

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	"Haircut" from the movie soundtrack album <i>Mulan</i> by Jerry Goldsmith. Dramatic score with determined, driving beat plays in background of dialogue.
00:00:01	John Roderick	Host	Representation matters. When <i>Mulan</i> appeared on the screen in 1998, she was only the third princess of color and the first from Asia to enter the Disney canon. She's an empowered protagonist; a fighter; an iconoclast—kind of a nerd—and a true hero. But full wokeness was not yet a twinkle in the Disney Corporation's eye in 1998. And the film suffers from some <u>very</u> problematic attitudes towards other cultures that were inexcusable even considering the standards of their day.

I'm talking, of course, about the virulent anti-Hun racism that pervades the film. The Chinese are proud to have built a giant wall to exclude the Huns from opportunity and prosperity. Sound familiar? And they continue to market it and profit from it at the expense of the global reputation of the Hunnish people. Disney animators reinforced this Sinocentric prejudice by portraying the Huns as simultaneously subhuman and otherworldly, using the most offensive stereotypes. Of course, the Huns *did* have yellow, glowing eyes, but ancient accounts seem to confirm that their eyes glowed not with malice, but with wit and charm. Did they stand eight feet tall? [*Scoffing laughter.*] No! The tallest Hun on record was only 7'9" in his tallest murder boots.

The fact is that because the Huns left no written record of their culture—other than curses scrawled in the entrails of the vanquished—we are forced to rely on biased descriptions of them in Chinese and European manuscripts that appealed to the xenophobic and fundamentalist popular sentiments of their time. Worse even is the fact that Disney animators—predominantly Asians—were working from sketches produced largely by artists of European descent who almost certainly had an ethnographic axe to grind to avenge their ancestors, whose spinning skulls were used to hone the blades of Hunnish axes.

00:02:05	John	Host	Of course, the Huns were portrayed as murderous and merciless in those exaggerated and possibly falsified accounts, just because the Huns murderously and mercilessly decimated the Ostrogoths, the Visigoths, the Eastern Roman Empire, and much of Gaul and Italy itself. Extracting great ransoms and leaving salted earth in their wake. Again—the histories are written by the victors, and even though the Huns were <u>technically</u> the victors in these cases, the histories were written by the history victors, which is to say the people who wrote things down to make it seem like they won even when they lost. Like Norman Mailer.
----------	------	------	--

In fact, many references to the other side of Hunnish culture permeate our language, passed down through the oral traditions of preliterate people like the Swiss. The term "honeybunch," for instance, entered High German as a word for the lighter side of total war when a fun bunch of Huns would overrun a town and squeeze everyone until their eyes popped out. Or, "honeysuckle"—a colorful

Galatian way of describing a lust for sucking the marrow out of life and out of the broken femurs of your enemies.

Anyway, yes. *Mulan* was a groundbreaking film and is celebrated even unto this day. It's been remade just recently as a live-action thing starring Lin-Manuel Miranda as the hilarious talking donkey and Sandra Oh as Vice Principal Gupta. It promises to be worth all \$200 million they spend on it. But let's hope that Disney spent a little bit of that cash to offer the Hunnish perspective. Or better yet—add a glowing-eyed Hun princess to match *Mulan*'s swordplay and dragon fetishism with some skull-binding, corpse-mutilating, literal horse play. You don't meet a girl like that every dynasty. On today's *Friendly Fire*—*Mulan*!

00:04:01	Music	Music	<p><i>[Music fades.]</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>
00:04:21	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 is travel-sized for your convenience! I'm Ben Harrison.</p>
00:04:27	Adam Pranica	Host	I'm Adam Pranica!
00:04:28	John	Host	And I'm John Roderick.
00:04:30	Ben	Host	All the best lines in this movie <i>[through laughter]</i> are Eddie Murphy's, right?
00:04:34	Adam	Host	It's such a weird use of Eddie Murphy! Isn't it?
00:04:38	John	Host	<i>[Ben laughs.]</i> Yeah. I'm gonna—I'm gonna go against that vein.
00:04:40	Ben	Host	He refused to come to Disney to record it. So— <i>[Laughs.]</i> So they had to—they came and recorded him at his house, is what I read.
00:04:50	Adam	Host	This is such a weird version of Eddie Murphy, right? Because it's like... mid- to late-nineties, self-quarantine, like, weirdo Eddie Murphy?
00:04:59	Ben	Host	Uh-huh. <i>[Laughs.]</i> Yeah. Now we are all Eddie Murphy. <i>[Laughs.]</i>

00:05:03 Adam Host *[John laughs.]*

00:05:05 John Host *[Through laughter]* Right. The best part, I thought, of the Eddie Murphy performances were the very few times—but there were a handful of times—where he showed sympathy or—where he got kind of small. But the rest of the movie, he’s just doing a kind of... slightly different and lesser version of Robin Williams’s Genie.

00:05:22 Ben Host Yeah. I think that that was definitely, like, why this character was written into the movie. Was, “Remember how great it was when we had Robin Williams in *Aladdin*?”

00:05:31 Adam Host And on paper, the math of that totally pencils out. Like, you could really see that happening. You could even see it coming so close to being that! But like, Mushu isn’t even the top in the top three characters in this film in terms of importance! He’s no Genie! And it’s the importance of Mushu that makes the Eddie Murphy character diminished, right?

00:05:54 Ben Host Yeah. I guess so.

00:05:55 John Host It sounds like Ben’s riding for Mushu a little bit.

00:05:57 Ben Host I liked the performance. I mean, he’s a weird character. I agree. I definitely agree that he’s, like, his D-story doesn’t add that much to the film.

00:06:07 Adam Host It’s hilarious to see these voice actors cast sort of against type. Like... Eddie Murphy has got a little bit of darkness in him, but like, Miguel Ferrer?

00:06:19 Clip Clip **Bob Morton (RoboCop)**: He’s got the 209 series online and now he wants to show off.

00:06:21 Adam Host *[Through laughter]* It’s a fun bit of casting. *RoboCop*’s Miguel Ferrer and then, like, BD Wong from *Oz*?

00:06:27 Clip Clip *Oz* title theme music by David Darlington and Steven Rosen. Percussive, resonant chime followed by driving cowbell.

00:06:29 Adam Host Like...

