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Promo:

Jesse Thorn: Hey gang, it's Jesse. We're about to go into another episode of *Bullseye*, but first I wanted to tell you about something really exciting. We are ringing in 25 years of *Bullseye* all the way through this fall. 25 years! I started this show when I was 19 years old! Don't do the math.

What does that mean? Well, we have a whole month of special shows, new and old—and also other cool stuff! So, earlier this month I did 25 interviews in a row live on video. You can watch me talking with Tony Hale and Lisa Loeb and Elvis Mitchell and Bob Odenkirk and Patton Oswalt and 20 other people, again, in a row on the *Bullseye* YouTube page.

We're also going on the road. November 1st will be at the Kuumbwa Jazz Center in Santa Cruz. I'll talk with Adam Scott, Boots Riley and Glen Washington. We will have comedy from Scott Simpson and music from the Mermen. Then on Saturday, November 15th, we have a huge show at the Pit Theater in New York City—which is the first place I ever did a live version of this show. I will have the great Tony Shalhoub, who has a new food show on television. Jad Abumrad from *Radio Lab*, who has a great new podcast about Fela Kuti, and H Jon Benjamin from *Archer* and *Bob's Burgers*. Plus! We'll have standup comedy from Josh Gondlemman and music from Kristin Anderson-Lopez and Bobby Lopez—the latter of whom is an EGOT! He got every award you can get in show business! It's gonna be great. That's at the Pit in New York, November 15th.

I hope that you'll celebrate all that stuff with us. Go to MaximumFun.org/events to find out more. And thanks.

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. What makes a good horror actor? It's a weird kind of alchemy. The stuff that makes someone a good comedic or a dramatic actor—like a distinct face, an intense dedication to preparation, a certain grounded-ness—it's not necessarily what you need to be great in a slasher flick. First, you don't usually need to be grounded. Horror movies are big. When you're on the screen, you usually need to play

everything pretty big. Having a distinct face is good, but you don't want the same kind of distinguishing features. You're almost playing an archetype. The final girl, the himbo, the quirky serial killer. Maybe the horror actor is our guest this week: Bruce Campbell.

He's distinctive looking—so textbook handsome, he might look too good to even be on a soap opera. He's like the kind of guy you would cast on an action show if he wasn't so action-starry. He also plays his roles big and brassy—sells every line like everything's at stake. He started in *Evil Dead*, the cult horror movie, directed by Sam Raimi. He played Ash Williams, the lead. He parlayed that iconic role into a bunch of others—movies with titles like *Crime Wave*, *Maniac Cop*, and *Bubba Ho-Tep*. The guy is a delight.

The first time he appeared on *Bullseye*, he was on the phone. I booked him because my comedy partner, John Hodgman, was his literary agent. Back then, the show wasn't even called *Bullseye*. It was still *The Sound of Young America*. Bruce came back to the show in 2011 as the star of the hit spy drama *Burn Notice*. He'd also just starred in the feature-length movie prequel of that show, *Burn Notice: The Fall of Sam Axe*. In 2011, my co-host and other comedy partner—Jordan Morris—interviewed him. And as I said, Bruce Campbell was and always is a delight. Let's get right into it.

Transition: Upbeat synth.

Jordan Morris: Bruce. I think you are kind of best known for films and projects that are very genre specific, that are kind of outrageous; their campy humor plays a big part.

Bruce Campbell: Sometimes ridiculous! Sometimes unwatchable!

Jordan Morris: *(Laughs.)* Was this the kind of stuff you were into as a kid?

Bruce Campbell: *(Chuckles.)* Boy, that's really a trick question. No, not really. No.

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I was into like *Zorro*, adventure. More straight-up adventure, like a guy with a cape and a sword that was kind of—I ran around my yard with a stick and a cape that was made out of something. I have no idea. And I had found a pair of striped pants somewhere.

(Jordan laughs and affirms.)

And *Zorro* was on TV at the time. 'Cause I'm a middle-aged man, *Zorro* was on. He was on television as a hero. Old black and white—old, old black and white TV show. And that's more of what I kind of wanted to do, but it all falls under the same ball of wax of: why not play a mad scientist? Or why not play Elvis Presley with cancer on your penis? You know, why not play some of these weird roles? *(Chuckles.)*

Because it just keeps it interesting. You know, we get bored easy. We're fickle creatures, actors.

Jordan Morris: (*Chuckling.*) Sure. And when you were growing up, kind of running around the yard in striped pants with a stick-sword and a towel, was this something that—

Bruce Campbell: Now, don't say that mockingly when you recap that. Just, I mean, it was my childhood we're talking about.

Jordan Morris: I'm sorry if any kind of tone crept into my voice. It was not intended.

