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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. Take a second to think back to 2013. If it helps, you can dig that “keep calm and carry on” poster out of your closet; maybe do the Harlem Shake for a Vine. Now, I want you to think about the biggest songs from that year: Bruno Mars, Macklemore. It wasn't a big year for rock music. But then think about “The Wire”, the smash hit from my guests, Alana, Danielle and Este Haim, known collectively as HAIM.

That's all caps, H-A-I-M.

(Music fades in.)

But it is a very specific kind of rock song. It has the bouncy drums of your favorite Lindsey Buckingham song, upbeat guitar riffs like you might hear on a Thin Lizzy tune. And then when Danielle HAIM sings the first verse, she hits every syllable double hard, like Elvis Costello.

Music: “The Wire” from the album *Days Are Gone* by HAIM.

Just so I could say that

Well, I know, I know, I know, I know

That you're gonna be okay anyway

You know there's no rhyme or reason

For the way it turned out to be

I didn't go and try to change my mind

Not intentionally

I know it's hard to hear me say it

But I can't bear to stay in

I just know, I know, I know, I know

That you're gonna be okay anyway

Always keep your heart locked tight

Don't let your mind retire

(Music fades out.)

Jesse Thorn: It's different, right? “The Wire” and the album on which it appeared, *Days Are Gone*, launched HAIM’s career, but their success wasn't overnight. The sisters first performed together at the encouragement of their parents, who were themselves musicians. They were a family band. They played at farmer's markets and community events and covered “Mustang Sally”. The three sisters left their folks behind and formed the band HAIM in 2007. They gigged night after night after night. And the rest is history, I guess.

I am thrilled to get to talk with Alana, Este, and Danielle. Before we do, let's hear a single from their great new album, *I Quit*. This song is called “All Over Me”.

Music: “All Over Me” from the album *I Quit* by HAIM.

Your place or my place, it doesn't matter to me

Your lips, my tongue, they're intertwined

You want us locked in, and I'll give you my sympathy

But that's one thing I won't define

(Music fades out.)

Jesse Thorn: Hi, and welcome to *Bullseye*! It's so nice to see you and see you again.

Alana Haim: I'm so happy to be here. I finally get to bring my sisters to this beautiful room.

(Jesse laughs.)

We all get to get to know each other a little bit better in this beautiful room. The last time I was here—I mean, I was here years ago, but I was very excited to get the call to bring in all three! Very stoked.

Jesse Thorn: Oh yeah. Did you give everybody some prep?

Alana Haim: I mean, what prep? Just let's have a good time!

Danielle Haim: Uh, we didn't—we didn't get prep.

Este Haim: Yeah, we didn't get prep.

Danielle Haim: We didn't get prepped.

Alana Haim: I just said, "Let's go have a good time in a cutie little box. The studio is great. The vibes are good."

Jesse Thorn: I'm glad that you think this is a cutie little box. It's often been compared to like a set from *Saw*.

Danielle Haim: This is great!

Jesse Thorn: We did change out the wall panels and introduced this console.

Alana Haim: Yeah, it's great!

Danielle Haim: That's gorgeous.

Alana Haim: I don't think the console was here the last time I was here.

(Jesse confirms.)

But you know what? I'm into it. Let's go.

Este Haim: We like the upgrade. It's a great upgrade.

Alana Haim: Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: Thank you very much. You three haven't put out a record in quite a while until this new thing. What were you guys up to?

Alana Haim: Well, there's like a little bit of a of break. Because with *Women in Music*, it came out literally smack dab in COVID, year 2020. And we had to wait two years to tour. And so, putting out an album and then also—I mean, I don't know. I hate talking about COVID, 'cause it's like a weird—it's such a weird time, and like it kind of feels like a weird fever dream. But there was a point where people were saying that live music was never gonna come back.

Jesse Thorn: I mean, in that period where people started touring two years or so after COVID, it was really weird. 'Cause everyone was touring at the same time, 'cause everybody needed to work for a living.

(They agree.)

Alana Haim: Yeah, I think we were all like itching to go back on the road. But to put out an album in 2020— We're used to putting out albums and immediately going on tour. And every day we'd be like, “Is there any news? Is there any news?” And it'd be like, nope, no news; not playing anything. Like, no—all the venues were closed.

And so then, after everything started to open up, we were one of the first bands. We were like part of that class of post-COVID touring musicians. And then we toured for like a year, almost two years. And then it was like, *(chuckling)* wait, we gotta come back and make another album. So, we don't like, you know, waiting this amount of time, but I do feel like there's a bit of an excuse.

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Jesse Thorn: Was it as weird being onstage playing music at that time—just post-COVID—as it was— Like, I toured a little bit doing comedy. And there was like an odd combination of people being terrified to be there and people being desperate to be there at the same time.