00:06:32 Ben Host *[All laugh.]* I think I mentioned this last week, that this was the Disney movie that I didn’t go see. The first one that like came out during my childhood that I did not go see. And I also kinda think as early in the era where there’s kind of stunt casting of famouses? Like, maybe I’m wrong about this, but I kinda had the sense that like earlier... animated films didn’t make as big a deal about the famous people doing the voices. And I had such a fun time going like, “Oh my god, that’s totally George Takei doing that voice!” And then, like, the gratification of seeing the credit come up later?

00:07:10 John Host Which is part of that era of peppering it with little Easter eggs for the grown-ups that have to watch it. Some—y’know, that was the thing about the Genie. Right? That 9/10ths of the Genie’s references and riffs would’ve been completely—

[Ben laughs.]

00:07:28 Ben Host —unintelligible to a child. But then somebody gets, like, burned on the butt and sticks their butt in some cold water and the kids laugh.

00:07:33 John Host And then the Genie comes back in and does an Ethel Merman impression and then, y’know—

[Ben laughs.]

00:07:40 Ben Host A lotta people don't realize this, but most of the dialogue from—for the Genie in *Aladdin* is just stuff that was left over from *Good Morning, Vietnam*.

00:07:51 John Host *[Multiple people laugh.]*
I for sure, not having seen this—'cause this movie came out... what, 1998? For me, I didn't go see it because this was like peak *Adbusters* years for me. And—

[Ben laughs.]

—and so I was hyperattuned to the fact that Disney was making mind-control content. And... that this movie was—this movie had a strong female lead but it was cynical about it. And, y'know, I was really, really at my most attuned—

00:08:23 Ben Host "Hey, what you don't realize, man?"

00:08:24 John Host Yeah, exactly! Like, I was just a couple of years off of my Chomsky peak. And so didn't go to see this because I was like, just like—this was the era where Big Media was, y'know, my sworn enemy.

00:08:39 Adam Host I haven't yet summited Chomsky Peak. I'm still setting up base camp.

[Multiple people laugh.]

About a mile below the summit.

00:08:46 Ben Host I don't know if it's the same where you guys are, but where I am we're trying to actually flatten the Chomsky curve.

00:08:52 John Host Yeah. You want to for sure.

[Ben laughs.]

So when this movie started—y'know, watching it recently on my phone in the bathtub—I was really charmed by it at first. It had a kind of sly sense of humor. I liked *Mulan*. I thought she was charming and she had—she was being given that standard Disney treatment of like, "She's a tomboy! A fish out of water!"

00:09:14 Ben Host I was wondering if it was going to be a musical for a long time. Because the first musical number is a ways into the picture.

00:09:22 John Host There's just not that much music in it, is there? There's only three big songs! But I felt like the story was setting up in a pretty charming sort of *Cinderella* way. And I liked the little cricket as the familiar. The kind of nontalking cricket that got into scrapes and screwed everything up. And the whole picture, I was kinda like, "Okay!" Like, "I'm along for this ride. This is pretty fun." And it was the introduction of Eddie Murphy where all of a sudden—y'know, where they felt like, "We need a big-name comedy thing to make this movie fun," and he just felt so... forced upon the movie. And then—and I didn't find him funny or charming. And maybe if I were eight years old I would've.

00:10:12 Ben Host He's definitely coming from a cultural milieu that is so alien to the story that it's telling. Like— *[Laughs.]* They didn't ask him to be any less Eddie Murphy than he would be in an Eddie Murphy movie.

00:10:29 John Host Even though they, y'know, this movie was written and directed and conceived of by white people who live in Florida, they made—

[Ben laughs.]

—they made some effort to cast Asian actors in most of the main roles. And this is a strange moment, but in Disney time or whatever—or in cultural time—but I can't tell whether Eddie Murphy was just the top name star, or whether they specifically needed to introduce an African-American character into a movie about China in order to fulfill some thing that they felt like they needed to do. But also the character feels pasted on! Like, Mushu is not important! It's not just that he's the fifth storyline. If you took him out of it—completely—it'd just be a better movie!

00:11:20 Ben Host

Yeah. I'm actually—I'm surfing some BitTorrent websites right now and I see that the— *[Laughs.]*

[John laughs.]

The fan edit from “JRod” of *Mulan* with all the Mushu edited out is getting a lot of seeds!

00:11:36 John Host

Yeah, for sure! It's only 45 minutes long, but it's killer.

[Adam laughs.]

00:11:42 Adam Host

The tone of it feels weird because... like, we're made to understand that Mushu is one of the many family ancestors—or ancestry-adjacent beings—that are sent to help Mulan on her mission. But, like, that's such an opportunity to... try to understand what the culture is like with respect to how it views its own ancestors. And instead, we get none of that. We get slapstick ancestry! And I wonder how that played in some countries!

00:12:19 John Host

They hoped this would be a big hit in China and it wasn't. Right?

00:12:22 Ben Host

Yeah. I mean, part of that was just how the Chinese government allowed it to be played, 'cause they had, like, very tight restrictions on how many foreign movies could be released in country. And like Disney was kind of trying to curry favor with the cultural authorities in China after having made *Kundun*, which was seen as politically provocative by China.

00:12:49 Adam Host

But I mean, if we got a version of Mushu that was like *Golden Child* Eddie Murphy? Like, just a little bit dialed-down, maybe. I wonder... I wonder if it would've played better. Like, I'm not asking for the film to like pay utter respect to ancestry, but like, this just seemed disrespectful. Utterly.

00:13:09 John Host

I think that's a good observation, if—that's the part of it that makes it such a Genie rip-off. Is that the dragon—the small dragon is a frenetic character. Now, what if the dragon was played by Eddie Murphy, but it was a fat, lazy dragon? Same amount of opportunity for humor...

00:13:32 Ben Host

Well, they would've had to take all those fat jokes from the one character—

[John laughs.]

00:13:37 Adam Host

—and give 'em to Mushu!

So would Eddie Murphy have been playing five different fat dragons and then they'd all sit down at a dinner table, like—

[John laughs.]

—eating a bunch of beans? And—

00:13:46 John Host Way more fart jokes, that's right!
 00:13:47 Clip Clip **Mushu:** If I was my real size, your cow here would die of fright!
 00:13:50 Ben Host I also think that part of the calculus here has got to be, "We are making a movie about horse-mounted warfare for a—y'know, and going for the G rating. Like, we're trying to make a war film that little kids are gonna go see." How do you do that in a way that is palatable?

