

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

00:00:00 Music Music "Cross of Iron: Main Title" by Ernest Gold. Begins with children singing cheerful song in German, accompanied by light woodwinds and accordion. The children's song is variously interspersed with "patriotic"-style march music, dramatic brass-heavy movie soundtrack-style music, and sinister, string-heavy background music.

00:00:03 Adam Pranica Host To read Sam Peckinpah's biography is to understand some people just aren't cut out for a normal life. He started young, a rabble-rouser of a ranch kid in central California, skipping school to spend time trapping, branding, and shooting his afternoons away until his frequent fighting and discipline problems in high school inspired his parents to send him to military school. By 1943 he joined the Marines and by the end of WWII he was in China, disarming and repatriating Japanese soldiers.

It was here that Peckinpah experienced what many film biographers believe to be his creative inspiration: he came under fire and he witnessed death and torture. Some believe his alcoholism and, later, his drug addiction started here as well. It's not hard to imagine that some of the mental and emotional problems that haunted him later in life—his mania; his depression; his paranoia—were ignited by those experiences in China, too.

Post-discharge he went to college and got married to a drama student and started directing—the kind of work that necessitates the teamwork that—if we're putting it charitably—Peckinpah was just not cut out for. At first he'd do something like not show up to work in a necktie. Later on it would escalate to abuse of stagehands and getting himself kicked off of productions. We've already had an episode about *Major Dundee*. That was in 1965. What followed for the next ten years would be the envy of many a filmmaker of the era, and by '77, he was still totally renowned. I mean, can you believe Hollywood producers—knowing what they knew about Sam Peckinpah—were still willing to pay him to direct *King Kong* and *Superman*? I mean, we would've finally been given the *King Kong* film where he rips the faces off of people or a *Superman* film that destroys an entire city block with body counts in the millions! No one would wanna see that, right?

By turning those films down, Peckinpah chose today's *Friendly Fire* film: *Cross of Iron*. And the challenges he faced and caused during production—on a scale of one to five Peckinpahs—was a perfect score. On location in Europe, underfunded and undercrewed, he went into his own pocket to pay experienced crewmembers when the money from the West German porn producer ran out. Frequently drunk and ill-tempered, the production would often run out of money and over time. Many of the scenes, including the film's final sequence, are improvised.

And like a student turning in a paper they wrote the morning after a bender, *Cross of Iron* manages to pass the class. Kind of a miracle of a film. What's striking after the death of Sam Peckinpah is the difference between biography and legacy. The truth of Peckinpah's life experience is tragic and yet the reputation imbued by the films

he made—and to some degree what he self-perpetuated—is one of a hard-living, hamburger-hamburger bang-bang kind of life that could be inspirational to a certain kind of person. That it affects his legacy is clear, but many people who stuck with him after the fights, the breakdowns, the divorces, and the films, regarded him as a good friend whose complexity enriched their lives.

So when you watch *Cross of Iron* know that there is a man behind the camera barely holding it together under the worst of circumstances. Which is to say that while we watch James Coburn and Maximilian Schell duke it out onscreen, Sam Peckinpah is fighting his own kind of war at the same time. With each film you just keep hoping he'll turn the tide. And that the Axis powers of his nature retreat for good. What will we do when we've lost the war? Prepare for the next one. On today's *Friendly Fire*—*Cross of Iron!*

00:03:45	Music	Music	<p><i>[Drumroll transitions into theme song.]</i> “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> <p><i>War!</i> <i>Huh!</i> <i>Yeah!</i> <i>What is it good for?!</i> <i>Absolutely—</i> <i>—nothing!</i></p> <p><i>Say it again, y’all!</i></p> <p><i>War!</i></p>
00:04:02	Ben Harrison	Host	<p><i>[Song fades down and plays quietly as the hosts speak.]</i> Welcome to <i>Friendly Fire</i>, the war movie podcast that toasts heroic horses’ asses everywhere. I’m Ben Harrison.</p>
00:04:10	Adam	Host	I’m Adam Pranica.
00:04:12	John Roderick	Host	And reporting again from Hawaii—I’m John Roderick.
00:04:17	Ben	Host	Alright, guys! Let’s start the show like we start every show—one, two, three— <i>[high-pitched voice in imitation of the German children singing at the beginning of the show’s introductory music]</i> Hänschen Klein ging allein in die weite Welt hinein, Stock und—
00:04:30	Ben	Host	<i>[Adam and John laugh.]</i> I thought—what, you guys aren’t joining me?
00:04:32	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	John: It all— <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:04:35	Ben	Host	Ben: I need— <i>[Laughs.]</i> I need your harmonies!

00:04:37 Adam Host If the *Peanuts* gang were German? I feel like—
[Multiple people laugh.]
—that’s the vibe we’re getting here.

00:04:42 Crosstalk Crosstalk *[Ben laughs.]*
John: So menacing! So awful, that song!
Biz: Oh, boy!

00:04:48 Ben Host **Adam:** Yeah.
Wow. *[Laughs.]* Imagine—imagine, like, walking into a kindergarten in Germany and just having that happen. Like, that’s—that’s the beginning of all horror movies! Or it should be.

00:05:00 John Host During the opening credits, I had a very real feeling like—okay. These credits are establishing a tone that this movie is gonna have a hard time living up to. Because these credits are... dark. And sardonic. And... really... uh— *[Laughs.]* Uh, the—
[Ben laughs.]
—the movie came in and I was like, if this is just some sort of, like, *Dirty Dozen* fun war pic, it’s gonna let these credits down! Fortunately, the movie lived up to them.

00:05:32 Adam Host I agree with you. I was a little bit bewildered by them? And I remained that way for the first half an hour in the film. And then... once the pedal hit the metal, I started loving the film. And then when the bookended credits came with that song again? I was like... celebrating it.
[John laughs.]
Like, yes! This is the—
[Ben laughs.]
This is the “fuck you” attitude that I had thought was—this was going to be throughout. But I’ll admit, like, to being a little bit confused at the dissonance. Going into it.
[Ben laughs.]

00:06:06 Ben Host Yeah. Sam Peckinpah was a crazy man. *[Laughs.]*

00:06:08 John Host This is a crazy film. *[Laughs.]*

00:06:11 Adam Host It’s another story of Sam Peckinpah being too drunk to direct and then doing a bunch of coke in the edit room.
[Multiple people laugh.]

00:06:25 Ben Host He—he was drinking 120-proof Czech, uh, liquor. Like—180 proof!
[Sound of telegraph in background.]

00:06:26 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Adam:** 180—no, that’s worth it! That makes a huge difference!

Biz: I—I don't—I don't wanna pedant you, but 180 proof. Yeah.
[Laughs.]

00:06:32 John Host *[Through laughter]* It has to be Slivovitz. Is that what it is? That's the—

00:06:33 Ben Host It was Slivovitz!

00:06:36 John Host That's the only thing they make in the Czech Republic that could possibly achieve that proof.

00:06:40 Ben Host I imagined, uh, Sam Peckinpah, like—like getting, y'know, heading to the airport and having anxiety? Like, what am I going to drink way too much of while I'm on this set?

[John laughs.]

00:06:53 Adam Host What do they even have there?
 Tell me about Slivovitz!

00:06:55 John Host Uh, Slivovitz, Adam, is a plum brandy?

00:06:58 Adam Host I had to—I had plum brandy in Poland! It's gotta be related to that, right?

00:07:04 John Host Every— *[Laughs.]* Every nation in Eastern Europe, uh, has its own plum brandy? Or version of fruit—fruit brandy? And it's—y'know. It's brandy... but... really— *[Laughs.]* It's just concentrated jet fuel, um—

00:07:22 Adam Host When I was in Poland visiting my Polish family, I felt like that was the initiation. Like, the bottle's on the table. The—the mini shot glasses are out. You're gonna do the plum brandy. With us. And then you're in the family. And that's—yeah. That's tough stuff!

00:07:41 John Host Yeah. They distill it and then distill it again. I mean—I—I've taken part in some plum brandy, um... harvests? Uh—where you're—I was just sort of in some region and they were like, hey! Y'know, this is what we're doing today and this is what you're doing today? Because all hands on deck? And basically you're just collecting rotting plums off the ground and putting them in bags and then letting them sit in the driveway to rot... more?

[Ben laughs.]

00:08:15 Adam Host Until the plums are already just, like, putrid? *[Laughs.]*

00:08:18 John Host You're basically making driveway Pruno?
[Through laughter] Yeah!

[Ben laughs.]

00:08:28 Adam Host Then—and then the delicate process of—of extracting their—their—their, uh, liqueur begins.

00:08:46 John Host I would say, dear listener, if this sounds disgusting to you, uh, I did not find the drink itself that bad. It—it wasn't hot like a super high-proof vodka or anything? I—I thought it was alright! I wouldn't recommend people try it, but... worked for me.

00:08:54 Adam Host If you want to direct a war film basically from the perspective of a stumblebum, by all means!

[Multiple people laugh.]

00:09:01 John Host I enjoyed my experience with the drink and I'm only sad I couldn't direct a war film while I was in Poland. That would've been fun.

