

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 Ben Host [Soundtrack from *The Admiral: Roaring Currents* by Kim Tae-seong plays in background. Dramatic, fast-paced, tense, sweeping orchestral music.]  
Harrison

Never make a film with kids or animals, and never set your film on a boat. These are words for filmmakers to live by, due to the high level of difficulty each one offers. Kids and dogs must be trained, and they're easily tired or distracted and their performances rarely seem authentic. Boats, on the other hand, are their own unique complication. Their movement is affected by forces that no filmmaker can control—and therefore, you're fighting to keep your angles and lighting correct as your set moves under your feet. You have safety problems. You have a very limited set of tools for stabilizing and lighting shots and moving your camera, and your cast and crew can get seasick!

Maybe consider writing a nice story about a soldier in an army? And save yourself some trouble? No! Naval combat is something of an obsession for us on this show, in part because of the challenges inherent to doing it right! And in part because of the fascinating limitations the sea imposes on combat itself. As new technologies like CGI boats and drone cameras emerge to reduce some of the barriers to filming on the water, I'm hoping we get more and more of these films. But even with these advancements, it's still much easier to set a naval warfare film on a modern naval vessel.

Rare is the film that allows us to explore the finer points of naval combat prior to World War II. Once in a blue moon, a *Master and Commander* comes along and gives us a glimpse into a more blessed timeline where movies like this are made all the time, but in our doomed reality, *Master and Commander*—despite being a perfect film—was not financially successful enough to spawn its deserved cavalades of sequels and imitators.

South Korea, thankfully, is not bound by the same creative constraints as Hollywood. And one of the most successful films to ever be released there is a film about a naval battle between Japan and Korea that took place the same year that Shakespeare's *Henry IV Parts I and II* was first performed. The same year that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Spanish Armada tried and failed to invade England. It's a 2014 film directed by Han-min Kim that covers the battle of Myeongyang, and the long shot victory achieved by Yi Sun-sin against the invading Japanese.

00:02:20 Ben Host The style of ships is very different from the ones we see in *Master and Commander*. Their squared-off hulls engender a totally different set of strategies and tactics in ship-to-ship combat. The ships are oar-powered, and the film is just as interested in the men struggling to propel the ships as it is the ones on deck firing arrows and swinging swords.

The action takes place in the Myeongyang Strait, a slip of water notorious for the film's eponymous roaring currents. The badly outnumbered Joseon navy that Yi commands makes clever use of their home water advantage and—like the 300 Spartans at

Thermopylae—thwart a Japanese invasion fleet of 333 ships with a mere 12. We love a classic David and Goliath story on *Friendly Fire*. You map that onto a naval battle and we're all yours! There's something deeply gratifying about seeing a small, outgunned force overcome the odds. It's a feeling we want to revisit more and more these days, and to follow the example of those figures of history who didn't lose hope, even when everything and everyone around them said they were already defeated. This is a universal human story. If you crave life, you will surely die. If you fight to the death, you will live. Today on *Friendly Fire—The Admiral: Roaring Currents!*

00:03:45	Music	Music	<p><i>[Music swells before ceasing.]</i> “War” off the album <i>War &amp; 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>
00:04:05	Ben	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 burned our own houses down before we started recording today! I’m Ben Harrison.</p>
00:04:13	Adam Pranica	Host	I’m Adam Pranica.
00:04:15	John Roderick	Host	That’s the only way I’m gonna be sure that you guys take to the seas!
			<p><i>[Adam laughs.]</i></p>
00:04:20	Adam	Host	I’m John Roderick.
00:04:22	Ben	Host	I love that move! Are you the admiral of this podcast? <i>[Laughs.]</i>
			<p><i>[John laughs.]</i></p>
00:04:25	Adam	Host	Is that what you keep doing by not recording introductions to the show? Is that your—your version of burning down—
			<p><i>[John laughs.]</i></p>

—our houses?

00:04:32 John Host I'm the admiral of this show in the sense that I never smile. Or answer any direct question put to me.

00:04:37 Adam Host Yeah!

00:04:38 Ben Host I didn't know anything about this movie! Very, very, very popular movie in South Korea. I kinda got the sense reading the Wikipedia article that this admiral—Yi-Sun-sin—and this battle were, like, very famous kind of formative stories in the Korean—in the—y'know, in Korean history. I imagine this is like something you learn in elementary school if you're a South Korean student.

00:05:06 John Host Yeah. It definitely has the feeling of a foundation myth and—or not "myth," but like a foundation story. And it also feels like some of that is necessary to fully understand the film? Like, I imagine a South Korean or a Korean audience would be as familiar with the events depicted here as we are of the events of the Revolutionary War or whatever. You don't have to explain... who everybody is or what the stakes are. But that's not entirely clear to an audience coming at this movie from a Western perspective.

00:05:43 Ben Host Like... the Battle of Red Cliffs movie that we watched. *[Through laughter]* Like, everybody gets their title card and their rank and, y'know, their statistics. Their turn-ons.

*[John laughs.]*

00:05:59 John Host Everybody gets their *Playboy* centerfold. *[Laughs.]*

00:06:00 Ben Host They all get Murdocked.

00:06:00 Ben Host Yeah! And this movie definitely gives a little... kind of perfunctory setup. 'Cause the Koreans had a navy that was about the same size as the Japanese navy, and the admiral that took control of that fleet when Yi Sun-sin was wrongly accused of treason or something, like, was totally incompetent? And he got his ass kicked in this naval battle and then just like took the rest of his fleet back somewhere and like sat in his ship for a week and wouldn't talk to anyone? Like, totally just brooding and ashamed of himself and... somehow, like... just let the rest of the fleet get taken apart, like, while he was in that state. Like, all but 12 ships in the Korean navy get destroyed by the Japanese.

00:06:52 Adam Host Can you imagine the Korean government after seeing this go down? Like, the scene we don't get in this movie is them going back to Yi and being like... *[sharp intake of breath]* "Mistakes were made." *[Laughs.]*

00:07:04 Ben Host I know! Like, I kinda think that—maybe there's—I mean, this movie was so successful. Maybe there's a—

00:07:10 Adam Host A prequel? *[Laughs.]*

00:07:12 Ben Host —a prequel in the works! But, like, I feel like that's the story I wanna see!

00:07:15 Adam Host Yeah.

00:07:17 John Host Right. I mean, that was—that would've been—well, yeah! A major battle! I think one of the interesting things about this movie—and we see this all the time from our perspective watching movies about World War II or Western movies that—we think nothing of... watching British actors play Nazi officers, for instance. In this movie, almost all of the Japanese characters are played by Korean actors.

00:07:42 Ben Host Yeah.

00:07:44 John Host And so...

00:07:45	Ben	Host	Yeah. The head general on the Japanese side is played by a guy who used to be like the Minister of Culture? <i>[Laughs.]</i> For Korea? <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:07:54	John	Host	<i>[John laughs.]</i> And that's a—y'know, that's really... it's very clear from the uniforms and the costumes, y'know, who the sides are and what all is happening. That there is a character that is a <u>defector</u> —or a spy—who's working for the Koreans but is Japanese. In some of the earlier scenes when they're not in their war costumes, but they're kind of in more courtly dress, or people are moving back and forth between... environments. Coming and going from scenes of the peasants being persecuted. Scenes of different sort of court spaces. There was a little bit of a narrative juggling for me. Like, "Now what—now, wait a minute? Now who are—who's talking to who right here?" And that would've been—this is another one where... if the subtitles were different colors? For... when they're speaking Korean or when they're speaking Japanese?
00:08:54	Ben	Host	Right. Yeah.
00:08:56	John	Host	That would've been very helpful just in orienting yourself in space. I watched this movie with someone who speaks a little bit of Japanese, and she said, "The Koreans are doing a terrible job of speaking Japanese in this movie."
00:09:11	Adam	Host	<i>[Ben laughs.]</i> Oh! Did that take you out of the movie?
00:09:13	John	Host	It really did for me. I was like, <i>[makes dismissive noise]</i> .
			<i>[Adam laughs.]</i>  Sayonara!
00:09:19	Adam	Host	<i>[Ben laughs.]</i> I don't—I mean... that may be true about the accents, but god. The costumes were incredible in this movie.
00:09:26	John	Host	Right. Yeah.
00:09:27	Adam	Host	The details in it, I think, far outweighed whatever linguistic challenges might've been faced by some viewers. Like, holy shit.
00:09:37	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	<b>Ben:</b> I liked seeing all those <i>Ran</i> haircuts on the Japanese generals?
00:09:42	Adam	Host	<b>John:</b> Oh, so much. So much! I thought a lot about that movie when I was watching this one. You're just not gonna get a Kurosawa film anymore. Like, you're gonna—you're gonna tell Kurosawa stories, but... but they're always going to look like this from now on. And I—like, I gotta admit I approached the film with a little bit of reluctance. I was thinking, changes are this could be a <u>Redbad</u> situation.
00:10:05	John	Host	Yeah.
00:10:07	Adam	Host	But it was not. It was more—it was more <u>Ran</u> than it was <i>Redbad</i> for sure!
00:10:12	Ben	Host	Yeah. That—that colon in the title apparently was not present in the title in the U.S. theatrical release, but then I guess... it went by just <i>The Admiral</i> I think theatrically and then for home video it was released as <i>The Admiral</i> , colon, <i>Roaring Currents</i> . That tends to be a bad sign? <i>[Laughs.]</i>

00:10:35 Adam Host *[John laughs.]*  
 Yeah. It's a track record. It's not a policy.