00:14:10 John Host I mean, there's a lot of stuff that would be scary for a little kid in this. The Huns are super-Orientalized. Even in— *[through laughter]* Even in a movie set in China. Like, the lead Hun—the super bad guy, Shan-Yu—is given yellow cat eyes! Like, almost lizard eyes!

00:14:31 Adam Host And fangs!
 00:14:33 Ben Host Yeah, and they have claws. They are... very scary.
 00:14:36 Adam Host John, did you watch this with your daughter, out of curiosity?
 00:14:39 John Host No, in a incredible twist—

[Ben laughs.]

On Friday night, I came downstairs because there was loud TV happening. And when there's loud TV happening I usually am like, "Whaaat's going on down there?" I came downstairs expecting to see an episode of *Clone Wars*—which is her current TV diet—and she and her mother are halfway through watching *Mulan*.

00:15:05 Adam Host Whoa!

[Ben laughs.]

00:15:07 John Host And I said, "What are you guys doing?" And they were like, "Oh, we're watching *Mulan*!" And I said, "A, since when did you guys start watching a movie and not invite me to come see it, and 2, did you know it's my *Friendly Fire* movie this week and I was going to watch it either tonight or tomorrow?" And they were like, *[gasps]* "No wayyy!"

00:15:25 Adam Host What?
 00:15:26 John Host And I said—
 00:15:27 Adam Host Wow!
 00:15:28 John Host "Well, great. I guess I'm not going to sit down and start watching this halfway through with you. So good luck. I hope that you're fine. I'm gonna go live on a sailboat."

[Ben laughs.]

00:15:42 Ben Host And so, no. That's what happened to me. Wild timing on that. Yeah, speaking of the Huns, there were actually some pretty well-made points in the comments about this movie on IMDB by TurkFan69.

00:15:55 John Host Oh really?
 00:15:56 Ben Host Said that they were a racist depiction of people from that part of the world!

00:16:02 John Host No way! The Turks, all the way across the world, are offended on behalf of the Mongolians.

[Ben laughs.]

[Through laughter] How wonderful. TurkFan69.
 00:16:12 Adam Host Is this the one moment where we might agree with TurkFan69?
 00:16:15 Ben Host Yeah.

[John laughs.]

I never thought it would happen, but I was like, “TurkFan69 is not totally off-base here. That this is... like, a dark-skinned Disney villain that is an offensive portrayal.” *[Laughs.]*

00:16:30 John Host I should mention at this point, you guys, that I know you’re not on Facebook, either one of you. But I got a message from our Facebook fan page. Our administrator, Ruth, there, wrote me and said “Hey, I need you to review this person trying to join the group.” And I looked and TurkFan69 has a Facebook profile!

[Multiple people laugh.]

And was trying to get added to our Facebook group.

[Ben laughs.]

And it turned out that Ruth believed from listening to our show that TurkFan69 was a real person and she needed to talk to me about whether we should actually let him join.

[Ben laughs.]

00:17:13 Ben Host TurkFan69 is a character on the show.
00:17:16 John Host Yes, but TurkFan69—like many things that were characters on the show—has become real in the world.
00:17:21 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Ben:** Yeah.

Adam: Right.

00:17:24 John Host And so TurkFan69’s gonna be pretty mad about this.

00:17:26 Crosstalk Crosstalk **John:** Already is.

Adam: So is TurkFan69 now a member of our Facebook group? Just espousing, like, nationalist Turkish— *[Laughs.]*

00:17:33 Ben Host

[Multiple people laugh.]

00:17:37 Adam Host Yeah! I mean, that would be in character! If you’re gonna be the character, go all the way, TurkFan69! That’s what I’d say!

00:17:43 John Host What I suggested to Ruth was, “Either this is a one-note joke and the person will forget about it after a week, or this is a person that is sincerely going to impersonate TurkFan69 on our fan page.”

00:17:57 Adam Host And annoy everyone.

00:17:58 John Host And in that case, all the more power to them. If they can stay in character.

[Adam laughs.]

My favorite person to follow on Twitter is Richard Nixon.

[Multiple people laugh.]

00:18:07 Music Music “Honor to Us All,” sung by Lea Salonga, Marni Nixon, and Beth Fowler from the soundtrack to *Mulan*.

*We all must serve our Emperor
Who guards us from the Huns.
Our men by bearing arms...*

00:18:12 Ben Host What do you guys know about the, like, historical veracity of the story of *Mulan*? More of like a bedtime story than a real historical event?

00:18:24 Adam Host As a story-making project, I just really loved the idea of Disney sending people over to China to live there for a while and do research. I thought that was a great part of the preproduction story of this film.

00:18:41 John Host Yeah. It's based on a poem. And at least the thumbnail sketch of the poem is pretty much the thumbnail sketch of the movie. I don't think the poem has the romantic interest that *Mulan* develops for her commanding officer?

00:19:01 Ben Host That romantic side of the film was a real surprise to me. Like, this—there's totally like a female gaze moment when he's walking around with his shirt off and she gets a little hot under the collar. And—
[Laughs.] it's like a movie for kids! *[Laughs.]*

00:19:16 John Host And it was the part of the movie—at the very end, when she comes down from having, y'know, been rewarded by the Emperor and gives him a hug, which, y'know, shocks everyone. And the entire crowd has gone from being the most rigidly sexist and hierarchical culture in the universe, as far as we can tell, to completely accepting that she is the hero of China without really any resistance. The crowd just is mollified. But her love interest—

00:19:51 Ben Host Well, they'll do what they're told by that emperor.

00:19:52 Adam Host Right. The Emperor bows first.

00:19:55 John Host That's right. The Emperor bows first. The Adam Pranica story.

[All laugh.]

But this is such a 1998 version of the story of gender dynamics or the story of feminism. Like, it's a strong female lead and she is legitimately strong. At the end of the movie, she—y'know—no man comes to rescue her. So in that sense, it's, y'know, we're halfway there. But she does have to disguise herself as a man to accomplish anything. And the worst part is that Li Shang—who, up until that final moment, really never gave her a single prop. Even though she completely not only saved his ass, but was responsible for his victory.

