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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. By the time my guest, Regina Hall, got her first acting gig—which was a McDonald’s commercial—she had already gotten a master’s degree. She was planning to go into journalism. But the commercial led to a TV show which led to a movie. The movie was *The Best Man* in 1999—one of the biggest and most beloved romantic comedies of the decade. By the time *The Best Man* was released, Hall was nearly in her 30s. And her part in *The Best Man* led to a bigger part in an even bigger movie: *Love and Basketball*. She played Lena, the main character Monica’s sister. Now in showbusiness, that story in and of itself is not super unique. There are lots of very successful actors who didn’t find their calling in high school or whatever.

But Regina Hall went from aspiring to be the next Peter Jennings to being an icon of Black romance movies. Then, as Brenda Meeks, she became the face of one of the most successful comedy-horror franchises ever. You remember a *Scary Movie*.

Transition: A whooshing sound.

Clip:

(Several people screaming.)

Brenda (*Scary Movie*): (*Hysterical.*) LORD, I’M GONNA HAVE A HEART ATTACK! (*Censor beep.*) This is some scary (*censor beep*)! AH! Oh, I am scared! (*Whimpering loudly.*)

Transition: A whooshing sound.

Jesse Thorn: Now she’s starring in one of the most celebrated films of the year: Paul Thomas Anderson’s *One Battle After Another*: a movie that runs 165 minutes and feels like—I don’t know—maybe half that. It revolves around the members of an armed revolutionary group, the French 75. 15 years have passed since that group disbanded. Those who survived are mostly just trying to get by while they reckon with their past. Their number include Leonardo DiCaprio as Bob Ferguson, the burnt-out protagonist of the film. Regina Hall plays Deandra. She’s an ex-

French 75 member. She's tasked with protecting Willa—Bob's daughter—as they run from Sean Penn's Colonel Lockjaw.

And in a movie full of weirdos, creeps, and revolutionaries past their prime, Deandra is probably the only person in *One Battle After Another* I'd actually trust to keep me safe if I were in that situation. Anyway, Regina's wonderful in the movie. I'm so thrilled to welcome her to *Bullseye*. Let's get right into it.

Transition: Upbeat, jazzy synth.

Jesse Thorn: Regina Hall, welcome to *Bullseye*. It's nice to have you on the show.

Regina Hall: Oh, I'm excited to be here! Thank you for having me.

Jesse Thorn: Congratulations! You're one of the few advanced degrees guests on this program.

(Regina giggles.)

You're the holder of a master's degree in journalism.

Regina Hall: Yes.

Jesse Thorn: Did you ever practice journalism outside of school?

Regina Hall: Not really. I did—I actually did a magazine article for this—I mean, I was on the magazine—called *ABILITY*. And then *ABILITY* actually—you know, because they knew I had majored in journalism or I had my master's in journalism—I started like writing with them. I would do like certain cover stories. So, that was about— Although, I wanted to produce more long-story packages, like *60-Minutes* type stuff.

Jesse Thorn: You wanted to be a broadcast journalist.

Regina Hall: Well, I didn't wanna be on-air. I wanted to produce long-story packages. So, I wanted to just come up with it, produce it, and then maybe someone else would do the on-air work.

Jesse Thorn: What's something that you reported on when you were in school?

Regina Hall: I did welfare fraud. Another one that I did was— It was something called the *(unclear)*—I hope I'm saying it properly—Peace Memorial. And it had been the number of Black men that had been killed or died from gun violence between— I don't know; I can't remember the years. Maybe 1980? Those were two.

Jesse Thorn: What led you into journalism?

Regina Hall: I liked it. I think I read a book, *Democracy in America*.

Jesse Thorn: De Tocqueville?

Regina Hall: Mm-hmm. (*Laughs.*)

Jesse Thorn: I'm not surprised that you read it. I'm surprised that I don't— You know, I feel like if I had Ted Koppel in here right now, he would not be like I decided to become a journalist because of—

Regina Hall: I love. And Ted Koppel.

