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| 00:00:00 | Music | Music | Soft, melancholy, somewhat eerie music. |
| 00:00:01 | Adam Pranica | Host | <p>If it feels like there are a lot of films about Stalingrad, you're not wrong. A quick search in your movie streaming service of choice—or if you're so lucky, a brick-and-mortar video store—will reveal <u>ten</u> of them. Although only one, to our knowledge, has a scene depicting a Rachel Weisz hand job.</p> <p>It's enough film content to spin off a podcast of its own, and I've already pitched Earwolf a show about German/Russian World War II films with an emphasis on fighter plane aerodynamics/equestrian cavalry enclosures hosted by fifth-year college seniors from acting school with limb fractures called <i>The Stalingrad Stall Stall Stallin' Grad Cast Cast Cast</i>.</p> <p>For comparison, there are only five more films made about Pearl Harbor, and that's if you <u>don't</u> disqualify the Michael Bay movie, which we do. <u>This</u> Stalingrad film is <u>the</u> most successful Russian film of all time, earning 51 million domestically in Russia and \$68 million globally. And while the <i>Friendly Fire</i> project examines how a country views itself by how it tells its war story, we are also very interested in what other countries consume for entertainment. <i>Stalingrad</i> accomplishes both.</p> <p>But does that say anything about the importance of this battle in the story of World War II, and the historical record? Well, in our experience watching war films, sometimes quantity doesn't equal quality. And this is a film that tries <u>very</u> hard to project quality. Shot on state-of-the-art equipment, much of it in 3D, the film has a glossiness to it that could attract as many filmgoers as it could conceivably repulse. And its director, Fyodor Bondarchuk, is cut from that same cloth as Michael Bay: polished music video director turned film director.</p> |
| 00:01:55 | Adam | Host | <p>This film also does that thing that Michael Bay's <i>Pearl Harbor</i> does, which is construct a love story within a war story. And just like a stuffed box office doesn't translate into critical success, foreign language films rarely penetrate the American zeitgeist.</p> <p>It has a lot of strikes against it, but will this film's aim be true for the assembled hosts of <i>Friendly Fire</i>?</p> <p>"You know what they say: there's no life beyond the Volga," on today's <i>Friendly Fire</i>, as we discuss the 2013 Fyodor Bondarchuk film: <i>Stalingrad</i>.</p> |
| 00:02:33 | Music | Transition | <p><i>[Music fades into the opening drumroll of the next song.]</i></p> <p>"War" off the album <i>War & Peace</i> by Edwin Starr. Impassioned, intense funk.</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> |

War!
Huh!
Yeah!
What is it good for?!
Absolutely—
—nothing!

Say it again, y'all!

War!

[Song fades down and plays quietly as the hosts speak.]

00:02:52 Ben Harrison Host Welcome to *Friendly Fire*, the war movie show that is the bloodiest podcast in human history. I'm Ben Harrison.

00:02:59 Adam Host I'm Adam Pranica.

00:03:01 John Roderick Host And I'm John Roderick.

00:03:03 Ben Host I think—I think we might have the bloodiest podcast going!

00:03:05 John Host Ours, yours and—yours and ours?

00:03:07 Adam Host I think there are horror movie podcasts that can probably claim that title, right?

00:03:10 John Host Ohhh. Well...

00:03:12 Ben Host Every time we do World War II, we add millions of bodies to our podcast's body count!

00:03:17 John Host That's right.

00:03:18 Adam Host [Sighs.] Yeah, that's right, a horror film could never rise to that number.

00:03:20 John Host Horror movies usually have—they kill like 15 undergraduates.

00:03:23 Adam Host You know where a horror movie podcast has us beat is in the sex. Lots of sex in a horror movie.

00:03:28 Ben Host [Laughs.] Yeah.

00:03:29 John Host But wait, zombie—zombie podcasts have a lot of deaths.

00:03:32 Adam Host Yeah.

00:03:33 Ben Host Oh, zombie podcasts have a lot of bodies...

00:03:34 John Host No, what are we even talking about?! It's superhero movies!

00:03:37 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** They kill hundreds of millions of people!

Adam: Riiight. Entire cities.

John & Adam: Yeah.

Adam: Alright.

Ben: Yeah.

Adam: That's fair.

00:03:41 Ben Host Planets, even!

00:03:42 John Host Yeah. Planets.

00:03:43 Ben Host But we've—we did *Star Wars*!

00:03:45 John Host That's true.

00:03:46 Ben Host They kill a planet in that!

00:03:47 John Host That's true. A million—

00:03:48 Adam Host Yeah!

00:03:49 John Host Millions of souls all screaming out, and then silenced, in...

00:03:51 Ben Host *[Laughs.]* Yeah, millions! It's a planet of millions. We've got that beat by a country mile on this planet.

00:03:57 John Host But this movie, *Stalingrad*—

00:03:59 Adam Host It'd take a planet of millions to hold us back.

[John laughs/groans, Ben and Adam laugh.]

00:04:06 Ben Host Oh, boy.

[Adam laughs.]

Uh, two million people died in the Battle of Stalingrad.

00:04:10 John Host That seems like a lot of people.

00:04:12 Ben Host Yeah. And this movie chooses to focus on... seven. *[Laughs quietly.]*

00:04:16 John Host Yeah, seven people that are stand-ins, that—

00:04:19 Adam Host You know what? You say that while laughing, Ben, but this is, like—*Saving Private Ryan* did the same fucking thing.

00:04:26 John Host Mm!

00:04:26 Ben Host All war movies do this! *[Laughs.]*

00:04:28 Adam Host *[Laughs.]* I—I just detected a tinge of like, incredulity on your mic! That I'm trying to interrogate.

[John laughs.]

Now for all of you with bingo cards at home, that's two squares.

[John laughs.]

00:04:42 Ben Host You're projecting.

00:04:43 Adam Host Okay.

00:04:44 Ben Host That's three. *[Laughs.]*

00:04:45 John Host I'm—I'm—*[laughs]*. I'm working on a *Stalingrad* movie where every single one of the two million people is given one second of screen time.

[Adam and Ben laugh.]

So we just see them one after another—*[stifles laughter]* we see the moment of their death. Like, bullet splatter, bullet splatter, death in a fire, fall off a log...

00:05:02 Ben Host I read that the director and two of the lead actors in this film had been in previous movies called *Stalingrad*.

00:05:11 John Host How many—did you do—did you research how many movies have been called *Stalingrad*?

00:05:15 Ben Host There seems to be at least two other narratives called *Stalingrad*, and one documentary. There may be more. But there's a 1989 Russian film called *Stalingrad* that the director acted in, and also one of the other Russian actors acted in. And then there's a 1993 German film that the German lead guy was in. *[Laughs.]* So... And he was also in *Valkyrie*! That German guy.

00:05:43 Adam Host If I were to ask you how many films there are about Pearl Harbor and how many films there are about Stalingrad, which would you guess had had more films about it?

00:05:53 Ben Host Hmm.

00:05:54 John Host Well, but the question isn't about Stalingrad, because we've watched a movie about Stalingrad already, *Enemy at the Gates*.

00:06:00 Adam Host Yeah.

00:06:01 John Host We've watched a couple of movies about Stalingrad! Right? What—

00:06:04 Adam Host *Hand Job Behind the Gates* is... is what people call that movie.

[Adam and John stifle laughter.]

00:06:08 John Host But we're talking about how many movies are actually called *Pearl Harbor*.

00:06:12 Adam Host Oh. Well, I mean, that could be a pretty high number, too!

00:06:15 John Host Yeah. I think it's maybe lower.

00:06:16 Ben Host How many adult films are called *Pearl Harbor*? Just that is probably a pretty high number.

[Adam sighs, then laughs.]

00:06:21 John Host I want out of this podcast.

00:06:22 Adam Host *[Laughing]* God damn it.

[Ben laughs.]

00:06:23 John Host Can I start a separate podcast where it's just me?

00:06:25 Adam Host There are more adult films called *Pearl Harbor* than there are films called *Stalingrad*.

[Ben and John laugh.]

00:06:33 Ben Host You know, one of the things we can say about this film called *Stalingrad* is that it is a film called *Stalingrad*!

00:06:39 John Host Now I—now all of a sudden I'm hearing a tone in your voice that I'd like to interrogate, Ben! Adam may have been projecting before.

00:06:48 Ben Host Mm.

00:06:49 John Host But now I'm concerned that you are... you're trying to shit on this movie *Stalingrad*.

00:06:54 Ben Host I'm surprised it didn't have a colon in the name.

00:06:56 Adam Host Mm.

00:06:57 John Host Whooooa.

[Ben laughs.]

That's one of our highest criticisms of a film!

00:07:00 Adam Host Yeah.

00:07:01 Ben Host Yeah.

00:07:02 Adam Host That's how you know.

00:07:03 Ben Host I—there's a lot about it that worked for me, but overall I—I didn't—I mean, I don't wanna review the movie now! We've got a whole podcast to get through!

00:07:10 John Host Right!

00:07:11 Ben Host The text that you sent me, John, as you embarked on watching this film the other night, is illustrative of one of my key criticisms of the movie, which was you just sent a text that was like "Is this movie set in Japan?"

[Ben and John laugh.]

00:07:28 John Host The movie opens—*[laughs again as Ben continues]*.

00:07:29 Ben Host It is one of the most bizarre framing devices of anything I've ever seen in a movie.

00:07:33 John Host The movie opens in more or less contemporary Japan, tsunami aftermath Japan. And it is a very wei—*[laughs]* a very weird framing device that I have been trying to untangle. The idea being that the woman at the center of the film... is the mother of an aging doctor—a Russian doctor—that has been sent to Japan to help rescue trapped German tourists.

00:08:02 Ben Host Yeah, they're in a collapsed building under tons of rock.

00:08:06 John Host And we spend a little bit of time with them, trapped under—*[laughs]* under this collapsed building, these Germans.

[Ben laughs quietly.]

00:08:13 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Ben:** Yeah.

Adam: It's like, "We need to make bookends to this film. Let's roll for country of origin..."

John: Yeah!

[Ben laughs.]

Adam: "That our tourists are—*[laughs]* under this building."

00:08:21 John Host And then—and then—

00:08:22 Adam Host It's all randomized, it feels like!

00:08:23 John Host It's so random! And the girl is just like "I miss my dad!" She's trapped under this building. And the German—or and the Russian doctor—whose face we never see!

00:08:32 Adam Host Yeah.

00:08:33 John Host Says "Oh, you know, don't... you know, I know that feeling!" or whatever.

[Ben chuckles.]

00:08:38 Adam Host We never see his face because they can't pull off that *Saving Private Ryan* morph from...

00:08:43 John Host Yeahhh, right.

00:08:44 Adam Host ...young face to old face.

00:08:45 John Host Well, because he's not born during the movie!

00:08:47 Adam Host Yeah.

00:08:48 John Host So they wouldn't need to!

00:08:49 Adam Host Yeah, that would be weird. *[Laughs.]*

00:08:49 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** But then, um—*[laughs]* yeah, right, that would be.

Ben: But nonetheless, it looks like a—

[Adam laughs.]

Ben: —a young man in old man makeup somehow.

John: For—

Ben: Even though we never see his face. *[Laughs.]*

John: Yeah, for whatever reason!

00:08:57 John Host And then she says something—I don't even remember the line of dialogue, but something like "Well, you wouldn't know what it was like to... miss your dad!"

[Ben laughs, John stifles laughter.]

Or I don't know what, and he's like "Yes, I would. I had five dads!" It just see—it's like a weird—

00:09:11 Ben Host Yeah.

00:09:12 John Host It's—he uses this line that he's surely been using at cocktail parties for 50 years.

00:09:16 Ben Host Yeah, he's been drinking out on that his whole life!

00:09:18 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** "I have five dads!"

Adam: It's dialogue written in reverse.

John: Right.

Adam: "How do we get a character to answer in this way?"

00:09:24 Adam Host "Well, I guess this question is a way to make that happen."

00:09:27 John Host And then she says "You didn't have five dads! That's impossible!"

00:09:30 Adam Host Yeah.

00:09:31 John Host And all of a sudden the sides of the screen get all wavy, like "Here we go!"