(*Bruce affirms.*)

Not intended, Bruce.

Bruce Campbell: Okay. Alright. I didn't know if that was *The Sound of Young America* or not, or whatever.

Jordan Morris: (*Chuckling.*) No, no. *The Sound of Young America* is not mocking, Bruce. I assure you.

Bruce Campbell: But it's weird. Unlike most actors, I did not have a horrible childhood. Most actors have had miserable childhoods! And they go into acting to hide from their real life. I had no problem sort of playing in the woods all day. It sort of helped. People just sort of left me alone. I think I got— I'm gonna go back to those woods.

Jordan Morris: So, was getting into acting something that your parents encouraged? Was that something that— Was being an actor within the realm of possibilities for a young Bruce Campbell?

Bruce Campbell: They did not discourage it, but they didn't go, "You're such a kooky kid; you should be an actor." So, there was no stage mother thing going on. I come from a non-acting background. My grandfather worked for Alcoa Aluminum in Detroit for like 50 years. And then my dad was like, (*nasally*) "You know, I'd like to be a painter!"

And then my grandfather went, (*dryly*) "No. No, you're not gonna be a painter. You're gonna go to school. You're gonna get a job. You're gonna start a family. Enough of that artsy crap."

So, my dad got into advertising, and he was sort of a madman. He was, you know, in Detroit. He was Detroit's version of a madman. He was an ad guy in the '60s and '70s, Mr. Swinger Pants. And so— But he, as a— So, he got into advertising, 'cause he thought that would be a creative outlet. But it wasn't really that creative. It's all, you know, constrained for your clients and things like that. So, he got into a local theater group, St. Dunstan's Guild of Cranbrook, in suburban Detroit. And he started getting into plays. And these guys were industrious. They did good plays! They did about five/six plays a year. Some of them were these big, splashy musicals outside. They had some outside shows and inside.

And I went to see my dad in a play! It was just one of the classic case— I was about eight, and he was in *Brigadoon*. And I thought, "Wow, my dad is acting so weird! He's dancing

with chicks that are not my mom. What is happening? What's going on here?" And the audience is like clapping and laughing. I'm like, "I've just seen a different part of my dad. And I like that part!"

Jordan Morris: When did you decide to start performing yourself?

Bruce Campbell: Not long after that. Then finally my dad directed me in a play there, so I thought, "Good!" It was a cool, little closed-loop moment.

Jordan Morris: And when your dad was directing you, did you have that like, "God, Dad, you're so embarrassing" feeling? Or was he the coolest guy in the room?

Bruce Campbell: Oh, no! He knew what he was doing. My dad was so funny. By the time he directed this play that I was in, he had directed like ten plays. And he had his notebook all ready, and he had— He cut his script out and pasted, and he had notes all over the place. And he had an assistant, and he would like bark orders to her. And I was like, "Wow, look at him!"

'Cause at home he was like, (*nasally*) "Hey, hey! What's going on?"

But at work I thought, "Wow, Dad's— He's really focusing up here."

Jordan Morris: Did you dream of going into the theatre? Or were movies and television always your kind of end game?

Bruce Campbell: Movies were not really on the planet. Not really. Not initially. I thought, "Okay, maybe—yeah, maybe I'll be a theatre actor." 'Cause that's how it started. But then really, my neighborhood, we started getting into the Super 8 movie thing, regular eight-millimeter. Then if you had a lot of money, you could go to Super 8. And we would experiment. Like, I had a photographer buddy in my neighborhood, Mike Ditz, who—he had a camera, a little Bell & Howell thing. He had to wind it up. And you could do stop motion; you could do frame-by-frame.

So, we'd do these things of like guys getting on their butts all over the place, crashing into things, all stop motion. And we would do stuff like that. A lot of gag stuff. And then Sam Raimi, over in his neighborhood, was doing— He was a magician. He would do magic stuff. And he got into amateur movies too. And then another guy—Scott Spiegel, in his neighborhood—had a full-on, full-fledged setup. I met him in eighth grade. And when I first saw—

He said, "Come on over. I'll show you some of the movies we're working on."

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I'm like, "Yeah, whatever." I went over there; it blew me away! They were building sets, they had costumes. I was so jealous. I was like, "Guys, I have a theatre company. I can steal their costumes. You need me. You need me to be in these movies. You need me bad."

So, I talked my way into their group. And then in high school, all the neighborhoods collided. 'Cause you all get—you all now go from separate junior high schools to the same high school. So, we became a full-on industry in high school. It was really like our weekends were completely booked of like, "Hey, Scott, what are you doing this weekend?"

"Well, Friday night I gotta do some pickup shots for *Pies & Guys*. And then, you know, Saturday we're gonna do that— We're gonna—" We never—

Jordan Morris: Bruce, I would actually— I'd like to maybe stop you here. I'd love to hear a description of the film *Pies & Guys*.

