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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. So, I wanna start with a personal story. So, like 16 years ago, I had only been living in Los Angeles for like a year and a half/two years. And I got an email from a comedian who had been a guest on my show, and I had met him once or twice, otherwise. We had maybe occasionally interacted online. He had been a radio host in New York City. He was moving to LA, and he wanted to do a podcast out of his garage. And so, he just basically asked me, “What stuff do I need?” Then like maybe the next week, I went over to his house for a couple hours and helped him set it up.

That comedian was Marc Maron. That show was *WTF*.

Music: “Are We Doing This?” by John Montagna, the theme song for *WTF with Marc Maron*.

Lock the gates!

(Music fades out.)

Jesse Thorn: *WTF*—which may stand for a phrase I can't say on NPR—ended its 16-year run earlier this month. During that time, Marc talked with Paul McCartney, Brad Pitt, Robin Williams, and twice with Barack Obama. Obama was actually Maron's final guest. And if you've heard of the show, the odds are you've already heard about why the show mattered. *WTF* got millions of downloads over thousands of episodes. Countless comedians knocked it off and created their own podcasts. It's a cliché to say this; it is actually also true. *WTF* revolutionized the medium. And behind the show for 16 years were two guys: Marc, the host, and Brendan McDonald, his producer. They started the show as an equal partnership, and even as it became one of the biggest podcasts in history, they never really staffed up much.

A few weeks before the show ended, I got to talk with Marc and Brendan virtually about how *WTF* formed, how it picked up steam, and why they decided to sunset it.

Alright, let's get into it. Lock the gates!

Transition: Thumpy synth with light vocalizations.

Jesse Thorn: Brendan and Marc, welcome to *Bullseye*. Welcome back to *Bullseye*, Marc. It's nice to see you guys inside of the Zoom screen here.

Marc Maron: Thanks, Jess.

Brendan McDonald: Thanks, Jesse!

Jesse Thorn: Brendan, have we ever seen each other's faces before?

Brendan McDonald: I mean, I've seen your face quite a lot.

(Jesse laughs and Marc “wow”s.)

But we have never talked face to face. No, that's true. But I was thinking about that today. I have talked to you digitally so much that I feel like I have talked with you.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, I mean obviously all of our listeners have seen me in the pages of *Tiger Beat*, but they haven't produced radio shows with me before. What do you remember, Brendan—I'm gonna start with you, 'cause I know Marc is gonna get his in. What do you remember as your initial impressions of Marc when you met him?

Brendan McDonald: Oh! Well, the initial impression was, “Is that Marc Maron?” Because we were in a big ballroom. I forget what the hotel was, but it was the launch of *Air America Radio*, and I had no idea who was working there other than Al Franken and Janeane Garofalo, and I knew that who Lizz Winstead was without knowing her specifically. I just knew like co-creator of the *Daily Show*. And this was, you know, this project that was being launched to kind of counter right wing talk radio. I was a producer for public radio in New York City, WNYC. And one of the news anchors I worked with, she brought me over to *Air America*. She said, “I think would be good at this new place that's starting up.”

And so, that was all I knew. I didn't know what I was gonna be doing there. I didn't know what hour of the day I was gonna be working. But I showed up and they were like, “You're on the morning show!” And I was like— That was the last thing I wanted to hear. And they put me with this collection of people who were also gonna be working on it. And I saw Marc standing around, like talking to people. And I just—I knew him! I know comedians. I knew him from Comedy Central. I just—I was aware of that guy, Marc Maron. But then they said, “And oh, you're gonna be working with these hosts.” And he was one of them. And he was super intense right away, very close to my face.

(Jesse laughs.)

Like, “Who are you? What are you all about?!” You know?

And I was like, “Oh, uh. Uh, I'm a guy. I work on the radio.”

And I was— I wouldn't say I was intimidated, but I was just like, “Okay, this guy's a pretty raw dog. Like, we're gonna have to like figure this one out a little bit.”

(Marc chuckles.)

But I don't know.

[00:05:00]

It kind of all came together pretty quickly after that. My impression then, once I actually could make one, was “Oh, this guy's in it. Like, he wants to do this.” It wasn't— Like, I wasn't like worried that he was just like some comedian who was thrown into something he wasn't gonna be capable of doing. I knew pretty early on that he wanted to do it, and he was gonna be good at it.

Jesse Thorn: Marc, do you remember that ballroom?

Marc Maron: Oh yeah, I remember that night. I entered that whole world ready to go, but I didn't feel like I was sort of politically astute enough to really kind of do what was necessary. So, there was a lot of insecurity. There was a lot of unknowns. But I remember Sam Seder, I knew Seder. And he was very funny that night. I still remember it as being the most brilliant thing that he might have ever done. Because, you know, here we were each going up there talk about being involved with *Air America* and how it's the voice of the left going against the right. And Sam went up there to talk, and he pretended like he had laryngitis. *(Chuckles.)* It was so funny.

And I remember meeting Brendan at that time, but the more—stronger memory about Brendan is when we started working. And he was an associate producer, and Pashman, Dan Pashman, was associate producer. Jonathan Larson was the producer. And all these guys looked so clean cut to me. I was like, “What the—?! What have I gotten into?”

Brendan McDonald: You thought we were conservatives. You were like, “Is this a scam?”

Marc Maron: Yeah. Yeah, because Pashman had the Haldeman haircut. He had that like—he had that flat top! And all I could think was like, “I haven't seen that haircut since pictures of Haldeman.”

(Brendan laughs.)

And you were just like—like, you seem like all pretty normal guys. But you know, I'm a rogue. I grew up feral, you know, in the comedy world. And I'm walking into this place where there's these really smart guys that all look pretty conservative. I obviously didn't think you were politically conservative, but I definitely knew you had your *(censor beep)* together. And I was just outta my mind all the time.

But I remember meeting Brendan, and I remember feeling like he just said— I remember him kind of looking at me like, “Alright, so what are we gonna do with this guy?”

(They laugh.)

“I don't know if we're gonna get this one harnessed.”

Jesse Thorn: I mean, Marc, you must have done hundreds of hours of radio in your life, even before you became a radio host, as a standup comic. I mean, one of the things standups did, and to some extent still do, is when they have a weekend booked in the city on that Friday—or sometimes Thursday, if they have a Thursday night show—they'll have to get up at five o'clock in the morning and go do, you know, *Wallaby and the Bigman*.