[Ben laughs.]

00:09:36 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Ben:** *[As music into a flashback/dream sequence]* Dit-a-lee doo! Dit-a-lee doo! Dit-a-lee doo! Dit-a-lee doo! *[Laughs.]*

John: "Here we go, off to a magic—*[laughs]* magic land!" *[Laughs.]*

00:09:39 Adam Host There is a lot about the bookends that feels random, but what feels like a choice—a real choice—is the depicted relationship between Russia and Japan.

00:09:49 John Host Which also—

00:09:50 Adam Host That feels significant! Why?

00:09:52 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** Also feels weird!

Ben: And Germans.

00:09:54 John Host And Germans, right! Well, so the—

00:09:55 Adam Host Yeah!

00:09:56 John Host The Russian doctor and the Germans. Maybe it was a thing where they were like "How do we get a Russian to be saving Germans?"

[Ben laughs.]

"Let's see, let's see, where would we find a situation where a Russian could be saving Germans?"

00:10:06 Ben Host Yeah.

00:10:07 John Host "Ah! The Japanese tsunami of 2011!"

00:10:10 Adam Host Yeah.

00:10:11 John Host But I don't—I cannot imagine during that period that the Japanese were reaching out to the Russians for help!

Don't send us letters. Or if you do, send 'em to Adam at gofuckyourself@...maximumfun.sex.

[Adam laughs.]

But that just didn't seem—even in the moment it felt like, "This is a little—this—" 'Cause I'm always on the lookout for Russian-language, or Russian-made films, to see like that real Russian take on...

00:10:35 Adam Host Oh, yeah.

00:10:36 John Host ...on the world.

00:10:37 Adam Host That's one of your things.

00:10:38 John Host *[Stifles laughter.]* And I was like... "This is pretty self-aggrandizing!"

[Ben laughs.]

'Cause it felt like "Here we are! The Russians! Finally! Your nation is in need!"

00:10:45 Ben Host "We've forgiven the Germans, finally!"

[Ben and John laugh.]

00:10:47 John Host "We've forgiven everyone!"

00:10:49 Ben Host "Or at least these three." *[Laughs.]*

00:10:50 John Host "The most generous nation!"

00:10:52 Ben Host Does he launch into his story in German and then switch to Russian when it's voiceover for the rest of the movie?

00:10:59 John Host That is a really good question. This is one of those movies that we're reading subtitles, but there are—there's dialogues being spoken in Russian and German. And that's a plot point.

00:11:10 Adam Host Mm-hm.

00:11:11 John Host Right? There—

00:11:12 Ben Host Yeah.

00:11:13 John Host That there are characters speaking to each other in Russian and German and they don't understand one another.

00:11:17 Ben Host Right. And talking shit to each other. *[Laughs.]*

00:11:19 John Host Right. We have the advantage of—or disadvantage—of just reading it all in the same color text.

00:11:23 Ben Host Yeah.

00:11:24 John Host You know, why don't they do that? Why don't they put Russian in green text and German in blue text or something, so—so *[exaggeratedly]* Americans and English speakers can more fully understand what's going on? Wouldn't that be a better device?

00:11:38 Ben Host That would be great!

00:11:40 Adam Host Yeah. How do we make it easier for us?

00:11:42 John Host Yeah! Exactly. *[Laughs.]* Speaking of the most generous nation.

00:11:45 Ben Host I mean, this movie was like, one of the highest-grossing movies in—of all time in China, so I imagine that would be useful as a device for a lot of different audiences.

00:11:57 John Host Yeah. Take that, Adam.

00:11:59 Ben Host That don't speak German and Russian.

00:12:01 Adam Host Yeah, you really scored a point on me there, John.

00:12:03 John Host Yeah. Why are you so defensive?

[Adam laughs.]

But after we're in the movie—right? After we go through this twinkle curtain of set-up, and we're there...

[Ben laughs.]

We're in Stalingrad. We go through some familiar Stalingradian scenes. It's kind of like a submarine movie, a Stalingrad movie. You always start on the other side of the river.

00:12:28 Adam Host Yeah!

00:12:29 Ben Host Right.

00:12:30 John Host You always cross the river under withering fire.

00:12:32 Adam Host Yep.

00:12:33 John Host You watch people blown up and sink in the river. And then you arrive on the other side and it is a total hellscape. You climb up the bank through rubble and people catching on fire—more people on fire in this movie than in most.

[Ben or Adam snorts.]

00:12:49 Ben Host A lot of people that are on fire and just continuing to fight the war.
[Laughs.]

00:12:53 John Host Which was... *[laughs]* you got to admit—

[Ben laughs.]

Pretty gnarly scene! They kept on rolling!

00:12:59 Ben Host Yeah!

00:13:01 John Host Kept on rolling so much so that it was like—it felt like... this is either documenting a real event where an entire, *[stifles laughter]* uh, platoon—or more—of men just fought on fire for a long time...

00:13:14 Ben Host Right.

00:13:15 John Host Or this is re-writing the story. *[Laughs.]*

00:13:18 Ben Host Right.

00:13:19 Adam Host I really wanna scrutinize this moment a little bit. Because... this is insane.

00:13:23 John Host Yeah.

00:13:24 Adam Host To depict it this way, also insane.

00:13:26 John Host Yes!

00:13:28 Adam Host It's—*[laughs]*. It's absolutely bug-nuts. Why didn't you laugh during this moment? I know I didn't! *[Laughing]* I was terrified!

00:13:38 John Host I was, too. *[Stifling laughter]* I was, too.

00:13:39 Adam Host This shouldn't work! But something about that scene does, and I can't explain why.

00:13:45 John Host There were multiple moments in this film, multiple whole sections of this film, where I caught myself—and we've talked about this before, where I was physically recoiling?

00:13:55 Adam Host Yeah.

00:13:56 John Host And—you know, and cowering, and my face was contorted in like "Eughhuaghhh!" And sure, that was maybe the first one. Where I was like "Well, I've never seen this on a film—on film before."

00:14:07 Adam Host Yeah.

00:14:08 Clip Clip *[Audio of what sounds like fire burning and people screaming, possibly including children. Fades in over the end of John's previous statement, and fades out as Ben speaks now.]*

00:14:10 Ben Host There's a few scenes in the film that really reminded me of Chinese

cinema?

00:14:16 John Host Hm!

00:14:17 Ben Host And this was one of 'em, where it's almost like magical realism that they're on fire and still just marching toward the German lines and shooting Germans, and then like, when they get there, you know, wrapping their arms around the Germans and—and causing them to immolate along with them. Like, it almost feels like the... the kind of imagery you would see in a kung fu film or something.

00:14:41 Adam Host Right. Where *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* would be, like, people sword-fighting on treetops—

00:14:47 John Host Sure.

00:14:48 Adam Host—in a Russian film, the sword fighters are on fire.

00:14:51 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John & Ben:** *[Laughing]* Right.

00:14:52 John Host From even before that, from the very opening scenes in Stalingrad—I mean, the—the—let's just leave the parts that take place in Japan off now.

00:15:02 Ben Host Yeah.

00:15:03 John Host It had that—

00:15:05 Ben Host Let's pretend that didn't happen. *[Laughs.]*

[Ben responds affirmatively a few times as John continues.]

00:15:07 John Host It had that crazy—and you guys can tell me what it is—but it felt like a filter on it that looked like the movie *300*. And there's so many scenes in this movie—'cause they choose to film a lot of the battle sequences in super-duper slow-mo. There's so much slow-mo in this movie, and it's *300*-level slow-mo, where people are going "Waaaaaah!"

00:15:32 Ben Host And speed-ramping, too, where it'll be like, slow motion for a second and then like, somebody'll do a punch and it's like, super fast motion.

00:15:40 John Host Yeah, a lot of that, but then the filter on the background—the sky always looks sort of copper, or...

00:15:47 Ben Host Yeah.

00:15:48 John Host Mother of pearl, even. You know, there's a kind of—there's a depth of field that feels like it's—like it—there's almost like a silver plate to it.

00:15:58 Adam Host You remember how popular HDR photographs were like five years ago? Where like, everything was perfectly lit.

00:16:06 John Host Oh, yeah.

00:16:07 Adam Host On your Instagram photos? That's how this film felt. It felt—and because it was shot in 3D natively, I wonder—

00:16:18 John Host Well, that's—

00:16:19 Adam Host And this is a question for you, Ben. Like, I wonder if in shooting the film in 3D, you have to both light and compose in such a way that it gives you this look of—this HDR effect look, where everything is perfectly lit.

00:16:35 Ben Host Hm.

00:16:36 John Host This movie was 3D?!

00:16:38 Adam Host Yeah!

00:16:39 John Host You could see this in 3D in theaters.

00:16:40 Adam Host Absolutely. And a lot of the compositions—like, you could tell this was shot natively in 3D, because a lot of the comps were like, coming at the camera.

00:16:50 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Adam:** In kind of an unnatural way for a mainstream film.

Ben: Yeah.

John: Oh, I didn't—I didn't pick up on that!

Adam: Like, when shit blows up, it blows up at you.

00:16:57 John Host Wow! Yeah, I was watching this on my Apple Watch.

[Adam and Ben laugh.]

In the bathtub, while eating a spaghetti dinner, so I didn't—I was—didn't pick up on all that.

00:17:05 Adam Host Yeah.

00:17:06 John Host I wish that I'd seen it in IMAX, frankly, in 3D!

00:17:09 Adam Host Yeah.

00:17:10 Ben Host I thought that the—the Instagram filter stuff was... really overwrought toward the beginning of the film, but they really relaxed after the first 20 minutes or so, and then it—like, the color palette is very specific but it's doesn't—it doesn't feel like it was all achieved in post the way some of those early scenes do.

00:17:32 John Host I agree. Yeah, at first it was super noticeable, and then it... the film chilled out.

00:17:37 Ben Host Yeah.

00:17:38 Adam Host It's gotta come down to what your position is as a creator, right? Do you want it to look real, or do you want it to look beautiful? The choice in this film appears to have been beautiful. Right?

00:17:52 John Host It doesn't look... real.

00:17:56 Adam Host Yeah.

00:17:57 John Host But it—but it f—*[sighs]*. Well, I mean that—

00:18:00 Adam Host But what an interesting choice for someone making a war film!

00:18:02 John Host Because I feel like it—at least for me, it felt real. Like, it looked unreal to the point that it achieved a kind of hyper-real. Um—

00:18:14 Adam Host *[Exaggeratedly mindblown]* Whoa.

[All three laugh.]

00:18:16 John Host Yeah. "Strap in, bros! Because I'm about to get real."

[Adam and Ben laugh.]

You know, like the—we see this in art sometimes where the attempt is to give you an emotional experience? And to create in a—in—something that's immersive, and knowing that this was meant to be

in 3D, I now see that it was meant to be completely immersive. And to have that immersive feeling take you someplace that maybe if you spend a ton of time trying to get the grayness of—trying to get it to feel sort of that flat gray that it probably was. You wouldn't—it wouldn't have felt as dangerous.

00:18:57 Adam Host Mm.

00:18:58 John Host I mean, the movie *300*... I resisted going to see it, because it looked like it was a goofy—it was goofy.

00:19:05 Adam Host My resistance continues! I've never seen it.

00:19:07 John Host But when I finally saw *300*, I recognized that it was a different—it was a new kind of thing. At least for me.

00:19:14 Ben Host Is that on the list, Ben?

00:19:15 John Host Yes!

00:19:16 Ben Host Yeah.

00:19:17 Adam Host Okay.

00:19:18 Ben Host Course!

00:19:19 John Host You know, that—the m—

00:19:20 Adam Host *301* also on the list?

00:19:21 John Host *301*, whatever it takes.

00:19:23 Ben Host *[Laughs.]* Yeah.

[Adam laughs.]

00:19:24 John Host *[Stifling laughter]* It, uh—

00:19:25 Ben Host Cruella de Vil is back!

[He and John laugh.]

00:19:29 John Host So *300*, it becomes affecting by virtue of the fact that there is magical realism in it!

00:19:34 Ben Host Yeah.

00:19:35 John Host I mean, magical realism works because it takes you somewhere.