Jesse Thorn: And Ted Koppel?

Regina Hall: And Ted Koppel. I used to watch *ABC News Nightline* a lot, and Ted Koppel was on it. And I had a best friend at the time—Kate Mariano, who I loved very much, and she passed away when she was 14.

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She'd had a brain tumor. And my family watched *Dateline*, and Kate's father and mother— Her mother wrote for the *Washington Post*, and her father had been an ABC anchorman in (*unclear*). He had passed away. And he and Ted Koppel were really good friends.

Jesse Thorn: So, it was like somebody you knew; It was almost like— In Washington DC, television news is like what showbusiness is.

Regina Hall: Kind of! Absolutely. Yeah. You know—I mean, the truth is that you're in a city that's dominated by government. That is the industry of that city. And I think very early on, having pap newspapers at the time like *The Washington Post*—of course, this is post-Watergate. Obviously. Yeah. There's kind of some unspoken sense about the importance of journalism and its accuracy to democracy. And I don't know. I think I had read *Anne Frank*. I mean, there were many things that I was like, “Oh, journalism is very important.”

Jesse Thorn: Did you always go to Catholic school? I know you went to Catholic high school.

Regina Hall: I did. I went to— After elementary school, I think at about fifth grade, I started going to Catholic school.

Jesse Thorn: And your family wasn't Catholic. What was it like in that situation? Not that you have to be Catholic to go to Catholic school but—

Regina Hall: Right. For me, I liked it. Because I actually am quite a lover of theology, you know. So, that would include Catholicism. And I and my mom, we were raised Christian non-denominational. My grandmother was Baptist, so I probably have read up on so many religions. I find them all to be incredibly interesting and formative. And also, very similar.

Jesse Thorn: Was it full nuns and priests?

Regina Hall: Full nuns and priests. Mm-hmm. Full nuns and priests.

Jesse Thorn: How did you feel about the nuns?

Regina Hall: I liked the nuns! I thought I was gonna be a nun.

Jesse Thorn: A couple times, right?

Regina Hall: A couple times. Mm-hmm.

Jesse Thorn: Why did you want to consider becoming a nun? You have to become a Catholic first, for one thing.

Regina Hall: Mm-hm, mm-hm. Yeah. I don't know that I was married to the religion of what it meant to be a nun. You just had to— You know, that was the religion that had it. And there are other ones, but specifically. It seemed quite... simplistic, purposeful. Right? It felt like a purpose-driven life. You'd be with like—I'm assuming like, you know, looking at my mind then—all your friends.

Jesse Thorn: We're talking about as a teenager, here?

Regina Hall: Yeah. You'd be praying for people, and—I don't know. I mean, it seemed kind of delightful. You didn't have to dress up; you didn't have to wear makeup or do your hair. And you didn't have to like—I don't know. It looked like they were also teachers; and they had jobs and vocations. But a primary purpose and focus just seemed like—it seemed pretty good!

Jesse Thorn: Was it something that you wanted and couldn't access? Or was it something that you truly hadn't considered?

Regina Hall: It was something that I hadn't truly considered. You know what I mean? I was pretty present in my life, so I wasn't really in a longing state. I had really good friends. I went to college and met more great friends and had a ball in college. And prior to that I think—I was very 15 or 16. I was not—I hadn't jumped to a mindset of like the future. I think I was very much like, “This is fun.” And I knew I'd go to college. I mean, that was— No matter what I was gonna do, I think my family was like, “You'll go to college.” So, I had not overly thought about the future. (*Laughs.*) That sounds pretty horrible.

But beyond college— And I loved school. I did love school. Like, I could have gone to school and gotten my doctorate as well and enjoyed it. It was not like I'm saying it was easy and that I didn't sometimes be like, “I don't wanna write another paper!” You know what I mean? And you know, those things. But there was still something structured and rewarding about it. I loved learning, I should say.

Jesse Thorn: In college particularly, your like whole life is built in.

