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Transition: Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue.

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

Music: “Huddle Formation” from the album *Thunder, Lightning, Strike* by The Go! Team—a fast, upbeat, peppy song. Music plays as Jesse speaks, then fades out.

Jesse Thorn: It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. Behind the punk rock band Joyce Manor, there are three guys. Barry Johnson, the singer; Chase Knobbe, the guitarist; and Matt Ebert, the bassist. These three dudes have known each other since high school, more or less. They grew up in the South Bay of Los Angeles County, home to Los Angeles International Airport, the DelAmo Mall, and a few piers and aquariums. It's a pretty quiet place, the South Bay. And quiet places, it turns out, are good incubators for loud music. The Minutemen, Black Flag, and Descendants all hail from that same region.

Joyce Manor formed almost 20 years ago. And pretty much from note one, they knew what their sound would be: anthemic, sometimes nostalgic punk rock. Does it sound a little bit like Blink-182 or Green Day? Uh, yeah, a little bit. But a little less adolescent or snide. I mean, you know the weird things people used to say about pop punk.

They just dropped their seventh album, *I Used to Go to This Bar*. Here's a track from it: “I Know Where Mark Chen Lives”.

Music: “I Know Where Mark Chen Lives” from the album *I Used to Go to This Bar* by Joyce Manor.

When you can't afford anything anymore

Tell me, how are you gonna—how you gonna swim to shore?

When you can't explain the damage done to your brain

But it's clear that it's severe

And it's here to stay

Train coming down the track

And it almost gave me a heart attack

Freight train coming down the track

And it almost gave me a heart attack

(Music fades out.)

Jesse Thorn: Joyce Manor, welcome to *Bullseye*. I'm so happy to have the three of you on the show.

(They thank him.)

So, my colleague, Jesus, has been to a lot of Joyce Manor concerts. He says almost always you open with “We’re Joyce Manor from Torrance, California.”

(They confirm.)

Barry Johnson: True.

Matt Ebert: Yeah, like 90% of the time.

Jesse Thorn: So, why do you start the shows that way?

Barry Johnson: No one's really claiming Torrance, really. So, I was like, “We’re Joyce Manor from Torrance, California.”

Jesse Thorn: What is distinctive about Torrance? What is Torrance like?

Barry Johnson: So little! So little. Undistinctive.

Matt Ebert: It feels sort of Midwestern for a Southern California city, I think. It's really industrial. It has refineries; it's kinda anchored by the port in San Pedro. It doesn't have a lot of freeway access, so people that are from there tend to stay there.

Barry Johnson: Yeah, I don't know. It's a really difficult place to describe, but I have friends that are from San Pedro—which is near there—and they have a term called Torrence Weird, where it's a particular type of weird that people from Torrence are. And I know exactly what they mean, even though I am Torrence Weird.

(They chuckle.)

Jesse Thorn: What constitutes Torrence Weird?

Barry Johnson: I'm not sure. That's why it had to have its own term. It's like a certain *je ne sais quoi* of weird.

Jesse Thorn: I mean, Torrance is in southwestern Los Angeles, and it is not quite Long Beach—which is a big city with a very strong identity. It is also not quite South LA, which is what is immediately below the airport, which in turn is immediately below the sort of fancy parts of West Los Angeles. It is kind of its own kind of working-class, industrial area. But also, a real hotspot for mall culture. *(Chuckles.)*

(They agree.)

Matt Ebert: It's also not quite the beach cities, like Redondo, Hermosa, Manhattan, which are more affluent, more touristy, really beautiful beaches. The only beach Torrance has is Torrance Beach, which is like... it's beautiful, but it's like a—you know, a little, quarter-mile swath of beach.

Music: “Beach Community” from the album *Joyce Manor* by Joyce Manor.

I lost it all in a beach community

Where it was lost is not all that clear to me

Over the sidewalk, into a slow talk

Called the police

Told me I'm in the wrong town

(Music fades out.)

Chase Knobbe: And there is something kind of appealing about it in some way, because it's the mall that's in *Jackie Brown*. And a lot of that a lot of that movie just takes place in like the South Bay, like I think the Bail Bonds place is in like Lomita.

