

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 Triumphant, victorious war music.
00:00:01 Adam Host The persecution of a person based solely on their beliefs has been a
Pranica shameful, and also inextricable, part of human history. And for those that subscribe to one such belief system, their oppression is more recent yet no less traumatic.

The followers of this ideology take communion in massive cathedrals where they worship their deities. The money they tithe during these weekly ceremonies makes their political influence formidable. This narrow world view has come to encroach upon more and more aspects of society and culture, going forth and multiplying everywhere, public and private, ushered in by this growing community.

And it's more than a community, it's an identity! As they consume more and more of what gives their lives meaning to the exclusion of everything else, and as their influence increases and their numbers grow from minority to majority, the sense of victimhood has not transformed. What is now only imagined remains: the persecuted majority.

But their followers are of such mass, and their members vocalize at such a bombarding rate, that even offering the most nuanced, critical view of their beliefs is considered controversial, even when voiced by our society's most celebrated minds.

00:01:25 Adam Host That's what happened when Martin Scorsese said superhero films are "not cinema," and instead "theme parks." Francis Ford Coppola agrees, saying "He's right, because we expect to learn something from cinema. We expect to gain something, some enlightenment, some knowledge, some inspiration. I don't know that anyone gets anything out of seeing the same movie over and over again."

To say the response has been hostile would be an understatement. And not just from those that observe Superhero Sabbath, but also those that create and profit from the genre. The superhero genre is reliably profitable in a filmmaking world that's become more costly, and at the same time more risk-averse, and these films' financial success is the impenetrable shield their supporters use against all criticism.

All of this is to say that when you review a superhero film, you better be prepared for the consequences. Superhero films are fine, alright? No one is taking your superhero films away! That's not what we're doing. We're just gonna talk about a superhero film.

"If you have something to say, right now's a perfect time to keep it to yourself" on today's *Friendly Fire*, as we discuss 2011's *Captain America: The First Avenger*.

[Music ends.]

00:02:51	Music	Music	<p>“War,” by Norman Whitfield and Barrett Strong, lead vocals by Edwin Starr. The song plays at full volume to the end of the transcribed section, and then drops to play quietly as the hosts introduce themselves.</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>
00:03:12	Ben Harrison	Host	Welcome to <i>Friendly Fire</i> , the war movie podcast that cannot control the power it holds! I am Ben Harrison.
00:03:17	Adam	Host	I’m Adam Pranica.
00:03:20	John Roderick	Host	And I’m John Roderick.
00:03:22	Ben	Host	I keep meaning to say to you guys, maybe we should say “the <u>history</u> podcast” or something that makes our show sound more palatable, because “war movie podcast” is such a turnoff to most people.
00:03:32	John	Host	To <u>what</u> people?
			<i>[Music fades out.]</i>
00:03:33	Ben	Host	But— <i>[laughs]</i> . But then we watch a movie like this and I can’t, in good conscious, <i>[laughing]</i> say “history podcast.”
00:03:40	John	Host	<i>[Laughs.]</i> <u>Alternate</u> history podcast! This—
00:03:42	Ben	Host	Yeah, I guess so. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:03:43	John	Host	This, uh—the world of <i>Captain America</i> , uh, <i>First Avencher</i> is...
00:03:52	Ben	Host	It’s like if the Nazis had imperial <i>Star Wars</i> technology. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:03:57	John	Host	Yeah. And if the 1940s were a world where America was racially integrated.
00:04:05	Adam	Host	Hmm!
			<i>[Ben laughs.]</i>
00:04:06	John	Host	And, uh— <i>[stifles laughter]</i> and everyone just got along.
00:04:10	Ben	Host	Yeah.
00:04:11	John	Host	Yeah.

00:04:12 Ben Host That'd be nice!

00:04:13 John Host It would be. It's a different—it's different from... the world, though.

00:04:16 Ben Host I guess so.

I thought that the—*[laughs]*. That one guy was biting on his capsule, and he says "Hail Hydra," but he's like, burbling, so it almost sounds like he says "Hail Hitler."

00:04:28 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Ben:** We can't quite tell.

John: "Hail *[garbled nonsense.]*"

00:04:30 Ben Host *[Laughs.]* That was a nice little—they threaded that needle pretty well. *[Laughs.]*

00:04:35 John Host Tell me this. You guys maybe know more. Is Hydra... was that ever—did that ever appear in a *James Bond* movie? I mean, I know SPECTRE is the *James Bond* bad people, but is Hydra just Marvel Comics Universe? Or is there a—does Hydra cross over to other properties?

00:04:56 Adam Host I'm gonna let you take this one, Ben, 'cause I—I have no idea.

00:05:00 Ben Host I wish we had *The Flop House's* Elliott Kalan on to field that question, because I have no idea.

00:05:07 John Host Well, let's look that up for the show.

00:05:09 Ben Host "Hydra is a fictional terrorist organization appearing in American comic books published by Marvel Comics."

00:05:16 John Host Huh.

00:05:17 Ben Host "The name 'Hydra' is an allusion to the mythical... *[uncertainly]* Lernaean Hydra.

The organization's motto references the myth of the Hydra, stating that if a head is cut off two more shall take its place."

00:05:28 John Host They're more than a terrorist organization, though. That seems like a—that seems...

00:05:33 Ben Host Yeah!

00:05:34 John Host ...like a diminishing appellation for Hydra.

00:05:37 Ben Host In this film they have official support and recognition by the Third Reich until they kind of grow too big for that flowerpot and... you know. Like, they're even Hitler-ier than Hitler, is the case that this movie is making. Although they never talk about Jews or anything.

00:05:57 John Host Hydra seems to think of Hitler as just a pawn in their world game. But also, in addition to this taking place in an alternate universe where America—where the American Army is integrated, it also takes place in a world where the power of Thor... exists.

00:06:18 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Ben:** *[Laughing]* Is real.

John: And is harnessable.

[Ben laughs.]

00:06:20 John Host Harnessable by like, red, skull-faced bad guys. So let—I mean, do we accept that, um... I'm not sure what the canon is on this, but the

Marvel Universe is not our universe. Is that safe to say? There are a lot of things happening in the Marvel Universe that don't happen in our own.

00:06:42 Ben Host Yeah.

00:06:43 John Host And so I—

00:06:44 Ben Host It does not feel like our universe, for sure.

00:06:45 John Host I feel like it's gotta be sort of a simultaneous side universe.

00:06:50 Ben Host *[On a laugh]* Right.

00:06:51 John Host Where magic is afoot.

00:06:54 Ben Host Yeah, I mean I think that there are a lot of people in the world that know a lot more about comics than me. I'd say most people know more about comics than me. But I know that people always say that the distinction between DC and Marvel is that DC is set in an explicitly alternate version of reality, and that Marvel is set in the real world, 'cause you have—like, it's not Gotham and Metropolis, it's Chicago and New York.

But also, *[laughing]* like—

[John laughs.]

—Yggdrasil is real in the context of this film. *[Laughs.]* So who knows?

00:07:31 Adam Host Lots of people are gonna know more about comics and comic movies than us—

00:07:36 John Host Yes.

00:07:37 Adam Host —but no one knows more about war films than three assembled hosts of *Friendly Fire*.

00:07:41 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** That's right.

Adam: So we've got that going for us.

00:07:42 John Host That's right, and I'm sure there are some listeners—particularly listeners who have come to this show from your guys' *Star Track* podcast—who are gonna be very offended that we aren't fully soaking in the Palmolive of the Marvel Comics Universe.

[Ben laughs.]

Including some of my friends. Right? I've been—

00:08:01 Ben Host Cuts through tough grease, John!

[He and John laugh.]

00:08:04 John Host *[Stifling laughter]* I've been—I've been nerdjacent (*nerd adjacent*) for about a decade now.

And I've received the Marvel Comics Omnibus not once but twice from friends, who said "You need to figure—you need to get right with Jesus."

00:08:20 Ben Host *[Laughs.]* Right.

00:08:21 John Host And they send me some giant tome that I'm supposed to avidly consume, and I mean, I just use—

00:08:26 Ben Host They come knock on your door on a Saturday afternoon. *[Laughs.]*

00:08:30 John Host Yeah. *[Laughs.]*

00:08:31 Ben Host With a giant tome and—

[Both laugh.]

—wanna come into your living room and preach the gospel?

00:08:34 Adam Host There's nothing I hate worse than a proselytizer.

00:08:37 John Host Yeah.

[Ben laughs.]

00:08:38 Adam Host And here they are.

00:08:39 John Host It was nice though, 'cause I was able to take my hundred-ounce silver bar and stop using it as a doorstop and instead put Marvel comic books there.

00:08:48 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Ben:** Oh, yeah.

John: Hardbound.

[Ben laughs.]

00:08:51 Adam Host I'm glad all the Marvel people are so enthusiastic about their universe, but there's nothing about this film that *Wonder Woman* didn't do better in its film.

00:08:59 John Host Oh!

00:09:00 Adam Host And it's the exact same story.

00:09:01 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** Kapow!

Ben: Wow!

John: Dropping the big bomb on it!

00:09:04 John Host I was saving that up for later!

00:09:07 Adam Host Yeah?

00:09:08 John Host But let's go!

00:09:09 Adam Host I mean it may have been a favorable circumstance for *Wonder Woman*, having come after this film. But I felt like the stories were very similar, and *Wonder Woman's* was better.

00:09:20 Ben Host *Wonder Woman* is definitely fighting Nazis. *[Laughs.]*

00:09:23 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Adam:** Yeah.

John: Real—

Ben: Even though it's World War I.

00:09:25 John Host Real Nazis. Yeah. That's the problem with it, right? It's—they get their Germans mixed up.

00:09:31 Adam Host Mm.

00:09:32 John Host But what you get in *Wonder Woman* is a thing where throughout the movie, you... you never are fully secure in the outcome. Where in *Captain America: ... The First Avenger—Adventure*, youuu are pretty assured of the outcome throughout the film.

00:09:55 Ben Host It doesn't feel like he's at any particular risk. And this is something we talked about in that episode as well, which is a pork chop bonus episode.

00:10:06 Adam Host MaximumFun.org/donate is how you would listen to it.

00:10:10 Ben Host Yeah. But when we talked about *Wonder Woman*, the connective tissue that the movie has to staple onto the beginning and end, so that they can situate it in a series of films rather than have it be its own story, is the thing that fucks it up. And I definitely felt that even more strongly with this episode.

Like, with this movie is that like, the stuff about finding the plane at the beginning and waking him up at the end really blew it for the film feeling like it had any stakes. Like... you know. Even when—and maybe this is retrospect, because the—when Bucky dies, it doesn't even really hit that hard, you know? Like, I don't feel like they make the case that they're that great of friends, and that their friendship is like, *[stifling laughter]* deeply meaningful to Captain America.

And then when Bucky dies it's like, "Okay. Well, there goes a guy." *[Laughs.]* You know?

00:11:08 Adam Host Especially 'cause Bucky is never not a dick to him. Right?

00:11:11 Ben Host *[Laughing]* Right!

00:11:12 John Host Wellll, I mean, you know, Bucky's—Bucky's sweet to him. I mean at the beginning of the movie, everyone—

00:11:17 Adam Host *[Stifling laughter]* You're—you're using your relationship to me and Ben as—as a metric!

[John and Ben laugh.]

00:11:23 John Host Yeah! I'm sweet to you guys!

[Adam laughs.]

That's what people don't really understand.