Regina Hall: Your life is built in. Yeah! So, I was like looking forward to going to college.

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And I mean, I met Dina and Vanessa and other great friends. And I was in New York. So—

Jesse Thorn: You met Dina and Vanessa there!? You should have started with that!

Regina Hall: Yeah. (*Chuckles.*) I know! Dina and Vanessa!

Jesse Thorn: My next— We can just cross out my next question!

(*Regina laughs.*)

Where'd you meet Dina And Vanessa?

Regina Hall: I know. I knew that's what the— I was like, “Everyone's gonna be wondering that.” I was like, “They're gonna be like ‘that's the whole reason I watched the interview.’” And New York was fun. I was, you know, having fun. They're great parties, in New York. I mean... ‘90s.

Jesse Thorn: It must have been party central in New York City in the ‘90s. You're like—

Regina Hall: Yeah, it was great.

Jesse Thorn: Was it just like you and Kool DJ Red Alert?

Regina Hall: (*Laughs.*) I mean, it was like— I don't know what it was like. Hip-hop was great. It was like Biggie and Jay and other—you know, Tribe Called Quest and every—you know, EPMD, every—Brand Nubian. I mean, every amazing artist—LL—just you know, happening. And so, that was— I mean, I don't know. It was a great time. D’Angelo.

Jesse Thorn: What's that entree into the idea of being in showbusiness. I mean, I know you dated for year Sadat X from Brand Nubian, right?

(*Regina confirms.*)

And that's the heart of showbusiness.

Regina Hall: Yeah—(*correcting herself*) no. Well, no. At that time with him, I was in college and then in grad school. And no, because it was still music, and I wasn't like musically inclined. (*Playfully.*) Although, we know I was featured on one, little song—two songs.

Jesse Thorn: And you know what? I listened to that song this morning; hadn't listened to that album in a long time.

(*Regina laughs.*)

There is a classic genre of guest performer on a rap record which is “lady who is being the reporter who is saying some news at the beginning of the thing.”

(Regina giggles.)

And I assumed it was going to be that. That always just seems to be, based on the quality of the performances, whatever lady happens to be within arm’s length.

Regina Hall: Yes. Come here, lady.

Jesse Thorn: They're not casting for that part.

(Regina agrees.)

And you actually rap a little bit, basically!

Regina Hall: A little bit, yes.

Jesse Thorn: You basically rap.

Regina Hall: Yeah. Yeah. I talk in rhyme. *(Laughs.)* Kind of. Yeah, that was fun.

Music: “The Interview” from the album *Wild Cowboys* by Sadat X.

[Regina]

Sadat X, would you say that you're hardest working rapper?

Tell us some of the places you've been

[Sadat X]

Honey, I've been around the world and to African shores

Piccadilly Square and to Tokyo stores

Heard the roars of the German applause and shook the floors

Then went to Denmark with my main man, Spark

[Regina]

Sadat X, what's this thing you started called The Cowboys?

(Music fades out.)

Regina Hall: It was fun. I listen to it now, and I was like— I was really trying to put on like an interview voice, but it worked. I think I probably got yelled at a lot. *(Laughing.)* He was like, “You’re not doing it right!”

I was like, “I’m trying!” But no, it was fun.

Jesse Thorn: We've got so much more to cover with Regina Hall, including her time at Columbia University's prestigious College of Bartending and how those bartending classes helped her realize her true calling as an artist. It's *Bullseye* for MaximumFun.org and NPR.

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Transition: Thumpy synth with a syncopated beat.

Jesse Thorn: Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest is Regina Hall. She's an actor who's appeared in films like *The Best Man*, *Love and Basketball*, and *Scary Movie*. Her latest is *One Battle After Another*.

[00:15:00]

That Paul Thomas Anderson movie is streaming now on HBO Max. Let's get back into our conversation.

So, if it wasn't the fact that you were literally living with someone in showbusiness, even if it was music—something that wasn't your aspiration—what changed that led you into acting?