00:19:39 Ben Host It's like a fever dream about...

00:19:40 John Host Yeah!

00:19:41 Ben Host ...ancient history or something.

00:19:43 John Host And the combination of that look and super slow-mo... It's fever dream. That's exactly the feeling. You're just like "Whoa, where am I now?"

00:19:52 Adam Host I don't have this film paper chambered, but what is the difference between magical realism in a film like this and magical realism as depicted in a superhero film?

00:20:04 John Host I think they're super different. The idea of a fever dream is not a suspension of disbelief while people shoot laser beams outta their fingers. It is trying to duplicate that feeling that people describe when they're in a car accident and everything slows way down, and they—they see a butterfly out the window.

00:20:26 Adam Host It's trauma!

00:20:27 John Host Yeah! That's... there's your film paper.

00:20:29 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[Printer sounds.]*

00:20:30 Adam Host Yeah!

00:20:31 John Host Right? How do you depict something that's so awful that there's just—that you can't capture it any way other than going outside of the normal frame of how you make a film?

00:20:43 Adam Host Right.

00:20:44 John Host And that's why we see movies that have soundtracks that are—that sound bad, but are meant to create in you a state of emotional discomfort, or...

00:20:55 Adam Host Mm-hm!

00:20:56 John Host ...you know, um—

00:20:57 Adam Host The Jonny Greenwood effect.

00:20:58 John Host Right. Where it's just like "Bwlarghhhh."

00:20:59 Adam Host Yeah.

00:21:00 John Host "BWLEEEEE."

00:21:01 Adam Host Yeah.

00:21:02 John Host And you're like "Why—I hate this! Stop this!"

[Ben laughs quietly.]

But it takes you someplace.

00:21:05 Adam Host Yeah, there's a lot of like, modern Trent Reznor soundtracking happening in that same way.

00:21:08 John Host Yeah.

00:21:09 Music Music Deep, distorted voices aggressively repeating "TICK! TOCK!" Music fades in over the end of Adam's previous line and cuts out before Ben speaks.

00:21:11 Ben Host The soundtrack in this film is extremely sentimental in a very specific way. It felt like it kind of... never stopped, to me. Like, there is always some really, like, needle-pegging emotional music playing, no matter what was going on.

00:21:28 Adam Host Music by Angelo Badalamenti. Uh, yeah! He did—he does a lot of David Lynch films.

00:21:34 Ben Host Wow!

00:21:35 Adam Host Uh, of *Mulholland Drive* fame, is Angelo Badalamenti. *Blue Velvet*. Like—

00:21:41 John Host Really?

00:21:42 Adam Host —films of notably interesting... scores.

00:21:46 John Host Music.

00:21:47 Adam Host Yeah.

00:21:48 John Host So this was a, uh—this was a multinational production. Is that true? Or did Columbia just buy the rights to this?

00:21:55 Adam Host *[Sighs.]* I mean, I'm unclear about how—about the relationship

between production and distribution in a film like this.

00:22:02 John Host How much did Netflix put into this movie, and how long was it in theaters—

[Ben laughs.]

—before it appeared on my watch?

00:22:08 Adam Host Great question. I mean, it's a Russian production. It was distributed by American companies. But I don't think it had American money put into it.

00:22:15 John Host You know, I think—*[stifling laughter]* I think you're right? 'Cause no Americans appear in this film! There's wasn't some GI that came in to save the day, so we know that an American company didn't put any money in it.

[Ben laughs quietly.]

00:22:25 Adam Host Right on down to the waving Canadian flag in the earthquake rubble scene.

00:22:30 John Host Yep.

00:22:31 Adam Host Of either the—of either one of the bookends. Like...

00:22:33 John Host The Canadian flag was there to say "This was a multinational effort. Therefore, it's not weird that there are Russians here."

00:22:39 Adam Host Yeah.

[Ben laughs.]

00:22:40 John Host "Because there are also that other most helpful nation, the Canadians."

00:22:43 Music Transition Brief clip of "War."

War!

[Music cuts.]

00:22:45 Promo Clip *[Cheering crowd.]*

Danielle Radford: Mmmacho man, to the top rope!

[Thump!]

Danielle: The flying elbow! The cover!

[Crowd cheering swells.]

Speaker 2: *[Distant; impact on each word]* One! Two! Three!

[Ding ding ding!]

Danielle:: We've got a new champion!

Music: Excited, sweeping music.

Lindsey Kelk: We're here with Macho Man Randy Savage after his

big win to become the new world champion! What are you gonna do now, Mach?!

00:23:04 Promo Clip **Hal Lublin:** *[Randy Savage impression]* I'm gonna go listen to the newest episode of the [Tights and Fights](#) podcast, oh yeah!

Lindsey: Tell us more about this podcast!

Hal: *[Continuing impression]* It's the podcast of power, too sweet to be sour! Funky like a monkey! Woke discussions, man! And jokes about wrestlers' fashion choices, myself excluded! Yeahh!

Lindsey: I can't wait to listen!

Hal: *[Continuing impression]* Neither can I! You can find it Saturdays on Maximum Fun! Oh yeahhh! Dig it!

[Music fades out.]

00:23:31 Promo Clip **Music:** Straightforward, thump-y electric bass guitar beat with light drums.

Laurie: Hi. I am Laurie Kilmartin.

Jackie: And I'm Jackie Kashian.

Laurie: Together we host a podcast called:

Jackie: [The Jackie and Laurie Show!](#)

Laurie: Uh, we're both stand-up comics. We recently met each other because women weren't allowed to work together on the road or in gigs for a long, long time, and so... our friendship has been unfolding on this podcast for a couple years. Jackie constantly works the road; I write for Conan and then I work the road in-between.

Jackie: We do a lot of stand-up comedy, and so we celebrate stand-up—

Laurie: Yes.

Jackie: —and we also... bitch about it.

Laurie: We keep it to an hour; we don't have any guests. We somehow find enough to talk about every single week. So find us—you can subscribe to *The Jackie and Laurie Show* at [MaximumFun.org](#), or wherever you get your podcasts.

Jackie: *[Nonplussed]* K, bye.

[Music ends.]

00:24:17 Music Transition Brief clip of "War."

Huh!
Yeah!

[Music cuts.]

00:24:19 Ben Host So this movie is set in this building. And this building is... strategically important, because it abuts the Volga where the Russians are building a crossing. And I felt like that was referred to a bunch, but I didn't have a sense of like, what kind of crossing they were talking about, if they were talking about like a pontoon bridge that they were building, or if they were filling in the river in some way. 'Cause there's a shot at the very beginning where the—you see guys like, walking out across the river in like, ankle-deep water?

00:24:53 John Host Yeah.

00:24:54 Ben Host You know, for all of the kind of CG wide shots that they show in this film, they never give you like a territorial establishing shot that shows where the building is, you know, in the square, and the other building that the Germans are in. You know, like you really are left to puzzle that out as a viewer.

00:25:15 Adam Host That's a good point, it's really man against building.

00:25:17 John Host Well, so—

00:25:18 Adam Host As a film story goes.

00:25:20 John Host So all of this is based on a kind of true aspect of the Battle of Stalingrad. There was a building, called Pavlov's House. And it was named after the Russian soldier that, with a small platoon, held off—

00:25:38 Adam Host Whenever the doorbell rang—

[John laughs.]

—their mouths would water inside?

[Ben laughs.]

00:25:43 John Host You know what, Pavlov is a very common name in Russia.

00:25:45 Adam Host *[Stifling laughter]* Uh-huh.

00:25:46 John Host But they did a—they—so this movie isn't like, based on a true story. But it really is sort of taking a ton from this Pavlov story. And that building did actually front on that square that we see in every Stalingrad.

00:26:06 Adam Host Right.

00:26:07 John Host With the statue of the little kids dancing "la la la" around a fountain. And the—this little platoon of dudes held off the Wehrmacht for like two months or whatever from this building. And the Russians—it's kind of like that church in Berlin. The Russians have maintained the destroyed rubble of the building as a monument within... Volograd. Or whatever the hell they call it now.

00:26:34 Ben Host I read a quote from the Russian general that oversaw the Battle of Stalingrad that the Germans lost more lives taking Pavlov's House than they did taking Paris.

[Ben and John laugh.]

00:26:45 John Host *[Laughing]* Isn't that great?!

00:26:46 Adam Host Fuuuck!

00:26:47 John Host It's true, right?! I mean—and so that building was situated in like a key—like, keystone position within Stalingrad. And I think any

Russian filmgoer of any age knows that. Because this is just one of those; it's like the—it's like... Washington crossing the Delaware or whatever. It's like a, uh...

| | | | |
|----------|--------------|--------------|--|
| 00:27:08 | Ben | Host | Yeahhh. |
| 00:27:09 | John | Host | It's just a— |
| 00:27:10 | Ben | Host | Oh, so the—you're saying that that context that the movie seems to leave out, like, wouldn't be necessary for the Russian filmgoing audience. |
| 00:27:16 | John | Host | Yeah. Right. I think anybody in Russia watching this would know exactly where that building was and why it was important. |
| 00:27:21 | Adam | Host | Mm! |
| 00:27:22 | Ben | Host | Wow. |
| 00:27:23 | John | Host | And so for whatever reason they didn't do—they didn't have to do a helicopter or a boom shot to—or some kind of, like, shot of some general standing over a table going "We've gotta capture this building to get across the river!" |
| | | | <i>[Ben laughs.]</i> |
| | | | It's just one of those things that everybody knows. |
| 00:27:38 | Ben | Host | I don't know if you know this or not, but how much, like... continuity do present-day Russians feel with USSR Russians? Does this feel like a patriotic film to a modern-day Russian? Or does it feel like a film about like, a different country? |
| 00:27:56 | John | Host | The whole Putin project has been to rehabilitate Soviet Russia as like a golden era. There's been a major collective project there within the kind of Putin... Administration. Whatever you would call that party that he's rebuilt. To kind of take away the Yeltsin years—to just sorta whitewash the whole project. Now, in <u>Ukraine</u> , they don't feel that way about the Soviet Union at <u>all</u> . And I—and they probably don't feel that way in Kazakhstan, and I <u>know</u> they don't feel that way in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. |
| | | | But for a Moscow audience? Yeah, this is just—I mean, Stalingrad is one of those events in history where if the city had fallen... and the Germans say it a couple of times in this movie! There wouldn't have been anything between them and India! And <u>two million</u> people died to keep them from crossing that river... And that's just— |
| 00:28:57 | Ben | Host | Yeah. |
| 00:28:58 | John | Host | I mean, that's just a thing that's not gonna get erased from their identity. |
| 00:29:03 | Ben | Host | You got pretty close in that to a moment of pedantry. So I feel like I should just get it out of the way. Um... |
| 00:29:10 | Sound Effect | Sound Effect | <i>[Beeping as Ben speaks.]</i> |
| 00:29:11 | Ben | Host | <i>[Straightforwardly]</i> "Whores in India do not have six arms." |
| | | | <i>[Beeping stops.]</i> |
| 00:29:14 | John | Host | What?! |

[Adam and Ben laugh.]

That's not been my experience. *[Laughs.]*

00:29:17 Adam Host That was your most Norm Macdonald delivery of a moment of pedantry. Ever.

[All three laugh. Someone claps.]

Note to self!

[Laughter continues and then dies down.]

Wow!

[Ben laughs.]

You know what's great about that scene? Is like, that is used as a—as a rallying cry! "Whores in India!"

00:29:38 John Host Yeah.

00:29:39 Adam Host "You live through this...!"

00:29:40 Ben Host Yeah!

00:29:41 Adam Host "You get those six-armed whores!"

00:29:42 John Host That's right.

00:29:43 Adam Host Interesting how in the cut-to shot of those soldiers, the Volkssturm, uh, doesn't really work.

00:29:50 John Host No! Nobody's like "Riiight on!"

00:29:53 Adam Host That old guy's like "I'm too old to fuck!"

[John and Ben laugh.]

And the young kid's like "What am I gonna do with a... even a second arm? Let alone a sixth!"