Bruce Campbell: Well, *Pies & Guys*! Scott Spiegel worked in a market, a local—the Walnut Lake market—for years. And then I weaseled in and got a job there too as a stock boy. We'd have to throw stuff out at the market if it hit its expiration date. They couldn't legally sell it. But we could shove a pie in somebody's face if it—you know. So, they had to throw out numerous pies, all this crap every week. It's amazing the stuff that America has to throw out. We took advantage of all of it.

Jordan Morris: So, you were taking food that was unfit for consumption (*laughing*) and using it as props?

Bruce Campbell: Yeah. So what? We were young. It doesn't matter. You're not gonna be hurt. You spit it out and start all over again.

So, it was more like that. So, we combined a bunch of resources and got really serious. We never got in trouble as a result; we were just too busy doing stuff. We didn't— There was no drugs. There was no anything, no DUIs. We were just— If anything, the cops would see us, and they'd go, "Oh, it's you guys." 'Cause we always had a camera.

And people would call and say, (*panicked*) "Oh, someone just fell off a parking structure!" And of course, it was just a dummy. We were experts with dummies. We'd throw them off of parking structures and film them. And the cops would show up, and they go, "Well, at least you got a better dummy this time."

Clip:

Speaker 1: This guy's nuts!

(*A distant, strangled scream.*)

Speaker 2: What's wrong with you?!

Jordan Morris: Do you remember some of the plots of these early, homemade Super 8 movies?

Bruce Campbell: Sam Raimi did one called *The Great Bogus Pig Nut Swindle*.

Jordan Morris: (*Playfully.*) The now classic. Sure.

Bruce Campbell: Yeah. It's a classic. Very hard to actually watch it, because the projector ate most of it in a couple of tragic screenings. Because you're screening your negative. There was none of this “hide the negative” crap. In Super 8, that was your negative. And so, at parties, that's how you would test—that was our test screening. Could you hold attention of like drunk or stoned teenagers for like 15 minutes? And if you could, that was a hit! We would do more like those.

Jordan Morris: So, you would show these movies at house parties?

Bruce Campbell: Yeah. At high school parties.

Jordan Morris: Was there ever an inkling of like “let's get this into a film festival”? Or did that not even occur to you?

Bruce Campbell: Oh, no, no, no. This was just because there were cute girls there, and if you made movies, they didn't really know what to think of you.

Jesse Thorn: More with Bruce Campbell still to come. Stay tuned. It's *Bullseye* for MaximumFun.org and NPR.

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[00:15:00]

Jesse Thorn: Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. Our guest is Bruce Campbell. He's, of course, the actor who starred in the cult classic horror movies *Evil Dead*, *Army of Darkness*, and on the TV series *Ash vs the Evil Dead*. He's also a director responsible for making the films *A Community Speaks*, *Man with the Screaming Brain*, and *My Name is Bruce*—the lattermost of which is a horror comedy about Bruce Campbell. (*Chuckles.*) Let's get back into his 2011 conversation with our correspondent and my comedy partner, Jordan Morris.

Jordan Morris: So, where would you have placed yourself in the high school social hierarchy? If you were not a jock, what were you?

Bruce Campbell: Right. I was not a jock. I was not a— We had the stoners. We still had greasers. We had stoners; we had like the tail end of greasers. If you were a greaser, you were kind of a loser, 'cause you were about ten years out a step. But we still had 'em. There were like greaser bathrooms, stoner bathrooms. Then there were jocks. I was hard to define, because I was a thespian. So, I was just a little weird. You're like a weirdo.

Jordan Morris: Did you kind of dress the part? Were you walking around school in kind of eccentric clothes and loudly proclaiming things in the halls?

Bruce Campbell: When I look back, it was a little eccentric. But it was not—nothing was over the top. It was my dad had a crushed velvet—like, a dishwater brown smoking jacket. And it had pockets. I loved it! So, I wore that every day. I wore a smoking jacket to high school every day.

(Jordan chuckles.)

And Montgomery Wards work pants and janitor shoes. Because they were comfortable!

Jordan Morris: Bruce, I'll come clean and say I was actually a drama kid too in high school. And I had a period where I wore bowling shoes to school and carried all of my books in a bowling bag.

Bruce Campbell: I think that's pretty awesome. Bowling shoes are great. I'd love to have a pair of bowling shoes. They're like two-toned shoes, like saddle shoes. Those are cool shoes.

Jordan Morris: Yeah. Yeah, I thought I was looking good. Looking back, I didn't date much.

Bruce Campbell: Well, hey, we didn't either. But we were too busy making Super 8 history.