And you can see in the parade that he and his men are ashamed of themselves. Because they're in a victory parade that doesn't include the person that's responsible. But when she confronts him or when she comes up and says, like, "The Huns are here," he blows her off again. And the best part—the best moment—I'm sorry that I'm rambling. But the best part is when she comes down from that award ceremony and he goes, "You did a good job fighting." And she goes, "Thanks." And walks off. And if the movie had ended there?

[Ben laughs.]

That would've been— *[Laughs.]* Or if she'd just gone back and reunited with her father and roll credits? But he shows up. And the scene—and the movie ends with her falling in love and getting married, presumably.

00:21:36 Ben Host It has to finish Disney movie math or they won't let it go to the theaters, right?

00:21:41	John	Host	Yeah! And that was just like— <i>[makes disappointed noise.]</i>
00:21:42	Ben	Host	And the princess has to marry the prince.
00:21:44	Adam	Host	There must be no remainders to Disney movie math.
00:21:48	John	Host	Right? He did not deserve her love. Except for the fact that he's like a beautiful...
00:21:53	Ben	Host	Yeah. He's very fuckable.
00:21:54	John	Host	Yeah.
00:21:55	Adam	Host	Like even at the end when he brings the helmet back? And gets invited to dinner, <u>he's</u> basically there to receive affection and not give it. Right?
00:22:04	John	Host	We never see him give it. I mean, maybe he fawns over her at dinner and is like, "I used to think you were a man, baby, but I kind of am still into that? Actually? A little bit?"
			<i>[Adam laughs.]</i>
00:22:16	Adam	Host	It's tonally just a very strange end to the thing.
00:22:20	John	Host	If that movie was made now, I think that Li Shang maybe... could have expressed total interest in her as, like, a young male soldier? And then when he finds out she's a woman, be like, "Yeah, even—well, or weird, but."
00:22:36	Adam	Host	Grandmother Fa would be, like, pawing at his groin the entire time.
			<i>[John laughs.]</i>
00:22:40	Ben	Host	Horny grandma is a great character. Always reliable comedy. I mean, the film <u>is</u> <i>[through laughter]</i> being made today. Like, as of this recording where we are in the window in between the initial announced release and the delayed release date of live-action <i>Mulan</i> . And I wonder if they revisit some of these things!
00:23:03	John	Host	Maybe we should add it to our list.
00:23:05	Adam	Host	Or if it's a shot-for-shot remake, like <i>Psycho</i> ?
			<i>[John laughs.]</i>
00:23:10	Ben	Host	You know what? This episode comes out—am I doing this math right? This episode comes out one week after the current posted release date for live-action <i>Mulan</i> .
00:23:19	Adam	Host	No way.
00:23:20	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	John: So TurkFan69 is gonna be—
			Ben: I don't know how that happens.
00:23:23	John	Host	—commenting up a storm.
00:23:24	Adam	Host	That timing is really gonna bite us.
			<i>[All laugh.]</i>
			You know what? Everyone? I would encourage you to set up a mute on Twitter that mutes the phrase "Why didn't you". Because—
			<i>[Ben laughs and agrees.]</i>
			—releasing a <i>Friendly Fire</i> episode about the 1998 film the week after the 2020 film comes out is gonna get a lot of those.
00:23:48	Ben	Host	It's—it's gonna be rough. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
			<i>[Adam laughs.]</i>
00:23:50	Music	Transition	Short reprise of theme song "War."

00:23:53	Ben	Host	Putting myself back in 1998, it did feel like this is Disney, like, making some pretty emphatic movies in a new direction from the kinds of movies they made before. 'Cause she is <u>not</u> a princess. Like, she definitely is coming from like a fancy family with a name, like, the Emperor knows who her dad is.
00:24:14	Adam	Host	It's Cinderella-adjacent, though, right? She's underestimated and lesser-than anyone else in her family until she's not.
00:24:24	John	Host	Total Cinderella.
00:24:25	Music	Clip	"Shake Me" by Cinderella from the album <i>Night Songs</i> . Cowbell and pop-metal guitar.
00:24:30	John	Host	As far as the war movie-ness of it, the scene where the Huns come over the horizon and ride down the snowy slope is one of the <u>best</u> war movie shots of <u>any</u> movie we've seen.
00:24:48	Ben	Host	It's amazing. And the pacing of it is incredible. Like, y'know, the smoke clears and you see Shan-Yu and then like... a couple of other guys and you're like, cutting back and forth and back and forth and every time you cut back, the shot gets wider and you realize that there's, like, <u>thousands</u> of guys up on this ridgeline?
00:25:07	Adam	Host	Yeah. It's a nice reveal.
00:25:08	Ben	Host	Oh my god.
00:25:09	John	Host	Incredible.
00:25:10	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	Ben: So good.
			John: Incredible.
00:25:11	John	Host	And really taking advantage of what animation can do.
00:25:15	Adam	Host	The film never telegraphed that that was possible, though! Up until that moment. I think that's what made it so effective is like you get the classic Disney animation up until that moment. And it's so breathtaking once it finally reveals itself as possible. Like... all the cels you've seen up until then have been like, "Oh, yeah, I've seen this in ten other Disney movies!" But that's the moment where you're like, "This is a new Disney technology being deployed here."
00:25:42	Ben	Host	It's gotta have some computer-generated elements to it. Just—just the particle effects of, like, the snow coming up under the feet of the horses as they run down the mountain. But like, you get the pit of your stomach dropping out like you're on a rollercoaster when you cut to the hawk perspective and, like, swoop over them. What a great piece of film design that a scene that catches your breath to that extent is also the kind of critical character moment. Where Mulan figures out how to beat the bad guys by causing an avalanche instead of using their one last cannon to kill <u>one</u> of them.
00:26:21	John	Host	I mean, I liked the way that that appears multiple times in the movie. That Mulan overcomes her lack of physical strength by being the smartest one. Seeing a canny solution. There was an article in the... I don't know if it was the <i>New Yorker</i> . There was an article just—that I read just a week ago. About the Marine Corps finally letting women go through boot camp not segregated. They were <u>forced</u> to let women into the combat arm of the Marines, but they still keep them segregated in boot camp.

And this article talked about, like, a little squad of Marines that were trying to accomplish some bridge crossing, and it was a mixed-gender platoon. And there was a—y'know, a guy was in charge and he was like, "Okay, well, we'll just muscle these things across the bridge." And there was a gal who said, "Well, why don't we attach

'em to this rope and it'll make it a lot easier?" And he blew her off? This is a real article.