00:30:00 Ben Host My understanding of the strategic importance of Stalingrad was that it was like where the oil from the Caucasus in Kazakhstan was brought into... into Europe. And—

00:30:12 John Host It was definitely like, capture Stalingrad, and then you have access to all of that oil and all of those resources.

00:30:19 Ben Host Which is why they blow up the oil tanks at the beginning of the film, right?

00:30:22 John Host I think they blow up those oil tanks because they're about to be captured.

00:30:28 Ben Host Yeah. Well, and they're on that embankment, so they can dump all that fiery oil on the Russian soldiers.

00:30:33 John Host Riiight!

00:30:34 Ben Host But they didn't count on Russian soldiers being... willing to fight while—*[laughs]* engulfed in flame!

00:30:40 John Host We're gonna return to those burning Russian soldiers, because even though that scene only lasts a minute... boy, it's a—it's a spooky—

you never saw a thing like that! Where did you ever see guys just coming out of oil fire? Just still "buh-buh-buh-buh-buh-buh-buh-buh-buh-buh!"

| | | | |
|----------|------|------|--|
| 00:30:56 | Ben | Host | If you had soldiers like that in the Middle Ages, you'd be Emperor of Europe! |
| 00:31:00 | John | Host | "Give me 50 burning soldiers, and I'll give you Stalingrad." |
| 00:31:06 | Ben | Host | <i>[Cracks up.]</i> General Roderick. <i>[He and John laugh.]</i> |
| 00:31:12 | Adam | Host | The Russian soldiers are like opening their MREs and it's just like, <i>[stifling laughter]</i> that <u>goo</u> that is like the fire retardant that stuntmen use. <i>[John and Ben laugh.]</i> "I'm—this isn't food! You want me to put this <u>where?</u> ! And then do <u>what?</u> !" <i>[Laughs.]</i> |
| 00:31:28 | John | Host | "Okay men, gather round! I'm gonna tell you about our mission today." |
| 00:31:31 | Adam | Host | "Gather round the campfire, and I mean <u>really</u> close to the campfire." <i>[John and Adam laugh.]</i> "You're gonna need to get used to this." Hey, can we play a little, uh... fantasy revisionist war history for a moment? Like, say the Nazis win at Stalingrad. And they go for India. Why is it just assumed that they make it to India, and take India? Everyone always sets India as like, the country on the horizon—Alexander did this! Like "We're gonna make it to India and then the world is ours!" And then they get attacked by elephants. What— |
| 00:32:03 | John | Host | Right. And monkeys. |
| 00:32:04 | Ben | Host | India was his Stalingrad. |
| 00:32:05 | Adam | Host | What makes the German military believe that it's just gonna be a cakewalk once they get past Stalingrad? |
| 00:32:13 | John | Host | You are making a <u>great</u> point. On the other side of Stalingrad, it's not like it's just fields of bananas all the way to India. |
| 00:32:23 | Adam | Host | Right. It's not waterslides. |
| 00:32:24 | John | Host | No. It's not just like— |
| 00:32:26 | Adam | Host | <i>[Laughs.]</i> All the way there. |
| 00:32:27 | John | Host | "All you have to do is just pick fruit from the trees and just walk at a leisurely pace!" |
| 00:32:31 | Adam | Host | Yeah. |
| 00:32:32 | John | Host | No, it's— <i>[laughs]</i> it's a pretty rough road! |
| 00:32:34 | Adam | Host | Yeah. |
| 00:32:35 | John | Host | Not a lot of food, not a lot of people. The—what—I thought about this |

a lot in watching this movie. You know, one of the—I think what's described as one of the major, major failings of the whole... the whole Wehrmacht plan to invade Russia was as they went across Ukraine and Poland and Belarus, and as they progressed—and we saw this—yeah. We saw this depicted in *Come and See*. Just make enemies of every single person they met! As they walked.

When you look at Ukrainian revisionism now, a lot of it describes how much the Ukrainians hated the Russians, because of the famines that immediately preceded the war. And they have described initially greeting the Germans as liberators. And then they realized—well, then the Germans just like... burned them alive in churches, and... one could say missed a huge opportunity to say to the Ukrainians, as they passed, "Hey, join us! And help us fight the Russians."

And instead the Germans made enemies of everybody they touched. And so when they got to Stalingrad, they were already fighting rearward actions against the people they had brutalized.

00:33:54 Ben Host Isn't that an inherent weakness in national socialism? That like, anybody not German is automatically an enemy?

00:34:02 John Host Yes. It is the—it is the problem.

[He and Adam chuckle.]

It is one of the many problems of Nazism.

[Ben laughs.]

Uh, that it is not a friendly—*[laughs]*.

00:34:11 Ben Host I didn't say—I didn't say it was the only problem! *[Laughs.]*

00:34:15 John Host *[Laughs.]* No, but it is—it is a major problem. The xenophobic aspect!

00:34:17 Adam Host They really need to work on that rep, I think!

00:34:19 John Host Yeahhh, that's right. If they had been a friendlier Nazis...

[Ben laughs.]

00:34:22 Adam Host You know what, you hire an agency. You get some marketing money behind it.

00:34:26 Ben Host Hmm.

00:34:27 John Host But you know, they're at Stalingrad. They're already outta gas. They don't have winter uniforms. And their supply lines are cut because—or too long. They're too extended. If they'd made friends the whole way, is what I'm saying.

00:34:40 Adam Host Mm-hm.

00:34:41 John Host Then they would be getting all those—those potatoes!

00:34:43 Adam Host It wasn't just the march to Stalingrad, it was the friends we made along the way?

00:34:46 John Host *[Laughing]* That's right.

[Ben laughs.]

And they couldn't—

00:34:49 Ben Host Well that was sort of the—that's why, like, Alexander was able to expand such a big empire! Was that he didn't—

00:34:55 Adam Host He made friends along the way!

00:34:56 Ben Host He like—

00:34:57 John Host He did! He had boyfriends the entire time!

[Ben laughs.]

Every village—*[stifles laughter]* every village, he was like, picking another guy outta the ranks!

[Ben laughs.]

00:35:04 Adam Host Yeah, I mean, that's really the point, isn't it? It's that Adolf Hitler didn't fuck. Enough.

00:35:08 John Host Enough!

00:35:09 Adam Host During World War II.

00:35:10 John Host Well, he didn't really at all!

00:35:11 Adam Host Yeah.

00:35:12 John Host That's one of the things that we know about Hitler! First of all, he only had one ball. And second of all...

[Ben laughs.]

00:35:16 Adam Host Eins?

00:35:17 John Host We don't even know if he ever had sex with anybody but his—what is the—the little niece.

00:35:22 Adam Host Mm.

00:35:23 John Host We don't even know if he had sex with her!

00:35:24 Adam Host Hmm.

00:35:25 John Host Not a sexy dude!

00:35:26 Ben Host What?!

00:35:27 John Host What?

00:35:28 Ben Host His niece?

00:35:29 John Host Oh, yeah. The love of Hitler's life was his teenage niece.

00:35:33 Ben Host That's...

00:35:34 Adam Host Blondie?

00:35:35 Ben Host Is that Eva Braun, or is that somebody else?

00:35:36 John Host No, it's not Eva Braun. It's his—there was this—he fell in love with his—with this little—*[stifles laughter]* this much younger relative, and she—

00:35:44 Ben Host What the fuck?

00:35:45 John Host Well, I'm sorry to break it to you—

00:35:46 Adam Host Wow!

00:35:47 John Host —but there's a whole Hitler story that you guys don't know!

00:35:48 Ben Host I didn't—I didn't think that there was new awful shit to learn about Hitler!

00:35:52 John Host Oh, yeah, it—it's—it's, uh... the Hitler story, you can just—*[laughs]* you can just read and read!

[Ben laughs.]

I told you, didn't I?

00:35:59 Ben Host Yeah.

00:36:00 John Host That I went through a phase where I was watching Hitler art auctions?

00:36:03 Adam Host Oh, I didn't think that was a phase.

00:36:05 John Host Peo—*[laughs]*.

00:36:06 Adam Host I just thought that was a...

00:36:07 John Host Well...

00:36:08 Adam Host A quality of yours.

00:36:09 John Host Yeah, I don't know what a—whether it is a phase.

[Adam laughs.]

But yeah! You can go—I mean, Hitler paintings are on sale right now. You can go buy them, if you are... if you're really that broken.

[Laughs.]

00:36:19 Ben Host And now for just 18 easy payments of 99.99 a month...

[He and John laugh.]

00:36:24 John Host Anyway, so, yeah, you're right. There's no—they are dumb. They are dumb to think that winning Stalingrad is the end of their toil. But that's the classic! That's the classic, uh, Borderline Personality Disorder problem. Right? You think that this problem that's right in front of us is the last problem we're ever gonna have.

00:36:44 Adam Host It's interesting that quality of, like... in certain ways, a country is always fighting the last war. But as a country is in the war that it's in, it's already looking forward to the next one! And that's what's happening here, right? By looking at India, you're looking past Stalingrad?

00:37:02 John Host This is the Adam Axiom!

00:37:04 Adam Host Yeah!

[Ben laughs.]

00:37:05 John Host Or one of many. *[Stifling laughter]* One of many!

00:37:07 Adam Host What I'm trying to say is like—

00:37:08 Ben Host Oh, yeah.

00:37:09 Adam Host If these countries just meditated more and remained in the present, uh, their chances of winning wars would increase.

[Beat.]

Right?

| | | | |
|----------|------|------|--|
| 00:37:18 | Ben | Host | Hmm. |
| 00:37:19 | John | Host | Fight the war you're fighting. |
| 00:37:20 | Adam | Host | Yes. Fight the war you're fighting. <i>[Laughs.]</i> |
| 00:37:24 | Ben | Host | Hey, so this is a Russian film for Russian audiences, but the Germans are... you know, heavily characterized, and we have a character that we follow quite closely on the German side. And there is a lot he does that is despicable, but I do feel like the movie spends a few moments trying to humanize him and... like, show what an unhappy and sad person he is. |
| 00:37:55 | Adam | Host | <i>[Laughs.]</i> Yeah, Kahn is very, uh, unhappy to rape. |
| 00:37:58 | Ben | Host | He's a depressed Nazi rapist. <i>[Laughs.]</i> |
| 00:38:00 | John | Host | He's a brutal character, but they—but the movie did that thing where they cast an extremely handsome actor in the role? |
| 00:38:08 | Ben | Host | Yeah. |
| 00:38:09 | John | Host | If the bad guy in a movie is extremely handsome... |
| 00:38:11 | Adam | Host | Mm. |
| 00:38:12 | John | Host | ...you know you're meant to either develop sympathy for him, or he is going to be the most hateful thing you've ever seen. Right? He's either gonna be beautiful because he's a angel of death, or beautiful because he's complicated. That's just how—it seems to <u>me</u> like that's how casting works. |
| | | | He does terrible things. But then he becomes a kind of... through his relationship with that poor girl that he... that, you know, he brutalizes into a sort of Stockholm syndromes fate? And... |
| 00:38:46 | Ben | Host | Yeah. |
| 00:38:47 | John | Host | Just his, like—he— <i>[stifling laughter]</i> he's clearly suffering from some major PTSD. |
| 00:38:51 | Adam | Host | God, when the townspeople were being marched away and Kahn like, gets on that <u>cool</u> , uh, treaded— |
| 00:38:58 | John | Host | Little tank—? |
| 00:38:59 | Adam | Host | —motorcycle, like, ATV thing. |
| 00:39:01 | John | Host | Right. |
| 00:39:02 | Adam | Host | I thought for sure Masha was gonna be like, double middle fingers into the boxcar on her way outta town, vs. <u>getting onto</u> the ATV with him! |
| 00:39:11 | John | Host | Yeah. Like—well, she just realizes looking around, I think, at that moment, that he's her best option. |
| 00:39:16 | Ben | Host | German loading you into boxcar is... <u>never</u> going to be a good choice. |
| 00:39:21 | John | Host | Right. Right. They're like "We're gonna re-settle you! Someplace nicer!" |
| 00:39:25 | Adam | Host | I really wonder if there was something lost in translation with a |