00:09:01 John Host This movie is so drunk. And... like, it's clearly directed by someone who is, like, blind drunk. And then edited by someone who is drunk

			and on cocaine. It's in the very DNA of this film. And this is not a <u>funny</u> movie! [Laughs.]
00:09:21	Ben	Host	No.
00:09:22	Adam	Host	It's interesting, though. Like if you're gonna be drunk and on cocaine at the helm of a film, the late seventies are probably where you're gonna wanna be! And there are a lot of techniques in this film that I don't feel like were unwelcome. And—and maybe even, at the time, might've been viewed as trailblazing. Like, the combination of—of speeds? Like, we get a lot of slow-motion and fast-motion and freeze-frame? And cross-dissolves and stuff? I—I dug all of that. And it made me wonder if—while the <u>grasp</u> of those concepts and the implementation of them might have been awkward in areas if they did not serve to inspire many, many films that came after in the war film genre.
00:10:05	John	Host	Basically, if you want to study Quentin Tarantino, all you have to do is watch <i>Cross of Iron</i> . And you learn probably 35% of what he puts forward in his films. It's <u>so</u> —he derived <u>so</u> much from it. And I don't mean that as a—as a ding. I think Tarantino watched <i>Cross of Iron</i> 400 times and <u>improved</u> upon it in some crucial ways.
00:10:33	Adam	Host	I oddly thought about the relationship between intent and quality when watching this, because it's hard to make the case that this is the film that Peckinpah wanted to make if he was in the headspace that he was in throughout. But like, where—where Malick is like, all thoughtfulness and premeditation? This is almost <u>exactly</u> the opposite. This is, like, so visceral and in the moment. And I think they both succeed in their own ways!
00:11:04	John	Host	It can't have been made off-the-cuff. Because there's so much... set—there's so much <u>set</u> . And so much... there's so many special effects.
00:11:15	Adam	Host	Yeah. God.
00:11:17	Clip	Clip	Sound of an explosion, then telephone ringing.
00:11:20	John	Host	It doesn't feel like they, uh, just—every morning kind of woke up and decided what they were gonna film that day? Like, it does feel really, uh, <u>made</u> ? But it does feel [through laughter] completely random, too.
00:11:33	Adam	Host	There are so many actors and background actors in this. Like, how do you know where to lean? And—and how do you know that what you're leaning on isn't rigged to explode?
			[John laughs.]
00:11:44	Ben	Host	Everything blows up in this movie! Apparently there was a big final set-piece that was supposed to be the end of the movie and it was, like, all of the rigging had been done and they ran out of money and had to improv the ending that they wound up with, because Peckinpah had been so out of control and like... y'know. Had to shut down filming every couple of weeks because he'd be recovering from a bender and... y'know, just couldn't come back to work for a couple of days. And so they went with a much cheaper version of the end than what they had originally planned.
00:12:21	Adam	Host	God. I know all three of the collected hosts of <i>Friendly Fire</i> have had a relationship to alcohol at one point, but have you ever been on a bender so bad it took you a week to get over?
00:12:31	Ben	Host	No! [Laughs.]
00:12:32	Adam	Host	Good lord! [Laughs.]

00:12:35 John Host Well, yes. But—
00:12:37 Adam Host Yeah. I mean—that’s a question I ask knowing the answer.

[John laughs.]

00:12:41 John Host Right.
No one had given me \$6 million to make a film and, y’know, it might’ve been my great—my greatest work!

[Adam laughs.]

There is no ending to this movie. Right? There is no—this movie doesn’t have an ending. This movie is affected by the—by the Bruce, uh, the—I’m sorry. *[Laughs.]* The Bruce Cassidy and, uh—Sundonce Kid.

[Ben laughs.]

00:12:59 Crosstalk Crosstalk Ending.
John: Uh, where it’s just like— *[Laughs.]*

00:13:02 Adam Host **Biz:** Yeah. Love those guys. *[Laughs.]*
00:13:05 Ben Host Bruce Cassidy and Skydance Kid is one of my favorite movies. I love—I love the velocipede scene in that.

[John laughs.]

00:13:09 John Host We’re gonna—we’re just gonna end it on a freeze frame and some weird laughing.

00:13:13 Ben Host It is such a strange movie. I wanted to talk about the ages of the actors ‘cause—I mean, it—we’ve seen lots of movies where the, y’know, the—all the American actors playing soldiers in World War II were too old for the characters that they’re playing. But this is Germans in World War II and Russians in World War II and we’ve got, like, y’know, grey-at-the-temples James Coburn as an enlisted man and we’ve got, like, 11-year-old boys from the Russian side. And I wondered if that was, in fact, realistic to this theater of the war, that they were using people that were kind of outside the ideal age range for soldiering because of desperation.

00:14:00 John Host So Coburn was—would’ve been about 50. Uh, when this movie was made. And at the start of the movie he’s a corporal. And you don’t get the sense that he’s one of these, uh, one of these soldiers that was, um, sort of home front, late in the war, uh, cannon fodder guys. It seems like he’s been in the war since the start. And so it feels a little bit unlikely that there would be a 50-year-old corporal who’d been—who had survived the Russian front. It feels a little bit... Coburn casting. Y’know? Like—

[Ben laughs.]

00:14:45 Ben Host ‘Cause this is at the—this is at the end of his run as—
Actually, *The Coburn Cast* is coming to Maximum Fun this fall! So, uh—

[John laughs.]

Make sure, you, uh—

00:14:49 Adam Host Oh, shit!

00:14:50 Ben Host —like and subscribe!

00:14:52 Adam Host Am I one of the hosts of that?

[Multiple people laugh.]

00:14:53 Ben Host I lost track.

00:14:56 Adam Host Yes. *[Laughs.]*

00:15:07 John Host I love Coburn so much in this film? And he reminded me so much of Lee Marvin and I don't think that's an accident, right? Like, I feel like Sam Peckinpah wanted Lee Marvin and couldn't get him. And James Coburn is a perfect substitute in this film.

00:15:07 John Host He is. And he is playing Lee Marvin in it. And the only way that you can tell that it isn't Lee Marvin is that Coburn doesn't quite have the hat—

[Multiple people laugh.]

00:15:21 Adam Host —science down.

00:15:21 Adam Host *[Through laughter]* It's the hat jauntiness, right?

00:15:24 Crosstalk Crosstalk *[Ben laughs.]*

00:15:24 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** If—if it is—

00:15:26 John Host **Adam:** He goes non-jaunty with the hat.

00:15:26 John Host He does! And the thing is, we know from past experience... that, uh, that that extra 4% of hat tilt really is the thing that sometimes pushes a film over the edge.

00:15:39 Adam Host If you're Lee Marvin without the baggage, you can still have a lot of baggage, I think.

[Ben laughs.]

00:15:47 John Host I don't feel like it was easy to work with James Coburn here.

00:15:47 John Host Well, you know, and Lee Marvin was even older than Coburn! Right? I think he would've been—Lee Marvin would've been 54 during this movie or—or 52. So.

00:15:56 Adam Host Was Coburn and Marvin ever in the same film? Because God.

00:16:00 Clip Clip **Speaker:** "That's a hell of a combination!"

[Multiple people laugh.]

00:16:03 John Host They were super contemporaries of one another! I mean, basically, like, um, Bill Paxton and Bill... Patton. Bill—Pantston. Who are the—there are the two Bills that you can't tell apart that are in movies and it could've been one or it could've been the other? Paxton and—and Pants... Pantston?

00:16:21 Ben Host Hm.

[Adam laughs.]

00:16:22 John Host Jaxton? Bill—Putnam!

00:16:24 Ben Host I've—

00:16:26 John Host Bill... Panette. Panda.

00:16:28 Adam Host Y'know, I—I think what you're doing is an example of this, like, in the way that Paxton is compared and confused to many other "that guys" of his era. Like the Lee Marvin, James Coburn, uh, Chuck

Bronson, Steve McQueen, like group of tough guy actors was very much, like, in the zeitgeist at this point.

00:16:48 John Host Yeah. Yeah.

00:16:50 Ben Host Maximilian Schnell [*Schell*] is, like, a couple years younger than Coburn. He looks so much younger in this movie.

00:16:59 Adam Host Yeah.

00:17:01 John Host He's so handsome. And he plays—I mean, he is the character that—where the Tarantino-ness—at the beginning of *Inglourious Basterds*, that whole incredibly tense scene where the—where they, uh, the Nazi officer interrogates—I'm sorry. The Nazi [*pronounces it "Nahzee" instead of "Nahtzee"*] officer interrogates the, uh, the family that is—

00:17:22 Ben Host [*Ben laughs.*]
[Through laughter] The argot of *Friendly Fire* must be observed!
[Laughs.]

00:17:26 John Host [*John laughs.*]
Uh—that where the Jews are hiding under the floorboards and he's interrogating the French peasant. That scene is—is, uh, foreshadowed in this movie. Where the—where Maximilian Schnell is interrogating his own, uh, adjutant about his homosexuality. And the tension and the... I mean, it's like almost note for note copied by Tarantino. It's just that Tarantino ratcheted it up so that that, y'know, that that's an Academy-Award-winning version of it. But—but it's so extraordinary here. Uh, to see it play out.

00:18:08 Ben Host Not a lot of gay characters in the *Friendly Fire* oeuvre. I was very surprised at how it was dealt with in a 1977 film. Like—he's definitely the bad guy for wielding this knowledge like a cudgel against his lieutenant.

00:18:24 John Host But his character is—is—is super strange! Because although he is despicable... he's also the—the film gives a lot of... explanation for him. And he doesn't—he doesn't fall... neatly into the trap of being the Prussian aristocratic officer who is callow and cowardly. Although he is all those things.

00:18:51 Ben Host Yeah. And it's like—and it really, like, lets you... marinate in whether, like, Coburn is definitely like the star of the film? But his is the character that is like the logline of the film, I feel like? Like this Prussian aristocrat who selects this shit duty so that he can go get himself the Iron Cross... and... the film gives full time and consideration to the idea of it being, like, him being self-deluded that he is a hero already? And just hasn't been recognized for it. Or that he's, like... got some kind of like... social cunning or that he is just subject of his station in the Prussian hierarchy and that it's—it's expected of him so he has to go do it whether he likes it or not?

00:19:43 Clip Clip **Speaker:** Between Biarritz and Siberia, what would you choose?

00:19:47 John Host And then he breaks down! A little bit. And is like, if I go home without an Iron Cross, I'll be rejected by my family. And there—there's that moment in the middle of the movie where you—you half-expect or even more than half expect... Coburn's character, the corporal... to just sign off on the Iron Cross because it doesn't cost him anything and you feel like, "Yeah, just sign off on it. Make this guy happy. Like, the war is a joke. Nobody cares about this stuff."

00:20:20 Ben Host It's like saying grace if you don't believe in God. It's like what—what difference does it make? Like, these people wanna say grace before we eat? Like—just hold their hands and do it! And I feel like

that's... kind of the character that—that's kind of the character move you expect James Coburn to make. Like, "It's meaningless to me. Like... just as meaningless as you promoting me to sergeant was. Like, so who cares? I'll write the thing."

00:20:43 Adam Host It's a scene of such importance because it establishes him as the chaos agent that we're not too sure that he is up until that moment. And it also totally galvanizes Maximilian Schell's character as the shit. The shit-heel. When Colonel Brandt talks about how insane it is that—that he would want to get this Iron Cross in anything but a totally just and righteous way, like, that totally makes Maximilian Schell's character even worse! They're like working different angles to make him... the shittiest character in the film. And I think you need both of them at the—both of them together to be effective.