[Ben laughs.]

00:27:29 Ben Host That I just read a week ago.
They figured this out 1400 years ago in China!

00:27:33 John Host *[Multiple people laugh.]*
And so these Marines were, like, busting their ass trying to get this stuff over there and they realized they couldn't do it. And she stepped forward again and was like, "Why don't you use my idea? The one about the ropes?" And they were like, "Ugh. Okay." And they did it and it was exactly what they needed to do. And to whatever degree an article that—about women in the Marine Corps found that particular event and wrote a whole story about it—it's definitely, like, feature-writing for a magazine. But it's basically *Mulan*. And that's a—y'know, that's a wonderful way of characterizing her participation and making it not seem like she went through one week of training and all of a sudden is a combat master.

00:28:18 Ben Host This is the classic war movie where the recruit winds up in boot camp. Learns how to be a soldier. Then goes and, like, participates in a couple battles. Like, most of the training in boot camp happens during a musical number—

[John laughs.]

—where we watch a bunch of soldiers go from being, like, incapable of doing anything well to, like, shooting apples with their bows and arrows and like running across posts in a lake without falling over. And like, she's—y'know—mostly being discouraged from continuing then. When none of them realize that she's a girl. From that standpoint, like, the—like, her force of will is like... is kind of the—the main thing about her character that's a real different—a different look and feel for a Disney film.

00:29:07 Adam Host She only gets the respect of the other recruits—Yao and Ling and Chien Po—when she grabs that arrow from the top of the post, right? Like, she never impresses them with her combat prowess. And this is related to the story that John, you were telling that you just read about. Like, the "smarter, not harder" motif here is... what makes *Mulan* great. And what makes her a respected part of her troop.

00:29:38 John Host Yeah. It's—the argument the Marines have always made is, "Well, y'know, a woman doesn't have the strength to carry one of her fellow soldiers off of the battlefield." Or whatever. Y'know, "She's not gonna be strong enough to do the job." And it's funny that, y'know, the Marines are still making that argument 22 years after this movie kind of... makes it and then breaks it.

00:30:04 Ben Host It should be required viewing in the Marine training facility.

[John laughs.]

00:30:08 Adam Host I was just gonna say, the scene of the Huns coming down the mountain was the preamble to what I thought would be when this film went from G to PG.

00:30:20 Ben Host *[Through laughter]* Uh-huh.

00:30:21 Adam Host Y'know, this is a war film! At some point we're going to see death. Or see death's aftermath. Or something. And I braced myself for that moment and, y'know, snow really helps a scene like this. If we're burying an army under snow, we're not gonna see the suffering of that kind of death. But I was very surprised at the moment where Mulan's army comes upon the burned-out village. And how much you are permitted to see there. Related to the death of her countrymen.

00:30:57 John Host Yeah. We see the entire army on a smoking battlefield.

00:31:01 Adam Host I utterly respected the film's, like, ability and interest to go, like, "Here's actually what happened, kiddo. And this is how painful it is." That's a devastating sequence and I think that maybe the thing that make—like, pulls the... emotional punch a little bit is that we don't really know anyone?

00:31:11 Ben Host

00:31:21 Adam Host Yeah.

00:31:22 Ben Host Or we don't see anybody we know. 'Cause I guess we know Shang's dad. But we just see his helmet. We don't actually see him, dead. We mostly process the deaths through like her picking up the dolly and hugging it.

00:31:34 Adam Host Right.

00:31:35 John Host I did not understand the doll's symbolism because it—the doll appears for the first time when the eagle brings it to Shan-Yu, and it's like—wait, is the doll like a voodoo doll of Mulan? Or is the doll something from—

00:31:52 Ben Host *[Through laughter]* I was totally thinking that!

00:31:53 Adam Host I thought the doll was a suggestion that even children were killed there.

00:31:57 John Host Well, I know, but then the doll reappears—did the eagle plant it there? Or is there—is that a second doll? Why does she leave the doll?

00:32:07 Ben Host And Shan-Yu's able to do, like, CSI about like where the Emperor's troops are based on like what the doll smells like and what kind of hair it has stuck to it and stuff?

00:32:16 Adam Host *[John laughs.]*

00:32:19 John Host The eagle lives after this film, right?

00:32:20 Adam Host Lives as a chicken.

00:32:22 Clip Host I'm gonna believe that the eagle feathers grow back.

00:32:26 Ben Host **Falcon:** Ba-KAWW!

00:32:26 Ben Host **Mushu:** Now, that's what I call Mongolian Barbecue! I didn't think about it until after I'd watched the film, like, all of her soldier buddies having to dress as concubines being kind of the shoe being on the other foot, but an internet pedant actually noticed something that was incorrect about that scene.

"During the finale, Yao uses a banana as part of his disguise. However, the banana is the sort of yellow and thin specimen a modern Western audience would recognize. This kind of banana cultivar would not be bred until centuries later."

[Sound of telegraph plays in background.]

00:33:07 John Host "The bananas available in China in the era in which this movie is set would have been rounder and of a different color."

00:33:07 John Host Hm. What color were old bananas?

00:33:11 Adam Host So a girthier banana is what it would've been.
00:33:14 Ben Host Yeah. And I think that banana's being used to simulate a boob. So you want—you probably want a more period-appropriate banana.
00:33:22 John Host Yeah. I mean, depends on your taste in boobs, I guess.
00:33:25 Ben Host What kind of boob verisimilitude you're going for?
00:33:28 Adam Host I don't know how you guys like your boobs, but I like them long and skinny. Like bananas.
00:33:33 John Host Yeah. Old Adam Torpedo-Tit Pranica!

[All laugh.]

00:33:38 Ben Host I wondered about that, like, how much—I dunno. Like if I was a nine-year-old, would this all be lost on me or would I understand it?
00:33:46 John Host As the father of a nine-year-old girl, it's very interesting just watching—in general—the kind of fourth-generation feminist overlay in children's entertainment now. And it's also the way that race is depicted in children's entertainment. Kids, in their lack of sophistication, are not super aware of race. They're very aware of gender. Race, they're kind of not. But kids sort of self-gender.