00:10:37 Clip Clip **Speaker:** I won't agree to that.

00:10:38 Ben Host I wonder how this film went over in Japan! Like, especially if Korean actors playing the Japanese characters are not doing a great job pronouncing the Japanese lines that they're delivering. It's a movie that—where the Japanese are definitely the bad guys, but also we spend a lot of time with them. Like the—even the, like, pirate king Japanese character—Kurushima—is, like, he's kind of like dark and sinister? But he doesn't have like evil intentions. He's... he's not... y'know, like—I guess he's got like a little bit of a revenge axe to grind. But they're there because they were ordered to come, y'know, attempt to invade Korea. Not because they're, like, bad men that want to do... bad things for no good reason.

00:11:25 John Host Yeah. The movie is very sympathetic to the Japanese position a lot of the time. They are committing atrocities. Cutting off people's noses and whatnot. But the—like you say. The high command—

00:11:39 Ben Host I don't wanna—I don't wanna turn a blind eye to the atrocities of the Japanese. *[Laughs.]*

00:11:43 John Host Right, right, right. You're absolutely right, Ben, and I think that's—that is in the record now that you are against atrocities.

00:11:48 Ben Host Okay.

00:11:49 John Host You are—Ben—and you know what? I've—I don't wanna speak for Adam? But I feel like we're all against atrocities here.

00:11:56 Adam Host I mean, I would say depending on the atrocity is where I fall.

00:12:00 Ben Host And if you don't say it out loud, I don't think anybody would assume that you're anti-atrocity.

00:12:04 John Host Right. Part of it is that we have to have a feeling that they are a competent military force and not just a bunch of bunglers, because that's the only way that we end up fully understanding the heroism of the admiral.

00:12:21 Ben Host And I think that, like, critically part of that is that some of them know that he has 12 ships but he's super dangerous anyways? Like, they outnumber him so vastly that, y'know, Kurushima is like, "Yeah, we're gonna roll over this guy." And the other guys are like, "No, he's actually kicked our ass a bunch of times and we're scared of him even though he only has 12 ships."

00:12:43 John Host I think this movie does a great job of actually setting it up. There are so many movies like this where the premise is—here's a commander who's against all odds, and you know he's gonna win in the end. And so get ready to watch him kick a bunch of ass with his, y'know—

*[Ben laughs.]*

—his, like, small band of ragtag fugitive fleet. But it does a great—this movie does a great job of having multiple situations where you go, "The jig is up here! They cannot possibly—"

*[Ben laughs.]*

—"win!"

00:13:17 Ben Host They don't have the turtle ship? You need the turtle ship! The turtle ship is the key to the whole thing!

00:13:22	John	Host	He knows he needs the turtle ship! He's <u>crying</u> , he needs the turtle ship so bad.
00:13:27	Adam	Host	I love how this movie recognizes your desire to see the turtle ship in action <u>so</u> much—
			<i>[John laughs.]</i>
			—that after burning it down and giving us the terrible feeling of seeing it die, that it gives you, like, a postscript: “Here’s what the turtle ship was like when it was used” sort of scene? <i>[Through laughter]</i> That was great!
00:13:46	Ben	Host	That was awesome.
00:13:47	Adam	Host	That was turtle ship fan service, right? Like, some people didn’t like that.
00:13:51	Ben	Host	Admiral Yi invented the turtle ship! Or, like, greatly improved on it. They existed for like 200 years before that but like the one depicted in this is like a real thing that is—he’s credited with innovating. And it’s like the first kind of, like, armored warship of its kind in the world.
00:14:10	Music	Music	<i>Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles</i> music plays in background: Up-tempo cartoon theme song heavy on brass with a driving beat.
00:14:11	Adam	Host	<i>[Singing]</i> South Korean wooden turtle ship! South Korean wooden turtle ship!
			<i>[Multiple people laugh.]</i>
			South Korean wooden turtle ship! Turtle ships kick ass!
			<i>[Music finishes.]</i>
			<i>[Multiple people laugh.]</i>
00:14:23	Ben	Host	I thought you were gonna go with something like <i>[music briefly returns]</i> “burned it before the battle. No more turtle.”
00:14:27	Adam	Host	Yeah. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
			<i>[Ben laughs.]</i>
00:14:29	John	Host	What did you guys think of the special effects? They were—we spent a lot of time at sea. A lot of naval battles. A lot of what appear to be CGI boats.
00:14:38	Ben	Host	Yeah. They built, like, eight real boats for this and then CG’d the rest of them. And I thought, like, it really like... wildly swung back and forth over the course of this film. Like it—the earliest shots we see of these ships on the water are <u>so</u> bad and <u>so</u> fake-looking that I was really worried. I was like, “Oh god, this battle’s gonna be <u>rough</u> .” And then the battle was pretty exciting and pretty well done, I thought!
00:15:07	Adam	Host	Yeah. And what are the reasons for that? It’s because we’re cutting far closer. All the sequences are... are aboard the ship, or at the waterline as the ships are ramming into each other. It’s the wide shot that gives it away, and I think... y’know, you can’t show this battle without showing a wide shot. It’s impossible. But I think that the film did what it could in not lingering wide too often.
00:15:34	John	Host	But you’re right. The establishing shot—the establishing wide shots were bad CGI and it took me a while to realize that there were real ships in action here and it wasn’t <u>all</u> CGI. Because I was—because I got kind of, like, stung at the start. I think a big part of what made

the CGI look bad is that the bow wave and the wake of some of the ships, they just looked—is this wooden oar-powered ship really moving 25 knots? I don't think so!

00:16:07 Ben Host  
00:16:08 Adam Host

*[Through laughter]* Right. I had the exact same note. *[Laughs.]* It's—"How is it possible to generate a wake—"

*[John laughs.]*

00:16:16 John Host

"—with just oar power on a boat that big?" Well, and especially like a bow wave! Like, what are we—how are—I mean, you didn't get a feeling. And I think—I think a ship this size that's being oar-powered like that, I'm not sure that you would get that... that surging that you get with an oar, y'know, an oared boat? Where it's like, "Hnugh! Hnugh!" But there's gotta be at least a little bit of that, right? I mean, the boat has to be visibly... not lurching, but moving organically and not... just feeling like it's, um, that there's somebody with a stick that's pushing it.

00:16:49 Ben Host

The Japanese boats had more of like a pointed bow, too, so they seemed a little bit more, like, hydrodynamic? Whereas the Korean ones were, like, they're like Mack Truck fronts. Where they maybe created that—that bow wake just because they're creating so much turbulence in the way they're designed. Or turtle-bulence, in the case of—

*[Multiple people laugh.]*

—that—*[Laughs.]* In the case of that one ship.

*[Multiple people laugh.]*

00:17:16 John Host  
00:17:26 Ben Host  
00:17:32 John Host

It was interesting to me—and I don't know enough about the world of, um... whatever 15<sup>th</sup>-century warships—Shakespeare is off in Avon writing plays and this is happening on the other side of the world. But the use of sail versus oar—if we think about the big epic naval battles of the Greek and Roman period, a lot of those boats are... oared. Y'know. During this period in China, like, there are junks. Right? Like, sail-powered ships. But these were... and none of these boats had anything other than just sort of ceremonial sails. I wonder at the—like, the side-by-side evolution of sail power and oar power and why... oars would have been utilized almost exclusively in these battles. They weren't using wind at all.

