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(ADVERTISEMENT)

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. This month we are doing something really special. We're ringing in 25 years of *Bullseye* being on the air. 25 years! It's true. We started as a college radio show back at Santa Cruz's KZSC, the Heavyweight 88. This week, we are bringing you the first of many celebrations: a spectacular live show we just taped at LAist 89.3 in Greater Los Angeles, California—which of course is our hometown.

We'll have interviews with Roy Wood Jr., Jason Mantzoukas, music from Rebecca Sugar—who created *Steven Universe*. But first, we've got one of my favorite standup comics: Al Madrigal. He's a comedian and writer. You've seen him on *The Daily Show* where he was a correspondent, on *Conan* and *The Tonight Show*. He was a series regular on *Lopez vs Lopez*. He's also a good friend of mine who—this is a true story—20 years ago, when my co-host graduated from college and moved to Southern California, Al was nice enough to drive down to Santa Cruz from San Francisco to help me host this very show. And he was nice enough to come over from his house in Pasadena to LAist in Pasadena to do some standup. Let's get into it.

(Audience applause fades in.)

Al Madrigal: So, I have known Jesse for an incredible amount of time. We—now, it's crazy. I think I went and co-hosted that show before wife and kids, certainly. And now I'm an empty nester. That's how long it's been. I just recently got both kids outta the house, which deserves applause.

(Laughter and applause.)

Especially now. The bar really got lowered, folks, as we went on and on, Right? I got polite, young kids that'll look you in the eye, and I don't care much beyond that. Alright? I really don't. Because that's where the bar gets. I see a young child in the audience. You're gonna learn a lot.

(Laughter.)

Even though this is gonna be clean. There's—I looked over to my left to spot a five-year-old. Is that what five looks like? Yeah. Six? Oh, seven? He's tiny.

(Laughter.)

But—he's not popping out the doctor's—he's not in the 90th percentile. Right?

(Scattered laughter.)

So, when you do look your child in the eyes for the very first time, you look at your baby in the eyes, you can't help but think, “Oh my gosh, what can't you become? You could be a CEO, a titan of industry. You could be a philanthropist, save humanity, maybe an Olympic athlete—some sort of a professional.” But then what happens is five years later, you go to your first parent-teacher conference, and they sit you down, look you in the eyes, and tell you that's not gonna be the case. You need to lower your expectations. Because your kid's a biter! Heh!

And you go, “Oh my god! What did the other kid do?” Nothing! Alright? Your kid just came flying at him like a psycho.

I lived right near the fires. Had to evacuate. You learn a lot about yourself when you have to pack a go bag. Alright? Then there's COVID. It's not gonna stop at 19. Heh? I'm not sure wiping out the CDC's probably the best policy, right? It'll probably work its way up to 25 in our lifetime. I don't know if we'll be around to see it. And then of course, you know, do I have enough saved? You know, what is the retirement savings when civilization is collapsing? AI, probably gonna take all of our jobs. I mean, certainly Jesse's.

(Laughter.)

(Chuckling.) Okay, alright.

(Jesse laughs distantly.)

But other than that, happiest days. Right? Right? Ahead. I'm excited. I'm gonna miss some of the kid stuff though. You know, we did club sports. That actually I'm not gonna miss so much. Anybody have their kids in sports? Is that—? The seven-year-old play any sports? What does he do? *(Beat.)* Baseball, soccer? Is he club? *(Beat.)* AYSO. You're in a league, AYSO. You gotta up it to club.

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That's the trap. I just like— It's like a fraternity. You get other people to join, but it's really a horrible deal. Right? *(Chuckles.)* I spent four upwards of \$40,000 supporting a mediocre athlete.

(Laughter.)

I really did! I spent about 45 grand on a 5'4" shooting guard.

(Laughter.)

It's not the best investment, eh? Should have gone to inner city, found some 6'6" 12-year-old, given him half the money. My kid could have been the agent. That would've been a smarter deal. I am gonna miss the backyard parties. I'm not sure if anyone's been to a Mexican first through fifth grade—like a five-year-old birthday party. You've been to a—? You've held them! It's the best time, right? I mean, you see it. I think that's—my Instagram algorithm knows that I like looking at Mexican backyard birthday parties. It gets a little weird. But you gotta check this out. Sweater over your shoulders? You've never been to one, for sure. You gotta go.

(Laughter.)

They'd take you in! They don't care. Alright? You could tell them all about pickleball. This is after a couple shots. But it always is just images of strollers. The kids have been asleep for three hours, and everybody's still up pounding shots and beers. It's so fun. You gotta get the pinata. Yeah, I love going down to the Mexican party supply store. It doesn't matter if you go down to Glassell Park or you go to—you're in Cleveland or Guadalajara. They all look the same. Spraypainted storefront, right? Airbrushed. It says, "Weddings, flowers, horchata, income tax, mufflers."

(Laughter.)

"Notary and copier" is written in on the side, because they didn't plan properly for the amount of businesses they were gonna roll outta that particular storefront. The pinata is ridiculous too. Because think about it. It's like, *(menacingly)* "Hey, kids. Let's get your favorite cartoon character, and let's lynch his ass. Then we can all take turns beating the crap out of it until its guts come out."

Alright, I gotta go. But thank you very much, and thanks for supporting Jesse and the show and LAist!

(Applause and cheers.)

Jesse Thorn: Al Madrigal!

(Applause and cheers.)

Our first guest on the program has been a guest on *Bullseye*. I think this is his third time? One of my absolute favorites. He actually got his start in radio—radio and standup comedy in Birmingham, Alabama. He was a correspondent on *The Daily Show* for eight years, and he has a brand-new book that is right around the corner. It's called *The Man of Many Fathers: Life Lessons Disguised as a Memoir*. He's also the host of the hilarious and wonderful CNN panel show *Have I Got News for You*. And in case you haven't seen it, we have a little clip.

Transition: A whooshing sound.

Clip:

Roy Wood Jr.: How did he compare giving your kid a lifesaving measles shot to—

Amber Ruffin: (In horror.) Roy. Roy.

Roy Wood Jr.: (*Without stopping.*) What did he compare vaccinations to?

Amber Ruffin: Roy, I don't know this news story. But if the answer is slavery, I'll kill us all.

(*Laughter and scattered applause.*)

Roy Wood Jr.: Show the clip!

Joseph Ladapo: All vaccine mandates in Florida law, all of them—! Every last one of them is wrong and drips with disdain and—and slavery!