[Adam laughs again.]

Yeah, Bucky—

00:11:29 Ben Host I just hope that one day, you are an almost as capable super soldier as us. *[Laughs.]*

00:11:33 John Host *[Laughs.]* The, um—

00:11:36 Adam Host When John is eventually thrown from a train, we will grieve him.

00:11:40 Ben Host It—

00:11:41 John Host Yeah...

00:11:42 Adam Host Deeply.

00:11:43 Ben Host Oh, yeah. And I should just say, like, what we do on the—you know.

We know that, like, the—when we watch *Aliens* or when we watch, you know, a big movie, we're gonna get a lot more downloads than when we watch, like, a French movie or *Beasts of No Nation* or whatever.

00:11:58 John Host

[Exaggerated French accent] Fraunch!

00:11:59 Ben Host

So, you know, if you're here because you're a cafeteria *Friendly Fire* listener...

[Adam laughs.]

Uh, [laughs] we're here to shit on this movie.

[He and John laugh.]

00:12:10 John Host

The stakes, I mean the real—the only stakes for me—happened right there at the end. Where we realize that he and Hayley Atwell, or Peggy—he and Peggy have fallen in love. And they make that date. And then you realize, kind of unlike most fantasy movies like this, there's no... he never does see her again. We never see her again. She doesn't—

00:12:41 Ben Host

Yeah, hero does not get the girl!

00:12:43 John Host

Well, and the girl who's a fascinating character in this movie, maybe one of the more interesting characters. She does not get transported into the Marvel Universe. She's lost, and it seems like he's the one that's gonna be lost there, as he suicides his plane into Antarctica. Or into Arctica. Or wherever.

[Ben laughs.]

Greenland. Wherever he crashes.

00:13:07 Adam Host

I think 9/11'ing his plane is the preferred nomenclature.

00:13:10 John Host

Ah, he 9/11'ed it?

00:13:11 Ben Host

Hm.

00:13:12 Adam Host

Yeah.

00:13:13 John Host

Yeah. [Laughing] But—oof.

But uh—

[Ben laughs.]

But that—you know, that was the thing that you shed a tear about, right? As she's saying like, "Meet me in the—at Grand Central Station on August 4th, and...!" We don't even get a glimpse of her being sad, do we?

I mean, does it—do we get a glimpse of her being—oh, we do! Right, we see her at the victory dance.

00:13:34 Ben Host

Oh, do we?

00:13:35 John Host

Yeah, with everybody dancing around her and she's... sad? Don't we get that? Maybe I just imagined it.

00:13:42 Adam Host

Is that in your head? [Laughs.]

00:13:44 John Host *[Stifling laughter]* I don't know.

I feel like she was at the—

00:13:45 Adam Host I think it is!

00:13:46 John Host I think she was at the dance. All alone. All alone at the dance. I'm sure she ended up fine; she—she—you know. Her life went on well.

00:13:55 Adam Host Hey Peggy, you know what you could do if you missed Steve Rogers so bad? Is like, you work for the military, why don't you look for the crashed plane?

00:14:02 John Host Hey, there—well, no, they—

00:14:04 Ben Host Hmm.

00:14:05 John Host There is a scene where they're looking for the crashed plane, right? The—

00:14:07 Adam Host Yeah, but they find the little cube.

00:14:08 John Host They found the cube, right.

00:14:09 Adam Host Yeah.

00:14:10 John Host It's, uh...

00:14:11 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Adam:** It's Howard—

John: It's Tony Stark's dad.

Adam: It's Howard Stark that wants to continue.

John: Yeah. Howard Stark. *[Switching gears]* The thing is—

Adam: Peggy doesn't give a shit.

00:14:16 John Host The thing is, Peggy—her next boyfriend... has to live up to Captain America. Although she never makes it with him. So...

00:14:25 Ben Host She got to touch his chest. *[Laughs.]*

00:14:27 John Host I guess that's right. You have to have a good chest to be Peggy's next boyfriend.

00:14:31 Adam Host It looked like she got a static shock from it.

[John and Ben laugh.]

When she touched it.

00:14:36 John Host He does have four times the metabolism of a normal man.

00:14:41 Ben Host Yeah.

00:14:42 John Host Which accounts for his ability to lift up a Harley-Davidson with three girls on it.

00:14:47 Adam Host And I guess that's what keeps his body warm in the Arctic ice? For... 50 years?

00:14:53 John Host That's unclear.

00:14:54 Adam Host What is that about?

00:14:55 John Host That's unclear.

00:14:56 Adam Host Like, I looked into Captain America's special abilities and his weaknesses.

00:14:58 John Host Yeah?

00:14:59 Ben Host Yeah?

00:15:00 Adam Host And his whole deal is that increased metabolism, but he can still be killed like a human being. If you shot him, he would die.

00:15:06 John Host Yeah. He needs a shield. But—

00:15:07 Adam Host So why didn't the ice kill him?

00:15:10 Ben Host Well, there's a phenom—I mean this is a big stretch, but like, when people fall into a lake in the Alps and are taken to a hospital like an hour later, they can still be revived sometimes because the like, extreme cold can slow down your metabolism enough to... stave off the effects of death?

00:15:34 John Host So maybe four times the metabolism means that you can survive 70 years frozen in the ice.

00:15:40 Adam Host He didn't have a lot of stored fat on that body.

00:15:43 John Host *[Ben laughs.]*
We don't see a ton of—I mean, we don't really see—they find him. Or they—we don't even see them find him. They find his shield. And the next thing we know, he's... he wakes up, in a bed. He doesn't even like, wake up hard. He just kind of like—

00:16:01 Adam Host *[Ben snorts.]*
"Huh?" Like, he—there's not even a kind of like, "Ow!" *[Laughs.]*
You—are you suggesting that he should have woken up with an erection?

00:16:05 John Host No! But I mean, something—

00:16:14 Crosstalk Crosstalk *[Ben laughs.]*
Yeah—I don't know about you, but I've woken up hard a couple of times, like, "*[Groan of pain]*! Ow!"
[Beat.]
Ben: Yeah.
Adam: Yeah, just a painful erection.

00:16:15 John Host More than once. Yeah, okay...

00:16:17 Ben Host And then you just Kool-Aid Man through a wall?

00:16:23 John Host *[All three laugh.]*
Yeah, that's right! He didn't lose any strength, either.

00:16:25 Ben Host Yeah.

00:16:26 John Host He didn't waste away at all.

00:16:27 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Ben:** I like that—

John: Oh, that—he also didn't eat for 70 years!

00:16:30 John Host So he would be thinner.

00:16:31 Adam Host One would think!

00:16:32 Ben Host Yeah...

00:16:33 Clip Transition **Music:** Dramatic music.

[We can hear the roar of a machine.]

Peggy Carter: Shut it down!

00:16:35 John Host Who is this movie, and these type of movies, for? What does this movie do...

00:16:40 Ben Host Mm!

00:16:41 John Host ...that makes it satisfying for people to consume?

00:16:46 Adam Host People whose religion is Marvel.

00:16:48 Ben Host Yeah, it's not for like... It's not for boomers, it's not for Gen X. It's like a different way of thinking about a demographic than we usually get on this show, I think.

00:17:00 John Host I mean, you watch it and you... what? You, in your imagination, become a super—? I mean, the beginning of the film, and the special effect that I like, is that it does a really good job of making our hero look—uh, that's Chris Evans as Steve Rogers, Captain America—they make him small at the beginning.

00:17:28 Ben Host Yeah.

00:17:29 John Host They make him—and convincingly small.

00:17:31 Ben Host Yeah, there're very few moments where it's not perfect.

00:17:34 John Host And it's not just a glimpse of him. Right? We spend the first 20 minutes of this two-hour film with him as a—an asthmatic, you know, five-foot, two-inch pencil-neck.

00:17:52 Adam Host A real "Adam Pratica"—looking guy.

[Ben laughs.]

00:17:54 John Host And it's believable! And so the story arc of him being someone who can't get into the Army; he's 4-F'ed over and over. He gets pushed around. He's like the kid in that comic, uh, that advertisement in the back of comic books, where he gets sand kicked in his face and then he takes the Charles Atlas weightlifting course.

00:18:15 Ben Host Yeah. He's the 90-pound weakling.

00:18:17 John Host He's the 90-pound weakling. And then he is—

00:18:20 Adam Host And yet DJ Qualls is like, waiting for the phone to ring. Not in a movie this year.

00:18:25 John Host ...What?

[Ben laughs.]

00:18:26 Adam Host Like, his is a body made for pre-magic trick Steve Rogers, right?

00:18:32 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** Right, but then the special effect would have to be that he becomes Chris Evans, which I think maybe is a harder—

Adam: *[Stifling laughter]* That's a tougher effect. *[Laughs.]*

John: —*[stifling laughter]* harder trans—transformation.

[Ben laughs.]

00:18:40 John Host But you can see an audience for this movie being people that that is a real fantasy, right? That you—that Tony Stark's dad injects you with some electricity, and Stanley Tucci with his very super-duper questionable German accent gives you some blue serum that he made, and you are transformed into like, Super Handsome Muscle Man Guy. Who's got a heart of gold, as you the movie viewer imagines that you have. Right? I mean, that...

I'm trying to figure out the demographic that goes into this movie and comes out the other side feeling great.

00:19:22 Ben Host Yeah. "What would it take for me to stop being an incel?" is the—
[laughs].

00:19:25 John Host Right, and turn me into a superhero, because it's not just that I became a muscle man and then... a Chad and a dick, but I became a muscle man but I still have the heart of gold of someone who was a virgin until he was 27.

I can see that. Right? Those are the only kind of real stakes in the movie.

00:19:45 Ben Host Yeah.

00:19:46 John Host After that, it's just him doing a bunch of guns. Right? It's just a shoot-'em-up, but no one ever—no one we know ever dies, except for his pal. Bucky. He's the only person that we ever know by name that dies.

Even the bad guys have these weird stormtrooper masks on, so we never see their faces. We never get a death scene, really, at all. People just get shot and fall down.

00:20:17 Ben Host Yeah.

Those masks seem like they would make it hard to see when they're like, in these dark, giant—you know, super weapon factories, too.

00:20:25 John Host Yeah! And what are they protecting you from? I mean they're not—
why the masks?

[Ben laughs.]

They're just—they are just to anonymize the bad guys.

00:20:33 Ben Host Right.

00:20:34 John Host And make it so that this movie—so that you could watch this movie as a seven-year-old and not have any questions about death.

I just don't get it. And I think it's part of my confusion about cosplay. Like, when I go to a Comic-Con and you see a cosplayer that has spent a lot of time and energy making their own costume, their costume has some imagination to it. Like I went to a Comic-Con one

time and I saw a steampunk Batman?

[Ben chuckles.]

And I loved steampunk Batman! 'Cause it's not just Batman, it's steampunk Batman! They took a lot of time to put those brass, uh, tubes onto Batman.

00:21:13 Music Music

[Intense action music plays under Adam's dialogue.]

00:21:14 Adam Host

[Batman voice; growly] "I am the brass!"

[Ben laughs.]

[Batman voice] "I am the wind-up watch!"

[Ben laughs. Music fades out.]

00:21:21 John Host

But I don't understand when I go to Comic-Con and there's somebody that's wearing a Batman costume that they got at Walmart.

00:21:27 Ben Host

Yeah.

00:21:28 John Host

And they're obviously really into it! I'm not—I'm not shitting on them. I just don't understand it.