00:21:28 John Host Yeah. When Steiner—which is the Coburn character—when he looks at him and says, y'know, they're sitting there sharing some drinks. And Steiner's like, "Yeah, I don't think you deserve the Iron Cross." It's such a chaos agent moment. Because... because Steiner clearly doesn't care about anything but this. He's gonna draw the line here. And he's not even doing it as—necessarily—like, a "fuck you" to... uh, to Von Stransky because Von Stransky's done anything to deserve it? It's just a... it's just, like, a—a—

00:22:01 Ben Host It's contempt for the entire institution.

00:22:04 John Host Right!

00:22:05 Adam Host But you only get that toward the end of the film. At this moment in the film, you don't—you don't get that. It's still kind of a mystery. Like, Coburn doesn't get his "fuck you" until twenty minutes from the end!

00:22:14 John Host But he's like, I don't—like you don't deserve the Iron Cross. I have one and am prepared to throw it into the latrine, but— *[through laughter]* but you don't—you don't even have one to throw in the latrine! How do you like them apples?

[Ben laughs.]

00:22:27 Ben Host Aristocratic piece of shit!

00:22:30 John Host But there's a lot—but there's a lot going on there! I mean, a lot of themes being explored. Themes that we see a lot, right? Where the enlisted man is the noble one. And the ostensibly noble officer class is the sort of callow... and, um... y'know, superficial—basically—uh, antagonist. Of the—of the real soldier. But it's being explored in a much more complicated way here.

00:23:00 Adam Host I think that its greatest complication might be that these are German soldiers! I wonder to what extent, like, they were thoughtful about Steiner's character that goes something like—we can't root for Steiner if he's starry-eyed for the German military at this moment. We have to have him hate the uniform, for example. He says at the end. In order for us to be on his side. He needs to be more than just a disgruntled employee of the German military. He has to actually hate his own people for us to like him as a character. As an American audience. Do you think that's part of it?

00:23:34 Ben Host I mean, I've—I can't even imagine what other military you could set this story in.

00:23:39 Adam Host Yeah.

00:23:41 Ben Host The characters feel like—generally speaking—big archetypes. But the way they're pit against each other is something that we would... have a very hard time enjoying or—or understanding if this was the—the American military, right?

00:23:56 John Host Well, but, y'know, the American military wouldn't have this... this sort of... Prussian Junker archetype class of—

00:24:07 Ben Host Yeah.

00:24:08 John Host Of, like, uh, born soldier type of thing. This movie was made in a time period in the late seventies where the revisionism about World War II was in this interesting place in its cycle. 'Cause the—'cause World War II revisionism, I feel like, really was a gyre. That cycled around through the fifties, sixties, seventies, eighties—and it's still cycling. But in 1977, you could make a movie like this where we're watching Nazis and yet the film is almost completely de-Nazified.

00:24:51 Ben Host Right. There's one party member.

00:24:53 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Ben:** Gets his dick bitten off.

00:24:54 John Host **John:** There's one guy.
Right. One guy is a Nazi and he gets his dick bitten off.

[Multiple people laugh.]

Everyone else in the film—they salute each other with traditional military salutes. They don't—no one ever Sieg Heils anyone else? There's a picture of Hitler in the background a couple of times? But as often as not, I feel like sometimes the picture in the background was Himmler? Every attempt was made to eliminate the Holocaust from this movie. To eliminate all of the abuses of Nazism and to situate this in what is effectively a conventional military that just happens to be German and fighting Russians who, in 1977, were not—were no friend of the United States.

00:25:41 Ben Host I saw—I saw one of the like little, y'know, blurb reviews on Amazon that a user had submitted was, uh, like—“A nice, sympathetic depiction of the Germans in WWII.” *[Laughs.]*

[John laughs.]

00:25:57 Adam Host It's like—what?!
I mean, not totally off base, though! Their evil isn't a part of this film. It's a micro-story within that greater evil story. That's sort of magical about this. For a film about German soldiers to think so little about Nazis and their atrocities. *[beat]* No? Just me? *[Laughs.]*

[Multiple people laugh.]

00:26:22 Ben Host That was always top of mind, Ben? For you? *[Laughs.]*
I mean... I wondered about it, right? 'Cause like there's plenty of times where we've told a... Vietnam story, for example. That doesn't bother with trying to, like, say whether or not our cause was just or whatever. It just tells the story of some soldiers that had an experience in the war. So... I don't see why you couldn't do that about anybody participating in any big thing like that. Like... what I'm trying to say, guys, is that, uh, there are great people on all sides.

[Multiple people laugh.]

00:26:54 Adam Host God! That's—it's so insane because I know I have said on this show before, like, like I've gotten all indignant about the idea of there being Nazi heroes in any way. And they should all be hated in every war film depiction.

00:27:09 Ben Host Right. That's the drunkenness of this movie, I feel like. Is that it's so drunk it doesn't really care.
00:27:16 Music Music Short reprise of "War" theme song.
00:27:17 Promo Clip *[A telephone rings.]*

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

Music: Fun, grooving music begins to play quietly in the background.

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

[Slurping sounds.]

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

Producer: BBN?

Ify: Buff Black Nerd.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Drea: Ify, quick! Start flexing!

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

[Music ends.]

00:28:10 Promo Clip *[Radio interference followed by laidback music with a snare drum beat. A phone rings as the DJ speaks.]*

Radio DJ: Welcome back to *Fireside Chat* on KMAX. With me in-studio to take your calls is the dopest duo on the West Coast, Oliver Wang and Morgan Rhodes.

[Click.]

Go ahead, caller.

Caller: Hey. Uh, I'm looking for a music podcast that's insightful and thoughtful, but like, also helps me discover artists and albums that I've never heard of.

Morgan Rhodes: Yeah, man. Sounds like you need to listen to *Heat Rocks*. Every week, myself—and I'm Morgan Rhodes—and my co-host here, Oliver Wang, talk to influential guests about a canonical album that has changed their lives.

Oliver Wang: Guests like Moby, Open Mike Eagle, talk about albums by Prince, Joni Mitchell, and so much more.

Caller: Yooo! What's that show called again?

Morgan: *Heat Rocks*. Deep dives into hot records.

Oliver: Every Thursday on Maximum Fun.

[*Music suddenly gives way to static and a dial tone.*]

00:28:56 Music Music
00:28:58 John Host

Short reprise of "War" theme song.

This is kinda what I'm talking about, about 1977. And where we are in the cycle of revisionism. Because in 1978, I think, the miniseries *Holocaust* aired in the United States. It was like a special five-night event. It was like *Roots*. Was sort of the first example of it. Uh, where everyone in the country was gonna sit down and watch this one program. For four straight nights or five straight nights. And when *Holocaust* aired on TV, in '78—whew! It's hard to—it's hard to actually say this, but... one of the first times that everyone had to confront the Holocaust.

And up until that point, in Hollywood, there had not been a Holocaust movie. I mean, *Judgment at Nuremberg*, which has Maximilian Schnell in it—and he won an Oscar in it—was a movie that confronted the Holocaust, but confronted it in a courtroom. *The Diary of Anne Frank* was a movie that—I mean, it's not like it was a blockbuster, but it had—but it portrayed the Holocaust. But other than that? Really? There wasn't this, like, universal understanding and acceptance and acknowledgment of the Holocaust as a thing that had happened that everyone knew about and knew about all of its many horrors.

I remember watching *Holocaust* on TV with my mom and having her explain to me what was happening. That it was real. That this wasn't—and *Holocaust* is a terrible miniseries. Y'know. It's got Meryl Streep in it, but—but it was the beginning. Right? I think when *Holocaust* showed in West Germany a year later, or something like that, it was the most-watched television event in German history. And it—for—because it was the first exposure a lot of contemporary Germans had had to the story!

00:31:07 Adam Host

Do you think that miniseries makes *Cross of Iron* a little bit impossible, had their... had their years been reversed?

00:31:13 John Host

Well that's what I'm—that's what I—I'm saying. Like, the idea of the Germans as a noble adversary who were just a—just another army in the list of armies and you could tell a story from within the German army that completely ignores Nazi atrocity and just make it,

like, uh, make it a thing where you're sympathizing with them. What makes that unmakeable now is that we... we have been... studying the Holocaust as a people for forty years. And we, y'know, we know every element of it or—or—it's been—it's been shown to us such—such that you cannot look at Nazis or Germans.

00:32:01 Ben Host
00:32:02 John Host

Yeah.

In this period without it being in every corner of the room. But in '77, that just wasn't true! Y'know. This was the era of, like... porn movies where the—y'know, where it was a bunch of blonde German girls all wearing swastikas and that was, like, hot. [Laughs.]

[Ben laughs.]

00:32:22 Ben Host
00:32:31 Adam Host

Right? Like—

Um, 1977 is the year that *A Bridge Too Far* came out and they're definitely the... capable and worthy adversary in that film, I feel like. John, I can't believe you were watching *This Ain't the Holocaust*.

[All laugh.]

00:32:40 Clip Clip
00:32:42 Ben Host
00:32:48 John Host

In the late seventies. Good lord!

Speaker: This is a giant cock.

But it's also the year that—that *Star Wars* came out and the Nazis blew up an entire planet in *Star Wars*!

Well, I know, but they're—they're—they're pretty sexy in that movie! Right? The Nazis—

[Ben laughs.]

00:32:57 Ben Host
00:33:00 John Host

—in *Star Wars* are like—well, they do have the best uniforms.

Yeah. They do have pretty cool uniforms.

But that's the—that's the trick of—of the second half of the 20th century. Is that it's very hard to look back at it from 2020... and remember a time when media was so constricted that stories as big as the Holocaust could be... not just underreported, but kind of, like, the type of thing where people would be talking about the war in a bar and the know-it-all would say, like, "Well, the Holocaust—" and everybody else would be like, "Ah, shut up with your Holocaust."

00:33:31 Adam Host

"Check out Joe Holocaust over there at the other end of the bar! Geez!"

00:33:34 John Host

It was so secondary to the American experience. Let's just put it that way. Right? Like... American Jews and, y'know, like, general America—like, Mr. and Mrs. Apple Pie America—had super different experiences. And I think if you were—if you were in Poland or you were in Europe, you were also trying to... there—there's no—there's no West German from 1977 that was proudly flying the—the flag of, like, "Let's talk about the Holocaust." So Holocaust awareness, I think, required... maybe a generation to pass.

00:34:15 Adam Host

God. That's just shocking to think about. It gives me chills to think about that sometime at a scale that large could be... too large to comprehend in its own generation in the way that you're saying. Wow.

00:34:28 John Host

I mean, y'know, those—the—the films came back. We saw the—we saw what happened. But the—but confronting the scale of it?

