

00:00:00	Music	Music	Quiet, intense orchestral music.
00:00:02	Adam Pranica	Host	<p>Hill 937. A steep, well-fortified pin on a map. The People's Army of Vietnam had it, and the US Army wanted it. That's all a soldier on the ground needs to know, and it's all <u>we</u> know as we follow our one platoon through this one operation. Along the way we get to know the sergeant and the squad leader, played by Steven Weber and Dylan McDermott respectively. But we get to know them fairly little compared to the rest of the platoon.</p> <p>There's Doc, the medic, played by Courtney B. Vance. There's Bienstock and Beletsky and Motown. There's Languilli, too—and you better say his name right. McDaniel has less than a month left on his tour. Each person gets a scene to better understand them and their motivations.</p> <p>There's a feeling of dread that pervades this film, though. It's a haunted house kind of dread. The kind of dread you feel when you spend an amount of time with characters you grow to like, who you are sure are going to meet a terrible end in movies like this. It's not going to go well on Hill 937. The futility of the repetition cements that. Attempt after attempt is made. There's napalm and rain. There's friendly fire. It's exhausting and terrifying.</p> <p>It's the tenth assault in the rain that takes Doc, the conscience of the film, off the board. Finally, the eleventh and final assault is mounted, overrunning the enemy positions and allowing Beletsky, Washburn and Frantz to reach the summit. But there's no joy in this victory, only fatigue and grief.</p> <p>I suppose what makes <i>Hamburger Hill</i> different from many other Vietnam War films is a sense of hopelessness that pervades the thing. There's wry humor in <i>Full Metal Jacket</i>, at least. And you could say <i>Apocalypse Now</i> is about just one or two people's psychological traumas. <i>Platoon</i> has Charlie Sheen. And as bad as things look, we don't lose <u>all</u> hope in those films, wouldn't you say?</p>
00:02:15	Adam	Host	<p>But after wave after wave of assaults upon the hill, as our soldiers are resisted, repelled, and reduced, it dawns on us: this <u>really</u> needs to matter. This <u>better</u> mean something, in the end.</p> <p>The US Army abandoned the hill soon after taking it. And there it is: the film's micro telling of the macro story. The heroism <u>and</u> futility during the siege of hill 937 <u>is</u> the Vietnam War in a nutshell. And maybe that's what's missing here, too. By sacrificing drama for the sake of realism, we are left feeling as empty and exhausted as those at the top of the hill at the end of the film.</p> <p>Because that's what's at the core of the thing. You get the sense that <i>Hamburger Hill</i> is really trying to say something with the hopelessness. Its message could simply be a reminder, a warning, and a question: what does it all mean?</p> <p>"We've been up that hill ten times, and they still don't think we're serious" on today's <i>Friendly Fire: Hamburger Hill</i>.</p>

[Music fades into the opening drumroll of "War."]

00:03:25	Music	Transition	<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>
00:03:42	Ben Harrison	Host	Welcome to <i>Friendly Fire</i> , the war movie podcast that don't mean nothing, man! Not a thing. I'm Ben Harrison.
00:03:48	Adam	Host	I'm Adam Pranica.
00:03:51	John Roderick	Host	And I'm John Roderick.
00:03:53	Adam	Host	This is one of those hard war films that we get from time to time, right? Where it's... gruesome and difficult and frustrating.
			<i>[Music fades out.]</i>
00:04:03	Ben	Host	Yeah. I think I was maybe extra frustrated by how unwilling the movie seemed to be to... contextualize itself, or try and say something bigger about the war.
00:04:21	Adam	Host	Oh, I kind of feel like that's the thing that I love about it!
00:04:24	John	Host	I feel like I <u>hate</u> the fact that they totally preached to us every time any two actors were talking!
00:04:31	Adam	Host	Oh, wow.
			<i>[John laughs.]</i>
			And so we begin. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:04:33	Ben	Host	I think—I think what it was for me was that we <u>just</u> watched <i>Tora! Tora! Tora!</i> , and I got the bends going from "everybody has two or more stars" to like, "we meet one lieutenant."
00:04:50	John	Host	There's a private first-class who lords it over everybody else. <i>[Laughs.]</i> "I'm a PFC!"
			<i>[Ben laughs.]</i>

Uh, yeah. There's not—unlike a lot of Vietnam movies, there's not a big picture presented here. Which is, I think as Adam said, sort of its strength. We're just down with 'em. But I really felt like there was a ton of—there were a lot of soliloquies in this movie.

00:05:17 Ben Host I felt like that too, but like, to me they seemed like they were coming from the characters' mouths and not from the film—like, it wasn't the film trying to say something through a character as much as it was... a character just saying a thing that they felt, as a way of fleshing them out as a character.

00:05:35 John Host Boy, we are going to tangle today, you and me.

[Adam and Ben laugh.]

Because honestly, I mean, I—

00:05:43 Adam Host I have a feeling that this is going to be a thing with you.

00:05:46 John Host *[Laughs.]* I—from the very start of this movie... My feeling about the first half of this film is that it seemed like a... it seemed like a community theatre play. I really felt the hand of a writer—

[Ben laughs.]

—in every word that everybody said, including the—it—not just the soliloquies, but also just like the normal attempts at portraying three guys having a jocular conversation, felt very writerly to me.

[Ben laughs.]

And felt like, acted in a... in a mannered way. I really felt like I was off-off-off-off-Broadway.

00:06:27 Ben Host You thought Max Fischer from *Rushmore* was writing it?

00:06:30 Clip Clip **Child:** I ain't even here, Sergeant! I'm in Cheyenne, Wyoming!

00:06:35 John Host For the first long bit of this movie, I felt like it was one of these one-helicopter Vietnam films. Where they only had—

[Ben laughs.]

—they only could afford one helicopter. And so every time—

00:06:47 Ben Host Yeah.

00:06:48 John Host —they're trying to portray like a big movement of helicopters, you just see one at a time. "Here's one! Oh, there's another one! Ope, there it is!" You know, just like—yeah, right. One helicopter. Then this movie, at about the midpoint, completely turned on its—turned on an axis, and somehow became a very different movie.

But yeah, the first 45 minutes to an hour, I just—I felt like I've seen versions of *House at Pooh Corner* that were more—*[laughs]* more engaging for me.

[Ben laughs.]

House at Pooh Corner as put on by the Shoreline, like, Children's Theater.

00:07:27 Adam Host Well, we've skipped—
[John laughs.]
—right to the review portion of the show. *[Laughs quietly.]* Wooow.

00:07:33 John Host I—I give it one hotdog!
[Ben laughs.]

00:07:37 Adam Host Are you really feeling the proximity effect of this film to other films that we've watched lately?

00:07:42 John Host Nope.

00:07:43 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Adam:** Does that hurt it?
John: No. I—I—

00:07:45 John Host I, uh—there are quite a few scenes, for instance, where the frame—the filmmakers were super conscious of the frame. And so we're watching somebody in the middle of the frame, and then another actor comes in in the foreground, and then a third actor comes in relative to the second actor in the foreground, creating a perfect triangular-shaped vector, drawing the eye of the viewer to the—and it's just like—I—it just felt like a film studies... thing where the people took it—took their instructions too literally, and—and it—*[stifles laughter]* and there were just so many frames where I was like, "Good job, I guess."

00:08:27 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** "If that's what you're going for."
Adam: John hates composition.
John: *[Laughs.]* I mean, but composition that's in service of nothing other than... to show—
Adam: *[Laughing]* John's the guy on the film crew ripping up the marks in the ground.
John: *[Laughs.]* Yeah! Right!

00:08:40 John Host Like, you know what? Like, let it happen! Let it happen a little bit!

00:08:43 Adam Host "We won't have any spike tape on this production. No thanks."
[Ben laughs.]

00:08:48 John Host It was—it was not just—it was—I guess it was the fact that it kept piling on these compositions, these... kinda clichéd—we don't quite have a, like, Jewish guy, Italian guy, but pretty close! We got the redneck guy, we've got the pussy hound...

00:09:06 Ben Host It seems like everybody in this unit is the Brooklyn guy.

00:09:11 John Host There's a lot of Brooklyn guys. I was... put off.

00:09:15 Ben Host Yeah.

00:09:16 John Host And I continued to be put off until they get to the hill. Everything up until that point just felt like, "Meh."

00:09:23 Ben Host How much did you know about this particular engagement going into the film, John?

00:09:31 John Host Zero.

00:09:32 Ben Host Okay. 'Cause I didn't either, and I read it—I read about it afterwards, and it seemed like maybe a 1987 filmgoing audience would have understood... with more recency, like, the kind of—the way in which this film—this particular battle was emblematic of something about Vietnam, which is we got all these guys killed to take this hill, and then the hill doesn't have a strategic—like, they don't talk about that in the movie at all. Like, that there's actually no reason to take this hill other than there are some VC up there.

00:10:12 John Host Yeah, weirdly, the film ends on that poem about like, "Don't forget your fallen heroes" poem. But when it really should have ended with a title card that said "One week later, we abandoned the hill, and it never mattered. It had no strategic significance. We immediately handed it back over to whoever was there."

00:10:35 Ben Host Did 1987 moviegoer know that, or—?

00:10:38 John Host No. No, I don't think so. I mean, we—in 1987 people understood that the entire Vietnam War had been somewhat of an exercise in futility. But I think Hamburger Hill itself was some kind of turning point in the way the war was being conducted. The idea up until that point was "We fight the enemy where they are." And so they're everywhere. And what we do is just go where they are and fight them, with the idea that we're gonna demoralize them and defeat them. We're just fighting a war of attrition. It's—there's no battle lines.

And after Hamburger Hill, and the recognition that we were just throwing soldiers into a hole... I think it changed the way the war was conducted.

00:11:26 Ben Host It's so weird to leave that out—

00:11:27 John Host It is.

00:11:28 Ben Host —of a movie called *Hamburger Hill*!

00:11:30 John Host It is. Why the—I mean, and they could have put it in as like, just a little... a little scroll at the end of the movie, and it would have made the movie better, I think.

00:11:38 Ben Host That's what I was saying I was frustrated with.

00:11:40 John Host Yeah. Right. You were missing the context on either side of it.

00:11:44 Adam Host Is that context provided by other films, though? Like, does *Platoon* and *Full Metal Jacket* so strongly present the idea of that futility that a *Hamburger Hill* that comes out only months after those films doesn't need to do that? We already know it.

00:12:00 Ben Host I think that *Platoon* is... trying to do a different thing? And it, like—*Platoon* has plenty of context. Like we understand, you know, where Charlie Sheen is from, and like what kind of a guy he was before he enlisted, and like why everybody else thinks he's an idiot for having chosen to do that, and then we watch him go on this journey.

This movie is about a—like a real battle.

00:12:29 John Host Yeah, right. *Platoon* is about the entire Vietnam War. And *Full Metal Jacket* is about... some other war. 'Cause it sure as shit didn't seem like it was set in Vietnam.

[Ben laughs.]