Amber Ruffin: (*Scream-laugh.*) Oh-ho-ho! Knives! Dead! You're dead! You're dead! You're dead! I'm dead!

(*Laughter.*)

Transition: A whooshing sound.

Jesse Thorn: Please welcome to the stage, Roy Wood Jr.

(*Cheers and applause.*)

Roy Wood Jr.: Thank you for having me!

Jesse Thorn: It's very nice of you to be here. I mean, you are here to do a late-night television appearance.

Roy Wood Jr.: Yes.

Jesse Thorn: And you like literally have your luggage in the kitchen that passes for a green room over there.

(*Laughter.*)

Because you're about to leave immediately afterwards. So, I'm very grateful that you were able to find the time.

Roy Wood Jr.: No, it's all good. If you can make it work and still get home to do dad stuff in the morning, I make it work. That's the only rule is don't miss Dad stuff. *(Chuckles.)* Except for when you fly to LA.

Jesse Thorn: How does it feel to be on the *Jimmy Kimmel* program in the immediate aftermath of the Jimmy Kimmel drama>

Roy Wood Jr.: It was like— I don't know. You ever seen people like survive a rollercoaster?

Jesse Thorn: *(Chuckling.)* Uh-huh. Wait, survive—?

Roy Wood Jr.: Like, when you're waiting to get on a rollercoaster, and you see everybody come off like, *(exhausted relief)* “Whoo! Huhhh!”

[00:10:00]

That's his whole crew. Like, Jimmy Kimmel, the whole crew. Like, it's just love. You wanna hug strangers. Like, when you're legitimately horrified and think you're going to die and then you don't? Like, the idea of cancellation, per se, being the death? It felt very warm and communal in a way that I've never—and I've done that program two or three times prior, and it never felt that same level of reverence, and—you know—and love. Like, it really had—and I'm not even joking. It really had whenever Jon Stewart would pop in on *The Daily Show* type vibes. Like, when I was there with Trevor, you know, John would pop— You know, how Jon Stewart just walks in, and you don't know why. And he just goes, “I'll come on the program tonight.”

And I'm like, “Okay, come on.” But yeah, it was— I think “warmth” is probably the best way to describe the atmosphere at that studio now.

Jesse Thorn: I mean, literally in the time between when we booked you on this show and right now— Like, when we booked you, it was, “Oh, he's gonna be in town for *Kimmel*. We just have to figure out when he can leave there to make it here.”

Roy Wood Jr.: Correct.

Jesse Thorn: And then Jimmy Kimmel got canceled by the president...

Roy Wood Jr.: Yeah. And then we called and was like, “Yeah, I'm probably not gonna come.”

(Laughter.)

I'm like, "I love you. I don't know if I can fly all the way out there for the single thing." But like what I try to do is, when I'm coming to LA—you have your tent pole, and then you build around that. So, you know, I get in town at nine in the morning and just go. And then it's straight to Burbank, get the haircut. And then at one o'clock—I did a podcast at one o'clock and then was off to *Kimmel* and then over here. And then I'll—if I can get to In-n-Out, I will.

(Laughter.)

Jesse Thorn: How do you feel about your place in the television world? CNN is, um— It feels like a safe home now; you're on your third series of the show. But it's also potentially going to be acquired by the same rich kid who just bought CBS.

Roy Wood Jr.: Yeah. What's crazy is that's part of why I left *The Daily Show* was 'cause of the merger! Like, that merger talk started three years ago, and I thought that merger was gonna happen much faster than what it did. And then Trump won the election, and that affected whatever. But I don't really—like, if your question is about job security, I don't really believe in that.

(Laughter.)

Like, it's just you have a job, and then eventually you don't. None of these jobs are permanent. And I don't say that from a pessimistic place, but even if they do the merger, and they try to restructure the creative on the network, that'll take a year. In the meantime, stuff's gotta be on; the show is beloved. We've dominated our time slot in the last year, and I know that CNN has a subscription model coming out—which isn't necessarily about new content, but it's about giving people who've cord-cutted an entry point into having a regular news program. And then you get access to all the CNN shows. So, we are part of that packaging. So. And we're also probably the funniest show on the network.

(Laughter and scattered applause.)

I mean—

Jesse Thorn: Don't applaud that!

(Laughter.)

Roy Wood Jr.: Well, let me say—

Jesse Thorn: Wolf Blitzer's like—*(laughs)*.

Roy Wood Jr.: Tony Shalhoub going around eating bread with people. And that's been pretty interesting. And like—it's like Stanley Tucci, but just bread. Like, it's just—like, I'm not joking. That's literally what—like, Tucci would do the wine, and Longoria does all the like Latin American food. So, I feel comfortable in that regard.

Jesse Thorn: One of the most poignant stories in your book is a work story. You—when you were in college, you were suspended for a semester because you had been convicted of a crime.

Roy Wood Jr.: Yeah. Credit card fraud. Stealing in credit cards and—

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. You went back to college, and you were doing standup comedy sort of like—almost desperately. Like, you described it as like the thing in your life that you enjoyed.

Roy Wood Jr.: It's the only time I was happy was onstage. For about a year.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. And when you were working as a comic, you would get booked like long weekends and sometimes even two weeks in a row as an MC at a club. And you would do day labor during the day when you were working at night. So, like, as far as you were concerned, a weeklong booking—

Roy Wood Jr.: It's two jobs.

[00:15:00]

Jesse Thorn: —was great, 'cause you could have two jobs. You could show up at the day labor center in the morning when you got to town.

(Roy confirms.)

Tell me about the jobs that you did as a day laborer.

Roy Wood Jr.: I mean, it just—it varied from city to city, and then also the season. It was almost always outdoors. Like, I would do— And when I say day labor, it's not in the same sense of kind of the day labor culture here, where you can go to a particular spot and just pick folks up. This is like an office and paperwork. So, it's daily work, daily pay, Labor Ready and Labor Finders, spots like that. And there was some temp services. And I used to try and get jobs with them, because I called them air-conditioned jobs—like, keyboarding. And like, I was 20, and I could type like 80 words a minute, which is—

Jesse Thorn: Normally you gotta be like 60 to do that!

(Laughter.)