00:34:36 Ben Host

Processing it.

00:34:38 John Host We just wanted the... I don't know what we wanted. Obviously in 1977, somebody wanted to see the Germans... the German army at the protagonists.

00:34:51 Adam Host So there wasn't a real... line then. Like, 'cause I think—the paper I started to read that you were writing was that there was a class of World War II films—

[Sound of old-school printer in background.]

00:35:13 John Host —depicting the German side from before 1978 that should be considered differently than those that came after. For that reason. I think the power of *Schindler's List*... for a lot of people... was, y'know, the depiction of the brutality of it—the upfront-ness of it; the in-your-face-ness of it—was something that was gradually rolled out in American cinema. And *Schindler's List* now? If that movie came out now? It wouldn't have the impact that it had then because then nobody'd seen it! There hadn't been a big, big film before that. And, y'know, I'd—I think now it would not... even though that is still a powerful movie and we'll watch it for this show—it—I just—I feel like maybe for someone of your age, Ben, the idea that there was not always a complete knowledge of the Holocaust is something that you—would be hard to—it would be hard to put yourself into... a posture where you could have so much knowledge of World War II, and so many strong opinions about it... and yet be missing that component.

00:36:19 Ben Host Well, when we watched *Platoon* and there's that scene at the end where the APC or the tank or something comes through the jungle and it's got a swastika flag flying from it—something that you said that has stuck with me... at that point in history, like, somebody could just put up a swastika flag and be like, "Cool, right? Swastika!" Y'know?

00:36:40 John Host Just exactly like the Confederate flag! Just, like, "This flag means I'm a badass!"

00:36:46 Ben Host Right. And, I, uh, was coming back from the Bay Area. I was driving down the 5—

00:36:51 Clip Clip **Speaker:** Then I'm gonna look around for street parking on Colorado.

00:36:54 Ben Host Some motorcyclists were fueling up at the—on the opposite side of the same gas pump as my hybrid car. *[Laughs.]*

[John laughs.]

00:37:51 John Host And I was looking at the, like, logos on their colors. And... spotted some, like, SS—like, not exactly the SS, like—double-lightning bolt? But like something that was definitely a play on that in there? And I was—I thought about that remark. Like, what are these guys representing? Are they representing that they're cool bad-asses that ride motorcycles or are they representing that they're actual Nazis? And... and I feel like, over the course of my life, that's gone from being a pretty easy thing to solve to less of an easy thing to solve. Because... maybe they're both but, just, y'know—like, I don't know! Like, you know? *[Laughs.]* I'm not gonna like strike up a conversation with these guys, 'cause I'm afraid of them.

00:37:51 John Host If you look at the Hells Angels that were providing security at Altamont for the Rolling Stones concert there? A lot of 'em were wearing swastika armbands! But again, like, were they also white

supremacists? Uh... I don't wanna get inside the Hells Angels in 1969, but I—I know that the Rolling Stones—no one was in a situation at the time where they were like, “Hey, take that off!” Y’know?

00:38:19 Ben Host Right. “Excuse me! That’s cancelled?!”

00:38:23 John Host *[John laughs.]*
In this movie, we hardly see a swastika.

00:38:25 Ben Host We mostly see them at the hospital when they’re having that reception for the general.

00:38:28 John Host Right. Right. But, like, on the battlefield? On their uniforms? It’s very neutered.

00:38:35 Adam Host What are your feelings about the Iron Cross itself? Like, as a symbol? Like, even today I feel like you see the Iron Cross a lot. Across a lot of different cultures. Like... like the biker gang culture being one of them. Is it as implied as the swastika? Is it, like, the “secret” swastika? For those in the know? Or is it just, like, cool World War II iconography that the people put on their model airplanes sometimes?

00:39:03 Ben Host Are they just Lemmy from Motörhead-ing?

00:39:05 Adam Host Right! Right! There’s—*[sighs.]* You can get really granular with this stuff! It’s hard to tell what it all means. Unless you ask the person who has it tattooed on their knuckles, I guess.

00:39:15 John Host The thing about the Iron Cross as a—as a medal... is that, like, a lot—I mean, like the swastika itself, right? It’s derived from an ancient symbol and the—the—the cross that makes up the Iron Cross is a Teutonic cross that dates back to the, y’know, sort of Crusades. So when it was turned into a German medal for valor, it was chosen to echo that connection to the Teutonic orders. And all of that is a—is garbled by biker gangs and by, y’know, soldiers the world over into this kind of garbling... um... knights of old, bad-asses of the—of ye olden times kind of iconic gibberish. Where a soldier wants to put some kind of emblem on their shield. And when you’re looking for emblems, you’re looking for something that looks cool and scary to the other guy.

00:40:29 Ben Host It’s not, like, super different conceptually from like what Ralph Lauren does with the iconography of British aristocracy. Like, putting it on—like, putting an embroidered, y’know, coat of arms on a coat, y’know, just like a—a blue blazer that you’re gonna wear. Like, you didn’t go to Eton or whatever, but you’re dressed like somebody who did something quite similar. That’s like a—like an upper-class version of maybe a similar phenomenon of like... clothing yourself in a pastiche of the imagery of something that is aspirational to you in some way?

00:41:07 Adam Host I—yeah. And I don’t wanna go too far afield in this direction. I wanna take it back to the movie. But before we leave the topic, I just wanted to recognize that, like, the Anti-Defamation League has said that the Iron Cross as a symbol has been used by bikers and skateboarders and extreme sports enthusiasts and it’s part of the logo for many companies and stuff. So, like, the cross itself in a non-racist context, uh, is pervasive and it—and it is not a hate symbol in and of itself. It’s contextualized. So, like, let’s be clear—like, not every Iron Cross is an evil Iron Cross.

00:41:45 Ben Host Hashtag #NotAllIronCrosses? *[Laughs.]*

[John laughs.]

00:41:47 Adam Host Right. Exactly. Yeah.
00:41:49 John Host If you're gonna cancel independent trucks, then—

[Ben laughs.]

00:41:57 Ben Host All of skating comes to a screeching halt.
John, can you contextualize the Iron Cross in American military terms? Is it like a Bronze Star? Or is it something more—is it a Gold Star? Like, what—where is it in the hierarchy?

00:42:11 John Host It's weird because the Iron Cross is used in, y'know, during Nazi years. It's, like, this kind of award that transcends a clear analog in American awards. Because you can get the Iron Cross awarded for valor if you're a soldier that does something amazing. But you can get the Iron Cross if you're a good officer and have been doing a good job. And so you can get an administrative one. Y'know? It can be awarded in a kind of honorary fashion. Like, you're a friend of the—of the regime! But there are also multiple levels of Iron Cross. There's the Iron Cross. There's the Iron Cross with swords. There's the Iron Cross with swords and diamonds. There's the Iron Cross with hearts, spades, blue diamonds—

[Ben laughs.]

—yellow stars, green clovers? Um, you—there are so many different Iron Crosses.

00:43:09 Ben Host Oh, yeah, there's the Oops! All Berries! Iron Cross, I believe?

[John laughs.]

00:43:14 Adam Host There's also the Oops! All Iron Crosses! That one really scrapes the roof of your mouth.

00:43:18 Ben Host Oh, yeah, yeah. Yeah. *[Laughs.]* Gotta let it relax in the milk for a little while. *[Laughs.]*

00:43:23 John Host But it's not so ubiquitously awarded that it becomes meaningless. Obviously it really matters, and to have one is, um... I mean, it's a— a badge of honor. Literally.

00:43:37 Adam Host Stransky's character makes you feel as though his family and friends and town won't view him as a real soldier having been in the shit unless he comes back with one.

00:43:45 John Host Right. And in that sense there's not an American—I mean, you—you wouldn't be—you wouldn't come back to your hometown and have your father go, like, where's your Bronze Star? *[Laughs.]*
Right?

00:43:56 Adam Host Yeah, yeah.
00:43:57 Ben Host But it's also like he's so desperate to have it that he is willing to risk getting caught—like, James Mason kind of has everything he needs to reject the request.

00:44:07 Adam Host It's weird. Like, Stransky's willing to devalue its entire concept in order to get one.

00:44:13 John Host Right. He's a member of that generation that would have wanted a dueling scar. And would have probably in life have had one. It's—it's weird that they didn't put—it's weird that—maybe Peckinpah was too drunk to consider putting a dueling scar on him. But, y'know, there were guys in Prussian aristocracy that went out and had their friend, y'know, got into a fake swordfight with their friend just so that they had the dramatic scar.

00:44:41 Adam Host That's called Gerard-ing.

00:44:44	Clip	Clip	<i>[All laugh.]</i>
00:44:45	John	Host	Speaker: <i>[Unintelligible.]</i>
00:44:50	Ben	Host	<i>[Through laughter]</i> Right! It's totally a Gerard! <i>[Laughs.]</i> Guys, is this a Christmas movie? Because I'm pretty hungry for some stolen (<i>stolen</i>) valor.
00:44:58	John	Host	<i>[Adam laughs.]</i> Unbelievable.
00:45:00	Adam	Host	<i>[Ben laughs.]</i> Uh, in parentheses—(Adam laughs.)
00:45:11	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	<i>[All laugh.]</i> I mean, it may not be a Christmas film, but there is a Senta (<i>Santa</i>) in it. John: Ohhhhh.
00:45:14	John	Host	Ben: There is a Senta.
00:45:16	Ben	Host	Well done, Adam.
00:45:19	Adam	Host	She's kind of typecast as the nurse in Peckinpah movies, isn't she?
00:45:21	John	Host	Yeah.
00:45:26	Adam	Host	The nurse that is, like, totally, uh, a professional-slash-prude? Doctors prescribe; nurses provide... the sex.
00:45:31	John	Host	<i>[Ben laughs.]</i> And the next scene is pulling—pulling her nurse's, uh, outfit back on over her naked bum, having been seduced by Coburn's irresistible charms. Not only seduced, but in the course of a single night, she's talking about... him coming back to their shared home. <i>[Through laughter]</i> Somewhere in Germany. Like—like they're having a <u>marital</u> dispute.
00:45:56	Ben	Host	Yeah!
00:45:59	Adam	Host	I love how there's absolutely <u>zero</u> to Steiner for her to fall in love with? Other than his need for her care. Like, why is she attracted to him? He's actually insane for most of the scenes that they're in together.
00:46:13	John	Host	Insane and wounded. In a wheelchair.
00:46:15	Adam	Host	It seems a little unmotivated except for... it's the seventies!
00:46:19	John	Host	<i>[Through laughter]</i> In 1977, there were lots of movies that—that, uh, that would show a young man like myself that all it took to seduce a beautiful woman was just to look at her.
00:46:31	Ben	Host	Maybe, uh, while he was out she, uh, gave him a sponge bath and saw the goods and she liked what she saw!
00:46:36	Adam	Host	Yeah. "Affix bayonets!"
00:46:42	John	Host	<i>[Ben laughs.]</i> There's so many scenes in this movie that are <u>hard</u> . Like, <u>hard</u> . Um—
00:46:46	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	Adam and Ben: Yeah.
00:46:48	John	Host	Where people you care about die. Where... uh, where you're in a situation that just feels, like, unsurvivable? The characters of our—of our cast of—of German <i>Platoon</i> ? Of our, y'know, little squad? Um, they all feel very <u>real</u> and <u>all</u> super hard-worn? Dirty-toothed?