Este Haim: Well, we did a lot of outdoor stuff too. Which was—

Alana Haim: And also, we were just like grateful. The gift of playing live music was the most overwhelming. To have that taken away for so long? And like, again, not knowing when it was gonna come back, it could have— We could have just not had live music for five years, and I would've been devastated. But I think playing those shows, it really did rejuvenate this true love for playing live and like being like, “Oh my god, I forgot how amazing this feeling is.” And then to have people show up—

And again, of course, there was that little push and pull of like, *(nervously)* “Ooh, ooh, ooh.” We did do a lot—as you said, a lot of outdoor things. But I think everyone was just so grateful to have that experience again.

Jesse Thorn: Was it unusual to have that period in your life where you weren't touring, you weren't recording, and thus you weren't constantly with your family members that you've been working with for 20 years?

Este Haim: (*Chuckles.*) Yeah. It was weird.

Alana Haim: It was weird! Yeah. I mean, but the thing is like we really did work through the whole pandemic. I mean, we were— It's not like we put out *Women in Music* and didn't have to do anything. I mean, we had to— If anything, it was like how do you put out an album? I shot *Licorice Pizza*. But also, putting out an album, it was like, “Okay, how do we make a music video? And how do we, you know, promote this album being at home?”

And it really kind of—we were doing really funky things. And luckily, you know, people listened to *Women in Music*. And I think now it's just crazy; 'cause now we put out *I Quit*, and now we get to go on tour. So, like it kind of feels like— Like, I miss this feeling, this energy of putting out an album and then immediately going on tour. Like, it feels—in a weird way—fresh, even though I've been doing it— This is our fourth album, but yeah. (*Chuckling.*)

Jesse Thorn: Este, you're nodding. Does it feel the same to you?

Este Haim: Oh yeah. I think that we're just ready to go on tour. I think that making records is fun, but I think touring for us is where we have the most fun, you know?

Jesse Thorn: It's hard though!

Danielle Haim: Touring? Well—

Este Haim: Is it?

(*Jesse laughs.*)

Alana Haim: 'Cause you tour—

Este Haim: Is it hard because you do comedies? You do comedy tours.

(*Jesse confirms.*)

Danielle Haim: Yeah, what's the hard part for you?

Jesse Thorn: The traveling. Not the shows. The shows are great!

(*They all agree.*)

The shows are awesome. But the traveling is really hard.

Alana Haim: I love the traveling. I love waking up in a new city and like not knowing where you—and feeling like discombobulated. That's such an amazing feeling.

Este Haim: And exploring too.

Alana Haim: Yeah! Like, exploring. Yeah.

Este Haim: And I don't know. I love it. It's my favorite part of the job.

Jesse Thorn: What's an exploration that you've made that delighted you?

Este Haim: Well, I think in every city we kind of have the same routine. I think it's: you wake up, Danielle gets on her phone and goes, “What's the best coffee? What's the best breakfast? Where are we gonna go?” And then we'll either walk there—and we go there with the band. We'll do that, and then we'll go, “Okay, is there fun—? Is there fun—?”

Danielle Haim: Activity.

Este Haim: Activity to do in the city. Will we—? I don't know. And then we'll figure that out.

Jesse Thorn: What kind of activities are we talking about here?

(They talk over each other.)

Alana Haim: You can walk. I mean, even just walking around!

Este Haim: Aquarium, museums.

Alana Haim: Aquariums, museums. Yeah. Like, we do the whole thing.

Este Haim: We like to explore, you know? While we're still young, you know!

Jesse Thorn: I love that you guys like activities!

Este Haim: *(Chuckling.)* You don't like activities?

Jesse Thorn: When I tour with my friend John Hodgman, John does not like activities.

Este Haim: Ohhhh.

Danielle Haim: Interesting.

Alana Haim: Well, maybe you guys—this is why you need to— This is gonna be your switch, and you're gonna love the travel. You need to do activities.

Jesse Thorn: I don't know. Maybe so! What was different about recording this record after a few years off?

Danielle Haim: Huh. Recording it. Um. We work with Rostam, who's an amazing producer. And I think the way that he records instruments is amazing. I think we did a lot of like— We did basic tracking at this studio in the valley, actually right down the street from where we grew up, called Valentine Studios in North Hollywood. But most of it was done also just in his home studio. And we just set up a drum set in his living room of the studio and—I don't know.

Este Haim: We're all single.

Alana Haim: Oh yeah, we were all single. That was—

Danielle Haim: I mean, that was like a huge energy that was kind of pulsing through the *(unclear)*.

Alana Haim: Yeah, the record?

Este Haim: Through the airwaves.

Danielle Haim: That was definitely different.

Alana Haim: It was pulsating.

Danielle Haim: You know, I think—yeah, it was the first time that I was single in ten years? Nine years?

Jesse Thorn: And your ex-boyfriend had co-produced some of the previous records, right?

Danielle Haim: Yes. Yes. With me. But yeah, so this was—you know—different in that sense too. And we were really just also like post-COVID, just like going out all the time in LA as three single sisters. I think it was really...