But the entertainment that's made by adults for them is trying to—in a lot of cases—trying to correct for problems in adults. By getting to kids. So I will watch movies with my daughter all the time, and I'm super-conscious of this. Because movies start off by kind of looking directly at the child and going, "Women are strong!" And my daughter often—or at least, used to—kind of turn to me and go, "Of course!" And I go, "I know!"

[Adam laughs.]

So very early on in her media consumption, the media was telling her that there was a question about whether women were strong or not. And although it's answering in the affirmative, the whole fact that it raises the question... I watched it on my daughter's face go, "Well, if they are, why does it need—why are people yelling it so much at me? Like, I get it! Women are strong! I never doubted it!" Right? And so movies like this that are... y'know, they spend the whole first part of the movie telling children that women are... not. As a way of kind of trying to counter the fact that adults are wrestling with that. But from my daughter's perspective it's like, "Well, I didn't know all this about women being concubines! Why do I need to?"

00:35:44 Ben Host The first 15 minutes of this movie are a lot about teaching you what the gender roles even were back then. Because it's—y'know—it's pretty different from even 1998—like, the expectations of women in the year 600 A.D. are—in China are like—are pretty Rococo by comparison. And I mean, like, I wondered if that like... mitigated some of that. Like, if the expectation of a woman in this era is, "Paint your face bright white and remember all the admonitions in the correct order and do all these, like, tea ceremonies." Of course a little girl is going to be like, "Fuck that! Not interested!" Y'know.
00:36:35 John Host It feels like the film that you make for a 16-year-old. Who is now ready to be made aware of the fact that life for women over the centuries has been... very different than it is now. But when you're making content for an eight-year-old!
00:36:51 Adam Host When you consider what the messages of a film like this might be to the little girls who I think we could agree this is targeted to. Like, the

inspiration of a Mulan superficially that girls can do anything that boys can do. But I think there's darkness in digging a little bit further, which is like... Mulan's success only occurs while she's in man-drag. And then she so quickly goes back to her own life at the end! It made me sad at the end of the film that she was so quick to reabsorb the culture that diminished her before she went on her mission.

And I wonder—like, I'm putting myself in the mind of the audience. And the mind of the audience is a G-rated audience. So it's a simplistic audience. Like, is the main takeaway the first one, or is it the second one? And I've gotta believe that it's the first one, right? Like, Disney's not gonna make a film that tells girls that like, y'know, you can go off and have your adventure as long as you come back and snap to square the way things were before you left.

00:38:07 John Host Well, that's the story of the actual poem, I think. She comes back from the war, refuses all government positions and accolades that are offered her, and goes back to live her simple life in her village. And it's kinda the Rosie the Riveter problem. Right? That you have a generation of women that realize they can do whatever they want and they can do any job as well as men can and then the war is over and you get all these guys coming back that are like, "What's for dinner, honey?"

00:38:35 Ben Host *[Through laughter]* Right.

00:38:36 John Host And we basically lose two more generations of women to a kind of, like, "Well, domestication is stronger than your liberation."

00:38:46 Ben Host Yeah. That's the argument that was sort of posed in *Their Finest*, right? Like, the women talking about like, "Are they gonna make us stop being development executives at film production companies?"

00:38:58 John Host Turns out, yes!

00:39:00 Adam Host It feels like this movie ends too early. Like, the film has a chance to... say something big. And I think with another ten minutes, it might have had that opportunity. If we were given a glimpse into what Mulan's life is. Maybe she does marry Shan-Yu. But maybe their marriage is quite unconventional for its time!

00:39:20 John Host I really believe that this movie could have—if it had just ended on him saying, like, "Wow, you really are a good warrior." And her going, "Thanks. A woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle."

[Ben laughs.]

00:39:35 Adam Host Well, at that point it's—the viewer can then project at her equality for the rest of her life. Like, you could form all kinds of stories in your imagination about how the rest of her life goes. But the film chooses to... to pull the film car into the driveway and turn off the engine.

00:39:54 Ben Host I wonder if part of that is the direct-to-VHS sequel wagging the third-act dog.

00:40:02 John Host *[Through laughter]* Whoa!

00:40:03 Ben Host That like Disney makes these franchise-able animated features and then make a trillion, like, musical spin-offs and rides at their theme parks and maybe an animated television series eventually. Like, all of these things have to be potential spinoffs, depending on how big of a hit the initial film is? 'Cause like, I watched this on the Disney+ app and like the second it was over it was trying to get me to watch *Mulan 2*, which— *[Laughs.]* Y'know, like, who even fucking knows what happens in *Mulan 2*.

[John laughs.]

Based on the exciting sequel to the ancient poem? Y'know?

[Laughs.]

00:40:43 John Host Well, two things. Right? This movie is a Disney princess movie. And Mulan is the only one of the Disney princesses that isn't a princess. And I've had people tell me that because the Emperor gave her that medal, that she was princess-ified or something at the end? Thereby qualifying as a princess?

00:41:05 Ben Host Oh, wow. It like— *[Laughs.]* She gets in on a technicality, huh?

00:41:09 Adam Host So Chewy hasn't been a princess all these years himself.

00:41:13 John Host No. Well, Chewy is a princess in a different way. I've just recently learned that Chewy and R2-D2 are actually the two stars of the *Star Wars* franchise.

00:41:19 Adam Host Mm.

00:41:21 Ben Host *[Through laughter]* Oh.

00:41:22 John Host But also, if you think about the movie itself, at the beginning her family wants her to be a proper girl and get married. Partly because her father doesn't want her around anymore creating all this havoc with the dog and the chickens. Y'know, there's an idea about the beginning of the film that it's like, look. The real tension here is—get Mulan a husband. And—

[Multiple people laugh.]

And we spend the first act realizing that Mulan is never gonna find a husband if she keeps fucking up this bad. And then we have an entire, like, adventure in the middle. War movie or whatever. But really the only stakes after saving China—both before and after saving China—are, “What the fuck is Mulan gonna do with her life?” She can't just sit around here being a milkmaid. And the only other option is get married. There is no third way. Except to be a horny grandma. *[Laughs.]* And you gotta live a long time.

[Ben laughs.]

00:42:25 Adam Host That's such a weird kind of tragedy, though. Like, if that's all she ends up being.

00:42:31 John Host Well, now, wait a minute. Being a wife and mother is no—there's no shame in that, Adam.

00:42:34 Adam Host That's not what I'm saying.

