

*Note: This show periodically replaces their ad breaks with new promotional clips. Because of this, both the transcription for the clips and the timestamps after them may be inaccurate at the time of viewing this transcript.*

00:00:00 Music Music

Old-fashioned sounding, exciting war music.

00:00:02 Ben Harrison Host

You get the sense with some war movies that the war itself isn't a good enough motivation for some soldiers. They're there for the adrenaline, or the camaraderie, or to avoid something back at home.

But a different, no less strong motivation comes to the fore in *They Were Expendable*: being underestimated.

It's easy to forget that there was a time when PT boats weren't inextricably linked to the image of John Fitzgerald Kennedy [*JFK impression*] ripping through the coastal waters while wearing his Ray Bans and singlehandedly sinking a line of Japanese cruisers.

There was a time when the PT boat was maligned. I mean, look at those things. Are you kidding me?

00:00:41 Ben Host

And this film is chock full of sailors who are absolutely champing at the bit to go to war, except they're saddled with what their leadership sees as glorified pontoon party boats.

John Wayne's character, Rusty Ryan, can't deal with this derision. So he prepares his papers to transfer elsewhere. Trouble is, when your request is dated December 7th, 1941, a person can assume it's not going to be a priority for those in charge.

Everyone in this Philippines-based PT boat squadron assumes that now, this will be their time to prove their worth, but after being relegated to messenger duty, morale crashes and their hopes of their craft being used in combat fade.

Just as they're about to be deployed to destroy some Japanese vessels, Rusty is ordered to the hospital. It's blood poisoning.

00:01:29 Ben Host

Missing what he sees as his best shot at action, he is understandably devastated. Rusty is the crankiest patient in the hospital before Nurse Sandy gets through to him, as Donna Reed has the power to do.

And the rest of the film is spent absorbing the constant losses of boats and men under Robert Montgomery's command. American forces are pushed back constantly, outgunned and outnumbered, retreating island to island. For a film of its era, it contains much more defeat than you'd expect.

By the end, no one is underestimating the PT boat, or the sailors who command them. But maybe Rusty's biggest mistake was underestimating how much danger Nurse Sandy was in.

Today on *Friendly Fire*, we'll skipper a cake of soap in the bathtub of our show, as we discuss the 1944 John Ford classic, *They Were Expendable*.

00:02:23	Music	Music	<p>Music changes to “War,” by Norman Whitfield and Barrett Strong, lead vocals by Edwin Starr.</p> <p><i>War!</i>  <i>Huh!</i>  <i>Yeah!</i>  <i>What is it good for?!</i>  <i>Absolutely—</i>  <i>—nothing!</i>  <i>Uh-huh!</i></p> <p><i>War!</i>  <i>Huh!</i>  <i>Yeah!</i>  <i>What is it good for?!</i>  <i>Absolutely—</i>  <i>—nothing!</i></p> <p><i>Say it again, y’all!</i></p> <p><i>War!</i></p> <p><i>[The song continues from here at a lower volume as the hosts introduce themselves, and then fades out.]</i></p>
00:02:44	Ben	Host	<p>Welcome to <i>Friendly Fire</i>, the war movie podcast where one of the hosts used to skipper a bowl of spaghetti in a bathtub, too! I'm Ben Harrison.</p> <p><i>[Beat.]</i></p>
00:02:54	Adam Pranica	Host	<p>That one's not me. I'm Adam Pranica.</p>
00:02:56	John Roderick	Host	<p>It's me!</p>
00:02:58	Adam	Host	<p>Heyyy! It's-a John-a!</p>
00:02:59	John	Host	<p><i>[Italian accent]</i> Eyyy, I'm a skipper of a bowl of spaghetti!</p> <p><i>[Ben and Adam chuckle.]</i></p> <p>I'm John Roderick.</p>
00:03:07	Ben	Host	<p>None of us have ever skippered a bar of soap in a bathtub, though.  <i>[Laughs.]</i></p>
00:03:11	John	Host	<p>No. Skippered a bar of soap in a prison shower.</p>
00:03:15	Adam	Host	<p>Oh!</p> <p><i>[Ben laughs.]</i></p> <p>Uh, tell <u>that</u> story.</p>
00:03:18	Music	Music	<p>Sudden loud music and clock ticking. Immediately starts fading away.</p>
00:03:19	John	Host	<p>Fellas...</p>

*[They laugh.]*

I had just turned 18.

00:03:21 Adam Host

Mm.

00:03:22 John Host

I was in Boulder County, Colorado.

00:03:23 Adam Host

Yeah?

00:03:24 John Host

I only showered at night.

00:03:25 Adam Host

Yeah.

00:03:26 Ben Host

This is, like, becoming just what the show is about. The time that John was in jail in Boulder. *[Laughs.]*

00:03:32 John Host

*[Laughs.]* If I can reference it in 25% of, uh—of *Friendly Fire* episodes, I'll—I'll do it. I think that's an achievable goal.

*[Ben laughs.]*

00:03:42 Music Music

Twangy country music briefly accompanies Adam.

00:03:43 Adam Host

*[Singing comically below his own range]* I went to jail in Boulder, and I showered at night! *[Laughs.]*

*[Ben laughs.]*

That's my Johnny Cash!

00:03:52 John Host

Mm-hm.

00:03:53 Crosstalk Crosstalk

**Adam:** You gotta go deep for that Johnny Cash.

**Ben:** Got a beautiful singing voice, Adam.

00:03:54 John Host

*[Laughs.]* You really do.

00:03:55 Crosstalk Crosstalk

**Adam:** That is, uh—

**John:** Uncanny.

00:03:57 Adam Host

That is beneath the depth of what my voice can do.

00:04:00 Ben Host

*[Laughs.]*

I may have misread what was stated on Wikipedia, but it made it sound in the Wikipedia like Robert Montgomery was actually the XO of the real life character that his character, Lt. John Brickley was based on?

Did you guys look at the Wikipedia about this movie?

00:04:22 John Host

Say what, now?

00:04:24 Crosstalk Crosstalk

**Ben:** So—

**Adam:** Well I will now!

*[John laughs.]*

00:04:26 Ben Host

Part of—part of his—like, part of, like, the interesting story about this is that John Ford broke his leg, like, examining some set. And was

off the—off the shoot for a little while.

And Robert Montgomery, uh, came in and directed a bunch of scenes so that they wouldn't lose days. And it's—he—he went on to have a directing career, but this is his first swing at directing anything.

But he was good at it, because he had some experience as a PT boat, uh, skipper.

00:05:01 John Host Not as the XO of the—of the main guy. Or not—

00:05:06 Ben Host Well, listen to this! Uh, in the production notes on Wikipedia, it says—it—his character is based on a Medal of Honor winner named John D. Bulkeley.

"John Ford met Bulkeley during the Normandy invasion, and later sighted his former executive officer, Lt. Robert Montgomery, on D-Day."

00:05:25 John Host Right.

00:05:26 Ben Host Is it—is that a different Robert Montgomery?

00:05:29 Adam Host I think Bulkeley is a great name! Why did they change it to Brickley?

'Cause I guess you wanna call the guy "Brick," right, and not "Bulk"?

*[Ben laughs.]*

00:05:37 John Host Well, it's so it's lightly fictionalized.

*[Ben responds affirmatively as John speaks.]*

This is based on—based on real stuff, but I don't think they wanted it to be, um—it's not one of those war movies where we're meant to follow along exactly what happened.

Although a lot of this stuff did happen.

00:05:52 Adam Host The thing about that story you're telling, Ben, that I really seized onto was that—you know, you're used to the idea of a John Wayne being the biggest swinging dick on any film set, and being the star of stars.

But...

00:06:08 Ben Host Yeah.

00:06:09 Adam Host John Ford killed John Wayne on the production of this film. Like, was the biggest dick to him.

And the idea that he was second billing in this film, that John Ford hated him, that he was the non-vet of the actors, and he was made to feel, uh, like, othered by everyone is amazing.

00:06:31 Ben Host Yeah.

00:06:32 Adam Host I just can't conceive of it. And—and how bad must John Wayne have felt when John Ford injured himself and like, "Oh shit. My costar is—is field-promoted to director." Like...

*[Ben laughs, and then again responds affirmatively as Adam speaks.]*

Veterans' Club. Like, "How am I gonna get fucked today?" John Wayne might have been thinking.

00:06:51 John Host It's especially weird given that John Ford made John Wayne.

00:06:55 Adam Host Yeah!

00:06:56 John Host Right? I mean, John Wayne acts in a lot of John Ford movies!

00:06:58 Adam Host And would go on after this film to—like, they did *The Quiet Man* together!

Like—like, really great John Wayne films came afterward, and it's amazing that—that John Ford didn't poison the well with him!

00:07:10 John Host *[Adam responds affirmatively as John speaks.]*

But from the very beginning, from the opening credits of this movie, everyone in the film is credited with their World War II Navy rank.

00:07:20 Adam Host Yeah.

00:07:21 John Host Right? I mean, one after another, everyone working on this production actually was in the Navy, and they were all like, "Lieutenant Commander Robert Montgomery!"

00:07:29 Adam Host Yeah.

00:07:30 John Host And, you know, like, trying to give not just verisimilitude, but also—

00:07:35 Ben Host They—they designed the credits at John Wayne. *[Laughs.]*

00:07:37 John Host Yeah, right! And I think John Wayne, his whole life—because—because this is a—this is a matter, uh, that has been discussed and discussed for decades. John Wayne's failure to serve during World War II.

And then went on to become, like, ultra-patriot dude. His daughter—

00:07:55 Ben Host Right.

00:07:56 John Host —at one point famously said that he became, like, a hyper-patriot to compensate for the fact that he was always deeply ashamed that he didn't go.

00:08:06 Ben Host Methinks John Wayne make more movie too much?

00:08:09 John Host Yeah, right!

*[Ben laughs.]*

00:08:10 Adam Host He's got, like, career trucknuts.

*[Ben and John laugh.]*

00:08:15 John Host If you look at what he did during the war, he really—he really, like, at every turn, was kind of like, "Oh! I've got flat feet! Oh, I wanna join, but my back is hurting!"

Like, he joined the OSS but he didn't change his address. So the acceptance letter went to his ex-wife's house.

00:08:35 Adam Host Mm.

00:08:36 John Host And the letter went into the trash compactor.

There's like...

*[Ben laughs quietly.]*

So many examples of what you look at from a distance and go, "Oh, he's just a chickenshit. He didn't wanna go, and he came up with a lot of reasons."

Like, he was exempted because he was 34? But Robert Montgomery was 44 or something like that.

00:08:55 Adam Host It's weird, like—I get it. But... why wasn't he given a pass? He did more for military recruiting in that era than anyone else could have possibly done, right?

00:09:06 John Host He was, except that you never can be. Like, the—that—

00:09:09 Adam Host Yeah...

00:09:10 John Host It's one of those things of the time, like—

00:09:11 Adam Host "Either you were there or you weren't, man."

00:09:12 John Host Yeah. If you didn't go, then you didn't go.

00:09:14 Adam Host Yeah...

00:09:15 John Host And even if you went and were—were peeling potatoes, if you were in the hold of a ship that was in the combat zone—

00:09:21 Adam Host Right.

00:09:22 John Host You were there.