When they get to that town, it felt like it was Mosul.

[Ben laughs harder, John stifles laughter.]

Even though we haven't watched that movie yet. But Adam, all these movies were in production at the same time. So I don't think that *Hamburger Hill* was consciously thinking "Well, I'll let those other movies do the heavy lifting of examining Vietnam."

- 00:13:00 Adam Host I didn't make that case as a conscious decision. I'm just trying to put myself in the mind of a filmgoer in 1986 and '87. Like, do you have a—like, is that already ingrained when you're going to go watch war films in '87, after having seen *Platoon* and *Full Metal Jacket*? Do you—like... is that already there for you, in a way that isn't as we watch these films in 2019?
- 00:13:26 John Host I feel like that was the hot moment, right? The late eighties was when we were finally ready to watch some Vietnam movies that interrogated the war and our conduct there, and all of these movies are members of the same family. Which are "Let's make some brutal movies now. Let's make some *Casualties of War* and see how much Americans can take." And it's also a moment in American cinema where like, people getting blown up is being employed much more graphically.
- A lot of the—a lot of these movies—I mean, even in *Apocalypse Now*, you don't see anybody's guts. You don't see anybody's head get blown off.
- 00:14:08 Adam Host You see water buffalo guts.
- 00:14:11 John Host You see water buffalo neck guts. But—
- 00:14:13 Adam Host Those don't qualify as guts?
- 00:14:15 John Host No, I don't think—well, maybe. But you don't see, like—you don't see like, "Bleghhh."
- 00:14:19 Adam Host You don't see intestines.
- 00:14:20 John Host Yeah.
- 00:14:21 Adam Host You don't see offal the way you see offal in *Hamburger Hill*.
- 00:14:24 Ben Host You see it in like the first two minutes of the movie. There's a guy with his small intestines pouring out of his belly.
- 00:14:31 John Host But all—there's always been a war movie shorthand for a lot of this stuff, but I think the lexicon of Vietnam War movie shorthand was still being written at this point. If you put a lot of this stuff in a contemporary—in a war movie about Vietnam now, it would just feel like "Come onnn. Come up with something else."
- 00:14:49 Ben Host Yeah. Like, this seems like a cliché because it is the headwater of so many of those clichés.
- 00:14:56 John Host Yeah, but we're still in an era where putting—in 1987, a movie like this that is totally soundtracked throughout... every time some sixties hit comes on, it still would be evocative then, instead of feeling corny.
- 00:15:14 Adam Host That Animals song is great, though.

00:15:16 John Host It's a great Animals song! You gotta get outta that place! It's right there, in the title.

00:15:10 Adam Host Yeah.

[Ben laughs.]

00:15:20 John Host They want out.

00:15:21 Adam Host Yeah.

00:15:22 John Host Of that place.

00:15:23 Adam Host That place.

00:15:24 John Host Yeah.

00:15:25 Clip Clip *[Crowd chattering.]*

Speaker: Everybody shoots at me. Especially you grunts.

00:15:27 John Host You know, there are a lot of those early battle scenes in this movie where—for instance, when they're up on the hillside on the other side of that river, and they start taking mortal—mortar fire, and the first 20 mortar rounds land on the opposite side of the river, and they just—they're sorta walking that mortar forward.

00:15:45 Ben Host Yeah.

00:15:46 John Host And the mortar is like, just gratuitously blowing up civilians on the other side.

00:15:51 Ben Host That was a confusing scene. I was like "Are they shooting the civilians?" Like, "Why are they blowing up over there?"

00:15:57 John Host The civilians are getting blown up, and it really felt like, "Oh, well this movie needs a reason to show some hurt civilians to get us feeling something. To get us on the path to somewhere." But during that scene, all of our guys up on the side of the hill just start... shooting. And looking—surveying the set across that river valley, where whoever the bad guys are are walking those mortar rounds forward, there is no place you—it's just—you can see no place where there's—anybody would be in even gun range! And our guys are just like—just unloading bullets. At nothing. I can't imagine any filmgoer that would look at that and go like, "Oh, they're shooting at a bad guy." They're just shooting bullets! And it felt so much, like, movie.

Like, "We need to see these guys in combat. But we're not ready to put 'em in combat, and so they're just shooting bullets across a river valley while we set off some explosions." It just felt like, not real and not good. Because it didn't hold up to the geography. Like, the geographical test of like, who are you shooting at? Who's in charge here? Ain't you?

[Ben laughs.]

00:17:13 Adam Host Boy, I just felt so differently about the film, and I think it's... I mean, I get it. I get your perspective. I recognize it.

00:17:21 John Host Yeah. Uh-huh.

00:17:23 Adam Host But the thing that I appreciated most about the film was that you don't ever get to be the general with the star. You get to be the grunt.

00:17:32 John Host I don't wanna be the grunt, Adam.

00:17:34 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** I wanna—

Adam: I know you don't, but that's the point! That's the point of this!

John: *[Stifling laughter]* That is not the point of this.

00:17:38 Adam Host Like, you're gonna put on the boots and you're gonna be the grunt, and you're gonna fight for a hill that you don't understand the strategic value of, because that's your fucking job. And that's what war is!

00:17:50 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** Now we're talking about the—*[laughs]*.

Adam: And war is so dumb! Because it's over hills!

John: We're talking about the second half, though!

00:17:53 John Host You're talking about once we get to the hill! Now once we get to the hill, I got a different story to tell about this movie. But before we get to the hill, it's just—it's some community-ass theatre.

00:18:04 Adam Host You don't think it's *Tora! Tora! Tora!*-ing at all in its run up to the hill?

00:18:10 John Host No. I feel like there are some dudes firing blanks while we get to know which one's the hick, which one has his girlfriend's picture in his wallet... We get to see some—

00:18:18 Ben Host Dylan McDermott is really trying to Lee Marvin his helmet, and—

00:18:21 John Host Yeah. Oh, his helmet?

00:18:22 Ben Host He's not doing a great job of it. *[Laughs.]*

00:18:24 John Host His helmet is always, uh, askance.

00:18:26 Adam Host This has happened in a hundred war films, John, and you saved the one hundred and first for this kind of criticism.

00:18:31 John Host *[Laughs.]* Yeah! For the 101st Airborne.

00:18:33 Adam Host Yeah.

00:18:34 John Host The Screaming Chickens represented here.

00:18:35 Ben Host Whooooa.

00:18:36 John Host What do you think about that, Ben?

00:18:37 Ben Host That's—I—that's a total accident!

[John laughs.]

That's amazing!

00:18:41 John Host 101st episode, 101st Airborne.

00:18:43 Ben Host Wow!

00:18:44 John Host But then there's the guy from *Wings* who's like, also a hard-bitten sergeant. I like the relationship between the sergeants! I liked that they were friends.

00:18:53 Adam Host Did not think Steven Weber had this gear in him.

00:18:56 John Host But he—he did. And then—

00:18:58 Adam Host Wow. Great Steven Weber film.

00:19:00 John Host You know Doc, from *The Cosby Show*, was chewing up the scenery. And he had glasses, which is a great way to establish a character.

00:19:09 Adam Host Can you imagine casting and directing Don Cheadle in his first film, and not knowing you have a Don Cheadle on your hands?

00:19:16 John Host Oh, the thing is, as soon as he's on the screen you know you have a Don Cheadle on your hands.

00:19:20 Adam Host He's criminally underused in this film.

00:19:22 John Host He is. Yeah.

00:19:23 Ben Host Yeah. He has about a quarter as many lines as would be minimum for a Don Cheadle.

00:19:29 John Host Later on in his career—

00:19:30 Adam Host Contractually you would be obligated to give him more *[laughs]* down the road.

00:19:33 John Host In *Ocean's Eleven* and *Twelve* he's criminally over-used.

00:19:36 Adam Host Mm.

00:19:37 John Host Yeah.

00:19:38 Ben Host Whoa.

00:19:39 John Host Yeah, that's right. I said it. *[Laughs.]*

00:19:40 Adam Host You need to find Don Cheadle equilibrium.

00:19:42 John Host You do.

00:19:43 Adam Host In your Don Cheadle film.

00:19:44 John Host *Crash!*

[Ben laughs.]

The movie *Crash* is where you find Don Cheadle equilibrium.

00:19:47 Adam Host That film is just criminal, period.

[All three laugh.]

Irrespective of how Don Cheadle is used in it.

00:19:55 John Host But when they get to the hill, something happens to this movie. And it becomes a great war movie! And I don't know what happens, because it's the same movie. It's not one of those movies where it's like "Well that was a shitty movie and now it's a good movie."

00:20:10 Adam Host I feel like the hill scenes lobotomized me to the first part of the film, because I—I ac—I just don't understand where you're coming from when you criticize the first half.

[John laughs.]

It's almost like we saw different films.

00:20:22 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** Yeah, we did. I saw the film *Hamburger Hill*, and you—

Adam: Yeah, and I hit fast forward on my remote in 30-second increments.

[Ben laughs.]

John: *[Laughs.]* Yeah. Yeah, you looked up from your *Sgt. Rock* comic books long enough to get who the comics—

Ben: Ah.

John: —the stars were.

Adam: That's fair.

John: You like—

Ben: Adam, you missed all the topless babes! *[Laughs quietly.]*

Adam: Yeah.

John: Couple of topless babes in a hot tub.

Adam: I do like, uh—yeah, shared bathtub. That's how you know you're close.

00:20:45 John Host That's right. That's how you know it's Vietnam.

00:20:46 Adam Host Yeah.

00:20:47 John Host Some guys said "Didi mao" a couple of times. Uh—

00:20:51 Adam Host So on a scale of one to five soapy boobs...

[All three laugh.]

00:20:56 John Host One to five, or one to five pairs?

00:20:59 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** 'Cause if we are—if there's only—

Ben: Yeah!

Adam: That's for you to decide.

John: *[Laughing]* If there's only five soapy boobs...

[Ben and Adam laugh.]

00:21:04 John Host I don't know, that's a Vietnam whorehouse I'm not sure I wanna visit.

[Adam and Ben laugh.]

00:21:10 Ben Host Plausible, though. *[Laughs.]*

00:21:11 John Host But the fighting on the hill—and the thing is, I found the fighting up into the hill in this movie unrealistic and... and like, almost insulting. And then all of a sudden, we're in a movie that has 30 helicopters—how does a movie gets two F-4s?!

00:21:31 Ben Host Yeah.

00:21:32 John Host There—we've seen a lot of Vietnam movies where they didn't come up with two F-4s to strafe the hill a bunch of times. Like, that's impressive shit! They're setting off napalm...

00:21:41 Ben Host It's sort of impressive, but it actually—there actually is a problem with

the F-4s, John.

00:21:47 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Adam:** Uh-oh, here it comes.

John: Oh, boy.

Ben: A pedant on the Internet noticed that—

John: Are we there already?