00:18:16 Ben Host  
00:18:21 John Host  
00:18:25 Adam Host

'Cause they had those—they had sails. Like, you could see them tied up on the decks. Right. And they had plenty of wind going on. Y'know. There—it's not like—And like the evolution of naval warfare is such that like—what—1500 years passed between Spartacus-style, bang-on-a-drum, oar-powered naval vessels and what we're seeing in this film. And what changed? Nothing changed! Why didn't the boats get much better? There were a lot of nautical technologies that came out of China. Like crossbeam bracing and rudders that you could raise and lower.

00:18:45 John Host  
00:18:56 Adam Host

Yeah. It sure wasn't just an oar that was happening. There was like a—what am I trying to say? Like, it's not just a straight piece of wood. There's, like, a crank at the end of it. That's helping you get

			leverage from inside the boat. Like, there's a greater technology happening, but it's subtle.
00:19:13	Ben	Host	They definitely look way better than the kind of oars that, like, galleon slaves in the Roman time would've had.
00:19:22	John	Host	Well, and I loved the fact that ramming was a major, uh, war technology at this point. And the Korean ships, y'know, sank a <u>lot</u> of the Japanese boats by just full-on just crashing straight into them.
00:19:37	Adam	Host	The hood ornament wasn't just decoration. There's a utility there.
00:19:41	John	Host	I loved that as a fighting strategy.
00:19:43	Ben	Host	That reminded me of... those scenes in <a href="#">Red Cliff</a> where they're like, y'know, using like barrels of oil and stuff to, like, ram and then like light the other ships on fire. And that's—that's, like, 1400 years earlier in history. Right? Like— <i>[Laughs.]</i> Naval technology has like really leapt forward in the last 500 years!
00:20:09	John	Host	Yes. So has airplane technology.
00:20:11	Ben	Host	Not to mention internet technology.
00:20:12	John	Host	That's really gone through the roof, too, yeah.
00:20:14	Ben	Host	Yeah. The internet stuff in this movie sucks.
			<i>[Adam laughs.]</i>
00:20:18	John	Host	But like, fire ships were—played a plot role and we saw that, too, in the Three Kingdoms, right?
00:20:24	Adam	Host	Yeah.
00:20:25	Ben	Host	Yeah. <i>Red Cliff</i> .
00:20:26	Adam	Host	Except we never got to be on board one of those ships the way we are here. I thought that was a really fun wrinkle. Like, the fire ships of previous films we would just see approaching as a threat, but when we see Lim, the scout, aboard the ship? Trying to get their attention? It's—it feels so dangerous to be aboard that thing.
00:20:45	Ben	Host	Yeah.
00:20:46	Clip	Clip	<b>Speaker:</b> <i>[speaks rapidly in Korean]</i>
00:20:51	Ben	Host	There's an awful lot of... kind of... spiritual subtext that I could feel in this movie. A lot of—and I wondered—I don't really know the history of religion in Korea, but my sense is that now it is a very Christian country. Like, I read like this whole article about like COVID and how the megachurch thing in Korea wound up, like, really exacerbating their problem there.
00:21:18	John	Host	Oh, I think that there <u>is</u> a lot of Christianity in Korea, because of all the occupations, but I think that, um... I think that Christianity is like 20% and Buddhism is 20%. It's—
00:21:33	Ben	Host	Hm. Yeah. I'm seeing "No Religion, 56%. Protestant Christianity, 19%. Korean Buddhism, 15.5%."
00:21:42	John	Host	Hm.
00:21:43	Ben	Host	This movie kind of... in a way that I think we've picked up on in kind of more... y'know, right-wing-oriented American films, kind of appealing to a—a spiritual... nationalistic... kind of conception of history. And—and a lot of the stuff with, like, the fire ship made me think that. Like, the way they're like, y'know, praising God, praising Providence. When that doesn't wind up destroying the Admiral's ship, the questions about that at the end.
00:22:22	John	Host	And that was—I thought—really interesting at the end when the son wanted his father to say that God had rescued—or—y'know—or Providence had rescued the navy and his father kept saying that it was—like, a couple of times in the movie that it was the peasants of Korea that made the nation. And that—whether that was pandering



to present-day South Korean sensibilities or whether that's something rooted in history.

But, y'know, the thing about Buddhism is that it's less—it's a religion that's much less about there being a godhead and more about there being a kind of... um... y'know, a spiritual ethic. And as that moves to, like, Confucianism and further progressions of Confucianism and Zen Buddhism it becomes more and more a rational non-divine religion. So I—y'know, the Christian comparison—y'know, there's a lot of ancestor worship happening, but I don't think there's that same sort of, like, "God changed the wind to blow in our favor" stuff.

00:23:35 Ben Host

Yeah. 'Cause that—that played a big role in *Red Cliff*. Did divine Providence help us or did like our very advanced understanding of weather— *[Laughs.]*

*[John laughs.]*

Like, the stuff about the whirlpool definitely seems kind of adjacent to that in terms of like how it's conceptualized in this film. Like, how did you know to use the whirlpool? I mean, like we've been talking about this whirlpool phenomenon in this strait like all movie long. *[Laughs.]*

*[John laughs.]*

00:24:11 John Host

And it does seem like it would be a thing you could use if you know that this is where the battle's gonna be.

I was gratified that the whirlpool—it seemed like they were building up to having a scene where the whirlpool became, like, sea monster-y? And—

*[Multiple people laugh.]*

00:24:46 Adam Host

And all 30 Japanese ships were just swallowed up in a giant whirlpool? And they—it was quite a bit more restrained than that. At the very end you did get that picture of a gyre where it felt like the whirlpool was gonna destroy the admiral's ship. But that became a pretty interesting scene, when the peasants came out to rescue him.

I really like how the plan wasn't in a straight line, and how chaotic it became once the whirlpool was introduced as a strategy. Like, it wasn't like, "Oh, if we can just lure them into the whirlpool everything will be fine." That's just the point where shit really went off.

00:25:03 John Host

Right. *[Laughs.]*

00:25:04 Adam Host

But, like, there was no safety there. It was just as dangerous for the admiral as it was for anyone else. And especially—like, that moment when the admiral's ship is totally surrounded by all those ships? It feels like moonshot after moonshot is what Yi has to employ in order to survive and destroy the enemy fleet. It's... I know that, like, divine... responsibility is a—is an argument made for how, y'know, Yi's fleet was able to survive and win, but, like, isn't that always the case, when there's a statistical improbability that takes place? Like, any time the underdog wins in that kind of way, it is never... Ben, you articulated this a while ago, I think,

probably on another show. But like when something has a 20% chance of winning, it doesn't mean that it never has a chance of winning.

00:26:01 Ben Host  
00:26:02 Adam Host

Right. *[Laughs.]*

And how—and so often in movies like this and in battles, like, we're given the impression that it would be impossible for such a thing to take place. But it is not statistically impossible.

00:26:14 John Host

But in that scene in particular, when he—when the admiral's ship is—has four Japanese ships both tied to him and four separate Japanese crews are on his ship and hand-to-hand-combatting—and they are out of gunpowder and shells—

00:26:33 Adam Host

*[Ben laughs.]*

Was that the tracking shot scene where we go all the way around the ship and we—

00:26:38 Ben Host

Yeah!

00:26:39 Adam Host

That was amazing.

00:26:41 Ben Host

That was fucking great.

00:26:42 John Host

It's not really communicating that they have a 20% chance of victory there. *[Laughs.]*

00:26:46 Adam Host

Right.

00:26:47 John Host

My sense of it was that they had a 0.0% chance of victory.

*[Adam laughs.]*

And I felt like any situation now where they pull this off is going to feel... fake. It's gonna feel like the South Koreans—this is their foundation myth and this guy has superpowers and there's no way they can do it. And then somehow, what he pulls off is believable, and you just throw up your hands. And are like, "Wow. Killer. I mean, that was killer."

00:27:18 Adam Host

I love the—has anyone ever attempted to like, I dunno, tie a bunch of the cannons together?

*[Multiple people laugh.]*

00:27:25 John Host

Fire 'em all at once?

00:27:26 Adam Host

Fire 'em all at once?

00:27:29 Music Music

Have we done that? Can—can we do that?

00:27:30 Adam Promo

Reprise of "War" theme song.

00:27:34 Ben Promo

It's week three of the MaxFunDrive, fellows. And—

00:27:35 Adam Promo

Oh, wow!

00:27:39 John Promo

It's really—it's really where the support rubber hits the support road.

00:27:40 Ben Promo

Mm-hm.

00:27:42 Adam Promo

It's the longest MaxFunDrive ever!

Yeah. I don't know if I have the stamina!

*[Ben laughs.]*

00:27:46 Ben Promo

For this. To be honest.