Roy Wood Jr.: Yeah. But because I was still on probation for the credit cards, pretty much no indoor job would touch me. Because they just, *(skeptical and muttered)* “You don't know! Hmm!” And there's always somebody with no record that's as qualified as you. So, I remember in Columbia, South Carolina, I would get to town on Monday night. And if I could convince the comedy club or the hotel— Like, usually my move was to show up to the— The comedy club has a hotel that's contracted to house the comedians. The shows start Tuesday

night. But I would show up to town Monday night, so I could work Tuesday morning at Labor Ready. And I would show up to the hotel, and I would deliberately show up at like midnight, one in the morning. And “Man, they said— They was supposed to— They didn't tell you I was coming early, man?”

Ad nine times outta ten, I could get that room, because the hotel had a contract with the club. So, they know the club was good for it. Those were simpler times, man.

Jesse Thorn: I mean, what I hear you describing in part is like— You have either 10 or 12 half siblings, but you are also your mother's only child.

Roy Wood Jr.: Correct.

Jesse Thorn: And what I am hearing— I also have—I'm also my mother's only child. I have two half siblings. What I am hearing you describing, in part, is like an only child dream life. Which is you are performing for people when you are ready to do so, in the right context. And you are only responsible to others for the course of one day. And then you see how the you feel the next day. And you are, at 20—even as a convicted felon on probation—in control of your own life.

Roy Wood Jr.: Yeah, pure freedom. Which is all I ever really wanted—and so much so that by the time I get admitted back into school, the work ethic that I had established on the road carried over into the classroom. Because comedy essentially was the North Star. Because what happens is, if you wanna keep doing comedy— I didn't have a car at this point. I'm still riding a Greyhound bus to all of my gigs. Well, if you're gonna get to this weekend gig, you need to leave town Thursday night, no later than Friday morning. And to get back after the Sunday night show, you need Monday all day to travel back. So, then you need to condense your classes to Tuesday/Wednesday/Thursdays. So, you have to take a full course load in three days.

And now if you're taking a full course load in three days, then that means you can work Golden Corral Tuesday/Wednesday/Thursday, leave town Friday, study on the bus trip there. Once you get to town, focus on standup, only do standup. Review jokes, listen to the audio. And then Sunday—I mean, Monday morning, study. So, those eight hours on either side of the trip on the Greyhound, if you do not study right here, you're going to flunk. And if you flunk, then you are going to be in violation of your probation and go to prison. Because part of the terms of my probation was graduating from school.

So, like they have all of these stipulations. And you know, like I had like a 2.2/2.3 early on in school. And then on the other side when I got back in school, I was Dean's List the rest of the way. Because those—I'm not gonna screw up these three days, because I need this weekend. Like, that's all that mattered was just getting to the weekend. And so, anybody— And I think something that's not really talked about when you talk about like recidivism in this country is just—

[00:20:00]

—once people find out that you're carrying that scarlet letter, there's a bit of—you're ostracized a little bit, and there's a lot of judgment placed on you. But then I get to these cities, and I'm working with these random people, and I didn't feel that. And so, it gave you this sense of validation that you still had worth to the world. And that was something that I also looked forward to. Because in Tallahassee, I'm the guy who used to steal credit cards to sell you jeans at half price. Once I no longer can do that, I have no social cache. And because most of the people I hang with are doing far worse stuff, you can't go to the party no more. It's not cool for you to be around people like that no more. And! As part of the terms of your probation, you can't even be around those types of people no more.

So, once you like walk in a room, like you could literally— Like, I was 20, and I could like walk into a room in college, and I could just scan the felonies happening in the room and just go—

(Laughter.)

Like, you know how Terminator walks in the room like, “Boop! Boop! Boop! Boop!” and scans it? I'm like, “Alright, I should leave.” So, it cut down my social life. But then when I got out on the road, none of that mattered! It didn't matter at the comedy club. You're on stage, you're funny, you're talking about something I relate to, I'm gonna laugh! So, this idea of being judged on my potential versus being judged for my past, it was literally two totally different worlds.

Jesse Thorn: This is William Carlos Williams poem that I have like a little bit of— It was the most only-child-est thing ever. I have a little bit of it tattooed on my arm. And in the poem, he's describing himself at home when his children are and his wife are asleep. And he's like in his office, and he's doing a little dance for himself in front of the mirror naked. *(Chuckles.)* And there's a part where he says, “Lonely, lonely, I'm best so. And who shall say I am not the happy genius of my household?”

And I think sometimes when you are an only child, there is this like allure to loneliness. Because even though it is this painful thing and you desperately want connection, you also kind of so want to just have the quiet of having your own life on your own terms.

Roy Wood Jr.: Yeah. Yeah. There's attacks. Like, companionship costs. You know? There's a tradeoff. And I think the problem though is that in relationships we're always taught to defer to the other person's needs and give them what they want. But I think you just have to be honest about what works for you and then just keep being honest until you find something that meshes with that. I remember one time—it was when we were supposed to go on a date, and like in the time leading up to the date, I'm dreading it. Not because I don't like her or anything, but there was just a lot of stuff I needed to get done at the house.

(Scattered laughter.)

And I was just honest about it. I was just very honest, just in the sense of, you know, “We can do this thing, but I bet you will clock that I'm not present.”

She goes, “What would you rather do?”

I go, “I would love to just bring your laptop over, and we just do work around each other.”

And she was with it!

(Laughter.)

And like, that idea— And that doesn't have to be every single outing or something, but the idea of finding somebody to be alone with I think is—I think that's the trick that only children have to deal with. I don't— You know, lonely, just because loneliness is comfortable doesn't necessarily mean it's always the right move. You know? I do have fun with friends. I have people and folks I chat with and kick it with. But there are days where I just need to just be alone, just to kinda refill my tank a little bit. And it's nothing personal.

And I think the problem is that people who are more sociable or come from big families or— They need social interaction, because they're scared of the noise in their brain. Like, they'll take offense to it. They take you choosing yourself as rejection or something personal, and it's not. That part of it, finding some degree of social compatibility within that construct? That's a little difficult.

[00:25:00]

Like, I've found as I've gotten older, I have gotten worse at small talk. And I don't know when that happened. Like, I was a waiter for years. And like, waiting tables is a series of micro conversations. And now, like on the elevator, I just— I don't know what to say to you. “Elevator, we riding? Yeah. The button. I don't—*(mumbles)*.” I've lost something, and I wonder if that's because I'm always alone.

Jesse Thorn: Are you worried that it's because you are becoming your emotionally distant, much older father? Because that's something that you write about in the book is that there was a point in your life where you were living with your father much of the time, but like felt like he had nothing to say to you.