(They confirm.)

Yeah, generally, it doesn't really— If you go to any type of like suburban place in like New Jersey or like Minnesota, there's like a plaza with like a TJ Maxx and like a Sports Clips and like a sporting goods store and like a—

Barry Johnson: It sort of has the—what you would kind of more think of as Orange County. It's conservative. It's kind of repressed. It's like a lot of chain stores and stuff. Even though there's a lot of great things about Orange County,

obviously, and Orange County is a lot of different places. But sort of like when people picture like, “Oh, you guys are from LA?” It's like not really. We're kind of from this like—um, yeah. It's got a—it's like fairly conservative.

Jesse Thorn: It's sort of culturally conservative, not even necessarily politically conservative. I mean, somewhat. But—

Chase Knobbe: And politically, yeah.

Barry Johnson: We have it both culturally and politically, yeah.

Jesse Thorn: Did you guys think of yourselves as Angelinos when you were teenagers?

(They all say no.)

Barry Johnson: Most people I know didn't ever go to LA. No one really leaves Torrance. It's a weird, sleepy, strange place.

Matt Ebert: Going to shows it was like either you go to LA or you go to Orange County, 'cause there were no shows in Torrance or the South Bay really at all. And I think I probably identified more with Orange County, in terms of going to shows. LA, we would go to like bigger concerts and that was about it.

Barry Johnson: Yeah, but going to like local shows it would be like Chain Reaction or something like that to see. Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: San Pedro is a legendary punk rock location, right?

Barry Johnson: It is, indeed. And it's right there, but it has a very different vibe. It's right on the port and it has a really... kind of more working-class vibe. And it almost feels kind of East Coast, weirdly.

Chase Knobbe: It's kind of straddled by like— There's Hermosa too, where like Black Flag are from and The Descendants, Circle Jerks and stuff. And then St. Peter's got Minutemen. And all those bands would kind of practice in Torrance, because it was like— I mean, it's cheap. There's a lot of warehouses. And yeah, you can just get more bang for your buck getting a practice space over there.

Jesse Thorn: There is a— Look, I've lived in Los Angeles almost 20 years. Like, I could list cities in the Los Angeles area—in Los Angeles County, mostly—that I have no idea where they are.

(They affirm.)

But like, I know that probably I could get there in 40 minutes, but I don't know what it is.

Barry Johnson: Yeah, same. Oh yeah.

Jesse Thorn: And like, I've been to City of Commerce probably ten times. I couldn't tell you where that is.

(They agree.)

Matt Ebert: Right, right. Like, you see the sign off the 105 for Norwalk, and you're like, "*(Clicks tongue.)* I'm sure some stuff happens there, but..."

(They laugh and agree.)

Jesse Thorn: But one of the things that can happen in a place like that is punk rock. Like, I think a punk rock show is something that can happen in a semi-suburban or semi-industrial town of 50,000 people or 75,000 people that's a bunch of freeway stops down from where the club is that the indie rock bands are playing.

(They agree.)

Chase Knobbe: And in Torrance—in all those places, there's always like the thing where you have a venue for one summer. Like, it'll just be like a vintage store, or we had this place called Famima that was like a Japanese 7-Eleven, essentially, with an all-purpose room in the back. So, you would get all the bands you know that are in like the LA area. Like, "Come down and play this place. We have a new spot."

And so, stuff like that definitely blossoms in places where there are a lot of kids but not a lot of venues.

Barry Johnson: Yeah, exactly. Yeah.

Matt Ebert: The fact that we had a Japanese convenience store that let us do shows was like so mind blowing to touring bands. *(Laughing.)* Like, bands would be like, "Wait, you guys are allowed to do shows in this Japanese market?"

And the employees in the front, like they didn't give a *(censor beep)*. They just worked there.

(Jesse laughs.)

And they would sell like an insane amount of food and snacks. And then of course, it got shut down eventually. Things got too crazy. But just stuff like that is incredible to have.