Marc Maron: Well, yeah, that's true. I don't know if it's hundreds of hours. Like, I don't have a sense of that time, you know, in terms of... maybe. I mean, I've done a lot of that. And to be honest with you, it was one of the reasons why I wanted to do *Air America*. I mean, I always liked doing morning radio. If it's a good crew, it's great, and it's fun. And I knew that going into *Air America*, that there are certain morning crews that I would do every year where—I mean, it was hard to get up. But if they were in it, and they were not trying to undermine me, getting into the groove with a good morning crew is a blast. Because— And what I learned from doing it is that there's so much writing on it. You don't want someone to come in there and kind of crap out your show.

And comedians, by and large, don't have a great reputation for doing morning radio, because they've been up all night, or they're exhausted, or they don't care. So, a lot of these hosts are a little kind of tenuous about how it's gonna go, but I can talk. So, if they're jiving on something and we get going, I thought it was completely engaging a lot of fun. And again, as you know, from the Bay Area, when I lived there early on, I did a lot of Alex Bennett. You know, this was the waning years of Alex Bennett, where he would just basically talk about, you know, like not feeling good and complaining about things.

(Jesse laughs.)

But you know, it would be me and three other comics. And you just try to kind of do that. That was a little more challenging. But you know, when it's good, it's great. And one thing I learned by doing *Air America* is I had a profound empathy for these morning show crews. Because if you get a dud of a guest and you've got a momentum going, it's a bummer! And it's like—and it's a show-ruiner. And you know, you kind of have to regroup after that. Because it's all about pace, and it's all about, you know, not falling asleep. And you know, these are people that are up.

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They've sacrificed a normal life to do that job. And you know, you want to get into the groove. And I was always aware of that when I learned how to do it at *Air America*.

Jesse Thorn: I did morning radio briefly when I was just out of college.

Marc Maron: Uh-huh.

Jesse Thorn: And I couldn't do it physically because of my migraines. I just couldn't handle the getting up early in the morning. I was getting a migraine every day. But one of the hosts you weren't supposed to make eye contact with before she went into the studio. That was like a rule that was like explicitly said to me. And at the time, I don't think— Not unreasonably, I was like, “Come on, gimme a break.” But now when I think back on it and I think about the job that she had to do at that time of day, the intensity and liveness of it, I just thought, “Yeah! Probably somebody engaged her in a conversation about what kind of coffee she wanted in the break room when she was about to go in and talk about *Survivor* or whatever, and it messed up everything! And they just had to say, ‘Well, I guess we have to have a rule.’” (*Chuckles.*)

Marc Maron: Yeah. Well, it's crazy, man. I mean, the intensity of it— And we were getting up much earlier than like just average morning crews, because we had to kind of collate the news. So, we were getting up at 2:30. You know, getting there by three sometimes. And you know— And I was overwhelmed because I'm not a wonk. I'm a little out of the loop. I learned a lot there. I literally showed up at *Air America* with a *Democracy for Dummies* book, because I felt like I was at a disadvantage. And that's true! And Brendan'll tell you this story about Pashman, used to crunch all the news and put it in a packet that was like 30 or 40 pages of news stories. And what was it—what happened? He put it on my desk like day one?

Brendan McDonald: You were in like a conference room getting ready to do— We were not even on the air yet. It was practice shows. And I think this was the first practice show that we were treating like a real show. Like, come in at the time we should come in and do the whole procedure. And then it just wasn't actually going on the air. It was a dummy show. And you were in a conference room with a, you know, large oak table so you could spread stuff out. And like, I saw you through the door in there, like from the back. And I could tell the way you were hunched over and just like— Like, I didn't have to see your face. I knew you were just like exasperated and frustrated, and it was just—probably scared and confused and all of the emotions.

(*Marc agrees.*)

And so, Dan, who's—you know—even at 2:30 in the morning, three o'clock—is a very kind of plucky, energetic guy. If you've listened to *The Sporkful*, you know Dan. And he walked in there with his packet that he'd been producing for several hours, and he put it down next to Marc. And Marc's like, (*panicked and angry*) “WHAT IS THIS!? I—I CAN'T READ ALL OF THIS!” (*Laughing.*) Just like full volcano rising.

And Dan was like, “No, no. It's just for you. It's whatever you wanna use it for.”

“I DON'T WANT IT! I don't want it at all!”

(*They laugh.*)

So, that was the first day we started doing the show. We kind of made an adjustment after that.

Marc Maron: It was so overwhelming, and it was so weird to be up at that hour, and the process of— And I was trying to maintain a marriage, you know, across country. And I would call her three—you know, at three in the morning or 2:30, you know, because she'd be going to bed. It was all insanity. But I used to have the driver stop; I would get two like, you know, large Dunkin' Donuts coffees and a bag of M&Ms that I would start munching on.

(Jesse laughs.)

You know, I'd do the coffees, and I'd been eating M&Ms and drinking Dunkin' Donuts coffee, you know, starting at six in the morning just to get myself into a kind of manic state. And I was outta my mind, man.

Jesse Thorn: Marc, I like the idea that you had a plan to get yourself into a kind of manic state. Like, I would think just like having to do that thing—being in a room sometimes is enough to get you into that state.

Marc Maron: Well, yeah, but not at three in the morning, dude!

(Jesse laughs.)

And not at six in the morning. You know? I think that's true, and you do kind of adjust to the schedule, but never really adjust to it. And I really had to blast my brain, you know, with sugar and caffeine. And that went on every day. I don't know what kind of damage I did to myself, but it was really just M&Ms and Dunkin' Donuts coffee. Once it started to get going and once Brendan, I think—who was, you know, the middleman between me and the seemingly to me evil Jonathan Larson—that there were these expectations about how I should do it. But there was a breakthrough at some point where, you know, once the load of me having to talk about politics—which I thought I had to do in a sophisticated way; which was not really my bag, and it wasn't possible. But I tried.

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And there was a lot of informing me through the mic. And Jonathan Larson was always in my ear telling me what to do, and it became very unnerving. But once I broke out of that and just started talking about my life and what I was going through with the cats or with whatever I was doing, it really kind of—it opened up a whole other world for me. And you know, and then we had three hosts, and then one was gone. And then it was just me. I eventually became the driver of that show, and I leaned on my co-host, Mark Riley, to sort of do the news parts and for me to just kind of, you know, chime in and talk about other things and, you know, move the comedy along. But that was a real game changer.

You know, I remember the monologue that probably made Brendan realize that—you know, that I was good on these mics in the way that later became what we do. And that's really where I found my voice.

Transition: A whooshing sound.