And a lot of—you know, a lot of these movie stars, they joined, and they went and did USO shows.

00:09:28 Adam Host Yeah, it's not like Robert Montgomery was like, doing the blood and guts routine over there.

00:09:31 John Host He was, though! Robert Montgomery was actually, like, in the shit!

00:09:36 Ben Host Uh, we have not spent a ton of time in the Philippines on this show.

00:09:40 John Host I mean, the story of the—the—the fall of the Philippines is kind of like John Wayne's military career: a little bit of a—um, of a black mark, or a big black mark, on the US Army that got, um—that there's a lot of revisionism around.

Because MacArthur made some pretty classic blunders. And his whole, like, "I shall return" business. His—his escape in the middle of the night, which is documented here in this movie. Um...

00:10:11 Ben Host Yeah.

00:10:12 John Host His, like, sneaking out, leaving behind a huge American army that ended up surrendering to the Japanese in Bataan. And it was the largest American surrender in history.

Um, and then all those soldiers were forced on the Bataan Death

March, and all of it arguably for nothing.

00:10:31 Ben Host I—I actually have a moment of pedantry about the, uh—the MacArthur quote.

00:10:35 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[Beeping as Ben speaks.]*

00:10:36 Ben Host Uh, a frame at the end of the movie said, "We shall return," and it's attributed to General Douglas MacArthur.

In fact, the White House tried to get the general to change his famous quote to "we," but he refused, saying he "failed to see the purpose."

*[John laughs.]*

It should read "I shall return"

00:10:51 John Host And somehow MacArthur, like we see in—in grandiose political figures, ended up being sort of bulletproof throughout his career.

00:11:00 Ben Host He turned this failure into the—like, one of the defining moments of his career as like a—as like, a rad thing he said.

00:11:07 John Host Right. A super legendary moment, and a legendary, uh—in a legendary career.

But he's really, like, very decidedly retreating. And not just retreating, but—but, like, sneaking out.

00:11:20 Ben Host Leaving 38,000 troops to the Bataan Death March.

00:11:23 Adam Host This was a whole movie about that!

00:11:25 John Host Yeah.

00:11:26 Adam Host It's about getting our asses kicked and retreating.

00:11:27 John Host Yeah.

00:11:28 Adam Host And the feeling at the end is one of victory. It's amazing.

00:11:31 Ben Host Yeah. *[Laughs.]*

00:11:32 John Host 'Cause the—you know, the movie's made at the end of the war.

00:11:34 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** So it's like—

**Adam:** Yeah, you know the ending.

00:11:36 John Host And somehow even in this moment, we see—I mean, when MacArthur gets on that PT boat, every character in the—in the film looks at him with loving awe.

00:11:47 Ben Host Yeah. *[Laughing]* It's playing like, "Glory Hallelujah" and stuff.

00:11:50 John Host Which is, you know, how he was—how he was regarded through his whole career, but I think as a—I mean, historians look at him with a pretty critical eye through all of this.

There were other—*[laughing]* let's just say there were other alternatives he had.

00:12:03 Ben Host Mm-hm.

00:12:04 John Host There was a whole plan for the defense of Bataan.

00:12:06 Adam Host He'd yet to become the guy with the ladders. That would be later?

*[Ben laughs.]*

00:12:10 John Host The guy with the ladders. Yeah.

But there was a plan before the war for the defense of Bataan, and MacArthur came in and rejected it and put his own plan in place.

And as his own plan crumbled during the battle, he at one point just reverted to the original plan. Like, "Oh, we're going back to Plan 3B!"

*[Ben laughs.]*

He—he yells into a radio as everybody's scattering.

00:12:35 John Host But—but he had—he'd spread his resources around, because he had re—he had revised the plan, and so when he was like, "Back to—" you know, "Back to the original plan!" they weren't set up for the original plan.

And it ended up being a big—one of like a dozen clusterfucks around this event.

00:12:51 Adam Host Yeah.

00:12:52 Ben Host I wondered, like, would an audience at the time have, like, understood the significance of Corregidor and Manila Bay and all that stuff?

00:12:59 John Host Yeah, this was all—

00:13:00 Ben Host Was this—

00:13:01 John Host —front page news.

You know, each one of these things would have been a—would have been a battle that Americans had to—just as—just as we do when we get into some overseas campaign and you're like, "Where is Tora Bora?"

*[Ben laughs.]*

You know, like, people that are reading the newspaper figure out where Tora Bora is.

00:13:19 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Adam:** There's a relationship between—

**Ben:** Right. What's a newspaper again?

00:13:21 John Host Yeah, I know...

00:13:22 Adam Host —the geography and the technology that this film really glosses over. Because—like, this film was about PT boats and their crews, and whether or not their—they serve any use where they're at.

But—like, the PT boat is the guerrilla warfare naval platform, and logically, I'm—like, I don't know a lot about the Philippines, but I'm—I'm seeing these boats, and their ability to operate in shallow waters, and they're not really making a super strong case for their utility



outside of their kind of "last boat standing" mentality.

00:14:02 John Host I think the—the story of the PT boat is interesting, because there were characters in World War II that understood that—that bombers or aircraft carriers were the new technology that was gonna transform war making.

You know, we—we saw in the character—or in the personage of Bulkeley, or Brickley, uh, somebody who saw the potential of PT boats where the old Navy guys were still clinging to destroyers.

And so I think, at the end of the war, there was a recognition that the PT boat had become a decisive form of guerrilla warfare, and this movie is sort of playing a little bit for laughs—not for laughs, but the viewing audience would recognize, in a way that some of the brass at the beginning of the movie didn't see, that PT boats became, if not decisive, then at least, like, an honorable way to serve in the Navy.

But John Wayne is against PT boats at the beginning, and so is the admiral. It's really Bulkeley is the only—or Brickley is the only guy that's like, "Look, PT boats are gonna be the thing."

You know, because *PT-109* was a famous story by the end.

00:15:14 Adam Host

Right.

00:15:15 Ben Host

Yeah.

They really drag that—that submariner when they, like, shame him into giving them a bunch of torpedoes. *[Laughs.]*

00:15:22 John Host

I know, "How many boats have you guys sunk?"

*[Ben laughs.]*

The thing—the thing that's key to understanding this movie, and a thing that isn't really addressed in this movie, is that American torpedoes—and we've talked about this in watching submarine movies before—the Mark 14 torpedo, the American torpedo that we went to war with... was a shit torpedo.

And there were submarines that—that could have played major—a major role in stopping the Japanese advance, and the subs were there, and they fired torpedo after torpedo, and the torpedoes didn't explode.

Because there was—because they were—um, they had a major flaw.

00:16:07 Adam Host

That's gotta be so maddening.

00:16:09 John Host

And that was true of PT boats, too.

00:16:11 Ben Host

Ugh.

00:16:12 John Host

They were there, and they would fire these Mark 14 torpedoes, and the torpedo would go and hit the Japanese destroyer and go like, "Bonk!"

*[Ben laughs quietly.]*

And just slowly sink. And—

00:16:21 Ben Host I mean, but it probably made like a really loud noise when it hit.

00:16:24 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[CLANG.]*

00:16:25 John Host *[Steadily quieter, as reverberations]* Bonk! Bonk! Bonk! Bonk! Bonk!

00:16:27 Adam Host Yeah, I'm sure it was very irritating for those on the Japanese destroyers.

*[Ben laughs.]*

00:16:31 John Host So like, American subs—because the Japanese, when they came in during this phase of the war, really early on in the war, the first thing they did was what they did at Pearl Harbor: they destroyed all the airplanes.

Uh, like all—all the American Air Force bases that were there, Army Air Force bases, the Japanese came in, surprised attacked them, and burned all the planes on the ground.

So all we had was subs and little PT-size boats to wage war there.

00:16:57 Adam Host Were the PT boats the reason that the Japanese Navy stopped transporting 200 tons of TNT in every cruiser?

*[John and Ben laugh.]*

Because their cruisers spectacularly blow big in this movie.

00:17:11 John Host There's some big fireworks.

00:17:12 Ben Host Some of the most extravagant explosions we have seen, period.

00:17:16 Adam Host I would say throughout the film, uh, there are a lot of really breathtaking compositions in the interplay between aircraft and—and boats in the water.

Really great stuff. Really nice low-altitude, uh, dogfighting happening.

00:17:32 Ben Host This film got a well-deserved Oscar for Best Effects. The—

00:17:36 Adam Host Yeah.

00:17:37 Ben Host I mean, like, it's—it's a real high watermark in terms of like, naval combat stuff that we've seen.

00:17:42 John Host Well, when the first scene of the Japanese Zeros raiding the base—

00:17:46 Clip Clip *[The clip starts to play as John describes it. Engines whirring, weapons firing.]*

00:17:49 John Host When those—when those planes went from V-formation into attack mode, I was watching it, you know, kinda slouched on the couch, and I jumped up out of my chair and was just like, "WOW! WHOA!"

*[Ben laughs. Adam responds affirmatively as John speaks.]*

I mean, it was so—it was such a breathtaking shot that I was like, "I

am—how have I not—how did I not know this already, that this was the greatest film ever made?"

*[Ben laughs.]*

And I really, at that—at—*[laughs]*.

00:18:15 John Host At that point in the—in watching the film, I was like, "If—this movie would have to work hard to not get a five-star rating from me, just based on that—on that combat."

00:18:24 Ben Host I know!

00:18:25 Adam Host I could never imagine, like, using this word for any film from 1945, but it was cool!

00:18:31 John Host Yeah.

00:18:32 Adam Host All of those action scenes were cool.

00:18:33 John Host So cool.

00:18:34 Adam Host Really well-done.

*[Adam responds affirmatively as John speaks.]*

00:18:35 John Host Realistic and—and you—and intense.

00:18:38 Adam Host And compound, too! Like, a lot of foreground-background stuff, like PT boats jumping other PT boats' wake, and—and depth charge—looking explosions coming out the water.

And fighters in the sky circling! Like, it's all happening!

*[Adam responds affirmatively as Ben speaks.]*

00:18:53 Ben Host And like, chaff in the air all around them, like the—I—like, I—I'm sure that's miniatures when they cut to that—those shots where the boats are just surrounded by exploding chaff, but—

00:19:03 Adam Host But a fair amount of them aren't!

00:19:05 Ben Host And—and like, we have seen a lot of Navy miniatures in particular that looked terrible, and these do not. They look great.

00:19:12 Adam Host It really heightens the tension of the thing! And you need to do that in a film this long.

00:19:18 Ben Host Yeah.

00:19:19 John Host Well, and that's the thing. I mean, I—at that point, I was like, "This is—this is a five-star movie unless they—unless they really bungle it."

00:19:26 Adam Host Yeah.

00:19:27 John Host They didn't really bungle it, but they did that 1945 thing where there was a—what seems like a completely superfluous entire romantic movie in the middle of it.

Where John Wayne again does the thing where he takes a hostile nurse protagonist—he doesn't even plant one on her!

00:19:49 Adam Host Yeah.

00:19:50 John Host He just glares at her.

00:19:51 Adam Host It was a magical hammock they sat in!

00:19:53 John Host Yeah! And—

00:19:54 Adam Host Changed everything.

*[Ben laughs.]*

00:19:55 John Host And she's just like, "I love you!"