00:21:33 Adam Host

I really like all of that stuff. I like the positivity of a, like, unifying thing that gathers a culture together to celebrate the thing. Like, there are a lot of positive aspects to fan culture that superhero films make possible.

But there are—there is—*[laughs]*. There is an opposing force to that, that is ugly and dumb.

00:21:53 John Host

[Feigning shock] What?!

[All three laugh.]

00:21:57 Adam Host

But I think specifically with Captain America, I feel like—I understand the Batman thing! I understand the Wonder Woman thing! But in the hierarchy of heroes—of superheroes, I mean—I don't feel like there is a lot there to him. And I was missing that extra bit of character with Steve Rogers!

Like, Steve Rogers goes from weak and good to strong and good.

00:22:23 Ben Host

Yeah.

00:22:24 Adam Host

So he doesn't change, ever. All he does is get better weapons, and that weapon includes his body. That's it!

00:22:30 John Host

Yeah.

00:22:31 Ben Host

I mean this movie made me think a lot about, like, the way... Like, this is a—an explicitly hyper-nationalistic character and story. And I was... really puzzled by the fact that the appeal of nationalism is like—is set against Nazism in this movie.

And like, I think from—like, so many of the myths that we've had since World War II have been about how, like, the exceptional America struck down the evil Nazis and yet, like, those—like, the

most nationalistic people in our society are now Nazis. Like, how did they—? [*Laughs.*] How did they like, grow up dipped in this culture and decide what they wanted to be was Nazis?

00:23:24 John Host Well, this movie came out in 2011. So this was—I mean, we've seen this before in movies that came out in the late nineties. Or I'm sorry, in the mid-nineties. Where we were in that, like, bubble of imagining that we were in a post-racial society.

And those movies look—some of the premises look alien to us now because they presume that you would have a Black leading man who never referred to his race, and no one else did.

00:23:57 Ben Host

Right.

00:23:58 John Host

And this is—this 2011 film is before the Trump era, and before we were arguing about this, and before the white nationalist community was visible, again, in the way that they are now. And we were ima—I mean, these were the Obama years! So we were imagining...

I mean, somehow they made a film where their squad—and not just their squad, but the whole division—has Black and Asian soldiers in it. Just...

00:24:32 Ben Host

Right.

00:24:33 John Host

Who aren't just soldiers but officers, they're just integrated into the—so we're—it's a nationalist American film that's completely whitewashing what would have actually been the case, in order to appeal to an audience—to basically an unsophisticated audience—that imagines that...

Because it's a retro-nationalism.

00:24:55 Ben Host

Yeah!

00:24:56 John Host

Right? It's a forties and fifties kind of flag-waving.

00:25:02 Ben Host

Thor came out the same year and I remember, like, seeing a news report that white nationalists or Nazis were cranky that they'd cast Idris Elba as one of the people that lives in, uh...

00:25:16 John Host

Oh, I remember that! I remember that!

00:25:18 Ben Host

Like, and I remember thinking like, "Who—like, how is this even in the news? Like, who the fuck cares what Nazis think? Like, there're not that many of them, and they're like, super marginalized!" But like, even then we were seeing, like, that as a... a burgeoning voice in the culture, and like—and reacting against this.

00:25:39 John Host

It wasn't explicitly Nazi. It was that whole crew that says "Look, man, I'm not racist. But these are Norwegian gods, bro."

00:25:48 Ben Host

Right.

00:25:49 John Host

And the pushback was "Yeah. They're... fake gods."

[*Ben laughs.*]

[*Stifling laughter*] "They can be whatever we want them to be. They don't—it's not like their Norwegian-ness is the element of truth to them."

00:26:04 Ben Host

Yeah.

00:26:05 John Host "They live in Valhalla, the crazy, fake heaven."

[He and Ben laugh.]

00:26:11 Adam Host Racists are so dumb they actually believe that Idris Elba shouldn't be cast in a film.

00:26:15 John Host Yeah! They're—

00:26:16 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Adam:** Give me a fucking break.

John: Yeah, come on!

00:26:17 Adam Host That's the dumbest take that there could ever be!

00:26:19 John Host Put Idris Elba in every movie.

00:26:21 Adam Host Yeah!

00:26:22 Ben Host Yeah.

00:26:23 John Host The whole "Idris Elba as James Bond"? I'm still—I'm on pins and needles waiting for that!

00:26:27 Adam Host Yeah.

00:26:28 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** Come on!

Ben: Yeah.

00:26:29 Ben Host I would say they should either stop making *James Bond* films or only make them with Idris Elba in them. [Laughs.]

00:26:34 Clip Clip **Murdock (*Rambo: First Blood Part II*):** That's a hell of a combination.

00:26:36 John Host Give him his ten years! Give him his five *Bond* films!

00:26:40 Ben Host And then, like, Gamergate was three years later. And that was kind of the first, like, breakthrough Proud Boy... you know, "Oh, like, white nationalist misogynist pieces of shit are in fact all around us and suffuse the culture of the Internet" moment, I guess.

00:26:57 John Host So this is a—so 2011 is a little bit of a halcyon time in our recent era.

00:27:03 Ben Host Yeah.

00:27:04 John Host Where Twitter was still good, and bitcoin hadn't—bitcoin you could still get for fifty cents...

00:27:11 Ben Host Yeah, bitcoin—[stifling laughter] bitcoin wasn't—wasn't burning the planet to the ground. [Laughs.]

00:27:15 John Host Right. And nerd culture was still somewhat nascent. I mean, 2011 was the first year that I went on the Jonathan Coulton Cruise, the first year of the cruise, and it was a galvanizing sort of Comic-Con kind of event. But it wasn't—it was still novel. It wasn't clear that the ascendancy of nerd culture was gonna take over our culture, and that sort of everyone was going to be defined as a nerd.

00:27:47 Ben Host Yeah.

00:27:48 John Host Right, there was a protectiveness of nerd culture, but as it also exploded into the popular world. So... it's a—it came out in a weird moment.

00:28:01 Ben Host Yeah. There are a few of these Marvel films that I really enjoy, but I've dragged the like, MCU a couple of times on *The Greatest*

Generation and gotten some very angry letters—like, even pretty recently—from people that still feel, like, kind of aggrieved as marginalized because of their nerdery. And—

00:28:23 John Host Even though these films sold, like... a billion dollars in receipts, right?

00:28:30 Ben Host It would be like if you said something bad about the NFL and somebody took it really personally.

00:28:34 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** *[Stifling laughter]* Or—I mean—

Ben: Because they like football.

00:28:36 John Host *[Stifling laughter]* We live in a world where American Christians continue to feel like they're a persecuted minority.

[Ben laughs.]

00:28:43 Adam Host Yep.

[John laughs.]

00:28:44 Ben Host Right!

00:28:45 John Host So I mean, and that's one of the things that defines our present era, is the idea that every single group of people can position themselves as a marginalized and persecuted group. No matter how mainstream they are, no matter how much they are actually the persecutors.

And that—I feel often persecuted by people that believe in a Marvel Comics Universe, because I cannot turn around without receiving another Marvel omnibus in the mail.

[Ben laughs.]

There are only so many doors in my house that can be propped open by these things.

[Ben laughs.]

The thing is, I love Tony Stark! Right? As a character, his flaws... The flaws in his machines... The fact that he is—you know, the fact that he's both disagreeable and also super charming. All those things are...

00:29:35 Adam Host Loving and yet unlovable?

00:29:37 John Host Yeah, right!

[Ben and Adam laugh.]

I mean, they're compelling throughout the course of a film.

00:29:41 Ben Host Yeah.

00:29:42 John Host So that Tony Stark at the beginning of a film, and Tony Stark somewhat un-re-constructed by the end—like, he always learns something—but at the end he's still a dick.

00:29:53 Adam Host All of that dimensionality is absent from a Steve Rogers, or a Steve Rogers story, I think.

00:29:58 John Host There's no—yeah. There's no dimension to him. Even Thor is a

snark, and he's got his wicked brother. Like, there's something to—I mean, when Thanos appears, you realize that there's a much larger universe where, like, Thanos could be doing things.

[Adam or Ben laughs.]

We could be following him. Where's the freakin' Thanos movie?

[Ben laughs.]

Where he's sitting up on his rock throne with his—with his angry daughters? I want more of that!

00:30:30 Ben Host One of the hosts of the *Retail Nightmares* podcasts described him as a bad guy who's obsessed with jewelry.

[He and John laugh.]

[Through laughter] Which I really love.

00:30:41 John Host But yeah! Here in this film, I just—the entire last hour and a half of it... I felt like I could have gotten up and gone and made a sandwich and come back and not have paused the film, and not really have missed—I would have missed some set pieces.

00:30:58 Ben Host Yeah.

00:30:59 John Host But I wouldn't have missed anything that—I wouldn't have been unable to continue to follow.

00:31:05 Adam Host Red Skull is certainly no Thanos, in terms of dimensionality. He's the son who daddy liked less than his brother, when we're talking about that Stanley Tucci character. But even that is just given such short shrift, right? Like—

00:31:20 John Host But Hugo Weaving is so wonderful.

00:31:22 Adam Host He is.

00:31:22 Clip Clip *[Strange, ethereal rumbling.]*

Johann Schmidt: You have never seen this, have you?

00:31:26 Adam Host He gives everything everything he's got.

00:31:27 John Host Yeah. Also not a great German accent, but... better?

00:31:32 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** Quite a bit better.

Adam: It is a very Werner Herzog type of accent that he's going for.

[John and Ben laugh.]

00:31:37 Adam Host And I do like that quite a bit.

00:31:38 Ben Host Oh, man. What if they just cast Werner in there? *[Laughs.]*

00:31:41 Adam Host Werner could've been a great Red Skull!

00:31:44 Ben Host *[Sighs, then whispering]* That would have been amazing!

00:31:45 John Host From a costume perspective, I would also like to point out I loved Captain America's homemade felt, like, USO costume?

00:31:56 Adam Host Mm-hm.

00:31:57 Ben Host Yeah!

00:31:58 John Host With the kind of, like, floppy ears and the—

00:31:59 Adam Host And the dark colors?

00:32:00 John Host Yeah, just sort of like, the—just the fact that it was made out of felted wool made me super glad. It looked like long underwear.

00:32:11 Ben Host Yeah, it feels very, like, 1950s, in a like, "somebody drew it in the 1950s about the 1940s" kind of way.

00:32:19 John Host Yeah! I mean, if you showed up at a Comic-Con in that outfit, I would high-five you all day. But the—but then he moves into his true costume throughout the rest of the film, and it really does look like a Halloween costume! It doesn't fit him very well—

00:32:34 Ben Host *[Laughing]* Yeah.

00:32:35 John Host It has weird muscle pads.

00:32:38 Ben Host Yeah, and the same weird muscle pads that Red Skull has in his uniform.

00:32:42 John Host Yeah! Red Skull's—when he first shows up and he's in his modified Nazi uniform with the leather trench coat and everything, you get a feeling like "Ooh, here's—he looks like a bad guy!"

00:32:53 Ben Host Yeah.

00:32:54 John Host But then later when he's in his muscle pad—I mean, they really do look like things that you would get at Target.

[Ben laughs.]

At Halloween. And they didn't look impenetrable; they didn't look like they were armor; they just looked cheap.

00:33:07 Adam Host Can we infer from Red Skull's body shape that the red carpets don't match the red drapes?

[Ben cracks up.]

Because like, he has no facial musculature...