Music: “NBTSA” from the album *40 oz. to Fresno* by Joyce Manor.

Well, can I tell you a secret?

And can you promise that you'll keep it?

Well, if you can't, just say so

I don't know why I want you to know

But something happened to me last night

And ever since, I don't feel right

I think it did something to my brain

And I may never be the same again

And I may never be the same

(Music fades out.)

Jesse Thorn: What was the first time you got paid as a band?

Barry Johnson: I remember. We opened for—what was that place called?

Chase Knobbe: Blue Star Bar? Blue Star Café?

Barry Johnson: Blue Star Café. We played with this band called Bomb the Music Industry, which was Jeff Rosenstock's band before he was doing Jeff Rosenstock. And yeah, we were just stoked to be on the show. It was like a packed show, and we were fans of Bomb the Music Industry. And as we were leaving, Jeff came up to us and gave us 100 bucks and was like, "Hey, have a good tour." 'Cause we were doing like our first West Coast run.

And I remember running up to Matt with 100 bucks like, "Dude! Jeff gave us 100 bucks!"

We were so excited. And that paid for gas for basically the whole tour. It was really kind. He did not need to do that at all.

(Matt agrees.)

Chase Knobbe: Yeah. And it was like a weird like ethic that, if there's a touring band, like you don't take any money. And so, we—there was like pushback. We were like, "Dude, you guys are on tour. Like, it's all good. Trust me, you can take it."

And then—so, yeah, it was crazy. That was really generous. And yeah, it was kind of life changing. Like, we made money.

(They chuckle.)

Barry Johnson: Yeah. Yeah. We just didn't—I never even thought about it. Like, we were just on the show.

Jesse Thorn: When you started touring, were you booking your own shows?

Barry Johnson: Yeah. Yeah.

Matt Ebert: For the first three years or so? I think 2012 was when we signed on with a booking agent full time.

Barry Johnson: Matt did most of that. Matt's better at like—

Chace Knobbe: On Myspace, coordinating with a guy and his roommate, who's— You find out—you don't find out until a week before the show if it's actually gonna happen. And then usually it does, sometimes it doesn't.

Matt Ebert: Yeah. Most of 'em happened. Yeah.

Barry Johnson: Most, but not all of them. In El Paso, we played to that kid and his friend.

(They laugh and confirm.)

Two guys.

I saw pictures from that show recently. They were cool pictures, but it was—the friend was taking 'em.

(They laugh.)

Jesse Thorn: I was about to say! Who took them, the kid or the friend?

(They laugh.)

(Crosstalk.)

Chase Knobbe: Yeah. It looks like public—

Matt Ebert: There's one less person. *(Laughs.)* We were chilling in the living room. We watched *Baby's Day Out*. And then the movie ended and we were like, "You guys wanna play the show?" *(Laughs.)* Yeah.

Chase Knobbe: Yeah, that was cool.

Jesse Thorn: That's one of the most punk rock films ever made! *Baby's Day Out!*

Barry Johnson: Yeah, I like it.

Jesse Thorn: Yeah, that baby really goes wild.

Chase Knobbe: He does. He doesn't care.

Jesse Thorn: Especially on a baby scale, you know? Babies usually are pretty stationary.

(They giggle.)

We're gonna take a quick break. When we come back, even more with SoCal punk luminaries, Joyce Manor. Stay with us. It's *Bullseye* from 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. I'm here in the studio with Barry Johnson, Chase Knobbe, and Matt Ebert. They're all members of the punk rock band Joyce Manor. Joyce Manor have a new album out. It's called *I Used to Go to This Bar*. Let's get back into our conversation.

How does bowling fit into the history of the band?

Matt Ebert: Barry and I met at a bowling alley, on a bowling league, in eighth grade. And Chase went on to work at that same bowling alley a few years later.

Barry Johnson: Gable House—Gable—

Matt Ebert: Gable House Bowl. It's now gone. It's bulldozed.

Jesse Thorn: I feel like bowling is both, A) just a god-tier eighth grade activity.

(They all agree.)