00:27:49 Adam Promo

Yeah. You look a little green around the gills, Adam!

00:27:50 John Promo

Yeah.

Adam, when you look back and you see only one set of footprints in the sand, it's—it's me. I'm carrying you.

*[Multiple people laugh.]*

00:27:55	Adam	Promo	I'm guessing that that other line in the sand is a mic cord? But— And I was in the water just offshore in a weird boxy boat from ancient Korea.
00:28:00	Ben	Promo	
00:28:07	John	Promo	Mm-hm.
00:28:08	Ben	Promo	'Cause this is the pledge break for <i>Admiral: Roaring Currents!</i>
00:28:11	Adam	Promo	One of the great <i>Friendly Fire</i> episodes, I think.
00:28:13	Ben	Promo	That's one thing I love about this show, is we get to see movies that I would never, ever, <u>ever</u> have seen otherwise. And this is definitely one of them. A real wild story! That I'm glad I know about!
00:28:24	Adam	Promo	You remember that part in the movie when everyone had to rally their support around the thing that they loved?
00:28:30	John	Promo	Yeah!
			<i>[Ben laughs.]</i>
00:28:31	Adam	Promo	And that thing that they loved continued?
00:28:33	John	Promo	Yeah, I do remember that!
00:28:35	Adam	Promo	That's kinda like us during MaxFunDrive, huh?
00:28:37	Ben	Promo	Yeah. If you head to <a href="https://MaximumFun.org/join">MaximumFun.org/join</a> you can set your membership up easier than it seems. And I think that Rob will include a link to MaximumFun.org/join in the show notes. So you can probably just click into it from your podcast app on your phone <u>while</u> we're sitting here talking to you about it. You set your membership up. It's like, 5, 10, 20 bucks a month. You get the Pork Chop Feed. You get some prizes if you support at that level. And you're gonna feel great every time you listen to <i>Friendly Fire!</i>
00:29:08	Adam	Promo	It's as easy as getting your boat caught in a whirlpool.
			<i>[Ben laughs.]</i>
00:29:12	Rob Schulte	Promo	And don't forget—if we reach 3500 new and upgrading members during the MaxFunDrive, we're gonna review <i>Hamilton!</i>
00:29:20	Music	Music	Reprise of "War" theme song.
00:29:23	Adam	Host	I love seeing all of the different weapons employed here. Like, the shoulder-fired mini cannon we get in this movie? I'd never seen that before!
00:29:31	Ben	Host	Yeah. The preindustrial bazooka?
00:29:34	Adam	Host	<i>[Through laughter]</i> Yeah!
			<i>[Ben laughs.]</i>
00:29:37	Ben	Host	I mean, yeah. Like, from blades to—to guns. Like, the... like, I didn't know what to expect in this! I had no idea if there were gonna be cannons, even, for the beginning part of the movie 'cause it takes—I mean, like, this is basically one battle. Y'know? Like, the first hour is prep for the battle and the second hour is <u>the battle</u> .
00:29:57	Adam	Host	I was just impressed and delighted with how this movie spent its time. Like, we are not going back and forth.
00:30:04	Ben	Host	I think it's really amazing to make a battle scene that's one hour long that feels varied and interesting and keeps your attention.
00:30:11	John	Host	Although it is an interesting question... how the other 12 ships—or the other 11 ships—in this Admiral's navy—how all of those crews weren't brought up and court-martialed and sentenced to death.
			<i>[Ben laughs.]</i>
00:30:26	Adam	Host	Beheaded.
00:30:28	John	Host	Like, they just—they just hang back and wait for the admiral to get sunk, <u>presumably</u> because they're all gonna raise the white flag! And they let—they watch him get his <u>ass</u> kicked all around the

block! Before they finally—and I have to say, kind of half-assedly—join the battle!

00:30:45 Ben Host I was wondering if that was part of the plan, too? Because... this is definitely one of those movies where a commander has a brilliant plan that he's not telling anybody about because it's more dramatic for him to like reveal it by turns? And so I was expecting it to be, like, "That was great the way you 10 guys hung back in the cut until I, y'know, put up this one flag that was your signal to enter the battle."

00:31:13 Adam Host Yi makes the case over and over again that he needs to turn fear into something else. Like, fear into courage, perhaps. But like the idea of all those boats hanging back, to me, did not serve that theory. To me, that was—those were people being practical and not fearful. And I wonder if that was something that was lost in the translation.

00:31:34 John Host I don't think so. I felt like it was the—that was the least satisfying part of the film. Look. I get you don't show your hand to the bad guy. I get that you command respect by being taciturn. But... multiple times, your fellow captains are begging you to tell them the plan! And he's just like, "Meeting adjourned." And it's like, "Wow! I don't know, man! You gotta give us something!"

00:32:00 Ben Host That's gotta be made up for dramatic purposes, right?

00:32:02 John Host It took away from the narrative to make him such a—a lone wolf. Because what it did is it made it seem less like a strategy, and more like he was just making it up as he went. And maybe that's how—maybe that is the point of the movie? That he was just, like—

00:32:17 Adam Host Or that he was cruel and insane—

*[John laughs.]*

—from his experience being tortured and imprisoned. Like, there was that aspect to his character that I couldn't quite stop thinking about as I saw him make his decisions. Like, how—like, it—was he irreparably damaged from that? And that's why things are happening?

00:32:35 John Host Yeah, that's true. That was present, wasn't it? That he had just lost his grip?

00:32:39 Adam Host Yeah.

00:32:40 Ben Host It made me think of, like, "Is this gonna be like—is it like The Sun?" Like, the emperor in that movie we watched where he's like, kind of nuts, and it's a bit about a crazy person doing an amazing thing?

00:32:55 John Host Even in the pitched battle, some of the most—some of the tensest and maybe most frustrating scenes are when it's clearly time for him to issue a command? And he waits. And waits. And it's like, "How much time do we have here?"

00:33:12 Clip Clip **Speaker:** Hooold!

00:33:13 John Host And it did, over time, make you feel like he's just crazy and is just pulling this off because—basically because luck did not deliver one cannonball to your magazine. Right? Like, he—

*[Ben laughs.]*

—he's sinking ships right and left where he's basically, like, one cannonball hits below the waterline and the ship breaks up and sinks. So did he win this naval battle just 'cause he was crazy and lucky?

00:33:37	Adam	Host	I mean, I wonder to what extent this is a film speaking an action film language—a language that goes like, we—even though the last hour of this film is a protracted naval battle, it cannot be high-tension throughout. We <u>must</u> lower the volume for a moment and show someone thinking about the next move before we see that next move happen.
00:33:59	John	Host	Right.
00:34:00	Adam	Host	Like, I totally get what you're saying. It feels crazy. If you were to place yourself into the film as if it were really happening in real life, that would be crazy-making. But in a film language, I wonder if they're riding a tension here... intentionally. Where you <u>have</u> to duck down and be quiet for a moment to pop back up and get loud.
00:34:20	Ben	Host	I don't know. Like, thinking about the other admiral, Won Gyun, that—he blew it and then went and locked himself in his ship for a week and wouldn't talk to anybody. Like, that's like a—like a toddler throwing a tantrum? <i>[Laughs.]</i> And like, there's—this movie elucidates the emotional maturity of all these dudes <u>several</u> times. Like, how many times are we in a scene where a bunch of generals and captains are having a conversation about what to do and they're on the verge of pulling swords out and chopping each others' heads off because they disagree about something? Like, maybe that's the position that this film was taking. That it's just like a different time and these people are <u>not</u> behaving like modern adults.
00:35:07	John	Host	When we watched <i>Master and Commander</i> naval battles that are taking place in the age of sail, the maneuvering that it takes to get your cannons facing their cannons, and to come at them with the wind at your advantage so that you can, y'know, fire that fusillade and then <u>turn</u> and get <u>back</u> on them and hit them again—like, that's a whole... like, exciting, crazy aspect of naval warfare in the age of sail. I had <u>never</u> seen <u>this</u> . Where he—he anchored his boat. He had the oars pull him broadside, fired a salvo, and then <u>spun</u> the ship around and fired from the <u>other</u> side! And it felt like—that's incredible!
00:35:54	Ben	Host	Like, presumably because it's faster to flip the entire ship around than to reload those guns?
00:36:00	John	Host	Yeah! All it takes is one side of your oars to lift up and the other side to crank hard and you can kind of spin in place if your anchor holds! And I just wanted to see <u>that</u> strategy employed again! Like, if he had brought all 12 boats up and they had done that, where six of 'em were firing and six of 'em were turning? And while they were turning they were reloading? Like... that seemed like a <u>great</u> —
00:36:23	Ben	Host	Yeah. Like the naval equivalent of volley fire.
00:36:26	John	Host	Yeah! Right! So the—y'know. And that would've explained how the Japanese that were coming straight on could never maneuver in the same way. And the current would've been against them and so forth and so on. But we really only saw that <u>once</u> . And I spent the rest of that battle wanting to see that again. Like, "Do that thing where you shoot and then you spin!" Because those age of sail battles were <u>all</u> about that! I mean, it was just like—get—get close. Let loose. And then whoever can get the drop on the—on the other ship coming around is the—you can only take three or four volleys before they shoot down your mast or whatever.
00:37:05	Ben	Host	Yeah. Who are the guys with the swastika vest that offer their assistance right before the battle starts?
00:37:12	John	Host	The Fighting Monks.