00:47:10	Ben	Host	Something you observed about the characters in <i>Black Hawk Down</i> in last week's episode was that it didn't spend a lot of time trying to characterize them at the beginning? It just let them characterize themselves over the course of the film? And I kind of feel like that's true of these guys as well. Like, y'know, they—they have some scenes back in the bunker where they get to lay their mustard-gas farts down on each other or whatever. But like for the most part, their—their characters become richer and richer over the course of the film and it's not one note that we are given right at the beginning.
00:47:46	John	Host	The one note, though, we're given at the beginning is the capture of the little Russian boy. I mean, you're <u>so</u> prepared for that Russian boy to play a key role in the film throughout? That his relationship to the platoon; his... y'know, donning of their uniform; all of this stuff that happens at the <u>beginning</u> you think he's this central figure.
00:48:09	Adam	Host	I thought we were gonna get <i>Come and See</i> 'd through him.
00:48:12	Ben	Host	<i>Come and Seed</i> is a different movie, Adam.
00:48:14	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	John: Yeah. That's pretty good. That's a good one.
00:48:16	John	Host	Adam: Oh, no! And that's what this could've been 'cause he was clearly, like, a captured sex boy. That—for whatever reason in this film—I guess 1977, you weren't—they couldn't tell the story of the captured sex boy yet. But then we <u>lose</u> him!
00:48:30	Adam	Host	Never use a movie title as a verb. That's what I learned here. [Laughs.]
00:48:36	John	Host	[All laugh.] We—we lose—we lose him <u>so</u> early! And so desperately. It's—it's like you almost didn't have a chance—he's taken from us before we even had enough opportunity to bond with him such that his death mattered!
00:48:54	Ben	Host	It almost—it really reminded me, actually, also... speaking of <i>Black Hawk Down</i> ! Of the scene where the little boy kills his dad or uncle or whatever that was. Like... it's just this senseless friendly fire moment that totally comes out of nowhere and makes you feel like anybody is going to die at any moment in this movie. Like, nobody is safe. No—no story is necessarily going to be concluded in a way that is satisfying in the, like, Aristotelian sense.
00:49:24	Adam	Host	And in the—the hallucinations make those deaths un-final, also.
00:49:30	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	John and Ben: Right.
00:49:32	Adam	Host	In a way that for most other war films they are. Did you find the hallucinations effective? I've—really did! I think so often they can be cheesy and... I don't know. Like, goofy or something. But I was really with Steiner for all that.
00:49:45	John	Host	The kind of surreal element in it felt like it was a <u>product</u> of the late sixties, early seventies motorcycle movies? Y'know, where somebody goes on a bad trip? There was a—a, uh, an appetite for—or at least a filmic vernacular—that kind of fell out of favor, I think, not long after this, where one of the characters was given a chance to be crazy and we were trying to see inside their head. A lot of times it clangs for me. Because it feels like it's coming from... <i>Easy Rider</i> .
00:50:21	Adam	Host	There's something so dreamlike about an interaction with a ghost in films. That—when it's not good, so often they come and visit you and they have something to tell you. But there's something so much

scariest about a character thinking that they're seeing someone, like, from behind or from a one-quarter angle and then like grabbing their shoulder and turning them around and they're someone else. Or— or they're a corpse. Or something. And in this film, I think, what's so effective about seeing all of the dead soldiers again is that they're having interactions and they're existing in the same world with him. But they're almost ignoring him completely and going about their— their ghostly business. I really thought it worked.

00:51:04 Ben Host Even if you don't interpret 'em that way, like, it felt very much like the kind of modern psychology idea of trauma that affects your decisions going forward. Affects your emotional reality.

00:51:17 Adam Host Yeah. For some reason, Senta Berger sees this and is like, "I want to fuck."

[Ben laughs.]

00:51:32 John Host I feel like we needed, like, five more minutes of Senta Berger and James Coburn to figure that out. I definitely would have preferred five more minutes of Senta Berger. I don't think James Coburn had to be in it.

[Ben laughs.]

00:51:40 Ben Host Yeah. Just her, trying on some different outfits—

[John laughs.]

00:51:45 John Host —walking around the hospital. Y'know. Maybe dancing in the rain.

[Ben laughs.]

00:51:49 Adam Host God. Nurses have to put up with so much crazy shit from patients who aren't all there mentally? That much is obvious. But when Steiner, like, sucks her finger to tell her whether or not his sense of taste has come back? Like, the cringe in me was like, god, I bet that happens so fucking often. Like, ugh. Gross.

00:52:09 John Host One time about, uh, five or six years ago, I went to the VA hospital in Seattle as part of a thing where I kinda—I think it—I think... Duff McKagan did it? And he and I were talking and he was like, "Yeah, man, you should go to the VA hospital and just, like, talk to the—" that's a bad Duff McKagan impression, but look.

[Adam laughs.]

00:52:30 Adam Host How—here's a Duff McKagan impression: "Welcome to Sea-Tac Airport!"

[Multiple people laugh.]

"Going through the TSA line means removing all of your liquids."

[Multiple people laugh.]

00:52:44 John Host "Don't be that guy." But so I did it! And was like, y'know, I'll come hang out at the VA with the—with some vets! And they were like, "Great, that's amazing!" Y'know? And of course I—talking to Duff, he was like, "Yeah, about three-quarters of the people I met had never even

heard of Guns 'n' Roses. But, y'know. Like, a quarter of them were super into it. But I—but everybody was into having somebody come by." So I was like, "Cool!" And I went and I spent a day at the VA hanging out with—with vets. And, uh, y'know, injured vets. And... it was pretty intense. And my experience—well, certainly, the experience of the nurses there was that they didn't let anybody suck their fingers.

[Adam laughs.]

00:53:26 Adam Host
00:53:29 John Host

That's a pretty strict policy, I bet.

[Through laughter] Yeah. It would be an intense environment! Um, just the people that I met. And I didn't meet any recently returned people... who were suffering, uh, hallucinations or anything. Most of the vets I met were, um... y'know, had chronic conditions. And if anyone's listening and can—wants to go to the—the vet hospital in your region and hang out and talk to people, I think that everybody there—there's always a—a need. For just... people who are willing to go have a little day of companionship. Because I think a lot of people feel isolated in those veterans' hospitals. But yeah! I mean, what—what an intense job! Dealing with people who are... shattered.

00:54:18 Ben Host

He doesn't seem un-shattered when he decides to leave the hospital. Right? Like, they're—they're talking about he's—he's—the war is over for him. And then... he just kind of unilaterally decides it isn't.

00:54:31 John Host

Well, he's doing that thing that we want from a war hero. Which is he's converting his shattered-ness back into combat effectiveness. Right.

00:54:39 Adam Host
00:54:41 John Host

And these days we don't like that. A movie that was made now... we're conscious of the fact that soldiers—like *American Sniper* or whatever—you see his... pathological desire to return to the fight as part of his... his... psychic... uh... injury. It's not a thing we encourage. We're like, "Dude, you're broken and you need help." But—but we love it, too. When a soldier's like, "I don't have any family. I don't have any reason to come back. All I know is the fight and I'm going back."

00:55:17 Ben Host

It's a little bit what *Hurt Locker* celebrates.

00:55:21 John Host

It's like, I'm a fucked-up person and my fucked-up-ed-ness is normal here.

00:55:24 Adam Host

Whether it's explicit or not, I think it's what every—it's the question every war film tries to answer. It's the question that Senta Berger's character thinks enough to ask. Steiner is willing to leave his life of peace and making a home with her, and Senta's like, "What are you doing? Like, we—you actually have a chance to have a life!" And he—Steiner can't answer the question and I'm not sure the film does, either. I think it's because it's so difficult to answer. And maybe that's an answer in and of itself, right? Does anyone really know?

00:55:59 Ben Host

Like, when I travel a lot for work... y'know, and then I'm—go two weeks without being in an airport, it's just, like, ugh, just feels restless. Like I wanna be at an airport. And it's like, being at an airport sucks! [Through laughter] Why would I wanna be there? But I do! It's like a human nature thing!

00:56:14 Adam Host

You just get used to being a certain way, I guess.

00:56:17 John Host

Nobody that's ever toured with a rock band comes away from that experience feeling like, "Wow, being on tour is... the greatest."

'Cause being on tour is hard and sucks. But when you come back from tour? Uh, two months later you're like, "Ah, can't wait to get out on tour! Like, how soon can I get back in that van and—and back into that cycle?"

00:56:44 Ben Host Yeah. Would you say that the life you love is making music with your friends?

00:56:49 John Host Hm. Yeah, well, I'm sort of a picker. But also—like a grinner.

[Ben laughs.]

00:56:56 Clip Clip **Speaker:** I have a feeling that one of these days this land will swallow us up.

00:57:00 Ben Host How about, uh... how about that scene where he's sitting around with his buddy and they're, like, quoting von Clausewitz and stuff?

[John laughs.]

00:57:19 John Host That was—that really stuck out to me as like, "We're two enlisted yo-yos but we're having this, like, military academy conversation?" Well, it—and it come—it becomes explicit in the conversation that he has with Stransky—von Stransky—when Steiner and von Stransky are having that conversation and von Stransky is like, "Look. I'm all about understanding that you are a full human being. But let's be honest—the reason there's an aristocracy is that there are better people. And the better people are better because they had better parents. And were bred to be better. And those people should be in charge." And Steiner is like, "Yeah, but what about—it's like, Goethe and—and, um, Wagner or something." But I don't think it's either one of those 'cause it's definitely not Goethe. But he—he references two icons of German history who came from humble families. And... von Stransky's like, "Yeah, sure. Any—y'know. There's always a—there's always exceptions to the rule." That reveals Steiner to be an educated man. Y'know? Like a—a trench philosopher. But what a weird and—reflects back to what we were talking about before! The sort of, um... we—you can look at that moment and see von Stransky—

00:58:36 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Ben:** Kant and Schubert are the—are the people he mentions.