And B) Quietest kept legendary punk rock activity, and particularly ska activity.

Matt Ebert: Really ska activity. Yeah.

Chase Knobbe: It's very ska. Yeah.

Barry Johnson: The Attire has a—*(laughs.)*

Jesse Thorn: You can't steal bowling shoes from the bowling alley if you don't go bowling first. *(Laughs.)*

Matt Ebert: Gable House had a thing called Quarter Mania during the summer where it was \$5 entry from 9AM to noon. You paid five bucks, and then you get quarter games, quarter hotdogs, quarter sodas, quarter popcorn, everything. So, I

would go like sometimes three or four days a week, between high school years—like, during the summer—and spend \$7.50 and just have the time of my (*sensor beep*) life.

Barry Johnson: Yeah. So, yeah, Matt and I weren't on the same team. We were on opposing teams. But my team was so bad that they— Because we were kids, they would kind of give you like a handicap. But we were bowling every week. So, from the beginning to the end, we kinda learned how to bowl a little bit. And we actually won first place—we had a first-place bowling trophy that was like totally crooked. 'Cause we didn't bowl the best. At all.

(Chase laughs.)

And there was all these kids that were like trying to be serious bowlers and a lot better than us. And like, their dads were there—kind of like on some Tiger Woods type vibe. You know? And it was just—it just bummed everybody out. We weren't really taking it that seriously. We were just there having fun, and we like won first place. It was like—yeah, it was a sham.

Jesse Thorn: So, I feel like a lot of your records and a lot of punk rock in general is what it's like to be 16-22 years old. And every time you come out with a new record, part of the story of the record from the outside is: Joyce Manor are grownups now. (*Chuckling.*) You've been grownups now like ten times.

(They laugh.)

Matt Ebert: Yeah. Yeah. Straight up.

Chase Knobbe: We're all grown up.

Barry Johnson: I really agree with you on that. Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: What is your relationship like to the—you know, in punk rock, everybody always says, “Kids.” What is the relationship that you have to yourselves as 18-year-olds now?

Chase Knobbe: I've been in this band since I was 17, so that's one thing. It's kind of just I've been doing the same thing since then.

Barry Johnson: Yeah. Matt and I were a little older. We were like 22/23 when we got started. But yeah. I mean, no one really said that about our first record and then no one said anything about the second record. Third record people kind of—

I think there was a keyboard on it, so people were like, “Wow, Joyce Manor are like—” Yeah, there was some kind of talk of indie rock means like maturing. There was some kind of more indie rock influences or something. And then really, with that talk really is like “What happens when punks grow up or punks get old? Like, what do you do?” That really started around when we turned 30 and did *Cody* with Rob Schnapf. And it was produced by like a—by a real guy it. And was a little more mid-tempo and, uh—

Jesse Thorn: (*Laughing.*) Produced by a real guy.

Barry Johnson: Produced by—yeah, it was the first one that produced by like a known guy.

Music: “Last You Heard of Me” from the album *Cody* by Joyce Manor.

Found myself down at the Alibi

For the second time this year

Wrote my song down, gave it to the guy

Then went to grab another beer

Sonia's going to the parking lot

(Music fades out.)

Barry Johnson: That's really when that kind of like, “Where do punks go when you're not a kid anymore?” Something like that.

Jesse Thorn: Was that something you had thought about?

Barry Johnson: No. No, I never— I was just making records and—you know? Yeah, I just— I think it's for lack of any other kind of narrative. I think it's—

Matt Ebert: Yeah. We're aging at the same speed as everybody else.

(Barry agrees.)

Jesse Thorn: I mean, I think punk rock is, as a music world, distinctly obsessed with its own aesthetics and sub-aesthetics. I mean, metal is like this too. But like, the question of what is punk and how punk something is—just if you go on the subreddit for r/punk, it's probably 40% of the posts are discussions of how punk something is.

(Laughs.)

Matt Ebert: Oh, that's like a—yeah, yeah, exactly.