00:37:14 Ben Host That must be one thing that you're just like, "I know exactly what this is" if you're in a movie theater in South Korea. But I didn't know what those guys were.

00:37:23 John Host Yeah. They had a—it's a backwards swastika from the Nazi one.

00:37:29 Ben Host I personally think that the Nazi one is the backwards one.

00:37:32 John Host Hear, hear! Hear, hear, Ben!

*[Ben laughs.]*

You know what? I agree with you, and I, too, am against atrocity.

*[Ben laughs.]*

00:37:40 Adam Host I'm trying to normalize the monk version by wearing it out in public all the time. And guys, I gotta tell ya—does not go well.

*[John laughs.]*

00:37:48 Ben Host For me.

00:37:52 Adam Host Yeah. My wife has actually banned Adam from our house. And that was prior to the lockdown.

00:37:58 Ben Host I put the Shaolin version of the symbol on my car on a bumper sticker? Car was on fire when I came out.

00:38:03 Adam Host Weird. You would think people would see—oh, that's the forwards one! Not the backwards one!

00:38:04 John Host Yeah. Weird.

00:38:35 Ben Host I *[through laughter]* do feel like the presence of the monks... was another... it was another example of the—the idea, I think, behind this. Which was—all of Korea was eventually going to rally to the admiral and his battle. Because this was a—this was, like, a Korean last stand. And those monks are good fighters! You'll notice, they're, like, fighting with hooks and axes and stuff.

00:38:40 John Host They kick a ton of ass! And they also help the oarmen out! They're, like, swapping out with them to give them a break.

00:38:47 Crosstalk Host I loved the fact that the oarmen were all shown with bloody hands.

00:38:48 Clip Crosstalk **Adam and Ben:** Yeah.

00:38:52 Adam Host *[Sound clip of battle—men yelling, shots firing, and dramatic orchestral music in background.]*

I really love those—the two guys we get to meet who are the oarsmen. Who don't even know what ship they're on until—until the porthole is opened and then shut in front of them. Like, "Oh, god. Are we really on the flagship? This is terrible luck." Like—

*[John laughs.]*

I love every once in a while cutting to them for just a little bit of tension release. I thought they were used really well. And it's one of the examples—one of the few examples we get of some real, like, class distinction going on here.

00:39:21 Ben Host Yeah. You notice that when it starts going badly for the guys up on the deck, they have all the people down below come up to help them. But when the guys down below need help, where are the people from the deck?!

00:39:33 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Adam and John:** Mm.

00:39:35 Adam Host Yeah.

00:39:36 John Host Way to go, Ben.

*[Ben laughs.]*

00:39:42 Adam Host "From each according to his ability; to each according to his need." It's about time that the people from above deck—

*[All laugh.]*

00:39:45 Ben Host *[With a northeastern U.S. accent]* For far too long, the above-deck class—

*[All laugh.]*

00:39:51 Adam Host —have taken advantage of the oarsmen! *[Accent ends.]* The conflict we've been talking the most about is—seems to be, like, Yi's conflict with his own people. But I really like what's going on between the two enemy admirals—the Kurushima and the Wakizaka character—between themselves. The idea of the—of the pirate character being just a little too out there for Wakizaka to deal with? But Wakizaka being the guy that was defeated previously for Yi Sun so they both really have a lot of skin in this game.

00:40:25 John Host

Yeah.

00:40:26 Adam Host

Their different methods and tactics—both resulting in the same end. They both, I thought, were really interesting characters, too! They weren't just monsters! Like, I thought they were going to make him into a Thulsa Doom character. Like, with the giant headdress that he wears and just the evil staring? I thought he would be cartoonish, but he was not. He was someone to be taken seriously throughout.

00:40:50 Ben Host

The mask does, uh—*[Laughs.]* Kind of lose a little bit in translation. Like, when he puts it on for dramatic effect? Like—*[Laughs.]* And it's like an angry face with a fake mustache stuck onto it? *[Laughs.]*

*[John laughs.]*

00:41:04 Adam Host

*[Through laughter]* It's like—what?

I think we have talked about this before when we watch movies featuring martial arts. Like, there is a flowiness to costuming that can really make a character seem magical or bigger than life. And when Kurushima boards the ship wearing the mask, and he goes after Yi Sun-sin, like, he is... enormous there. And when they fill him full of arrows, it just seems like he'll be unkillable.

00:41:34 Ben Host

He's just that angry, though.

00:41:35 John Host

And that was a great, like... climax of the movie. For him to come onboard. And I think, historically, he's the only... he is the only, like, Samurai-class leader that died in this battle. So he was a real person and he really was the highest-ranking Japanese officer to be killed. So to have him board the ship and actually, like, die in hand-to-hand combat—pretty effective, narratively.

00:42:09 Adam Host

Kurushima really gets fucked over here, too. By Todo. Like, 'cause Todo chooses not to reinforce him.

00:42:16 John Host

Yeah.

00:42:17 Adam Host

When the shit is starting to go down. Like, Kurushima's also, like, into it. Like, there's no going back for him. And so by the time he realizes that reinforcements aren't coming, he's pot committed.

00:42:28 John Host

He is. And he feels—I mean, he dies of hubris, right? He was the one that, through the whole film, kinda blew off any suggestion that Yi Sun-sin was so formidable that he needed to be taken more—I

mean, it's not that he never took him seriously, but he just felt like, "C'mon. Give me a break."

00:42:48 Ben Host "We outnumber him 30 to 1, like, *[through laughter]* let's—let's be real, here. We're gonna kick his ass."

00:42:53 John Host Right. Also, "I'm a serious badass that has a mad kitty-cat helmet on. This guy has no chance."

*[Ben laughs.]*

00:43:01 Adam Host And then at the end, y'know. "I'm looking at the helmets over there and they look like a bunch of garbage helmets compared to this one."

*[John laughs.]*

00:43:05 Ben Host "They're all basically the same ziggurat design. But look at all these crazy helmets we got on this side!"

00:43:10 John Host "We got a lot of crazier helmets! The guy with the, like, the butterfly-wing helmet?"

00:43:14 Ben Host That guy had the best helmet.

00:43:15 Clip Clip **Speaker:** *[Shouts in Korean over dramatic music.]*

00:43:18 John Host Throughout this battle scene, there are multiple times where we cut to one of the Japanese admirals and all that character says is—in an awestricken voice—*[dramatically]* "Yi Sun-sin!" *[Regular voice]* Like, more than once, we're just—

*[Ben laughs.]*

We've cut over to someone who is just dumbfounded at every successive moment. And it really works! *[Through laughter]* Each time I was like, "Yeah, that's right! That's right, fella! Yi Sun-sin! And you don't even have—you haven't even seen the whirlpool yet! Fool!"

00:43:52 Adam Host No. Yeah. Wait until you get that whirlpool put underneath you.

*[Ben laughs.]*

00:43:56 John Host Wait 'til the 11 other ships show up!

00:43:59 Ben Host I like the one old man who's—who is kind of the boyfriend of the turtle ship?

00:44:06 John Host He was the architect of it. Or he was the builder of the turtle ship.

00:44:09 Adam Host Yeah.

00:44:10 Ben Host Yeah. Y'know. Or the boyfriend.

00:44:12 John Host Sure. That's what—it—that's—the Korean translation is "boyfriend of ship," yeah.

00:44:16 Ben Host Yeah. Yeah. *[Laughs.]* Just standing up on that bluff, screaming "Turtle ship" to the heavens!

00:44:22 John Host *[With fury]* "Turtle shiiiiip!"

*[Adam laughs.]*

00:44:26 Ben Host The flag budget for the Japanese military has got to be insane.

00:44:32 Adam Host Awesome.