00:33:22 John Host But he's not skeletonized in the rest of his body?

00:33:23 Adam Host Yeah! Like, does that go down all the way? Did he lose the skin from everything? Or is he wearing pads?

00:33:29 John Host I mean, the red—the fact that the face is sort of CGI'd, or you know, we're given a skull nose, is... It's an interesting effect, and it makes him scary.

00:33:41 Adam Host Mm-hm.

00:33:42 John Host But his skin tone... is just red greasepaint. Like, it's not even—it doesn't even look like—it doesn't look like blood. It doesn't look like muscle. It's not as interesting as Two-Face in the *Batman* movie, which is genuinely scary.

00:33:59 Clip Clip **Music:** Fast, sinister.

Harvey "Two-Face" Dent (*Batman Forever*): Nothing like a bad case of gas! *[Sinister laugh, followed by a crash or a small explosion.]*

00:34:02 John Host It just looks like he put greasepaint on and he's got a nose prosthetic! I did look at his neck going into his shirt and go, "What's down there?"

00:34:10 Adam Host Yeah.

[Ben laughs.]

00:34:11 John Host But all I imagined was that the greasepaint went like three inches into his collar and stopped. So that was not a very good special effect. Him pulling the mask off was meant to be like a big reveal, and it just felt like a—just sort of "meh."

00:34:26 Adam Host I don't know, I think you gotta save that face! Right? Don't just throw it into the fire!

00:34:30 John Host Yeah, man!

00:34:31 Adam Host You might want that face later!

00:34:32 John Host That was expensive to build, that Hugo Weaving face!

00:34:35 Adam Host Yeah.

00:34:36 Ben Host *[Laughs.]* I mean, save it for me! I would love to have a Hugo Weaving face!

00:34:41 John Host Yeah, I know! Put it on every once in a while?

00:34:43 Ben Host Yeah! Go rob a bank? "Hugo Weaving just robbed our bank!"

00:34:46 John Host Yeah! "What the hell, Hugo Weaving?!" Just use a fake German accent...

[Ben laughs.]

"Hugo Weaving in *Captain America: The First Avenger* just robbed our bank!"

00:34:55 Music Transition Brief clip of "War."

War!

00:34:56 Promo Clip [A telephone rings.]

Hotshot Hollywood Producer: Listen, I'm a hotshot Hollywood movie producer.

[Music fades in.]

Producer: You have until I finish my glass of *[articulating]* kom-bu-cha to pitch me your idea. Go.

[Slurping sounds.]

Ify: Alright! It's called *Who Shot Ya*: a movie podcast that isn't just a bunch of straight, white dudes. I'm Ify Nwadiwe, the new host of the show and a certified BBN.

Producer: BBN?

Ify: Buff, Black Nerd.

Alonso: I'm Alonso Duralde, an elderly gay and legit film critic who wrote a book on Christmas movies.

Drea: I'm Drea Clark, a loud, white lady from Minnesota.

00:35:21 Promo Clip

Ify: Each week, we talk about a new movie in theaters and all the important issues going on in the film industry.

Alonso: It's like *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* meets *Cruising*.

Ify: And if it helps seal the deal? I can flex my muscles while we record each episode.

Producer: I'm sorry, this is a podcast?! I'm a movie producer. *[Disdainfully]* How did you get in here?

Drea: Ify, quick! Start flexing!

Ify: *[Dramatically]* Bicep! Lats! Chest! *Who Shot Ya*, dropping every Friday on MaximumFun.org, or wherever you listen to podcasts.

[Music ends.]

00:35:48 Promo Clip

Music: Intense sci-fi music.

Narrator: You never know who you'll run into in Fairhaven, the city under the bubble.

Alison Becker: Alison Becker.

Eliza Skinner: Eliza Skinner.

Keith Powell: Keith Powell.

Narrator: Mucus-drenched imp monsters...

Rob Corddry: Rob Corddry!

Cristela Alonzo: Cristela Alonzo!

Judy Greer: Judy Greer!

00:36:03 Promo Clip

Narrator: Grotesquely possessive carnivorous plants...

Justin McElroy: Justin McElroy.

Travis McElroy: Travis McElroy.

Griffin McElroy: Griffin McElroy.

Narrator: Terrifying, malevolent, sentient beards.

John Hodgman: John Hodgman!

Paul F. Tompkins: Paul F. Tompkins!

Lisa Loeb: Lisa Loeb.

Narrator: *Bubble*: The sci-fi comedy from MaximumFun.org. Just open your podcast app and search for *Bubble*.

[Music finishes.]

00:36:28	Music	Transition	Brief clip of "War." <i>Huh!</i> <i>Yeah!</i>
00:36:30	John	Host	Tommy Lee Jones does a great job of playing Tommy Lee Jones.
00:36:33	Clip	Clip	Music: Fast, sinister. Harvey "Two-Face" Dent (<i>Batman Forever</i>): Nothing like a bad case of gas! <i>[Sinister laugh, followed by a crash or a small explosion.]</i>
00:36:36	Adam	Host	He's the best at that. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:36:37	John	Host	<i>[Laughs.]</i> He's got a couple of good laugh lines.
00:36:39	Ben	Host	He's definitely rolling his eyes at the whole movie, though. <i>[He and John laugh.]</i>
00:36:43	John	Host	He has some good uniforms. I mean there <u>are</u> a couple of <u>semi</u> -good uniforms. The character of his—of the corporal that wears the bowler hat and has the giant mustache?
00:36:57	Adam	Host	Talking about the great Neal McDonough.
00:36:59	John	Host	I recognize him maybe from <i>Sgt. Rock</i> comics? Or something? It seems like he is an older comic book character that I knew as a kid.
00:37:10	Ben	Host	Oh!
00:37:11	John	Host	Because he seemed very familiar. The—I don't know where I recognized him from.
00:37:16	Ben	Host	Dum Dum Dugan.
00:37:17	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	John: Dum Dum Dugan... Ben: According to IM— <i>[laughs]</i> IMDb, is what that character's name is.
00:37:23	Ben	Host	Timothy "Dum Dum" Dugan. I thought that that squad was like—it was interesting that they kept showing up, given the fact that like, the <u>only</u> characterization they're given is some different accents and one guy is Black and one guy is... of Japanese descent.
00:37:39	John	Host	Yeah. Right. I mean, it's a take on the "Jewish guy, Brooklyn guy," except we get—basically their <u>race</u> —
00:37:47	Ben	Host	Right.
00:37:48	John	Host	—stands in for their character without <u>any</u> further explanation. Except for the Japanese guy says "I'm from Fresno!" <i>[Ben laughs.]</i>

And we're given to understand that he's one of us.

00:38:01 Ben Host Yeah. It's like the one moment in the movie that makes any acknowledgment of what the world—like, what somebody from the forties would think of seeing a Japanese guy locked up with a bunch of American soldiers.

00:38:15 John Host Yeah. Right. Well, I mean, there were Japanese fighting in Europe in World War II, but always segregated into a Ja—all-Japanese unit, *[stifling laughter]* with white officers.

00:38:26 Ben Host Right.

00:38:27 John Host They weren't like, out in an integrated—I mean the movie is very, very careful about showing not just a token Black guy, but, you know, as it pans across a squad of men, there's one here, there's one there. You know, they're always kind of spread out throughout the group. Never two guys—two Black guys talking. Right?

00:38:54 Ben Host Right. *[Laughs.]*

00:38:55 John Host They're always just super-duper integrated. *[Stifling laughter]* But I don't think we ever see another Asian guy!

00:38:59 Ben Host No.

00:39:00 John Host There's just the one Asian guy.

[Ben laughs.]

So, you know. Not...

00:39:05 Ben Host Yeah.

00:39:06 John Host Not completely... Their colorblind army didn't really—they didn't think it all the way through.

00:39:11 Ben Host Probably not true to the 1941, uh, *[stifling laughter]* issues of the *Captain America* comic book.

00:39:18 John Host *[Stifling laughter]* No, for sure.

Looking up here, Dum Dum Dugan did appear in *Sgt. Fury!* Not *Sgt. Rock*, but *Sgt. Fury*.

00:39:28 Ben Host Hm.

00:39:29 John Host When I was a kid, if you could get your hands on those war comics... You know, like, every time you went into the store there was a rack, a circular rack of comics that you would spin around and try and find ones that you liked. And I didn't like superhero comics, but I loved *Sgt. Fury* and *Sgt. Rock*, and the ghost tank and all that stuff, but they weren't available everywhere.

You could always find an *Archie*. You could always find a *Richie Rich*. But boy, if I saw a *Sgt. Fury*, I grabbed it. And Dum Dum Dugan was one of his guy—one of the members of Able Company.

00:40:04 Adam Host That was one of the comics—

00:40:05 Ben Host Yeah.

00:40:06 Adam Host —that we saw in *Predator!*

[Beat.]

From the movie *Predator*.

00:40:09	John	Host	Ohhh, were they reading that in the helicopter?
00:40:11	Adam	Host	That's what that comic was.
00:40:12	John	Host	Yeah.
00:40:13	Ben	Host	Wow!
00:40:14	John	Host	<i>Sgt. Fury</i> .
00:40:16	Adam	Host	This is one of those films that—you know, to answer the question that John proposed earlier, like, "Who is this film <u>for</u> ?" This is a film for people who like telling the hosts of a war movie podcast what all these connections are.
00:40:32	John	Host	Right.
00:40:33	Adam	Host	This is a <u>reference</u> movie.
00:40:34	John	Host	It <u>is</u> a reference movie.
00:40:35	Adam	Host	It's for people who like to see how adaptations are done. And that dopamine hit of the familiar, of like, <u>knowing</u> who that character is with the mustache and <u>knowing</u> who the one Asian guy is, and how that ties into the greater universe. Like, there's a great joy in that for a certain type of fan.
			And I think unfortunately with a film like <u>this</u> , like... ingredients like that don't make a great movie! And I approached this film from the start as like, "Is this a good movie, and is it self-contained as a story, and are its characters contained in such a way that are satisfying and that give <u>any</u> of them at all, like, an actual story arc?"
			And so I think it's a really different amount of satisfaction that someone would derive from a film, you know, if you're just watching it cold like I am, like I <u>was</u> —like, without having much experience with MCU characters or storylines—and someone who has it <u>down</u> all the way.
			And what a <u>fucking</u> hard challenge it is to make a film like this, just <u>in general</u> . Like, you've got a director. He's given a script. It's part of this greater universe that he's got to integrate his story into. You gotta make sacrifices!
00:41:49	Ben	Host	Yeah.
00:41:50	Adam	Host	And the sacrifices you are made to do are often the ones that would make a film a standalone story, enjoyable for a broader audience, right?
00:41:59	Ben	Host	Right. You know that Captain America's safety is not truly in danger because he's gotta appear in subsequent installments of this film series.
00:42:12	Adam	Host	Right.
00:42:13	Ben	Host	In the way that like—I mean, that happens in television. You know? Like, when you watch an episode of, uh, <i>Star Trek: The Next Generation</i> , [<u>pointedly</u>] for example.
00:42:22	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	Adam: Mm-hm.

John: Mm...