Clip:

Marc Maron: I've taken sort of a mishmash of things that would give me hope. I have here an unopened fortune cookie. I have here an article that says The Federal Reserve chairman, Ben Bernanke, says that everything's gonna be okay towards the end of 2009. Not even gonna read the article today. Alright? That's where I'm at. Not even gonna read it. Okay, Ben! Thanks! That made me feel good right now. I have another article here. A guy in Georgia had both his hands cut off because of a bacterial infection, which is vague in this article. But apparently, they performed the first successful hand transplant on both his hands!

Now, there's a couple things that are going on there. One is: it makes me feel good to know that if I lost a hand, maybe I'd have some other guy's hand. But you know how sometimes when they put someone else's heart in someone else's body, and all of a sudden that person wants cheeseburgers, and they never liked cheeseburgers? Well, I'm just wondering— We're gonna see how those hands act. But I'm just saying— Who knows, but I'm saying that makes me optimistic that they might be able to replace my hands. Or my head, for that matter. I refuse to take medication, but I'm more than willing to have my head replaced.

Transition: A whooshing sound.

Jesse Thorn: Brendan, do you remember seeing Marc—somebody you knew as a comic—figure out how to be on the radio?

Brendan McDonald: Yeah, it was pretty instantaneous, frankly. Because I think mostly due to the kind of compromised way that all of the *Air America* shows were set up. Like, they were not set up with broadcasting intent in mind. They were like these weird chemistry tests of all these hosts and politicos, and it was not an ideal way to kind of set up one show, let alone five or however many they started with their slate. I can remember sitting in the hallway with Jonathan Larson and Dan Pashman and probably some other people who were kind of creatively involved with the network. And Jonathan was just like, “What do we think?” This was prior to launch, and we had been doing test shows and practice runs, and Jonathan was like, “What do we think? What's working about this?”

And I remember I was the first to speak. And I said, “I can tell you what's working. It's Marc Maron. And I can tell you what's not working; it's that we're not using Marc Maron. Like, that's the guy! Like, we should be focusing this around him. He's got the connection to—” You know, and that just was obvious to me probably just because of my own preferences of how the show was sounding. I was interested when he was talking. And then, as he said, it evolved as he was on the mics and as we were seeing what reaction certain things got from

the audience. We still to this very day, if Marc does something on the monologue on the podcast that is similar to what he's talking about with those lentils, where it's—you know—halfway kind of this like fever dream explanation of like a weird, absurdist story, and then half of it is like looking for advice about how to cook lentils, we will get so much more reaction than any guest we have or any kind of underlying controversial material. It's always that lifestyle stuff that causes the most connection.

Jesse Thorn: Much more still to come with Brendan McDonald and Marc Maron. They're the producer and host of the podcast *WTF*.

How did Marc go from confessional standup comic to one of media's great interviewers? They'll explain when we get back. It's *Bullseye* from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

Promo:

Music: A relaxed, jazzy tune.

Travis McElroy: Hi, I am Travis McElroy. I'm here with Maria, and we're excited. Because as a member of the month— Maria, thank you so much for being a listener and a supporter of the show.

Maria: Hi!

Travis: How did you find out about the shows?

Maria: When my daughter was in high school, we kind of connected over *TAZ*. She introduced me to *Shmanners* and *Sawbones*.

Travis: What made you decide to become a MaxFun member?

Maria: I kind of decided that with the economy being so difficult, it was worth me giving up my Starbucks to join in with you guys.

Travis: Well, Maria, I owe you a cup of coffee then. At some point I'll get a cup of coffee into your hands to pay you back.

Maria: *(Laughing.)* Okay.

Travis: Maria, again, thank you so much for your support.

[00:20:00]

Maria: Thank you very, very much for your time and getting a chance to be the member of the month. My daughter was shocked when she found out about it, so I can't wait for her to actually maybe catch a little bit of this. I can rub it in her face a little bit.

Travis: That's what we do it for. Thank you and thanks to everybody for your support. Maria, have a great month!

Maria: You have an amazing month as well.

Speaker: Become a MaxFun member now at MaximumFun.org/join.

(Music ends.)

[00:20:00]

Transition: Thumpy synth with a syncopated beat.

Jesse Thorn: Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. We're doing something pretty special this week. My guests are Marc Maron and Brendan McDonald. Marc is a standup comic and actor. He's probably best known as the host of the podcast *WTF*. Brendan produced that show since it launched in 2009. Earlier this month, *WTF* aired its last episode, ending a 16-year run. Let's get back into our conversation.

You guys were fired from *Air America* twice. Like, *Air America* just went through a lot of changes over its relatively short life, the last version of being on air at *Air America*, Marc, was you and Sam Seder hosting a live streaming web show for a while. The second time that you got fired from *Air America*, Marc, did you have any hesitation about sticking around in audio?

Marc Maron: No. I mean, I went back to audio! 'Cause streaming certainly wasn't happening then. And there was, you know, this new thing. So, oddly, I didn't—I was ready to go. I mean, because when we were still in the offices—because they let us stay there—I was like—I said to Brendan, “Do you think we can do this?”

And he was like, “Yeah, let's do it.”

Because you know, podcasting was fairly new. There weren't that many there. I knew it existed, and I knew things were possible there. And it was my idea, I think, to do it. Wasn't it?

Brendan McDonald: You asked me if I was interested in doing it with you. And because I was a—probably unknown to you—a podcast fan, I was like, “Giddy up. I'm ready to do this.”

Jesse Thorn: Did you guys have a plan? Did you have a meeting?

Marc Maron: Yeah, we had a plan to do a new show every Monday and Thursday. That was it.

Brendan McDonald: Yeah, and it was like a kind of fun, organic planning session for about a month. I remember going to Marc's apartment in Astoria. We'd just kind of sit around and toss around like people we could wind up talking to, ideas. You know, we really wanted to do a radio show. It wasn't so much like, "Okay, get ready. You're gonna start interviewing people." It was more about like, "Let's do the Marc Maron podcast. And what does that entail? What are all the kind of things that make Marc entertaining that will make this a thing that delivers for—?" Really, the people we thought we'd deliver for were the 1,000 or so folks who were tuning into that stream. And we thought if we could keep them around and give them something—'cause they showed some loyalty and an enjoyment of this show that we had been doing. Let's do that. Let's do this for them and maybe some other people from the old *Air America* days who dropped off.

And we figured a few thousand people, that'd be great. That'd be great for Marc's mailing list. He'd get people to shows; he'd maybe build a draw again on the road. That was really the plan.

Jesse Thorn: Marc, were you worried about building your draw then?