00:44:33 Ben Host Like, when you're the chief financial officer of this era of Japanese military and you're looking at, like, all the line items? You're like, "Y'know, we could actually save, like, 10% of total by just eliminating flags—"

*[John laughs.]*



00:44:52 Adam Host “—from how we deploy our military in the field.” *[Laughs.]*  
 You go to the wrap party for this film? You know you’re taking one of those home.

00:44:55 Ben Host Oh, yeah!

00:44:56 Adam Host Everyone gets one of those flags!

00:44:57 John Host Everybody gets a flag. I mean, it’s in real contrast to the, like, American military now in Iraq and Afghanistan, where the flag budget is all spent on Punisher T-shirts, it seems like?

00:45:12 Ben Host *[All laugh.]*  
 Yeah. Well, y’know. We’ve taken a sharp turn toward Dork Fascism in this country.

*[John laughs.]*

So. *[Laughs.]*

*[Adam laughs.]*

00:45:22 Adam Host I mean, there was the Japanese captain wearing the Chanel logo—

00:45:25 Ben Host Oh, yeah. *[Through laughter]* That was pretty cool. *[Laughs.]*

00:45:27 Adam Host —on his head. That was—that felt a little out of place.

00:45:29 Ben Host Yeah. *[Laughs.]*

00:45:30 Adam Host Who would’ve thought that product placement would be in this film? But there he is.

00:45:34 Ben Host I think that Captain Bae probably deserves more credit for this victory than he’s given in this movie. ‘Cause he—he saved all the boats! Like, through an act of cowardice, is what everybody says. But like... they wouldn’t have the 12 boats if he hadn’t seen the writing on the wall. Like, “This one gun guy is getting us shellacked over here. I’m gonna make like a tree and get outta here with my ships!”

00:46:01 John Host Well, and that whole thing was historically accurate. That he chickened out of the battle, saved the 12 ships, and then tried to desert a second time!

*[All laugh.]*

And was caught and executed. He wasn’t executed by an arrow fired into his forehead from... 300 yards away, but...

00:46:21 Adam Host Desert you once, shame on me.

*[Ben laughs.]*

Desert you twice, shame on you. That was a hell of an arrow shot.

00:46:30 John Host It was. There were a few of those. A few sniper shots that were—that strained credulity.

00:46:36 Adam Host I am always gonna, like, do a little fist-pump when stuff like that happens in movies. That’s just like—

*[Ben laughs.]*

—hitting a fleeing submarine.

*[Multiple people laugh.]*

00:46:45 John Host A bullet through the eye, huh? *[Laughs.]*

00:46:47	Adam	Host	Yeah. I— <i>[through laughter]</i> I just love that million-to-one shot.
00:46:50	John	Host	I mean, that was—we're talking about, like, unrifled barrels and that sniper is—
00:46:56	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	<b>John:</b> —firing from—
00:46:58	John	Host	<b>Adam:</b> Yeah, that sniper was amazing! Firing from a ship. So a vessel that's bobbing up and down and firing at <u>another</u> ship. Another vessel bobbing up and down.
00:47:06	Ben	Host	I liked that the never gave a false, like, zoom-in factor for that guy, though? Like, they always show him shooting from, y'know, with like a 50mm lens? So you can see how far away the thing he's bullseye-ing really is?
00:47:21	John	Host	Right.
00:47:22	Ben	Host	Y'know, he doesn't have, like, superpowers in like filmic terms. Like, he's amazing, but he's not... he's not, like, superhuman.
00:47:31	John	Host	There's only a little bit of, like, battlefield slow-mo in this film. There—compared to a lot of contemporary war movies where we go into slow-mo every time people are fighting. There is <u>some</u> here.
00:47:47	Ben	Host	Yeah. Well, there's that one where—like—it goes around the entire deck of the ship? And it's maybe the most successful, like... moving tableau I've ever seen in a film?
00:47:59	John	Host	It was <u>really</u> incredible and the only thing that took me out of it were—there were a couple of scenes where people were clearly pulling their sword-punch?
00:48:09	Ben	Host	Yeah.
00:48:10	John	Host	It's gotta be so hard to have 50 people fighting in a sprawling sequence and have—and <u>not</u> have at least one person who's hitting another one with a plastic sword and trying not to actually hurt him.
00:48:22	Ben	Host	When this shot is that long, it's essentially challenging you to find the mistake, though? <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:48:27	Adam	Host	It's challenging an actor to not just go one to two, but go one to four. Like, what are two other things you can do sequentially to sell your fight? One thing that stuck out to me from that sequence, Ben, was—like, my entire life, I feel like you watch people use these swords in a certain way. You're just slicing off arms and heads. But in this film you get that sword being used with two hands.
00:48:56	Ben	Host	Yeah! Like turning it around and pulling it toward a guy?
00:49:01	Adam	Host	Yeah! Or like sawing into them using both hands? Like, the closed-hand—closed one hand, open one hand? Like, I've never used a—I've never <u>seen</u> the swords being used that way before in a film! It's really using the whole buffalo!
00:49:13	Ben	Host	It seems like the Koreans had a very similar type of sword to the—like, I—I—y'know, because we have so much Japanese culture available to us in the U.S., I'm familiar with katana and wakizashi as ideas—
00:49:29	Adam	Host	Mm-hm.
00:49:31	Ben	Host	And I wonder if Korea has a very similar sword culture to Japan. And I, like, never even thought about it before this movie. But it seems like this movie is making the case that, like, a Japanese samurai facing off against a similarly trained Korean warrior of the same era was, like, basically on pretty even footing.
00:49:54	Adam	Host	Yeah. We rarely got that kind of battle presented, though. Right? It felt like so often it was sword against guy with hammer? Or gun against arrow? Or... any other mix. Like, the film <u>rarely</u> had a

strong conviction about, like, “Our guys are better than those guys in a totally even fight.”

00:50:15 Ben Host It’s the *Batman v Superman* thing. Where you like, okay. Like, what if we took, like, one of *The Admiral’s* top dudes and pitted him against, like, whatever the top military guy in the U.K. was, like, at this time. Like, what would the odds be? What—who would be better? And... it also made me think, like, the Japanese being the bad guys in this movie is a familiar position for them to be in in a war movie, especially for us, given the list of films we’ve watched. I wonder if somebody could do some data analysis on the movies we’ve watched and give us like a scatterplot of who has been the bad guys the most?

00:51:01 Adam Host Interesting. I don’t know!

00:51:04 John Host Would it be the Japanese or the Germans? I mean, we’ve watched an awful lot!

00:51:08 Adam Host Someone generated a graph that proves how much John hates movies.

[Ben laughs.]

00:51:14 John Host That’s—  
Did they really? What did they—what did it say?

[Adam laughs.]

00:51:18 Adam Host By that, I mean someone generated a graph that show how we rate—how we’ve rated all the films in the *Friendly Fire* project.

00:51:26 Ben Host The bell curves are in three different places. Like, the graph that they made is based on a false... supposition, which is that five things is five things?

00:51:36 Adam Host Right.

00:51:37 Ben Host Five things is not five things.

00:51:38 John Host True.

00:51:39 Adam Host It’s an impossible graph to make. What they should do it make 200 different graphs.

[All laugh.]

00:51:44 Music Music Reprise of “War” theme song.

00:51:45 John Promo Even if you don’t feel great every time you listen to *Friendly Fire*? Even if you’re one of those—what I think is probably about 12% of our listeners that just hate-listens to this show?

[Multiple people laugh.]

00:52:07 Adam Promo Think of how much more... I don’t know. Directed and hot your hate can be if you’re actually supporting the show monetarily.

00:52:08 John Promo Yeah! Yeah!

00:52:13 Adam Promo Now you’ve got a real grievance—you’re paying for the show and we keep giving you this pile of shit every week?!

00:52:15 Ben Promo Wow!

00:52:18 John Promo [Laughs.] And we keep being wrong, week in and week out?  
[Laughs.]

00:52:27 Adam Promo No, you can’t—you can’t complain to the manager if you haven’t paid anything! You’re just some rando walking past on the sidewalk! But if you have donated to the show, oh! You—

00:52:31 John Promo You’re entitled to complain once you start supporting the show!  
Sure! You could downvote us on Reddit.