Jesse Thorn: Which is not the case in r/HipHopHeads, for example. You know what I mean? Not that it doesn't exist, but the idea of “What is punk? What's good about it? What's valuable about it? What are you leaving behind? What are you taking with you?” is kind of all consuming in punk rock in a way that it isn't in other kinds of music necessarily.

Matt Ebert: Yeah.

Barry Johnson: Yeah, and I think it also has to do with getting better at something the longer you do it. So, sometimes some of the rough edges or scrappiness has been maybe a little bit ironed out of what we're doing. And people wanna talk about, “Wow, look at— They're like more presentable now.” Because some of that scrappiness and the rough edges were not like necessarily like aesthetic choices. They were just genuine scrappiness and genuine rough edges. So.

Jesse Thorn: Right. 'Cause one of the values of punk rock that is most useful is anybody can be in a punk rock band. Right? So, like when you start a punk rock band, if that's the rule, some of the people might not be that great at playing music.
(Laughs.)

Barry Johnson: Yeah. Or have access to like really great equipment. And so, that kind of comes across in the recording. And then when you—

Jesse Thorn: You're telling me there wasn't like a world class PA in the utility room of a Japanese grocery store!?

(They laugh.)

Matt Ebert: We still don't have one, really.

Barry Johnson: But yeah. It's like you kind of reuse whatever equipment you have available to you and whatever skillset you have available to you. And then that— You know, the stuff you're listening to is in that same circumstance. And then you're emulating that too. You're like, “Ah, it doesn't sound right. Make it sound more like this Misfits record that they were just—they're recording with whatever they had.” You know? Of course, like Danzig has that amazing voice, but I didn't have that. (*Laughs.*)

Jesse Thorn: What are the things about punk rock that are most important to you? Like, what are the things that you hold closest?

Matt Ebert: I think for me, it was always about the network of like— Like, I was always really enamored with bands that would be a band for two weeks and then go on tour. And this was pre-internet. Like, the fact that you could just start a band and pack your (*editor beep*) in a van and leave for tour and somehow make it happen because of this network that exists is incredible to me. I don't think it exists in a lot of other facets of society. You know?

Barry Johnson: I like really catchy, energetic music. So, I think I was drawn to punk as just a hyperactive, emotional kid. And this music that was like outburst-ish was just extremely exhilarating to me. And so, because I came of age in the late '90s, there was punk on the radio and stuff, but there was this thread to follow for like crazier and crazier stuff. So, you would get into more underground punk music that was like even wilder. You know? And so, it was just really exciting to try to find like the wildest thing.

Chase Knobbe: Yeah, I think as soon as Joyce Manor started, I was just— I didn't really necessarily think, “Oh, these are great punk songs.” I just thought, “Oh, they're fun, melodic songs.” And I think what has stayed from like growing up with punk and stuff is just a sort of kind of humility you carry yourself with when you're on tour. We'll cross paths with bands on tour, and we'll kind of get along with some bands like, “Oh, these guys certainly like grew up playing smaller DIY shows.” And even if they don't really resemble like a punk band now, you could tell that's where they came from. And then you sometimes meet bands who like—they have only done like the circuit of like booking agents and green rooms and catering.

Barry Johnson: Publicists, yeah.

Chase Knobbe: Exactly. And so, you talk to them—I just have nothing to really talk to them about. It's just that—

Matt Ebert: You can tell in less than five minutes if a band comes from punk or not.

(Chase and Barry agree.)

Chase Knobbe: And it's not even like a poser-detector thing. It's just sort of like, "Oh. It's easier to talk to you because you're—you expect things—" I don't know. I'm not sure what it is. You kinda expect things to go wrong all the time instead of things being perfect and completely curated to like your comfort and your needs.

Barry Johnson: Yeah. You're more adaptable and relaxed.

(Chase agrees.)

Whereas like some indie rock types that have always had a publicist are just like... so fussy.

(They chuckle.)

Chase Knobbe: Yeah. "My in-ears aren't working." Yeah, yeah, totally. Yeah.

Barry Johnson: You know? Yeah, they're just fussy. And it's really off-putting.