Marc Maron: Well, I didn't have a draw ever! So, like it wasn't— It was really a matter of like— I had nothing going, and I had gotten back on my feet financially after the divorce. But I didn't— You know, I wasn't a known guy. *Air America* didn't bring me nothing in terms of a draw, really. You know, all those *Conans*. I did not have a draw. When we started the podcast, it wasn't great. And I was looking down the barrel at, you know, being a B-room headliner for the rest of my life.

Jesse Thorn: For folks who don't know, like you had a very well-established reputation; you had an act; you could headline. That's the kind of thing that you're talking about. And because you had credits— In a comedy club, there's a certain audience that comes for comedy, and they want to trust that the comic is a professional comic. But at that time especially, if you just had, you know, "Oh, I've been on these late night shows,"—which you had—"I've been on Comedy Central,"—which you had—then you can headline, but that audience that comes isn't necessarily your audience. And maybe you're talking about wanting to have an audience that comes to see you rather than comes to see comedy because they're a bachelorette party.

Marc Maron: Right, but even what you're talking about, those days had sort of passed. This was not, you know, the heyday of comedy in a lot of ways.

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I mean, even the sort of people just coming for a comedy show was not— It was limited. So, you really had to be able to sell tickets to get quality club work. And I couldn't sell tickets for whatever reason.

Jesse Thorn: And as great of a comic as you are, you might not be the ideal choice for a generic audience.

Marc Maron: No, of course not! When we started the podcast, I just wanted to stay out there somehow, because I didn't have anywhere to go. You know, I wasn't getting acting roles. I couldn't get booked as a comic that much. You know, I had made enough money back from the divorce, through *Breakroom*, to kind of sustain myself. And you know. But what was driving me was not so much "I gotta build a draw"; it was like, "I have to stay in the game somehow. And this is the game we're in now."

Jesse Thorn: When and how, Brendan, did it become an interview show?

Brendan McDonald: It was very gradual. I mean, we had interviews from the very first episode, but it was more the idea of like an interview like— I don't wanna say it was like a late-night panel, 10 minutes of that. But it was really just like, "Let's get some other comics in here who Marc can bounce off of, and they'll do every however much they want!" That was the great freedom of it being a podcast. Do whatever you want! You wanna talk to somebody for a half hour? Great. You wanna talk for five minutes? Great. And so, it kind of evolved from that.

I mean, was there a point where I remember thinking, "This is now an interview show." I don't know. I guess like the one— It's probably more retroactive that I think that, that we—you know—kind of circle like the Robin Williams episode, which happened like around, you know, six months in. And you could go, "Okay, that was a big deal."

Transition: A whooshing sound.

Clip:

Marc Maron (*WTF*): So, I appreciate you doing this, and—

Robin Williams: Oh, (*unclear*), it's fun. It's nice being here.

Marc Maron: I was nervous. I was nervous coming up here.

Robin Williams: Why?

Marc Maron: And I usually don't get nervous.

Robin Williams: Why?

Marc Maron: I don't know why, you know!

(*Robin laughs.*)

Because we've hung out before. We've talked before. But then at some point in my mind, I'm getting ready to do this, and I'm like— I felt like I was interviewing a former president. *(Laughs.)* I mean, I'm going—

Robin Williams: *(Impersonating Nixon.)* “I never knew.”

Marc Maron: *(Laughs.)* It's gonna be like the Williams-Maron interviews. These are gonna be— This is gonna go on for days.

Robin Williams: “Wh-what—what phone call?”

(Marc agrees with a laugh.)

“What did I do? It was a blackout. I remembered it—”

Transition: A whooshing sound.

Brendan McDonald: At the time, it didn't feel like we were ever saying, “This is gonna be about the interviews.” It just grew that way.

Marc Maron: Yeah! Because like the monologue, that all evolved out of me being insecure about people not knowing I was a comic. And so, the monologue at the beginning— I remember we engaged a couple of the writers from back in the day, that maybe we could get some jokes going and figure out some segments. And what that afforded me over time was that like I didn't have to be funny. I mean, I could just talk. But the initial reason for the monologue at the beginning was to make sure people knew that I was a comic. And then it just became this other thing that gave me a lot more of an expansive approach. That I could talk about anything—anything!—and then we do the interview.

So, it was sort of a mixture of things. And I think Brendan usually says that, you know, from the beginning, this was a show about me. Despite the fact that we were interviewing people.

Transition: A whooshing sound.

Clip:

Marc Maron: So, now I've got a deaf, black cat eating outta this bowl who doesn't even know I'm there making noises to scare him away. And then he looks up at me, and his eyes are all cross-eyed and off! And his face is a little twisted! It was like a David Lynchian cat. I had this moment where I sort of slipped into some weird, waking dream state because of the creepiness of this deaf, cross-eyed, black cat eating outta my cat's bowl. And I, for some reason, in that moment, said, “What does this

mean?! This can't be good. This creepy cat was sent from the underworld to deliver a message, and I can't figure out what it is. And I gotta go to the doctor tomorrow!"

Transition: A whooshing sound.

Jesse Thorn: I remember those days very vividly. People would talk to me about *WTF*, because it was like my show but more successful. It was like if they were familiar with my show. And they would always say, "Oh, those interviews are incredible! I hate the monologue." And there were certainly people who loved the monologue. I wanna be clear about that.

Marc Maron: Well, it all turned eventually.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, but like you guys were very clear that you were keeping the monologue. Like, on the show it was very clear this is central to what this show is, even if you people who are here for the drama of the conversations are mad that you have to listen to Marc first.

Marc Maron: Yeah. I mean, well, I wasn't gonna let it go. And there was— You know, I don't know that we had discussions ever about letting— I don't even think it was a discussion. I did know that people like— You know, there was a joke—a running joke—that people skipped the first 10 minutes. But oddly, over the years that changed to the point where people listened to the monologue. That was why they were tuning in.

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So, it was really a matter of—like anything else, like any kind of irascible radio personality is they're an acquired taste. But most of the people that listen consistently began to listen for the monologue more than the interview.

Brendan McDonald: I don't think there's any doubt in my mind that the show would not have had the longevity and the success that it had if we had, at some point in the early stages of doing the show, decided "Well, there doesn't need to be a monologue. It'll just go right to the interview." I fully believe that. And it's because I know the floor of our audience. Right? I have a very specific understanding of the fewest amount of people that will listen to any given episode, and it has always been—it has always remained fairly strong. And I attribute that entirely to the connection that people have with Marc. Meaning they will listen to any episode. It doesn't matter who the guest is. It doesn't matter if they know the person or don't know the person. It doesn't matter, really, any of it.