00:21:51 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[Beeping as Ben speaks.]*

00:21:52 Ben Host None of the F-4 jet aircraft that, quote, "bombed" the hill numerous time had any bombs on them! Any ordnance on an F-4 is visible. Those pictured had none. Not even wing fuel tanks.

[Beeping stops.]

Wow.

00:22:08 John Host Dogged.

00:22:09 Adam Host You know, James Carabatsos is the writer of this film...

00:22:13 John Host Yeah?

00:22:14 Adam Host A Vietnam War veteran. So if you have any problems with the, uh— with the truthfulness, or how any of these scenes are depicted in terms of whether or not they're correct...

00:22:26 John Host Yeah.

00:22:27 Adam Host ...in your mind, you'll have to take it up with him!

00:22:29 John Host I don't—

00:22:30 Adam Host He was there, man!

00:22:31 John Host I don't wanna take it up with him!

00:22:32 Adam Host You weren't there!

00:22:33 John Host Just because you were there doesn't mean you're a good writer of there!

00:22:36 Adam Host Mmmmm...

00:22:37 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Adam:** Yeah!

John: Right? Right?

Adam: Alright!

00:22:38 John Host I mean, you know. Use—

00:22:40 Adam Host You got me there!

00:22:41 John Host *[Laughs.]* You were there for the indie rock irony wars of the 2000s. But what's your screenplay like?

00:22:47 Adam Host "You were there" is an excuse for a lot of shit.

00:22:50 John Host There's a lot—there are—there's a lot of the production of this movie that stands on the stilts of... uh—

[Ben laughs.]

It was written by Vietnam vets. There were Vietnam vets used as technical advisors. There are a lot of Vietnam vets that ride for this movie.

00:23:10 Ben Host

Yeah.

00:23:11 John Host

But none of that makes it a good movie.

00:23:14 Ben Host

This was the last thing Jim Carabatsos wrote before a TV movie he wrote in 2001, which is the last thing he wrote period.

00:23:23 John Host

Was that *House at Pooh Corner*?

00:23:25 Adam Host

Oh, jeez.

[John laughs.]

Come on.

[Ben and John laugh.]

Come on. Show some respect. We're a respectful show here.

00:23:35 John Host

This movie opens with a long—super long pan across the Vietnam Veteran Memorial. And I don't—I couldn't decide at the time whether I felt like it was gratuitous, or... but like, respectful, or pandering.

00:23:55 Adam Host

Think it's very interesting that the very first shot in the film is of the Capitol Building. It is not the war memorial.

00:24:00 John Host

That's right.

00:24:02 Adam Host

Shot number one.

00:24:03 John Host

Capitol Building.

00:24:04 Adam Host

Yep.

00:24:05 John Host

Because this movie is in the family of Vietnam films that is... that at the very core of it is the—that hoary old criticism that we coulda won this war if it weren't for the civilians back home. There's an awful lot of preachy dialogue about how the longhairs and the hippies are spitting on us when we get back to the airports. And a lot of that's been debunked, you know? That soldiers came home and got dog shit thrown at 'em by cute co-eds. And there's an awful lot of that in this movie that, again, feels pandering to that MIA POW crowd.

00:24:43 Ben Host

Yeah. There's definite—there's that guy that's like, "My girlfriend's gonna stop writing to me because everybody she goes to college with told me it was immoral"?

00:24:51 John Host

Yeah, all of the Ben Harrisons' parents at Berkeley who are—

[Ben and Adam laugh.]

—throwing dog shit at soldiers...

00:24:57 Ben Host

Yeah.

00:24:58 John Host

But you know, like, that stuff—

00:25:00 Ben Host

Yeah, I can—I can actually confirm that some of that did go down.

[John laughs.]

'Cause my mom was engaged in a lot of it.

00:25:05 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** Yeah.

Adam: Yeah.

00:25:06 Ben Host That's actually how she met my dad when he cycled back to the world. She, uh—she threw poop at him, and...

00:25:09 John Host And he was like "Hey, baby!"

00:25:11 Ben Host *[Laughing]* Yeah. He fell in love.

00:25:13 John Host "She has looong, straight hair all the way down to her butt."

00:25:17 Ben Host Love at first poo.

00:25:18 John Host You know, 1987, there was still a real, like... that was maybe peak "Vietnam vet on a Harley-Davidson with a handkerchief wrapped around his head and a leather vest that said 'POW/MIA'... doing that late eighties revisionism of 'We woulda won that thing if it weren't for those damn communists in the State Department—'" read: pussyfooting democrats and hippie co-eds... And that stuff—that sticks in my craw, too. I don't think that's the main theme of this movie, but it definitely is a vein running through it.

And it's a vein you don't see in *Platoon*, 'cause *Platoon* was written by a hippie. Before he became a Castro apologist.

[Ben and John laugh.]

00:26:04 Ben Host And a Putin acolyte.

00:26:05 John Host Yeah, and a Putin bootlicker. But that whole, like, "This movie is beloved by Vietnam vets" thing—that has—that's a—that's code for a lot, I think. Code for a certain amount of like, "Here's a flag up your ass."

00:26:20 Adam Host *[Laughs.]* Oof!

00:26:21 John Host *[Laughs.]* Until we get to the hill!

[Adam laughs quietly.]

00:26:25 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** Until we get to Hamburg—the titular hill made out of hamburger.

Adam: The titular hill, yeah.

[Ben laughs.]

00:26:31 John Host And then it becomes a freaking great war movie! Like, it's gr—those battle scenes—and I was mad enough at it that I was like, "Are these battle scenes really good or am I just, like... was I just bored enough that now I'm getting some fighting and I'm into it?" But no, they—that holds up. That feels real. It feels—and I started to care about the characters! Like, it becomes a good movie! All the stuff about them before, all of the little—all the like, "That's a hell of a combination" stuff that we get at the beginning... it all, like, clicked! I didn't want 'em to die!

[Ben laughs.]

I wanted Dylan McDermott to keep being handsome! I didn't want him to stop being handsome! He sto—he even—even Dylan McDermott's handsomeness gets covered with mud.

00:27:15 Ben Host Didn't think it was possible.

00:27:16 John Host Adam is so mad he doesn't know where to start. *[Laughs.]*

00:27:18 Adam Host No, I'm—I'm—I'm incredulous. I'm not mad. I—yeah. Just, I'm really surprised. This is not how I expected this episode to go.

00:27:28 Ben Host *[Laughs.]* What was your expectation?

00:27:31 John Host That it would be a mutual celebration.

00:27:34 Adam Host No, not that! But this just—to call it "formula" would be pejorative, but there is a formula to these films that this film prescribes to. The—

00:27:45 John Host Ascribes to.

00:27:47 Adam Host "—Get to know your soldiers before you watch them die on the hill" type of movie.

00:27:51 John Host Right. Right.

00:27:52 Adam Host And I don't see how this film is any different from a lot of others in that way. But you're making the case that it is. And I'm not agreeing with that.

00:28:02 John Host Right.

00:28:03 Adam Host That's what's happening in my mind right now.

00:28:04 John Host I don't think I'm making the case that it's different, or that it even fails at that. But just that I saw the... I saw the matrix.

[Adam and Ben laugh.]

00:28:19 Adam Host It's not—*[laughs]*. It's not even—it's not even that it's—that it was—"You take the red pill."

[John laughs.]

00:28:24 John Host "You turn off *Hamburger Hill* and you go back to *Platoon* where you belong." *[Laughs quietly.]*

00:28:45 Ben Host Part of it is I just didn't believe the—I didn't feel like the dialogue felt real. The dia—dialogue can be super corny and still feel real. There's a moment where somebody—where a soldier goes, you know, "We're not here to ask the questions. We're here to answer them!" And you can—you already know what he's gonna say. And you—

00:28:46 John Host Yeah. "We don't start fights."

00:28:47 John Host That's right.

00:28:48 Ben Host "We finish 'em!"

00:28:49 John Host "We finish them." That's what he said. Right.

00:29:05 Adam Host There's a Courtney B. Vance-ification of his dialogue that really—like, this is the second lobotomy for me, is like, he makes it work! And I believe him! Even though it's corny as hell, some of the things that he's saying.

00:29:05 Ben Host I would agree with that. I mean, I think that the problem I have with

the first—I—it's like the first like, 40% of the movie is pre-hill. And I don't feel like—like, Courtney B. Vance is like, the exception, where it seems like it's trying to establish these characters and help us understand the dynamics of this squad. And I just didn't feel like I got to know any of them but Courtney B. Vance, you know?

00:29:38 John Host You know what it is? The first 40 minutes of this film... if you took the first 40 minutes of this film and the first 40 minutes of *Operation Dumbo Drop* and you swapped 'em—

[Ben laughs.]

You—

00:29:49 Ben Host It'd be like "Why are there tits in this Disney film?" [Laughs.]

00:29:51 John Host [Laughs.] You would not—there would—you would have—you know the characters in *Operation Dumbo Drop* and care about them more than you do the characters in *Hamburger Hill*.

00:30:03 Ben Host Yeah. Like, they—like, two guys go off to a whorehouse. And then do some whoring, and leave. And—

00:30:09 Adam Host I'll never get the image of Danny Glover and Ray Liotta and those soapy tits—

[All three laugh.]

—in that Jacuzzi together—

00:30:17 Ben Host But like—

00:30:18 Adam Host —[stifling laughter] in *Operation Dumbo Drop*.

00:30:19 Ben Host Like, there's no conflict in that scene. Like, one of 'em doesn't get rough or, you know, one of 'em doesn't... catch an STI. Like, they're—like, nothing happens, you know? Like, it's characterization without any of the frisson that we need to actually understand the—who these guys are.

00:30:36 John Host Where's the frisson, Adam?! That's what Ben and I are saying! Frisson.

00:30:42 Ben Host They do a little to establish the lieutenant as like, officious and bureaucratically oriented. That's like, all we ever know about him. And it—like, we have the later scene where he calls in the helicopter strike that gets a bunch of his guys killed, but it doesn't really seem like it's his fault.

00:31:00 John Host Nope. It doesn't.

00:31:02 Adam Host I feel like I am fucking beaucoup dien cai dau right now.

00:31:05 John Host [Laughs.] It's only halfway through that scene that you even realize it's the lieutenant you're dealing with!

00:31:09 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** Because he just—

Ben: Right. [Laughs.]

John: You don't—the—they're—

Ben: Yeah, he's covered in mud at that point. [Laughs.]