00:58:39 John Host **John:** —Kant and Schubert. That's it. You can superimpose a master race element on that conversation? Except von Stransky is not saying the Germans are the master race over others; he's saying, "[I, as a von Stransky, am superior to you, common Steiner."

00:59:00 Ben Host Yeah. And they're also, like, both talking about not thinking that the Fuhrer is good. Like, they're disagreeing in that conversation but they're also agreeing on "Hitler sucks."

00:59:10 Adam Host John, your high school superlative was "trench philosopher," right?

[John laughs.]

00:59:14 John Host Um—yeah. I mean, I was like... uh... Most Humorous. My nickname was "Rad Dog." And under my picture it said "Trench Philosopher." *[Ben laughs.]*

00:59:26 Adam Host Yeah.

00:59:28 John Host But again, that's a weird thing that situates this film in 1977! There's no way you would've been having that class conversation without it being a race conversation.

00:59:41 Adam Host Hm.

00:59:42 John Host And von Stransky was making it—it was a race conversation, in the sense that it's just a good breeding—y'know, it's a—it's like the old version of a class conversation. Which had less to do with money and more to do with pedigree. But boy, you wouldn't see that now.

00:59:58 Adam Host In *Crimson Tide*, it was explicitly both as well! And it was almost exactly the same conversation. Only they were officers that were having it.

01:00:07 Ben Host Well they were talking about horses, Adam.
01:00:09 Adam Host Yeah.

[Ben laughs.]

No one knows what color a Lipizzaner stallion is. Even now.

[John laughs.]

01:00:15 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Adam:** It's a mystery.

Ben: Yeah.

01:00:17 John Host Well, you—you can figure it out. You just have to shave them.
01:00:20 Adam Host Have—have you ever tried to shave a Lipizzaner? That's a big animal!

01:00:24 Ben Host There's more than one way to do it! *[Laughs.]*

[John laughs.]

This show is so dumb.

[All laugh.]

01:00:36 Adam Host Steiner can't give any kind of answer to Senta Berger about why he's going back. But when he does go back, he gets that speaking truth to power scene. He gets a couple of 'em, even. Is that what this movie's about?

01:00:52 Ben Host Yeah. I mean, 'cause he definitely, like, gets... the upper hand with... Schell. Like, at the end—y'know, he's like, "I'm gonna go show you how to be a soldier." And—and that's—that is a total status inversion in that moment.

01:01:08 Adam Host I love that scene. I love—as soon as they're up and out and fighting, how—how crazy that moment is. And to see how—how terribly Stransky conducts himself out there. Can't even get his helmet on right! Doesn't know how to reload his weapon?

01:01:25 John Host There's more than one scene in this movie where someone puts down a loaded gun... someone else picks it up... considers shooting them... and then decides, "Well... I'll make common cause with you instead."

[Ben laughs.]

Uh, that's—that's like a strange thing to have more than once in a film.

01:01:45 Ben Host Yeah.
01:01:46 Adam Host Did it—did it train you into thinking that the scene between Steiner and Triebig was going to end differently than the way that it did?

01:01:53 Ben Host Yeah. 'Cause they already, like, burned that idea?
01:01:55 Adam Host I shouldn't have been shocked by it. It was right there the entire time. But—but there are three extra beats to that scene that made

me think, “Well, I guess Triebig’s gonna live!” He’s a shit-heel and a bad person, but, like, he lives. Until blam! Until forty blams.

01:02:15 Ben Host Yeah. Movies seem to like killing the gay character a little... too much. Seemed to relish in that.

01:02:21 Adam Host He was not killed because he was gay, though!

01:02:24 John Host Well, except—

01:02:26 Adam Host He—he was blackmailed because he was gay. His choices about, uh, the friendly fire killing were—were unrelated, except for that.

01:02:33 Ben Host Yeah. But I think that it’s conflated in that moment. If he hadn’t chosen to be gay, he wouldn’t have, y’know.

[John laughs.]

01:02:40 Adam Host I don’t believe that’s a choice, Ben!

01:02:42 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** Yeah!

Ben: I don’t believe that this movie believes that that’s not a choice.

[Laughs.]

01:02:44 John Host Oh, I—I—I disagree.

01:02:47 Adam Host But I think crucially he’s never sexualized in the film outside of a cheek stroke. Like, he’s—he’s not... he’s not grabbing asses for an hour and a half and making his sexual interests anyone else’s concern. Like, it’s only used as a weapon against him!

01:03:05 Ben Host Well, we just don’t see how he behaves around the doctors when he goes to the field hospital.

01:03:10 John Host Lot of—lot of finger-sucking.

[Adam laughs.]

01:03:16 Adam Host Interesting that you would gender the doctors, Ben. As male. Wow.

01:03:17 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Ben:** In this era, I would, John!

John: Geez. Ouch. God.

01:03:20 Ben Host Historically!

01:03:22 John Host Sure. Okay. Fine.

01:03:23 Adam Host It’s Senta Berger and not Sam Berger, Ben.

01:03:26 Ben Host When my dad was a kid he was in the hospital for, uh, for something? I think he got like knocked out and when he woke up there was nobody in the room but he figured out that he was in a hospital? And he yelled, “Doctor’s wife! Doctor’s wife!” Because that’s all he could think of for “nurse”?

[All laugh.]

01:03:42 Adam Host What?!

01:03:45 Ben Host ‘Cause he was—he was a little boy in the forties!

01:03:47 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Adam:** Oh, yeah! Alright.

John: So sexism runs in your family, is what you’re saying.

01:03:50 Ben Host No! Sexism runs in the forties!

01:03:53 Adam Host Did he tell you how many fingers he sucked in his time in the hospital? *[Laughs.]*

[Ben laughs.]

01:03:57 Ben Host He was a little boy!

01:03:59 Adam Host “Let me tell you something, Benjamin. A lot of fingers were sucked that day.”

01:04:05 John Host *[Ben laughs.]*
Well, but—so I think that the—I think that the homosexuality of that character was played with a lot of restraint. And the—the idea of him being blackmailed into being the true villain at the end... was... uh... was—it was a pretty nuanced plot point.

01:04:25 Ben Host I mean, he's forced into villainy, but it—I—like—I felt the movie providing the character, like, "If you just chose not to be gay, this wouldn't be a problem for you." As a... y'know, like—as a—as a way of, like, confirming his true villainy.

01:04:43 Adam Host He was always going to be a villain by virtue of his proximity to Stransky, though! I felt like his sexuality had very little to do with how we felt about him, uh, with respect to his goodness or evilness.

01:04:58 John Host Oh, I thought that the whole movie was setting him up to be the one that fragged von Stransky. Right? He was the one that had the opportunity and the motive at some point in that bunker to—to shoot him from behind.

01:05:11 Adam Host And if he wants to get out of this jail, that's what he'd have to do.
01:05:14 Crosstalk Host **John:** Right.

01:05:16 Ben Host **Ben:** But I don't think a 1977 audience—
01:05:20 Adam Host —is gonna be, like, "Yeah! Fucking right on!"
Oh, yeah. No one would've been satisfied at giving Triebig that kill. It had to be Steiner's.

01:05:25 John Host Now, wait a minute. You guys are doing a little bit of revisionism here. There were—there were plenty of instances where a character that the audience could identify as gay was also given complete agency in films in 1977.

01:05:41 Ben Host Yeah. Like, Han—look at Han Solo and Chewbacca!
01:05:43 John Host Yeah, exactly! Classic gay relationship! Daddy-son relationship!

[Ben laughs.]

01:05:51 Ben Host But—but I think even more than that—
Are you saying Han Solo is the twink, and—

[Multiple people laugh.]

01:05:55 John Host —Chewbacca's the bear? *[Laughs.]*
Speaking as a Chewbacca who's also a Han Solo, um—

[Multiple people laugh.]

01:06:49 Ben Host But the scene—the scene with the Russian—the female Russian soldiers. It's a stunning moment in the movie. And in—in movies in general. Uh, that you don't usually see women portrayed as fighters. And then their position as fighters compromised and then they're exploited as women and then return as fighters and in the end exact their revenge as fighters. There's a—there's so much in that four minutes that is—I mean, I'm sure that all three of us were cringing throughout. But it's not—but there's no, like, simple door in or out.

01:06:52 Adam Host It was all worth it to see a Nazi get his penis bitten off.
Oh, yeah! I wasn't cringing at all. I was—I was celebrating it. That was awesome!

01:06:56 John Host You don't get penises bitten off a lot. The girl that was in the hot tub and the other dude just is like, "I'm getting in the tub with you!" Like, there were—

[Ben laughs.]

—there was a lot that was like, "Oh, god, this is really gonna go a bad place!" And it did. It did go a bad place. Several bad places. I think that, uh, the—the modern directive to punch Nazis needs to be upgraded to—remove Nazis' penises from their bodies.

01:07:14 Ben Host

01:07:21 Adam Host With your mouth? Yeah, you first, Ben.

[Ben laughs.]

01:07:26 John Host His—his agony is, uh, really well played. There's some great acting in this movie! I wouldn't even say that James Coburn did the—did the best acting. There's a lot of really good supporting character acting in the film.

01:07:41 Clip Clip **Speaker:** What do I have to be grateful for, Captain?

01:07:46 Adam Host Something interesting that Coburn does is that he's so cold whenever he's having a military interaction outside of a couple of moments of... punctuation where, like, when he—when the kid dies in front of him? He lets out that scream? Like, the moments where he really is hurt, I—I feel like are really well done and acted because he is such a flatline through so much of the film. And that laugh at the end during the credits, like, is another example of that. It's so odd, but I think it—it serves the character's story. Because he's so put together and grounded through so much of it that to see him lose it is so much more meaningful. That's why I found his hallucinations so affecting.

01:08:34 Ben Host Hey, uh, I know we've gone a little bit long, but I had a moment of pedantry that didn't have a natural... uh, place—insertion point in the—in our review. Do you guys wanna hear it?

01:08:46 Adam Host Why don't you put your pedantry into our show's mouth and see what happens?