[John laughs.]

And you know it.

[Ben laughs.]

00:42:38 John Host Listen, if you could end up being a wife and mother, it'd be a—

00:42:42 Adam Host Oh, I'd jump at the chance. I'd leave all this behind, that's for sure.

[Ben laughs.]

00:42:49 Ben Host In a second I'd give it up.
Why doesn't she just Mu-lean in?

[John laughs.]

00:42:54 John Host So she could have it all?
We can do it! I mean, I think—yeah, if she had taken the government job. If she had taken the government job of being the obsequious moustache administrator, that would be a cool movie.

[Ben laughs.]

00:43:10 Ben Host But that’s not what happened in the poem. So they’re picking and choosing here.
Yeah. *Mulan 2* is about a bunch of domestic infrastructure programs that she’s trying to get off the ground?

00:43:15 John Host *[John laughs.]*
Well, no, it’s about her Benghazi. Right?

00:43:19 Ben Host Oh, god. Yeah. Yeah. Her emails become a big— *[Laughs.]* A big concern.

00:43:23 Music Music *[Multiple people laugh.]*
“The Huns Attack” from the album *Mulan* by Jerry Goldsmith. Tense music with overlay of characters shouting and horses whinnying.

00:43:28 Ben Host Every death we see on screen is obscured by a beautiful animated explosion, so it occludes every soldier that buys it.

00:43:38 Adam Host Yeah. I wonder if Disney got some notes after *Bambi*. Don’t show the burning bodies.

00:43:45 Ben Host *[John laughs.]*
Yeah. *[Laughs.]* Y’know, they decided to make a feature film with their Florida production studios and they were originally gonna go with one about The Great Raid and show a lot of people burning in, y’know, fuel oil bunkers. They decided against that.

00:43:59 Adam Host John, you probably have a better recollection of this for recency reasons. But the Shan-Yu character seems like a fairly unmotivated bad guy. As Disney bad guys go in this era and before, do you get the sense that they were more, like, that they had more of a backstory? A more reason for being other than “destroy”? As Shan-Yu seems to be?

00:44:26 John Host His motivation is that the Emperor built the Great Wall of China and he’s here to just put it in his face. Right? That’s his—

00:44:35 Adam Host He feels like the Emperor built it at him.

00:44:36 John Host Yeah. Right. And he’s just gonna show.

00:44:39 Adam Host In a “you can’t get past this” kind of way. Yeah.

00:44:40 John Host And so it’s just a dare. The—but the thing is, a lot of Disney villains, their primary villainy is vanity. If you think about the Wicked Stepmother, she’s entirely motivated by vanity. Snow White is—

00:44:57 Adam Host Oh, and the hero of this film—

[Sound of old-school printer.]

00:45:05 John Host —has to suppress her vanity to become the hero of the story.
It’s the vanity problem.

00:45:06 Adam Host *[Whispering]* She cuts her hair!

00:45:10 John Host *[John laughs.]*
A lot of Disney stakes are relatively low. But they’re... y’know, is there a thing that motivates people to greater evil than vanity?

00:45:19	Ben	Host	Definitely my favorite sin!
			<i>[Multiple people laugh.]</i>
00:45:21	John	Host	In that sense, y’know, you can kind of—you can put vanity at the heart of a <u>lot</u> of big crimes. And that—
00:45:31	Adam	Host	Vanity was the most evil Smurf.
00:45:32	John	Host	Well she was also the most evil of Prince’s acolytes.
00:45:37	Adam	Host	<i>[Through laughter]</i> Mmm.
00:45:40	John	Host	Anyway, that feels like—at least from the standpoint of a villain—enough. And I don’t know what it is about the Walt Disney Company that wants kids to—and I think it’s just that the opposite of vanity is selflessness—which seems like the—which seems like a great virtue to teach children who are all born psychopaths.
			<i>[Ben laughs. Adam joins in.]</i>
00:46:05	Adam	Host	I mean, if I’ve learned anything from this episode, it’s that. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:46:09	Music	Transition	Short reprise of theme song “War.”
00:46:13	Adam	Host	All <i>Friendly Fire</i> films get ratings and reviews on this show, even Disney films. Disney films not having a great track record on this show, for either. I wonder if <i>Mulan</i> will do any better than the great <i>Operation: Dumbo Drop</i> .
			<i>[Ben laughs.]</i>
			We’ll never know, because we’re not giving it the same rating system!
00:46:34	Ben	Host	That’s true!
00:46:35	Adam	Host	I’m here to give <i>Mulan</i> its own custom rating system. Of course it’s gonna be that arrow that Li Shang shoots to the top of that pole for his army to bring down! It’s the main test! It’s the test of the army. He doesn’t quite believe in their skills. Pretty great for Li Shang to shoot the arrow and then go cool his jets in a tent for two days.
			<i>[Ben laughs.]</i>
			<i>[Through laughter]</i> Watching to see what these idiots are gonna do to get the thing down. Only Fa Mulan can do it. But can this film rise to the challenge of introducing us to a new Disney princess while at the same time teaching us about a different part of the world than a Disney film ever has? One to five arrows will be how we rate it.
			John, you started to list all of the virtues that this film signals toward a young viewer, and these are great! I mean, the inspiration to be yourself, even when it’s difficult. Y’know, how important it is to sacrifice your comfort in favor of being brave. The desire for independence, but also a desire to be in a relationship. And by that, I mean, like, both friendly and romantic.
			Fa Mulan is someone who has a lot of troubles with both. I think the story moves so quickly and in such a straight line towards defeating Shan-Yu that it really doesn’t allow us much of an opportunity to think about those things. Or for our characters to grow that much. And I think part of it just might be the G-rated Disney film ability to tell a story that complex. I shouldn’t grade it harshly for that. This is—a G-rated Disney film is only gonna be what a G-rated Disney film is! But I think my favorite challenge on <i>Friendly Fire</i> is trying to

00:48:37 Adam Host

review the film in the context of the year of its release. Or the place of its release.

And I think there's an added challenge to *Mulan* in this case, 'cause it's not just about a film released in the late nineties. It's also like the context of... modern Disney-Pixar films versus classic Disney films. And what they're able to do. Like, the modern films being more spectacular visually and nuanced narratively. And this film is like a very classic *Beauty and the Beast*, *Lion King*-style film! And it's easy to forget that that's what Disney films were like most of the time.