I mean, they fall in love literally from across a crowded dance floor.

00:20:00 Ben Host That's a little bit more classy than the way Peter Sellers makes women fall in love with him.

00:20:03 John Host Yeah. Right.

*[Ben laughs quietly.]*

I mean, it's not James Bond. It's—it's some—it's a guy where he's like, "I've got an infection in my hand!" and she's like "I love it. I love you."

*[Ben laughs.]*

00:20:11 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** "Infected man."

**Adam:** Donna Reed is beautiful in this movie.

00:20:13 Adam Host She's beautiful wearing a hat. She's beautiful wearing a jumpsuit.

*[Ben responds affirmatively as Adam speaks.]*

Like, it doesn't matter. She's great.

00:20:19 Ben Host Jumpsuit and a string of pearls?

00:20:21 Clip Clip **Murdock (*Rambo: First Blood Part II*):** That's a hell of a combination.

00:20:22 Ben Host Total snack!

00:20:23 Adam Host *[John and Ben laugh as Adam speaks.]*

Yeah, I didn't know that was my thing until this movie, but it's definitely jumpsuit and string of pearls.

00:20:28 John Host Jumpsuit and string of pearls. She takes that one second to turn and primp in the mirror in front of everyone, like, "Hang on. Before I'm introduced, will you give me just a second?"

She takes her hat off. She gives—

00:20:39 Ben Host "Run a comb through my hair."

00:20:40 John Host Yeah. And then turns around—puts the string of pearls on and then turns around and is like, "Nice to meet you!"

00:20:45 Adam Host John Ford is like, "How are we gonna make the viewing audience believe that, uh, Donna Reed's beautiful and everyone should fall in love with her?"

*[Ben laughs.]*

Like, "Can we have everyone fall in love with her? Everyone in the movie!"

Yes. We can.

00:20:58 John Host

Yeah.

*[Ben is still laughing.]*

00:20:58 Adam Host

It's insane.

00:21:00 Ben Host

Yeah. That's—that scene ends with them all just being like, "Hey! Uh, thank you so much for just being around me for a little while."

*[Laughs.]*

00:21:06 John Host

*[Laughs.]* "That was really wonderful, just to—"

00:21:08 Ben Host

"I'm gonna—I'm gonna crank it about this for the rest of my life. No joke."

00:21:13 Adam Host

That was a crucial—like, a lot of that is—is laughable, up until the point where dinner's over and Donna Reed gets up from the table, and after meeting all of these guys, is struck with the realization that they're all gonna die.

Like, "I don't wanna meet the people who I'm gonna have to perform surgery on later."

And I thought that was heavy duty.

00:21:31 John Host

Yeah.

00:21:32 Adam Host

In a film like this, which really didn't telegraph, uh, that kinda pathos early on. It seemed like a very man vs. man kind of conflict up until that point, but when she expressed that feeling, I was—I was really wounded by it! It was great.

*[Ben responds affirmatively as Adam continues.]*

And that she did it with her back turned, too! Like, she didn't get the movie star turn into the light with tears rolling down her cheeks. Like, she almost played that totally, uh, away from the camera.

00:21:59 John Host

Yeah! It made me think that same thing, right? Of all the people—you get a feeling in a movie like this, where you've got a bunch of Navy guys all standing in an office, and somebody comes in and says, "We're at war!"

00:22:11 Ben Host

Right.

00:22:12 John Host

And all the actors make kind of, like, concerned face? But you know these are the war makers who have trained their lives to make war, and now they're at war!

Like, they're—if they are making concerned face, it is only because they are duty-bound to not jump in the air and go, "Yes! Yes! We're at war!"

*[Ben laughs.]*

"I'm a fucking sailor and we're gonna fight! Yes!"

00:22:36 Adam Host The only guy who deserved concern face and didn't get it was Doc, and we needed five more minutes of him going, "Sooo, do I... uh... gooo... report? I mean, am I retired?"

*[Ben laughs.]*

00:22:48 John Host Right, right!

00:22:49 Adam Host Like, uh, "Do I keep drinking?" *[Laughs.]*

00:22:52 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** Yeah, they had—they had like—they were at Doc's retirement party—

**Adam:** Doc's retirement party is so confusing!

**John:** Yeah.

00:22:55 Adam Host And then Doc shows up later, like, at work.

00:22:58 John Host Yeah.

00:22:59 Adam Host I guess he rescinded his—

00:23:00 John Host Well no, you don't get to retire if you're—if—

00:23:02 Adam Host Yeah!

00:23:03 John Host —war starts!

00:23:04 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Adam:** Yeah! That's it!

**John:** It's like, "Sorry, Doc."

**Ben:** They stop-loss you.

*[John laughs.]*

00:23:05 Adam Host So it was understood.

00:23:06 John Host Yeah.

00:23:07 Adam Host That—that that was his deal.

00:23:08 John Host Yeah. "Here's your hat. Get—get back to work."

00:23:10 Adam Host Doc was grizzled.

00:23:11 Ben Host There's also all that stuff about how John Wayne's character wants to—wants to transfer to a destroyer, and then—and he's, like, working on the—on the letter that he's gonna use to get that transfer when—when the war breaks out, and like, crumples it up and throws it off camera.

00:23:28 John Host Yeah, he doesn't crumple it up 'cause he's like, "I'm—I'm into PT boats now!"

He's like, "Well, that—so much for that plan."

00:23:34 Adam Host Yeah.

00:23:35 Ben Host Yeah, "I'm not abandoning these guys in—in a situation like this."

00:23:39 John Host Right.

But yeah, back to that Donna Reed scene. The idea that—that of everybody in the field of combat, that scene where the—where the doctor is working on somebody's abdomen and they wheel him off and they wheel another dude in—

00:23:52 Adam Host That assembly line surgery was so amazing.

00:23:54 John Host And it's just—it's basically, we're—we're meant to understand there's one doctor, two nurses, and 250 casualties coming in.

00:24:01 Adam Host And even the hospital itself is like a factory, right? With its tunnel configuration?

00:24:05 John Host Right.

00:24:06 Adam Host You can just sort of see—you could see it in your mind, how this works.

00:24:10 John Host I mean, I went to a—uh, I went to a military base, uh—a forward operating base in Africa when I was on that tour.

00:24:16 Adam Host Mm-hm.

00:24:17 John Host And there was a full, combat-ready hospital there. And there were surgeons and anesthesiologists and nurses, and they had—they had room for 10 people to be operated on at once.

And they were actually sitting in a chair, throwing playing cards at a hat.

*[Ben laughs quietly.]*

00:24:35 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** I'd never actual—I'd never seen anyone do that in real life!

**Adam:** Wow.

00:24:38 John Host Throw playing cards at a hat! But here they were. And so we're standing there, kinda meeting them, and I was like, "Have you ever used this as a hospital?"

And they were like, "Nope. But it's here. In case we need it."

00:24:47 Ben Host Wow.

00:24:48 John Host And the day that something goes down, the day that a bomb goes off at a U.S. embassy in Naimi, uh, this is where American people are gonna get brought.

From anywhere in Africa, basically, they're gonna get air-lifted here.

00:25:03 Adam Host They're gonna be putting bullets in that hat.

00:25:04 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[Metallic clattering.]*

00:25:05 John Host "And so—so here we are! Throwing cards in this hat! But every day we wake up and—and we polish our spoons or whatever."

I don't know. I—Donna Reed's, like, emotion—it did feel real. It just made me think.

00:25:19 Adam Host Did it feel like they were definitely going to pay off that relationship at some point? I was shocked that—

00:25:25 John Host They never kiss!

00:25:26 Adam Host That it just—that it—yeah! It reached the point of pre-kiss, and then...

00:25:31 Ben Host You can still get pregnant from pre-kiss, though.

00:25:33 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Adam:** Right.

**John:** Back then you could.

**Ben:** Yeah.

*[John and Ben laugh.]*

00:25:36 Adam Host By the time the film ended, I was like, "You—you forgot about Donna Reed!"

00:25:40 John Host She never reappears!

00:25:41 Adam Host No!

00:25:42 Ben Host *[Adam responds in agreement as Ben speaks.]*

Well, that's another, like, amazing moment of pathos, though, when they're getting on the plane and they realize that, like, any number of things could have happened to her, up to and including she is a prisoner of the Imperial Japanese Army.

00:25:55 John Host Right. Nothing good happened.

00:25:56 Adam Host It was a sophisticated, uh, amount of restraint not to tie it up nicely and instead leave it that way.

00:26:03 John Host Yeah. Like a last gut punch.

00:26:05 Adam Host Yeah.

*[Ben responds affirmatively as Adam speaks.]*

Boy. And that whole lottery for the—for the seat on the plane, and then to be the guy who thinks he's gonna get on the plane because two no-shows happened, and then to be pulled off the plane.

They're—like, that last ten minutes of the film was full of like, four sucker punches.

00:26:23 John Host Well, and crazy—like, that was a—an Army major and a—and a captain.

00:26:28 Adam Host Yeah.

00:26:29 John Host And they got pulled off for these two 21-year-old ensigns.

00:26:32 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Adam:** Oof.

**John:** And—and—

**Adam:** That's the worst, right?

00:26:34 John Host But you know, they're in front of everybody, so they have to be like, "Okay, well, good luck out there! You know, I'm going back to my certain death!"

00:26:42 Adam Host And they did everything they could to dope-ify that one ensign, too.



00:26:49	John	Host	Like—like, "drinking dishwater" ensign. Like— Yeah.  <i>[Ben laughs.]</i>  Yeah.
00:26:51	Adam	Host	That guy was an <u>idiot</u> .
00:26:52	John	Host	Dishwater Ensign, that's a—
00:26:53	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	<b>John:</b> That's a good call sign.  <b>Adam:</b> That's my call sign. Yeah.  <b>John:</b> <i>[Laughing]</i> Yeah.  <i>[All three laugh.]</i>
00:26:58	Adam	Host	That's fair.
00:26:59	Music	Crosstalk	A short clip of "War."  <i>War!</i>
00:27:00	Promo	Clip	<i>[Upbeat, poppy music plays in the background.]</i>  <b>Sean David Johnson:</b> Unless you binge-watch TV at least 80 hours a week, <i>Inside Pop</i> is definitely not for you.  <b>Amita Patel:</b> Sean, that's a little extreme, and also not quite true.  <b>Sean:</b> Okay, Amita. How about, " <i>Inside Pop</i> is the podcast for people who love and appreciate the best pop culture has to offer"?
00:27:19	Promo	Clip	<b>Amita:</b> Oh, much better.  <b>Sean:</b> In every episode, we interview the people who create the culture you crave.  <b>Amita:</b> Past interviews include the showrunner of Ava DuVernay's <i>Queen Sugar</i> , and <i>Mudbound</i> director Dee Rees.  <b>Sean:</b> You'll also get the very best pop culture recommendations in our Big Sell segment.  <b>Amita:</b> Plus the opinions of two TV producers who are pop culture obsessives and actually <u>do</u> binge 80 hours of TV a week.  <b>Sean:</b> <i>[Exhausted]</i> Eyeballs... so tired...  <b>Amita:</b> <i>[Laughs.]</i> Listen to <i>Inside Pop</i> every other Wednesday on the Maximum Fun podcast network.  <i>[Music ends on a cymbal crash.]</i>
00:27:45	Promo	Clip	<i>[Music.]</i>  <b>Benjamin Partridge:</b> If you're looking for a new comedy podcast,

why not try *The Beef And Dairy Network*? It won Best Comedy at the British Podcast Awards in 2017 and 2018. Also, I—

*[Audio suddenly slows and cuts off.]*

**Speaker 1:** There were no horses in this country until the mid to late sixties.

**Speaker 2:** Specialist Bovine Arsefat—

**Speaker 3:** Both of his eyes are squids' eyes.

**Speaker 4:** Yogurt buffet.

**Speaker 5:** She was married to a bacon farmer who saved her life.

**Speaker 6:** Farm-raised snow leopard.

*[Strange electronic audio.]*

*[Beginning audio returns.]*

**Benjamin:** Download it today. That's the *Beef And Dairy Network* podcast, from [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org). Also, maybe start at episode one. Or weirdly, episode thirty-six, which for some reason requires no knowledge of the rest of the show.