Regina Hall: I was in grad school, and my father had a massive stroke and died. And that was the change.

Jesse Thorn: But you finished graduate school?

Regina Hall: Oh, 'cause he would've wanted me to finish. So, I certainly wasn't going to not do that. But I had a friend who was like, “If you need to make some extra money, you could do commercials.”

And that was when I was like, “Oh. Alright. You know, that could be great.” I was in school, you know. I had to take out student loans and stuff. So, I knew I would have great debt. Although, I wasn't necessarily thinking about that debt, to be honest. (*Chuckles.*) I think I was like, “Alright. I'll have to figure that out.” I think I wasn't— I mean, I obviously then, gratefully, was able to do it. I mean, back then you could defer your loans, and it didn't affect things the way they do now. So, thankfully I was able, by the time interest had accrued, I was able to pay it all back. So.

Jesse Thorn: But was it “I think I could make some money-making commercials,” or was it “I am reevaluating my life and my life choices I think, and actually I want to be an artist not a journalist”?

Regina Hall: Both. I think I was reevaluating the brevity of life. I think I enjoyed acting. I think it was an escape for many things that I was probably feeling, because no one at that point in my life had lost a parent. So, that felt unique and isolating in and of itself. And I think— You know, it's not like I hadn't done high school plays and enjoyed it, but I think it gave me a way to channel feelings or discover them. You know what I mean? And I think it was very enjoyable to me. And so, I thought, “Well, I've gotten my master's, which is what my father would've wanted. So, now I can discover what I might want. And if it doesn't work out I still have my degrees.” I mean, this is when you really— You know, journalism was different, and there were...

Jesse Thorn: Jobs?

Regina Hall: (*Solemnly.*) Yeah. Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: Were you ever in a position where, as you considered the brevity of life and were a total party animal, your life could have gone in a different direction?

Regina Hall: I wasn't that kind of party— I was a very responsible party animal. I partied— You know, Dina and Vanessa—the ones everyone was—you were dying to ask me about?

Jesse Thorn: (*Playfully enthusiastic.*) Oh, sure. Dina and Vanessa from earlier. Yeah.

Regina Hall: (*Laughs.*) We partied. We might party, go to the after party, stay up all night. But we were going straight to class. Like, no one was missing class, no one was missing finals, no one was getting high. So, we didn't do that. I mean, I couldn't remain in school without being as— And I don't know; I wasn't irresponsible. They weren't irresponsible.

Jesse Thorn: Well, Dina and Vanessa would never. (*Chuckles softly.*)

Regina Hall: I mean, Dina—no. I mean, everyone knows that about Dina and Vanessa. (*Laughing.*)

Jesse Thorn: That's two of the straightest arrows I know!

Regina Hall: Yeah! So, no, it wouldn't have gone there. I mean, maybe I would've done something else. I mean, I did love theology. Could have studied the theology.

Jesse Thorn: What was the sign that it was working?

Regina Hall: The acting?

Jesse Thorn: Yeah.

Regina Hall: It didn't work at first, but—

Jesse Thorn: Okay. What was the sign that it was working for you then? Let's leave aside the career part.

Regina Hall: I enjoyed it. *(Beat.) (Laughs.)*

Jesse Thorn: Had you not enjoyed the other stuff you were up to?

Regina Hall: You mean like journalism? I did enjoy journalism. This was just different, and I thought— I don't know! You know, certain things pull you. I guess it's like meeting someone. You can have incredible conversation with one, and then you can have incredible connection with the other. So, I would just say I had a connection with the art form of performance and that taking classes— I mean, oh, then I went back to school. Well, then I went to Columbia Bartending School. Because if I went to Columbia Bartending School, then I would be able to— *(laughing)* I was like—

Jesse Thorn: You said Columbia Bartending School?

Regina Hall: Yeah. They had bartending school classes.

Jesse Thorn: At the Ivy League university, Columbia?

Regina Hall: Yes, they did.

(They both muffle giggling.)