(Jesse chuckles.)

Este Haim: Look out, world.

Danielle Haim: Look out, world.

Este Haim: Look out, LA.

Jesse Thorn: Were you walking next to each down the sidewalks (*unclear*)?

Alana Haim: Yeah, just like our music videos.

Danielle Haim: (*Unclear*), Jawbreaker.

Alana Haim: No, it wasn't even on the side. We were always in the center of the street. No matter where we were going, we were just stopping traffic.

(*Jesse laughs.*)

Never on the sidewalk. But no, I think that when it comes to this album—

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—I think just watching as like a baby sister, having a bird's eye view of my middle sister, really— I mean, Danielle's produced all of our albums, but especially on this one, I really think because of your confidence level, her production on this album is insane. Like, I always talk about “Everybody's Trying to Figure Me Out”, because I really do think that once that song was over—like, once we like had written it and started producing it and then listening to the final product— Danielle plays drums on every single one of our albums, including this one. And when she was making the drum beat for “Everybody's Trying to Figure Me Out”, it was like insane to watch.

Music: “Everybody's Trying to Figure Me Out” from the album *I Quit* by HAIM.

Everybody's trying to figure me out

Oh, and that's all alright

My top's down and I'm losing ground

Oh, and that's alright

(*Music fades out.*)

Alana Haim: And I think—not to gas you up 'cause you're like right next to me.

Danielle Haim: (*Chuckles.*) I'll take it.

Alana Haim: But I think there's like an insane confidence level that—it's our fourth album, and just Danielle has learned so much production wise. And she, you know, cooks behind the board. (*Chuckles.*) So many faders. Danielle's like in behind the music, like with the faders. Yeah.

Danielle Haim: No, I think there is a very— that's like a bit more room to breathe, I would say, in the production elements. But yeah, drums are a huge thing for us. It's the first instrument we all learned, and I really did focus on the drums. And Rostam's such an amazing producer and engineer with making drums, to me, sound really unique and—yeah.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, I really noticed the drums on this record.

Danielle Haim: Oh, thank you. That's a huge compliment.

Jesse Thorn: There's a lot of really distinctive sort of drum sounds.

Danielle Haim: Sonics, yeah. Cool. Thank you.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. I assume that at least some of them were sampled, but—?

Alana Haim: Some of them are, but...

Danielle Haim: “Relationships”. There's a bunch of samples in there, but I am playing live over it. But no, most of it's just kit. I mean, I guess it's kind of half and half. I will say like even though I do play drums, we're a huge fan of program drums. And I mean, talk about Prince. I mean, you know, the Linn for him was so big, and we just grew up loving the mixture of live and synthetic drums.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, a lot of those beautiful records with those early drum machines—like those Sly Stone records and those Prince records—

Danielle Haim: Ah, so good.

Jesse Thorn: It's them programming drums and then playing drums on top of the programmed drums.

Danielle Haim: Yes, yes. Or it's like— You know, with us it'll be like, “Let's program the kick and snare,” but like I'll play a live hi-hat or, you know, make it feel a little more loose or something, whatever. That's like a lot of—(*chuckles*) a lot of our discussions in the studio.

Alana Haim: But yeah, like an album doesn't really start for us until we get the drum sound correct. There's always— There's a distinct drum sound for each one of our albums. And I think this one, once we kind of nailed it, we were like, “Okay, now we can start an album.”

Jesse Thorn: We're gonna take a quick break. When we come back, even more with HAIM. Keep it locked. It's *Bullseye* from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

Transition: Thumpy synth with light vocalizations.

Jesse Thorn: This is *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guests are Alana, Este, and Danielle Haim of the band HAIM. Their new album, *I Quit*, is out now.

There's a record on this album called “Take Me Back”.

(They affirm, chuckling.)

That is, you know, in the classic form of a variety of things remembered from teenagedom.

(They agree.)

Alana Haim: Go on.

Este Haim: Were you triggered?

Jesse Thorn: One of the lyrics is “Molly took a *(censor beep)* in the back of a truck. Didn't even know; she was too coked up.”

(They confirm>)

That feels too specific to be—*(chuckles)*.

Alana Haim: To be a lie?

Jesse Thorn: Yyyyeah.

Alana Haim: Yeah. It is real.

Este Haim: It's real.

Music: “Take Me Back” from the album *I Quit* by HAIM.

(Take me back, take me back)

Molly took a— in the back of the truck

Didn't even notice, she was too coked up

Wants to be a dancer, but she had no luck

And more time's passing

(Take me back, take me back)

(Take me back) I want it

(Take me back) Like I remember

(Take me back) Just thinking about it

(Take me back) Makes me emotional

(Take me back) I want it

(Music fades out.)