couple of these scenes—

- 00:39:30 Ben Host Yeahhh.
- 00:39:31 Adam Host —between Kahn and Masha, because like, one of the unintentional... funny/horrible moments of the film is when Kahn's looking in the mirror after raping Masha, and he's like, you know, "You've made me do this! You've turned me into this beast!"
- 00:39:52 John Host And I'm like... "Ugh! That cannot be what he's saying here, right?"
But he's saying it about the Russians. And so it is awful that he's using, like, super rapist justification language?
- 00:40:01 Adam Host Yeah!
- 00:40:02 John Host But he's putting her in place of what he's—what's he—what he is—because he's in that same moment calling her entire people despicable. But the comedy of those moments also is that she repeatedly says "I have no idea what you're saying! You're speaking German to me and I don't speak German." And she's presumably saying that to him in Russian, which he also doesn't speak. And we never—we don't get that, 'cause like I say, they didn't color code the subtitles.
- 00:40:28 Adam Host At the very end of that scene, he's going on and on with his monologue, and she doesn't understand. He—she reaches out for him, and then we cut to the next scene. And that moment stuck with me for so long! Like, trying to figure out why she's doing that in the aftermath of that... of that violence. Like... what do you think that means? Like, is it the Stockholm syndrome of a rape survivor in wartime? Like, is that simplistically all that was?
- 00:40:58 Ben Host That's... very much where my mind went. And also just hopelessness, right?
- 00:41:04 John Host Right.
- 00:41:05 Ben Host 'Cause like, little kids in the streets are yelling at her for, you know, this choice she didn't even make, of sleeping with a German.
- 00:41:13 John Host Yeah, this is the thing about all the women that we end up looking at in wartime and calling collaborators. You realize that a lot of 'em didn't... you know, either didn't have a choice, didn't feel they had a choice, and it's a classic kind of—it's a classic civilization problem, where we blame the women for decisions that ultimately, like, how do you survive a war?
- 00:41:43 Ben Host So this is the thing about Stockholm syndrome! That you end up defending your persecutor. But that's not because—
- 00:41:43 Ben Host Right.
- 00:41:44 John Host That's not just a simplistic brain meltdown. You actually—you spend a ton of time in this—you know, in this person's emotional envelope, and their justifications for their behavior, and it... it becomes like a—mean it is a primary relationship in your life, even if it is based in violence and lack of consent.
- 00:42:08 Ben Host Under duress.
- 00:42:09 John Host Right! And so—
- 00:42:10 Ben Host Yeah.

00:42:11 John Host So you can't—it's—you can't—I don't think most people can sit in a situation like that and maintain... maintain defiance.

00:42:18 Ben Host But doesn't this movie condemn her in the end? Like, when Chvanov snipers her and calls her a whore... like, to me that felt like the filmmaker condemning her as a character.

00:42:34 John Host Well, no, because Chvanov is the worst of the Russians! And I felt it was a tragic moment.

00:42:41 Ben Host Hm.

00:42:42 John Host I mean, I just thought of her as a tragic character throughout. I—you know.

00:42:45 Ben Host Yeah. American films about war don't often have a Chvanov.

00:42:52 John Host Yeah, or if you do, you have one unlikeable guy in the squad, but at the end of the movie he always ends up being a hero of some kind.

00:42:58 Adam Host You know, my feelings about this scene are a little more mixed, because... I sort of got mercy killing vibes when Masha got taken out. Like, almost relief.

00:43:08 John Host Because there wasn't any good outcome.

00:43:10 Adam Host What is she looking forward to?

00:43:11 John Host Right.

00:43:12 Adam Host At this point? That's not... worse than the worst stuff she's experienced already?

00:43:18 Ben Host But there's no mercy in his performance of that. Like—

00:43:21 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John & Adam:** No.

00:43:22 Adam Host No, like, this is purely, like, my feelings about Masha independent of who pulled the trigger.

00:43:28 John Host The film is letting us off the hook of—because we care about Masha at this point, but in a very complicated way.

00:43:35 Adam Host Very complicated.

00:43:36 Clip Clip *[Men shouting angrily/urgently in German and/or Russian, and a woman sobbing. A child (?) screams.]*

00:43:42 Ben Host Speaking of women who are killed in this movie, I wanted to touch on the woman that is determined sort of ad hoc to be Jewish, and is burned in a truck with her little kid. That felt to me like a moment in the movie that's... I don't know, like, how... how much antisemitism still plays a role in modern Russian life, but the sense I get is that it's like a pretty pervasive issue still. And I know that, you know, Stalin racked up quite the Jewish body count of his own after the war.

This is a moment that definitely, like, is "the Germans were bad because of their hatred of Jews" moment. And all of our hero soldiers are outraged by what they're watching.

00:44:36 Adam Host Did you think it was strange that her death was constructed as less of an execution, and more of... like, an almost ritual? Like, they refer to it as a sacrifice!

00:44:49 John Host Yeah.

00:44:50 Adam Host In an almost Pagan kind of way!

00:44:51 John Host Yeah. Yeah.

00:44:52 Ben Host Yeah.

00:44:53 John Host Like, this is "We give a sacrifice to our gods before going into battle!"

00:44:56 Adam Host I mean, we've unfortunately seen a lot of Jewish people boarded up into buildings and then burned in the *Friendly Fire* project, and it's awful every time, but this is the first depiction of that that has that sort of couch to it.

00:45:13 John Host But also as Ben is saying, it becomes the galvanizing moment—

00:45:16 Adam Host Right.

00:45:17 John Host —that brings our squad together. They are so outraged that they launch an attack.

00:45:21 Adam Host Yeah.

00:45:22 John Host And it's like the trigger moment for the whole movie. It is an extremely strange scene, and another aspect of it is that all of her fellow Russians stand around where their heads bowed, nobody getting involved, nobody standing up for her. It's an... an awful scene, and I think what you're saying, Ben, is it's kind of a little bit of... it's a little bit of virtue signaling? Like, taking the—like, giving the Russian side an opportunity to seem... valiant?

00:45:54 Ben Host Yeah.

00:45:56 John Host Because our squad is the one that goes to her—not to—well, obviously doesn't rescue her, 'cause she burns.

00:46:02 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Ben:** Yeah.

John: But avenges her.

Adam: It's a cause proxy.

00:46:05 John Host Right.

00:46:06 Ben Host Seeing that in this movie made me think that there is a widespread appetite to see that kind of virtue signaling in the Russian filmgoing audience.

00:46:15 John Host I do not think that the Russian, uh—the present-day Russian people think of themselves as defenders of the Jews.

00:46:23 Ben Host Yeah.

00:46:24 John Host But I think there is a global—uh—

00:46:26 Adam Host That's john.roderick—

[John and Ben laugh.]

—at maximumsex.fuck.

00:46:31 John Host *[Stifles laughter.]* Go—gosexyourself@maximumfuck.sex.

[Adam and Ben laugh.]

But I do feel like globally, there is a desire probably of all people to position themselves relative to the Holocaust in some positive light. Right? If you can—if you're—if you are Egyptians making a movie about people in Thailand, and there's an opportunity to have a

character denounce the Holocaust...

00:46:59 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** Like, why wouldn't you?

Ben: *[Laughs.]* "Hey, as long as we're over here—"

[Ben and John laugh.]

00:47:02 Ben Host "Let's, uh—let's also just take a moment to distance ourselves from Hitler!"

[Ben and John laugh.]

00:47:06 John Host That's right. That's right.

[Adam laughs.]

00:47:10 Ben Host Yeah, I mean, lord knows I do it in just about every podcast I record.

00:47:14 John Host Boy, you sure do.

00:47:15 Adam Host Yeah.

00:47:16 John Host There are a lot of people on the Internet right now that take an opportunity every day to distance themselves from Hitler. Also a lot of people that don't? That don't! Right?

00:47:23 Adam Host Yeah!

00:47:24 Ben Host Yeah.

00:47:25 John Host That, uh...

00:47:26 Adam Host That have every opportunity to.

00:47:27 John Host *[Laughs.]* Yeah! Yeah! And that really end up waving... a weird flag!

Uh, we have not talked about the central figure in this film, and the tentpole that the whole—that supports the entire plot of the movie. Which is Katya!

00:47:44 Ben Host Yeah! Let's talk about her.

00:47:46 John Host Katya, who first appears in the movie as a bedraggled urchin.

[Adam laughs.]

Who comes in, you know, they—

00:47:56 Adam Host That's punching down. Come on.

[Ben laughs, John stifles laughter.]

00:47:57 John Host They're—they occupy this building, and all of a sudden this like—

00:48:02 Ben Host Have you tried the bedraggled urchin at Nobu? It is spectacular.

[All three laugh.]

00:48:07 Adam Host Seared on the outside...

00:48:09 John Host Yeah.

00:48:10 Adam Host Raw on the inside?

00:48:11 John Host Don't even use wasabi! It doesn't need it!

00:48:12 Adam Host No. Yeah. *[Laughs.]*

00:48:13 Ben Host Yeah. *[Laughs.]*

00:48:14 John Host The flavor—the flavor's in the urchin.

[Ben laughs.]

00:48:20 Adam Host Like, she tumbles out of—you know, and she's—
Host She lives in kind of a burned Wes Anderson apartment.

00:48:23 John Host Yeah! That's right! It's—she's got like, Rube Goldberg devices all around to make her tea.

[Ben laughs.]

00:48:29 Adam Host And even the narration—like, she's introduced onto the scene, and Papa is the narrator, and they're like "She just refused to give up her life and her apartment."

00:48:40 John Host Yeah.

00:48:41 Adam Host And she's walking through her apartment, not even attempting to dodge the bullets that are smashing into the walls around her.

00:48:47 John Host Yeah! Like, for her to be that, she would have to be completely insane.

00:48:52 Adam Host Yeah.

00:48:53 John Host She would have had to have lost her mind.

00:48:54 Adam Host Right.

00:48:55 John Host To be living in this wreckage of a building and refusing to leave! Like, what a crazy move! And yet she very quickly—like, when she first appears, I thought "Oh! Here's a nine-year-old." I—my first thought was "A nine-year-old boy!"

00:49:08 Ben Host Right.

00:49:09 John Host And then we look at her again and it's like "It's a 12-year-old girl!" And then it's a 16-year-old girl. And all this is happening just in hair and makeup.

00:49:16 Ben Host Right.

00:49:17 John Host And then all of a sudden she appears to be... a 19-year-old... uh, she's basically Amélie.

00:49:25 Adam Host She's kinda Talia Shire-ing to me! In that "How old is she?!"

00:49:29 John Host Right.

00:49:30 Adam Host Like, really hard to tell.

00:49:31 John Host But then she becomes this—this sort of dream... talk about fever dream! These guys are like, in the—in a pitched battle for their lives, and this beautiful and largely sort of sexless beauty, like a—like—she becomes a thing that they care for, care about, that brings them together. It never really comes between them. It threatens to throughout the whole movie, 'cause they're all in love with her, all five guys.

00:49:58 Ben Host Right.

00:49:59 John Host Are in love with her, but actually there are six guys! Which I wanted to ask you guys about.

00:50:03 Ben Host Yeah, that—the guy in the Navy uniform doesn't—isn't—doesn't count as one of the dads.

00:50:08 John Host He's not one of the dads.

00:50:09 Ben Host Well, he's in a different branch, so, you know...

00:50:12 John Host Right, right, right. Navy guys never count as dads.

[Ben and Adam laugh, John stifles laughter.]

Um, but the—they're gone so much of the time! Right?

[Adam and Ben laugh.]

But so we're—*[laughs]*. The plot of the movie is that this woman—

[Adam cracks up.]

—is in lo—*[sighs]* not in love. She... her life is saved by, and affected by, her relationships with these five men who are in this building with her. For some amount of time that the movie compresses to a matter of a few days, but actually if this is Pavlov's house, it's actually a couple of months that they're all living together.

00:50:53 Ben Host Right.

00:50:54 John Host And so much so that although the father of the Russian doctor that appears in Japan at the beginning of the movie—although none of these five guys is his actual father, because we never see her have sex with any one of them... That throughout his life—because he says right at the end; he's like "My real father was Sergey. Sergey... Brin," or whatever.

[Adam laughs.]