Jesse Thorn: Years ago I worked for a little bit with this guy in public radio in Santa Cruz, where this show started. And he had come from commercial radio. He worked on the *Michael Savage Show*, which was a hot talk show out of San Francisco. And he took a job in public radio, 'cause—you know, he liked public radio, and he wanted to work in public radio, 'cause it was nice. And eventually he quit, and he went back to the *Michael Savage Show*. And I

asked him why he did that. 'Cause he had told me very convincingly his reasons for wanting to work in public radio.

And he said, “Well, I mostly just get Michael Savage's newspapers. I don't have to be in the same room with him. They pay me \$250,000 a year, and I'm the only one that can put up with him!”

(They chuckle.)

Which, having heard Michael Savage on the radio, I'm not surprised to hear that. But I wonder, Brendan and Marc both, if you ever felt like your relationship was “Gosh, I guess I found the person who can put up with me” or “the person I can put up with”? Like, if you somehow have a special pairing in that way.

Brendan McDonald: It was more just like I found a guy I work well with! Which I think a lot of people, if they're in a collaborative work environment, they feel like there's usually a person that they can work well with. And I just think that was always how it was for me and him. But he might see it differently.

Marc Maron: No, I think that— I think at times— I know I'm a lot to put up with, and I do appreciate the fact that you've gotta listen to me more than anybody. But I think the foundation of the relationship was really a mutual respect for each of our respective jobs. It's been the longest relationship I've had! You know, look, I've had personal conversations with him about where I'm at. And you know, I respect his input. But it's not the way we work. And I think because of the mutual respect and the sort of admiration for each other's work—and our work ethic too!—I mean, it's just oddly a healthy relationship. Which is not something I'm really known for.

(They laugh.)

But somehow him and I—because of our work ethic, and because we're the only ones doing this, and just because of what we came through in radio and everything else, and just 'cause of my respect for his intelligence and everything else—there's just not— There's never been any “putting up with.” I misread his texts sometimes, but that's me.

Jesse Thorn: I'm glad you used the word admiration, Marc. Because I have talked to you about Brendan without Brendan in the room, virtually or literally.

Marc Maron: Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: That is the word that I would use to describe the way that you talk about Brendan. I think gratitude also. I think whenever I hear you talk about Brendan, I can hear you being grateful that you have a partner that you trust so much. Admiration is not like too big of a word to use about how I've heard you talk about Brendan to me.

Marc Maron: Well, I think like what—you know, whatever Brendan's talking about, talking circles around, it's like— The truth is that you don't—you know, you don't stay in a

relationship, working or otherwise, for 20 years plus now—you know, one way or the other—without it having some depth to it. It's just we're pretty well-guarded guys, but we have a pretty deep relationship that it just is what it is. I mean, we don't have to get all teary eyed about it—which I'm prone to.

(Brendan laughs.)

But you know, it's—

Jesse Thorn: It would help me if you guys did! That would be a real boon to me in this show!

(They laugh.)

Marc Maron: But it's kind of a—

Jesse Thorn: It's really worked great for *WTF*. I've never been able to generate it on my show, so if you guys could pump that element up a little bit.

Marc Maron: No, it's a very moving thing, you know?

[00:35:00]

And it's a very, you know, difficult thing to— You know, the way it's all evolved and the fact that we've, you know, maintained professionalism without giving up a sort of caring for each other in a real way. You know, like I know that—*(laughs)* look, you know, he had to take a call from me saying my girlfriend died. You know? And he's been there for me throughout all these different parts of my life.

You know, I don't really have a family structure or that many people to go to. And despite the fact that, you know, he doesn't necessarily want to put that on me with his wife—and I respect that—he's always been there for me and... *(Beat; Marc chokes up.)* Alright, so, you got it.

(They chuckle as Marc finds his words.)

He's always been there for me, you know, in all ways. And you know, you gotta appreciate that. But it's not fundamentally, you know, like a regular friendship, because it is rooted in professionalism. But you can't underestimate the depth of the dynamic. *(Beat.)* Did we stop circling?

(They laugh.)

Jesse Thorn: How do you feel hearing that, Brendan?

Brendan McDonald: I mean, like obviously—you know, the appreciation goes both ways, and it wouldn't work without that, but the gratitude really does too. And I think that's a big reason why maybe I don't intellectualize it too much. Because... I mean, Jesse, how do you think of someone— I'm sure there's people in your life, and I don't mean like your immediate family, but like there's probably people in your life that you're like, “That person changed my life. Like, forever. Like, changed my life.” And it might be someone you don't know personally, or it might be someone you know personally. But like, if I stopped and thought about that all the time—that he and I have legit changed each other's lives permanently? And I don't know how you stop and just have a regular relationship then. And a working relationship, and one where you can just be like, “Hey, did you watch that movie?” “Yeah, it was good.”

Like, I feel like most of your relationships in life stay on the ground. And this relationship is so elevated because we both literally would not be the people who we are today without it; we wouldn't have had the success we have; we wouldn't have the ability to lead the lives we live. We changed each other's lives for the better.

Jesse Thorn: Were you each completely aligned in the decision to end the show?

Marc Maron: Yeah. I mean, we had this agreement. It's a weird thing. And it also should be said that, you know, in most of these situations— You know, Brendan and I, from the get-go—you know, we're 50/50 partners in everything. So, you know, my belief is that this show doesn't exist without him, and the same on his side as obviously as well. You know, our sort of commitment to—

Jesse Thorn: And that's like— Sorry to interrupt, Marc, but that's like literally true. Like, I've been in a room with an entertainment attorney to try and make a contract that says 50/50 partnership, and the entertainment attorney will be like, “NO! Do not do that! Never, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever have a 50/50 partnership. At the very least bring someone else in, so there's two votes against one.”

Marc Maron: Yeah. I don't know. We never thought that way, and it was never— The one thing that we've earned, and we relish in is the fact that no one can tell us anything.

(They laugh.)

You know, that we have complete control of all of it at all times.

Jesse Thorn: But the reason is because if you're a 50/50 partnership, that means everyone has a veto.

Brendan McDonald: And I will tell you, I did not take that lightly. Like, when he said it, I thought it was kind of crazy. And I don't think it's crazy now.

(Marc chortles.)

But I did at the time think like, “Wow! I mean, like I would've easily taken 20 on this.” You know, it's like this is the—he's the talent. Like, that's the way my brain worked around this. But because he trusted me—I've said this to other people. People say like, “Well, Marc—you know, really changed from the guy he was when the podcast started.” And I understand all the reasons why that's true. I understand all the reasons why people perceive that. But to me? He didn't change that much. Because this is a guy who, when we were starting with nothing, said, “Half of this is yours. Do not question it.”