Alana Haim: Different name though. All of the names were changed. Other than my name and my best friend, Kane's, name; because we are the only two people that I still talk to—*(chuckling)* me, myself, and Kane. But no, we changed her name. But yeah, that is real.

Jesse Thorn: Can you tell me the circumstances?

Danielle Haim: Well, we went to LA County High School for the Arts, which is actually, you know—

Este Haim: Down the street.

Danielle Haim: Down the street.

Alana Haim: A hop, skip, and a jump.

Danielle Haim: About 15 minutes away from here. But there was just a really amazing cast of characters of just these really—

Alana Haim: It's a free art school, so it's like we're teenagers—

Este Haim: Yeah, there weren't a lot of rules at our school. And we were on a college campus, so there wasn't—at the time, there wasn't an actual campus. We were using the college—

Danielle Haim: The Cal State LA.

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Este Haim: The Cal State LA rooms. And we had one hallway with lockers. And we were just kind of running around doing whatever we wanted to do, and there weren't really any consequences. Which was great for me, specifically.

(They chuckle.)

I mean, the amount of freedom I think that we had at LACHSA, I think, was great for creativity. They really praised us for taking risks, and so I think we just ran with it in all aspects of life—not just in art.

Jesse Thorn: Could you play guitars at LACHSA? Or was it band and orchestra?

Danielle Haim: Oh yeah. Well, you could play everything.

Este Haim: No, no, no, no. There was jazz guitar. I wasn't in the jazz program. I was in the theater arts program.

Alana Haim: Me and Danielle were in the opera department,

Este Haim: Yeah, but it was—

Alana Haim: Big up to the opera department at LACHSA.

Este Haim: The music department and the art department, I think the kids were the most talented in those two departments, and they were definitely the most diligent. But there was theater, there was music, there was dance, and then—

Danielle Haim: Visual.

Alana Haim: Visual.

Este Haim: Visual art. And only 500 kids. So, it was a really small school. So, also when anything happened over the weekend during school, everyone in school knew. So, when Molly took a *(censor beep)* in the back of a truck, it spread like wildfire!

Jesse Thorn: One of the things about the Valley, here in Los Angeles, is— I think people know about the part where there's a nice mall that everybody goes to and says “like” to each other.

Alana Haim: Don't—! That's a stereotype!

Este Haim: That's people that like just have seen *Valley Girl*. That came out in like '82.

Alana Haim: Everyone says like all the time. Okay? I'm putting it out there.

Danielle Haim: Yeah, it's not just a valley thing.

Jesse Thorn: But that also—I mean, that is a real thing. It exists.

Alana Haim: Okay, fine.

Jesse Thorn: However, because the Valley is part of Los Angeles and is a middle-class part of Los Angeles—but also commercial real estate is much more affordable, I think?—there are just whole stretches of the valley that are just a goth store and a martial arts museum and a model airplane store. Just any kind of odd business can exist in certain parts of Burbank.

(They agree.)

Alana Haim: I feel like its own thing.

Danielle Haim: It's technically not—it's its own—

Este Haim: Was that LA County?

Danielle Haim: I feel like Burbank really is incredible, and it's like its own little like town. But yes, I know what you mean. There are those stores there. *(Laughs.)*

Jesse Thorn: Like, you can't have a model train store in central Los Angeles.

Danielle Haim: Right. I don't think—yeah.

Alana Haim: Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: You just can't keep the doors open.

Danielle Haim: Totally.

Jesse Thorn: But you'll be like, “Is this a fishing store?!”

Alana Haim: We do have those.

Jesse Thorn: Where are people fishing, even?!

(They agree.)

Este Haim: Billiard stores. There was like a—around the corner from where we grew up, there was like a pool table store. I'm like, "How many people are buying...?"

Alana Haim: Oh yeah. The pool table store.

Este Haim: Brick and mortar pool tables.

Alana Haim: Yeah, there's a whole store of them. You know what? In the Valley. That's where you go. No, the Valley was a great place—

Este Haim: It was a great place to grow up.

Alana Haim: Yeah, I was literally just about to say that. Jinx!

Este Haim: Yeah. Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: Did you have ambitions when you started the band as the three of you? Other than writing songs? Like, did you think, "We're gonna figure out how to become rock stars?"

Alana Haim: I think.

Jesse Thorn: gonna figure out how to

Danielle Haim: Literally the idea was that we would like get to leave LA and play shows outside of LA.

Alana Haim: Yeah. We wanted to like headline a show. Even playing in LA, like none of these— Well, also— I mean, I don't wanna like dive so deep into our past in the sense of like going back to like the Myspace times, but like we could not get good recordings. And also, we didn't have enough people to come to our shows to like headline like the Echo. And so—

Este Haim: Well, also our friends were like, "We're not coming to another show."

(The sisters confirm.)

Danielle Haim: We'd book like, I don't know, five shows a month. And then we would just like be begging our friends—

Alana Haim: We would call—we would just look—

Danielle Haim: “Please, please.”