00:28:04 Promo Clip

00:28:25 Music Transition

A short clip from "War."

*Huh!*

*Yeah!*

00:28:27 Ben Host

Talking about pathos, uh, I also really respected, uh, Robert Montgomery's, uh, choices in the scene where he's told by the admiral that he's essentially going to be the head of Message Boy Squadron.

00:28:42 Adam Host

Yeah.

00:28:43 Ben Host

At the beginning of the conflict.

Like, he's in that office with a tear just, like, parked on the edge of his eyelid for the entire scene.

00:28:52 John Host

In crazy half shadow. I mean, that was a—that was drama.

00:28:56 Ben Host

How do you do that?! *[Laughs.]*

*[Ben responds affirmatively as John speaks.]*

00:28:57 John Host

Well, and what's crazy is I waited in that scene for any one of a thousand movie tropes.

For him to say, you know, "Sir, you've gotta let us fight!" Or to—in some way to push back.

00:29:10 Ben Host

Well, and they make the case that like, they could have gone and like, taken out some boats then that would have maybe slowed or changed how the Japanese had to prosecute their assault.

And I think that maybe plays into what you were saying about MacArthur not having necessarily a great plan.

00:29:26 John Host Right. But he—he plays that so—*[sighs]*. I mean, it's so dramatic and then he doesn't—he's just like, "Yes, sir. Thank you for explaining that."

And you just go—augh, it was—it was harder to watch than square-shouldered conflicts between a—between an underling and his exec?

00:29:45 Ben Host Yeah. There's—there's never insubordination. Like—like, people get tempted by insubordination a million times, but never actually follow through with it.

00:29:54 John Host Right. John Wayne kicks a paint can at one point.

00:29:56 Adam Host *[Ben responds affirmatively as Adam speaks.]*

But everyone understands, like, the rules of what qualifies as, uh, insubordination. Like, there's that scene where they—they sarcastically call each other sir.

*[John responds affirmatively as Adam speaks.]*

They overuse the word "sir" quite a bit.

00:30:09 John Host Right.

*[Ben laughs.]*

00:30:10 Adam Host So they're—they're like, referring to the chain of command with incredulity at times, but at no point does anyone step out of their lane into actual insubordination.

00:30:20 John Host At the very end, when, uh—when Brickley and John Wayne's character are—are given that ticket out and they're with their men and they can't bring their men, the chief petty officer or whatever says, "Well, you know, at this point, I'm just gonna call you guys by your first names.

00:30:39 Clip Clip **Speaker:** Rusty.

00:30:40 John Host Uh, and that was like, the one moment where somebody said, "You know what? Uh, I'm not gonna call you Lieutenant right now."  
*[Laughs.]*

00:30:47 Adam Host "If you're not gonna use my rank, I'm gonna call you Mick."  
*[John and Ben laugh.]*

*[Laughing]* Which is what John Wayne does in that scene.

00:30:53 John Host *[Laughing]* Right! "You big dumb Mick!"  
*[Adam laughs.]*

00:30:56 Ben Host Yeah.

00:30:57 John Host It's that last little fraternal moment, where it's like, "Well... If you're leaving us here to die, I think I'm gonna, like, not salute you one last time."

00:31:05 Adam Host Interesting punctuations of, like, fraternal love shown between soldiers in this film. That's one of the scenes. Uh, the way everyone reacts to MacArthur is another one.

Moments that I don't think you could do now, without some snickering from the audience.

00:31:23 John Host There are a couple of—there are a couple of really crazy, uh, homoerotic moments.

00:31:29 Adam Host Yeah.

00:31:30 John Host The nuttiest one, I think Brickley says to the—to the assembled enlisted men, like, "I'm gonna need you older—you older crusty guys," and it takes a shot of the—of Doc and the two other enlisted guys who are like 55 and look like pirates, basically.

00:31:48 Adam Host Yeah! *[Laughs.]* Yeah.

00:31:49 John Host *[Stifling laughter]* And then he says, "I'm gonna need you to take care of the younger guys."

And then there's a close-up shot of that little milk-fed—he's about five feet tall.

00:31:58 Adam Host He's like, 11!

00:31:59 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Adam:** What is he doing there?

**John:** *[Stifling laughter]* He's 11 years old.

00:32:01 John Host His skin is just—even in black and white, you can see the pink porcelain beauty of him.

And he looks over at the pirates with this big look, and it's such a "daddy," "baby" little moment.

Like a—it basically—it basically—it has Greek overtones of like, "Will you take care of me?" And the—

00:32:20 Adam Host Right.

00:32:21 John Host The three pirates just like, *[gruffly]* "We'll take care of you."

00:32:23 Adam Host Yeah.

00:32:24 John Host It was—I mean, I had to turn the movie off and go take a walk.

*[Adam laughs.]*

I had to put a cold compress on the back of my neck.

*[Adam keeps laughing.]*

00:32:31 Clip Clip **Speaker 1:** You got wet clothes on underneath that blanket?

**Speaker 2:** No, sir. Just scared. *[Laughs lightly.]*

00:32:35 Adam Host That—that's why you keep forcing glasses of milk onto me when I come over to record, right?

*[John and Ben laugh.]*

00:32:39 John Host *[Cheerfully]* "Sure you don't want a tall glass of milk, Adam?"

*[Adam laughs.]*

00:32:42 Ben Host Speaking of daddies, was the guy that they called Dad supposed to be Brickley's actual father, or—

00:32:47 John Host No.

00:32:48 Ben Host —was he just a guy that they call Dad? *[Laughs lightly.]*

00:32:50 Adam Host *[Sighing]* Oh, he was such a great character.

00:32:52 John Host He's just one of those—one of those Americans that populated the kind of Philippine archipelago with little start-ups.

*[Laughs.]*

You know? He had a little boat yard that he'd been working on since—

00:33:04 Adam Host He's the guy that retires to Mexico today!

00:33:06 John Host Right.

00:33:07 Adam Host Like, just the guy that moves overseas to—to live out the rest of his days. He seemed like a Hollywood actor out of time.

00:33:14 John Host *[Adam responds affirmatively as John speaks.]*

And—and I think he was a silent era actor that played cowboys.

00:33:17 Adam Host Yeah.

00:33:18 John Host That—that became like, a *Grapes of Wrath*—style actor later.

00:33:22 Adam Host Just a great bit part.

00:33:24 John Host Yeah.

00:33:25 Adam Host The pride that a character like that has in being useful in a time of crisis is the best. Like, this is, uh—this is the Mexican guy in *Terminator 2*. Right?

Like, you wanna be the safe harbor in a conflict. And that's him.

00:33:39 John Host Right.

00:33:40 Adam Host Like, finally. Like, "My—my—my dock—my marina is useful!"

00:33:44 John Host *[Laughing]* Yeah.

00:33:45 Adam Host "I get to be a productive member of society! I thought I was here to drink and retire and die!"

00:33:50 Ben Host He's also, uh, a bit like the missionary couple in, uh—in *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo*, where he's—he's definitely doomed, and is sort of—is sort of resigned to that in a way that doesn't bum you out?

*[Laughs.]*

00:34:05 John Host Right. He does the "Harry Truman on the slopes of—of Mount St. Helens" thing.

00:34:11 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** That's a little bit of an obscure reference.

**Ben:** Yeah.

00:34:12 John Host *[Adam responds affirmatively as John speaks.]*

But—but, uh, he's like, "I've lived here—I've lived here my whole life, and if the mountain—"

00:34:17 Adam Host He's *Dante's Peaking*.

00:34:18 John Host Yeah. *[Laughing]* "If the mountain goes, I'm going with it."

*[Ben laughs.]*

00:34:22 Ben Host There's a lot of doomed people in this movie! Like...

00:34:24 Adam Host Yeah.

00:34:25 Ben Host So many of the people in this movie are doomed. And—

00:34:28 Adam Host And you don't see them die. Right?

00:34:29 John Host Right.

00:34:30 Ben Host Like, sending half your squad to Bataan means they're dying—they're gonna die, right?

00:34:36 Adam Host Yeah.

00:34:37 John Host Or they're—they're—they're going on this forced march, which everyone recognizes—

00:34:41 Ben Host They're gonna have a bad time? *[Laughs.]*

00:34:42 John Host Yeah. It's like a—it's like one of the major atrocities that was recognized during the course of the war. Everybody in America knew what the Bataan Death March was, 'cause it was a—you know, it was a scandal.

I mean, *[laughs]* more than a scandal. *[Laughs.]*

00:34:56 Ben Host Does not seem to be condemning any of the choices that were made around that.

00:35:00 John Host On the American side?

00:35:02 Ben Host Yeah.

00:35:03 John Host I mean, I think—I think we see so much frustration in everyone—we're getting our asses handed to us throughout this film.

And the only—the only moments that we see any getback *[laughing]* are the couple of times when they—when they torpedo a destroyer, which goes up—where the torpedo ends up right in the magazine, and the magazine happened to be filled with jellied gasoline.

00:35:26 Ben Host *[Laughs.]* Yeah.

00:35:27 John Host Uh... Other than that, every other scene, we're losing!

*[Adam responds affirmatively as John speaks.]*

We're getting—I mean, the Japanese are right over the horizon, we hear their guns.

00:35:35 Adam Host Every meeting after the first meeting is just made in a—in a room full of rubble.

00:35:39 John Host Right. So—

00:35:42 Adam Host And the boats are breaking down constantly. Like, it's not a great PT boat commercial. If we're being honest.

*[Ben laughs quietly.]*

Like...

00:35:49 Ben Host Yeah.

00:35:50 Adam Host The coral wrecked that one boat. We aren't really sure how. We don't get a straight story out of that guy.

*[Ben responds affirmatively to the above as John speaks.]*

00:35:55 John Host But one of the coolest things is that they—there—there are two different times when four boats go out, and three boats come back.

00:36:00 Adam Host Yeah!

00:36:01 John Host And we don't see what happened!

00:36:02 Adam Host Yeah.

00:36:03 John Host *[Ben responds affirmatively as John speaks.]*

It's like, "What ever happened to the other boat?"

"Oh! They were there in the middle of the night. I don't know where they ended up."

00:36:08 Ben Host I—I was really surprised as—as the boats started to break down, to see that they were made out of wood.