That was extraordinarily generous and a real vote of confidence, of faith, of taking someone who is—you know—almost two decades his junior and trusting that trusting that person with something this monumental, as it turned out, in his life.

[00:40:00]

So, like I always took it very seriously. I think that it's a big reason why— You know, Marc has this kind of compulsion to make sure he delivers on his end no matter what. And I don't want to like discount my own work ethic, but I think a big reason why I felt an importance to deliver was to live up to that standard of 50%.

Marc Maron: It was so funny. When he finally came onto the show full time—I don't even remember when that was. 'Cause you know, he was working in television production and consulting and whatnot, producing. And he said, “Look, I'm gonna go on *WTF* full-time.”

And I just remember like, “Dude! You don't—don't do it, man! It's like, that's crazy! You have a family. I mean, don't— Like, look, I live the life of a single weirdo!”

(Brendan laughs.)

And he's like, “I crunched the numbers. I'm not making a rash decision. Do you not know me?”

I'm like, “Alright, man! If you say so!”

Jesse Thorn: Why did you two never hire anyone else?

Marc Maron: I don't—that's a good question. *(Laughs.)*

Brendan McDonald: Well, wait, but I wanna know what you mean by hire. Like, we definitely have plenty of partnerships where people are doing work that, you know, benefits us tremendously. And so, do you mean just like why did we never like expand the production element of the show?

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. Why didn't you staff up at some point? You know what I mean? I'm not talking about like why do you have a—why do you not have a publicist, or whatever.

Marc Maron: I know what you're saying.

Brendan McDonald: Yeah. I mean, from my perspective, the answer was what Marc gave just a few minutes ago, which is we always only wanted to kind of answer to ourselves on this.

Marc Maron: And because of that, we overwork. (*Laughs.*)

Brendan McDonald: Yeah, that's true. But it's also—it's like I just don't think I would've been okay with it another way. I think so much of what allowed us to keep this going the way we did, at the level we were able to keep it going, was to not have to stop and explain it to somebody. To not have to say—which in some way was inexplicable—"Here's the ethos behind this show." It was just something that was kind of understood between Marc and myself. And we've had plenty of, you know, assistance. We've had people who handle updating things on websites. We've had people who handle, you know, being there in person to greet guests.

And you know, that's the easy stuff to explain. But having someone else edit the show? That was just a non-starter. Because it's as much something of just a kind of understanding Marc and I have about how this is going to sound as it is of just like what comes outta Marc's mouth when he is on the microphone. It's just—it's innate. It's within him. It's gonna come out. And it's the same way of how the show ultimately gets presented. So, I don't think either of us ever wanted to be like, "Hey, let's expand! And now the show is multiple people. Or you know, we can do several shows a week or—you know, with different hosts!"

And it was just not part of our drive to do this. Like, ultimately, we're just guys who wanted to do the work we did.

Jesse Thorn: We will wrap up my conversation with Brendan McDonald and Marc Maron in just a minute. After the break, now that the show is ending—this thing that they worked to make week after week after week after week for 16 years—what are they gonna do with their lives? It's *Bullseye* for MaximumFun.org and NPR.

Promo:

Music: Exciting synth.

Mallory O'Meara: Hey, there! Do you like books about various shades of gray?

Brea Grant: Maybe 50 of 'em? Or books about winged men searching for soulmates?

Mallory: Is your e-reader full of stories that would pair well with Barry White in the background?

Brea: We're Brea and Mallory of *Reading Glasses*, and we have a brand-new show for people who crave reads with just a dash of sriracha sauce.

Mallory: That's right! Every other Friday we dive into books that can be measured on the Scoville scale and talk about reading to the people who love them.

Brea: You can find our new show by visiting MaximumFun.org/spicy. That's MaximumFun.org/spicy.

(Music ends.)

Transition: Bright, chiming synth with a syncopated beat.

Jesse Thorn: Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guests this week are Brendan McDonald and Marc Maron. Marc is, of course, a comedian, writer, and actor. For 16 years, he hosted the podcast *WTF*. That show just ended earlier this month. Brendan produced *WTF* for its entire run. Let's get back into my conversation with Marc Maron and Brendan McDonald.

[00:45:00]

For either of you, was there ever a time when you felt the partnership was tenuous?

Marc Maron: No.

Brendan McDonald: No! No, for real. Not— The partnership, definitely not. I mean, there were times where I wondered about like the show. You know, I've been public about this, and I said—you know, when the Me Too movement started in earnest, I wondered if we were—you know, in some ways had blind spots to that that was negative. And I wasn't feeling great about that. You know, basically meaning were we kind of elevating people in this kind of comedy situation—“Oh, aren't these people hilarious and funny and great?”—and not really addressing the problems. But I think that we were able to talk through that.

Jesse Thorn: Brendan, do you mean because part of what *WTF* was about was about a world in standup comedy where there was a lot of workplace harassment, and that if you celebrated the messy things about the practitioners that you might inadvertently have been or would be celebrating the harassment?

Brendan McDonald: Yeah. Or more accurately, I think from my own brain, it was like, “Did we think that because someone came on here and we had this idea that the show kind of helps reveal someone's authentic self, did we like, kind of whitewash that?” Right? Did we paint over the negative aspects of that? Or ignore them ourselves? Right? And I think like we— Marc and I had conversations about that. We like went out of our way to like try to address that going forward with the type of guests we booked. And I—like, personally, I was able to kind of overcome what I thought was, you know, a questionable route of—like, a fork in the road for the show.

I would say the same thing was true during COVID. Like, you know, are we going to just keep doing this over Zoom? Like, one of the things we wanted to do from the start was have these live connections with people in a room. But we adapted to that, and it—you know, we didn't continue doing it after people were back seeing each other face-to-face. We stopped doing over the screen remote interviews. But I was questioning whether or not we should do it.

At no time, though, was it ever like a question about our partnership. It was like, “Can we have this conversation?” And it ultimately—the same thing that led to the end of the show was that we both said, “Let’s have this conversation.” I went out to LA with a date in mind. And I said, “I’m gonna come over on this day, and we can talk about the future of the show.” And I went over to Marc’s house saying to myself, “I’m gonna tell him I think we should be done.” And he said the same thing!

Like, when I got over there, he said, “So, you wanna talk about the show?”

I said, “Yyyeah. I mean, I’m interested to know like your thoughts about where we go with this in the future.”