- 00:42:23 Ben Host You're not worried that Captain Picard is gonna die, even when he is portrayed to be in terrible danger. So why is it less effective here? Is it because the language of film is a little bit different from the language of television?
- 00:42:35 Adam Host I think we're interrogating the difference between heroism and superheroism.
- 00:42:38 John Host Hmm.
- 00:42:39 Adam Host Are we not? I mean, the qualities of heroism involve risk, and the risk of death, in a way that a superhero can just never embody in the same way.
- 00:42:50 John Host And that's what makes this film kind of a... like a fluff. Because he is human. He doesn't get wounded! I mean, he's using his adamantium shield and his ability to jump high to not only avoid a almost constant hail of bullets from beginning to end, but also blue, Thor-beamed laser cannons and...
- I mean, there's that scene in the—at the end of that Clint Eastwood movie where he armors up that bus and drives it into San Francisco City Hall while the cops shoot at him. And you go, "Yeah, that would—that's a little hard to stomach, but I believe it." Uh, believe it's possible.
- But this, it's just like, why... After a time, why am I invested in him, other than that he's handsome and strong? I mean, I g—
- [Ben laughs.]*
- I think we're meant to constantly picture him as a small man, and that's why we still care about him. We care about him because he's got this heart that came out of being bullied.
- 00:44:03 Ben Host Yeah.
- 00:44:04 John Host And the use of the word "bully" happens a lot in this movie. The bad guys are characterized as bullies. And we see him picked on in a way that—I don't think in 1943, people used the word "bully" that way. *[Stifling laughter]* You wouldn't have characterized a Nazi as a bully.
- "The reason we're fighting this person is he's a bully!" And—
- 00:44:25 Ben Host It would have almost the opposite connotation, when they would say like, "Bully for the Brooklyn Dodgers winning the series!" *[Laughs.]*
- 00:44:31 John Host *[Laughs.]* But that was—but that's—that definitely resonates with a contemporary culture.
- 00:44:37 Ben Host Right.
- 00:44:38 John Host That the "bully" is in some ways the worst of man.
- 00:44:43 Ben Host Well, and that sort of goes to that "everyone is an aggrieved victim" thing that you were talking about earlier. Like, the Proud Boys, the alt-right feel like they're being bullied by the... multicultural left or whatever.

00:44:57 John Host Right. By you in particular, Ben.

00:45:00 Ben Host Mm-hm!

00:45:01 John Host You and your webbed belt.

[Ben laughs.]

And your sockless... Quoddies.

[He and Ben laugh.]

00:45:10 Ben Host *[Stifling laughter]* I'll bully the shit out of those motherfuckers!
[Laughs.]

00:45:12 John Host Yeah, bully 'em!

00:45:14 Ben Host Uh, bully for me!

00:45:15 John Host Yeah, that's right!

00:45:16 Ben Host But—and the like—the 90-pound weakling with the tie that's four inches too short is the like, almost self-parodically quintessential image of a—the victim of a bullying.

00:45:32 John Host And I certainly have, over the years, wished for—in my, you know, in those times when I'm sitting and staring at the wall and living in my imaginary world—wished for some miracle cure that would take away some of my faults, physical and emotional. If only I could take a shot that would—uh, that would take away my scars.

00:45:57 Ben Host Right.

00:45:58 John Host It's a—I think not uncommon to sit and fantasize about it.

00:46:02 Ben Host Right, the idea that that would be instantaneous and not a shitload of hard work—

00:46:07 John Host Yeah, exactly—

00:46:08 Ben Host —that would have imperfect results. Like—like, the—*[laughs]*.

Even if you do like, try to address your faults, you're like, asymptotically approaching a better version of yourself. You can't actually get... there. You can't get to Captain America level.

00:46:24 John Host It's the—it's in some ways the appeal of certain kinds of drugs. Certainly the appeal of psychedelic drugs. Which is that the first few times you take them, you believe that you've been given a glimpse of a higher order. And you think that maybe you've skipped a few rungs on the ladder toward enlightenment. And the sad thing about drugs is that when you come down—and this is true of amphetamines, too, or meth or whatever you—cocaine...

00:46:55 Adam Host Brown-brown?

00:46:56 John Host Brown-brown. You get up there and you feel like Captain America for a while. And then it's a super-duper bummer when you come back to reality and realize that you still have all your problems.

00:47:09 Ben Host I think in the case of cocaine, you feel like Tony Stark for a while.
[Laughs quietly.]

00:47:12 John Host You'd feel like—a little bit like Tony Stark! That's right. And then you realize that you're 90-pound Captain America before he gets the drugs, before he gets the blue serum.

[Ben laughs.]

00:47:22 Clip Transition [Whirring machinery]

Speaker: Let's get high.

00:47:24 Ben Host You mentioned his shield briefly, John. I'd—I wanted to get a Moment of Pedantry out of the way. I could really have filled this entire podcast up with these, but I feel like I've done that bit before.

00:47:36 Sound Effect Sound Effect [Beeping as Ben speaks.]

00:47:37 Ben Host But somebody noted that if vibranium is vibration-proof, the bullets striking it would make no ringing sound!

00:47:44 John Host Hey-heyyy!

[Beeping stops.]

Wooow!

00:47:48 Adam Host Makes a ton of sense.

00:47:49 John Host Hello, pedant! Are you married?

00:47:52 Ben Host I like that they just like, fell directly on the floor, though. They don't bounce off, and that's—I guess stands to reason if it's absorbing all of the energy.

00:48:02 Adam Host Vibranium is from Wakanda!

00:48:03 Ben Host Yeah!

00:48:04 John Host Is it? Really?

00:48:05 Adam Host Yeah!

00:48:06 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** Ohhh, it's that what makes, uh, Wakanda?

Adam: Isn't that fun?

John: Well now wait a minute, is—

Adam: That is a reference that I got!

00:48:10 John Host Wakanda uses some kind of blue, uh, super material, right?

00:48:16 Ben Host Yeah, that's vibranium.

00:48:18 John Host Ohhh.

00:48:20 Ben Host It's the source of all their technology and power.

00:48:23 John Host Wow. Hello, thread! Hello, wonderful thread!

00:48:27 Adam Host See how good that feels? That's—

00:48:29 John Host It's really nice. I get the reference now!

00:48:31 Adam Host People who love MCU movies get to feel that all the time.

00:48:34 John Host Well, that—whenever Nick Fury shows up at the end of a film...

[Ben laughs.]

I'm always like "Yes! Nick Fury! It all ties together! Nick Fury! He's there, with his eyepatch! Making it all work!"

00:48:49 Ben Host Speaking of technology and power, the Nazi super weapon is like—that's like an entire genre of documentary on cable television. And that's kind of the topic of this film. Like, "What if the Nazis had been, you know, this much more advanced than us in terms of what they're doing?" And—

00:49:12 John Host Well it's really a nuclear bomb, right? That's the—

00:49:14 Ben Host Right.

00:49:15 John Host —the effect of it.

00:49:16 Ben Host That's the metaphor. And the idea that we're racing them to the nuclear bomb is definitely, like, a theme that runs through this movie. But I've also watched like, you know, like the History Channel will just have like a thing about a crazy, like, 12-foot barrel gun that the Nazis were trying to build in... in... France, that would be able to shoot shells across the English Channel.

And you know, they just didn't ever quite get it together to—*[laughs]* to finish it or something. But like, the bunker's still there, and they'll like have some English scientists go down there and shine flashlights around and talk about what it would have meant.

It's always like a little bit disappointing when you see those documentaries. It's like, "Oh, you just put a really big gun on a train. That's what the Nazi super weapon really was."

00:50:07 John Host Yeah. You know, they're always fighting the last war.

00:50:09 Ben Host *[Laughs.]* But like, this movie shows them having like, jet engines and stuff, and that was real. But then also... lasers that vaporize people. *[Laughs.]*

00:50:22 John Host The scene where they arrive in the hangar and it's clear that they're going to—that the plan all along was that Red Face—that Red Head was gonna fly these missiles with a bomber... That bomber is so Indiana Jones.

00:50:39 Ben Host *[Laughing]* Yeah.

00:50:40 John Host *[Stifles laughter.]* The idea that there are so many—and I—

00:50:43 Ben Host I like that it has jets and propellers. *[Laughs.]*

00:50:45 John Host Jets and propellers! Which—that's not untrue!

00:50:48 Adam Host And then that one aircraft had a jet engine on its propeller.

00:50:51 John Host Yeahhh.

00:50:52 Adam Host To spin it around.

00:50:54 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** Yeah.

Adam: That was neat!

John: That was pretty cool.

Adam: I like all the aircraft in this film!

00:50:57 John Host But the—I mean those documentaries that you're talking about, about Nazi super weapons, there are so many kooky planes that they at least had on the drawing board...

00:51:08 Ben Host Right.

00:51:09 John Host ...that you can pretty much just design any kind of kooky plane, any flying wing or helicopter that looks like a cannon shell.

[Ben laughs, John stifles laughter.]

And it's more or less believable! Like, "Sure, I guess! I mean, they were the Nazis! Right? They—they, uh, they were building roller coasters."

00:51:27 Ben Host They sure were, John. *[Laughing]* They sure were.

00:51:30 John Host *[Stifling laughter]* Roller coasters.

Well, you know, they—there's an argument to be made that—because the original plan, the original Nazi Army plan, the German—the Wehrmacht plan, the general's plan, was that they wouldn't start that war until 1944. They wanted that extra six years to build all these things.

00:51:49 Ben Host Wow.

00:51:50 John Host And Hitler had such a—he was so successful in Anschluss-ing and Sudetenlan-ing that he was like, "Nah, let's just go for it!" And you wonder if, if they'd waited a few years to build all their super cannons and—and a spaceship—

00:52:09 Ben Host Yeah. If they'd had version two of all those things by the time...

00:52:14 John Host If their little plant in Norway had made all that heavy water...

00:52:17 Adam Host So what you're saying is this was kind of a premature solution?

[Beat.]

00:52:21 John Host A premature solution, yeah. *[Stifling laughter]* Yeah.

[Ben and Adam laugh quietly.]

Yeah! Hold off! Just—if Hitler had edged a little bit more—

[Ben laughs.]

00:52:30 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Ben:** It just—

Adam: Even a premature solution can get someone pregnant.

00:52:33 Ben Host Another technology that's shown a bunch in this movie, to no appreciable benefit to the storyline that I could discern, was video surveillance. Like, SHIELD has surveillance cameras everywhere, and you know, the Red Skull is able to like, look at... Like, there's the moment when the team is storming the final compound, where he like, looks at a surveillance screen and sees like, out in the yard, the combat popping off, and he's like, "What's going on?!" *[Laughs.]*

And I feel like you could have just done that with him hearing gunfire. But like, for some reason he has the power—like, he has video power. Which... seems like—

00:53:16 John Host That is so weird. I didn't notice it...

00:53:19 Adam Host Yeah.

00:53:20 John Host ...but now that you mention it, that is infuriating. That is...

[Ben laughs.]

00:53:23 Adam Host Great call, Ben.

00:53:25 John Host *[Laughing]* That makes me so mad!

00:53:27 Ben Host And the other moment is that like, he like has—he has like, rear-view video monitors on the airplane! And that's also—it doesn't add anything to the story!

00:53:38 John Host And yet—

00:53:39 Ben Host That's just there to be annoying! *[Laughs.]*

00:53:40 John Host Yeah, it's just there to be annoying. Wow. I'm really surprised that that went by—I mean, it's testament to how much this movie failed to engage at the level of looking at it critically, or looking at it with any kind of attempt to locate it in time and space. By the point we got—

00:54:02 Adam Host You didn't wake up that hard.

00:54:04 John Host No, by the—*[laughs]* by that point we were just like—

[Ben laughs.]