Roy Wood Jr.: Yeah, we just didn't talk. You know, good dad, terrible husband is probably the quickest summation for the sake of tonight. But no, I mean, my dad and I didn't talk a lot. But you know, that's for a bevy of reasons. I mean, you know, he was always at war with my mom, and so I would choose her. So, sometimes I was the enemy; whatever his mood is this week. But for me, a lot of what I deal with is so much of my life is people. Professionally, it's people. To promote it, it's people. So, sometimes there's a day where you just don't wanna open the front door. You just wanna play PlayStation. And there's nothing personal about that. But if you have a friend you haven't seen in a while, and you decide to flake out on those drinks that you promised a while back—

Jesse Thorn: Sorry about that, by the way.

(Laughter.)

Roy Wood Jr.: Yeah. You know, you're only gonna get so many times before people reshuffle you in their lives, because they gotta protect themselves too. I got a buddy I was tight with for 20 years. He got engaged, and I didn't get an invitation. And I felt some kind of way about it. So, I called him. And in so many words, what he basically said was just, "You don't call. You don't come around. So, what did you—? I figured this would be another thing that you just couldn't come to, because you're doing all of this stuff that I see in my algorithm." But I still want it to be included even if I couldn't have showed up.

Jesse Thorn: How do you control those impulses in your own parenting? 'Cause this book is like epistolary to your son. This is like you teaching your child in the form of this book.

Roy Wood Jr.: Yeah. I think with my son, it's more of a, "Hey, here's the things that I think made me me. So, if you're trying to figure out who you are, start with this stuff. 'Cause that's the stuff that feels most prominent within me. And then if you identify that in yourself, you'll know what to do or not do with those feelings and impulses." But in terms of like isolating myself from my family? No, absolutely not. Like, I'm like—literally I land at 6AM in New York, and they have a function at a school in the morning for the parents and them. It's like a parent's—like, come eat terrible food with your child.

(Laughter.)

You know, the breakfast and "come here breakfast with the parents! Eat your breakfast!" And he sits in a small (*censor beep*) chair.

(laughter.)

But you know, I wanna be there for that. I had an old man who wasn't there for any of that stuff, you know. So, it'd be nice to see what happens to someone within my generation, within my lineage—what if the father was around? What would that look like? Let's see. You know, my pops lost his dad when he was four. So, you know, he never had that. So, how does he even know what I needed? 'Cause he never got it. So, you know, in a way really sitting and sitting with a lot of those truths about him, it made things very forgiving and freeing. Because I understood. You know?

Jesse Thorn: Well, Roy, speaking of your family, you have an airplane to catch. Roy Wood Jr., thank you so much for joining me on *Bullseye*. It's so nice to see you, man.

Roy Wood Jr.: Thank you. Appreciate it.

Jesse Thorn: Thank you.

(Applause.)

[00:30:00]

We've got so much more to come from our 25th anniversary show, live at LAist in Pasadena. I'll talk with Jason Mantzoukas, and you will hear music from Rebecca Sugar—the creator of *Steven Universe*. Keep it locked. It's *Bullseye* from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

(ADVERTISEMENT)

Promo:

Jackie Kashian: Jackie Kashian. Hi, and welcome to the MaximumFun.org podcast, *The Jackie and Laurie Show*, where we talk about standup comedy and how much we love it and how much it enrages us.

Laurie Kilmartin: We have a lot of experience, and a lot of stories, and a lot of time on our hands. So, check us out. It's one hour a week, and we drop it every Wednesday on MaximumFun.org.

Transition: Thumpy synth with light vocalizations.

Jesse Thorn: Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. This whole month we are celebrating 25 years of *Bullseye* being the show—which I think makes our radio program old enough to rent a car. To celebrate this quarter-centenary—not a word, but who cares—we did a special live show at LAist in Pasadena. Let's get back into it.

Oh, wow. I'm so glad that we have this next guest here. I was lucky enough to corner her backstage to tell her what her work meant to me and to my family. It is work that is so profoundly special and has changed so many lives. Their second EP, *Lonely Magic*, dropped earlier this summer. In addition to being a musician, they created the beloved television program, *Steven Universe*—one of the most beautiful children's shows that's ever existed on television. They were also a writer and storyboard artist for *Adventure Time*. And it was just announced that they are going to be the director of a brand-new feature film starring the Moomins.

(Scattered applause.)

The Moomins, the... (uncertain) Finnish?

(Someone in the audience confirms.)

Yes. The Finnish hippopotamus people—

(Laughter.)

—who are the most famous thing in the entire world everywhere except here.

(Laughter.)

Performing the song “Hill to Die On”, the wonderful Rebecca Sugar.

(Applause and cheers.)

Music: “Hill to Die On” from the album *Lonely Magic* performed live by Rebecca Sugar.

Call it an obsession, but I call it a calling

I'm flying, I'm falling

I know that I'm right

Call it something special

It's the chance of a lifetime

It's my day and the sunshine

It's my moment to fight

Every bone in my body to the tips of my hair

Every part of me is electric with care

Every second I can feel a part of the thrill of the climb

To the peak, to the peak, to the peak of my hill to die on

[00:35:00]

Calling in a favor

We can reach it together

In the heat of the fever, I'll make you a believer

Nothing could be better than the top of that mountain

Where there's fame and there's glory in the power of story

You and I can make it

I'll be holding your hand

Sweet luck that somehow you understand, my love

Oh, how your bright eyes sparkle with the thrill of the climb

To the peak, to the peak, to the peak of my hill to die on

Looking at the scenery is making me dizzy

The atmosphere is thin

Did I win, my love?

And how your bright eye sparkle with the thrill of the climb

Oh, my beautiful friend, I would do it again

For all the time in my life and the air in my lungs

I would try

But now I—I think I don't wanna die

And as I feel the thrill of the pull of the hill

Eyes shut, heart catches

Are here with me, still?

My rock, my joy, my world, my shoulder to cry on

On the peak, on the peak, on the peak of my hill

To die on

(Song ends.)

(Whispered.) Thank you.

(Raucous cheers and applause.)

Jesse Thorn: Rebecca Sugar!

(Whistles and cheers.)

Our next guest on the program is a comedian and actor who, when you see him on screen, you absolutely always know that you are about to see something special. You saw him on *The League*, where he played Raffffi—the guy who kept hot dogs in his pockets. You saw him on *Brooklyn Nine Nine*, where he played Adrian Pimento—who was also completely out of his mind.