(Chuckling.) And he was like, “What are your thoughts?”

(Marc chuckles.)

Like, just turned it right around on me. Like, I was not gonna be able to back into that thing. And I said, “Well, if I had to really plant my flag on this, I’d say we’re done.”

And he right away—it wasn’t like he had to give it some thought—said, “I think so too.”

So, that was the— To me, it’s like we had these other times where we were like, “We should have a conversation about the show,” and it led to us continuing to do the show. And at that point the conversation was, “We should end the show,” and we both felt okay about it, and we proceeded.

Marc Maron: That was always the agreement too, was that—you know—whoever said, “I’m done,” then the other would honor it. But the fact was— What he’s not mentioning is I would say—I don’t know how long ago it was; a year or so, maybe more—that the reality of burnout, which is not something I could identify, but Brendan was able to identify it. Like, you know, Brendan was like, “You know, this is a real thing.” And we went through a sort of period there where we were—it was compromising our lives, what was really just burnout. And I’d never really thought of that as a clinical kind of thing, that it’s a real thing that has implications on the rest of your life. And you know, we both identified that in ourselves a while ago. Yeah. I mean, before we decided to end the show.

I would say there were talks about that as we were negotiating the deal with Acast. That was the deal that we got that we—you know, we were experiencing periods of real burnout. And then we decided to soldier on. And I think, you know, making the deal with Acast brought new life into us and—

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—you know, a new sort of goal, which was financial—which I think we both felt we had coming, you know, for the work we put in. And now we were, you know, living it. And that kind of made us transcend what was, you know, feelings of exhaustion around what we were doing. And it wasn't even pushing through. It just brought new life to the show. But now as we're sort of coming to the end of that and to—we realize like, “Alright, well we can do it now.”

Jesse Thorn: I know people who got tens of millions of dollars for their shows. It's not happening so much right now as it was happening five and eight years ago.

Marc Maron: No, it's done.

Jesse Thorn: Did you ever consider selling the show, even if it meant—you know—potentially you just becoming an employee? That's still a big difference in your life and could have been a big relief.

Marc Maron: No.

Brendan McDonald: It was never—I mean, this goes to Marc's joke about, “It's easy to maintain your integrity when no one is looking to buy it.” (*Chuckles.*) And I don't think we ever got that kind of offer because—largely, because of what we talked about earlier. That our decision to not build the show out beyond what it already is, production wise, did not create for it a value beyond the brand—which is very strong—and the ability to put ads in the show, and the ability to monetize like a subscription service for—and you know, merchandising that kind of stuff, which is all brand related. But you know, these shows that you're talking about that got the huge deals—and as Marc correctly identified, those are vanishing. They started empires, you know? And what they were in essentially selling were networks. And we didn't have that. And so, we weren't really offered that.

We were offered, always, along the lines of what we wound up doing, which was partnership deals that involved ad sales and, you know, a kind of a larger infrastructure for premium content or subscription-based content or however you wanna phrase it. And we were happy with that. We were like, that allows us to keep doing the type of show that we do, and we can move forward with that.

I think one of the reasons we looked at the landscape and said it's probably time to hang it up was we knew that the next deal—whatever that deal would be—would either involve lots of compromises that we had, up until that point, avoided; or a lot less money. And to me, it's not like I'm like, “Oh, I can't do this for less money.” It's more like, “I'm exhausted.” So, I feel like you should be—you should value your own output to the level of what you've already been doing. Right? And if that value is then less in the marketplace? Well, then I should be done.

Marc Maron: And also, Jesse, we're—(*chuckles.*) Just by nature, neither Brendan or myself are greedy people or people that believe that means winning. So, we did alright. And we did

alright for, you know, our lives. That's great. We're not greedy people. Our lifestyles are reasonable. You know, we're not driven by that. We're driven by the integrity of the show and the quality at which we operate at. And our choice to remain in audio was because we appreciate audio and believe that it is the more intimate medium, and there is a magic to it. And the fact that we kind of— With the deal that we got, we were able to say like, “Well, you know, we earned this, and now we can live our lives in a certain amount of comfort that is reasonable without feeling we have to chase anything.” And we're just not like that.

Jesse Thorn: Marc, you have a successful acting career. You've become a very good actor in addition to being a successful one. You have always defended your position as a standup comic. You know, there was no point at which you backed off of being a standup. And I think if you had, you know, written your own epitaph at any point, it would've started with “standup comic”.

(Marc agrees.)

Even at the—you know, the, even at the most successful of *WTF* or the most culturally current of *WTF*, whatever point that was, you still would've said, “I'm a standup.”

Marc Maron: Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: Brendan, you're the producer of *WTF*. You're not an actor or a standup or a filmmaker.

[00:55:00]

So, this is a bigger difference in your life in some ways.

Brendan McDonald: Bigger in the sense that the change? That like what—is that like a “what's next” question?

Jesse Thorn: Look, Marc is giving up 40% of his career right now—maybe 60%, depending on how you see it; whether it's financial or, you know, spiritual. You know what I mean? This has been your life for the past 15+ years.

Brendan McDonald: You're asking basically—you're saying to me basically what my son said to me. He said, “Are you sad about this ending?”

I said, “What do you think?”

And he said, “Yes, I think you're sad.”

And I said, “Why?”

And he said, “Cause your career is over.”

(They all laugh.)

And I like—I had to laugh. And I said to him, “I don't think my career is over. And I'm not sad. I'm happy that we are getting to do this on the terms that we're getting to do it.”

And no, like— Again, much like I do not take for granted Marc's offer to me when we started this of a 50/50 partnership, I do not take for granted how we're ending this. I am very grateful for how we're doing this. People do not get to choose most of the time. They get shown the door, and that's the end of that.

Marc Maron: Or they fade away!

Brendan McDonald: But the reality for me is like I'm in the same position I was in, now, when we started *WTF*. Which is that I can end this, and I then do not have any expectations for what's next. And I'm also in a very secure place in my life that I can have that. And that's wonderful to me. I am not sad about that! I'm very happy that the next thing that's on my plate, whatever that might be, will come with zero expectations, zero pressure. It will just be an outgrowth of whatever I decide that I would like to do. And that's great! That was why we did this. Like, to me, I'm like, “I'd like to get to a place in my life where I can just like be happy with what I do, and I don't have to worry about what comes next.”

Jesse Thorn: Marc, as a compulsive worker and a compulsive person in some other areas, what's it gonna be like for you not to have the signpost of those two episodes a week?