Jordan Morris: *(Laughs.)* So, we joke about *The Great Pig Nut Swindle* being a classic, but a movie you made with Sam Raimi, *The Evil Dead*, is actually a bonafide classic. Sam Raimi, of course, went on to direct the *Spider-Man* movies and many other blockbuster type films. How did you guys go from making movies to show to stoners at parties to an actual movie that was ready for theaters?

Bruce Campbell: Oh, that was a bumpy road! *(Chuckles.)* It was a long, bumpy road. But it basically started with high school ending. 'Cause we went, "Oh, crap. This is it. The amateur hour's over." We realized we had to kind of take it to the next level.

I, soon after high school, joined a professional theater. So, I got a taste of the professional world. Then after that, I started to do production assistant work for commercials in Detroit. So, pretty much— And I got to know every process of how you actually do something for real. It's not a Super 8. You have to take something to a lab now. You now have to be careful with the negative. Your sound has to go to a completely different place, then you have to put everything back together again. And I got to see every aspect of it.

And Sam was unsatisfied with college, and so was I. And I had been working in the industry, so I was like— I knew where we could get stuff. I knew how to rent equipment now. I knew all these companies. And Sam was itching. We met another guy, Rob Tapert. Sam Raimi and Rob met at MSU, and he had a degree in economics. So, Rob was the money guy. Rob and Sam got to talking about, you know, what would it actually take to make a movie? And so, we did a bunch of three-way phone calls of, “Okay, what would it really take?”

So, I explained—you know, I had a handle on some of the costs and where to get some of the equipment. And then Rob was more tuned into, “You need a lawyer to drop a piece of paper that you then show to investors, and they sign it, and they give you money.” You know, you create an entity to make a movie. It was very daunting to us, but we thought, “If that's what it has to be, that's what it has to be!” The idea of leaving Detroit to go to the West Coast was too daunting, too mysterious. We thought, “Let's make our own movie.” And that's kind of how the professional part of it started.

Jordan Morris: Was the script for *Evil Dead* already in place? Or did you just work out the business end first, and the script came later?

Bruce Campbell: I think Sam wrote a little short story in college about the Necronomicon. And then he sort of pitched us that idea. And we were— We felt like if you're gonna make your first movie, it should probably be a horror movie. Even though our amateur movies are about 90% broad comedy. We were very familiar with *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *Halloween*, and none of those movies had anybody—

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No name-actors were in any of those movies, any of the classic '70s/'60s horror movies. *Night of the Living Dead*, nobody! So, we knew that we could get away with that. Horror movies, you don't need fancy cars and clothes. A lot of times they're in one location. We had a cabin, so that made it cheaper. So, we did everything we could. We told investors that we have similar story elements to these other successful horror movies; that we're not reinventing the wheel. And we made a short movie. We made like the ultimate Super 8 movie, now that we were the— We were really experts at making Super 8 movies. We made a half-hour movie called *Within the Woods*, which we could show to investors and go, “See? It'll be like this! It'll be scary like this and gross like this.” And it worked!

You know, we sat in these high-level executive offices, showing them a dumb little Super 8 movie and suckering them out of, you know, some money.

Clip:

Speaker: What the hell happened to you?

Ash: Cheryl, what's the matter with you? Did something in the woods do this to you?

Cheryl: (*Frantic.*) No. It was the woods themselves! They're alive, Ashley! The trees!

Speaker: (*Upset.*) I wanna leave this place right now.

Ash: Cheryl, there's nothing out there. Trees do not attack people.

Cheryl: Ashley, will you drive me into town or not?!

Ash: What, right now?! Yeah, look, sure, sure. I'll take you into town, but just listen to what you're saying!

Cheryl: I don't care how it sounds! I wanna get out of this place right now!

Ash: Okay. You can stay somewhere in town tonight, huh?

Jordan Morris: When did you start to get a sense that *Evil Dead* was more than just a movie you made with your friends? When did you get a sense of “oh, this is something that people really like”?

Bruce Campbell: When it finally opened. No US distributor would touch it. They wouldn't have anything to do with it. So, we found a foreign sales agent, the great Irvin Shapiro, who helped us. Irvin Shapiro goes back to doing publicity for the *Battleship Potemkin*. And he's got sketches from Picasso, you know, that he traded for bottles of wine. This guy was one of the first people to ever bring motion picture—foreign movies to the States. He was involved in Screen Gems early on; that was a company that brought movies. And so, he's one of the founding fathers of the Cannes Film Festival in France.

So, this guy knew how to sell movies overseas. And he had represented George Romero. So, we thought, “Well, wait, George Romero?! That's the same type of movies, let's—” You know, we didn't want to go to somebody who didn't like these type of movies.