And they're like, “I'm not gonna spend another 10 bucks to go to your show at the Echo.”

Alana Haim: Yeah, “We'll miss you.”

Danielle Haim: “We'll give you drink tickets. Like—”

Alana Haim: (*Laughs.*) We always said like, “We'll put you on the list.” But what that meant was we would just pay for the ticket and leave it at the box office. So, they would just come. But yeah, like I think the first step was like, “One day, we'll headline.” We honestly didn't headline any of those places until— Even when the *Forever* EP came out, we didn't even headline. Like, I remember we opened—we kept opening up. So, just like headlining a place felt like a pipe dream. And then after that happened, it was like, “Oh my god, maybe we'll get out of L.A.” And then after that happened it was like, “Oh my god, maybe we'll play a festival.” And like that happened.

It was like all of our goals were very much—I was like, “If we do this, would (*censor beep*) rule! Like, I just wanna do this!” But there was never like a, “Oh, we're gonna get together and like put this band together, and then we're gonna take over the world.” No, we just wanted to play. In the beginning, we were just a live band that would play anywhere.

Jesse Thorn: And I think if you were five years younger—three years younger, maybe—you would've been part of a generation of musicians for whom the primary medium was recording: a generation of musicians who were making music at home and putting it on the internet.

Danielle Haim: Well, what's interesting about that is we were kind of actually right there at that moment. 'Cause I remember it was like 2012, and we released our EP. And I remember like *The Weekend* had come out. And like, you know, people were obsessed with his music.

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But he had never played a show. I don't know if you remember this. Like, I remember when he actually played his first show, and it was like either a year after— Like, his thing was already so big. And like we actually— It was good for us that we had those six years of just playing live to no one. 'Cause then once our music was starting to get played, I guess in the UK, we could show up to a venue and just like—

Este Haim: A parking lot and play a show.

Danielle Haim: And just (*censor beep*) rip. The recording caught up to like the live part, but the live part was really the fundamental part for us.

Jesse Thorn: I mean, you had been born and raised in a world where it was normal to go out every weekend and play “When a Man Loves a Woman”, or “You Better Shop Around”, or whatever with your parents at farmer's market or something.

(They agree, laughing.)

Danielle Haim: *(Unclear.)* The Sherman Oak Street Fair.

Alana Haim: The Sherman Oak Street Fair still goes on, and the St. Francis of Assisi Fair, shout out to St. Francis. They have a huge carnival every year.

Jesse Thorn: What were your favorite songs to cover with your parents?

Este Haim: Well, I just watched the Billy Joel documentary. And we covered “You May Be Right” by Billy Joel.

Alana Haim: “You May Be Right”, which brought the house down.

Este Haim: Oh yeah. The ending?

Alana Haim: Also?

Alana & Este: *(Singing in unison.)* “You may be wrong, but you may be right. Cha! Cha! You may be wrong, but you may be right!”

Este Haim: *(Scatting.)*

Alana Haim: That one really got the people going. Obviously, “Mustang Sally” really went off. We still play “Mustang Sally” sometimes when my parents come to visit us on tour.

Jesse Thorn: Who sang lead on “Mustang Sally”.

Este Haim: *(Overlapping.)* Our mom.

Alana Haim: *(Overlapping.)* My mom. My mom always—

Este Haim: Our mom.

Alana Haim: Sorry, I always say “my”— Okay. Just so everybody knows, I say, “My mom.” I have two siblings. People think that we're not related, 'cause we each say, “My mom.”

(Este repeats “our mom”.)

Like, they think that we're not related. We are related. It's our mom. Just—sorry. What else do we play? Uh.

Este Haim: Van Morrison, “Wild Night”.

Alana Haim: Also, “Blue Suede Shoes”. Lemme tell you. Donna Rose, my mom? “Blue Suede Shoes”? She brought the house down.

Jesse Thorn: What suggested to you that you could do something other than open for your friends' bands or get the five people who were home on break from college to come to the show?

Este Haim: Blind faith. (*Chuckles.*) Just—

Alana Haim: I mean, yeah. We just—

Este Haim: We just kept going.

Alana Haim: We kept going. Honestly, I don't like being—

Danielle Haim: I mean, I did a little touring with other artists.

Alana Haim: It's true.

Danielle Haim: I got to see like what the road was like, and I got to leave LA and play music. So, I think that really helped me like—

Alana Haim: Danielle got to tour with our favorite people on the planet. Julian Casablancas and Jenny Lewis.

Danielle Haim: But so, I think that was kind of like eye-opening. Because I was like, “Holy (*ensor beep*).” And I like went to so many places for the first time. Like, I remember going to London for the first time and, you know, buying you guys a bunch of (*ensor beep*).