Chase Knobbe: Yeah. Like, "Where's our wine?" Like, that kind of *(censor beep)*. Yeah. It's just—

Barry Johnson: "Aw, they got the wrong kind of wine." It's like, alright.

Whereas when you are—even people in successful bands, if they came from punk, you can just tell. They're just a little less—I don't know. They're sort of like more approachable or something. I don't know.

Jesse Thorn: Do you guys still like to play all-ages shows?

Barry Johnson: Of course!

Chase Knobbe: Kind of exclusively, yeah.

Barry Johnson: Yeah. We very, very rarely play anything 21-and-up. Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: Is this something that you ask for when you're booking? If there's a club, do you say, "Hey, can we make this all ages?"

Matt Ebert: Yeah.

Barry Johnson: As much as possible. Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: Why is that?

Barry Johnson: Yeah. I think that the people under 21 are probably the— That was like the time when I was the most obsessed with music and the most—so intensely into music, and so intensely excited about being at a show. You know? And I like our shows to be really energetic and crazy. And so, if you fill it with people 21+, it's probably not gonna be as crazy as if it's full of like wild (*sensor beep*) kids. Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: I think that it really speaks to another distinctive thing about punk rock from other kinds of rock music, which is just like how physical and visceral the experience of being in a punk rock show is. I mean, like people rock at a— whatever, a Mastodon show or something like that too, but a punk rock show is immersive and visceral in a very different way. It's not a bilateral relationship between the stage and the person in the audience. It is a like multilateral relationship between everybody in there really going ape.

Barry Johnson: It kind of spoiled other shows for me for a long time. Like, I eventually learned how to enjoy other things. But yeah, when I got a little older and got interested in other kinds of music, and you'd go see stuff, and you were just like, “It's not like—” Yeah, it just wasn't... So spoiled with the kind of great shows I saw in like participated in. And then you just go and watch—I don't know. I'm trying to think of an example of something. But you know, I did see other great shows where you just stand there with your jaw on the floor, like blown away. But those are pretty rare too, yeah?

Jesse Thorn: We'll wrap up my conversation with my guests, Joyce Manor, in just a minute. Have Joyce Manor—the leading lights of contemporary pop punk—grown up? Well, we'll get into it after a break. It's *Bullseye* from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

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(Music fades out.)

Transition: Thumpy synth with a syncopated beat.

Jesse Thorn: I'm Jesse Thorn. You're listening to *Bullseye*. I'm talking with Southern California punk band, Joyce Manor.

When you go to a show now that you guys are in your 30s, do you stand at the edge? Or back at the bar?

Chase Knobb: All pit. *(Stammering.)* Not like hardcore moshing or anything, but like a—we saw the last NOFX show. Barry and I got in the circle pit for the last *Linoleum*. Uh, just saw *(unclear)*. Pitted. But I'd say most of the time. There's like a few bands that will get— And it can't be too violent. If it's like too violent, I'll be scared, but yeah.

Barry Johnson: I went to go see this band, 100 geecs, that I really like and I was watching from like the VIP balcony or whatever. And I was—it was kind of— I wasn't totally engaged in it. And so, I went on the floor and watched, and then I went a little closer. And by the end of the show, I was like up at the front. And I was having a blast just with all these other people, getting all sweaty and loving this band. And then something happened that hasn't happened to me in a long time, where I was like there 'til the very end of the show, and the house lights came on, and I like filed out through a crowd. That I haven't done in a long time. I'm very much like a “Let's leave before it gets crazy and the parking lot's a nightmare.” You know?

But I was just like so in it and having so much fun that I was like there ‘til the very last like house lights are on, and I'm like filing out with all these like sweaty kids. That was a cool feeling. That I haven't done in a while.

Jesse Thorn: You guys also are the age where you are the final generation where, when you were an adolescent, if you made melodic punk rock music, you could become a famous, rich person.

(They agree with a chuckle.)

Like, there were famous, rich punk rock guys when you were 14 or whatever.

Barry Johnson: Selling CDs!

Matt Ebert: We missed that train, unfortunately. *(Chuckles.)*

Barry Johnson: We just missed it. Yeah.