(Laughter.)

Maybe you've heard him on *How Did This Get Made?*, the legendary bad movie podcast that he co-hosts with June Diane Raphael and Paul Scheer. He is also on the latest season of the British comedy panel game show—stunt show?—*Taskmaster*.

(Cheers and scattered applause.)

And only in a public radio, comedy nerd audience could I say that and get a round of applause.

(Laughter.)

Please welcome to the stage, Jason Mantzoukas.

(Cheers and applause.)

Hello, friend!

Jason Mantzoukas: Alright, let's go!

(Laughter.)

Jesse Thorn: *(Laughs.)* Jason, welcome. Um—

Jason Mantzoukas: Jesse, thrilled to be here. Thank you for asking.

Jesse Thorn: We'll be talking about your absent father.

Jason Mantzoukas: Brrr! I'd love to tuck right into male loneliness.

(Laughter.)

Brrr! Va-va-va-va-va-va!

Jesse Thorn: Instead, let's talk about *Taskmaster*, shall we?

Jason Mantzoukas: Sure! Sure! Not the lonely crucible that all comedians are born from? Got it. Got it!

(Laughter.)

Jesse Thorn: All comedians' memoirs are either "how I became an alcoholic during the 12 hours a day that I was in Des Moines with nothing to do"—

(Jason agrees.)

—Or "how I just barely avoided becoming an alcoholic by getting addicted to something else in the other 12 hours."

Jason Mantzoukas: Sure. Or "the home I grew up in had too many people in it" or "not enough people in it."

(Laughter.)

Jesse Thorn: The guidance counselor is like, "You'll never become a comedian! Too medium of people!"

(Laughter.)

Jason Mantzoukas: Yes! *(Laughs.)* You're not gonna be funny if you're just right.

Jesse Thorn: Exactly.

Jason Mantzoukas: In the *Goldilocks* scenario.

Jesse Thorn: Can I ask you a sincere question?

Jason Mantzoukas: Please.

Jesse Thorn: Was there a guidance counselor at your high school?

Jason Mantzoukas: There was.

Jesse Thorn: What did the guidance counselor tell you?

Jason Mantzoukas: You know? *(Sighs.)* I don't have a good story for this, only because nothing much. I feel like the guidance counselor told me what I feel like teachers have been telling me for a long time, which was essentially, “Why don't you try?”

(Laughter.)

Like, “You seem smart. You seem like you could do better and maybe get into a better school. I'm gonna recommend a bunch of not as good schools as I suspect you could get into. Why don't you try?”

And I was like, “Cause I'd much rather be doing bits and jokes than studying at all.”

[00:40:00]

I am zero for book learning.

(Laughter.)

Jesse Thorn: Jason, one day I was in therapy, and I had an old fashioned—

Jason Mantzoukas: By the way, came to this straight from therapy. So, I'm ready to cry, baby!

(Laughter and applause.)

Jesse Thorn: Right. I was in therapy, and it took my therapist asking me the question, “How many hours a week do you work?” for me to believe that I was not lazy.

(Jason “wow”s.)

Because sooo many people in school had asked me that same question. “Why aren't you trying?”

Jason Mantzoukas: Interesting!

Jesse Thorn: I was convinced I was lazy until I counted in my head and said, “80 or so?”

Jason Mantzoukas: WHOA! Okay. See, I was the opposite.

Jesse Thorn: Okay.

Jason Mantzoukas: I could have done better, but I instead was like, “I'm gonna be in bands! I wanna play drums in bands.” Or I was just consumed—I was consumed with anything that

wasn't the work I was given. I would happily pour hours into practicing drums, being obsessive about radio and TV and comedy. Aaanything! Like, I went to college. I was a religion major. Couldn't tell you anything about religion at this point.

(Laughter.)

Because for all intents and purposes, I majored in improv group and radio station. That's where all my time went. Aaall my time was—I slept in the radio station all the time! Aaall the time! Just 'cause I was like, “Oh—” Because the morning crew oftentimes doesn't show up. So, if I sleep there, I'll get a free show. I'll get four uninterrupted hours when the folk people don't show up for their damn shift, and I can play free jazz the whole time.

(Laughter and applause.)

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. Once that dog with a bandana isn't there, it's free reign for—

Jason Mantzoukas: Forget about it! Oh, we all had dogs with bandanas.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah!

Jason Mantzoukas: It was just like my guy—my religion major—my thesis advisor was a dog in a bandana.

Jesse Thorn: *(Cackles delightedly.)* I didn't know you were also a banana slug.

Jason Mantzoukas: Oh yeah.

(Laughter.)

Jesse Thorn: What was your college radio show?

Jason Mantzoukas: I was—I had a bunch of them. My initial one and the one that kind of lasted me throughout—I was incredibly lucky that when I got to college, the radio station did not have a jazz manager, and I was already obsessed with jazz.

Jesse Thorn: You were a jazzbo.

Jason Mantzoukas: I was a classic jazzbo. I mean, if you are gonna— If you're asking me if I showed up to freshman year of college with a beret? Yeah, I did.

(Laughter.)

Jesse Thorn: It had been years since you had applauded. Snaps only.

Jason Mantzoukas: Sure. Oh yeah. I had absolute contempt for anybody in a fedora but would happily wear a beret. As if I'm like cool. Anyway! So, they didn't have a jazz manager, and so I was like, "Oh, I'll do that!" So, got to be like in on a level where I could do shows. I had access to the library. And at the end of the year—at the end of my freshman year, they kind of—the guys who ran the station were like, "Hey, listen, we've got all this extra money that we have to give back to the school if we don't spend. So, over the summer, you need to buy \$5,000 worth of jazz CDs."

(Laughter.)

And they gave me \$5,000. And I went to Tower Records, like the first week I was home in Boston from college. I bought \$5,000 worth of jazz CDs and listened to them all. Like, I had them to myself the whole summer! So, listened to everything all summer and then brought them back and, you know, built up the library with them. But it was like the greatest situation in my life. Like, we all are drowning— Because of streaming and because of—we are drowning in stuff. Like, if you wanted— If I said to you right now, "Oh, wouldn't it be cool to get all the kind of different takes of Thelonious Monk's, you know, "'Round Midnight"? Ba-ba-ba, you can line 'em all up and see how it's changed." That's easy. We can dial that up right now on the screen and do it. But it was very hard!