Marc Maron: I don't know. I don't know. Yeah. It's already sort of like showing itself, in that we don't have to, you know, get a backlog of interviews in the can. So, there's already been that space. And you know, right now—because of the weight of stopping it and the big change in the fact that I just dumped a special, and I'm kind of that square one with standup—it's a little rough. Every day's kind of an emotional rollercoaster. But I'm aware of it, and I'm things in place. And also, this show was—you know, outside of Brendan and I's relationship in all ways—you know, like it was a big part of my social life, talking to people and getting outta my head. And it was a big psychological and emotional and at times spiritual part of my life that was very consistent.

And having this time to plan the end, you know, I've had to put some things in place knowing that I'm gonna be a little untethered. But I also know that I spent a good part of my professional life like that. Like, it's not—I'm not heading into something unfamiliar. And as a matter of fact, like Brendan was saying, there's a lot of things that are secure now that weren't. But I have spent large chunks of my life when I was just a comic with more time on my hands, in a lonelier place, in a much different living environment, with a lot of dread and fear and not knowing how I was going to continue to survive or move through the world. So, that part of it is not there. But the emotional part of it is there. And the sort of creative, you know, like, “What do I do next?”

And my compulsion, you know, lends itself to anything. Right now, I'm highly obsessed with a difficult cat situation and, you know, trying to figure out how to clear out all this crap from my life. It's somewhere I've been, but not as confident or, you know, financially secure or creatively sort of grounded. So, not unlike Brendan, I don't know what'll happen. I do know

I'm employed, you know, with the television. But you know, in terms of my own creativity, outside of doing someone else's script, I'm trying to make the adjustment to, you know, focus on pulling this movie together and working a little differently. But I do need to expand my social life and probably, you know, get back to—uh, uh... meetings.

(They laugh.)

[01:00:00]

Just so I— Not that I'm worried I'm going to drink or use drugs, but just to get that emotional component of, uh—of feelings, you know, going on a regular basis.

Jesse Thorn: I guess 15—or 17 or whatever it was—years ago, I went over to your house to help you plug your microphones into your computer. If you guys aren't gonna use those... do you think I could have 'em in case we need them? Just 'cause we're not—

Marc Maron: I have an unopened one.

(Jesse laughs.)

Shore sent me one with a built-in preamp. Do you want it?

Jesse Thorn: No, it's okay. It's okay.

Marc Maron: An SM-7. I remember when you told me to get the mics, I bought the wrong one! I bought an SM-57, and that was definitely the wrong mic. But I use it now to record all the guitar at the end. That's the mic that I bought, 'cause I thought you meant an SM-57, not an SM-7. But I still have it. And it makes all the music.

Jesse Thorn: Can I tell you something? As I was preparing for this interview, I was in my office in a shed in my backyard. And I looked over my shoulder, and my eye caught my trophy for being in the Podcast Hall of Fame—which you're also in, Marc.

Marc Maron: *(Chuckles.)* Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: And this is one of the only accolades I've received since I won the Best Local Radio Personality in Metro Santa Cruz in 2003. I'm very proud of it. And I thought to myself, "I'm very proud of the work I've done and my contributions to podcasting... I don't think I would have that trophy on my wall if it weren't for Marc Maron compulsively thanking me on the air for showing him how to plug the microphones into his computer!"

(They laugh.)

Marc Maron: It was which microphone. And believe me, Shore is forever grateful.

(Jesse laughs.)

Because from you to me to God's ears, 80% of the podcasters use this mic.

Jesse Thorn: Well, I wanna say that, as modest as my contributions were—you know, three hours of my time or whatever decades ago—I just am always so grateful to you for giving me credit. *(Laughs.)*

Marc Maron: Always! *(Cackles.)*

Jesse Thorn: And it has meant such an oddly large amount in my career!

Marc Maron: It was a big deal!

Brendan McDonald: It's not nothing though, Jesse! I mean, it was the mics, but you also— You, you know, gave us your time and spoke to us about the host service that you were using at the time. That was the one we used. It was— You know, we just had JimmyPardo over to do a conversation with Marc, and it was a similar thing. It was like there was a community back then that we all kind of relied on each other to help feel out in the dark. What's going on with this thing? How do we do it? And you know, I'm always very grateful to everyone who was there in those days, even people who didn't do what you did and speak to us directly. Just people who were there doing podcasts.

We took from that. We took from everyone. It was all very fun and encouraging. And like, we definitely knew we were doing something that was unique and growing, and let's just make the most of it. So, I don't treat it as like we over-praised or anything. It was like— It was hugely important for us and everyone else in those days in 2008/2009/2010 that we kind of all had each other's backs, even when we didn't think we did.

Jesse Thorn: And you know, if it weren't for the work that, Brendan, you did, and Marc, you did, and that I did, and JimmyPardo did, we never could have had a podcast hosted by Barack Obama and Bruce Springsteen.

(They chuckle.)

That gift would've been withheld from the world.

Brendan McDonald: That's the least of the ones that you could come up with!

(Jesse laughs.)

Marc Maron: Also, SM-7s, buddy!

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. SM-7s. Brendan, Marc, thank you so much for coming back on *Bullseye*. And thanks for all these wonderful years of work that you've done. I'm so happy that they're in the world and will continue to benefit people for many years to come.

Marc Maron: Thank you!

Brendan McDonald: Yeah. Thanks, Jesse.

Jesse Thorn: Marc Maron and Brendan McDonald. Congratulations to them on an incredible run of a wonderful program. Two genuinely good dudes. Special thanks to them for earning me one of the only awards that I've ever won in my life, which PRX gave us for the public radio program with the most bleeps in it. (*Chuckling.*) Thanks, Marc and Brendan, for letting me produce a radio version of *WTF* many years ago. And hey, thanks for all your great work.

Of course, there is plenty more in the future coming from the great Marc Maron and Brendan McDonald.

[01:05:00]

Transition: Playful 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 headquarters overlooking beautiful MacArthur Park in Los Angeles, California. Although! This will be one of the very last shows that is primarily recorded in our office in MacArthur Park, because we just moved to downtown Los Angeles. So, so much love to MacArthur Park and the Westlake neighborhood, one of my favorite places in LA. And we'll see you soon on the Angels Flight Railway!

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, Hannah Moroz. Our video producer is Daniel Speer. We get booking help from Mara Davis. Our interstitial music comes from our friend Dan Wally, also known as DJW. His music is at DJWsounds.bandcamp.com. You can go there and download the music from *Bullseye* if you need something to freestyle over. It's pay what you want. 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. I think that's 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.