Jesse Thorn: I'm really blown away by this revelation!

[00:20:00]

Regina Hall: Yeah. Yeah. They took— I don't know if it was like they or someone taught it, but the class was at Columbia University.

(They laugh.)

Jesse Thorn: You're like, “Well, the bad news, Mom, is I didn't get into Harvard Bartending School. But I'm still in the Ivy League!”

Regina Hall: I know! Columbia was near me, and I was like, “Oh, it's great.” And their class was like I don't know how long. And I was like, “Oh, it makes sense. They probably have students who wanna be bartenders in the area.” I don't know! But that was— So, I went there, although I didn't become a bartender.

Jesse Thorn: What was the experience that you had beyond “I can make extra money in commercials, because I am charismatic and beautiful” that made you think “I am an artist”? Like, it could have been class. It doesn't even have to be in front of the camera.

Regina Hall: No, I had a teacher— I had an agent who was a commercial agent, Mickey Shara, who everybody I know has been asking about too, after Dina and Vanessa.

(Jesse mumbles unclearly.)

Yeah, just check it off the list! But he was the one who— I was like— I wanted to take classes. I wanted to study. It was in my class with my teacher, Barbara Marshant, that I discovered that. And that was when I went to Bill Esper Studios. That was actually the catalyst for saying, “Oh, I would want to have a career.” Which is why I took the bartending school, so I could take the classes. But I didn't end up bartending. I ended up waitressing. And so, I became a cocktail waitress. *(Chuckles.)*

Jesse Thorn: Your first big part, your first film, part was *The Best Man* right?

(Regina confirms.)

This is like an iconic film.

Regina Hall: Yeah. I know.

Jesse Thorn: Just like— If you had never done anything else in your career, you would still be eating and drinking for free out, because you were that girl from *The Best Man*.

Regina Hall: Yeah. Yeah. That was kind of great. I didn't know what the— I only— At that point, there was no email. You know. So, I only had the sides, because I was just auditioning, and I wasn't like big enough to give a script to. They were just like, “These are the sides.”

Jesse Thorn: The sides are just the pages of the script that your character is in that you're gonna read for the audition.

Regina Hall: Yeah, just your lines. Yes. Just your audition scenes. And so, I didn't understand— You know, you're trying to read everything in the pages—you know, going back and forth so you can kind of glean some kind of idea. And in that film, I didn't know who was in it. I didn't get the cast. You know, there was very little information. Quite a few auditions but very little information. So, then when I found out, I was very excited. And I had been a fan of Nia Long for a very long time. And then Taye Diggs and then the rest of the cast, I was like discovering. I mean, I had known who some of them were. I had just seen Harold.

Jesse Thorn: Harold Perrineau?

Regina Hall: Harold Perrineau. I wanna say in Shakespeare with Leo and Claire Danes—Leonardo DiCaprio and Claire Danes. And I was so excited. And we had the same acting teacher, and she was like, “Harold's a student.” And so, when I got the part, I was very excited. Except I was like, “I can't dance. This is gonna be a travesty.” But um, (*chuckles*) it kinda—you know, it worked out, and it was— I mean, who would've known at that point.

Jesse Thorn: Your character in the film was a dancer.

Regina Hall: Yeah. She was an exotic dancer. (*Chuckles.*) She was.

Jesse Thorn: What did you have to do to prepare for that as an “uncomfortable with your dancing” person?

Regina Hall: You know, I went to a lot of clubs to watch the ladies dance. And then talked to a girl who was a former dancer, and she gave me a lot of tips which were very helpful.

Jesse Thorn: As somebody who fell backwards into acting in part, you had like seven different careers before about 10 years ago. Did you have a vision for what you wanted to be? I mean like you're like the lady from those iconic Black romances of the '90s, then you're the woman from *Scary Movie*, which is a whoooole other thing. You know? And then you eventually found your place as yourself, I think.

(*Regina agrees.*)

But like, did you have a vision for what you wanted that to be?