00:31:13	John	Host	He shows up a lot in this movie, and you forget he's the lieutenant! Because he's given so little to do.
00:31:19	Adam	Host	Very interested in what your review of this is going to be. Be, uh—
00:31:23	John	Host	<i>[Laughs.]</i> Yeah, it's gonna be beaucoup dien cai dau is what it is. <i>[Adam laughs.]</i>
00:31:25	Music	Transition	Brief clip of "War." <i>War!</i>
00:31:27	Promo	Clip	<i>[Wolf howls. Dramatic piano and organ music. Throughout, the wolf howls again, and a crow caws.]</i> April Wolfe: Hello there, ghouls and gals. It is I, April Wolfe. I'm here to take you through the twisty, scary, heart-pounding world of genre cinema on the exhilarating program known as <i>Switchblade Sisters</i> . <i>[Sinister echo on the title.]</i> The concept is simple: I invite a female filmmaker on each week, and we discuss their favorite genre film. Listen in closely to hear past guests, like <i>The Babadook</i> director Jennifer Kent, <i>Winter's Bone</i> director Debra Granik, and so many others every Thursday on MaximumFun.org . Tune in! If you dare... <i>[Thunder booms, something growls over April as she cackles evilly, and then all sound abruptly cuts.]</i> April: <i>[Rapidly]</i> It's actually a very thought-provoking show that deeply explores the craft and philosophy behind the filmmaking process while also examining film through the lens of the female gaze. So, like, you should listen. <i>[Same sinister echo effect]</i> <i>Switchblade Sisters!</i>
00:32:13	Promo	Clip	Music: Gentle, upbeat piano music. J. Keith van Straaten: Hey everybody, this is J. Keith van Straaten, host of <i>Go Fact Yourself</i> , a live game show here on the Maximum Fun network. On <i>Go Fact Yourself</i> , we take the smartest people we know, and make them look dumb. J. Keith: Paul, by the way, how much do you know about chicken

husbandry?

Paul F. Tompkins: You gotta give 'em that grain.

J. Keith: Alright!

[Audience laughs.]

Paul: You gotta give 'em that grain!

J. Keith: And then smart again.

J. Keith: What future hall of fame pitcher for the Cleveland Indians became the first active player to enlist—

Speaker 1: Bob Feller.

J. Keith: —wh—oh. Okay!

[Audience laughs again.]

J. Keith: We've got me, co-host Helen Hong, plus celebrity guests and actual surprise experts.

J. Keith: Alright, we have an expert on hand for sure.

Speaker 2: Is it Allan Havey?

J. Keith: Helen, who do we have tonight?

Helen Hong: Allan Havey!

J. Keith: Allan Havey!

[Crowd cheers.]

J. Keith: In the coming weeks, you can hear guests like Maria Bamford, Tom Bergeron, Paul F. Tompkins, Janet Varney, and Grant Imahara. Check us out on the first and third Friday of every month, here on the Maximum Fun network.

[Music continues for a moment, then ends.]

00:32:35 Promo Clip Brief clip of "War."

Huh!
Yeah!

00:33:06 Adam Host You do get that gallery of familiar soldiers. You get the short-timer.

00:33:11 John Host Mm-hm.

00:33:12 Adam Host You get the—

00:33:13 John Host He was great.

00:33:14 Adam Host You get the most Italian soldier ever depicted on film.

00:33:19 John Host Yeah.

[Ben laughs.]

00:33:21 Adam Host Whose name means "noodles."

[John and Ben laugh.]

What do you th—look. Here's a component that we haven't discussed about the first half of the film, that I think is one of its strengths, is this film leans into race a lot. And why a Black soldier is there vs. why a white soldier might be. Was there anything good? In those conflicts?

00:33:48 John Host But that's—

00:33:49 Adam Host Or worthwhile?

00:33:50 John Host That's also true of this whole—this whole era, this whole genre, right? *Platoon* has, like, all of that same kind of... like, interrogation.

00:34:02 Adam Host So your problem with this is that it's derivative? And not that it exists?

00:34:07 John Host No, no, no, no. Not that it's derivative, because I feel like they were made at the same time. But what *Platoon* does is give you five guys that you learn about and care about that have different personalities, that have different responses to being Black in Vietnam. There's—you know, there's a righteous guy that's against the whole operation, there are some go-along-to-get-along guys, there are some kind-hearted guys.

Doc is given all of that.

00:34:31 Adam Host Yeah.

00:34:32 John Host He has to be the guy that does it all. He's the—he's on the team, but he's against the war, but he's for the—he's for military discipline. Like, Doc bounces around... seven different characters. He's the one that's like, "Don't—" you know, "Don't laugh when I tell you to brush your teeth."

00:34:51 Adam Host Yeah.

00:34:52 John Host But at the same time he's the one that's like, "This isn't my war. This isn't our war."

00:34:57 Adam Host I think it's interesting to have made Doc... the doctor, vs. another grunt. Because everyone regardless of race needs him on the battlefield.

00:35:08 John Host Yeah.

00:35:09 Adam Host And must respect him, in a way that if he were just any other Black soldier, I don't think he'd be given that kind of respect.

00:35:17 John Host We get a little bit of the sort of like—the fact that the Black soldiers have something... in common with one another that transcends their rank. A few different—you know, that—particularly that time where

they kinda get into that "It don't mean nothing," um—

00:35:36 Ben Host Right.

00:35:37 John Host —like, healing process. That—I think that stuff is affecting.

00:35:44 Adam Host You probably thought it was dumb, because I thought it was cool, was that scene where—

[Ben laughs.]

—where Motown was telling McDaniel about how hard it is to get used to normal life going back home, because you can't stop saying "motherfucker" to your mom at the Thanksgiving table.

00:36:00 John Host No, I—I thought that was cool.

00:36:01 Adam Host As a comparison to how hard it is to get Vietnam out of your mind when you go back home, I thought that was really... affecting, and a deft touch.

00:36:10 John Host Yeah, I agree. I agree. It was good. It was a little—it felt like...

00:36:15 Ben Host *[Jokingly]* I thought it sucked!

00:36:17 John Host *[Laughs.]* It felt a little bit like, uh—like maybe going back to Louisiana and buying a shrimping boat.

[Adam laughs.]

00:36:24 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** Shrampin' boat.

[Ben laughs.]

Adam: Oh, god.

00:36:26 Adam Host I knew it. *[Laughs.]*

00:36:28 John Host But yeah!

[Ben laughs.]

Yeah, no, that was—I mean, there—there are nice moments! There are nice moments. But they stand in bold relief.

00:36:35 Adam Host But they—they don't make up a strong half of a film.

00:36:38 John Host Right.

00:36:39 Adam Host Hm.

00:36:40 John Host That's right. And we do care about Doc, a lot. But, uh—

00:36:45 Ben Host Yeah.

00:36:46 John Host You know, Don Cheadle's right there. He could have a conscience, too. He could be something other than just a—like a blank slate.

00:36:53 Ben Host Yeah, he's really a filler soldier.

00:36:55 Adam Host And especially because he survives to the end—you don't really know him at that point!

00:37:00 John Host No. We don't know where he's from.

00:37:01 Ben Host Right.

00:37:02 John Host He's never said a single thing about himself or his opinions.

00:37:05 Adam Host Yeah!

00:37:06 Ben Host Like, Motown and Mac both have... elements to their characters, and he really doesn't.

[Beat.]

00:37:12 Adam Host Maybe it's trying to say something with that.

[John bursts out laughing and claps his hands. Adam laughs quietly.]

00:37:20 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Ben:** This movie—yeah.

[John is still clapping and loudly laughing/sighing.]

Adam: *[Stifling laughter]* I am trying to write a film paper over here! *[Laughs.]*

John: I know! This C-minus paper that you're working on—

[John and Ben laugh.]

Adam: Would—John, would you turn down the music?! I'm trying to write here! *[Laughs.]*

John: *[Drunk college student voice]* Hey, come on, Adam! Come join the party!

Ben: We're just trying to provide—

Adam: God, John's the worst roommate!

Ben: We're trying—

[All three laugh.]

00:37:36 Ben Host We're trying to provide some frisson for you to write that paper.

00:37:40 John Host *[Drunk college student voice]* Stop being such a grind, man, this party's going off!

[Ben laughs.]

00:37:46 Adam Host You know what, someone's gonna ride your face down a stairwell.

[John laughs, then sighs.]

You keep pissing people off at this college, John.

00:37:51 John Host *[Regular voice]* Believe me.

[Adam laughs.]

That happened.

00:37:54 Clip Clip **Speaker:** Johnny, I forget his name...

00:37:56 Ben Host What did you guys think of the scoring in this movie? This like, very—

00:38:00 John Host Philip Glass!

00:38:01 Ben Host A very different Philip Glass scoring. I did—I wasn't really sure, like, what motivated it a couple of times? Like, there are several charges up the hill, and occasionally one will be accompanied by this really weird—

00:38:15 John Host *[Makes a staticky noise.]*

00:38:17 Ben Host —experimental music, and—

00:38:18 John Host *[Makes the noise again.]*

00:38:20 Ben Host ...But a lot of the time it's not! You know?

00:38:22 John Host There were sound effects that were almost a little bit like *There Will Be Blood*. Things added into the war stuff—the sound of a strange... that strange snare drum that opens the film? And it kind of reappears as a—as like a war effect! Enough that it stood out. Enough that it wasn't just like, "Hm, that's a weird gun."

00:38:46 Ben Host It's not like the military, like, marching band snare that is accompanied by brass instruments.

00:38:53 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** No, it's just like, *[crackly/staticky noise]*.

Ben: It's like—it's like a different sound.

00:38:56 John Host A different sound that feels like—feels like it's meant to ramp up the tension?

00:39:00 Ben Host Yeah.

00:39:01 John Host Ramp up the discomfort? Maybe if it had happened a little bit less and I hadn't noticed it, it would have—I think it was doing that job. It just... it just was too much.

00:39:12 Adam Host I never got that non-diegetic sound feeling from it. I never got the Jonny Greenwood vibes that you guys did.

00:39:20 John Host Yeah, 'cause you had your pants down around your ankles through the—this whole movie!

[Ben laughs.]

00:39:23 Adam Host I pre—look, I prefer a Jerry Goldsmith score to a war film! I've said that before! I don't think this stuck out to me in any particular way as a movie score.

00:39:34 Ben Host Really?

00:39:35 Adam Host Yeah. Yeah, and I'm someone who frequently notices that stuff, but... this one felt baked-in to me.

00:39:42 Ben Host I thought it was a great score. Like, it was maybe my favorite part of the movie for how unusual it was. But it was... super unconventional in my—

00:39:52 Adam Host *[Sighs.]* Wow.

00:39:53 Ben Host —experience of it.

00:39:54 Adam Host Yeah, I just—I never felt like it was a character in the film!

00:39:57 John Host Yeah, I—my favorite character in the movie—not my guy, but my favorite character was the Spencer Davis Group singing "Gimme Some Lovin'" during the hot tub scene.

[Adam and Ben laugh.]

00:40:10 Adam Host All roads lead back to the hot tub.

00:40:12 Ben Host *[Laughs.]* Are we having a tough time talking about this?

00:40:16 John Host It's a tough movie to talk about! And we've seen plenty of movies where it feels like the second unit director is making a different movie than the first unit director. Like—like—

00:40:28 Ben Host Uh-huh.

00:40:29 John Host —*Predator*. Right? At the beginning of *Predator*, that scene where they raid the rebel base, and it's a bunch of like super corny Schwarzenegger lines and people getting blown up and jumping on trampolines, and it's just like, "This is terrible."