I—I—you know, I've seen PT boats in a couple of movies now, and I imagined that their hulls were steel. But they're—they appear to be, like, plywood in this movie.

00:36:21 John Host Yeah. They're wood. And, um—and that was, I think, a key to their success. They were cheap to make, and they were, uh, buoyant and relatively lightweight.

I think they tried to make a PT boat out of steel, and it couldn't take the damage.

*[Ben makes a sound of acknowledgment and then responds affirmatively as John continues.]*

But they're hard to maintain. Like, the steel boat couldn't get the same sort of—I mean, they're just incredibly fast! They're like, going 50 knots!

00:36:46 Adam Host *[Ben responds affirmatively as Adam speaks.]*

When you fire a torpedo out of a PT boat, you have to do it while turning, right, because the tubes are walleys? Isn't that part of the whole deal?

00:36:54 John Host Yeah. You have to turn and face the—like, aim your tube.

00:36:58 Adam Host Yeah.

00:36:59 John Host The tube doesn't aim.

00:37:00 Adam Host No.

00:37:01 John Host The boat aims.

*[Ben laughs.]*

00:37:02 Adam Host Right. Yeah.

00:37:03 Ben Host Yeah.

00:37:04 Adam Host The—the boat is the turret.

00:37:05 John Host Yeah.

00:37:06 Ben Host And they talk about like, when they've got one up in dry dock, that they—to like, get it back to service condition, they need to like, soak the hull for 24 hours.

00:37:14 Adam Host Yeah, "Soak it on the way," that one guy says.

00:37:16 John Host *[Laughing]* Yeah, he was like—

00:37:17 Adam Host I like how that guy's thinking.

00:37:18 John Host *[Laughing]* That's right.

00:37:19 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Ben:** Yeah!

**John:** "It'll—it'll soak—"

**Adam:** "There's water all around us!"

**Ben:** "It's gonna be in the water!"

*[All three laugh.]*

00:37:23 Adam Host "What, you wanna—you wanna soak it in Dad Knowland's whiskey?"

*[Ben laughs.]*

Do you think that's his real name, or did he ask to be called Dad?

00:37:32 John Host I don't know. Can I ask to be called Dad?

00:37:34 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Adam:** I—

**John:** Every time I've done it—

**Adam:** I'm not gonna call you Dad, no matter how many times you ask.

**Ben:** Yeah.

00:37:38 John Host Every time I've asked to be called Dad, I just get, like, eye rolls.

*[Adam laughs.]*

00:37:42 Ben Host Is Donna Reed his daughter, and John Wayne asked for her hand in marriage, and he said, "Sure thing, kid. Call me Dad"? Just like, a headcanon there, but—*[laughs]*.

*[Beat, and then John and Adam laugh as Ben speaks.]*



00:37:59 Clip Clip I'm just trying to come up with a reason to call that guy Dad, okay?

00:38:02 Adam Host **Speaker 1:** Reminds me. How about a little snort?  
Weird movie with what it doesn't show, right?

All those boats lost. The—the death march unseen. The *Mogami*-class cruiser was brought up as a, like, "You're never gonna believe the size of this thing!"

00:38:16 John Host I mean—  
*[Adam responds affirmatively as John speaks.]*

00:38:20 Adam Host We only see it in the dark. Well, here's one thing we never see: a single Japanese person.

00:38:21 John Host Right.

Um, although there is a moment, I think, when the—when we hear the declaration of war, and they're in a Manila officers' club.

There's one woman in that scene, and it's a crazy—the way that scene is shot, where there's—there are conversations happening in the foreground, and our attention is directed to the middle-ground or the background.

00:38:45 Adam Host Yeah.

00:38:45 John Host *[Ben responds affirmatively as John speaks.]*

I mean, there are a couple of compositions that really struck me.

Uh, but there's one woman whose reaction to the announcement made it seem like maybe she was Japanese. But other than that, every other—every Asian person we meet is Filipino.

00:39:00 Adam Host Was that the same woman who was on the dock when that PT boat was stocked with injured soldiers and about to leave, and she's like resting on the piling and—and—and super bummed out, and then that guy on the boat tells her to get the fuck off the dock?

00:39:15 John Host No. So—so I—I don't think so. The—a big part of our military force in the Philippines was the Philippine Army.

00:39:23 Adam Host Mm-hm.

00:39:24 John Host That was commanded by MacArthur, and before the war, trained by MacArthur.

So there was a lot of, um—I think there was a lot of love for MacArthur within the Philippines, 'cause he'd been there since the thirties.

*[Adam responds in agreement as John continues.]*

Uh, and so I got the sense that that—that she was meant to be a kind of stand-in for all the, uh, Philippine civilians that had sons that were part of the war effort.

I mean, it—it felt just like a moment that we were meant to register the Philippine contribution to all these—we didn't see a—we didn't see a ton of soldiers.

00:40:01 Ben Host None of them had speaking parts, but you did see some Filipino guys that seemed to be part of the—of the crew.

00:40:09 John Host Yep.

00:40:10 Ben Host So they were like, semi-integrated. Which is interesting.

00:40:13 Adam Host Yeah, but unfortunately like, a lot of chefs and bartenders, too. You get that mix.

00:40:18 Ben Host Yeah.

00:40:19 John Host Chefs and bartenders.

00:40:20 Adam Host I was impressed at the degree to which you see, uh, anti-Japanese sentiment from the Philippine people who are on the ground over there.

Like, the guy who's forced to keep his bar open, who is freaking out about—

00:40:37 John Host He's really freaking.

00:40:38 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Adam:** About, quote, "the J-ps" coming for his bar.

**John:** Yeah. "They're coming, they're coming, they're coming."

00:40:42 Adam Host Yeah.

00:40:43 John Host And the—the sailors are just like, "Yeah, we just buried two of our dudes and all we want is a beer, so... We're not really interested in your panic right now."

00:40:51 Adam Host Yeah. And—

00:40:52 John Host But I mean, I sympathize with that guy! 'Cause he's like, "My—my daughters, my kids," like, "Let us out of here!"

00:40:57 Adam Host That guy also knows that the presence of American troops is not gonna keep him safe.

00:41:02 John Host That's right.

What I didn't understand is—hey. All you're leaving behind here is a basket of beers. Like, you can still get out of here! Your bar's not gonna make it.

*[Ben and Adam laugh.]*

You know what I mean? Like—

00:41:12 Adam Host What about the lost tips?!

*[John laughs.]*

00:41:14 Ben Host Yeah, you don't have to stand in the background polishing a glass.  
*[Laughs.]*

00:41:17 John Host *[Laughing]* Yeah, right!

Like, all this is burning to the ground, and you—later on you're gonna

regret the 20 minutes you spent—

00:41:23 Adam Host I—

00:41:24 John Host —here for a dollar.

00:41:25 Adam Host I love, like, the—the, uh, the unit moves around several times. I think they move around three times, but everywhere they land, they always—there's always a cantina.

00:41:32 John Host Yeah.

00:41:33 Adam Host Either, like, they build one—

*[John laughs quietly]*

—or there's an officers' club that they make into a structure that's already there. There's always a place to relax.

00:41:40 John Host I had never heard—or seen depicted—this kind of situation where the Navy starts running out of boats.

And so the sailors that are sorta standing around boatless cons—

00:41:54 Adam Host Yeah, you get to join the Army. *[Laughs.]*

00:41:55 John Host Yeah, get conscripted into the Army, where it's like, "Alright, here's a gun!"

Like, you're not just—there's no boat for you!

00:42:01 Ben Host "I know you didn't train for this."

00:42:02 John Host Yeah.

00:42:03 Ben Host Like, that—like, they make a point that like, these guys wouldn't know anything about this kind of combat!

00:42:07 John Host Right.

00:42:08 Adam Host "I'm supposed to, like, put one foot in front of... in front of the other?"

00:42:11 John Host Yeah. I mean, the—all those marching scenes, where it's like, "Left face!"

00:42:14 Adam Host *[Laughing]* Yeah!

00:42:15 John Host And the sailors are all like, "Alright."

*[Adam agrees emphatically as John continues.]*

But yeah, other—if they can't swim to the next locale, like, get a gun and defend the—defend your hole!

00:42:25 Adam Host Brutal. And you really register the disappointment on their faces there.

Like, there's the—there's the double hit of you've lost your boat, and also you're do a—you're doing a job you're untrained for, and you're conscripted into being in a part of the military that, if it were your choice, you would be there!

00:42:43 John Host Right.

00:42:44 Adam Host It wasn't your first choice.

00:42:45 John Host I think it's hard—or not hard, but like—for us now—you can be in combat in Afghanistan and 15 hours later be in, uh, Frankfurt.

*[Ben or Adam responds affirmatively as John continues.]*

In a military hospital, eating macaroni and cheese.

Right? Like, there is no place on the globe right now that you can't be—if you're an American soldier—that you can't be rescued from and be back in the States, uh, within, you know, a—a single cycle.

00:43:19 Adam Host Right.

00:43:20 John Host And the idea in this movie that not only is there no rescue, but, uh, you got no chance.

00:43:26 Adam Host There are not enough planes.

00:43:28 John Host Right. We—

00:43:29 Adam Host To evacuate.

00:43:30 John Host We can't even air drop you some macaroni and cheese.

00:43:32 Adam Host Yeah.

00:43:33 John Host You're basically—you're eating cockroaches until—until you're buried in a hole.

And everybody takes it! Everybody takes it with a kind of, like, cheerful resignation.

00:43:42 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Adam:** Right?!

**John:** Because—

**Ben:** Yeah...

00:43:44 John Host It's part of just the expectation, part of the military discipline, but also part of the time.

In 1940—

00:43:49 Ben Host Yeah. They don't have anything to compare this to.

00:43:52 John Host Right! Most people even back in Iowa are like, "I'm one—I'm one finger infection away from dying of sepsis at any moment."

00:44:02 Ben Host "If one plane comes, we can take 30. If two planes come, we can take 60. But if one plane comes, that's fucking amazing." *[Laughs.]*

00:44:09 John Host Right! I mean, can you imagine? "If two planes come."

And then the one comes, and it's like, "...Yeah, there's not gonna be another."

*[Ben responds affirmatively as John speaks.]*

There's not even any hope. Nobody's sitting there like, "Well, I'll just stick around the airport because maybe that second plane..."

00:44:22 Ben Host "I—check my Delta app and see if I can switch onto a different flight tomorrow."

00:44:26 John Host Yeah.

00:44:27 Clip Clip **Speaker:** Soup, biscuits, jam.

[Dishes clank.]

00:44:29 Adam Host Tonally, like, wouldn't a loss of hope be... welcome, in a story like this?

I think it's interesting when we scrutinize the lack of insubordination, early on in the film when there's probably cause for a little bit of that—that when things are at their most bleak...

Like, the major—the major stressor for the troops is they're wanting to fight and not being able to.

And when shit is at its worst, when people are being taken off of a plane that they thought they could be evacuated on, there's no complaining about that. There's no crestfallen moment there.

00:45:06 John Host Well, think about—uh, think about the tank crew in *Lebanon*, where from the very beginning of that movie, we see rank insubordination, and the feeling we had living in the world of *Lebanon* for the length of that movie, where you never felt comfortable or good for a single second.