00:51:18 Ben Host Right.

00:51:19 John Host But—*[stifles laughter]* but, uh—"But these five guys are my fathers." And I'm just trying to imagine, like, what his real dad felt—like, felt about that story?"

00:51:28 Adam Host Yeahhh.

00:51:29 John Host Like, throughout his whole life, his mom—his super—*[laughs]* apparently super crazy mom is like "Yeah, yeah, yeah, your real—you know, you 'dad' or whatever is... this guy."

00:51:37 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Adam:** Yeah! It's like when a parent tells a kid to call one of their friends "Uncle So-and-so" when they're not related.

[Ben laughs.]

John: Yeah, right.

Adam: It's like that kind of thing.

John: Right, or like—or their stepdad comes into the house and is like "You're gonna call me 'Dad' from now on!"

Adam: Yeah.

John: And you're like "I have a dad!" And he's like "I'm Dad now!"

Adam: Kinda disrespectful to Sergey's memory, huh?

John: Yeah!

00:51:54 John Host But Mom—Mom in his childhood was like "You have five fathers. And they all died before you were born, and none of them ever... really hugged me, even. I kissed one of 'em one time."

00:52:06 Adam Host Yeah, the thing about that is that Katya doesn't really regard them all as equal. And she likes them very differently, and even dislikes some of them.

00:52:14 John Host Yeah, right! Some of them are super dislikable.

00:52:16 Adam Host Yeah.

00:52:17 John Host A couple of them are like neutered sorta dad dudes.

00:52:21 Adam Host Yeah.

00:52:22 Ben Host She never lets Chvanov pet her hair, though.

00:52:25 John Host That's true! There's some hair-petting that happens.

00:52:27 Adam Host Yeah.

00:52:29 John Host I mean, the beautiful boy that—whose name in this film is Sissy...

00:52:32 Adam Host Mm.

00:52:33 John Host Who actually when we see him in several war scenes is like a super total badass fighter.

00:52:38 Ben Host Yeah.

00:52:39 John Host But he's also super beautiful. And we see them crush out on each other from moment one. But the only one she ever really—like, the surprise relationship that comes out is her relationship with Captain Gromov!

00:52:53 Adam Host Yeah.

00:52:54 John Host Like, I didn't see that coming, when all of a sudden they're alone together and... it's not really a make-out session; it's—

00:53:00 Adam Host *[Sighs.]* I also never thought that it was credible that Katya would leave her apartment for any reason! And all the sudden she's being stashed across the street at the lookout?

00:53:10 Ben Host Was it Sissy that took her to that—to the lookout?

00:53:13 John Host Yeah! And didn't he say—wasn't there some ruse, like "Come with me! I'm gonna show you a magic dragon!" Or like "I have a toad that farts gems!" And she was like "Okay!" I mean, she's not like a—she's not a rocket scientist.

00:53:26 Adam Host I mean all it took was a hot bath to change her way of thinking altogether, right?

00:53:30 John Host *[Stifling laughter]* That's all it takes for me!

00:53:31 Adam Host Yeah.

[Ben laughs.]

00:53:33 John Host One hot bath, and I'll follow you anywhere!

00:53:35 Adam Host The magical realism of the birthday scene was something that I think it took effort for me to get through.

00:53:44 John Host The war slows down. Somehow they make a chocolate cake. They retrieved a bath and boiled enough water to fill it up.

00:53:51 Adam Host I had so many questions. *[Laughs.]*

00:53:53 John Host And somehow she didn't notice any of this was going on.

00:53:55 Adam Host How are you living in a Thomas Kinkade painting inside Stalingrad and not drawing all the fire? Like, how is that not your last night on Earth?

00:54:05 John Host That's true. The Germans across the no-man's land are like "Do you see all that... candle—?"

[Ben laughs quietly.]

Where did they find curtains?

00:54:13 Adam Host Where did Sasha find a tux? And have it be clean?

00:54:18 John Host He's carrying it with him. Don't you remember? There's—they actually say—the one guy says "He's been carrying that bowtie through the whole war." So it's in his pack! He's waiting for this—he's been waiting for this opportunity.

00:54:30 Adam Host Hey Sasha, that's valuable MRE room.

[John laughs.]

That you're taking up with that tie.

00:54:35 Ben Host Yeah, but that tie—

00:54:36 Adam Host *[Stifling laughter]* That's probably a choice that Benjamin Ahr Harrison would make, too, right?

[John laughs.]

00:54:38 Ben Host But—but the—listen! The tie has a naked lady on the silk liner! So it's serving two functions.

00:54:45 Adam Host Oh, it's his jack tie?

00:54:47 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Ben:** *[Stifling laughter]* Yeah, it's his jack tie!

Adam: And also his formalwear? Mm.

Ben: That's totally explained! *[Laughs.]*

00:54:51 John Host I mean, we—we're set up with that character to believe that he's... he's mute? And he's mute because of the trauma of war.

00:54:59 Adam Host Yeah.

00:55:00 John Host And then gradually throughout the film he just sorta starts talking. We never have... because he's the mute character, it's really laid out there that we're gonna get some moment where something happens, either something thaws him or something jars him loose, and he's all the sudden gonna start talking. But instead he just sort of... he just sort of starts talking. *[Laughs.]* At one point. Not very much! But he

says some things.

00:55:27 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** And then it turns out he's an opera singer.

Adam: I mean, it is—

00:55:29 Adam Host I mean, that's the moment that you know that the romantic relationship has been unlocked. Like, if he can fully bloom in that scene, and she can realize a happy birthday, like, there is hope for a better future at this point. Like, the entire film pivots at that moment.

00:55:48 John Host 'Cause she's star-struck by him, right?

00:55:50 Adam Host Yeah.

00:55:51 John Host She—he's the one that to her is truly a rock star.

00:55:53 Adam Host Yeah.

00:55:54 John Host I mean, every one of these five fathers does have a pretty unique path to her heart.

00:56:01 Adam Host Yeah, and then India, uh, in the distance.

[Ben laughs quietly, John stifles laughter.]

00:56:05 John Host India in the distance, right. It's all the six-armed... whores.

00:56:07 Adam Host *[Stifling laughter]* You have to go through her heart to get to India.

00:56:09 John Host Yeah. *[Laughs.]*

I'm—I was amazed that the film started off with her as a completely traumatized character, and then just bled the trauma right out of her until she felt like just a—just a waif. Like a fairy, almost. An Amélie.

00:56:27 Ben Host Right.

00:56:28 John Host Somebody that was just charmed by everything? The only thing we didn't see is her with a butterfly on the tip of her finger.

[Ben laughs.]

Slowly flapping its wings while she—you know, while she said "Fly, fly!" Like, she became really, really, really... a blank slate for us.

00:56:44 Adam Host Her acceptance of the kindness is such... is an example of that, right? Like, because if she was still traumatized, I think she would enter the room and see the cake and go like "What the fuck?!" Like, "Why are you using your resources on me? We need to live until tomorrow."

00:57:05 John Host There are a couple of quotes—couple of characters say things that are truly heartbreaking. And she says at—right in this period, she says to one of the other characters "I'm really happy, and that is this awful feeling."

00:57:26 Adam Host Yeah.

00:57:27 John Host And they don't go—and I think in a lesser film, or in an American movie, the characters would exposit on that more. This movie just lets that hang. And to its credit, it lets it hang, because I sat there and went "Ugh." Like, of course that's a feeling that we all know. Where you're in a moment that's perfect with somebody, and you're like "There's no path out of this moment where my heart doesn't

break somehow."

00:58:00 Adam Host Mm-hm.

[Ben chuckles.]

00:58:01 John Host And in this situation where it's like—it's not just that "Tomorrow they're probably not gonna love me the same way that they do this moment." It's like "This building is gonna blow up in a cataclysm and everyone dies."

So that really makes the pain of that happiness stand in bold relief.

00:58:23 Adam Host Yeah.

00:58:24 Ben Host I think you made a great point, Adam, that it's hard to wrap your mind around her leaving after her stated antipathy to that idea at the beginning of the film. Like, the math of the movie is that she's going to have to not be around when they all... buy the farm.

00:58:43 Adam Host Yeah.

00:58:44 Ben Host And that's pretty clear early on. But... yeah, she's such a cipher that like, she can say like "I'll never leave this building again" at the beginning and then just totally change her mind without any seeming justification. And maybe that's just because she's so traumatized! Like, she is really living moment to moment.

00:59:08 Adam Host Yeah.

00:59:09 Clip Clip *[Gunfire and/or vehicle noises.]*

00:59:13 Ben Host The building is under attack the—over the course of the entire movie, and the German captain, Peter Kahn, is, uh... *[stifles laughter]* not doing a great job of capturing the building, and is in a lot of trouble with the colonel that's commanding this area. But it really feels like—Peter Kahn doesn't seem to have a lot of like, urgency, about anything he does except for the one time where he's like, racing to rescue Masha from the cattle car.

He almost seems like a postman or something. It's like "Yeah! Like, I just go deliver the mail every day! And then I go home."

00:59:48 John Host I feel like what he's telegraphing there is—he's a character with complete fatalism. And we hear the backstory of several of these soldiers where it's like "Oh, this isn't their first rodeo." Every single person here has already fought in multiple battles in this war, and has already seen—

01:00:05 Ben Host Yeah.

01:00:06 John Host —you know, countless qualities of death and atrocity. The captain just seems like he already understands that there's no way to win this. He no longer believes in the—any cause. And that's why he retreats to this woman that reminds him of his wife! Like, he's lost the plot completely. But somehow duty and his—because he's also—he also explains that he's a kind of Prussian aristocrat.

01:00:32 Ben Host Right.

01:00:33 John Host And so he's just caught in this thing where he's like—I mean, where the duty that's baked into him means that he's gonna keep doing his job. But he's no zealot, and also he can't—he's not afraid of anybody. Right? The colonel and all the colonel's threats just sorta bounce off

of him, because he realizes that what does—I mean the colonel, what, firing squads him? There's nobody to take his place.

01:01:01 Ben Host

Right.

01:01:02 John Host

Like, every warm body is needed, and he's a—you know, he's an officer that commands I guess a certain amount of respect from the troops.

01:01:09 Ben Host

Hm.

01:01:10 John Host

But the fatalism in that guy is—

01:01:11 Adam Host

He's not my guy.

01:01:13 John Host

Right, but I mean, he's—

[Ben laughs.]

He's the German that we are—that we're left with.

01:01:17 Adam Host

Yeah.

01:01:18 John Host

You go to war with the German you have, Adam.

[Adam and Ben laugh.]

Not the German you want.

01:01:21 Adam Host

That's so true.

01:01:22 John Host

His fatalism I guess is in contrast to the fact that the Russian characters are defending their homeland?

01:01:29 Ben Host

Yeah.

01:01:30 John Host

And so as awful as life gets for them, they never stop fighting, because there are real stakes.

01:01:37 Adam Host

That fatalism comes into relief once again when Henze gets stabbed, and all the sudden Kahn gets elevated into being in charge. Like, he's like "Fuck. Great."

01:01:49 John Host

Yeah. Right.

01:01:51 Adam Host

Like "That didn't help, actually. The guy who threatened to execute me dying is actually a bad outcome."

01:01:59 John Host

Right.

01:02:00 Adam Host

In this case.

[Ben laughs quietly.]

01:02:01 John Host

Well, and Henze gets stabbed because the captain brings a captive in and they didn't frisk him well enough! Check the boots; that's the lesson.

01:02:10 Adam Host

Yeah.

01:02:12 Ben Host

Is part of it that he is in the Wehrmacht and he knows that a bunch of fancy tanks are gonna show up eventually and make this building capture situation much easier?

01:02:22 John Host

Yeah, may—I think there's some of that.

01:02:25 Ben Host

I read a moment of pedantry about those tanks that I thought you guys might find interesting. "The numbering on the German tanks is

incorrect."

01:02:33 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[Beeping as Ben speaks.]*

01:02:34 Ben Host "One tank has the number 716, which would make it the sixth tank in the first platoon of the seventh company. A German tank platoon had no more than five tanks—"

[Beeping stops.]

"—so it should actually end with 715."