[Ben laughs.]

And then *Predator*—then the *Predator* arrives, and the movie is transformed, and three quarters of the way through the movie you are in like a super-duper good psychological drama, and war—complex war movie.

This is sssimilar to that. It feels like the war movie stuff is being filmed by a different director. And then I realized it wasn't; it was just that we had one director that was good at filming war movie stuff, and not super good at making a movie about real people who had real personalities and motivations. And I feel like a lot of that is in the script.

00:41:26 Adam Host One thing that made this film feel like the stage play that you were describing it as, is that it does *Predator* credits at the end. Did you—did you stick around for the credits, John?

00:41:35 John Host I did.

00:41:36 Adam Host I know you famously did not for *Predator*.

[John laughs.]

But they did the little video capsule in the—and the credit at the bottom.

00:41:42 John Host Yeah.

00:41:43 Adam Host That little moment with each main character.

00:41:44 John Host Yeah.

00:41:45 Adam Host That was a *Predator* thing!

00:41:46 John Host Yeah.

00:41:47 Adam Host It's the same year! That's amazing!

00:41:48 John Host Credits. (*Predator* + *Credits*.)

[Beat.]

[Ben and John laugh.]

00:41:52 Adam Host Indeed.

00:41:53 John Host Indeed.

I feel like I'm gonna come in for a ration of shit from the people that

are like, "This was the most accurate-looking Vietnam movie ever made, brrrb!" and I do not disagree. I loved the—I loved the fighting.

00:42:10 Adam Host Interesting order of operations for John Irvin's directorial career. He went from *Raw Deal* to *Hamburger Hill*.

[Ben laughs.]

Raw Deal the Schwarzenegger film.

00:42:20 John Host Was that like some kind of *Road House* movie where there was an arm-wrestling contest and somebody drove a truck into a swimming pool or something? What was *Raw Deal*?

00:42:31 Adam Host Yeah, it was all of those things, John.

[John laughs.]

Eeevery single one of those things.

00:42:36 John Host Did he have an orangutan as a sidekick? In *Raw Deal*?

00:42:40 Adam Host Yeah.

[John laughs.]

Yeah, that was it. I'm gonna let you believe all those things are true.

00:42:47 John Host Are you tapping out of this show?

00:42:48 Adam Host No, I'm in it for the long haul!

00:42:50 John Host Alright.

00:42:51 Adam Host I'm in this for another ten years.

00:42:52 John Host Alright, good.

00:42:53 Adam Host You've got ten years of me.

00:42:54 John Host Good.

00:42:55 Adam Host And then you gotta find a replacement.

00:42:56 John Host Good. You're—you're irreplaceable. I think it'll be me that has to be replaced in ten years.

00:43:01 Adam Host "What mean irreplaceable, John?"

[John and Ben laugh.]

"It means when your two co-hosts bag on you an entire episode. 'Til you wanna leave. *[Stifling laughter]* Doesn't really matter."

[John laughs.]

00:43:13 Ben Host Is this what getting bagged on looks like? *[Laughs.]*

00:43:16 Adam Host I love this. This is great.

00:43:17 Ben Host I feel like I've gotten way worse baggings in the past.

[John laughs.]

If—if we're talking about getting bagged on for an entire episode.

00:43:24 Adam Host We make fun of you because you don't like or listen to popular music. That's—

[Ben laughs.]

That's the reason for the bagging.

00:43:31 John Host Yeah, you get tea-bagged, Ben.

[Adam laughs.]

00:43:33 Ben Host Gross!

00:43:34 John Host *[Laughs.]* Adam's just getting full-on put in a bag.

00:43:37 Ben Host I do like and listen to popular music! My—I would wager that the music I listen to is more popular than the music you listen to!

00:43:43 Adam Host Mm.

00:43:44 John Host He may have you there.

00:43:45 Adam Host Yeah.

00:43:46 John Host You don't listen to Cardi B, do you, Adam?

00:43:47 Adam Host Yeah.

00:43:48 John Host No. Ben does.

00:43:49 Adam Host Yeah.

00:43:50 Ben Host Yeah!

00:43:51 Adam Host Indie rock, the—the least popular genre of music.

[John laughs.]

00:43:56 Ben Host I wear bloody shoes!

00:43:57 John Host Adam's Gen X, the forgotten generation. And he's young Gen X.

[Ben laughs.]

Young enough to like *Hamburger Hill*.

[Ben laughs.]

00:44:06 Adam Host Now that we've sufficiently scorched the Earth of the first half of this film, are we gonna talk about the Hamburger Hill portion of the film?

00:44:14 John Host Yes, let's do.

00:44:15 Adam Host 'Cause we should! It's a—

00:44:17 Ben Host Mud is really like, one of the main characters in the Hamburger Hill portion of the film.

00:44:22 Adam Host This is the Mel Gibson-iest part of the film.

00:44:25 John Host Yeah, but—but I never felt for a single second that the violence was gratuitous.

00:44:31 Adam Host No.

00:44:32 John Host I felt like they were getting... they were getting shit-canned, and it felt absolutely believable. And you know, there are a lot of—there's a lot of NVA faces in this movie. They aren't just an invisible set of

machine guns from behind a wall of jungle. We see them, we see them get hurt, we see their strategy. We see their tactic.

00:44:55 Adam Host Yeah, the—boy. That—

00:44:56 John Host We see them win.

00:44:58 Adam Host The moments of futility that feel like they're the most pronounced are those moments where they call in the airstrike and then right on cue, they—they hide back into the bunker to avoid being bombed. The bombs do nothing, except scorch the Earth, and then they're right back into action.

00:45:14 John Host Right.

00:45:15 Adam Host Over and over again we get those scenes.

00:45:18 John Host They are shooting down at like a 50-degree angle.

00:45:21 Adam Host Yeah.

[Ben laughs quietly.]

00:45:22 John Host Which is a pretty good advantage. If you have a machine gun.

00:45:27 Adam Host Sure is.

00:45:28 Ben Host There's one of the charges where it is so slippery that it—like, it almost makes the case like, "Oh, they could have gotten all the way to the top on this one."

00:45:37 John Host They were almost there.

00:45:38 Ben Host If it had just been—

00:45:39 John Host Yeah.

00:45:40 Ben Host —20% less slippery.

00:45:41 John Host It was a rainy day, and that was the thing that defeated them. At that point in the movie I really wanted them to just—just keep sliding all the way down the hill, and go back to...

[Ben laughs.]

Go back to the Air Force base, to wherever.

00:45:53 Ben Host They—they—*[laughs]* they're in lowa when they get to the bottom. *[Laughs.]*

00:45:56 John Host *[Laughing]* Yeah.

00:45:57 Adam Host Ben's at the bottom of the hill, like, "I wore dress shoes! I can't do it!"

00:46:00 John Host *[Laughs.]* I really did, I felt so much frustration for them at that point. Just like, "You guys."

00:46:06 Adam Host Yeah.

00:46:07 John Host "Seriously. Let me—I—let me jump ahead and tell you how this war ends. You all go home anyway." And they know it, too! You know, they—they are—they're—they confide that in one another. They know that there's no point to this.

00:46:20 Adam Host How do you make the decision between a fire bomb and bomb bomb in a situation like this? What kind of strategy is involved? Like, when you're calling in an airstrike, do you get to request the type of ordnance that's dropped?

00:46:35 John Host Probably.

00:46:36 Adam Host You don't see that here, and I don't think I've ever seen that in a war film.

00:46:39 John Host Where the guy on the ground is like, "Bunker busters!"

00:46:41 Adam Host Yeah! Because it seems like what they're dropping on the top of the hill is insufficient for the job. And everyone knows it!

00:46:50 John Host Right, it's just—it's just incendiaries.

00:46:53 Adam Host Yeah, they need to blow up the hill.

00:46:56 John Host But they also—

00:46:57 Adam Host And not light it on fire.

00:46:58 John Host They also have artillery, and can call in artillery as well. And they do many times in the movie call in artillery. But that's not... able to reach the top of Hamburger Hill for some reason?

00:47:14 Adam Host Yeah.

00:47:15 John Host I don't know.

00:47:17 Ben Host They definitely could have elucidated that a little bit better. The—because—I mean, all the Iwo Jima movies we've watched spend some time talking about how we just pulverized this island for days, and then sent troops to it and there—it was still... capable fighting forces, hiding in the tunnels. Like—

00:47:40 Adam Host As if the proper order is like, "Soften it up."

00:47:42 John Host Right.

00:47:43 Adam Host Before we send our guys in.

00:47:44 John Host Right.

00:47:45 Ben Host Yeah! And it seems like they like, come up with the idea like, *[snaps fingers]* "Oh! I got it!" Like, "I know we just climbed halfway up this hill, but what if we had some helicopters come in and shoot the guys that are trying to kill us?"

00:47:57 Adam Host Yeah, you know how you get the higher ground? You get into the air.

00:48:00 John Host That's the most—maybe one of the most devastating moments in the movie, after they get to the top of the hill... and then some helicopters show up and land. And it's like "Well... well... why did we have to—"

[Ben laughs.]

"Couldn't we have just come on helicopters?!"

00:48:16 Adam Host I thought you were gonna say the friendly fire moment.

00:48:19 John Host Oh, that was awful. That was awful, and I think that's real.

00:48:22 Adam Host I wonder how hard, as a soldier, it is to suspend the instinct to shoot back.

00:48:29 John Host Right.

00:48:30 Adam Host In a moment like that.

00:48:31 John Host At your own helicopter.

00:48:32 Ben Host Yeah!

00:48:33 John Host Well, how much the—your instinct is to go to whatever base those helicopters were based at.

00:48:39 Adam Host Yeah.

00:48:40 John Host And find those dudes.

00:48:41 Adam Host Blow up a latrine.

00:48:42 John Host And—*[laughing]* that's right.

00:48:44 Ben Host Unload belt-fed ammo into all their computers.

00:48:45 Adam Host Yeah.

00:48:46 John Host That's right.

00:48:47 Adam Host I always thought the mind was the perfect weapon.

[John laughs.]

That part was hard.

00:48:55 John Host Yeah. And you can see—they do a great job of putting us in the helicopter.

00:49:01 Adam Host Yeah. Yeah!

00:49:02 John Host And recognizing that they're flying fast, they're coming over there, they got—they're also scared of getting shot down. And they're just firing willy-nilly, and everybody down below is covered with mud, and... it's—and you just see, like, somebody miss... miscommunicated where the battle lines were, and—and again, that was another scene where they were almost gonna take the hill. They were right—

00:49:26 Ben Host Yeah.

00:49:27 John Host They were right at the top, and then... they lost 50 guys.

00:49:32 Clip Clip **Speaker: FNG!**

00:49:34 John Host Now in actual fact, the assault on Hamburger Hill... uh, something like 70 or 80 American troops were killed. And I think we see a lot more people killed in this movie.

00:49:55 Ben Host Yeah.