00:45:26 Adam Host Yeah.

00:45:27 John Host And a big part of that was that the crew had no unity. No sense of purpose. No one had any morale of any kind.

00:45:36 Adam Host No tanks had bathrooms.

00:45:38 Ben Host They didn't seem to believe in the cause or even know what the cause was.

00:45:41 John Host Right! Or know where they were.

00:45:42 Adam Host Yeah.

00:45:43 John Host And then you—you—you know, you compare it to this, the attitude of kind of selflessness, but also—when John Wayne is kind of giving a homily to those two dead soldiers—those two dead sailors, rather, and he says:

"They—" you know, "they were just a couple of bluejackets doing their job, and they did it well."

00:46:01 Ben Host Yeah.

00:46:02 John Host And he's presiding over these two dead bodies, and saying a thing that we in our era of—of total individuation kind of—it registers almost as an insult.

Like, "There's nothing special about these two guys. They're just two random bluejackets that did their job."

But in the context of the time, it was meant as—if not a compliment, then certainly it wasn't a diss.

And I think it's because this was an era where—where people didn't

have that sense of, like, "I'm special."

It's like, "Nope! You got to be this old, and then you died."

00:46:38 Adam Host Yeah. That's—[sighs]. That's weird. Like, that relationship between grief and individuality and—and your permission to feel that.

00:46:52 John Host Like, these—these soldiers are stripped of everything throughout this film, until finally they're stripped of their boats, even.

00:46:55 Adam Host Right.

00:46:56 John Host I mean, you're—you only matter to your friends.

00:47:06 Adam Host Yeah.

00:47:12 Ben Host And there's never a suggestion that you matter to anyone else except the US Navy, who thinks of you as a body. Right?

00:47:14 John Host I mean, some—somebody's gonna take your boots, basically.

00:47:17 Adam Host Yeah! There's a scene where, uh, John Wayne wears a—a pair of boots around his neck, and he's wearing boots on his feet?

00:47:18 John Host He's a rich man!

00:47:19 Adam Host He was trying to keep his boots dry and maybe what he had on his feet were some kind of—

00:47:20 John Host They had treads on 'em!

00:47:23 Adam Host Did they?

00:47:24 John Host Yeah!

00:47:26 Clip Host He's got two pairs of boots, water boots and land boots?

00:47:29 Ben Host Guess so!

Clip **Speaker:** And watch out for the coral.

[Splashing.]

00:47:29 Ben Host I wanted to talk a little bit about when this movie was released. 'Cause it came out kind of right at the end of 1945, and I guess didn't do very well at the box office, because the war was over and people were kinda exhausted by war stories.

I wonder what it would have meant to an audience being released during a—a war that was ongoing, and really dragging at that point? Like, a movie with this many kind of sustained defeats.

Like, in some ways it's kind of aspirational about how everybody deals with defeat being a routine part of being at war. Like, they have little victories, too, but like, they're—they are quite able to just, you know, continue the project without losing—losing hope, or losing gumption.

And I guess that's, uh, that's an interesting kind of story for a filmmaker to set out to tell during a war, and that—and I think that they thought that the war would still be on when the movie came out.

00:48:32 Adam Host Yeah, do you feel sad that the war's over, [*stifling laughter*] if you're in production on this thing?

[*Ben laughs.*]

What a weird confluence of feelings.

00:48:39 Ben Host Yeah.

00:48:40 John Host There's a weird revisionism that has happened in very recent years, um, in World War II scholarship, to think that the outcome of the war was inevitable before it even started.

The Germans could never have won, and the Japanese could never have won. Because of supply, because of availability of gasoline, and manufacturing base that would enable them to keep pace with the United States and our, you know, impossible engine of manufacturing.

And so there's a kind of, um, erasure of the consequences, or the—the threat of... losing the war! That I think during the war, people felt acutely from the beginning. And it's what made winning the war seem like such a massive, impossible victory.

And these scenes, you know, halfway through, where—Mid—the Battle of Midway being a great example of, like, we pulled this off. And it was the thing that turned the tide.

00:49:52 John Host And what modern historians are trying to do is say, "Ah, even if we'd lost Midway, even if we'd lost every battle, we would have just worn them down, because they just couldn't keep making aircraft carriers like we could."

00:50:08 Adam Host It's weird that this film doesn't have a turning point. Its turning point is a quote.

00:50:12 John Host Yeah, its—

00:50:13 Adam Host At the end of the film.

00:50:14 John Host Its turning point is two years in the future.

00:50:16 Adam Host Yeah!

00:50:17 John Host Right? Or, I mean, [*hesitantly*] Midway has happened? By the—by this point, but it still isn't clear—

If you think about ninet—or the—the winter of '42, the Japanese Army and Navy were invincible, pretty much!

You know, they were—they had captured the entire South Pacific. An impossible amount of area and people.

00:50:39 Adam Host Yeah.

00:50:40 John Host It didn't—and they had—you know, they had access to China, which had plenty of natural resources.

So I think in the context of this movie, the idea that it was fore-ordained that America would win was still not at all how people thought of it.

I mean, I didn't—I—I still thought of World War II as an incredible American success story until I was in my 20s, and started to realize that the Russians had lost 15,000,000 people *[laughs]* in—in prosecuting the war, compared to our couple hundred thousand.

00:51:18 Ben Host

Yeah.

00:51:19 Adam Host

That's the core of what our show is about! Like, how these films reflect a—a country's idea of itself. And how that comes into conflict with what we learned in school.

And how that comes in conflict with the actual reality.

00:51:34 John Host

But a lot of the war movies of—of the late forties and early fifties, they don't pull punches, right? They're not just patriotism movies.

But you're right, Ben. Maybe this was like—I don't know, too much of a downer; there's not enough dancing.

00:51:49 Ben Host

The resolve that the characters have in—in the face of a string of defeats is the thing that this film is trying to get across, is like, you know, you just keep working at it.

And in a "we nuked Japan *[laughs]* and the war is over" world, you don't—like, people didn't need that message, maybe.

00:52:10 John Host

Well, and—and what the movie doesn't show is that Bulkeley, or Brickley, ends up winning the Medal of Honor.

00:52:17 Ben Host

Yeah.

00:52:18 John Host

Uh, for his actions throughout the theater. Everybody—we do see that—

00:52:23 Ben Host

How many Medal of Honor winners have we seen in—in movies that they didn't actually make a big deal out of that? *[Laughs.]*

00:52:28 John Host

Right. They never even show him—they never even imply that he won it.

*[Ben replies in agreement as John speaks.]*

There's no title card at the end.

*[Ben laughs.]*

But he became one of the most decorated men in the Navy! Everybody on the boat—and we see that great scene where the ensign walks around and is like, "We all won the Silver Star!" and nobody gives a shit.

00:52:45 Crosstalk Crosstalk

**Ben:** Yeah.

**John:** Because we're—we're way past the point of caring about our Navy careers at that point.

**Adam:** Yeah! The film and everyone in it is totally disinterested in the idea of reward.

00:52:54 John Host

Yeah. Just, like, *[apathetically]* "Oh, yeah, Silver Star. Huh?"



I mean, basically, like, "Where's our macaroni and cheese?"

00:52:59 Adam Host *[Sound of agreement.]*

00:53:00 John Host But Bulkeley won the Navy Cross! He won—I mean he—he's, like, routinely cited as one of the Navy's most decorated officers.

And we don't see that—we don't see that in this movie at all. He—he remains a—a—a pretty humble and... and knowable character.

And he flies back to Washington. We don't—we—we hope that he succeeds in his mission, but you know, he played a significant role in getting John F. Kennedy his *PT-109*, uh, billet!

00:53:36 Adam Host Interesting.

00:53:36 John Host So—

00:53:37 Ben Host Huh.

00:53:38 John Host —he went back to the States. Like, Joe Kennedy—uh, JFK's father—had been pulling strings right and left. Because—because Kennedy was 4-F'd, right?

He—he had too many medical problems to enlist. But he really wanted to, and so his father got—

00:53:57 Adam Host He was F'ing stateside after that.

00:53:59 John Host Yeah, well...

*[Ben laughs.]*

His—his—uh, like, Joe Kennedy found some Boston doctor, basically like Trump's doctor, to write a thing that was like, "He's the greatest man ever! Strong as bull!"

*[Ben laughs.]*

And enlisted in the Navy, and then Bulkeley met—

00:54:16 Ben Host *[JFK impression]* "He may seem inbred, but he is not."

00:54:18 John Host *[Laughs.]*

Bulkeley met Kennedy on this tour that he went—I mean, Joe Kennedy—at some fundraiser, after he went back on this 30-person plane, and Kennedy came to him and said, like, "Put my—put my son John on one of these PT boats."

So it was all, like—it—he "old boy"ed Kennedy into his—into his, uh—

00:54:43 Adam Host Wow.

00:54:44 John Host —*PT-109* boat.

00:54:45 Adam Host Yeah! Major part of his legend.

00:54:48 John Host But none of that—I guess—I guess that probably wasn't in evidence. It wasn't evident in 1945.

*[Adam or Ben responds in agreement as John continues.]*

PT-109 hadn't become a thing, I guess. Uh, that all happened later. As part of his—Kennedy's, like, legend-producing autobiography.

00:55:04	Music	Transition	A short clip of "War."  <i>War!</i> <i>Huh!</i> <i>Yeah!</i>
00:55:07	John	Host	You know, a John Wayne is clearly conscious of his appearance as a leading man, potential leading man. And it's—you see him in, uh, in all of the shots, kind of—his shirt's always tucked in. He looks pretty handsome.  Montgomery <u>isn't</u> above making himself look a little... shabby. He kind of—you know, he has a little paunch. He pulls his pants up too high.
00:55:34	Adam	Host	<u>Great</u> leather jacket when he's driving that boat.
00:55:37	John	Host	<i>[Adam agrees emphatically as John speaks.]</i>  Oh, and that first scene, where he's got the—he's got the Ray-Bans on and that fighter pilot jacket?
00:55:42	Adam	Host	The best!
00:55:43	John	Host	You're like, "Come on, I'll follow this guy anywhere!"
00:55:45	Adam	Host	I mean, I came into this film thinking, like, it was gonna be a co-equal partnership between Montgomery and John Wayne to run the movie.  And they sideline John Wayne so early with his injury, it really—it really <u>trains</u> your attention onto Montgomery in a way that it <u>should</u> be.
00:56:02	John	Host	That's great, but then John Wayne gets <u>all</u> that romantic side plot!
00:56:06	Adam	Host	Yeah.
00:56:07	John	Host	With Donna Reed. And—
00:56:08	Adam	Host	But that's not hero stuff! And I think that's crucial, right?
00:56:10	John	Host	It—it's not, but—
00:56:11	Adam	Host	The hero of the film is someone else.
00:56:12	John	Host	But we spend <u>45</u> what seemed to me to be really <u>dragging</u> minutes—
00:56:17	Adam	Host	Yeah.
00:56:18	John	Host	—of a two-and-a-half-hour film with, you know, with John Wayne and Donna Reed in half light, not kissing.
00:56:25	Ben	Host	Yeah.
00:56:26	John	Host	And it's just like, "Why are we—" I mean, <u>why</u> does John Wayne get this sort of Frank Sinatra—

*[Ben laughs]*

—uh, like, third of this movie? Uh, when I wanna be back with Robert Montgomery, with him making hard choices about which boat he's gonna sink next.