So, he says, (*hoarsely*) “Well, it's not exactly *Gone with the Wind*, but I think we can make some money with it.”

So, we started this process with Irvin Shapiro, and England was an early bidder. And they got it, Palace Pictures. But what they did is they didn't treat it like it was a low budget horror movie. They treated it like it was this big sensation and showed it at the Prince Charles Theater in London with these giant, blow-up photographs of all of us. Made it look like *The Poseidon Adventure*. You know? And it hit!

Clip:

Narrator: When you think of making movies, you think of Hollywood, big studios, big names, big bucks. Well, what if you're not in the big time? What if you live near Detroit, don't have a lot of money, but do have some great ideas for a movie? If you always cheer for the underdog, you're gonna love Renaissance Pictures of Ferndale, Michigan and the three young men whose very first film won them a standing ovation at the Cannes Film Festival.

Bruce Campbell, 24, an aspiring actor with a realistic approach to finding work.

Bruce Campbell: Our route was if you can't audition for a feature film in town, then you make it.

Narrator: Rob Tapert. At 27, the old man of the group with a keen business understanding of the obstacles they faced.

Rob Tapert: We were just out to prove that we could make a film the first time and that it could make money, and from that point we'd go on and make other pictures.

Narrator: And Sam Raimi, the 22-year-old writer/director who had the gall to believe they could actually pull this movie thing off.

Sam Raimi: To think of the whole process, from conception to sitting in a theater with the popcorn and then seeing it bigger than life in front of you, is really a great thrill.

Jordan Morris: And when you were working with Sam Raimi on this project, did it ever occur to you that this guy will be directing some of the most profitable blockbusters of all time?

Bruce Campbell: No, but we knew something was different about him. I knew it since the second I met him. And I saw him in eighth grade. He was sitting on the halls of my junior high school, West Maple Junior High, dressed like Sherlock Holmes, playing with dolls.

(Jordan chuckles.)

And I was like, "Ohhh-kay."

Jordan Morris: A sign of greatness.

Bruce Campbell: Sam was always crazy. He would dress like Sherlock Holmes. Sam was crazier than any of us, and some of his physical comedy was better than any of ours too. So, he was really this bizarre, crazy guy who would do— You know, I'd go to answer a question. I was in his radio speech class together. That's what started our relationship. I'd go to, you know, answer a question. He's sitting behind me. He'll take his pencil, put it in the back of my

neck, and start to increase the pressure during the course of my answer to see how long I could last without cracking.

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We had that punishment relationship right from the start.

Jordan Morris: You worked with Sam on *Evil Dead*, *Evil Dead 2*, and *Army of Darkness*. But then you also appeared kind of in cameo roles in all three *Spider-Man* movies. What was it like working with him on a big budget studio movie, versus—?

Bruce Campbell: It was great. It was hilarious. Really. I thought it was funny. Just to watch sooo many people kissing his ass just made me laugh, you know?

(They chuckle.)

I'm like, "Wow." And you know, he always wore these rumpled suits, or he'd wear ties. He wore ties from early on, starting with like *Evil Dead 2* or something, even probably *Crime Wave*. And so, he would— The only difference now is that he wears an expensive rumpled suit. It's still a rumpled suit, but now it's a nice one.

(Jordan laughs.)

And the trick was finding the stage. You know, I was wandering around the Sony lot, and I asked some guy with a walkie talkie, "Hey, where's the stage for *Spider-Man*?"

The guy, he laughed. He goes, "What do you mean what stage? We have 12 stages that are *Spider-Man*."

I went, "Well, uh, where's the wrestling ring?"

"Oh, that's stage five."

So, I go in there. There were 1,200 extras. And my whole day the first day of shooting was just— I would ask some assistant director, "Hey, can you find out if I'm in the shot or not?" It was that sort of—it was like now we're in the military; you had to ask like 87 people to get a question to Sam, and then maybe you'd get an answer back. So, it was big. It jumped up to the next level. But once we get into scenes one-on-one, it's always the same. Sam pokes me with a stick, and you know, we have a good time. And he makes fun of me in front of the crew, and I let him do it, 'cause it makes him seem like he's a little, you know, Rasputin character.

So, it's a fine relationship.

Clip:

Announcer: If he can withstand just three minutes in the cage with Bone Saw McGraw, that sum of \$3,000 will be paid to— *(Leaning away from the mic.)* What's your name, kid?

Peter Parker: The Human Spider.

Announcer: *(Whispering.)* The Human Spider?! That's it?! That's the best you got?

Peter: Yeah.

Announcer: Well, that sucks. *(Back on the mic.)* The sum \$3,000 will be paid to the terrifying, the deadly, the amaaaaazing Spider-Man!