01:02:48 John Host Hello, pedant!

01:02:51 Adam Host Wow.

01:02:52 John Host Where have you been all my life?

01:02:53 Ben Host Yeah! This pedant cannot function in the world.

[John laughs.]

Because they watch a movie like this, and they are distracted by things like that.

01:02:58 John Host They have too much going on.

01:02:59 Ben Host Yeah.

01:03:00 John Host In a better life, in a world where I wasn't so traumatized, that would be me.

01:03:04 Adam Host Mm.

[Ben laughs.]

01:03:06 John Host I would just be painting ronin. Thinking about that time. When I rode a tank—column of tanks into Paris.

01:03:12 Adam Host Tending to your model trains.

01:03:13 John Host Yeah.

01:03:14 Music Transition Brief clip of "War."

War!

Huh!

Yeah!

[Music cuts.]

01:03:17 Adam Host It is time to construct the rating system that we will use to rate *Stalingrad!* The 2013 movie *Stalingrad*.

01:03:25 John Host Not the '93 movie *Stalingrad*.

01:03:27 Adam Host That one will have a different rating system.

01:03:30 John Host Right.

01:03:31 Adam Host I really wanted to make this a scale of one to five flaming Russian soldiers.

[Ben laughs quietly.]

I think that is a vision that will haunt me for the rest of my days. I also

wanted to make the rating system buckets of dirt porridge.

01:03:48 John Host

Mm-hm!

01:03:49 Adam Host

Which was a fairly harrowing story.

01:03:51 John Host

Right, the—

01:03:53 Adam Host

And concept.

01:03:54 John Host

The grain silo was blown up, and so they went out and grabbed buckets of sand because there was grain in it, and you could filter it out.

01:04:01 Adam Host

Yeah.

01:04:02 John Host

But it always tasted like dirt.

01:04:03 Adam Host

But this might be on the nose in its own way; I'm gonna make it a scale of one to five fathers.

[John and Ben burst out laughing.]

We're kicking out the Navy dad! Navy Dad doesn't count. Navy Dad makes six.

01:04:22 John Host

Yeah.

01:04:23 Adam Host

We're gonna go one to five fathers here because that's—I think the movie makes a strong case for itself in that way. This is a movie about five fathers, whether or not you agree with the truth of that in terms of young Sergey's given story about his real dad and the other dads that his mom knew. Like, that's sort of a core concept to this version of Stalingrad.

I'm resisting more and more the idea of giving *Friendly Fire* films a four-thing rating, but I think that—that has like, got to be the average that a *Friendly Fire* film strives to become, and then the great films exceed that, and the not-so-great films are unable to get to the four things. I think this is a four-fathers film, and here's why.

I was so afraid that we would come into this conversation painting it with the *Redbad* critique. Of its Instagram-i-ness. Like, that its glossiness would be a reason to hate it. And I think for some reason—and I don't know if we did a really great job discussing it—it rises past the level of how it looks! I don't know how it does that. But it did.

And I think there's just a brutality about Stalingrad that forces you to take it seriously. You could aim all of its explosions at the camera, and it can be a transparently 3D-shot film in a way that could kinda cheese a person out. But Stalingrad's brutal! Stalingrad rises above all of the tricks that a modern director will give it in terms of how it looks and how it feels. I think that is an... awful kind of magic that this conflict brings to bear in the story.

01:06:15 Adam Host

This film is kind of the lovechild between the Omaha Beach scene in *Saving Private Ryan* and the apartment scene in *Fury*. Thought a lot about those two films when I watched this.

01:06:27 John Host

Uh-huh.

01:06:28 Adam Host

The main problem that I had with it was that the—there was such an

equivalence given between the relationship between Kahn and Masha, and Sergey and Katya. Like, they're really giving equal time to both in a way that I didn't quite need or understand.

01:06:44 John Host

Both sides, Adam. Both sides.

01:06:46 Adam Host

I know.

One of the last lines of dialogue in the film is why I'm gonna give this the four-fathers rating. And it's putting the feelings in a way that I've never heard before, and I wish—I wish this was a thing that was said to veterans instead of "Thank you for your service." This is the best gift I've ever heard given to a veteran verbally, which is "Thanks to you, I have no idea what war is."

That's the kind of gratitude that I have a strong feeling for when we think about the veterans of our country's wars, and the feelings that other countries might have toward their veterans. "I don't wanna know about this, and thanks to you I don't." Why has it taken so many war films to finally like, get to that crystallization of that feeling? It took seeing this year's *Stalingrad* to get it! And I'm grateful to it for giving me that little gift.

Four fathers from me.

01:07:47 Ben Host

Uh, I did not enjoy the movie as much as you did. That sentiment is an interesting take on, you know, the gratitude that we show veterans. But it didn't strike me as particularly original. And that comes in the midst of the Japan tsunami rescue scene, which is a framing device that is... so bizarre. I just cannot—

01:08:17 Adam Host

Yeah.

01:08:18 Ben Host

I cannot get out of my head what a strange choice that was. Like, why bother? *[Laughs.]* Like, what does that add to this film that the film couldn't have just done without it? And I enjoy sentimentality in films, and a fan of melodrama. But this movie—the melodrama and sentimentality were too much for me. And you know, maybe I would have been more forgiving of that if it had been against a more realistic-looking film, and a—the stylistic choices are ones that I just have a problem with in general. Like, I have a problem with them in *300* when they're doing all the speed-ramping and stuff, and I had a problem with it in this.

Like, these guys are, you know, unkillable kung fu badasses when they just run out the front door of the building to kill 14 Germans and then run back inside. Like, they dodge mortar explosions; there's like—it's just—it was too silly, and it just didn't work for me, so...

01:09:20 Adam Host

It's very *John Wick*-y, huh?

01:09:21 Ben Host

But it's—like, it works in *John Wick* because it's—like, I don't think that they mess with the speed of reality as much in *John Wick*?

01:09:30 Adam Host

Mm.

01:09:31 Ben Host

Like, there are slow motion things and there are fast motion things, but it's not both things in one take. And I'm just not on board for that stuff. And this movie did not work for me; I'm gonna give it two fathers.

[Someone whistles.]

01:09:47 Adam Host

Alright.

01:09:48 John Host

Oof.

It may come as a surprise, but I really liked this movie! The framing device of the tsunami situation was super goofy.

[Ben laughs.]

But I think it was... I think what they're trying to do is take a situation like this where the necessity of the situation requires that everyone die. Like, no one survived. Two million people died. And to try and make a movie about that where it is connected even in the most tenuous way to the present, so that we see that—because if you make a movie where just everybody dies, I think it kind of resides in a—maybe a distant past that we can't connect to now, and so therefore don't care about.

And this strange bounce that they do, where they're like "No, no, no! The—" There's not even an M. Night reveal where they could—you know, they could have waited 'til the end and then the guy says "And that was my mother!" And we are left to go like "Ohhh!"

[Ben laughs.]

"Whoa, this whole time!" They don't even do that! I mean, he half—as soon as she's introduced, or you know, shortly after, he's like "And that was my mother." And we spend the rest of the film realizing—you know, watching that, and maybe—I mean, I definitely was like "Well which one of these five guys is his actual father?" It turns out none. It's weird, but I see where they were going.

01:11:22 John Host

But the super slow-mo—you know, like, in *John Wick* movies, in these contemporary movies, I don't like that, and I don't think it works. Because there's a lot of just impossible combat. People in hand-to-hand—I mean, *John Wick*, by the end of that movie, every bone in his body would be broken. And yet he walks outta there—you know, he's got like a bloody nose a band aid over his ear or something, and we're left to just... those movies are so comical. I mean, I like those movies. But they're just—they're comical. And I felt like the battle scenes in this movie mostly hewed to at least a real-life—

01:12:03 Adam Host

And they also feel like punctuation instead of run-on sentences. Like, you get a brutality in a Mel Gibson war film that goes on and on and on. And it feels skirmish-y in this film, in a way that I think helps make it less... pornographic.

01:12:17 John Host

We lose a lot of Russians in this movie in the—I mean, at the end there's only the six that survive. But we see members of their squad get killed in that—you know, in that scene that you're describing, Ben, where they run out and attack the Germans. You know, I think they—when they get back and count their numbers, they're like "Well, we lost 14, but they—but we killed 27" or something. I mean, it's not clear that they—I didn't see their super super-humanness in it.

And there's not that—I mean, it's a war movie! Right? So there's always gonna be scenes where our guy stabs somebody with a knife, then throw—then it slow-mo—

01:12:58 Adam Host Yeah.

01:12:59 John Host —twists in the air, he grabs it and stabs somebody else. There were just a couple of those, though.

01:13:05 Adam Host I sure do like a trench shovel being used as a weapon.

01:13:08 John Host Yeah, that's nice.

01:13:09 Adam Host In general. That's big fun.

01:13:11 John Host But the crazy coloration, the *300*-ness of it, combined with the like—the savageness of it. Where it's savage but not in a way where everybody that dies is just some unnamed guy in a club, or some—I mean, you felt—it's not like we got to know any of the German soldiers. But there was—there seemed to me to be like a realistic amount of savagery. Such that I felt like this was... a classic war movie!

It fictionalizes the details, and doesn't try to fictionalize the big picture. So it's not something where anybody in this movie kills Hitler. It's just fictionalizing, like, what the rooms looked like, basically. But the scope of the battle and the trueness of the time are maintained.

In a way, I see what you were saying, Adam, about it being a cross between *Saving Private Ryan* and *Fury*. And I was—you know, and I came out—I rode for *Fury*, too.

01:14:20 Ben Host *Fury* was already a cross between *Saving Private Ryan* and *Fury*.

01:14:24 John Host *[Laughs.]* Right.

01:14:26 Adam Host But specifically the scene in the apartment.

01:14:28 John Host Yeah. But this was a movie that was a cross between *Fury* crossed with *Fury* crossed with *Saving Private Ryan*.

[Ben laughs.]

01:14:34 Adam Host Mm.

01:14:36 John Host Anyway, I was affected by the movie, and I was into it! I was never bored. The whole little middle part of it where we are in a Wes Anderson movie... I could have, and probably should have, objected to it. But I didn't feel like any of the characters were given real cookie-cutter personalities. Each one of them sort of had a twist to who they were, and why they were behaving that way.

I completely understood how they fell in love with her, and she them, and why. And how tenuous and short-term that was, and how they all knew that the fuse was lit and that this was not gonna work out. And that—you know, that broke my heart, and kept it broken.

So I'm gonna come way out and say four dads plus the Navy guy!

01:15:31 Adam Host Whoa!

01:15:32 John Host For a—for either a half dad or just a dad that's in the wrong branch of the service.

01:15:38 Adam Host Wow!

01:15:39 Ben Host What the hell? *[Laughs quietly.]*

01:15:41 John Host I'm not gonna give it all five dads.

01:15:42 Adam Host Yeah, because clearly—

01:15:43 John Host Well—

01:15:44 Adam Host —Navy Dad isn't a whole dad.

01:15:45 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Adam:** You've made that very clear.

John: Yeah, Navy Dad's not a whole dad, and also like, Weasel Dad, I didn't feel like—all he taught her to do was shoot.

01:15:50 John Host So—and she was a natural at shooting.

01:15:53 Adam Host Yeah, he didn't do much there.

01:15:55 John Host No. So I don't know how—I feel—I leave it to the listeners to rank Navy Dad.

01:16:02 Adam Host *[Laughs.]* That'll go great.

01:16:06 John Host *[Laughs.]* Four dads and a Navy dad. That's me.

01:16:10 Adam Host I wish Sergey was a little more specific about the dads. Like "You know, my mom told me I had six dads, but between you and me, only three of 'em were that good."

01:16:18 John Host Yeah, "I had—"

[He or Ben laughs quietly.]

01:16:19 Adam Host "And one of 'em was a Navy dad, so..."

01:16:21 John Host "I had three great dads, a dad..."

[Adam laughs.]

"A guy that was not a dad, and then a Navy dad that didn't count for some reason."

01:16:30 Adam Host Yeah. "I'm only sending out two Father's Day cards. Let's be honest."

[Sighs.] Wow! All over! Like, not a tight grouping of scores there.

