trying to get new fans and new audiences into the movie theaters.” why I started doing these bilingual movies like *How to Be a Latin Lover*, *Overboard*, *The Ballet*, et cetera. *Acapulco*. Because we wanted to please my audience, but at the same time we wanted to open new path for a new audience.

**Jesse Thorn:** Were you more interested in conquering the United States as a producer/director/star? Or were you more interested in conquering the United States as an... I don't mean this in a rude way, but like as an artist? Like, did you wanna be as successful a businessperson—as successful a showbusiness guy as you had been in Mexico? Or did you want to do a different thing in the United States?

**Eugenio Derbez:** I feel that at the beginning I wanted to be the same as in Mexico. I wanted to—and that was probably my ego. I wanted to be in front of the camera. I wanted to be the—Because in Mexico, I do everything. I always like— I'm an actor, producer, director, writer. I'm involved in all the process. But here in the US—when I moved to the US, I just started acting because I didn't know the humor in the US. I was afraid of making mistakes. I always thought, “I don't know what they laugh at in the US, so it doesn't translate. So, I'm not gonna write or direct. I'm just gonna act and produce.”

And lately, I think—or I feel—I'm ready to be more behind the scenes, behind cameras. And so, right now I'm more interested in producing than starring in front of the cameras.

**Jesse Thorn:** Was part of the appeal of coming to the United States not just the new challenge, but also the relief of being somewhere where you weren't one of the most famous people?

**Eugenio Derbez:** Yeah! That's a great question. I enjoyed so much—and I still enjoy so much when I'm able to walk in the streets. I... I cannot do that in Mexico. Well, depends on the neighborhood.

[00:30:00]

But mostly, I can't. I'm always like in the car, and I go from my house, car, restaurant, and back. But I cannot walk. Here in the US, I can walk. I can go anywhere. And there's always Latinos that know me. But I can have a more—like, a normal life, and I enjoy that very, very much. I like it, honestly. *(Laughs.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** We'll wrap up with Eugenio Derbez after a quick break. Keep it locked. It's *Bullseye* from [MaximumFun.org](https://MaximumFun.org) and NPR.

#### **Promo:**

**Music:** “Building Wings” by Rhett Miller, a spirited acoustic guitar number.

**John Moe:** Hey, it's John Moe from *Depresh Mode*. Every week on our show, we have honest, humane conversations with artists, entertainers, and experts about what it's like to live with an interesting mind. I just interviewed Gavin Rossdale from the band Bush. You might be wondering: what would a successful, handsome, popular musician know about mental health? Turns out, lots!

**Gavin Rossdale:** All the time, we're like—we're forced into happy situations, sad situations, challenging situations—happy, sad, challenging. And it just never ends! And why should it? You know, we're just the sum of all these journeys.

**John Moe:** Check out *Depresh Mode with John Moe* every Monday at [MaximumFun.org](https://MaximumFun.org) or wherever you get your podcasts.

*(Music ends.)*

**Transition:** Thumpy synth with a syncopated beat.

**Jesse Thorn:** This is *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. I'm here with Eugenio Derbez. He's one of the most successful actors in Latin America and the star of the Apple TV+ show *Acapulco*.

How much of the time do you live here in Los Angeles, and how much of the time are you in Mexico City?

**Eugenio Derbez:** Well, I've been living in LA for the last 11 years, already. And I go to Mexico like probably... depends. Because last week—last year, I mean. Last year, I shot a series in Mexico, and I was living there for three or four months. But normally, I go to Mexico probably once a month. And I go for three/four days. No more than that. So, I spend like probably a month in Mexico. Usually a year.

**Jesse Thorn:** What do you miss most about Mexico when you're in LA?

**Eugenio Derbez:** The food. Food. *(Laughs.)* The people, also. We are more relaxed. There are pros and cons, but we are more relaxed. We're not that, uh— You know, especially— well, the driving. Driving in Mexico City, you need to fight for your space in Mexico City. *(Laughs.)* So, my wife is constantly lecturing me, like, “Nah! You’re—don't drive like a Mexican!” She's always telling me, “Ah, here comes the Mexican! Come on. Cut the line. Do that.” She's always complaining, because she says that I—still, I drive like a Mexican in LA. *(Chuckles.)* But... And in Mexico, I feel that I belong there—when I'm driving, at least.