00:52:34	Ben	Promo	<i>[Someone laughs.]</i> The <i>Friendly Fire</i> listening audience has come out in a huge way this MaxFunDrive, but in particular I think the hate-listeners have really stepped up in a big way. And uh... and we really appreciate all of them.
00:52:48	John	Promo	<i>[Adam laughs.]</i> It's true. Also, active-duty military? You should 100% support the show with the big, big, <u>big</u> dollars. That you are—you're grafting off of the U.S. taxpayer. Turn that money back around.
00:53:05	Adam	Promo	It's what active-duty sailors listen to when they're playing a game of "Hide the Shit."
			<i>[Multiple people laugh.]</i>
00:53:14	John	Promo	It's <i>Friendly Fire</i> , the official podcast for that. You know y'all are getting free food every day at the mess hall. You're just socking your money away in pillowcases. Send a little bit of it to <i>Friendly Fire</i> .
00:53:23	Ben	Promo	And then also, y'know, if you support at like the \$10 level and you put the <i>Friendly Fire</i> pin on your uniform, it technically complies with uniform code. I've just double-checked with the JAG Corps on that.
00:53:35	John	Promo	Nice!
00:53:36	Ben	Promo	So uh— <i>[Laughs.]</i> Go ahead and set up a \$10 membership and walk around like that thing is a medal you won.
00:53:43	Adam	Promo	That's <a href="http://MaximumFun.org/join">MaximumFun.org/join</a> to support <i>Friendly Fire</i> this year during MaxFunDrive. Here's the rest of the show!
00:53:51	Music	Music	Reprise of "War" theme song.
00:53:54	Adam	Host	It's... review time on <i>Friendly Fire</i> and we can't review a film without a rating system. It's impossible! This has been a really fun conversation about a film I <u>definitely</u> never would have seen without <i>Friendly Fire's</i> encouragement. I hope our listenership goes out and watches this film, too, even if it's just the last hour. I think there is an hour here that is just an action film—that is maybe even a best-of-breed action film that I really enjoyed and I think a lot of other people would, too. But we... review the <u>entire</u> film. And the rating system comes from a few events that happen fairly early on in it. There is a rating system in this film that's above all the rest. I think there are some horrible images presented here that I thought, "Oh my god, is this gonna be, like, just a grisly war film that gives us nothing but severed heads?"
			<i>[John laughs.]</i>  You get that ship full of heads! And then you get the <u>grieving</u> of the heads. Like, the burial of the heads later? And then Kurushima—like—he—that's what he does! Like, he's Heads Guy! Even Wakizaka's like, "You should give it a rest with the heads thing, Kurushima."
			<i>[Ben laughs.]</i>  "It's actually—it's pretty messed up!" Yi Sun-sin? He gets in on that action! He cuts the head off of that deserter to emphasize

discipline. And then he cuts the head off of Kurushima at the very end! I think it's obvious what the rating system—

[John laughs.]

—is for this movie. It's severed heads.

[Ben laughs.]

00:55:27	John	Host	They put Kurushima's head up on the <u>mast</u> !
00:55:30	Adam	Host	There are some things that you wanna see in this film that it doesn't give you. I wanna see... how do you get the head up the top of that mast? What are you tying it to? It's the hair, isn't it?
00:55:40	John	Host	Yeah, it is.
00:55:41	Adam	Host	It's gotta be the hair thing. Like, logistically... I want answers to these questions.
00:55:46	John	Host	There's not, like, a head cradle or something they're using.
00:55:48	Adam	Host	You know what, though? You cut off enough heads in this era that I'm sure there's head technology.
00:55:54	John	Host	I bet they—they, uh, y'know, they just finished a bag of satsumas and they grab that little satsuma bag—

[Someone laughs.]

00:56:02	Adam	Host	—put the head in it. It sends a message whether it's a single head on a mast or just a whole open grave full of severed heads. It really makes a strong point. And I think the assembled hosts of <i>Friendly Fire</i> will be tasked with the strength of their ratings based on how many heads to use, in this case. I was blown away by this movie! And I think what helped my affection for it was approaching it with such reluctance. Like... there's a lot to take on here! This feels like thousands of years ago and it feels a world away. There are not very many footholds here for understanding. And you just need to trust a film is going to teach you what you need to know to understand its characters and its motivations.
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And I think this film ably does! I think the costumes and the sets are... amazing. Among the best that we have seen on a *Friendly Fire* movie. Costumes that famously injured the actors wearing them, they were so heavy. And embellished. Like, Yi Sun-sin's dragon adornments? On his shoulders? Like, who has—who has actual dragon epaulets? Like—[Laughs.] Those were amazing! So, so gorgeous. I think a film like this fulfills the promise of what *Friendly Fire's* all about. And that's, like, discovering how a country views itself during wartime and how meaningful their war stories are to their culture. And we don't get a lot of these. And I hope we get to watch more. I'm gonna give it four-and-a-quarter heads.

00:57:42	Ben	Host	Nice score.
00:57:43	Adam	Host	And I'm gonna make that quarter head the top part, not the stump. I'm talking about, like, the scalp part of the quarter. Maybe down to the eyes. No, the eyes are in the middle of the head! We all learned that in art class! So no. Definitely above those eyes. Maybe even above the eyebrows.
00:58:01	John	Host	Hm.
00:58:02	Adam	Host	Uh, four-and-a-quarter heads.

00:58:04 Ben Host I like the score of four-and-a-quarter heads and I think I'm gonna join you right there. And I'm gonna give it eyes to nose.

*[Adam laughs.]*

Include the nose in there because, like, so many noses get cut off in this movie.

00:58:15 Adam Host Yeah. I had my choices of dismembered body parts as a rating system and—I mean—right or wrong, I went with the head.

00:58:22 Ben Host That close-up of the nose coming off is probably the worst part of the movie. Very, very upsetting.

*[Adam laughs.]*

Um, yeah! This is a... this is a movie that I didn't see coming. I—and I kind of, like... I carried that, um... that reticence into the movie. That there's a colon in the title of this. And then like the opening sequence—that shows the, y'know, that has like text on screen describing the kind of antecedent events to what we're about to see—is so corny. And it was like, "Oh god." Like, they show the Japanese invading the Korean peninsula as like, green, like, liquid flowing over it? Like it's some kind of infestation. I was like... this is the *Redbad* of Korea. I'm really worried about this. Like, there's a swordfight early in the film and I was just—I wrote, like, "What the fuck is going on?"

But like, the film won me over! It was too good to... to keep that prejudice, frankly, going. And eventually I had to set it aside and just enjoy a really kickass action film that, like, definitely is interesting for the fact that it is not speaking to my culture. Like, the—there are signals in this that you can tell are signals but you can't decode if you don't—y'know, if you don't know the culture that they're pointed toward. And it only makes me more curious to, y'know, visit Korea one day. To learn more about it. If this is one of like the founding fathers of your society or whatever? Like, he did some really—some really cool shit! And I also just like have to praise this movie for being... maybe the only motion picture in history to show a character coughing some blood into a hankie early in the film and never addressing it again.

*[Multiple people laugh.]*

I was like, "Oh, this guy's got tuberculosis! So like, at some critical moment he is going to, like, fade out and—and, y'know, either die or need to rally his—the last of his strength!" Nope! He's fine.

01:00:45 John Host *[Laughs.]* That one-and-a-quarter head just in that. *[Laughs.]* I have never seen a movie that had such a dramatic score as this film. And that score is present throughout. And it was what caused me to realize—going in—that there was not gonna be any humor in this movie. There's that one moment at the end of the battle when we go—we're in the bowels of the ship and the oarsmen are all bragging about how important they were to the battle? Funny. It's meant—y'know, it's meant to be a palate cleanser. That these guys are like, "I was the real hero of this battle!" And that is two hours into a movie where no one smiled. Like, there's not a smile in the

movie. And so... although it is a great war movie, this is just like a self-esteem movie?

01:01:32 Adam Host Yeah.

01:01:33 John Host That every once in a while, a country puts out a self-esteem movie, to just be, like, "You know what? We're ass-kickers, too!" The United States does it all the time, now to the point that self-esteem movies are ridiculous. I mean, we've gotten bad at it? This is a great self-esteem movie. There was no palate cleanser. There was no break in the tension. And as I'm sitting here trying to think of what I wanted? Everything I can think of would've made it worse, not better. So... I was gonna ding it a quarter head for that, but I think I'm—I think I just convinced myself that that was—that would've been a bad ding! I'm gonna give it four-and-a-quarter heads!

01:02:19 Ben Host Whoaaa!

01:02:20 Adam Host Wow! Alright!

01:02:23 Ben Host That's all three right in at the same level!

01:02:25 Adam Host Different head quarters, though.

01:02:27 John Host Yeah. My head—my head is the—like, from a slash? So it's one ear, across, and then the chin. One ear, the chin, and some, like... y'know, some like neck.

01:02:41 Adam Host Well, you wanna get the cheek in there. The cheek's the best part.