01:08:49 Ben Host Alright. Zip! Uh... the German machine guns shown in the film are portraying MG-42s, a weapon commonly known as having a high rate of fire, around 1200-1500 rounds per minute. The machine guns we see—

[Telegraph noise plays in background.]

—and hear in the film are actually M-53s, the post-war Yugoslavian copy of the MG-42. With a much slower rate of fire, 500-600 rounds per minute.

01:09:18 John Host *[Imitates machine gun noise]* Uh-uh-uh-uh-uh-uh-uh-uh-uh.

01:09:20 Adam Host You know, a Sten gun would never stand a chance out in the mud. Anyways.

[Multiple people laugh.]

01:09:27 Ben Host Glad you'll never see a Sten gun out here.

01:09:30 Adam Host Yeah. Leave those with the team from Navarone.

01:09:31 John Host Mm-hm.

I read somewhere that—that this movie was being made during the same time as, uh, *A Bridge Too Far*? And that all of the Yugoslavian tanks that had been contracted to make this film were

stolen by *A Bridge Too Far*? And I think we—when we reviewed *A Bridge Too Far*, we talked about that. Didn't we? That there were only—there's only so many Yugoslavian tanks you can borrow! During the making of the film.

01:09:57 Adam Host That's the saying! You can only borrow so many Yugoslavian tanks.

[John laughs.]

01:10:02 John Host But the tank sequences in this movie are incredible!

01:10:06 Adam Host Yeah.

01:10:07 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** Uh, that whole battle sequence—although it goes on way too long—is, like, one of the coolest—

Adam: Ugh, come on.

01:10:13 John Host [Through laughter] You're so mad. You're like, "There's no such thing as a too-long battle sequence!" But god, it's good! It's really good!

01:10:22 Adam Host They do that thing that all films have to do with the sequence of, like, showing the territory and then cutting in to up-close? But you are so close to the tanks for so long. And they're practically driving over us. And that scene where they stick the mines into the treads? Like, you're just—you're in it. And you're so tight. It just never feels like you're out of danger when you're nearby those things. I thought—that was one of my favorite parts. Was—were all the tank parts in this film. You're right.

01:10:51 Ben Host You're tight but you're also, like, it's not the tight of like... we don't have the budget to show a big battle?

01:10:57 Adam Host Yeah.

01:10:58 Ben Host It's like... you can tell that this is huge and no matter which direction they move, there's danger.

01:11:06 Adam Host This film gives you a lot of, like, two-second interstitial scenes of death, I'll say. Like, either during the battle you'll cut into guys getting blown away or the barrel of a gun or a tank running over a dead body in the mud? Like, that was one of the things that this tank talk brought up was that all—I don't think I'll ever forget that scene where a tank's just running over a body and smooshing him into the mud. That was rough.

01:11:34 John Host I—I never—I don't think of all the movies we've ever seen or that I've ever seen... uh, in the war movie genre—gave me a feeling of what a tank really sounds like and feels like. Just the sound of the motors? And the tread... this movie captured it! And I got a sense—maybe for the first time—of tanks as being—tanks of this era being kind of tractors. Like, farm implements that are nonetheless scary for that fact. Maybe even scarier. Because they don't feel like high-tech super-vehicles. They feel like things that can break down. They feel like things that are even more menacing, maybe. Because they can actually go into buildings and because they can go right through barbed wire. I was blown away.

01:12:26 Adam Host That sequence is spectacular because you know it's a director making a choice and it—in Peckinpah's case, you wonder how compromised his decision-making is. But, like, you—there's no going back once you do this sequence. This tank sequence where they're driving all over your set and they're taking out the barbed wire and all of the—all of the bunkers. Like, I was listening to an interview with Quentin Tarantino and he was talking about how different he is from Tony Scott in that—Quentin described himself as a composer, because he's framing his shots specifically in a way

that's premeditated in a way that Tony Scott just throws nine camera setups at—at any given shot. And he, like, shoots for the edit. And it feels like with this tank scene, the Tony Scott method is what was in play here. You're only gonna get one go at the tank sequence. You're gonna destroy everything in the process.

[Ben laughs.]

You might as well just get all the coverage you can! I think that's what made it feel so, uh... so frenetic. And incredible. Super well done. Because there's no going back to one.

01:13:33 John Host

Right.

01:13:34 Ben Host

Well this is, uh, I think—I think our last Peckinpah.

01:13:38 Adam Host

[With inflection that suggests displeasure.] Ahh! We need to sneak some more Westerns in here.

01:13:42 Ben Host

I mean... from an action standpoint, really best-in-breed stuff. And pretty impressive.

01:13:48 Music Music

Short reprise of "War" theme song.

01:13:52 Adam Host

I guess now we have to figure out if all of those components elevate the film into a best-of-breed *Friendly Fire* film! Only a rating and review can do that. Rating system is made up of something that catches my eye in the film. This is obvious. It's too obvious. I'm almost embarrassed to say... that the rating system for *Cross of Iron* is—Cross of Irons?

[John laughs.]

Or Crosses of Iron?

01:14:18 Ben Host

Oh, man! I thought it was gonna be Wooden Outdoor Bathtub!

01:14:21 Adam Host

[Laughs.]

It's the central object in the film! It's what it's all about! It's like if we did *Maltese Falcon* and it wasn't the falcon as the rating system.

Like, this is kinda—this kinda has to be the Crosses of Iron.

01:14:34 John Host

Mm-hm.

01:14:35 Adam Host

To me, I think all of these separate elements add up to one of the most fun *Friendly Fire* films I can remember seeing in a while. But it really did start out as a slow burn for me. I think it's because the movie starts so small. We're in those bunkers for so long. We're seeing the interpersonal relationships between everyone. And by the time we're finally unleashed into the upper world and it becomes a little more open world when, uh, Steiner gets injured—all hell breaks loose! And it's just relentless until the very end. It gets bigger and bigger and bigger and the explosions get bigger and the body count gets bigger and the editing gets faster. Like, you can feel... the locomotion of the film really build up speed in a way that—if you can get past the first twenty-ish minutes, I think is super rewarding for a specific type of filmgoer. I think—I think I am the type of filmgoer that loves a movie like this? But I so get that this is not going to work for a lot of people. So with that caveat, I think I'm going to give it, uh, four crosses, two tines. Four and a half crosses of irons!

[Ben laughs.]

01:15:49 Ben Host

Are they called "tines" when they're—when they're on the outside of the cross?

01:15:53 Adam Host

Blades?

01:15:55 John Host Four crosses of iron and two blades of glory?

01:15:57 Adam Host *[Ben laughs.]*
Yeah. Like, at its core I like stories about people who are underestimated and struggling and who are, like... led around by people who they know to be idiots. Like, that's—that's a cause I'm gonna ride for, uh, in any movie. And in life. And I think Steiner's like... the perfect embodiment of that. I—I really enjoyed his journey. And I really love how the film ended. Like, god! Just... awesome ending! In my book.

01:16:23 John Host Yeah.

01:16:24 Adam Host What about you guys?

01:16:26 Ben Host Um, I'm... gonna give it... four crosses. I... this is one of those movies I just didn't see coming! I...

01:16:35 Adam Host Yeah.

01:16:36 Ben Host ...was... imagining that because I hadn't heard of it and because... like, there's some great Peckinpah out there, but he made some turkeys. Like, he was a—he took wild swings and I was just imagining that this was gonna be a dog. And it was really compelling and—and, like, the emotional inner lives of the characters were interesting and well-drawn? And the action was amazing? Like, I was like—fuck! Like, this is—like—I feel like if you wanted to make a perfect *Friendly Fire* movie? This was—this is like what you would do?

01:17:16 Adam Host If this were on a submarine, I would say absolutely.

01:17:20 Ben Host But like, if you could like, insert a movie in the seventies. Y'know? Like—and have it be uniquely appealing to a podcast like this. I feel like *Cross of Iron* is that. And—um—and I had so much fun watching it and just, like, imagining the conversation I was gonna have with you guys about it. 'Cause it, uh, it is so... wild and unexpected! And I'm really, really glad we got to watch it for this project. And I hope people who haven't seen it, uh, that are listening, uh, go—go find it! I think it's—it's on Blu-ray? Uh, we watched a—an SD version of it on Amazon Prime, which was too bad. Because I could tell that it was like a pretty interesting film from a visual standpoint, but it was—it was kinda, y'know, hard to appreciate that on a modern big screen TV when you're watching the 480p version of it. So.

01:18:21 Adam Host I have a feeling if you watched the Blu-ray version, the set design and the *mise en scene* of everything is even more incredible. Because I think that was one of my favorite parts! Like, everything is so dusty and worn and ruined.

01:18:36 Ben Host And the angles in those bunkers are always—like, they're, like, always four layers of depth in every shot composition. And...

01:18:45 Adam Host I would've believed that they shot in real bunkers. They looked so... perfect. Instead of building them themselves.

01:18:51 Ben Host Yeah.

01:18:52 Adam Host It—there was that level of detail, I thought.

01:18:54 Ben Host Just some of the, like, just some of the bunker stunts! Like—like, logs falling out of the ceiling when they—

[Adam laughs.]

01:19:05 Adam Host —when they had artillery shells raining down? I was like, "That guy coulda gotten really hurt by those logs!" *[Laughs.]*
Yeah.

01:19:06 Ben Host Y'know? Like... it's a real fascinating and good movie. And I hope people watch it!

01:19:14 John Host Yeah. I was surprised by it, too. And it's a compelling watch. I had a few things that kinda bounced me out of it, and it all had to do with... I guess the casting of Coburn and that little bit of... of biker movie DNA that was in it.

[Ben laughs.]

There's slapstick in it! Von Stransky slips and falls in the mud in his new uniform. And...

[Ben laughs.]

01:19:51 Adam Host Y'know, that's—there's—there's stuff in it that's taken from...
01:19:53 John Host *M*A*S*H*. Um... that's, uh, like, slip on a banana peel stuff.
Like, the nudity?
And the gratuitous nudity, right? Like, the—

[Someone laughs.]

Like, uh, almost, like—

[Adam laughs.]

—from the movie *Airplane*. Right? Where it's just like, "Oh! She, like—you can see her boobs! Hahaaaa!"

01:20:03 Adam Host Yeah.

01:20:04 John Host Um...

01:20:05 Adam Host Yeah.

01:20:06 John Host That really locates it, weirdly, in a place—at least in my mind—that—that compromises it a little bit. That's very specific, I think, to that period, 1975 to 1980. But... the war stuff is—is... I think you could say is orgiastic.