(Cheers and boos from the crowd.)

Transition: A whooshing sound.

Jordan Morris: Bruce, it's funny to hear you talk about kind of your early days making Super 8 and your kind of early days in the community theatre. Like, you know, people doing a lot of different jobs and people using kind of resources that they have from their non-creative life. Seems like a lot of the projects you still do still kind of have that quality. That—and I mean this in the best possible way—a kind of a homemade quality to it. Is that an aesthetic that you feel like you're just drawn to?

Bruce Campbell: It's an aesthetic, yeah. Yeah, yeah, absolutely. Because the first *Evil Dead*, we had the most control on anything we've ever done before or since. You know, we had it structured with our limited partnership that the investors actually couldn't even set foot on the set unless we let them. They couldn't read the script. They had no say in the editing, nothing. We were the general partners. They were the limited partners. So, we were responsible for taking their money. We were the movie experts; they were the money guys. And we've never had that much, really, leeway since,

Sam's a big, powerful director, and I bet he has a lot of pull on what stays in and what doesn't. But you know, there's gonna be— There's a lot of executives who are dog piling those screenings, all with opinions. And you know, it gets old. Because you make Super 8 movies, all you're doing is screwing around and making movies. And you put it together, and some of them are great, and some of them suck, but that's just the way it goes. And so, getting back to that is something I've always wanted to do. You know, a couple years ago I finally made a movie on my property, and it was the closest to going aaall the way back to the Super 8 days as we possibly could. I got all the old schmoes. I lined them up and, you know, we made a silly little movie.

Jordan Morris: Are you talking about *My Name is Bruce*?

Bruce Campbell: Yeah. I built a little western town on my property.

Jordan Morris: You know, it's funny 'cause I actually would like to play a clip from that movie. I should say in this movie, *My Name is Bruce*—which you directed as well—you star as actor Bruce Campbell, who is kind of down on his luck. I think you and your dog share belts of whiskey.

Bruce Campbell: Yep. Out of the same bowl!

Jordan Morris: *(Laughing.)* Right! So, you know, you've seen better days in this film. And then you kind of get recruited by this small town to kill a monster. The clip I wanted to play is from kind of early in the film where you are coming off of a movie set, and you get mobbed by a group of fans. So.

(Bruce affirms.)

Let's hear that.

Clip:

Fan: Here he is! Here he is!

Bruce Campbell: Hey guys, how you doing? Here you go. One for you. One for you.

Fan: Oh, Mr. Campbell! Mr. Campbell! When you were in *Army of Darkness*, when you're stuck down in the pit, how'd you get your shotgun back?

Bruce: Oh, talked to the writer, man. I don't know.

Fan 2: Hey, when you worked with Ellen, did it turn you gay?

Bruce: No, but your stupid question did.

(The other fans "oooh".)

Fan 3: Why did you do *Serving Sarah*?

Bruce: Why did I do *Serving Sarah*? For the money, mouth breather. Why else?
(Muttering.) Love of god, what is this stench?

(Camera shutters.)

Here, it's called deodorant.

[00:30:00]

Look it up on your internets. See ya, boys! Late for a soiree.

Fan: Alright, thank you!

Jordan Morris: So, Bruce, in this movie we kind of get a little portrait of your fans. Tell us about how—tell us about Bruce Campbell fans. What are they like?

Bruce Campbell: Well, Bruce Campbell fans, it's the whole gamut. It's mostly guys. So, when I tour, my wife is like, "Have fun with the 22-year-old guys, Bruce." It's guys who are hyper-interested in certain things. And it's funny that there's someone who's so passionate about it, but in many cases, they'll come up to me at the table at a book signing or whatever, and they won't even be able to say anything. And I'm like, "You waited two hours to not say anything? I mean, this is your chance, isn't it?" So, I try and pull stuff out of them.

But a lot of fans will hit me with the obscure thing. One guy says, you know, "Where'd you get the shotgun in *Army of Darkness* after the pit?"

And I'm like, "I didn't write the movie! You know, I don't—I can't answer that."

Jordan Morris: You know, it's funny, you kind of— You know, in this movie you have a certain persona, and I think it's definitely the one that people associate with you.

Bruce Campbell: Jerk.

Jordan Morris: Very sarcastic, quippy, a lot of one-liners. Do you ever feel pressure when you are just out in public meeting people to kind of... present that persona?

Bruce Campbell: Well, it was funny. I was walking through an airport. (*Laughs.*) And I was kind of—you know, I was in a travel mood. It was kind of a lousy travel day. Happens to all of us, right? The guy walked by, he goes, "Bruce Campbell, let me shake your hand!"

And I look at him, and I was like, "Maybe I will, maybe I won't."

The guy goes, "That's exactly the answer I wanted!" And he kept going.