01:02:41 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** A cheek. Y'know, it goes—it goes—yeah.

**Ben:** Yeah.

**Adam:** I like that.

01:02:47 John Host Above the ear. The cheek. Across the face.

01:02:49 Adam Host Good one.

01:02:50 John Host Most of a chin. Yeah.

01:02:51 Ben Host That is fucking great. Adam, did you have a guy?

01:02:53 Adam Host Yeah! I thought for sure that I was gonna make Lim, the scout, my guy. But when I was listening to John talk about the death of a, like, romantic subplot here? It made me think about the one little bit that this film gives you. And it's Lim's ladyfriend! Like, when he is on the hay ship and he's communicating to her from shore. Like, there is some magical... there's some magic happening there. Like, he's so far off of shore. He's still able to communicate with her. He needs her to signal. He needs her to—to take off her clothes. *[Laughs.]* And do a signal that helps—

*[Ben laughs.]*

—that helps get the attention of Yi Sun-sin's ships so that the hay ship can be shot before it rams it. And I thought, like, you don't get a lot of scenes between them, but there is a very real affection between them that felt necessary. Like, and it's not a lot? And I think an American film would've leaned into this into full, like, B-storyline? But this film rightly does not. And it just gives us—what it does is it gives us enough to grieve Lim's death. Because if Lim's ladyfriend isn't there, Lim is just another scout who gives himself up for the cause. But it's Lim's ladyfriend and then all of the other people up on shore who are feeling this moment—this moment of great sacrifice! And it's what—it's what served the scene so well and it's what made me feel so much during it. So I'm going to make my guy Mrs. Jung. Mrs. Jung is Lim's wife.

01:04:37	Ben	Host	Um... toward the end of the battle, it's, like, starting to finally kinda turn for Admiral Yi. And, y'know, they have—they have to... do a little bit more fighting before... they're, y'know, totally in the clear. But they're getting toward the point where they're turning the tide on the Japanese. They're—there's a soldier on the deck of Yi's ship who's clambering and I think they get hit or they're—they hit some turbulence. And a cannon falls on this guy's <u>hand</u> ?
01:05:14	Adam	Host	Ahh!
01:05:15	John	Host	That's pretty amazing.
01:05:16	Ben	Host	And I'm <u>sure</u> —I am <u>sure</u> that that would be me in a battle like this.
			<i>[John laughs.]</i>
			Like— <i>[Laughs.]</i> Like if I didn't get run through by somebody's katana, I would catch a cannon on the hand. So.
01:05:28	Adam	Host	I love a movie that gives us that detail. Not everyone knows what it's like to have their head cut off with a sword? But like dropping something heavy on a hand—
01:05:35	Ben	Host	Everybody's had that happen to them. Yeah! And—and I don't know. Like, I—one—like, it's weird doing this project 'cause I like read so much more about war than I ever would've if we hadn't started <i>Friendly Fire</i> ? And like, one thing you always read is, like, oh, y'know, almost equal numbers of soldiers die when they go to war from like disease and shit as die from, y'know, wounds sustained in combat. And that's like almost never the story that you tell in a war film because... that's... y'know. <i>[Laughs.]</i> That's not epic or... y'know, heroic or anything. It's just, like, "Oh yeah, this guy went and sat in a trench for a year and got, y'know, pneumonia and that was the end. For him." But like... cannon on the hand guy, I'm sure that happened a <u>ton</u> . Especially in, like... premodern navies like this. <i>[Through laughter]</i> Like—it had to just be like a fact of life! Like, oh yeah. Like, every nine days somebody gets caught in the ropes and, like, thrown overboard. So. So he's my guy.
01:06:48	John	Host	My guy is <u>definitely</u> the Japanese admiral that is wearing the gold hat with the butterfly wings. I feel like that is such—
01:06:57	Ben	Host	Yeah. Such a cool hat!
01:06:59	John	Host	Such a—that hat definitely indicates that you do not intend to get into any hand-to-hand combat today.
			<i>[Adam laughs.]</i>
			And, uh, and I feel like that—going into battle with a—with a really, really impractical hat? Is such a power move. The thing about, like, having a—having an angry kitty mask, with a—like, a crazy buffalo head helmet with horns sticking out of it? That says, "Let me <u>in</u> to this battle! Even though I'm the admiral, give me—" Y'know, that's like a pearl-handled revolvers. But a hat with gold, like... insect wings? That suggests that you're not gonna reinforce the rogue general. You're gonna make a pot of tea on your way back to base. And I felt like... he never—y'know, he never breaks a sweat either. He just kinda smirks his way through that whole thing.
01:07:56	Adam	Host	Wow. Fun movie. Fun guys. Feeling pretty fortunate here.
01:08:02	Music	Music	Reprise of "War" theme song.
01:08:05	Adam	Host	I love when a movie comes outta nowhere and surprises us the way this one did. I wonder what surprises are in store for us next time?



01:08:12 Ben Host What we've decided to do for next week—to close out the Drive—is drop a Pork Chop film into the main feed! This is a—if you already subscribe, you have gotten this episode already. But if you aren't supporting the show, y'know—and you do that by going to [MaximumFun.org/join](http://MaximumFun.org/join)—if you're not already doing that, you are going to get a little taste of what goes on behind the paywall.

*[Adam laughs.]*

01:08:44 Adam Host With a episode we are very excited about. Adam, tell them what the movie is!  
It's a classic little ditty from the eighties. Starring our favorite precocious teen of that decade. It's Matthew Broderick! In *War Games!*

01:08:58 John Host *[Someone makes an exploding noise.]*  
Now I have no idea why you threw to Adam on that. Because—

*[Ben laughs.]*

01:09:08 Ben Host Adam was, like, four when this movie came out. And Ben, you were just a twinkle in your father's eye.  
01:09:12 John Host I think this movie came out the year I was born, actually.  
01:09:13 Ben Host Wow. Insane.  
The twinkle had been transferred from father to mother. *[Laughs.]*

*[John laughs.]*

01:09:16 Adam Host Are you suggesting your parents went on a date to see this movie?  
And—

01:09:19 John Host Oh my god, this might be it! You were conceived in the car after *War Games!*

01:09:24 Adam Host Wow.  
01:09:25 John Host That's the hottest story.

*[Ben laughs.]*

01:09:27 Adam Host That's what I call a whopper! *[Laughs.]*  
01:09:29 John Host Oh, ho, ho, ho, ho! This movie was like my bible when I was a teenager. Absolutely... informed my worldview more—well, more than the actual Bible.

*[Ben laughs.]*

*[Theme song begins playing quietly in background.]*

01:09:56 Ben Host And probably more than any other single piece of media other than the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. *War Games* was it. It set me on the path that delivered me here! To your doorstep!  
Wild. Well, it's a fun, fun episode and I hope it will inspire a lot of people to go to [MaximumFun.org/join](http://MaximumFun.org/join) and, uh, thank you to everyone who has supported us over the course of this Drive already! And if you haven't yet—no time like the present.

01:10:13 John Host Yeah. Thanks for supporting this show. I really appreciate it and I hope—I hope that extra content we provide is more than worth it.

01:10:20 Ben Host Well, I'm really looking forward to that. And we're gonna leave it with Robs Robs Robs Robs from here. So, for Adam Pranica and

John Roderick, I've been Ben Harrison. To the victor... go the spoiler alerts.

*[Theme song briefly plays at full volume, then subsides again as Rob begins speaking.]*

01:10:35 Rob Producer

Hey, pro tip! If you support now and gain access to our bonus feed? You can listen to next week's episode without pledge breaks! *Friendly Fire* is a Maximum Fun podcast hosted by Ben Harrison, Adam Pranica, and John Roderick. The podcast is 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.

Last year we reviewed *The Ottoman Lieutenant* from 2017. This movie is a love story between an idealistic American nurse and a Turkish officer in World War I. I should also say this movie is extremely controversial and the boys definitely talk about that in their review.

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So thanks again, and go check out that BoCo! You can now follow *Friendly Fire* on Twitter and Instagram under the handles [@FriendlyFireRSS](https://twitter.com/FriendlyFireRSS) in addition to all the discussion groups that are available. So join in the conversation! Thanks for listening, and we'll see you next week—on *Friendly Fire*!

*[War theme song plays for a while at full volume before fading out entirely.]*

01:12:03 Music Transition  
01:12:05 Speaker 1 Guest  
01:12:06 Speaker 2 Guest  
01:12:07 Speaker 3 Guest  
01:12:08 Speaker 4 Guest

A cheerful ukulele chord.  
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