Regina Hall: No, I just thought I wanted to work with great people and learn and do good work. I didn't wanna be stuck in one thing. I think that was a big thing. But I also think when you're just starting, you're just happy to work. Right? You're not like— Well, I was. I don't wanna speak for anyone else.

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I was happy to work. I felt like I got to work with— I mean, Marlon at that point was a first-time filmmaker, and that was— You know, I mean I've worked with him a bunch since then, so I was very lucky to be in good hands. And Spike was a producer on that, on *Best Man* and I believe *Love and Basketball* as well. Sam Kitt as well.

And I think after that, when *Scary Movie* came along—which was after those two films—I was like, “Ooh, I get to work with Keenen Ivory Wayans.” And I had been watching his films and *In Living Color* for so long, all the Wayans stuff. That was just— I didn't think about that. I didn't think about, “Oh, I'll be doing comedy,” and what that would mean. I just was like, “I love this part. I wanna do it.” Well, not like I wanna do it. I mean, yes I wanna do it, but I was auditioning at that point. So, I was auditioning and like, “I hope I get it!” Now, I didn't realize that after you did a comedy, people would be like, “Well, can she do drama?” I didn't—

Jesse Thorn: Well, like that isn't just a comedy. That's the— A) It's the biggest, broadest comedy that could possibly exist on film. I mean, it's like bigger than a Mel Brooks movie. And B) which you could never have known, is that it turned it into like an iconic hit. But you must have known like the breadth of the jokes in that! (*Laughs.*)

Regina Hall: I mean, I thought it was really funny. And I thought—for me, I was like, “Oh, it's character driven, so I can do a character.” I had been auditioning for comedies on television and hadn't gotten them because I didn't know how to do punchlines. Punchlines are very specific on a television show, and I didn't—

Jesse Thorn: Especially on a multi-camera show where you're performing for an audience.

Regina Hall: Yes. Yes. And I didn't—I wasn't really aware of that. Of course, there's a— You know, there's an art to it. So, I didn't know how to do that at all. I did know how to take a character, and I did— 'Cause it's all the same to me, in a sense. Drama and comedy; it's just more rhythm. Right? So, I was like, “Ooh! I know this character.” Which is not necessarily how they had written it. I didn't realize they had written it to be prissy. And I was like— I didn't—I just thought— I don't know. Everybody has their thought—everybody has their interpretation of what a character is.

So, anyway. I guess I hadn't thought about it. I just—you know what I mean? I wasn't— In that moment, I was like, “This is funny. It could be hilarious. And I get to work with Keenen Ivory Wayans. And that's all I thought about. I hadn't thought about it. I thought that it would be the same hit that I had— You know, like I thought of the two films I had done which were big hits. You know. I hadn't thought of the crossover effect of *Scary Movie*, and at that time it was the biggest R-rated comedy that had come out. But I didn't—

Jesse Thorn: I mean, I was gonna say. Like, you weren't thinking it; I mean, I don't even know if the Wayanses were thinking it! They blew everyone's mind.

Regina Hall: Right, right. Yeah. So, then it just— There it was. And then I was supposed to—you know, I died, and that was supposed to be it, but then there was a sequel. And then—you know, so you can't— Most things, you know, you're not—yeah, no great predictor. It just got— (*laughs*) it just happened, and there were more.

Jesse Thorn: Now that you're a serious actor and, you know, Oscar contention and everything, did you have to think twice about whether to come back for *Scary Movie* number six?

Regina Hall: (*Giggles.*) No. 'Cause once the gang was coming back I was like— I think I had to be like, “Oh my goodness.” I hadn't visited Brenda. I had to watch her! I was like, “Brenda's outta her mind.” (*Laughs.*) I was like, “Brenda is just—something's not right.” So, I think because it was the original gang, I think that made it very appetizing to do. And because it's really wonderful to see how many people wanted another *Scary Movie*.

Jesse Thorn: We will finish up with Regina Hall on the other side of the break. Keep it locked. It's *Bullseye* from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

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Promo:

Music: Playful piano.