So, to be able to go and buy that box set and have all that stuff? Unreal. UN-real. And it was like the best— Maybe the best music experience of my life was being able to spend all that money and then just listen to it all. It was great. It was great.

Jesse Thorn: I think of you more than almost anyone I know as an improv guy.

Jason Mantzoukas: Sure. I think of myself as an improv guy! Primarily.

Jesse Thorn: That was something you also discovered in college.

Jason Mantzoukas: Yes. I discovered it— I would say in high school is when I was exposed to it, because that's when British *Whose Line is It Anyway?* started airing in the States. And that I remember being like a bomb going off and being like, "Oh, whoa! This is—" 'Cause I was already a massive comedy fan, you know. *SNL* and *Monty Python* and anything that was—like, any sketch show or anything like that, I was deeply obsessed with.

[00:45:00]

But then improv was a thing that really—you know—in the late '80s, early '90s was just not a thing very much. You weren't exposed to it. Every college didn't have an improv group yet. It was not as big. It hadn't proliferated the way that it does now. The idea that the group that I do improv with, Dinosaur, is gonna be going on a tour where we will be able to sell out like 2,000 seats to do dumb improv bits is mind blowing compared to what I used to do. So, yeah. And then in college, I joined the—you know, at Middlebury College, the group was called the Otter Nonsense Players.

(Laughter.)

Otter Nonsense. Because the Otter Creek ran through Middlebury.

Jesse Thorn: Jason? Uh, Humor Force five.

Jason Mantzoukas: (*Jealously.*) Ough! Oh! Was there five of you?

Jesse Thorn: No.

Jason Mantzoukas: Oh boy.

(*Laughter.*)

(*Giggles.*) Wait, was Jordan in the group?

Jesse Thorn: Yes.

Jason Mantzoukas: Oh, incredible!

Jesse Thorn: Yeah.

Jason Mantzoukas: that's an incredible thing because StClair was in my group.

Jesse Thorn: Oh!

Jason Mantzoukas: So, the idea that like you and Jordan, StClair and I—

Jesse Thorn: Jessica StClair.

(*Jason confirms.*)

Wonderful actor and one of the funniest, most brilliant people on earth.

Jason Mantzoukas: Truly. Truly one of the funniest. These are dynamics and relationships that we've been doing since college and that we still do! Like, when *How Did This Get Made?* went on tour last year and June couldn't go because she was working, StClair came in. And it was just the two of us just roasting each other over 30 years of shared experiences. It was an absolute blast!

Jesse Thorn: Why do you think you are still so enthusiastic about being an improv guy when you could say, “Well, I've had a 20-year career as a successful actor” at this point?

Jason Mantzoukas: I think that there is— I think that—(*stammering.*)

Jesse Thorn: (*Interrupting.*) And also, like you're about to go on tour with Dinosaur, the sketch group that you and Paul Scheer and various other people are in, and sell out 2,000-seat theaters, and not make any money.

Jason Mantzoukas: Correct. Oh, yeah, yeah.

Jesse Thorn: Because there's too many people going.

Jason Mantzoukas: It's a zero. Yeah. Like, it's for the love of the game. You know? I think that for me— Because every once in a while, I'll be asked that question. And to me it wasn't “do improv in order to get to this other thing.” And I think for a lot of people that is it. It's a tool, it's a steppingstone, it's a way to get access to a stage—a cohort, a peer group—anything that could continue moving you forward. Right?

Jesse Thorn: Like Michael Keaton doing standup in 1982.

Jason Mantzoukas: Exactly. (*Laughs.*) Perfect! Absolutely. Yes! And I think he would be the first to say like, “I wasn't going to be that. That wasn't going to be what I became the best at. It was a way to get exposure and gain knowledge and connections and all the rest.”

But for me— And I think part of it was having been obsessed with jazz and playing jazz and being a musician who was improvising, the idea of improvising with a group on stage, an ensemble improv show scratched that same itch. And that's kind of the— I can't replicate what that does in any other way. I love being on shows. You mentioned some of my favorite, like being on *Brooklyn Nine Nine* or any of these. I love that! And those are incredible experiences. But I would happily, for the rest of my career, just get on stage with people that I think are hilarious and just make up a show from thin air. That, to me, is the most rewarding. And it's also, I think, in all honesty—straight from therapy—it is the only place in my life where I feel like I am present; where I don't feel like I am forecasting the future or re-litigating the past; where I am living in the moment, moment-to-moment, and just present-tense existing.

And that is—boy, do I wish I could thread that through the rest of my life. But at 52, seemingly unable to. (*Laughs.*) That being said, I'll never stop improvising. You know? Like, I don't think that's— I'm not interested in it being a past tense thing for me. I love the people I get to do shows with, many of whom— I've been doing shows with many of the same people for over 20 years. But then what's beautiful about improv and improv groups is we're constantly bringing in new people.

And somebody will be like, “Oh, so-and-so can't make it.”

“Oh, I've got somebody who we should have come along and play!”

And then you're playing with all new people. And that's exciting and interesting. And that kind of—(*clicks teeth*) I don't know, it might be corny, but that kind of “putting on a show, we're all figuring it out together, we're all just onstage, and this is a one-time-only, unique event—I find very exciting and in electric in a way that I don't find like movie or TV acting

the same. It's a different muscle. It's just— I'm not interested in it being one or the other. Improv, to me, is the skillset that I am the most proud of, I guess.

Jesse Thorn: I was talking to a friend who has a kid who's in high school.

[00:50:00]

And they are—they did a little bit of improv in theatre school. And the thing that I described to him—he's an artist, but a visual artist—was there are these things that you learn from doing theatre that are really wonderful. Like, I went to theatre school, and I learned that if you're not there at the time that you said you were going to be there, no one can do anything. Right? And that's like a really essential part of living is to show up for other people. Right?

(Jason agrees.)

And you have to learn it somehow. But the thing that I was trying to describe to him about doing improv is that you would think that the most exciting part of improv is putting over a joke or doing something funny, and the audience laughs. And that is great! Like, for sure. But I was trying to describe the feeling of being onstage with people in a really dangerous situation where everyone could certainly look foolish, where you feel like you are not only absolutely able to rely on the other people on stage, but also that your job is to make those people look good.