[Sleepily] "Ohhh, uh-huh. Oh, suuure. Ehh."

[Dropping the tone] I mean the opening scene of the movie when they cut into the frozen ice plane, and rope down into it, and start walking around—the two scientists.

00:54:23 Ben Host Yeah.

00:54:24 John Host One of them says out loud to no one, "What is this?"

[Ben laughs.]

And it's like... "Fuck you!"

[Ben laughs again.]

"You know what it is!" Like, "Of course you know what it is!"

00:54:36 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** But ev—

Ben: Yeah.

Adam: Yeah, that's for the viewer's benefit.

00:54:38 John Host Yeah, but even if you don't know what it is, you can guess without saying, like—it's a ship! It's a—some kind of ship!

00:54:44 Adam Host The other guy's like "It's a ripoff of *Aliens*."

[John and Ben laugh.]

"And LV-426. That's what it is!"

00:54:51 Ben Host This movie does, like, really heavily borrow from so many other films. Like, the war bond sequence felt so much like *Flags of Our Fathers*. Like, the "Hitler digs for trinkets in the desert" line was so much a *Raiders of the Lost Ark* nod.

00:55:09 John Host Yeah.

00:55:10 Ben Host Like, it's—it's both a series of references to its own universe, but also just like, cobbled together from pieces of other shit. It's like a Franken-movie.

00:55:22 John Host Yeah. A little bit like when *The Lego Movie* makes jokes that only Mom and Dad are gonna get.

00:55:29 Ben Host *[Laughing]* Right.

00:55:30 John Host Except this is—yeah, this is—it's basically a treasure hunt for the viewer to be like "I got that! I got that!"

My question is when 90-pound weakling Captain America goes into the machine, scientist Abraham Erskine—Stanley Tucci character—says "Take off your shirt and your hat." But he leaves his pants on. And then he goes into the machine... and he turns into like, super bulked-out dude, but his pants still fit! He's—

00:56:05 Adam Host It's not leg day in that machine, John.

[Ben laughs.]

00:56:06 John Host He didn't rip out his pants! Which, you know, speaking as somebody who in the course of a year goes up or down a couple of pants sizes, I can tell you...

[Ben laughs.]

...that if I were wearing a pair of pants that fit in June, those pants aren't necessarily gonna fit in October, let alone if I super-bulked out.

00:56:27 Adam Host Torn pants are a Hulk thing, right?

00:56:29 John Host Yeah! Why didn't they do a little torn pants action?

[Beat.]

Hulk smash.

[Adam and Ben laugh.]

I think the most successful Marvel movie—I'm just gonna walk out here and say it—is *Guardians of the Galaxy*.

00:56:44 Ben Host Hm!

00:56:45 John Host I feel like *Guardians of the Galaxy* took a thing that nobody really knew—who the hell knew that story? And—

00:56:51 Adam Host And that helped!

00:56:53 John Host It helped a lot. And then made a funny, charming adventure movie where it felt like there were stakes, even though it's a superhero movie. We're not gonna lose anybody, but there was so much personality in that movie, and that's what made it such a surprise and such a delightful film.

All this stuff is... All this Captain America stuff, it's like, so earnest. In a way.

00:57:18 Adam Host You also know him completely before the movie starts. Everyone

knows who Captain America is, even if you aren't a rabid comics follower. But very few knew who the Guardians of the Galaxy were.

00:57:31 John Host And Captain America has to be pure.

00:57:34 Adam Host Yeah

00:57:35 John Host He doesn't—there's no point in time that he's covetous, he's never—when the girl soldier pulls him into the—you know, behind a filing cabinet and gives him a wet kiss, he's just shocked and dismayed. He doesn't have any prurient qualities—

00:57:54 Ben Host That lady is canceled!

[Beat.]

00:57:56 John Host She's super-duper canceled.

00:57:58 Ben Host No kissing without consent.

00:58:00 John Host Yeah, that's right. She's off the—she's off the list. Although... she's on my list.

[Ben laughs.]

00:58:08 Adam Host You don't think Steve Rogers wanted that at that exact moment?

00:58:11 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** I think he did; he didn't res—

Adam: I think so too!

John: Yeah.

Adam: Let's not be so quick to cancel, alright?

00:58:15 Adam Host *[Somewhat parodically]* I'm about ready to cancel cancel culture!

00:58:18 Ben Host I can't help but be part of cancel culture; it's part of my brand!
[Laughs.]

00:58:22 John Host Yeah, it's part of his brand. Somebody on this show has to be part of cancel culture, to identify with that segment of our listenership.

00:58:29 Clip Transition **Steve Rogers:** Some of these men need medical attention.

00:58:31 Adam Host Was there a point in the film where the care that you brought to it was abandoned?

00:58:38 John Host *[Sighs.]* After he goes on the rescue mission and they're marking him as dead, and then he appears walking up the boulevard with almost the entire crew all saved. And just prior to that, when they were fighting their way out and they all sort of—if they could lay hands on a blue machine gun, they knew how to operate it.

There was a couple of funny moments, where they—

00:59:04 Adam Host Yeah.

00:59:05 John Host —where they were like, "How does this work? *[Mimics explosion.]*"

But it—

00:59:09 Ben Host *[Laughs quietly.]* "Whoops, just blew up a building!"

[Chuckles.]

00:59:10 John Host Yeah, "Rrrr!"

00:59:11 Adam Host Yeah, one of the characters is even like, "Woohoo!" Like it's fun!
[Laughs.]

00:59:14 John Host Yeah. Yeah. But there was—that nobody got hurt that wasn't a stormtrooper, and it just felt like, ohhh, whatever work went into making Tommy Lee Jones a real person, or Hayley Atwell being a real person, all that work was for naught. Because we're in a realm now where nobody's a real person.

00:59:42 Adam Host I think that was the moment for me, too. I really approached this film with good faith. Like, I really wanted to enjoy it for what it was. Like, the first third of the film, I was really like, "Alright!" Like, "I can get this! This is gonna be fun!"

00:59:56 John Host Yeah.

00:59:57 Adam Host But then it just failed to pay off any part of itself.

01:00:01 John Host Yeah, when you first see Tony Stark's dad, and he's doing a Howard Hughes impression, and you're like, "Right!"

01:00:08 Adam Host Yeah.

01:00:09 John Host "It's Tony Stark's dad!"

01:00:10 Adam Host Yeah.

01:00:11 John Host "And he's a Howard Hughes! I get it, I get it!"

01:00:12 Adam Host Yeah.

01:00:13 John Host "Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah!" The real—the attempt at characterizing those people was effective!

01:00:20 Adam Host It's character edging, because you get just a little bit—you just only get so much to get the recognition dopamine before you're on to the next.

01:00:30 John Host Yeah. Yeah. And basically—

01:00:31 Adam Host You gotta wait for the next movie to come, John.

[Ben laughs.]

01:00:34 John Host [Stifling laughter] You did—you did see the origin story of Tony Stark's dad.

01:00:38 Adam Host Mm-hm.

01:00:39 John Host Because it was that Leonardo DiCaprio movie where he played the lightly fictionalized Howard Hughes.

01:00:44 Adam Host The piss man.

01:00:45 John Host Yeah, you could—[laughs]. You could just put that movie at the—in the Marvel Universe, because basically it belongs there.

01:00:52 Adam Host Right.

01:00:53 John Host But yeah, it was at that point that—and from that moment on, they never return to a place where anything is even remotely real. Because the bad guys—I mean, Hugo Weaving appears to be a legitimate baddie at the beginning. And the fact that he's characterized as a brilliant scientist who went awry? We're given a kind of foreshadowing of like, "Oh!" Like, "He's not just morally compromised! He's a—he has an inner life."

01:01:26 Adam Host I never felt like he was a better scientist than the Toby Jones character.

01:01:30 John Host *[Dismissively]* No.

01:01:31 Adam Host Was I supposed to?

01:01:32 John Host Toby Jones was just a flunkie. Flunkie scientist!

01:01:35 Adam Host Yeah... I felt like they were more equivalent in talent than maybe was intended.

01:01:40 John Host But we see Toby Jones go through a little bit of an arc, right? He's just—he loves the science, and then we see him become...

01:01:47 Adam Host Yeah.

01:01:48 John Host That scene were everybody's "Hail Hydra"-ing, and then he's like, "Uhhh... Hail Hydra!"

01:01:53 Ben Host Well, he never wants to be confronted with the upshot of what he's building. Like, he's really happy when he's like, walking through the factory and they're using, you know, captured GIs as slave labor. But when somebody gets vaporized in front of him he's like, grossed out by it.

01:02:11 Adam Host In a film that is so grounded in the jealousy of its main characters, like, where is Toby Jones's pathos? Like, he's looking at all these people putting themselves into machines and getting stronger. Like, what could be more tantalizing to him than that?

01:02:27 John Host Right!

01:02:28 Adam Host Give him some dimensionality!

01:02:29 John Host Right! Let him go into the machine and have that experiment go awry and he comes out like The Fly!

01:02:35 Adam Host Yeah.

01:02:36 Ben Host That would be great!

01:02:37 John Host That's how we woulda done it.

01:02:38 Adam Host Yeah. Punch-ups by *Friendly Fire*!

[John laughs.]

01:02:40 Ben Host Well, when we reboot the MCU—

[Adam laughs.]

—you know, we're gonna do all of this stuff. And more!

01:02:46 Adam Host Right.

01:02:47 John Host But yeah! Could—if you made this movie and the bad guys were slightly both more human... and also slightly less vulnerable. I mean, no bad guy ever really lands a punch. They just show up and get shot. And then fall down.

And if you had slightly fewer anonymous stormtroopers, but they had slightly more capability, slightly fewer miracle weapons that did not appear to have any effect on just regular US troops... You know, if there was—if it was more... If there was an—a more even balance! We just get—we—all American troops are superheroes, and all

members of Hydra are there explicitly to die.

[Ben laughs.]

It's the only thing they're good at! You could have made this film more interesting.

01:03:45 Adam Host You're either a head that gets cut off, or one of the two that pops up.

01:03:49 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Ben:** Wow.

John: That's—oh, that's why there're so many Hydra soldiers!

01:03:51 John Host 'Cause there are two for every one that die!

01:03:54 Adam Host Yep.

01:03:55 John Host You can never defeat Hydra!

01:03:56 Adam Host Nope.

01:03:56 Ben Host They also do their "Heil Hitler" with both hands!

01:04:00 John Host Yeah!

01:04:01 Adam Host That's gonna be tough if you're carrying something. To do that salute.

[Ben laughs quietly.]

01:04:05 John Host Yeah, you have to drop your gun. That's a dumb salute.

01:04:08 Adam Host Or your beverage or whatever.

01:04:10 John Host *[Laughing]* Right. If you've got a Big Gulp.

01:04:12 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Adam:** You're not gonna be able to—

John: Like, "Shit! Hail Hydra! *[Dismayed]* Awww..."

01:04:15 Adam Host Like, when a—*[laughs]*. When a general comes into the commissary, like—

01:04:19 John Host Yeah.

01:04:20 Adam Host —there's a lot of dropped trays.

01:04:21 John Host Yeah, your boots are all covered with Mountain Dew and gravy!

[Adam and Ben laugh.]

01:04:25 Music Transition Brief clip of "War."

War!

Huh!

Yeah!

01:04:28 Adam Host Are we ready to review?

01:04:29 Ben Host Think we're ready.