Alana Haim: She bought us so many fun souvenirs. We were like in awe, honestly. Like, we would see Danielle playing like all these music festivals and be like, “This looks like so much fun.” And I think when Danielle came home—

Danielle Haim: I was motivated to try and figure out how to get a good recording, I think. And honestly, when I toured with Julian, that was like the one thing that he said. I would try to talk to him a little bit about like “I have this band, you know, at home.”

And he was like, “Just get a good recording.” And you know, that was kind of his little nugget of advice.

And I was like, “Okay, when I get home, I'm like getting GarageBand. I'm getting a laptop, and I'm like gonna try and figure out how to like record on my computer.” And that's what we did.

Jesse Thorn: What did you figure out? What were the things that actually, practically made the difference?

Danielle Haim: I mean, just being able to like plug a guitar into your computer and like put on—you know, we were talking about effects before—just any effect you ever wanted, you know? And not having— 'Cause we had tried to like go into these professional studios. We saved up all our money like every year, and we would go in once a year for like three years to try and like get a demo or try to put something on our Myspace that would maybe coax the Echo or Silver Lake Lounge to like give us some sort of headlining show.

Alana Haim: To give us a headline.

Danielle Haim: 'Cause that was like the thing was like, “What's your Myspace?” You know? And we could never figure out like a good recording. But anyway, I didn't know how to get a good drum sound. And the fact that you could just— I mean, I would set up a drum or just do it in the box—do like a midi thing and just like put a (*censor beep*)ton of reverb on it. I'd be like, “Oh my god!” You know, just like simple things like that, you know? I think we were also super into like—

Alana Haim: Well, it's also I think just—

Danielle Haim: I was like super into like Kate Bush and just doing these kind of crazy effects on things. And yeah, just whatever, just experimenting in the box. I had never really been able to do that before.

Jesse Thorn: I mean, it also gives you a sort of agency that young women in the music business don't often get to access. Like, unless they really are making it for themselves, there's a sort of expectation that somebody will get discovered, and their talent will go through some dude.

(They agree.)

Whether it's a manager or a producer or whatever. Right? And so, going through that struggle gave you your own platform to do your own business.

Este Haim: Agreed.

Danielle Haim: Yeah, totally. That's true.

[00:25:00]

Alana Haim: And go on—end of story.

Este Haim: End of story. End of story.

Alana Haim: Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: How do you think that made a difference in your career when it was time to get signed and try and make hit records, that you knew how to do it for yourself?

Este Haim: We had each other, first of all.

Danielle Haim: I feel like we had each other.

Alana Haim: We did.

Este Haim: We're a united front.

Danielle Haim: We had an amazing set of people that also helped produce and stuff. But yeah, I mean all of those demos—the GarageBand sessions that we had been making really did inform all of those— Like, our first album is so heavily, like—a lot of GarageBand sound.

Alana Haim: There's a lot of GarageBand. I mean, there's GarageBand on every single one of our albums, but that one has the most. *(Chuckles.)* You listen to it, you're like, "Oh lord."

Jesse Thorn: But like if you hadn't— If, when you wanted to be headlining the Echoplex or whatever, if it had worked somehow because somebody came in and said, "Oh, I'll put you on wax," and it worked to get on your Myspace page? You might've skipped that step.

(They agree.)

Alana Haim: I think the thing that's like—when I look back on like those early days, everything was meant for a reason. Like Danielle said, the fact that we would play shows constantly, that like by the time that we actually were ready to try to get signed or like— Everything happened by chance, but in a weird way everything was in our control. We would play gigs constantly. So, by the time we needed to play gigs, we were ready.

Danielle Haim: Like in front of labels or whatever, yeah. But it did feel like we were like—"We got this."

Alana Haim: We were ready. I was like, *(scoffs)* "Hold my beer." Literally. I'd be drinking a beer. I'd be like, "Hold it."

But when it came to recording, what got us— Like, it's not like we recorded, we put it on Myspace, and like that's what got us signed. If anything, like we put out a free EP that we did with Ludwig Göransson, who is now *(chuckles)* ginormous.

Danielle Haim: Oscar winning, yeah. Oscar winning composer.

Alana Haim: Oscar winning Ludwig. We knew Ludwig when he was not that. But also just as talented as he is now, he was like that then. But he also like gave us the space to be able to record for as long—

Danielle Haim: Explore.

Alana Haim: Like, time was—we needed time to explore in the studio. We were right— We got the live down. We literally felt like what was in our brains could never—like, no one could figure it out. And I think what was so beautiful about Ludwig was that he really did give us the space to be in a studio, but also explore. So, it was like that weird bridge. And then we put it out on the internet, and this beautiful woman named Mary Anne Hobbs in the UK started playing it on the radio. Like, there was no in between. Like, it's not like we like, “Okay, we put it out, and then we got signed, and then we did this.” It was like we put it out on the internet; this amazing woman started playing it all the time on the radio; and we just basically—I don't know how we figured it out, but it was like—we were like, “No one wants to sign us here.”