Jason Mantzoukas: Yes. And I think the—just to, I think, paraphrase what you're saying in a way—boy, is it electric and exciting to deliver a line that you haven't prepared that just came to you and it gets a laugh. But the far better feeling is to set you up for a line; you knowingly deliver it; it destroys; and we've done a shared magic trick now, together. It's one thing for a clever person—or a funny person can exist almost siloed on stage in an improv show and be funny. You know? Funny people are gonna be funny people. But to watch people work together without knowing where they're headed? But to watch that moment of surprise and discovery hit both of us and watch that happen?! That's both— That's a magic trick for us and them. You know, that's going this way and going this way.

And that's the tacit understanding that I think an improv show and audience and performers all share, which is, “We're all making this up. You said the dumb thing at the beginning that got us started, and now we're trapped in your show. And you guys said, you know, ‘a burrito’ or whatever, and now we're doing the burrito show.” But then you're like, “I did not expect the burrito show to have such a poignant divorce scene!” You know?

(Laughter.)

And then you're like—not knowing how that would happen and us not knowing how we would get there or even where “there” is, that discovery and that kind of shaggy rooting around and finding and building and heightening? That teamwork, that ensemble work? I think is the most satisfying thing—is really almost like connecting with you and doing a scene or doing a show—you know, an entire show—just onstage, not knowing what we're gonna do for a long period of time. That, I think, is incredibly rewarding. Because it

prioritizes the things that are interesting to me, which are surprise and discovery. Those are the things.

Because discovery is— And I like what I was saying before about music. You know, like discovering stuff in the moment is like an electric shock. You know? Especially if the audience doesn't see it coming and if they can tell you didn't see it coming? If you register the surprise and then it ripples out to them? That's a really satisfying experience. And we've all seen—we have all seen—bad improv shows.

(Scattered laughter.)

There's nothing worse! Truly nothing worse.

Jesse Thorn: I had to— I was in Washington DC once.

Jason Mantzoukas: Yep.

Jesse Thorn: I won't say where it was, but it was at Comedy Sports in Washington, DC.

(Laughter.)

My wife and I went to a show that had two halves, and my wife was so mortified by the first half that she made us leave halfway through. 'Cause she couldn't— Not because she hated the show, but because she couldn't bear living with the shame of the performers onstage who were doing such a bad job.

(Laughter.)

Jason Mantzoukas: Yes! It's so uncomfortable! It is palpably uncomfortable. It is— In a way that when you're watching—let's say standup or sketch, when you're watching a play—anything that is prepared, and it's failing, you're like, “Well, this is a failure of the preparation. This is a failure in direction, writing, whatever.” You know these people prepared this thing, but it wasn't ready. When you're watching an improv show, you're like, “These people are DYING up there. And they're trying to face—they're giving us the face like, *(forced laughter)* “Aren't we fun?! This is grreat! HA-HA!” Like, when they're laughing too hard at themselves onstage?

Jesse Thorn: They're like, *(desperately)* “Another occupation?!”

Jason Mantzoukas: Yes. As if the laughter from the stage is gonna stoke laughter from the audience, right?! And it doesn't! It's not! They're not gonna join you. It's terrible.

Jesse Thorn: So much more still to come from the live at LAist 25th anniversary spectacular.

[00:55:00]

Back in a minute. It's *Bullseye* from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

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Promo:

Music: Bright, brassy music.

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Katie: Find us by searching for the word (*whispers*) “secretly” in your podcast app.

Alex: And at MaximumFun.org.

(*Music fades out.*)

Transition: Thumpy synth with light vocalizations.

Jesse Thorn: Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. Our show's a little different this week. We just taped a very special 25th anniversary show live on stage in front of an audience at LAist 89.3 in Pasadena, California. That's what we're listening to right now. You can also watch a special live video of the event on our YouTube page. Search for *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn*. Let's get back into things.

I need you to describe roughly what *Taskmaster* is.

Jason Mantzoukas: Sure! Yeah. I love that in the introduction *Taskmaster* got the biggest acknowledgement. What an NPR crowd!

Jesse Thorn: Yeah. I mean, I would say it was the biggest round of applause tonight, other than mentioning Moomins.

(Laughter.)

Jason Mantzoukas: All foreign stuff.

Taskmaster is a British panel show, which is— It is—*(sighs)* it's very difficult to explain, but dead simple if you watch it. It's basically a show where a bunch of comedians are given inane tasks by another comedian to do. And the tasks are—let's say, for example—find the cheese phone. And somewhere in this house that I'm in is a ringing phone covered in cheese, and I have to find the phone. But they've obfuscated and given you enough difficulties such that basically you, on camera, humiliate yourself. And they film the comedians all attempting this challenge. The five comedians are the contestants. Then two comedians are the host.

And the show unfolds much like this, onstage in front of an audience. And the host will be like, “Okay, the challenge was to find the cheese phone, and this is how everybody did it.” And everybody's done it differently. Everybody's almost always failed in some way. And then all seven people onstage just make fun of each other.

(Laughter.)

So, it is a real— It's a hangout show that is predicated on comedians being humiliated. And it's fun.

Jesse Thorn: And it's something that you traveled to another continent to participate in.

Jason Mantzoukas: It's something— Not only did I travel to another continent, I lost money doing it.

(Laughter; Jesse cackles.)

They paid so little and the expenses were so great that I was— I did the show at a loss happily. I'm not kidding. Without a doubt, the most fun I've ever had as a, quote/unquote, “job”. Because traditionally for jobs, you get paid in a way that is meaningful. But an absolute blast. It is so silly and so funny and a type of a show we just don't have here.

Jesse Thorn: I wanna play— We have a clip of you on the show.

Jason Mantzoukas: Oh, great.

Jesse Thorn: So, let's take a look at Jason Mantzoukas on *Taskmaster*.

Transition: A whooshing sound.

Clip:

Jason Mantzoukas: If you fail to honk your horn when you see a lollipop lady, you must surrender your picture for 30 seconds.

(Two horn honks.)

Speaker: Where's the horn?

(Laughter.)

Jason Mantzoukas: And that'll be obvious, what a lollipop lady is? That's not a—I'm not familiar with the phrase lollipop lady?

(Laughter.)

Greg Davies: What—what did you think a lollipop lady was?

Jason Mantzoukas: I genuinely had no idea. I assumed a woman selling lollipops.

(Laughter.)

Which I would absolutely believe is one of the *(censor beep)* things that would occur in this country.

Transition: A whooshing sound.

(Laughter.)

Jason Mantzoukas: Yeah.

(Applause.)