00:49:56 John Host Than were actually killed. I don't fault a movie for that.

00:50:00 Ben Host I have some statistics here. "US losses during the ten-day battle totaled 72 killed and 372 wounded. To take the position, the 101st Airborne eventually committed five infantry battalions and ten batteries of artillery. In addition, the US Air Force flew 272 missions to expend more than 500 tons of ordnance."

00:50:24 John Host Whoa!

00:50:25 Ben Host That's the—that's from Wikipedia.

00:50:27 John Host Whoa!

00:50:28 Ben Host Yeah.

00:50:29 John Host A costly battle.

00:50:31 Ben Host 630 Vietnamese dead. Which is... pretty wild.

00:50:36 John Host Yeah, a lot of those probably to the artillery and napalm, but...

00:50:40 Ben Host Yeah, like—they found 'em like, buried in the tunnels and stuff.

00:50:44 John Host So 400 American casualties. I guess that's a—that's believably depicted in the movie.

00:50:54 Ben Host Yeah, you see a lot of guys get hit but you don't...

00:50:55 John Host You don't watch them die.

00:50:57 Ben Host It's not always clear whether they're KIA or just badly wounded.

00:51:02 John Host Doc had a pretty good death scene.

00:51:04 Ben Host This is Courtney B. Vance's first movie, also! And he's just one of those actors that I... I always love seeing. I wish I—I wish we had more Courtney B. Vance movies.

00:51:16 John Host He does a great job in *Red October*.

00:51:19 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Adam & Ben:** Yeah.

Adam: He was fun.

Ben: I love him in that movie.

00:51:21 John Host The ultimate unwatched *Friendly Fire* movie.

00:51:24 Adam Host Mm.

[Ben laughs.]

00:51:25 John Host The idea that you ding-dongs did that over at your *Star Track* (sic) podcast... and we haven't watched it over here... it gets nnot less infuriating every week.

[Adam laughs.]

00:51:36 Ben Host It's—it's on the list!

[John laughs quietly.]

00:51:38 Adam Host Yeah, you just—hey, why don't you try rolling the die right, John?

00:51:41 John Host Oh. *[Mocking grumble.]*

[Ben laughs.]

00:51:44 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** I see where this episode's going.

Adam: Sounds like it's your fault.

[John and Ben laugh.]

00:51:48 Clip Clip **Speaker:** I'm a salesman; these feet are my life.

00:51:50 Ben Host I thought that the lieutenant had a pretty good death scene too, that like—for all the times we've had a guy who is in shock and doesn't realize he's missing a wou—uh, a limb... *[laughs]* like, this was like a pretty good version of that.

00:52:03 John Host It was.

00:52:04 Adam Host 'Cause no one had noticed that.

00:52:06 John Host I noticed it. I knew his arm was gone. Because of the way it was framed. All the vectors.

00:52:14 Adam Host You're always making sure that a person's limbs are all there.

00:52:17 John Host 'Cause it's like "Wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute. I don't see one of his limbs."

[Adam laughs.]

"There's a reason for that." And then—and then the camera comes around. And it's like "Okay." You telegraphed that a little bit, filmmakers. But I—but you got to! You gotta telegraph it, otherwise we had already forgotten who the lieutenant was. Or why we cared about him.

00:52:38 Adam Host Eden has a really great scene where he's teaching the, uh, FNGs about filling out the forms.

[John laughs.]

And how crucial it is to donate into the retirement fund or whatever.

00:52:55 John Host Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

[John and Adam laugh.]

00:52:57 Adam Host I love that moment. You wanna talk about futility in that first half of the film, like, that's a big, big part of it.

00:53:05 John Host The way that scene ends, where he says "Are there any questions?" And you expect all the soldiers to just be like, "Buhhh." And they actually crowd around the table as the camera flies back?

00:53:16 Adam Host Yeah.

00:53:18 John Host I wasn't sure what message that was sending, or what I was supposed to think about it, but it seems like all those guys bought insurance.

00:53:25 Adam Host Lieutenant Eden is really Jesse Eisenberg-ing around in this movie, I thought.

[John and Ben laugh.]

One of the parts of the film where I really agree with you on the whole "proselytizing of a screenwriter" is the moment where Frantz, uh, interacts with the TV reporter.

00:53:42 John Host Yeah.

00:53:43 Adam Host Like—

00:53:44 John Host "You haven't earned the right to be here!"

00:53:46 Adam Host Yeah.

00:53:47 John Host I felt that! I felt that. I didn't like that TV reporter, either.

00:53:50 Adam Host No, I mean, the moment was correct, and it felt... real to its moment, but it also felt like a turn-to-camera.

00:53:58 John Host Well, the proselytizing I think irritated you because you had subliminally picked up on the six other times it happens in the movie. And you were already pre-irritated.

00:54:08 Adam Host Yeah.

00:54:09 John Host You had—basically, you had some histamine in your system. You were ready to sneeze.

[Ben laughs.]

00:54:13 Adam Host You know, you can still get pregnant from pre-irritation.

00:54:16 John Host That's right. You can get it from a toilet seat!

[Adam laughs.]

00:54:18 Ben Host Mm.

00:54:19 John Host Which is the first half of this movie.

[Adam laughs.]

[Stifling laughter] So you could—

00:54:20 Ben Host Or using a hot tub that somebody had been irritated in earlier that day.

00:54:24 John Host Yeah.

00:54:25 Adam Host That was me, Ben. I was with, uh—I was with a bunch of soapy boobs.

00:54:29 John Host Yeah.

[Ben laughs.]

You already—you already had the herpes, Adam. You just didn't have a sore yet.

00:54:34 Adam Host Mm.

00:54:35 Ben Host You would be irritated if you were in a hot tub with some soapy boobs.

[Ben and John laugh quietly.]

00:54:42 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** Well, Adam would be irritated—

Adam: In—in what way do you mean that?

00:54:44 John Host He'd be irritated 'cause he's happily married!

00:54:46 Adam Host Exactly!

[Ben laughs.]

00:54:47 John Host So it would be frustrating.

00:54:48 Adam Host Yeah.

00:54:49 John Host To have to bow out!

00:54:50 Adam Host I am—I am devoted to one pair of soapy boobs only.

[John laughs.]

00:54:54 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Adam:** Those of my wife's.

Ben: I didn't—I didn't say whose soapy boobs they were! *[Laughs.]*

Adam: Ben, what are you trying to say?

00:54:59 Ben Host I'm just saying... your irritation got me pregnant.
00:55:01 Adam Host Your open soapy-boob relationship that you have at home.

[John laughs quietly.]

Don't put that on me, man!

00:55:07 Ben Host Here's the reason I felt like the... characters talking about getting poopie flung at them and stuff wasn't necessarily the—like, I think the film—to me, it seemed like the film was more neutral on those things than the characters, some of the individual characters were. And I think it's because of the discussions of race being in there also.

Like the—it doesn't seem ideological about either issue when they're both there at the same time. Does that make any sense?

00:55:49 John Host Yeah, but I think some of that is that we're living in a time now where the consensus among people sort of under the age of 40 is that we never have had a national conversation about race that was frank or... confrontational. And we have. Like that, at the time, was—it was an uncomfortable—those were uncomfortable scenes for filmgoing audiences, but the—not that they weren't accustomed to them. We'd been having frank conversations about race in America, and race in Vietnam, and race in the military, for decades and decades.

So I think you could make a—you could make an argument in a Vietnam movie that the experience was very different for Black soldiers than it was for white soldiers. And still have the movie be kind of jingoistic about how soldiers were—I mean, one of the things it does is unite white and Black soldiers in their common, um, ex—or I'm sorry, in their very different experience of returning home, but a common experience of returning home to a world that doesn't understand them. And the Black soldiers are saying "We come back to our communities, and we are able to wear our uniforms with pride. And that's the one thing you can't take away from us. Because your stupid white hippie culture is the thing that is causing you problems, but we don't get spit on in our own town."

That's interesting, but it was also... that was being discussed and described in the world of the eighties. But I see what—I mean I see the point you're making, that the movie isn't just one-sided. I really feel like the jingoism of it is given an exclamation point by the—by ending on that poem. That poem being one that—and it's very—you know, it's subtle; it's not—they're not banging your head with it. But the poem is basically saying "These were good boys" and "Remember them for their valiant fight despite your contempt for the war and the military and everything else." It was, um... a theme at the time. Which was "Okay, maybe you didn't like the war. But you can't go against the soldiers."

And it was the first time we heard that. Which now is the primary pushback any time we have a complaint against American war-making, is that there's some incredible difference between criti—or rather, you cannot criticize the war because you're criticizing the soldiers, and the soldiers are innocent... because they're valiant—

00:58:29 Ben Host Right. They—they're answering the call to serve the country...

00:58:32 John Host Right.

00:58:33 Ben Host ...no matter what the country asks them to do.

00:58:35 John Host The reason that that was a conversation that was brand new at this time was that prior to Vietnam, nobody would have criticized the American military. And making that distinction was a reaction to... American civilian response to seeing soldiers on the street and taking out their frustrations on those individual soldiers. But that was kind of a... straw man.

The soldiers came back and didn't wear their uniforms with pride not because they were getting spit on, but because they came back to a world where that just wasn't... cool. Right? They didn't wear their uniforms out on the street and get showered with flowers. That's very different than getting spit on.

00:59:18 Ben Host Yeah. It's not—like, nobody's gonna high-five you for participating in a war that they don't agree with. [*Laughs quietly.*]

00:59:23 John Host Right. There were no marching bands. But the idea that soldiers deserve marching bands was... that in and of itself is a holdover from World War II and World War I. You know, that—or rather from all wars prior to Vietnam. That soldiers came back to...

00:59:40 Adam Host You get your ticker tape.

00:59:42 John Host Yeah, you get bunting on the town hall and patted on the back. And a lot of those World War II movies that we see that take a hard look at the war, those movies show soldiers coming back and being subjected to those ticker tape parades. Where they're like—

01:00:00 Ben Host Right.

01:00:01 John Host "Hey, I don't wanna talk about it." And "I don't feel I deserve a parade." Like—

01:00:06 Ben Host Yeah. "Stop ticker taping me."

01:00:07 John Host Yeah, right! Like, that's the jingoism of World War II. The civilians—you know, we saw it in the—in *All Quiet on the Western Front*.

01:00:16 Ben Host If we hadn't gone to Vietnam would we, like... would we be doing any of this? Like, does the civilian population's holding the military up on a pedestal go away? Or did Vietnam, like, provoke that shift?

01:00:34 John Host If in 1965 there were no nukes, and we had gone to war with the Soviet Union, with Europe as the battleground, I think it would have been just as flag-wavy. Because it would have felt we had a—an enemy worthy of our... you know, our big industrial military war. But Vietnam was this inexplic—nobody even knew where Vietnam was in 1961. Kennedy didn't know where it was! And we went there and we got our asses handed to us. By a new form of war, or rather a—an asymmetrical war. Where guerrillas were—just had the advantage, because they could fade into—not just into the jungle, but fade into the civilian population.