Jesse Thorn: *(Laughs.)* Was that something that you ever aspired to? Like, even when you were 13, did you ever think it would be so cool to be The Offspring and be on MTV right now?

Chase Knobbe: I didn't.

Matt Ebert: No. Really, no.

Barry Johnson: Yeah. I never saw them— Like, I never looked at that stuff and thought, “That'll be me one day.” Like, I watched the documentary about Eddie Murphy, and he was a little kid watching TV; he's like, “I'm gonna be on TV.” I never had that moment where I was like watching Kurt Cobain and I was like, “That could be me.”

Matt Ebert: Yeah. I started playing guitar in late middle school. And I knew that I wanted to be in a band, but there were like... really no ambitions beyond that. Just like, “I would love to be in a band that like gets together and plays.” *(Chuckles.)* That was it.

Barry Johnson: I didn't have like showbiz—I didn't have a showbiz itch, really.

Chase Knobbe: Yeah. I went to Subway early on and watched the guy making sandwiches, and I was like, “That would be a cool job.”

(They laugh.)

“I'm gonna get that job.”

Jesse Thorn: That guy's an artist.

Chase Knobbe: He sure is, yeah.

Barry Johnson: It's kind of a trip, though. My dad knew I was gonna be in a band, though. I remember talking to my dad and telling him like I wanted to be like a veterinarian or something, and he was like, “You're gonna be in a band.”

Jesse Thorn: How old?

Barry Johnson: I was like... between eight and ten? Little. Isn't that a trip? I didn't play any instruments. I didn't know— Like, I'd never talked about wanting to be in a band or anything and he— He just like knew it.

Jesse Thorn: Did your dad play instruments? Was your dad in a band? He just could tell?

Barry Johnson: Nope. No. Could just tell.

Jesse Thorn: He was a veterinarian.

(They laugh.)

Barry Johnson: Sheet metal worker. Yeah. Yeah, pretty weird, right? I remember thinking it was weird at the time. I was like, “That's weird.” And the way—like, the conviction in which he said it as well. He was like—as though it was obvious. It's a trip.

Jesse Thorn: Do you guys still like book drummers in the band the traditional way? Which is like pulling little pieces of paper off flyers at the Guitar Center?

(They laugh.)

Matt Ebert: I saw one of those recently, and it made me really sad. 'Cause it was like—the band seemed kind of cool, and I was like so aged out of it. It was like 16-24. And I was like, “Wow. I'm 39.”

(They laugh.)

“I’m so far from being allowed to audition for this band. But I was like,
“(Regretfully.) Ah.”

Matt Ebert: Rude.

Chase Knobbe: That was like the parameters they set forth? Or they're just describing—?

(Barry confirms.)

Okay, cool.

Barry Johnson: “These are the ages you're allowed to be to try out for this band.”
Pro gear, pro mentality or whatever. You know?

(They laugh.)

And I was just like—yeah, I'm not—

Matt Ebert: Not even close to making the cut! That sucks.

(They chuckle.)

Barry Johnson: Not even close. Not even close.

Jesse Thorn: 5'10” or over. No short kings.

(They laugh and agree.)

Chase Knobbe: I like the ones that are like, “Do you wanna play in a band that sounds like Queens of the Arctic, like 30 Seconds to Mars?” kind of thing. Like, that's pretty cool.

Barry Johnson: Yeah. It was a diverse— I actually tried out for a band when I was 15 like that. 'Cause was like, “Ozma, The Rentals,” like stuff like that. And I went and tried out, and I didn't get it. The guy wrote me a really nice email though, saying, “Thanks for coming down. We decided to move forward with somebody else.”

(They laugh.)

I was devastated! But I got over it.

Jesse Thorn: In what ways are you grown up? Like, what's different now?

Matt Ebert: I mean, I feel more comfortable as a person than I did when I was—I think about this often, 'cause I'm turning 40. Barry and I are both turning 40 this year. And I think of where my head was at when I turned 30, 10 years ago. And I feel a lot more comfortable as a person now than I did 10 years ago.