I mean, no one wanted to. It was a joke. (*Chuckles.*) It was hilarious. But we had heard that like something was happening in the UK, so we just went there. And then, you know, again, we were ready to play live. They were like, “You gotta play these showcases.” And we were like okay. And so, we like did it, and did our thing, and that was enough.

Jesse Thorn: We will wrap up with HAIM after a quick break. The Haim sisters have been a band for nearly 20 years. They've been sisters their whole lives. How do they see the band changing when they're in their 60s? Will there even still be a HAIM? It's *Bullseye* for MaximumFun.org and NPR.

Promo:

Music: Exciting, playful sax.

Jesse Thorn: On *Judge John Hodgman*, the courtroom is fake, but the disputes are real.

(*Gavel bang.*)

Gumby Disputer: Brian would say, “I'm the Gumby of this family.” He's just not!

Jesse Thorn: Claiming to be Gumby is an un-Gumby-like claim.

Brian: No, it's just Gumby and I being our authentic selves.

(*Gavel bang.*)

John Hodgman: So, what's your complaint? Too many sauces?

Sauce Litigant: There are no foods on which to put the sauces.

John Hodgman: Have we named all the sauces on the top shelf yet?

Sauce Enthusiast: (*Laughing.*) Not—not even close.

(*Gavel bang.*)

John Hodgman: You economize when it comes to pants.

Pants Plaintiff: Truly, it's not about the cleanliness of the pants.

John Hodgman: Well, why isn't it?! This is what I want to know!

(*Gavel bang.*)

John Hogman: *Judge John Hodgman.* Fake court, weird cases, real justice. On MaximumFun.org, YouTube, and everywhere you get podcasts.

Transition: Bright, chiming synth with a syncopated beat.

Jesse Thorn: This is *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guests are Alana, Este, and Danielle Haim of the band HAIM. Their new album, *I Quit*, is out now.

When I interview jazz musicians—

Danielle Haim: Mm. Mm-hm. Go on.

Jesse Thorn: —they're always waiting for me to ask a question that I have to like self-consciously not ask. Which is the, “Is jazz dead?” question.

Danielle Haim: Oh. Oh god.

Alana Haim: Oh my god. What are you gonna ask?

Jesse Thorn: “Is jazz a historical art form?”

Este Haim: Are you gonna ask us that?!

Jesse Thorn: No—(*laughs*) yes, “Is jazz a historical—? How do you feel? Is it just a bunch of recreationists? Or is there real innovation happening?”

No. I'm gonna ask you that question about rock and roll music.

Danielle Haim: Rock and roll!

Alana Haim: Rock and roll. Gross!

(Jesse laughs.)

Este Haim: I think it's alive and well, I think.

Danielle Haim: I'll say though, like it's— When we were first coming out, it did feel kind of crazy. 2013, you know, us playing festivals, it was the height of EDM. I remember being like, “Wow, there are truly no other bands playing this festival.”

[00:30:00]

Like, we were truly like one of the only bands. I think it's gotten progressively—actually, now I feel like there's more bands now than there were in 2013. Like, that I remember being very— Right?

Este Haim: Yeah.

Alana Haim: Totally.

Jesse Thorn: Does it change what it means to be a success or have a hit record?

Danielle Haim: Wait, what do you mean?

Jesse Thorn: I mean, like—

Este Haim: In this in climate? In like—?

Jesse Thorn: You're not gonna go on TRL, right? So.

Alana Haim: Oh! Ugh, it would've been such a fun time though.

Este Haim: I wish. We tried to get them to come out so many times.

Danielle Haim: That was a dream.

Alana Haim: All I wanted to do was go on TRL. That was like my absolute dream. Ugh. Like, I don't—*(laughs)* you have to be optimistic in that sense. I mean, I think that's why it's so important—like, at least for us—melding genres. Which I think, to be honest, people did not *(censor beep)* with the fact that we were, you know—again—even talking about our production and not being snobby about mixing real instruments and instruments that are in the box. And I think for us, that was just second nature. It was just like, “This is what we like. We love Prince.” Prince did the same thing, and like it didn't seem weird.

(Her sisters agree.)

But I think some people are snobby that way. I don't think that that's cool. But I think that's why it's been such a beautiful experience to not have fear in the studio; to be like, “No, I want to meld these different genres.” Just in that sense, I will never say that rock is dead, because it's not. I mean, I don't think it'll ever die. Not in this heart of mine, lemme tell you.

(They laugh.)

Not in this heart of mine!

Jesse Thorn: I will say that, in this relatively warm studio, two of the three of you are wearing leather jackets. So.

Alana Haim: Yeah. But I do think that the joy of being able, again, to feel free in the studio and not feel like, “Oh, we're gonna make a rock record, because rock people need a rock record.” We make—

Danielle Haim: I wouldn't say we're rock purists.

Alana Haim: We're not purists. We just make the music we wanna make.