00:56:40 Adam Host

Yeah.

00:56:41 Ben Host

Uh, ¿que significa the black baseball hat that John Wayne is wearing for kinda the last third of the film?

00:56:50 John Host

I think that the—*[stifling laughter]* there were so many cool uniforms in World War II. My god.

*[Ben laughs.]*

There's a whole—there is a whole subset of World War II fan that is just about uniforms, cataloguing the uniforms.

*[Ben responds in agreement as John continues.]*

When all those officers walk by in their dress whites, and you realize that any dress white after Vietnam is made either entirely out of polyester, or some kind of 70/30 polyester blend.

But those dress whites were made out of pressed cotton.

00:57:23 Clip Clip

**George Costanza (*Seinfeld*, "The Chaperone"):** They're gonna play better.

00:57:24 John Host

Cotton with a little starch in it.

And I looked at those uniforms, and I was like, *[whispering]* "Oh, if I could just dress like that every day..."

*[Ben laughs.]*

Just get—I mean, dress like that and not look like I was a chef.

00:57:34 Adam Host

Was the guy who wore the ball cap with the brim pointing straight up—was that guy ever cool? Or was that—

00:57:40 John Host

Yeah.

00:57:41 Adam Host

—just the signifier of the dope?

00:57:43 John Host

No, no no. The—the—the brim straight up was, like, if you're an aircraft mechanic or a bombardier or a torpedo man—

00:57:51 Adam Host

Oh, if you had your head down in something, you—you'd want the brim up, you're saying.

00:57:55 John Host

Yeah, brim up. Brim up if you're, like—if you're doing something—I think that that was a pretty cool look.

And the black baseball hat, it just said something about, like, this is—you know. "I'm Navy and this is my casual, uh, exec hat," I guess?

I mean, all the hats were cool! MacArthur's hat—why—I've never understood—I know this is a sidebar.

But why hasn't Ralph Lauren popularized the World War II pilot hat

where they took the—they took the brim stiffener out so they could put their headphones over it?

Like, that—

00:58:32 Ben Host

Flop-down hat?

00:58:34 John Host

That flop-down hat with the—with the, like, the front—I mean, it's such a great hat, and no American fashion icon—I mean, Robert—uh, uh, Ralph Lauren has taken almost every other element of uniform culture and repurposed it as some sort of—

*[Ben responds affirmatively as John continues.]*

The epaulette jacket, the cotton tunic, the whole—all that military stuff!

00:58:59 Ben Host

Well, I mean, that's like a huge tradition in menswear is that it all kind of trickles out of militaria.

00:59:04 John Host

Right! Right! We see it everywhere! But that hat, the gr—potentially the greatest of all, like, modified uniforms...

00:59:13 Ben Host

And if you got like, the embroidered Polo Bear on the—on the crest of your hat? *[Laughs.]*

00:59:19 John Host

Yeah, or like, the RL emblem, or—I mean, I think I would probably have some kind of—what, lightning bolt?

00:59:25 Ben Host

Yeah.

00:59:26 John Host

Like a—a raccoon throwing lightning bolts from on top of a phone pole? Something that, you know—

*[Adam laughs]*

—like a crow. A crow riding a raccoon. *[Laughs.]*

00:59:35 Adam Host

That's, uh—that's your production company—

*[John and Ben laugh. Someone claps a few times.]*

—pre-roll thing that happens before your movie, John!

00:59:41 John Host

*[Ben and Adam agree emphatically as John speaks.]*

Raccoon climbs up a phone poll and starts throwing lightning bolts down.

00:59:44 Adam Host

Yeah!

00:59:45 John Host

Oh, somebody please make that. It only has to be 30 seconds long.

00:59:47 Adam Host

John Roderick Productions.

*[All three laugh.]*

00:59:50 Clip Clip

**Speaker:** Trapped like rats, but dying like men.

00:59:53 Adam Host

Well, uh, the death march of every episode of *Friendly Fire* is review time.

*[Ben and John laugh.]*

I've always said. And, uh, *[laughs]* for John Ford's *They Were Expendable*, uh, it is time to design the rating system.

This system always comes from something that catches my eye in the film. And in the film, there are a number of objects that could have been this scale.

I thought for a long time I'd make it Sandy's pearl necklace.

01:00:26 John Host

Mm.

01:00:27 Adam Host

But then—but then we talked about how that was my thing, and I don't wanna make my thing—my sexual thing—

01:00:31 John Host

Don't make your thing the thing.

01:00:32 Adam Host

I don't want that to be the thing.

01:00:34 John Host

No.

*[Ben laughs.]*

01:00:35 Adam Host

So that's not gonna be it.

And then I came very close to making it the harmonica that, uh, that Snake plays, uh, at Squarehead and Slug's funeral. I thought that said a lot about the sort of creature comforts that you're permitted, uh, in a time of war.

And like, how everyone has a job. I mean—

01:00:54 John Host

And he asked permission—he asked permission before he played "Taps."

01:00:58 Adam Host

Most harmonica guys, or guys with a fucking guitar at a campfire, don't even ask to play. They just pull it out and play "Champagne Supernova."

01:01:09 John Host

That's right.

01:01:10 Adam Host

And it's not fun or good.

01:01:11 John Host

No.

*[Ben laughs quietly.]*

01:01:12 Adam Host

Instead, uh, this is an object that came to me, uh, during our discussion!

And I think it was something that Ben said that really inspired this, which was this film, as much if not more than most others, was about the idea of being together in a time of war.

I can't remember a single scene in the film where anyone was by themselves. They're always working a problem, or arguing a problem, or wanting to go to war and being stopped, or repairing a boat that they need to go do something.

And maybe the thing in the film that most, uh, embodies this idea is like, the cantina! The cantina is in every place where they set up

shop. It's the place where they conspire about what they're talking about in the officers' quarters.

01:02:00 Adam Host

It's vital to, I think, their happiness, and I think it's a reason why we never see—see anyone complain about their circumstances in the film. They always have a place to be together.

So from a scale of one to five cantinas, we will review *They Were Expendable*.

I think this film, just starting off, it has got the best in breed practical war scenes, uh, that involve both the sea and the air. Like, I just can't think of another film that does it as great.

*[Ben responds affirmatively as Adam continues.]*

And you can see other films biting these rhymes. Like, we've seen films that—that try to do what this does, and not as good.

01:02:39 Adam Host

And it's sort of a miracle that a film made in this time period, with this budget, can pull it off! And I think there's—there's just that John Ford magic.

Like, he is a super confident film director. Like, a—a big-time, swinging dick, Hollywood guy. And he does the thing.

He does the thing throughout, and I think that's also what cuts against what could be a great film, is I think—I don't think anyone's gonna say no to John Ford.

And I think that's why there are parts in this film that drag. Uh, Ford is a notorious asshole, and he is hard on his actors. And I don't think he is working with a lot of people to tell him no.

01:03:20 Adam Host

And I think that's why you get a lot of scenes that just sort of creep along, that you're waiting to end before you get to another thing, and then you'll—you'll get to a character cul-de-sac, like the one that happens between Donna Reed and John Wayne.

Like, what is that? It's not really realized as a thing. I think we're head-casing its goodness. We're—we're making the case that this is a good decision, where it probably isn't during production.

Like, we're making it darker than I think it's truly trying to be by not tying that up into a bow.

So there are problems that make it... not a five-cantina film. But there's so much that's good about it, I think you gotta start with those—those two performances. I think John Wayne and—and Montgomery are—are awesome.

01:04:08 Adam Host

I wanna see more Montgomery films, personally.

It's hard. It's hard. I mean, I know it's not great, and I think it's a little bit better than good. I think it's... I think it's 3.75 cantinas. I think that's where I'm at with it.

I don't need to see it again, and that's usually, like—if I really like a film, and it's a four-thing film, I wanna—I wanna see it again, for sure, and I don't think I need to see this film again.

I think I got what I needed to get out of it. I got—I think I got all that it was trying to say!

01:04:41 Ben Host Going off, uh, something John said, the, uh—the second the combat starts, just, like, jumping up on the edge of—of the couch and, uh, and just being blown away at like, how great that stuff was, is definitely something I experienced.

Um, and feeling like I don't need to see this again is also something I experienced. I, um, think that this movie was meant to be... entertaining. And I did not find it to be.

I found that I was pausing and, you know, going to look in the fridge, and you know, dicking around on my phone a lot. Uh, *[laughs]* when I was supposed to be watching it.

Uh, it just—it just doesn't hold together as a movie. Like, there are so many great things in it. There are so—so many things to recommend it. Uh, so many, uh, scenes, performances, little details that are—are terrific.

01:05:37 Ben Host But there are also just things like—there's a scene where Donna Reed comes over to—to have dinner with four of the—four of the boatsmen. And they've set up most of the rest of their crew under the hut that they're in, to sing a song.

And the song is like, super dissonant and like, hard to catch the melody of. And badly sung. And they keep cutting back to like, a—like a—you know, gauzy close-up of Donna Reed while this is happening, like it's supposed to be super meaningful to her.

And it is, like—such a miss! Such a profound miss as a scene. Like, it just doesn't—it doesn't make a lick sense.

01:06:17 Adam Host They don't even give those guys any of the biscuits, either.

01:06:20 Ben Host Right! Like, I can't imagine what, uh, what would motivate them to go down there under that hut and sing, if—if—if there's no upside in it for them. It was just, like, one of a million bad scenes.

Also, it's worth noting a lot of period-appropriate, uh, misogyny and homophobia in the film that were a little—a little, uh, distasteful, uh, in the viewing.

Obviously, like, not gonna get away from that in a—a film from this era, but—you're not gonna find the woke John Wayne film from 1945, but—

01:06:56 John Host Is that one of the times—or, did—did you always look at your phone at that point?

*[Ben laughs.]*

Did you—did you look at the, uh—the—

01:07:02 Adam Host You made another contribution to the ACLU every time?

01:07:04 John Host Yeah! Did you go to the American Socialist Party website and—and re-up?

[Adam laughs.]

01:07:09 Ben Host I don't participate in that crap.

01:07:11 John Host Oh, right, of course not.

01:07:12 Ben Host But yeah, I, uh—a lot of good stuff, also, and some amazing moments.

I'll give it three El Toro Cantinas.

01:07:19 John Host I haven't quite figured out, but I think we've talked about it, the like unnecessary romance in the heart of World War II movies from this era.

Uh, *Crash Dive* also had a kind of, you know, romance in it that was—it was made interesting by the—by the presence of a love triangle, uh, that—you know, that pitted the two officers against one another, except that when the chips were down, they—they worked as a team.

In this movie, there's no reason for it. It doesn't deepen our appreciation of John Wayne's character. It's trying to also give some credit to, you know, the many sort of medical personnel and other people.

I mean—uh, the whole point of it, I think, is to give us that—that moment at the very end of the film, where John Wayne says to the—to the, uh, the blond army officer, like, "Have you heard anything about where Donna Reed might be?"

01:08:19 John Host And he's like, "Nah. She's probably, uh, you know—she's probably been turned into a comfort woman somewhere and won't survive the war."