(*Jordan laughs.*)

So, I was just crabby enough for the guy instead of being like some sweetheart, "Oh, let me meet your kids and sign everything."

Jesse Thorn: We'll wrap up with Bruce Campbell in just a minute. Keep it locked. It's *Bullseye* from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

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Promo:

Speaker 1: (*Sighs heavily.*) Moving is the WOOORST.

Speaker 2: Yeeeeeah, but it's exciting too! Our new MaxFun HQ office in downtown LA is actually gonna fit all of us in it!

Speaker 1: (*Surprised.*) Oh!

Speaker 2: And the new studio is gonna be sooo nice. Plus, we'll have space for hangouts and events.

Speaker 1: Yeah, you're right. It's gonna be worth it. But boy, is it expensive. Maybe we can get some help?

(*They both "hmm" thoughtfully.*)

Speaker 2: Hey, cool listener, if you wanna get fun stuff aaand help us move, go to MaximumFun.org/movingday—where you can get vintage merch or buy naming rights of stuff around the office. If you help us move by buying something, we'll invite you over for pizza and beer at our new place. MaximumFun.org/movingday.

Transition: Thumpy synth with a syncopated beat.

Jesse Thorn: You are listening to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. Our guest is Bruce Campbell. He's in conversation here with our correspondent, Jordan Morris.

Jordan Morris: Now Bruce, kind of on the surface, your TV show *Burn Notice* seems really, really different from the other stuff you do. It's, you know, a very slick, high-budget, hit cable TV show. Does it seem different to you?

Bruce Campbell: Do you know what's weird? I am more typecast by my fans than the industry itself. Because I've made a French film. You know? I was in a film called *La Patinoire*. So, I can say I've been in a French film. I've been in a lot of Disney stuff. I did a Western show for a year. And so, I think from the inside of the industry, I don't get—I don't feel like I get channeled as much. But the people who only watch what they watch—'Cause there are fans of *The Adventures of Brisco County Jr.* who will not watch the *Evil Dead* movies, 'cause they're Western people. They're not sci-fi.

So, I kind of find when someone goes, (*nasally*) “Hey, you're the *Evil Dead* guy!” that's because they really just watch horror movies. They haven't seen like *Sky High* or *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs*. You know? Where I spend the other half of my time. I look at my paychecks. They're all from Fortune 500 companies. Everybody thinks like *Bubba Ho-Tep* is this cute little indie? Well, it was. It was made for a very small amount of money. But who was it distributed by? MGM! So, the nice thing is even corporations like little, tiny movies.

Jordan Morris: Is there anything that connects *Burn Notice*, you know, thematically to your other work?

[00:35:00]

Bruce Campbell: Well, I would just say that the character I play, Sam Axe, he's a former Navy Seal. You know, he is a wise-cracker and sort of a ladies' man. So, it's a bit of a continuation of the trash-talking sort of thing. But I naturally am drawn to that. If this was a spy show with serious, squinty-eyed characters, I wouldn't have touched this thing with a 10-foot pole. But you talk to the creator, Matt Nix, you see what he wants to do. I felt that it was a completely unique take. 'Cause I hadn't done TV in about... ten years almost when this pilot came up. I was like, (*shuddering*) “Ooh, television. Ooooh!” It gave me the shivers, because of some bad experiences that I had before.

But when I read it, I was like, “Wow! This is about the human version of spies!” That Michael Weston—sure, he is gonna blow something up with his girlfriend, Fiona, but he's gotta go fix his mom's garbage disposal after that. And I like that! You know, you gotta have that. Otherwise, if you don't care about the people that are getting shot at, then none of it matters.

Jordan Morris: Yeah. And now you— And they have made an entire feature-length film about your character. It's kind of a prequel.

Bruce Campbell: They did. They did. I kind of bullied them into it.

Jordan Morris: (*Chuckling.*) Yeah. You know, that's what I was gonna ask! It's called *The Fall of Sam Axe*. It's on DVD and Blu-Ray now. Was this something that the creators had wanted to do since the show started? Or was this something that came about through some other means?

Bruce Campbell: It's part me, part Matt Nix, where I was trying to think of other things to do to be part of the show. I wasn't really— I don't really wanna direct any episodes, 'cause it's—'cause television is too brutal. But Matt Nix said I was— He had said that he saw *Army of Darkness*, and he said to himself at that time, he goes, “I wanna write a movie for that guy!” And then I showed him *My Name is Bruce*. And he's like, “If Bruce can write a movie for himself, then I can write a movie for the guy. You know, I'm a better writer than that idiot! So, I'm gonna write a movie.”