I would say I am one of the— There was an American on—Desiree Burch was on some years ago. She lived in London at the time. I'm the first person who came over as an American.

[01:00:00]

And I would say 60% of my time on the show was bickering with them about Britishism versus Americanisms.

(Laughter.)

Jesse Thorn: There is a strong— Like, I have watched a number of episodes on which you appear. There was a strong “I did not come here to make friends” vibe that you bring.

(Laughter.)

Very unusual for this program. Pretty chummy show in general, but—

Jason Mantzoukas: Oh yeah. No, no. I found my MO was antagonism.

(Laughter.)

My whole thing was “your show is my show now”—in an American imperialism kind of way.

Jesse Thorn: What was the most humiliating activity in which you participated?

Jason Mantzoukas: Boy, there were so many. So many. I think there were— A lot of the tasks, like I said, are purpose-built to humiliate you, to get you drenched with water, to make you uncomfortable, to strip you down into weird costumes and outfits and all sorts of stuff. But the one that I think about all the time is a task that I just— A lot of times there will be hints, if you look for them. Clues. There will be a workaround. If you think laterally, you can do it without soaking yourself. You can— There are always ways to do it that they're trying to help you, but almost nobody ever finds them.

But there was one task where you had to put a bunch of pillows in a bin, but you— It was like red light/green light. Alex, the host would open his eyes. And his whole thing was if he catches you, you're wearing a cape of a certain color. If he can say, “Your cape is”—in my case—“blue,” then the game is over. You failed. Everybody fails, and everybody tries to go around in front of him. And I realized, “Oh, if I go around the back of this structure, I can be behind Alex. And if I can get behind him, then he'll never be able to see me, and I bet I'll do it. So, I get all the way behind him. So much so that I'm literally right behind him, like peeking out over him. And then I get like super cocky. Because I'm like, “Oh, I'm doing it! I've figured out—”

Jesse Thorn: You beat the system!

Jason Mantzoukas: I've figured out the lateral thinking. I figured the creative solution. And then my brain just goes like *(repeated fart noises)*, and I fully have a— Like, then I'm like, “What do I do now? Now that I've gotten here, where do I go? How am I gonna—? I still have to get these pillows to the bin!”

Jesse Thorn: You're like, "Heavy hangs the head that wears the crown."

(Laughter.)

Jason Mantzoukas: Yes! So, I immediately just start tossing the pillows. But if the pillows hit the ground, you're disqualified. So, I'm instantly disqualified.

(Laughter.)

But was the only person who'd even gotten close to making any headway in that. And that one makes me mental. Because I'm like— I was so close! Ugh! And when they—and then of course— And that's the kind of thing that you watch the— They've edited the package. You watch me spectacularly fail. And then you cut back into the room where I'm with six other comedians who are like, "What the—?! What are you doing?! You idiot!" And it's great.

Jesse Thorn: I would say the two sort of late motifs on your season of the program are you being antagonistic to everyone and you doing way too much trying to beat the system.

Jason Mantzoukas: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. And failing! And failing. And then destroying things, usually in frustration.

Jesse Thorn: The same mind that helped you buy \$5,000 in jazz CDs also led you to think you could out-puzzle every single one of the puzzles.

Jason Mantzoukas: Every puzzle, as if there was a secret solution to all of them—which really, there's only a couple of them that have that. And I wasted a tremendous amount of time and energy and self-respect trying to outthink them and failed.

Jesse Thorn: Are you now a celebrity in the British comedy humiliation community?

Jason Mantzoukas: I would assume so! I have not been there since it's aired. *(Chuckling.)* I would be genuinely curious if I were to go and walk around London right now, if people would be like, "Boooo! Boo, you blew it! You idiot!"

Jesse Thorn: You're England's Omarosa now. You can go work for Boris Johnson.

Jason Mantzoukas: *(Cackles.)* BoJo?!

Jesse Thorn: *(Laughs.)* Jason Mantzoukas, everybody!

(Cheers and applause.)

Jason Mantzoukas: Congratulations, Jesse.

Jesse Thorn: Thanks to all those pals for coming out tonight, and thanks to all of you for coming out tonight. We have another musical performance from our friend, Rebecca Sugar. Here to perform “Love Like You,” the credits theme from their show, *Steven Universe*. Please welcome Rebecca back to the stage.

(Cheers and applause.)

Music: “Love Like You” the theme from *Steven Universe*, performed live by Rebecca Sugar.

If I could begin to be

Half of what you think of me

I would do about anything

I would even learn how to love

When I see the way you act

Wondering when I'm coming back

I would do about anything

[01:05:00]

I would even learn how to love

Like you

Love like you

Love like you

Love like you

I always thought I might be bad

Now I'm sure that it's true

Because I think you are so good

And I'm nothing like you

Look at you go; I just adore you

I wish that I knew

What makes you think I'm so special?

If I could begin to do

Something that does right by you

I would do without anything

I would even learn how to love

When I see the way you look

Shaken by how long it took

I could do about anything

I could even learn how to love like you

Love like you

Love me like you

(Song ends.)

(Cheers, whistles, and applause.)

Transition: Bright, chiming synth.

Jesse Thorn: That's the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye*, created from the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun—as well as at Maximum Fun HQ... in the historic jewelry district in downtown Los Angeles, California. Yes, that's right. We're saying goodbye to Westlake. Our last chance to gaze out at MacArthur Park was this week. Thank you so much, Westlake. We still love you. Love you forever.

Our show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our senior producer is Kevin Ferguson. Our producers are Jesus Ambrosio and Richard Robey. Our production fellow at Maximum Fun is Hannah Moroz. Our video producer, Daniel Speer. We get booking help from Mara Davis.

A special thanks this week to the live events team at LAist: John Cohn, Rebecca Stumme, Tony Federico, Lorena Nader, Laura Dukes, Michael Eva, and Mikaela Perez. Our interstitial music comes from our friend Dan Wally, also known as DJW. You can find his music at [DJWsounds.bandcamp.com](https://djwtounds.bandcamp.com). Dan was at the show! Our theme music was written and recorded by The Go! Team. It's called "Huddle Formation". Our thanks to The Go! Team. Thanks to their label, Memphis Industries.

You can follow *Bullseye* on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube where you will find video from all of our interviews—just about all, anyway. Including the entire live show that you heard this week! I think that's about it. Just remember, all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.

Promo: *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn* is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.

(Music fades out.)

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