Barry Johnson: Yeah, same. I feel a little more, um—I had some—you know, like most people when you're young—some insecurities and stuff and just sort of like a... Yeah, just more comfortable in my skin and just a little more confident about what I do. And not as reactionary. You're really reactionary when you're young and stuff. And yeah. Yeah, I think it's just sort of—I'm trying to think of a better way to put it than just comfortable with who I am. But that's one of the—yeah, that's one of the main things.

Matt Ebert: I do think that this job keeps you feeling really young, at the same time. 'Cause like, my friend went to our 20-year high school reunion. You went! To yours.

Barry Johnson: I went to mine. It was so weird.

Matt Ebert: But he was kind of telling me about it. And it just got me thinking about how very few of those people are like drinking beers and having band practice. You know? (*Chuckles.*) And going on tour. And now we're in a place where we go on tour with bands where, you know, everyone in the band is maybe 10 years younger than us or more. But we're peers. And I do think it just keeps you feeling youthful.

Barry Johnson: You gotta stay up on stuff.

Matt Ebert: You gotta stay up on stuff, yeah.

Barry Johnson: You wanna stay relevant. So, it keeps you sharp.

Jesse Thorn: And you also gotta continue to be connected to the energy of youth that animates the kind of music that you make.

Barry Johnson: It's demanded of us.

(Matt agrees.)

You know, when the crowd is so exciting, you have to match it. And yeah, it's great.

Chase Knobbe: Yeah. Like, I have like friends from high school who I'll meet up with them, and I'll just talk about all the same stuff. Because I'm kind of locked in like, mentally, the age we all were when Joyce Manor started. And I'll just talk about some bands from high school or venues—like Famima or something. And then I'll just be like, “Do you ever think about this stuff?”

They're like, “I literally, unless I meet up with you, I don't think about this or hear these names at all, like ever.”

(They laugh)

Barry Johnson: That's so funny.

Chase Knobbe: So, it's kind of weird. Yeah. We'll talk about The Vandals like every single day or something.

(They agree with laughter.)

And then—like, most people our age don't do that. So.

Barry Johnson: Yeah, exactly.

Jesse Thorn: Well, guys, I'm so grateful for your time. Thank you so much for talking to me.

Matt Ebert: Hey, yeah, thanks for having us.

Barry Johnson: Of course.

Chase Knobbe: Yeah, thanks for having us. It was really fun.

Music: “Well, Whatever It Was” from the album *I Used to Go to This Bar* by Joyce Manor.

Had the worst day ever so far

Got run over by my dream car

Spent forever in the ER

Slowly going insane

Lost my job at Little Caesars

Drinking whiskey 'cause my teeth hurt

My tuxedo was a t-shirt

But you know what they say

Well, whatever it was (I'll live without it)

Yeah, whatever you are (Can't seem to care)

(Music continues under the dialogue.)

Jesse Thorn: That's the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye* is created from the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun, as well as at Maximum Fun headquarters in the historic Jewelry District in downtown Los Angeles, California. We've got some more hawk news this week. Our colleague, Richard, found an injured hawk in Eagle Rock and he helped rescue it. We've had multiple bird rescues on the MaxFun staff.

Our show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our senior producer is Kevin Ferguson. Our producers are Jesus Ambrosio and Richard Robey. Our production fellow at Maximum Fun, Hannah Moroz. Our video producer is Daniel Speer. We get booking help on *Bullseye* from Mara Davis. Our interstitial music comes from our friend Dan Wally, who's also known as DJ W. You can find his music at DJWsounds.bandcamp.com. Dan and I, just the other night, went to see the great Jonah Ray's new weekly show at Scribble in Highland Park, here in Los Angeles. We had a great time together.

Our theme music was written and recorded by The Go! Team. It's called "Huddle Formation". Thanks to The Go! Team; thank you to their label, Memphis Industries.

You can follow *Bullseye* on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, where you'll find video from just about all our interviews—including the ones that you heard this week. And I think that's about it. Just remember, all great radio hosts have a signature sign-off.

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

(Music ends.)

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