01:04:31 Adam Host *[Sighs/laughs quietly.]* I was hoping for so much more from *Captain America: The Avenger*. The first Avenger.

01:04:36 John Host First Avenger.

01:04:37 Adam Host *[Laughs quietly, then sighs/groans.]*

01:04:38 John Host Except Thor would be the first Avenger, right?

01:04:40 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** Isn't Thor a lot older than Captain America?

Adam: Is this Thor erasure? I kinda feel like it is.

01:04:45 John Host Thor is some kind of, like, long—he's got a longer story arc than Captain America!

01:04:50 Ben Host Guys, I'm pretty sure it's *Captain America: The First Adventure*.

01:04:53 John Host Yeah.

01:04:54 Ben Host And...

01:04:55 John Host Right.

01:04:56 Ben Host I don't wanna mis-say it, 'cause I know that we'll get corrected. So, uh. First Adventure.

01:05:00 John Host First Adventure. First Av—advennn—av—av—advenger.

[Ben laughs quietly.]

[Working his way into a French accent] Uh-vej-errr. A-vin-jahr!

01:05:08 Adam Host You know what doesn't work for me for character development? Is a guy just saying he doesn't like bullies. Or a guy who's just not good at climbing the rope ladder. Or a guy who never gets the girl. Like, these are pretty weak demonstrations of an underdog. But you know the part that really made me love Steve Rogers? Is where that dummy grenade gets thrown in the middle of his squad.

[John laughs.]

And he jumps on it. And he cradles it.

01:05:42 John Host Yeah, he curls up and says "Get away, get away!"

[Beat.]

That's not even how you jump on a grenade.

[Ben laughs.]

01:05:47 Adam Host That's...

01:05:48 Ben Host Yeah.

01:05:49 Adam Host That's the moment that tells you everything that you need to know about Steve Rogers.

Except we'd wasted 40 minutes of treacly, NutraSweet forties and fifties... "Aw shucks" character development on him! And I—

01:06:06 John Host *[John "bah-dah-nah"s his way through a wordless, cheerful ditty.]*

01:06:10 Adam Host It's... I mean... Glenn Miller is more heroic than Steve Rogers to me.

[John laughs.]

I'll save that for another show.

[Ben laughs.]

01:06:18 John Host Yeah!

01:06:20 Adam Host But it's a scale of one to five dummy grenades, is the review system

that we'll use for *Captain America: The First... Avenger*, because of that scene. I think that's... You can boil Steve Rogers right on down into that moment. And to the degree that that moment is effective, I think is—that's gonna tell you how much you like a Steve Rogers, and maybe even a little bit of how much you like this movie.

I mean, we spent a lot—

01:06:48 John Host

It's so virtue-signaling.

01:06:49 Adam Host

[Sighs.] It is.

01:06:51 John Host

[Laughs.] 'Cause it's just like, "Come on, dude!"

01:06:54 Adam Host

That's the moment that was instinctual, vs. something that's... I don't know. Like, the circumstances of that just felt far... better than any of the others. That felt more real to me. I mean, we have savaged this film up until now, and I think there are a lot of good reasons to do that!

[Ben laughs.]

Again, I really gave this film an open mind. I wanted to like it. There is a fit and finish to a Marvel Cinematic Universe film that this one definitely has. It looks good, and it sounds good. You feel things in all the places you're supposed to. Like—but the stakes are just a flatline throughout.

And it's unfortunate because there are some interesting ideas that the film floats and then doesn't pay off again. Like, the idea of power being the ultimate weapon is like a fairly interesting concept that this film just doesn't interrogate at all. Like, this thing could be used for good or evil. But it's an arms race. And that's fairly uninteresting, as these films go.

That is a conflict dead end that is one of several throughout the neighborhood that makes up this film and makes up the cinematic universe as a whole. I don't—like, I understand the constraints that a Marvel film has to operate under. But I'm not forgiving of that! I think you have to be a real movie! Even if your film exists in a greater story.

01:08:21 Adam Host

And this isn't one! There's no change in this main character. There's no change in any character except for Red Skull, and his change is death.

[Ben laughs.]

Further—

01:08:34 John Host

Well, Peggy has loneliness.

01:08:36 Adam Host

Right.

01:08:37 John Host

Awaiting her.

01:08:39 Adam Host

I liked Peggy a lot as a character, and I wish we got more of her. I wish we got more of the Stanley Tucci character. But again, this is a—this has got the bumpers up on the bowling lane of the story. Like, you can't deviate out of what the comic gives you. Because this is a story that's pre-ordained.

And that is another thing that just fucking kneecaps it in terms of feeling any sort of anxiety about the wellbeing of our characters. Characters that we're supposed to love. And they are very likable! But I think without stakes, you can only go so far with them.

One thing that you guys like that I didn't was the costume. And I think superhero costumes... *[stifles laughter]* are important when it comes to your respect for a superhero! And that Captain America costume is like the ultimate cowlick.

01:09:32 John Host What, the one at the beginning or the one at the end?

01:09:34 Adam Host The entire time!

[John laughs.]

Like, it makes him look like a child throughout the film, and I don't think that that serves him as a superhero at all. *[Stifling laughter]* The costume doesn't work for me. The film barely works for me—

01:09:48 Ben Host When—when in us dragging the costume for ten minutes did you get the idea that we liked it?

01:09:53 Adam Host Oh, John was pro-costume!

01:09:55 John Host I was pro-original costume, then I shit on every other costume in the movie!

01:09:59 Adam Host Alright, well it's now clear—

01:10:00 John Host I would wear that first costume!

01:10:02 Adam Host We all dislike the costume.

01:10:04 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Ben:** Was Adam looking at Twitter while we were talking about that, John?

John: I think he was. He was, yeah. He was.

Adam: I was pre-answering the emails that we're gonna get about this episode.

[John laughs, Ben cracks up.]

John: He was putting out his Tarot cards.

01:10:14 Ben Host You were setting up a series of new Twitter rules? *[Laughs.]*

01:10:17 John Host I—if I wore that costume to a Comic-Con though, I would look like Veruca Salt. So I'm gonna leave it—leave it on the hanger.

01:10:25 Adam Host I know we are going to be told a thousand times on a thousand now-muted Twitter accounts—

[John laughs.]

—that We Just Don't Understand.

01:10:35 John Host Yeah.

01:10:36 Adam Host We didn't get all the references like that we're supposed to. This movie isn't for us.

01:10:40 John Host No. It's fun, it's—"why are we taking it so seriously," it's just mindless diversion or a good time. Why—

01:10:50 Adam Host A movie is supposed to be a movie, and this is a component, and not a film. And so it's two dummy grenades from me.

01:10:56 John Host Hm!

01:10:58 Adam Host Two because—I mean, there's a lot of great quality brought to bear here that's just unrealized. Like good performances! The effects are good! Some exciting things. Fit and finish—wise, great. But everything else... The essential qualities of a good film are not here.

What about you, Ben?

01:11:16 Ben Host *[Sighs.]* I also... really grated against the bumper bowlingness of the plot, and I wonder if it's more useful to think of the MCU as a really high-budget and very long season of television than a film series. Because then it does allow for like, the minimal character change. Like, characters—like, the homeostasis is reset at the end of an episode of television so that when we start the adventure next week, it's from a normal place that viewers just tuning in can understand. And I think that that's kind of the model, maybe, that they are trying to follow here?

I don't know; it's a... I just didn't care that much! *[Laughs.]* You know? It was so hard for me to give a shit. And I don't think that you save a bad story with good special effects, or good sound mixing or whatever. Like, I think that the story has to be the first and most important thing. And you know, taking the Nazis and making them cartoonishly advanced and cart—like, and decoupling the evil of the Nazis from the things that the Nazis believe is... stupid and... and dumb and—and bad?

Like, the belief system is what is evil about them. And the—

01:12:52 Adam Host Yeah, does the Marvel Cinematic Universe deny the Holocaust?

01:12:56 John Host Well, I don't know, I didn't see any of it here.

01:12:59 Ben Host Well, that's the thing! Like, I got up on the edge of my seat when Toby Jones and the Red Skull are walking through the factory and Toby Jones is complaining that the slave labor that they're using is like, you know—they can only work so hard; they're not—that they don't have enough energy, and he says like, "Oh, well we can always get more of those." And I was like "Oh my god, are they gonna have like, emaciated Jews working these machines?"

Like, that would have changed so much about this film, and changed the stakes entirely, but instead it's just a bunch of like, very well-fed-looking multicultural soldiers that are locked in a—*[stifling laughter]* you know, in like a—in a jail cell that looks like it's straight out of *Battlefield Earth*.

01:13:42 John Host Who have only been there for three days. Right? They've—they—

01:13:45 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** *[Stifling laughter]* They're—they've been—

Ben: *[Stifling laughter]* Right.

Adam: Yeahhh, they're doing fine.

John: They've been trained to build these sophisticated weapons.

01:13:50 Ben Host *[Sighs.]* So I don't think that, uh... I don't think that the fit and finish saved it for me, and I'm gonna give it one... and a half dummy grenades.

01:14:00 Adam Host Okay!

01:14:02 John Host Yeah, I was surprised at how much—when I saw this movie in the theaters, I was surprised at how much I liked Chris Evans. He's a handsome person, and a fit person... and that's two strikes against him in the—

01:14:16 Adam Host We haven't seen his legs, so I mean...

01:14:18 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** Oh, you see 'em in those pants, though.

Adam: He's a fit upper body person.

01:14:21 John Host Yeah, you see those—you see those legs. You can imagine those buttocks. Firm.

[Ben and Adam laugh quietly.]

Strong.

I don't—I didn't get the sense, um, how big he was. Like, he's shown to be much taller than his small self. But there's a scene where small Chris Evans is talking to who we're meant to think of as normal-size Stanley Tucci. *[Stifling laughter]* And they're not really very different in size. So there are a few moments where it's like "Now how big are these people, really?"

And so the performance of the main character, I think, is... is a good part of this film. Everybody else is just clowning. Even Hugo Weaving is—he's having fun with what he's been given, but there are a lot of sorta clownish performances, as we've said. Tommy Lee Jones is just—it's just a paycheck for him. He's gobbling up what he can, but...

[Ben laughs.]

But otherwise, ehh, it is a attractive film, it is an adventure film, but this is a film for seven-year-olds, and seven-year-olds shouldn't be watching a film with this much unregulated violence!

It's, I think, characteristic of our time, that it is a movie about killing... thousands that we're not meant to care about. And in that sense, it's another video game movie. It's another zombie movie. And it—in that sense, I find it's a xenophobic movie. If you are—if you're sitting there enjoying watching thousands die... and you don't care about them because they're in a weird costume, or because they represent a different nationality that—what you're doing is you're killing people who are different from you, which is ultimately in our—it—I don't think there's—it's much of a leap to say that you're killing other, and other in our world is someone of a different race, or a different nationality.

01:16:42 John Host An enemy that you have no sympathy for, you don't try and get

inside them. They're just a mindless other. And I find that very dangerous, and in particular dangerous because it pervades our culture. We're consuming so much quote-unquote "mindless entertainment," whose message is that there are enemies that we can kill with impunity.

And so I don't find this mindless, and I don't think it's something for kids. And if it's not for kids, then it's for overgrown kids who have not really examined what they're consuming. And I think it's important to examine what you're consuming, and I think it's one of the criticisms I would level at fan culture and comic book culture, is that when you grow up, you put aside childish things and you start to take a more sophisticated look at what you're eating.