Jesse Thorn: Maybe like 12 years ago, I interviewed the band Hansen.

Alana Haim: Oh my god, we stan.

Danielle Haim: Okay. Love.

Jesse Thorn: Okay. So, they had a record out at the time that I listened to, and I really enjoyed. And they were the sweetest, most charming guys on Earth.

Danielle Haim: Yeah. They're so nice. We love them.

Alana Haim: We love them.

Jesse Thorn: And obviously, you know, their whole career is lived relative to their teenage selves. You know. But as I was talking to them, I was like, “These guys are gonna be 70 years old—”

Danielle Haim: Playing “MMMBop”, yeah.

Jesse Thorn: “—touring together.”

(The sisters agree.)

Playing “MMMBop”, but also like if they go to a show—an everybody wants to hear “Mustang Sally” show, then they’ll play “Mustang Sally” and have a great time doing it and do an awesome job.

(They agree.)

And I wonder if you three can picture yourselves still hanging out and talking to each other when you’re 65 years old.

Este Haim: *(Chuckles.)* I hope so.

Danielle Haim: I hope so! Like, at this moment—

Alana Haim: What would be the—? Yeah.

Danielle Haim: At this moment, yes. *(Laughs.)*

Alana Haim: Are you trying to start something right now?

Jesse Thorn: And like working. You know what I mean?

Alana Haim: Yeah, of course! Yeah!

Este Haim: I think it's gonna look different. I think that like we all— I mean, I can only speak for myself. I wanna have a family, and I want kids. And I think in my mind, what I want is to be able to have us all go on tour as a family with the kids. That's the dream. I don't know if that's—

Danielle Haim: God, I'd to.

Alana Haim: Love it.

Este Haim: That's the dream, but I don't know.

Danielle Haim: Who knows.

Este Haim: I don't know. Hopefully! Hopefully.

Alana Haim: You have to keep doing it if it brings you joy, and it does. It's the greatest feeling. Playing live is the greatest feeling on this planet. I mean, you know! You love your shows when you go on tour. That's the best part of the day. It's like, “I get to play live at the end of today, and then I get to go to sleep, and I get to travel and do it *(whispering excitedly)* again tomorrow.”

And it rules. And like, if that high runs out, let's meet back here when I'm 65, and we'll talk about it together.

Danielle Haim: (*Singing softly to the tune of “When I’m 64” by the Beatles.*) When I’m 65...

Este Haim: What’s the studio gonna look like when we’re 65?

Alana Haim: I know. What’s—yeah.

Jesse Thorn: Probably like this, but dirtier.

Este Haim: (*Voice squeaking.*) You think it'll be dirtier!?

Jesse Thorn: I don’t know if we're gonna get together a budget for a new—

Alana Haim: Or it'll just be like robots. Robots. But no, I mean—again, like the amount of gratitude that I get to sit here and talk about music and have a tour that I'm about to go on, it's incredible. I mean, again, we traveled from the Valley to Venice for a five-minute slot. Like, the fact that I get to travel the world with my siblings to play shows? I'm good! I'm happy as hell.

Jesse Thorn: Well, thank you—all three—for talking to me on *Bullseye*.

(*They thank him back.*)

It was really nice to meet you and see you again.

Jesse Thorn: HAIM, everyone. Let's go out with one more song from the band's new album, *I Quit*. This track is called “Down to Be Wrong”.

Music: “Down to Be Wrong” from the album *I Quit* by HAIM.

Down to be wrong

Don't need to be right

I left you the keys

I left on the lights

I locked myself out

Of the house

I'm on the next flight

You can't talk me out of it, yeah

[00:35:00]

From the window seat

I can see the street

Where we used to sleep

It was all a dream, huh

You thought I would fall

Back in your arms

But I lost my heart

(Music continues under the dialogue.)

Jesse Thorn: That's the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye*, created from the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun, as well as at Maximum Fun HQ—overlooking beautiful MacArthur Park in Los Angeles, California. I saw a great piece in *LA Public Press* about the summer concert series in MacArthur Park. The other day in MacArthur Park there was a sort of occupation by the Marines, the National Guard, and ICE. And the other night in MacArthur Park, in the bandshell, there was a huge pro-immigrant cumbia and ska/punk rock concert. And watching the footage from that, I was bummed that I missed it. It looked like a blast.

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, Hannah Moroz. Our video producer, Daniel Speer. We get booking help on *Bullseye* from Mara Davis.

Our interstitial music comes from our friend Dan Wally, aka DJW. You can find his music at DJWsounds.bandcamp.com. A lot of it is pay-what-you-want. So, go grab some *Bullseye* beats for your lo-fi hip-hop to study to, or whatever it is that people like. Our theme music was written and recorded by The Go! Team. Great band! It's called "Huddle Formation". Thanks to The Go! Team. Thanks to their label, Memphis Industries. Go buy some Go! Team music too.

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.

Okay. 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.)