J. Keith van Straaten: Say, what's the trivia show where dreams come true?

Helen Hong: It's gotta be *Go Fact Yourself!*

(Applause from the audience.)

[00:30:00]

Speaker: Legend in the house!

J. Keith: We quiz celebrity contestants about topics they love!

Helen: Then bring out surprise experts!

J. Keith: To delight and amaze.

(Scene change.)

And then finally, tell us why you know and love the lyrics to the song “Knockin’ Boots” by Candyman.

Helen: Joining us tonight is a rapper and producer. It's Candyman!

(Screams and applause.)

J. Keith: This is among the greatest moments of my life.

(Laughter and applause.)

Speaker: This is one of mine too. I'm loving it.

Helen: That's *Go Fact Yourself*.

J. Keith: Twice a month, every month—

Helen: Here on Maximum Fun!

(Music ends.)

Transition: Thumpy synth with light vocalizations.

Jesse Thorn: I'm Jesse Thorn. You're listening to *Bullseye*. I'm talking with Regina Hall. She's the star of the *Scary Movie* franchise, of *Love and Basketball*, and the brand-new, critically acclaimed Paul Thomas Anderson film *One Battle After Another*.

Let's talk about *One Battle After Another*. How many times did you read that script before you felt like you had a way in?

Regina Hall: Several. Several. I mean, I think... You know, that script is very specific. Because it didn't have a lot—I didn't grasp the scope of the film. Because there weren't really a lot of direction—camera/stage. So, I didn't quite grasp the enormity of the film... the complexity of tone and what people were gonna be doing. And then also, I didn't grasp the look of the film. Although we did watch dailies. And then, you know, we did talk— You know, we did get to see like, “Oh, it would be the—” You know, we knew about the VistaVision, and I had seen what VistaVision was like and understood that. Paul's shots tell his story as well. So, it's—

And so, I think I had to read it to be like, “Well, where does Deandra fit into this kind of frenetic energy that propels the film, you know?” That kind of— And so, a lot of reading it and then talking with Paul a lot. Rehearsals. That helped get an understanding of the film as a whole. And then you are like, “Okay. And this is my role and function in this particular film.”

Transition: A whooshing noise.

Clip:

Deandra (*One Battle After Another*): (*Hushed and urgent.*) Because you're in trouble, Willa. Right? And there's an SOS signal out. I'm here to help, but we have to leave here right away. Look, I knew your mom; I know your dad. I know you have a lot of questions, and I'll answer 'em later. But right now, we have to roll. Will you leave here with me?

Willa: Where?

Deandra: Anywhere but here.

Willa: (*Hesitant.*) Okay.

Deandra: Okay. (*Sighs.*) You have to stay by my side, and you have to do exactly as I say. Do you understand?

Transition: A whooshing sound.

Jesse Thorn: Was there things in the script or things that you talked with Paul Thomas Anderson directly about what her presence had to be or should be like on camera?

Regina Hall: Yeah, I think we— Yeah, we definitely we talked about that and also figured that out. And Paul would tell me— I would get some kind of understanding by the what by how he was shooting it. “This is gonna be a close up.” And so, you kind of understand that this is tight. So, if there's not... You know. There's gonna have to be a lot said without talking. You know. So, I understood. I understood that by what he would shoot and what we would talk about—and then knowing what was happening in the scene, obviously, to know how she's feeling about what she's seeing. And so. You know when someone's choosing that kind of shot and those kind of closeups that it's gotta be—that whatever that moment is has to resonate for an audience without you telling them what you're thinking or feeling.

Jesse Thorn: Tonally important to the movie is like the contrast between the freneticism and like propulsion of the movie, which is like all-consuming. You know, it's like a headlong dash the entire time. And these characters who are trying to slow things down—right? Like, Leonardo DiCaprio (*chuckling*) spends a lot of his time being told to chill out by a karate instructor playing by Benicio del Toro, who's incredible in the movie.