So, I miss the people. I miss the food and sometimes the weather too.

**Jesse Thorn:** Things have changed a lot for Mexicans living in the United States and Mexican Americans in the time that you have lived in Los Angeles. How do you experience that? I presume you, when you came, you probably got an O-1 visa, right? Like, that's like “person of extraordinary ability”, or— I can't remember what it's called exactly. *(Chuckles.)*

**Eugenio Derbez:** Yes. Yeah. *(Unclear.)*

**Jesse Thorn:** But it's like a—yeah. It's like if you're a gifted—if you're a famous cinematographer, you can come live and work in the United States. Or if you're a famous nuclear scientist, you can come live and work in the United States with an O-1 visa. But obviously, most people who come from Mexico to the United States don't have access to that.

What has it been like for you to watch the ways that the lives of particularly first-generation Mexicans living in the United States have changed over the last 11 years?

**Eugenio Derbez:** It's a completely different city now. That's what I feel. I was always— every time everyone asked me, “How do you feel in LA?”, I was like, “I love it! It's a great city.” But I feel that in the last couple of years, especially after COVID probably, it's another city. And regarding to my people—well, for the last month, it's been crazy.

[00:35:00]

LA feels like a ghost town compared to what it was a month ago. And I remember the last two weekends, I've been like going to malls or parks, and it's empty. It's lacking life and soul. Because LA is full of immigrants, and now they're scared. They don't wanna go out. And the worst part is that they're like—they are just picking up good people, hardworking people,

people that are working for the US that are making America great. And they're just like sending them back to a country that is no longer their country, where they—probably they don't have a family anymore, because their families are in the us. So, it's really sad.

**Jesse Thorn:** As someone who was able to get residency in the United States through very unusual circumstances—right? Most people don't have the chance to say at their—you know, head down to the consulate and say, “Hey, I'm the most famous comic actor in Mexico. I'd like to come to the United States.”

*(They chuckle.)*

Right? I think you're in a sort of a unique position to express on behalf of the people who didn't have that opportunity what it means to be in the United States and why people come to the United States. Like, I think some folks in the United States—native born citizens—might think like, “Oh, well, Eugenio did it the right way. He did it legally. Other people did it illegally. So, they're criminals.” What is the—where does that argument fall down for you?

*(They chuckle.)*

**Eugenio Derbez:** There's a big difference between being a criminal and just not having your paperwork in order. You know? Sometimes, you're missing a paper. Or some people that I know, they're just afraid of going to the consulate or trying to— Because they've been working for a year or two without papers, and then they continue working like that until this happens. But that doesn't make them criminals. And I feel that they love this country as much as they love their own. And some of them, even more. Because as I told you before, when they deport these people and they go back to their countries, they don't know that country anymore. Their country is the US.

Jesse, we need to understand as a society that this is wrong. What they're doing right now is exactly what we see in the movies when we are watching the Nazis. Remember those scenes in the movies where you see the Nazis knocking at the door and the Jews hiding in a basement or in a closet? It's exactly the same thing. And it's unbelievable that we are living the same thing nowadays, and nobody's doing anything. It is insane.

**Jesse Thorn:** Well, Eugenio, thank you so much for taking all this time to talk to me. It was really nice to meet you and really nice to get to talk to you. I sure enjoyed watching *Acapulco* as well.

**Eugenio Derbez:** Thank you. Thank you very, very, very much for this time, for having me finally here. And yeah, watch *Acapulco*. That's on Apple TV+. Family friendly. You can watch it with the entire family. You're gonna have a lot, a lot of fun.

**Jesse Thorn:** Eugenio Derbez, folks. Catch him on *Acapulco*. Its fourth and final season is airing now on Apple TV+.

**Transition:** Relaxed synth with a syncopated beat.

**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. Things have been quiet in the park lately. It's kind of a bummer.

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. Special thanks to Jacob Derwin at Technica House in New York City for recording our interview with Eugenio Derbez. We get booking help on *Bullseye* from Mara Davis. Our interstitial music comes from our friend Dan Wally—also known as DJW.

[00:40:00]

You can find his music at [DJWsounds.bandcamp.com](https://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://MaximumFun.org) and is distributed by NPR.

*(Music fades out.)*