And that was what was so confusing to us. Who do you fight? Hill—this—*Hamburger Hill* is a great example. What are we doing? We're not trying to beat the enemy back behind some line in the sand.

01:01:37 Ben Host Yeah, it's so weird to make a jingoistic movie about this particular battle.

01:01:42 John Host Right! I mean that—isn't that the thing that clangs the most?

01:01:47 Ben Host But that's the thing that makes me wonder if it is jingoistic, or if it... like, I don't know! Like it—like—

01:01:53 John Host The jingoism is the thing that is making a distinction between "our brave boys" and a fucked up policy. Because the fucked up policy is hung around the necks of Congress. And around the necks of co-eds. Like, no military officer or decision-maker is given responsibility for... this.

01:02:20 Ben Host Yeah.

01:02:21 John Host In the movie. We never see a bad general.

01:02:24 Ben Host And having just seen—*[laughs]* *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, that's... astonishing. *[Laughs.]*

01:02:30 John Host Right. Considering *Tora! Tora! Tora!* is all about dumb generals. The failure to anticipate Pearl Harbor, we see—we see the admirals and the State Department people making those failures. But here we open on the Capitol, and then all we ever hear about is soldiers getting spit on. And those are the bad guys? The hippies. The hippies are the bad guys of this movie. Which is just like...

01:02:55 Ben Host *[Whispering]* The hippies are the bad guys...

01:02:57 John Host Yeah! What do you say about that, Ben? Those are your parents! And their friends!

[Ben laughs.]

Your mom and dad are the bad guys!

01:03:04 Ben Host *[Regular volume]* My dad was in Vietnam, John!

01:03:06 John Host Yeah! Yeah! As a bad guy!

[Ben laughs.]

He was the bad guy both ways! He was a—

01:03:10 Ben Host What?

01:03:11 John Host He was a baby-killer and a hippie! Ughhh. I'm so mad.

01:03:15 Ben Host Damn.

01:03:16 John Host I'm so mad at your parents now. ...Actually I love your parents. And their friends.

01:03:20 Ben Host My parents are good.

01:03:21 John Host And their French-speaking artistic friends.

01:03:23 Ben Host And they donate at—

[John laughs.]

—at MaxFunkenstein.sex, so... you have to love them.

01:03:29 John Host What were your parents doing in Vietnam, Adam?

01:03:32 Adam Host Uh, not there.

01:03:33 John Host Right. 4-F'd, I bet.

01:03:35 Adam Host Yeah.

01:03:36 John Host For being Polish.

01:03:37 Adam Host Yeah. My—

[Ben laughs.]

My parents were the long-haired hippie fucks.

01:03:42 John Host Were they? Were your parents hippies?

01:03:44 Adam Host Think they were hippies!

01:03:46 John Host Whooooo. Oh my god.

01:03:49 Adam Host Never woulda guessed, huh?

01:03:51 John Host No, how would you ever meet Adam's parents? He keeps them hidden. He keeps them in a shipping container in the desert.

01:03:58 Adam Host You're never gonna meet my mom, John!

[John laughs.]

Won't let it happen!

01:04:03 John Host Does she have a boyfriend?

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

War!
Huh!
Yeah!

01:04:07 Adam Host Is it review time?

[John laughs.]

As if this entire argument hasn't been one big review? I think it is.

Every film on *Friendly Fire* gets its own custom—

01:04:16 Ben Host We've gotta get outta here.

[Ben and John laugh.]

01:04:17 Adam Host —rating system.

01:04:19 John Host If it's the last thing we ever do.

01:04:22 Adam Host Never been as tortured...

[John laughs.]

...as I am now.

[Ben laughs.]

To share that rating system with my co-hosts. A rating system that my co-hosts will probably hate. If it's anything like any other opinion I've had on this episode.

[Adam and Ben or John laugh.]

I feel like this film does a thing visually that I am shocked to find may be the first time we've encountered it. And it's the hill that makes it happen: the hill makes the empty, rolling helmet happen.

01:04:57 John Host

Huh.

01:04:58 Adam Host

And it rolls, and rolls, and rolls down that hill. And when the camera finds that helmet, and follows it down, you go with it. And you really understand, *[stifles laughter]* like, as muddy as the ground is, the helmet's still rolling. That's how steep the hill is. By the time it lands at the bottom next to a tree stump, like, that empty helmet is this movie.

[Stifling laughter] You might argue that it's empty of... intelligence.

[John and Ben laugh.]

Or a brain to go with it. But I think it's emblematic of the kind of horror that the hill suggests! I really like a war film that boils the war down to its—like, it's a distillation of war into its primary component. It's a hill, and a guy who wants a hill, and the guy who's at the hill defending against the guys who want it. Like, it's super simple in that way. And all we are are with these soldiers, playing the parts of the guys who want the hill. And I alluded to this earlier in the episode: we see so many war films that show us the administration of the war, and the powers that make the decisions.

But you never get to be that. Why do we see those people as often as we do? Like, the only chance that we would ever have in fighting a war is to be these guys. At the bottom of the hill trying to go up it.

01:06:29 John Host

You, maybe!

01:06:30 Adam Host

Yeah.

[John laughs.]

Believe it, John.

01:06:33 Ben Host

You know I'd be in OCS the second I enlisted.

01:06:36 John Host

[Stifling laughter] Are you kidding me?

01:06:38 Adam Host

I am... grateful for the reminder that this film brings in our consumption of all these war films, that sometimes it is just a hill, and it is a group of guys sent to go take it, and it doesn't matter the reason. And they should really stop asking questions about why. It doesn't matter to anyone, even if they were to get that answer.

And I thought it was a powerful reminder of that thing. Like, it's sort of a reminder of the insanity of war itself. It's not satisfying!

[John or Ben snorts.]

I'm trying to be sincere, and you're laughing at me!

01:07:18 John Host

[Laughs.] I hope you get this in Monday morning, 'cause it's not—

01:07:20 Adam Host

I think that—

01:07:21 John Host —if it's late, it's not getting accepted.

[Adam and Ben laugh.]

01:07:26 Adam Host I—I don't think it's a great film, but it gave me a lot to think about in a way that good films do. I think—

01:07:31 John Host You thought this was a great film until we started talking.

[Beat.]

01:07:35 Adam Host I think this is one of those four-helmet films.

01:07:38 John Host Hm.

01:07:39 Adam Host For me.

01:07:40 John Host Mm.

01:07:41 Adam Host It is simply... four helmets.

01:07:44 Ben Host To me it's a two-helmet film. And specifically the helmet that he hits the guy with, and then he falls down and it—the helmet is like, squishy? You can see that it's like a foam helmet or something.

01:07:57 Adam Host It's a rubber helmet?

01:07:58 John Host I didn't see that. *[Laughs.]*

01:07:59 Ben Host Yeah.

01:08:00 Adam Host Two rubber helmets.

[John laughs harder.]

01:08:01 Ben Host Yeah.

01:08:02 John Host I got two rubber helmets for you. They're covered with soap.

[Ben laughs.]

01:08:09 Adam Host Please make that your review, John.

01:08:10 John Host *[Laughing]* They're my falsies.

01:08:13 Adam Host John's shortest review.

01:08:14 John Host *[Laughs.]* You know, I have savaged it. But I honestly believe that the—the assault of Hamburger Hill is really well done. And to a certain extent, the pretty... shallow characterization of the soldiers was enough to get me into that battle with them. And a lot of their character is only revealed as they assault that hill. And it's tough to understand a man's character when he's shouting in the mud with rain coming down. You wish you knew a little bit more about him.

And the gratuitousness of the—the racist hillbilly and the smart, like, politically knowledgeable Black guy ending up, uh, dapping one another in solidarity...

[Ben or Adam laughs quietly.]

...is just another example of like, "No. Maybe. If this was a TV movie." But I do like the battle. So much. It doesn't redeem it. But I'm gonna come in a little above Ben; I'm gonna give it two and a half helmets. Two and a half rolling helmets. And I'm not even gonna cover 'em with soap.

[Ben laughs.]

01:09:33 Adam Host Alright.

01:09:34 John Host And I was astonished by the "two thumbs up"s that this movie got from contemporary critics! And there's all this—all this kind of chatter about like, "Well—"

01:09:44 Adam Host Yeah!

01:09:45 John Host "*Full Metal Jacket* came out right before it and got all the accolades, and so—"

01:09:48 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Adam:** 100% Rotten Tomatoes review on *Hamburger Hill*.

John: Yeah, that's just—that's just bonkers to me.

Ben: Crazy.

01:09:54 John Host And I think it—what it says is the only people that are watching *Hamburger Hill* are people that are—

01:09:59 Adam Host Professional film critics—

[John laughs.]

—give this pretty high marks, huh? Interesting.

01:10:03 John Host Yeah, professional film critics that have been hoodwinked and duped by the revisionisms. The—

01:10:09 Adam Host Yeah. Blinded by the lather.

01:10:12 John Host [Laughing] Yeah.

[Ben laughs.]

You can't watch Dylan McDermott without saying "What a handsome guy!"

01:10:19 Adam Host Yeah!

01:10:20 John Host He's very handsome.

[Ben laughs.]

01:10:21 Adam Host Lost 20 pounds during the production of this film. Didn't seem like he had 20 to lose.

01:10:28 John Host No, he was probably sweating the script the whole time. He was like "Really, I gotta say these lines?"

01:10:32 Crosstalk Crosstalk [Ben laughs.]

Adam: Sweating the script. That is some cold shit.

John: [Laughing] "I just lost another pound."

Adam: Wow.

John: "I just lost another pound of my soul."

01:10:38 John Host Anyway, two and a half helmets. If you, uh—if you disagree with Ben's and my critique of this film, please write us at

gofuckyourself@maxfunkenstein.sex.

[Adam laughs quietly.]

01:10:52 Ben Host Oh, man, we gotta register that account now!

[John laughs.]

01:10:54 Adam Host Yeah.

01:10:55 Ben Host Uh, Adam, did you have a guy?

01:10:58 Adam Host Yeah, the "Who's your guy?" segment, frequently the least argumentative of all segments on *Friendly Fire*.

[John or Ben laughs quietly.]

My guy is the camera operator during the interaction between—

[Ben laughs.]

—Frantz and the TV reporter. Because he never stops rolling. Even though—like, we know the reporter is the target for Frantz's ire, but at any moment you feel like there's going to be a hand into a lens and a camera into the mud.

01:11:29 Ben Host Yeah.

01:11:30 Adam Host But he is so still, *[stifles laughter]* and so invisible—

01:11:34 Ben Host Beautiful ingénue zoom lens is gonna get messed up!

01:11:37 John Host He knows what he's doing. He's not going in for a close-up at that point.

01:11:41 Adam Host He's part of what Frantz hates. And yet he's not the target of him, in an interesting way. He's every bit as... as culpable, in that moment. But that guy, uh—that guy blended right in. I could get with that. He's not gonna make himself a target.