Regina Hall: Sensei. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Jesse Thorn: And I think in some ways you play that role for his character's daughter.

[00:35:00]

That like you're the placidity. Like, you're the quiet part, even when you're running. Like, even when you're pulling her behind you, running. (*Chuckles.*)

(*Regina agrees.*)

Like, there's a certain kind of steadiness that you have to have.

Regina Hall: I mean, she's the— Yeah. I mean, her energy is probably... You know, she has a lot more consideration and mindfulness than that of like a Perfidia in the French 75. And it's... I mean, Perfidia's very smart, obviously. She manages to get away. (*Chuckles.*) But so does Deandra, but not at the expense of anyone. You know? She manages, because she is—you know, I think she does—she is observant. And she does see the things around her. I think Paul also had said, you know, she's my— I think he told me very early on, “You know, Deandra is like my Obi-Wan Kenobi.”

Jesse Thorn: Have you ever had a revolutionary zeal about anything?

Regina Hall: (*Beat.*) Perhaps, I'm sure. (*Beat.*) I know that's like an open answer, but— (*Chuckles.*)

Jesse Thorn: Can you think of an example?

Regina Hall: (*Muttering.*) I know. I knew you were gonna ask that. (*Beat.*) (*Sighs.*) I was very, very, very excited and compelled at the potential of having a female president both times. I would say with Hillary for sure. And with VP Harris. That felt... that felt kind of great and like mm! I don't know if it's revolutionary, but I it felt it.

Jesse Thorn: I mean, one of the things about being revolutionary or feeling revolutionary is that, even if you are a success, you still have to then deal with a more concrete reality. Right? Like, whether or not you succeed, there's a reckoning.

Regina Hall: Mm. Mm. Yeah. The reckonings. I guess it just depends on how extreme the reckonings are if you don't succeed. Right? Sometimes— I mean, I certainly think for Deandra, she felt like her lack of success would've meant the end of Willa. You know? The baby from the French 75. So, I don't know. Some reckonings are... mm. Harder. You know? More extreme, more fallout. It's different. That doesn't mean the revolution ends; it just means that you gotta— You might start from a place a little further back or something. I don't know. Or maybe it had to happen that way. I don't know. I just know the feeling and the excitement of the fight was the— you know—is what's so great about it, I think.

Jesse Thorn: Regina, I'm so grateful for your time. Thanks for taking the time to talk to me.

Regina Hall: Thank you so much for having me. It was very interesting.

Transition: Bright, playful electronic music.

Jesse Thorn: Regina Hall. Catch her in *One Battle After Another*. It is an awe-inspiring movie. She's amazing in it. She also made her turn into critically acclaimed fare in 2018's *Support the Girls*. She plays a sort of hyper-competent manager at a Hooters-y bar in Austin. It's a wonderful movie. She's wonderful in it.

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. Ooh, this week I got to do some cool jewelry district stuff! I went into like an art deco building that had fluorescent, tiny, warren-like hallways full of 1970s fake wood paneling. And I was looking for this—I was looking for this engraver. Oh man, it was great! I had to go ask a kind but sleepy security guard a few questions. Ah! I'd go up back stairs and then switch to other sets of stairs. Different guys went past me holding diamonds in their hands. It was tremendous.

[00:40:00]

Our show's produced by speaking into microphones. Our senior producer is Kevin Ferguson. Our producers are Jesus Ambrosio and Richard Robey. Our production fellow at MaxFun, Hannah Moroz. We get booking help on *Bullseye* from Mara Davis. Our interstitial music comes from our friend Dan Wally, also known as DJW. You can find his music at DJWsounds.bandcamp.com. Our theme music, written and recorded by The Go! Team. It is

called “Huddle Formation”. Thanks to The Go! Team; thanks to their label, Memphis Industries, for providing it to us.

You can follow *Bullseye* on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, where you'll find video from just about all our interviews, including the ones you heard this week.

And I think that's about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.

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

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