But we spend 45 minutes—just super boring, domestic—not domestic—it's not even drama! There's just no stakes, except like, "I can't get her on the phone!"

And I've suggested before that that stuff is in these movies because movie makers are trying to appeal to a broad audience, and they want women in the theaters, and they think this is how to do it.

I think it mars the film.

But in terms of the war movie part of this war movie, I feel like I... either learned a lot, or was directed to do some—some further study to make sense of what I was seeing, that maybe a—a contemporary audience would have gotten without needing it.

01:09:18 John Host But I don't think that mars it. Because it feels like watching a World War II movie—there are an awful lot of theaters, and for us in 2019, it's pretty hard to remember them all.



But I feel like the war movie scenes, the sort of explication of that period, and a lot of the—a lot of the Marine Corps, you know, island-hopping that we did was late in the war.

And this is early, early days. We're—we watched the—the war start.

So I feel like it's four cantinas, a solid four cantinas for me.

It's not—I would watch it again, because there's a lot to take in, and there's a lot of scenes.

01:10:00 John Host Like, that scene of the dudes underneath the—the cantina, singing their song, I found that performance very affecting. The fact that the enlisted men would never be invited into the dining hall, [*stifling laughter*] but had all congregated underneath, in order just to hear her voice?!

*[Ben or Adam laughs quietly.]*

They're not even getting biscuits! As Adam says.

I just—I—I sensed that there was stuff in that that I—that I could never understand.

01:10:30 Ben Host

Hm.

01:10:31 John Host

But I loved the—I loved their—their harmony. And they've got this crazy song about love to sing!

Anyway, four—four cantinas.

01:10:44 Adam Host

Alright.

01:10:45 John Host

For Robert Montgomery, as much as anything.

01:10:48 Ben Host

At the end of the movie, there—there's, uh, a wide shot down the fuselage of the plane that they're getting in.

And there's a woman lying on a—on like, a hospital cot in the foreground, and you can't really see her face, because, you know, she's like, lying down, and it's just not a good angle on it.

Did—did you guys think that that was gonna be Donna Reed?

01:11:09 Adam Host

Yeah. I felt that way.

01:11:10 John Host

But it weren't.

01:11:11 Ben Host

Could've been.

01:11:12 Adam Host

She was on the plane the whole time.

*[All three laugh.]*

01:11:16 John Host

I should say that that plane, the C-47 that rescued them, was my dad's job in the war.

He wasn't in—in any of these actions, because he didn't join the Navy, uh, until 1943. But that's exactly the—the job that he did.

He—he came in. Sometimes people were expecting two planes, and

there were only one. And my dad was the—the pilot of those C-47s—

01:11:43	Ben	Host	Wow.
01:11:44	John	Host	—that came, landed on some dirt strip, threw the supplies out the back, and then took the wounded or...
01:11:49	Adam	Host	Yeah.
01:11:50	John	Host	<i>[Laughing]</i> Whatever officers were escaping the war.
01:11:52	Adam	Host	One of the great planes of all time.
01:11:54	Ben	Host	If this was a modern movie, we would've had the pilot say, like, one, like, super wry thing. Like, yell back at them one thing, and <u>then</u> take off.
01:12:03	John	Host	Right.
01:12:04	Ben	Host	Kinda missed that.
01:12:05	John	Host	Yeah. Missed—we never saw the pilots, either. Just like we never saw the Japanese.
01:12:08	Adam	Host	<i>[Ben responds in agreement with the above as Adam speaks.]</i>
			Yeah, we needed a pilot saying "Hold onto your butts."
01:12:11	John	Host	Right.
			<i>[Ben or Adam laughs.]</i>
01:12:13	Adam	Host	Didn't get that guy.
01:12:14	Ben	Host	Did you have a <u>guy</u> ?
01:12:16	Adam	Host	Yeah, that guy <u>would</u> be my guy. But he's not in this movie.
			<i>[Ben laughs.]</i>
			Unfortunately.
			I think my guy is Sandy! And I think the reason is she feels the pain. She sees how terrible the war is going to be as it spools up.
			Like, she's elbow-deep in guts. <u>She</u> knows, personally, what it's gonna mean for her professionally. But she puts a personal spin on it.
01:12:40	Adam	Host	You know, the more of these guys that she meets, the more potential suitors she has dinner with, the more she realizes she's surrounded by ghosts. And it haunts her.
			I miss her when she's gone. Like, her scenes—like, if we're talking about, like, the—the A and the B and maybe the C story, like, she's a—her story doesn't go anywhere.
			In a film where the soldiers themselves, even, aren't permitted to feel that kind of grief or pain.
			Like—like, what do we get? When the people die, we cut to a couple of graves with palm fronds on them. We don't even see, really—like,

we get John Wayne's eulogy. And he has a hard time with that.

01:13:22 Adam Host But like, I think—I think war films are an opportunity to express, like, a kind of pain, a sort of deep pain about death and loss that this film is incapable of except through someone like Donna Reed's character.

So. I think she's gonna be my guy for this one.

Who's your guy, Ben?

01:13:43 Ben Host My guy is, uh, Mulcahey. They call him "Irish" and—

*[Adam giggles]*

—make a lot of jokes about his ethnic background toward the end, but, uh, the scene that made him my guy is when, uh, MacArthur gets on the boat, and one of the young guys asks for, uh, the general's autograph on his hat.

And it just cuts back to Boats going like—like, hands to the sky, like, "OI, WITH THESE KIDS!"

*[Ben and Adam laugh.]*

01:14:10 Adam Host That was a fun moment.

01:14:12 Ben Host Yeah.

01:14:13 Adam Host That exasperation was so great. *[Laughs.]*

01:14:16 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Ben:** *[Laughing]* That's killer.

**Adam:** That's like, the universal sign of exasperation.

01:14:21 Ben Host Yeah.

John, did you have a guy?

01:14:23 John Host Yeah, my guy, I—I, uh, I couldn't really find him credited, uh, but he was the—he was the non-commissioned officer with the—with the dark beard, who, uh, was the most piratical of the three.

Who was kind of taking the center of the song sung under the cantina, and—

01:14:47 Ben Host Yeah.

01:14:48 John Host —uh, and just looked, in every scene, kind of, um...

You know, he had Boats on one side, and he had Doc on the other, but to me, he was the one—you know, he was the black beard at the center of that little troika of—of dudes.

01:15:04 Ben Host Yeah.

01:15:05 John Host But that guy, and in particular the moment that Brickley throws him that young sailor and says "Look after the kids," it's him that gives the most lascivious look.

*[Ben laughs. Adam starts snickering during the following.]*

And I always imagine that that young sailor is looking him directly in the eye like, "Take care of me... Dad. Ee. Daddy."

*[Ben laughs.]*

01:15:30	Adam	Host	God. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
01:15:31	John	Host	So he's—he's my guy, and I hope that one day somebody throws <u>me</u> a young sailor.
01:15:37	Adam	Host	Good lord. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
01:15:39	Ben	Host	Wow. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
01:15:41	Music	Transition	A short clip of "War."
			<i>War!</i> <i>Huh!</i> <i>Yeah!</i>
01:15:44	Adam	Host	Uh, we have got to wrap up the show so I can leave!
			<i>[John laughs.]</i>
			Ben?
			<i>[Ben laughs.]</i>
			I need to <u>leave</u> this studio.
			<i>[Ben laughs.]</i>
01:15:54	John	Host	Oh, you have—your skin is like sandpaper.
01:15:56	Adam	Host	Let's, uh—let's find out what film we're watching next.
01:16:00	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	<b>John:</b> Alright!
			<b>Adam:</b> And—and what sexual overtones will be in it.
01:16:03	John	Host	Here we go! We got the 120-sided die.
			<i>[Sound like a plate settling on a table.]</i>
			My little girl is here with me, and I'm gonna let <u>her</u> roll the die for me.
01:16:13	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	<b>Ben:</b> Oh! A guest roll!
			<b>John:</b> Will you roll this die?
01:16:15	John	Host	Right in here, right in this area.
			<i>[Die rolling and hitting chimes.]</i>
01:16:25	John's Daughter	Guest	108!
01:16:28	Ben	Host	108! Is a—another World War II movie.
01:16:34	Music	Music	<i>[Intense, dramatic music plays over the next few lines.]</i>
01:16:35	Ben	Host	Uh, set in Japan. From 2005, directed by Alexander Sokurov.

01:16:40	John	Host	Hm.
01:16:41	Ben	Host	It's called <i>The Sun</i> .
01:16:43	John	Host	<i>The Sun</i> . S-O-N or S-U-N?
01:16:46	Ben	Host	S-U-N.
01:16:48	John	Host	<i>The Sun</i> ...
01:16:49	Ben	Host	Focuses on Emperor Hirohito and Japan's defeat.
			"When he's finally confronted by General Douglas MacArthur, who offers him to accept a diplomatic defeat for survival."
01:16:58	Music	Music	"War" is fading in.
01:16:59	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	<b>John:</b> Oh, this will be an interesting movie to watch!
			<b>Ben:</b> Yeah!
01:17:00	Adam	Host	Another ladder movie, huh?
01:17:01	John	Host	Yeah.
01:17:02	Ben	Host	Wow, very interesting.
			Well, that will be next week on <i>Friendly Fire</i> . Really looking forward to it!
			And, uh, I guess we'll let Robs take it from here! So for John Roderick and Adam Pranica, I've been Ben Harrison.
			To the victor go the spoiler alerts.
01:17:18	Music	Music	"War" continues.
			<i>Absolutely— —nothing!</i>
			<i>Listen to me!</i>
			<i>War!</i>
			<i>It ain't nothing but a heartbreaker</i>
			<i>[Music continues as Rob speaks.]</i>
01:17:23	Rob	Producer	<i>Friendly Fire</i> is a Maximum Fun podcast hosted by Benjamin Harrison, Adam Pranica, and John Roderick. It's produced by me, Rob Schulte.
			Our theme music is "War," by Edwin Starr, courtesy of Stone Agate Music, and our logo art is by Nick Ditmore.
			<i>Friendly Fire</i> is made possible by the support of our listeners. Like you! And you can make sure that the show continues by going to <a href="http://MaximumFun.org/donate">MaximumFun.org/donate</a> .
			As an added bonus, you'll receive our monthly pork chop episode, as well as <u>all</u> the fantastic bonus content from Maximum Fun.

01:18:00	Rob	Producer	If you'd like to discuss the show online, please use the hashtag <a href="#">#FriendlyFire</a> . You can find Ben on Twitter at <a href="#">@BenjaminAhr</a> . Adam is <a href="#">@CutForTime</a> . John is <a href="#">@johnroderick</a> , and I'm <a href="#">@robkschulte</a> .
			Thanks! We'll see you next week.
01:18:16	Music	Music	"War" continues.  <i>Is there no place for them today?</i>  <i>They say we must fight to keep our freedom But Lord knows there's got to be a better way Ohhh!</i>
01:18:29	Music	Transition	<i>[A cheerful guitar chord.]</i>
01:18:30	Speaker 1	Guest	<a href="#">MaximumFun.org</a> .
01:18:32	Speaker 2	Guest	Comedy and culture.
01:18:33	Speaker 3	Guest	Artist owned—
01:18:34	Speaker 4	Guest	—audience supported.