01:11:58 John Host No. No, that's you. We never even see his face, really.

01:12:01 Adam Host No. Sure don't. I mean, he's on the battlefield. But he's being told to get the fuck out of his, uh, area, big-time. He better not think that he's anything different from the reporter. That would be a mistake.

01:12:16 John Host He's the exact same guy that caught the raising of the flag on Iwo Jima.

01:12:20 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Adam:** That guy.

Ben: Yeah.

01:12:21 John Host It's just that guy. We never know his name, either, but...

01:12:24 Adam Host Yeah.

I wanted to be Galvan, 'cause that guy had great abs. But uh, I'm gonna be Anonymous Camera Guy instead. What about you, Ben?

01:12:32 Ben Host *[Laughs.]* Uh, my guy is Doc!

01:12:35 John Host *[Laughing]* He really is your—he really is your guy!

01:12:38 Adam Host It could only ever be Doc.

01:12:41 John Host It's you, basically!

01:12:42 Ben Host Yeah. It's me. It's me in the movie. I was only interested in this movie when he was on screen doing something. And when he was off screen, I—the movie lost me. So... you know? Just think—Courtney B. Vance! More of him! Please! Hollywood, if you're listening!

01:12:58 Adam Host How about that moment the helicopter comes in to pick him up? Helicopter's right there. Doc doesn't make it to the chopper.

01:13:06 Ben Host Except for you don't know where he is in the queue, you know?

01:13:08 Adam Host Yeah.

01:13:09 John Host I mean he was still alive enough to give a pretty impassioned soliloquy.

01:13:14 Ben Host Yeah.

01:13:16 John Host But not quite alive enough to stay alive.

[John or Adam laughs quietly.]

01:13:19 Ben Host Not quite alive enough to get all the mud off of his jump boots.

01:13:23 Adam Host What you wanna be in a war... is alive enough to stay alive.

01:13:27 John Host *[Stifling laughter]* That's right.

[Ben laughs.]

01:13:30 Adam Host It's just a little bit more alive than he was.
See, that's like an Eden speech, John!

[John laughs.]

01:13:37 John Host Eden should have said something like that up top to the FNGs.
[Laughing] Uh-huh.

01:13:38 Adam Host "Fill out your forms. Brush your teeth. Be alive to stay alive."

01:13:42 John Host *[Laughs.]* "Stay alive enough to be alive."
[Adam laughs.]

You know, Courtney B. Vance is married to Angela Bassett.

[Beat.]

01:13:49 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Adam:** Okay!
John: Which in and of itself is... a career highlight.

[Adam laughs.]

01:13:52 Ben Host Yeah. You can get an Academy Award just for that!

01:13:57 Adam Host *[Laughs.]* Who's your guy, John? ...Angela Bassett?

[John and Ben laugh.]

01:14:04 John Host My guy is whichever member of this production... secured the use of those two National Guard F-4s in the making of this film. Because that was a lot of paperwork.

01:14:17 Adam Host Plane wrangler.

01:14:18 John Host That guy had to go figure out how to get the Air Force, in some capacity—

[Ben or Adam laughs quietly.]

—to loan him these two airplanes to make a movie where... almost everybody dies.

01:14:31 Ben Host Not exactly like, "done with the cooperation of the Department of Defense" type of movie. *[Laughs.]*

01:14:36 John Host No.

01:14:37 Adam Host Like, "So do you see our recruiting numbers increase after this?"

[John and Ben laugh.]

"You think—you think that's gonna happen?"

01:14:41 John Host This is—

01:14:42 Adam Host "Can you promise anything?"

01:14:43 John Host This is not a recruiting video. And the thing about all those Hueys is that you can buy a Huey pretty much anywhere. We saw that—we've seen that in a couple of films. Harrison Ford goes and buys a Huey with CIA money.

01:14:54 Adam Host Yeah! He cuts a check!

01:14:56 Ben Host With his business card!

01:14:57 John Host That's right. And we saw a helicopter get purchased in that drug heist movie that we did for our bonus feed.

01:15:07 Ben Host Somewhere around here I have a box full with like 500 business cards that say "Benjamin Ahr Harrison, Deputy Director, comma, Intelligence—"

[John laughs.]

"—CIA." *[Laughs.]*

01:15:18 John Host Let's go buy some helicopters! But you—

01:15:20 Ben Host Yeah, let's go get some!

01:15:21 John Host You cannot just—

01:15:22 Ben Host I can get us a fucking fleet of 'em! *[Laughs.]*

01:15:24 John Host Let's get 50 helicopters and make our own Vietnam movie.

[Ben laughs.]

But you cannot just go buy an F-4. And you cannot buy an F-4 and then have it streaking over the Philippine jungle. And they may have been—

01:15:36 Ben Host The Second Amendment says I can, man! *[Laughs.]*

01:15:39 John Host *[Laughs.]* They may have rented those from the Philippine Air Force? But even so, that's a big ask. And I—and that is one of the unsung heroes of this film. Whoever that was who got that job.

01:15:52 Adam Host That guy was beaucoup dien cai dau.

01:15:54 John Host *[Laughs.]* He was beaucoup dien cai dau.

[Ben laughs.]

I hope that wrangler—I hope that production assistant went on to great heights in Hollywood.

01:16:04 Adam Host Yeah. Takes a show like *Friendly Fire* to recognize the true heroes—

[John and Ben laugh, Adam stifles laughter.]

—of a war film production. So we salute them! F-4 wrangler!

01:16:14 Ben Host That's true.

01:16:15 John Host I never forgot him. Where's his poem?

01:16:17 Adam Host Mm.

[Ben laughs.]

01:16:20 Music Transition Brief clip of "War."

War!
Huh!
Yeah!

01:16:23 Adam Host Another great question to ask might be what our next movie will be!

01:16:27 John Host Oh, here, let's go.

01:16:28 Ben Host I hope it's good.

01:16:30 John Host Come on, magic die! Yeah! *[Sighs.]* Adam's really disappointed in me. And I brought him donuts this morning, but it's not enough.

[Adam laughs.]

01:16:38 Ben Host Whoa!

01:16:40 John Host Yeah.

01:16:41 Adam Host That was pretty great.

01:16:42 John Host Okay, here we go.

01:16:43 Ben Host Maybe he's, uh—maybe he's crashing on the sugar. Maybe that's why he's so cranky.

[Beat.]

You know, I was really cranky when we recorded our *Alexander* episode, and I'm—

01:16:52 John Host Oh, do tell.

01:16:53 Ben Host Yeah, I feel like I—

[John laughs.]

01:16:54 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Adam:** I think—I think everyone knows that.

Ben: I owe you guys an apology for—for how—

[John and Adam laugh.]

John: *[Laughing]* You came out of the gate on that one.

01:17:02 Ben Host *[Laughs.]* I'm trying—I'm trying to say I'm sorry for being such a—
[John laughs.]

—such a sourpuss.

01:17:09 John Host We were like "How's it going, Ben?" and you were like, *[outraged]* "How's it going'?! 'How's it GOING'?!"

[Ben laughs.]

Okay. Here we go. Dice roll.

[Die rolls on a hard surface for a few seconds and then comes to a stop.]

Ooh, it was was—it was bouncing back and forth between 52 and 46, but it landed on 46!

01:17:29 Music Music *[Intense, dramatic music plays over the next couple of lines.]*

01:17:30 Ben Host Forty-six is a World War II film from 2016.

01:17:35 John Host Whoa.

01:17:36 Ben Host Directed by Sean Ellis. It's called... *Anthropoid.*

[John and Adam snort. Music ends.]

01:17:41 John Host What?

[Beat.]

01:17:43 Ben Host *Anthropoid.*

01:17:45 John Host Say what?

01:17:46 Ben Host "Based on the extraordinary true story of Operation Anthropoid, the mission to assassinate SS General Reinhard Heydrich, the main architect behind the Final Solution, and the Reich's third in command after Hitler and Himmler."

Wow.

01:18:00 Music Music "War" starts fading in.

01:18:01 John Host *Anthropoid.*

01:18:02 Ben Host Got Cillian Murphy! And Jamie Dornan! Famous actors!

01:18:07 John Host Alright, then. It's one of these World War II movies where they're like "Well, we've run out of plots."

01:18:13 Ben Host Cumulative worldwide gross of \$5,000,000. So...

[John laughs.]

... a very tiny—tiny little movie.

01:18:19 Adam Host Well, I gotta believe that a reason for its unpopularity is that title.

01:18:24 John Host *[Laughing]* Uh-huh.

01:18:25 Adam Host Think you gotta do better than *Anthropoid*.

[Ben laughs.]

01:18:27 John Host The people that went to see it thought it was gonna be *Alien vs. Predator*.

01:18:31 Adam Host Probably thought it was gonna be a *Human Centipede* sequel!

[John and Ben laugh.]

01:18:37 Ben Host Oh, boy. The tagline is "Resistance has a codename." *[Laughs.]*

01:18:42 John Host "It's Anthropoid!"

01:18:43 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Ben:** Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

John: They're—they tripled down on it!

01:18:45 Ben Host Yeah.

01:18:46 Adam Host *[Laughs.]* It's just two hours of people using the codename—

[John laughs.]

—and the recipient of the codename being, "Really? That's the code?"

[John and Ben laugh.]

[Stifling laughter] "We couldn't have done better than Anthropoid?" *[Laughs.]*

01:18:57 Ben Host Was the code come up with by like a third-string sci-fi novelist? Self-published?

[All three laugh.]

01:19:06 Adam Host Yeah, this really feels like vanity press here.

01:19:08 John Host Yeah.

01:19:09 Ben Host *[Laughs.]* Alright, well, that'll be next week—

[Adam laughs.]

—on *Friendly Fire*. *[Stifles laughter.]* Uh, in the meantime we'll leave it with RobsRobsRobsRobs. So for John Roderick and Adam Pranica, I've been Ben Harrison. To the victor go the spoiler alerts.

01:19:23 Music Music "War" continues, playing quietly as Rob speaks.

*Absolutely—
—nothing!*

Listen to me!

War!

It ain't nothing but a heartbreaker

01:19:28 Rob Schulte Producer *Friendly Fire* is a Maximum Fun podcast hosted by Benjamin

Harrison, Adam Pranica, and John Roderick. It's produced by me, Rob Schulte. Our theme music is "War" by Edwin Starr, courtesy of Stone Agate Music, and our logo art is by Nick Ditmore.

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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.

01:20:22	Music	Music	"War" continues until the next music cue.
			<i>Is there no place for them today?</i>
			<i>They say we must fight to keep our freedom But Lord knows there's got to be a better way Oh!</i>
01:20:35	Music	Transition	A cheerful guitar chord.
01:20:36	Speaker 1	Guest	MaximumFun.org .
01:20:37	Speaker 2	Guest	Comedy and culture.
01:20:38	Speaker 3	Guest	Artist owned—
01:20:40	Speaker 4	Guest	—audience supported.