01:16:39 John Host Mm-mm.

01:16:40 Adam Host All over the place!

01:16:41 Ben Host "That little guy down there? I wouldn't worry about that guy."

[John and Adam laugh.]

01:16:45 John Host Your—I felt like your four stars was your way of saying, like, "Here is Friendly Fire norm."

01:16:53 Adam Host Yeah.

01:16:54 John Host And I agree with you that our—that four stars has become kind of our norm. That to give something a three and a half stars feels like a little bit of a diss.

01:17:01 Adam Host Eighty percent! That's like a B, right?

01:17:03 John Host Yeah. Like a—

01:17:04 Adam Host What you want is—you want a B movie.

01:17:06 John Host Like a sporto B.

01:17:07 Adam Host Right.

01:17:08 Ben Host I've always aspired to be the Norm of this podcast. Like I come in and you guys go—

01:17:12 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Ben & John:** "Bennn!"

01:17:13 Ben Host "How's it hanging?" And I say "Short, shriveled, and a little to the left."

01:17:17 Adam Host Your jocularly masking just a very deep, deep alcohol abuse problem?

01:17:22 John Host Yeah.

[John and Adam laugh.]

01:17:23 Ben Host Yeah! Exactly! *[Laughs.]*

01:17:26 John Host Ben's two dads—Ben, would you, uh, would you say that that was a C-minus or a D-plus in this case?

01:17:33 Adam Host Two dads is 40% of the dads! That's a failing grade!

01:17:36 Ben Host Is D-plus a passing grade?

01:17:39 John Host As someone who had a—

01:17:40 Adam Host You got 40% a lot, John. What grade is that?

01:17:42 John Host A D-plus—um, a D-plus got me outta high school.

[Adam and Ben laugh.]

I got a D—well, I had a D-minus cumulative. But, um...

01:17:52 Ben Host I got one D in high school. I got very good grades and then senior year I turned in one D.

01:17:58 John Host I got so many Ds.

01:18:00 Ben Host In an English class.

01:18:01 John Host I got deez (*Ds*)... grades.

01:18:04 Ben Host Threw some Ds on that transcript?

01:18:05 John Host I did. I'll show you my grade card—I'll show you my transcript one time, Adam, just to—

01:18:11 Adam Host Oh, I'd love to see that.

[Ben laughs.]

01:18:12 John Host Just to turn your hair white.

01:18:13 Adam Host I'd love to know who your guy is, though. Who's your guy, John?

01:18:16 John Host Give me a second to think.

01:18:18 Adam Host I had a hard time. I thought for sure this might be the first episode of *Friendly Fire* where I just didn't have a guy. Because there was not enough dissimilarity between the dads, I felt, until one very specific scene. It's after the birthday. I'm assuming the cake's been eaten and the candle's been blown out. There's that post-birthday reverie. And someone goes to check on the tub after Katya's left it. Water's

still warm.

01:18:48 John Host Yeah, sure.

01:18:49 Adam Host No one's around, we're not doing anything. What are you gonna do? You haven't had a bath in... months, probably? You're gonna get in that tub, aren't you?

01:18:58 John Host And that's hair-petting dad!

[Ben laughs quietly.]

01:19:00 Adam Host I'm a little—like, look. I will admit, little bit of a germaphobe. Not a huge germaphobe. But one thing that supersedes my germaphobia is like, a bathtub after being dirty for a long time. That sounds great. I'll get in a used bath! I will get into Katya's bathwater if I need a bath bad enough.

The soldier in the tub is so sudsed up you can barely make him out, but sure as shit, that's Angel in there. Getting some good lather outta that water, also!

01:19:34 John Host I don't even know where he got that good soap.

01:19:36 Adam Host Yeah. It's—I mean, you hope there's ash in that soap.

01:19:41 John Host Yeah, right.

01:19:42 Adam Host That seems to be a pretty big complaint going around town is the whole, uh, lice problem. But there he his! Enjoying two hours ago's bathwater. That's me, right there. That is my guy. Any bathtub in a storm. And I feel like I'm stealing your guy in the process, John, because you're a famous bathman.

[Ben laughs.]

01:20:03 John Host Yeah.

01:20:04 Adam Host But maybe you can use the bath after me!

[John laughs.]

Third in line for the bath! The water's probably still warm.

01:20:10 John Host The thing about Angel is that he is a—you know, a man of about my age.

01:20:16 Adam Host Mm-hm.

01:20:17 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** And he had a wife who was younger.

Adam: Mm-hm. Yeah, uh—

John: Significantly younger.

01:20:22 Adam Host Twenty-six years younger?

01:20:24 John Host Yeah. And then she dies, and their child dies in the war. And there's a—and he—there's a friendliness to him, and a kindness to him. But he definitely feels like he's given up. He's not trying to make it with Katya, he's just, like...

01:20:38 Adam Host He walks right up to creepo, and there are a number of areas where that could have crossed the line. Wife 26 years his younger, not a great look. Hair petting, not a good look. A totally desexualized use

of a bathtub after a young lady uses it. Not a good look, either! All of those things together don't—don't crucify him as a character.

01:21:00 John Host No, he looks—he ends up looking fine throughout it all! Because he's neutered. And so it can't be me.

01:21:07 Adam Host He is neutered, isn't he?

01:21:09 John Host Yeah. No, I can't have a—I—my guy can't be somebody who's just like, given up.

[Ben laughs.]

'Cause...

01:21:13 Adam Host That's not you.

01:21:15 John Host No, I'm still—

01:21:16 Adam Host Yeah, that's clearly a me thing. *[Laughs.]*

01:21:17 John Host *[Stifling laughter]* I'm still looking for a wife that's 26 years younger than me.

[Adam laughs.]

No, my guy is right at the beginning of the movie, when they're—when all of our troops are massing on the one side of the river, getting ready to go through the hell storm. We see a soldier who is... 68. Who's got his helmet on, and he is just like—and there's some young—you know, some young soldiers wisecracking, and he's like *[gruff voice]* "Shut the hell up! You don't know what you're talking about!"

01:21:48 Adam Host Yeah.

[Ben laughs.]

01:21:49 John Host *[Gruff voice]* "You guys with your wisecracks!"

01:21:51 Adam Host Going in with his fucking kid.

01:21:52 John Host Yeah. He's like "Here we go!" And he's been through the shit, this guy! And he's not here because he's like, some volunteer that joined up after 9/11. He's basically forced by life to be here, and he's making the best of it by being a crank.

[Adam laughs.]

And you know, like, when he catches on fire, he is not charging up the hill with his machine gun firing, because he's 65 and he's tired. But he's still got his moxie. You know, he isn't neutered, this one.

01:22:28 Adam Host Did you also choose boat dad from *Dunkirk* as your guy? Because I think this guy qualifies as a boat dad!

01:22:34 John Host He's super boat dad.

01:22:36 Adam Host Yeah.

01:22:37 John Host Yeah.

01:22:38 Ben Host *[Laughs.]*

My guy was the young guy that was making the wisecracks!

[John cracks up.]

01:22:44 Adam Host That's great.
01:22:46 Ben Host 'Cause he says a line—like, one of the few lines I really liked in the movie was "We are all apostles now." *[Laughs.]* And then he gets immediately pilloried for it.
01:22:56 John Host Yeah.
01:22:57 Ben Host By this cranky old boat dad!
01:22:58 John Host *[Stifling laughter]* Yeah, shot down by the boat dad!
01:23:00 Ben Host "Barely out of diapers, and you make jokes!"
01:23:02 John Host Yeah!

[Adam laughs.]

And then he shoves his hands in his pockets and looks down at the floor of the boat and goes "*[Disgruntled muttering noises.]*"

01:23:08 Ben Host *[Laughs.]* "I thought it was a pretty good crack!"
01:23:11 John Host That's you and me!

[All three laugh.]

01:23:13 Ben Host Yeah! That's us, John!
01:23:14 Adam Host Yeah! Wow.
01:23:17 John Host Yeah.
01:23:18 Music Transition Brief clip of "War."

War!

Huh!

Yeah!

[Music cuts.]

01:23:21 Adam Host Alright, guys, what are we watching next?
01:23:22 John Host Here we go.
01:23:23 Adam Host On our hit podcast *Friendly Fire*, only the 120-sided die can tell us.
01:23:28 John Host Okay, here we go, rolling the die!

[Die rolls for several seconds and then stops.]

Whoa! This may be the highest number we've ever achieved on the die! One hundred and eleven.

01:23:47 Ben Host One hundred and eleven! Nice.
01:23:50 Music Music Dramatic music plays as Ben speaks.
01:23:52 Ben Host More Russians in our future, gentlemen! This is a Cold War film from 2002, director Kathryn Bigelow.
01:24:00 John Host Oh! Our friend Kathryn Bigelow.
01:24:01 Ben Host It is *K-19: The Widowmaker*.

[Music stops.]

01:24:06 John Host This movie has a colon in it.

01:24:07 Adam Host Uh-oh! That's a bad sign.

01:24:09 Ben Host It does not.

01:24:10 John Host Oh.

01:24:11 Ben Host I don't think canonically there's a colon in between "K-19" and "The Widowmaker." Oh, no, there is. There is on—

01:24:16 Adam Host I'm looking on IMDb and there's a big fucking colon there.

01:24:19 John Host Wow.

01:24:20 Ben Host *[Stifling laughter]* Everybody I know has a big colon.

Well, whoever put it in our spreadsheet—I see that that was you, Adam—

01:24:28 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Adam & John:** Mm.

01:24:29 Ben Host —*[laughing]* failed to include the colon on our spreadsheet.

01:24:30 John Host Mm-hm.

01:24:31 Adam Host That checks out.

01:24:32 John Host This does feel like an Adam movie, *K-19: The Widowmaker*. It's got Harrison Ford in it.

01:24:37 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Ben:** It's got Liam Neeson.

John: It's got Liam Neeson in it. That's right up Adam's—

Adam: Colon.

John: —bowling alley.

Adam: Yeah.

John: *[Laughs.]* Yeah.

[Ben laughs.]

Adam: Come on!

John: What did we decide that movies—

Adam: It's a submarine film—

John: Yeah...

Adam: —and you know you guys are gonna love it!

01:24:51 John Host What did we decide about colon movies? What was our hot take on those?

01:24:53 Music Music "War" starts fading in.

01:24:54 Ben Host The—it's the *[pronouncing the colon out loud]* *USS Indianapolis: Men of Courage* problem.

01:24:59 John Host Right, right, right, right.

| | | | |
|----------|-------------|------------|--|
| 01:25:00 | Ben | Host | But Kathryn Bigelow's no slouch, so I'm looking forward to this one. |
| 01:25:04 | Adam | Host | She makes a great movie. |
| 01:25:06 | Ben | Host | Well, that will be next week on <i>Friendly Fire</i> . We will leave it with RobsRobsRobsRobs in the meantime. So for John Roderick and Adam Pranica, I've been Ben Harrison. To the victor go the spoiler alerts. |
| 01:25:19 | Music | Music | "War" continues at full volume. <i>Absolutely— —nothing!</i> <i>Listen to me!</i> <i>War!</i> <i>It ain't nothing but a heartbreaker...</i> <i>[Music drops to play quietly as Rob speaks.]</i> |
| 01:25:25 | 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. Our theme music is "War" by Edwin Starr, courtesy of Stone Agate Music, and our logo art is by Nick Ditmore. <i>Friendly Fire</i> is made possible by the support of our listeners. Like you! And you can make sure that the show continues by going to MaximumFun.org/donate . As an added bonus, you'll receive our monthly pork chop episode, as well as <u>all</u> the fantastic bonus content from Maximum Fun. 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. |
| 01:26:17 | Music | Music | "War" continues at full volume. <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> <i>[Music fades out.]</i> |
| 01:26:30 | Music | Transition | A cheerful guitar chord. |
| 01:26:31 | Speaker 1 | Host | MaximumFun.org . |
| 01:26:33 | Speaker 2 | Host | Comedy and culture. |
| 01:26:34 | Speaker 3 | Host | Artist owned— |
| 01:26:36 | Speaker 4 | Host | —audience supported. |