01:17:40 Ben Host

Fuck, we're gonna be burned to the ground. *[Laughs.]*

01:17:42 John Host

Yeah. And I mean, I know that that's unpopular, and I know that this is meant to be empowering to certain people, but I don't think it is. I don't think it empowers.

01:17:52 Adam Host

I don't think the consumption of childish things is necessarily bad, but I think looking at those things critically as you consume and enjoy them is a—is something to aspire to.

01:18:03 John Host

Yeah. I mean, well, yeah! And if you look at this critically and are taking, like, unregulated pleasure at... Because we see this all the time! We see movies where actual Nazis, actual Japanese soldiers, are portrayed as just an other. We never know anything about them. They just die en masse.

And we find that problematic when it is—when it's a battalion of Japanese. But—

01:18:32 Ben Host

Right.

01:18:33 John Host

—that extends to this type of thing, this first-person shooter universe. And I don't mean to characterize it as something that inspires people to do mass shootings in America, but it certainly desensitizes you to the idea that there are—that there's pleasure to be taken in the destruction of a human—a humanoid—who you have no obligation to know or understand their motivation.

Sooo... but, it is a fun movie with a lot of guns in it, and some—and one cool costume. And it—and then you get Nick Fury at the end.

[Someone laughs quietly.]

So one and a half dummy grenades.

[Ben laughs.]

And if you would like to write an angry letter, please write it to gofuckyourself@gmail.com.

[Ben laughs.]

And Adam will read it, because that's his account.

01:19:34 Ben Host

That is his personal email, yeah.

01:19:36 John Host Yeah. And he'll definitely reply. So you can—you'll get the satisfaction of knowing that one member of *Friendly Fire* has read your angry Tweet.

01:19:44 Adam Host That's why I never got any follow-up in all the—all my job interviews!

[John and Ben laugh.]

No one wanted to send me a follow-up email. It's very dispiriting.

01:19:52 Ben Host That's why you had to turn to the lucrative world of podcasting.

01:19:56 John Host Mm.

01:19:57 Adam Host Wow. Pretty low marks for this film. But who would you give your highest marks to as a guy?

Ben, who's your guy?

01:20:08 Ben Host The old lady that works in the antique store.

01:20:11 John Host Mm.

01:20:12 Ben Host And does the code exchange at the beginning, *[stifling laughter]* and then has the submachine gun at the end when the German spy is escaping.

I just—I love that lady! She's maybe the most interesting character in the entire movie, 'cause how did she get that job?! Like, what is—what was her career up until that point? And—

01:20:33 John Host She was a—she was somebody that fought in World War I.

01:20:37 Ben Host Yeah! Is that like, OSS or something? Like, she's—she's like—she's like a fucking badass! And she gets taken out pretty early, but she's tough as nails, and I really liked her.

01:20:48 Adam Host I'm gonna read to you the note I have for my guy. "Machine gun grandma at the book store."

[John and Ben crack up.]

"A real hero with stakes."

01:20:58 John Host Yeah!

01:20:59 Ben Host Yeah!

01:21:00 Adam Host She stuck out to me for the same reason, and I feel exactly the same. Give me an entire movie of her origin story. She was awesome.

01:21:09 John Host My guy is a—is—well, I had a hard time choosing between the chorus line, who were all just having a great time and serving their country—

01:21:20 Ben Host **Ben:** *[Laughs.]* Yeah!

John: —by high-kicking.

Ben: Gotta get those war bonds!

01:21:23 John Host But ultimately my guy is the thousands of—of SPECTRE bad guys in gas masks.

[Ben laughs.]

Who just got mown down. I felt so much for them. I understood that they had mothers and fathers. They had brothers and sisters. Some of them were married. They married before they went off to war. They were sending letters home. They didn't understand what—

01:21:51 Ben Host Yeah, we never cut to a close-up of the photo of the sweetheart in their compass lid.

01:21:56 John Host That's right. The ones that were shot with .45 caliber machine gun bullets or shotguns lay on the ground writhing in pain. Some of them for hours. No one coming to rescue them. They had to put on those dumb uniforms and never fully understood why.

[Ben laughs.]

They—it was hard to breathe in there and hard to see.

01:22:19 Ben Host They probably had terrible acne, right?

01:22:21 John Host Well, yeah, right? I mean, they're sweating in there. They're uncomfortable. Also they've been somewhat indoctrinated into Hydra's, like, the Hydra Universe? And you feel bad for them that they've been—they're either in a cult, or they were poor and looking for a job. And this is how they ended up. And then they just got unceremoniously—and the thing is they're well-armed! But none of them ever seemed to hit their target.

01:22:50 Adam Host I always thought the mind was the best weapon.

01:22:53 John Host Yeah...

So they were my guy, together, as a group. And you know, the thing is that I didn't get the feeling that they were Nazis. Who knows what their worldview was?

01:23:06 Adam Host Right! How could you get that? *[Laughs.]*

01:23:08 John Host *[Stifling laughter]* Yeah, there was no Kristallnacht in this movie!

They were just... They were just guys that graduated from high school and responded to a recruiter!

[Ben laughs.]

01:23:17 Adam Host Hydra should be the Volkssturm! Give us some old Hydras!

01:23:20 John Host Yeah, right!

01:23:21 Adam Host Some young Hydras!

01:23:22 John Host Yeah! Where are the Hy—where are the flawed Hydras?

01:23:26 Adam Host Yeah.

01:23:27 John Host The ones that were like "Wait, wait, wait. Do I have... Do I have to do this?" There were those Hydras.

Anyway, hail Hydra. *[Laughs quietly.]*

01:23:35 Music Transition Brief clip of "War."

War!

Huh!
Yeah!

01:23:38 Adam Host Also hail the 120-sided die.

01:23:41 John Host Here it comes.

01:23:42 Adam Host The die which tells us—

01:23:43 Ben Host Hail Die-dra. *[Laughs quietly.]*

[Beat.]

01:23:45 Adam Host ...which film we'll be watching next.

01:23:46 John Host I'm hoping that in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, we only have to do two in a row.

[Ben laughs.]

And honestly, this should be in the pork shop feed.

01:24:00 Ben Host Yeah, it probably should have been a pork chop movie.

01:24:02 John Host Partly because it happens in an alternate universe. It's really a science fiction movie.

01:24:06 Adam Host I feel like an essential quality of films in the pork chop feed are the nomination by one of us.

01:24:11 John Host *[Reluctantly]* Right.

01:24:12 Adam Host As a film that we enjoy, and I don't think any one of us would have done that for this film.

01:24:16 John Host Yeah. I mean, and we really did take this movie to task, and it really is just a... should be just a... popcorn-eating pork chop movie, but—

01:24:25 Adam Host There are good and even great films in this universe. Right? This just isn't one of 'em.

01:24:30 Ben Host Mm-hm.

01:24:31 John Host Here we go! Rollin' the diiiiie!

[Die rolls on a hard surface for about five seconds.]

Number 17! Seventeen, the big seventeen!

01:24:45 Ben Host Seventeen is a World War II film from 1984.

01:24:50 Music Music *[Intense, dramatic music plays.]*

01:24:52 Ben Host Directed by Jim Abrahams, David Zucker, and Jerry Zucker.

01:24:56 John Host What the...

01:24:56 Ben Host It's *Top Secret!*.

[John cracks up. The music stops.]

01:24:59 Adam Host Wooow! I love this movie!

01:25:02 John Host *[Giddily]* *Top Secret!*

01:25:06 Ben Host This is wild! I added that to the list this morning and randomized.

01:25:10 John Host Whoa.

01:25:11 Ben Host And that—it happened to get to 17!

01:25:13 John Host Whoa, okay, make your compelling defense why *Top Secret!* is a war movie.

01:25:18 Ben Host Uh, somebody told me on Twitter that it should be on the list!

01:25:22 Adam Host This movie's so great.

01:25:23 John Host Wow, Twitter person. You had the rare, rare, rare experience of having your movie chosen right away!

[Ben laughs.]

There're gonna be so many *Friendly Fire* listeners who are—*[stifling laughter]* who put their movies out there a year and a half ago who are gonna be maaa-aad.

01:25:38 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Ben:** Yeah. I mean—

Adam: *Skeet-surfin!*

01:25:40 Adam Host Have you seen this, John?

01:25:42 John Host I never saw *Top Secret!*, no.

01:25:44 Adam Host At—

01:25:45 John Host When this movie came out, I had already—I already felt like I'd graduated to foreign language films at the local arthouse theater.

01:25:53 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Ben:** Well.

John: I wasn't going to see Leslie Nielsen movies anymore.

Ben: I don't think I've seen it either.

Adam: This is a Val Kilmer film.

01:25:58 John Host Oh, Val Kilmer! I like him.

01:26:00 Adam Host Who is Leslie Nielsening his way through this film.

01:26:04 John Host He's the Rickles?!

01:26:05 Adam Host He is. He is fantastic.

01:26:07 Ben Host *[Whispering]* Wow.

01:26:08 John Host Nice.

01:26:09 Adam Host This is a lot of fun.

01:26:10 Ben Host Fun.

Cool! Well, that will be next week. Uh... *[laughs]*. I feel like the trilogy of *Beast of No Nation*, *Captain America: The First Adventure*, and *Top Secret!* is a pretty wild...

[He and John laugh.]

...three places for a single podcast to ricochet off of, but, uh—*[laughs]* here we are!

01:26:33 Adam Host Everyone's got a podcast these days, but no other show would do three straight shows on those three movies.

01:26:39 John Host Yeah.

[Ben laughs.]

Well, and *Bridge at Remagen* got us started, right? Was that the last movie before *Beasts of No Nation*?

01:26:47	Adam	Host	Mm-hm!
01:26:48	Ben	Host	It was, yeah!
01:26:49	Music	Music	"War" begins fading in.
01:26:50	John	Host	Yeah, I can't wait to see what's next week.
01:26:51	Adam	Host	What a run.
01:26:52	Ben	Host	Alright, well, that'll be the movie we review next. We will leave it with Robs from here. So! For John Roderick and Adam Pranica, I've been Ben Harrison. To the victor go the spoiler alerts.
01:27:06	John	Host	"War" continues, playing quietly as Rob speaks.

*Absolutely—
—nothing!*

Listen to me!

War!

It ain't nothing but a heartbreaker

01:27:10	Rob Schulte	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.
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Our theme music is "War," by Edwin Starr, courtesy of Stone Agate Music, and our logo art is by Nick Ditmore.

Friendly Fire is made possible by the support of our listeners. Like you! And you can make sure that the show continues by going to MaximumFun.org/donate. As an added bonus, you'll receive our monthly pork chop episode, as well as all the fantastic bonus content from Maximum Fun.

If you'd like to discuss the show online, please use the hashtag #FriendlyFire. You can find Ben on Twitter at @BenjaminAhr. Adam is @CutForTime. John is @johnroderick, and I'm @robkschulte.

Thanks! We'll see you next week.

01:28:04	Music	Music	"War" continues until the next music cue.
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Is there no place for them today?

*They say we must fight to keep our freedom
But Lord knows there's got to be a better way
Oh!*

01:28:17	Music	Transition	A cheerful guitar chord.
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01:28:18	Speaker 1	Guest	MaximumFun.org .
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01:28:19	Speaker 2	Guest	Comedy and culture.
01:28:21	Speaker 3	Guest	Artist owned—
01:28:22	Speaker 4	Guest	—audience supported.