So, it was, a little of both. I certainly encouraged it. And Matt made it happen. And fortunately, Fox agreed to finance it, and USA agreed to air it. Som that's like getting two

different countries to like get rid of their tariffs and stuff—you know, Fox talking to Universal. It was tricky, but it happened. And fortunately, someone showed up to watch it. So, it wasn't a complete waste of time, 'cause that would've been a drag! (*Laughing.*) To go through all that hassle, go to Bogotá, Columbia, shoot up in the Andes Mountains and blow crap up, and then it not work.

Jordan Morris: So, Bruce—I mean, obviously you're filming another season of *Burn Notice* right now. Any plans to go back to a more Bruce Campbell-y, Super 8-y type movie in the near future?

Bruce Campbell: Well, we made enough money with *My Name is Bruce*, so I can probably con somebody into like— All I really need is like \$2,000,000. And it always kills me when I see these budgets of people just randomly— They'll toss off a budget of about \$200,000,000! I could make 100 movies for that! And I did the math. If I made 100 movies for \$2,000,000 each, you know, 30 of 'em would be pretty good! And like, ten of them— I think I could make ten really enjoyable movies. Maybe one classic. I don't wanna be arrogant here.

Jordan Morris: No, of course not.

Bruce Campbell: Maybe a low-budget classic. 1 out of 100. That's fair odds. You know? And okay, you blew it on about 25 of 'em. Those are the numbers. And I don't know, I want that money! I wanna sneak into a studio and just put a hose in and siphon off. You know, and go run it under the fence out to the parking lot and into my car. Because I only want a trickle of what they have, 'cause that's all you really need. I'm amazed that like— I'd love to figure out how to spend \$200,000,000! You know what I mean?

“How much should we pay that guy?”

“I don't know. Give him whatever he wants! What's he want?”

“He wants \$50,000.”

“Ah, give him \$1,000,000! That'll teach him!”

Jordan Morris: (*Laughs.*) Now, Bruce, I think it's almost kind of time to wrap things up here. And I know this is a kind of—

Bruce Campbell: See, it's always about the budget. It's always about the budget.

Jordan Morris: And this is a public radio show, and fairly high-minded, and not the place for kind of fan boy speculation. But I would never be able to attend a Comic-Con again if I didn't ask you. Word on the street is that there's maybe a future for the *Evil Dead* franchise. Anything you can tell us about that?

Bruce Campbell: Yes, the remake is happening. The remake—the script has been written. Diablo Cody—interesting choice, I would say—is doing another pass at it. And we have a fabulous filmmaker from Uruguay.

Jordan Morris: And someone else will be playing your part, right? Ash?

Bruce Campbell: There's no ash character currently. This is a—you still got your characters in a cabin, but it's basically almost like you could say a different group of people found this evil book.

[00:40:00]

And you know, it's gonna have— It's gonna be like putting on an old, comfortable shoe. But you know, it's a different deal. Whole different deal. I'm too old for this movie.

Jordan Morris: (*Chuckles.*) So, you'll just be attending as a fan?

Bruce Campbell: Yeah, I tried out for it. Sam's like, “Get out of the room!”

Jordan Morris: (*Laughs.*) Well, Bruce Campbell, it's been a damn pleasure talking to you!

Bruce Campbell: Thank you. I don't say damn, because this public radio. This is high-minded as you say. I wouldn't be so crass, but I appreciate your enthusiasm.

Jordan Morris: (*Suppressing a giggle.*) No. I—thank you.

Transition: Playful synth.

Jesse Thorn: Bruce Campbell from 2011. If you haven't seen any of the *Evil Dead* series and you're looking for some silly, funny, gross horror fun, well look no further. Thanks to Jordan Morris for interviewing Bruce. He is also a comedy writer. Last year he released the wonderful graphic novel *Youth Group*, which also has a lot of silly, gross horror fun. He also has a brand-new comic in stores right now of the same variety. It's called *Predator: Black, White, and Blood*.

Transition: Jazzy 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. It's the 25th anniversary of *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn*, and we just did something really crazy in our office. Which is I interviewed 25 people in a row. 25 for 25, we decided to call it. Eventually, some of it will make it onto the radio. But in the meantime, you can watch video of the entire thing—all 25 consecutive interviews—on the *Bullseye* YouTube page. And I would suggest that you go there and like some stuff and hit subscribe just in general.

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 here at Maximum Fun is Hannah Moroz. Our video producer is Daniel Speer. We get booking help from Mara Davis. Our interstitial music comes from our friend Dan Wally, AKA DJW. 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 there is going to be all kinds of special stuff for our 25th anniversary. So, go to all those places. I just saw that my colleague, Richard, posted photographs of my first apartment in Los Angeles and the studio inside my first apartment in Los Angeles, where I recorded this show for literal years. 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.

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