[Adam laughs.]

Y'know, there's a lot of violence that's... uh... that's just the kind of stuff that we see in war movies, which is—like—people are getting blown apart. But it's really fun.

[Ben laughs.]

And, uh, and that's a component of what we do on this show! Watch movies that do that. But I do feel like it's a good movie to watch. In that—you couldn't have said it better when you said that if you—if you could make a movie for *Friendly Fire* and put it in precisely the place that it belongs, which is 1977—like, it just belongs there and here it is. And the fact that I'd never heard of it? I think it was overshadowed by *Star Wars*, frankly!

01:21:19 Adam Host Mm.

[Ben laughs.]

01:21:21 John Host It was, y'know, *Star Wars* came out that same—what? I mean, within a month or two of when this movie came out? I guess this came out in January and *Star Wars* came out in May. So it—you

can't completely blame *Star Wars* for the fact that I've never heard of this movie. But it's so *Friendly Fire*. I have to give it—I have to give it four Iron Crosses and... y'know, like, not a Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross? Maybe... and certainly not a Grand Cross of the Iron Cross? But maybe a First Class Iron Cross with... Oak Leaves? A First Class Iron Cross... I guess it's a Knight's Cross with the Iron Cross that has the swords and the oak leaves and diamonds and stuff.

[Adam laughs.]

Maybe I'm gonna say four Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross without oak leaves. Let's get—let's call it that.

01:22:17 Adam Host

Alright!

01:22:18 Ben Host

Alright.

01:22:19 Adam Host

I wonder what your guy's gonna be covered in, John! *[Laughs.]*

[John laughs.]

Total mystery to me at this point! Do you have a guy?

[John laughs.]

01:22:25 John Host

I do. Of course! Uh, my guy is played by the great actor David Warner.

01:22:34 Crosstalk Crosstalk

Ben: Ahhhh! Dammit!

Adam: Mmmm.

John: He's the—

01:22:36 John Host

He's Hauptmann Kiesel. I got there first!

01:22:38 Adam Host

Yeah.

01:22:39 Ben Host

Yeah. You did.

01:22:40 John Host

Uh, he's... so great. You know, we see him to great effect as an actor later on in life. Particularly in the movie *Tron*. *[Laughs.]*

[Ben laughs.]

Um, where he... uh, plays the Master Control Program. Oh, no, no! Not the Master Control Program. He plays the—the Wirecutter, or whatever. *[Note: Warner plays the Master Control Program in Tron.]* But he's such a great actor and he's, y'know, he's in *Time Bandits*. But in this movie he's playing the kind of sickly and bedraggled assistant to the colonel, y'know, his—the colonel's main adjutant. And he's got like a cool, tousled, mod haircut?

[Someone laughs.]

And he's got that sort of British irreverence? That he's bringing to the role of a Nazi? *[Laughs.]* I love British people playing Nazis. Uh, it's sort of the best.

01:23:33 Clip Clip

Speaker: Just feels right!

[Multiple people laugh.]

01:23:35 John Host

It just feels right. *[Laughs.]* And he's such a... he—but he doesn't—he doesn't overplay the sardonic, y'know, he—a lot of times it just seems like he's sitting there twirling his pencil? Which is, I think, the

best? And then at the end, the Colonel says, “You’re the one I want to survive all of this. I’m putting you on a—I’m putting you on the train to behind the lines... not because you’re the hero, but because you’re the book reader that I want to help rebuild a new Germany.” It’s just like, huh! Okay. Good—good little thing at the end there! Like, you know, I was—I was suddenly transported to... West Germany in 1959. Imagining this guy in a tweed jacket—

[Adam laughs.]

—working at a—y’know, working in the government in some capacity as like Minister of Culture. And feeling like—huh! Alright. Well. Yeah! Y’know? Maybe he went to work for Volkswagen and that’s why we have the—why we have the Golf.

[Multiple people laugh.]

01:24:44 Adam Host

Can’t imagine a world without the Golf! *[Laughs.]* Uh, my guy appears in the hospital scene. There’s a general that shows up. He begins very magnanimously, like, “Hey, everyone can eat the meat! And the cheese and the veg! Come on and indulge! It’s gonna be great!” But before that he goes around and meets with everyone. His— *[Laughs.]* His interaction with Steiner isn’t great, but luckily he’s got Eva there to sort of explain away Steiner’s attitude. What cannot be explained away is Two Stumps—my guy in this movie.

[John laughs.]

Uh, the—the general reaches out to shake his hand, uh, is flummoxed by the stump; then goes for the other hand. Also a stump!

01:25:37 Ben Host
01:25:40 Adam Host

That was very M*A*S*H.

And then old Two Stumps holds up a foot. For him to shake, which is... uh, something that he chooses not to do. I love... I love Two Stumps for that. Like, “Fuck you! General! You’re not gonna shake a stump? Why don’t you—why don’t you shake my foot, asshole?” So, uh, his attitude was something I really admired. So that’s what makes him my guy.

[Ben laughs.]

01:26:05 Ben Host

My guy is, uh, I think it’s Leutnant Meyer? Who was the one that led the counterattack that then von Stransky is trying to take credit for. He dies in the counterattack, but is the one leading it and, uh, it’s not for that, but for—for the—like, he’s—he’s, like—a kind of unusual lieutenant character in one of these movies? Because he’s, like, pretty capable? And like... y’know, friends with all the men and stuff? He’s not an idiot. He’s not a genius. He’s just, like, a regular guy who’s doing the best he can in the situation? And he goes out of his way to try and make Steiner understand what kind of person Stransky is? And like, what forces are at play in how Stransky behaves? He’s like, y’know, like, he’s just from a different world from us. He’s like this... he’s an aristocrat. And they have different, y’know, they have different values and different rules that they have to play by. And, like, Steiner doesn’t give a shit. But I like that Meyer at least makes an attempt *[through laughter]* to—to like, make some peace there before these two guys go to war with each other. So he’s my guy.

01:27:15 Adam Host Good guy! Good guys all around!

01:27:18 Music Music Short reprise of “War” theme song.

01:27:20 Adam Host But do we have a good movie up next?

01:27:23 Ben Host Who knows?

01:27:24 Adam Host Gonna have to find out! And only, uh, only John’s 120-sided die or 120-sided brain can tell us what’s next. What’s it gonna be, John?

01:27:33 John Host Alright. Well, let’s see here! Um... uh, as you know, I’m here in Hawaii. Again.

01:27:41 Ben Host Yeah. This is our last Hawaii episode, though, I think!

01:27:44 John Host I think so. Unfortunately, I do not have my die with me. And... so I’m going to have to use... something, um... something different.

[Ben laughs.]

01:27:57 Ben Host To generate.
Are you okay, John? [Laughs.]

[John laughs.]

01:27:59 Adam Host Are you—you’re looking at the Senta Berger website, aren’t you?

[Ben laughs.]

01:28:04 John Host Uh—I am. I’m always looking at Senta Berger. Alright. Let’s see here. So rather than my 120-sided die, I’m going to use my, uh, 1982 IBM PC, 64K—

[Ben laughs.]

01:28:20 Ben Host —of, uh—
La-di-dah!

01:28:22 John Host Of Random Access Memory, uh, to generate one—from a choice of 120 tones. Uh, the following roll: [makes explosion noise]. Go!

[Sound of 1980s computer tones.]

01:28:44 Ben Host Annnnd... the resultant number is 111!
111! Is a...

[Drums begin playing in background, transitions into upbeat band music.]

—1987 Barry Levinson picture... about the Vietnam War. It’s called *Gooooood Morning Vietnaaaam!*

[Adam laughs.]

01:29:02 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** Oh, no!

Adam: Wow!

01:29:03 Adam Host One of the few Robin Williams films to make it on *Friendly Fire*. That’s great!

01:29:08 Ben Host Yeah. Looking forward to it!

01:29:10 John Host Well, *Mrs. Doubtfire*’s on our list, too, right?

[Ben laughs.]

01:29:11 Adam Host I know. I mean, that was the one that I was thinking of.

01:29:14 Ben Host That’s the war against the unfair judicial practice of separating fathers [angrily] from their—[gags].

[Multiple people laugh.]

Uh, wow! I'm really looking forward to that! Uh, I had—I was... as a—as a child I had the *Good Morning Vietnam* movie soundtrack on tape? And I was obsessed with it.

01:29:37 Adam Host

Wow!

["War" theme song begins playing quietly in background]

I would—I would disproportionately credit that with making me want to make audio programs, actually. Like, not—I didn't even—I don't think I'd even seen the movie. But I listened to that tape a zillion times.

01:29:49 Adam Host

Wow!

01:29:51 Ben Host

I know every song.

01:29:53 Adam Host

Alright! That—that was your *Forrest Gump* soundtrack!

01:29:56 Ben Host

[Through laughter] Yeah! Yeah! I guess it was! Uh, so that will be next week! We'll leave it with RobsRobsRobsRobs from here! So for John Roderick and Adam Pranica, I've been Ben Harrison—to the victor go the spoiler alerts.

[Theme sound plays louder in background, then subsides as Rob gives the outro.]

01:30:11 Rob Schulte Editor

Friendly Fire is a Maximum Fun podcast hosted by Ben Harrison, Adam Pranica, and John Roderick! This show is produced by me—Rob Schulte. Our theme music is "War" by Edwin Starr, courtesy of Stone Agate Music. And our podcast art is by Nick Ditmore. *Friendly Fire* is made possible by listeners like you. And if you'd like to make sure that the show continues, please head on over to MaximumFun.org/join! Once you pledge your support? You'll receive all of the Maximum Fun bonus audio content as well as our monthly pork chop episode. If you'd like to talk about this episode on social media, please use the hashtag #FriendlyFire or join one of our online discussion groups on a platform like Facebook! You can find Ben on Twitter @BenjaminAhr. Adam is @CutForTime; John is @JohnRoderick, and I'm @RobKSchulte. Thanks again for listening and we'll see ya next time on *Friendly Fire*!

01:31:29 John Host

[Music plays louder for some time, then concludes.]

I wish I could shut up my chicken.

01:31:32 Ben Host

[Adam laughs.]

They don't respond to spoken commands? *[Laughs.]*

01:31:35 John Host

[John laughs.]

Shut up, chickens!

01:31:37 Speaker 1 Guest

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01:31:39 Speaker 2 Guest

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01:31:41 Speaker 3 Guest

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01:31:42 Speaker 4 Guest

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