I like Mulan the character a lot more than I think I like the film. And I think the film constrains the character in a way that is unfortunate but also in keeping with what a G-rated film is going to be. And so that's the challenge. Right? This is not a... rating the film, keeping in mind the context of its year and its country of origin. It's almost like a contextual Disney challenge that must be graded and considered.

So I think considering that—considering this film's peers—I think it's one of the better Disney films. And it's one of the better Disney messages. But I think I'm just gonna give it a medium-strong score of three-and-a-half arrows. And I think it's because I hope it gets kids to ask some questions about, y'know, about the role of little girls in different societies. And... and I hope little girls don't take it as the wrong kind of inspiration at the end. Y'know? I hope it starts some conversations, but I hope the big takeaway at the end isn't, like, "Go and have your adventure and then go home and get married."

And that's sort of the effect of this that I really wonder about. When it's all said and done. And I wonder if that's not the reason why this film sort of disappeared! And while critically it might've been like one of the better-reviewed Disney films? This isn't a film that's in the zeitgeist the way that the others are. And I wonder if that's why. Like, *Mulan* didn't continue to be a hero. She went back home. So three and a half for me.

00:50:52 Ben Host

It's hard to know... what parts of this you can and can't criticize from Disney's decision-making standpoint. Because it is based on an ancient poem. And so like interrogating the morality of the ancient poem is a different project than interrogating the, like, y'know, the message that the Disney adaptation of it is trying to put out. There's a Chinese made live-action *Mulan* as well that came out in like 2004 or something like that. As far as I can tell it's not available for streaming anywhere outside of China. So that's—even more than the Disney live-action remake of this movie, I would love to have been able to compare that to this. Just to see, like... what the, y'know, like, the people that are living 1400 years later in the country that this is set in are doing when they adapt this story for a modern audience.

But as a film, I think it's really awesome. Like, the animation is great. The war scenes are really exciting. I think—I'm in agreement with you that the end is a bit of a bummer, but I also think it's a period-appropriate bummer. And so I can't hit the film too hard for that. And like it's not every weeknight that I sit down and watch a G-

rated movie for kids and find myself as caught up in it as I was this. Like, this was a 90 minutes that totally had me. And I think that's, by itself, a pretty impressive accomplishment. So I'm gonna give this four arrows. I like *Mulan*!

00:52:47 John Host

Y'know, this movie was a jumping-off point for a lot of interesting conversation between us, and this happens a lot on the show, I think. Where we get into something interesting about the movie and it sounds like we're ripping the movie apart. And it's really just a jump-off for us to talk about culture and stuff.

Y'know, again, as the father of a nine-year-old girl, it's—I know that in the—in modern culture, in our contemporary scene, the idea that a movie like this is this subtly pernicious influence on young girls and it makes them all think that the message from the world is that all they can do is be a wife.

But my nine-year-old girl can watch a movie like this and believe that she can be the hero of her own story. Y'know? Like, we overstate the perniciousness of popular culture and, in fact, overstate the perniciousness of culture! Because people, y'know, it is pernicious. She does—as a young girl—have uphill battles that other people don't face. But it isn't as simple as watching *Mulan*. Or watching any Disney film. To create in her a mentality. It's much less important than just the household that she grows up in and what her parents think are possible for her. To help her be a fully-fledged person. Y'know?

00:54:10 John Host

There are a lot of things in it. Like some crossdressing jokes that you wouldn't put in a movie now. But I think it was a really sort of fascinating and fun film! If you took Eddie Murphy out of it, there's a lot going on this movie that's a lot more interesting than *Frozen*. But y'know, also, this is the era where Disney started to go toward representation. Right? Like, *Pocahontas* in the mid-nineties and then we got *Mulan*. And Disney was—I think they got the memo—or internally were working hard to lead us up to movies like *Moana*.

And I have a friend who's, y'know, an Asian woman in her 30s who reported to me—and has reported for a long time—that it made a real difference to her. She went to see this movie and there was a Chinese girl that was a hero. And all of a sudden she—y'know, she wasn't living in this world where it was just a choice between Ariel and Cinderella. And I think up to that point, she had had to choose between Jasmine and Pocahontas as to which Disney princess she could most identify with. And then—and this is the point of representation!

And so for all of the dings we give this movie for not being, like, full-on girl power, it's still 90% girl power and... it's trying something. It's trying hard. At something. And I think it's interesting because Disney movies that feature darker-skinned princesses sell significantly less merchandise than Disney movies that have light-skinned princesses. And yet that doesn't dissuade Disney from continuing to try to make movies with dark-skinned princesses. And it's a credit we don't give to that company that they are, like, "Well, y'know, we're going to sell 100 million fewer little dolls at Christmastime, because this is a movie about a Polynesian girl. But—"

00:56:25 Adam Host But it's the right thing to do and the right story to tell.
00:56:28 John Host Yeah. It's a story to tell. We haven't told it yet, and let's do it. Not to—y'know. My Adbusters self is still like, "Fuck Disney." Right?

00:56:36 Ben Host *[Adam laughs.]*
[In a voice meant to mimic John's.] I mean, it's still—it still furthers the cause of the Divine Right of Kings?

[John laughs, applauds.]

00:56:47 John Host Which I think is a bigger problem than sexism, personally? And uh—
Yeah. That's right. "Where's the socialism narrative in this? There isn't one!"

00:56:52 Ben Host *[Ben laughs.]*
00:56:53 John Host *[Through laughter]* Yeah.
"What about free healthcare for the Chinese?" Anyway. I did—I feel like some of the battle scenes in this were great. I really liked Mulan! I just liked her! Through the whole film! Everything she did, I just was like, "I like Mulan!" Y'know? I will follow her! If it weren't for this *[through laughter]* fucking dragon. And the thing is, she didn't need the dragon! Because the cricket and the horse! That was all you need! You don't need three familiars! Smart horse, funny cricket. I'm gonna give it four-and-a-quarter arrows!

00:57:22 Ben Host Wow!
00:57:24 Adam Host Okay!
00:57:25 Ben Host Big score! John, did you have a guy?
00:57:28 John Host Well, there were a—y'know, there were the three main doofy guys. There was the guy that—for whatever reason—perennially had a black eye through the whole film. There was the big, small-headed guy that looked like the character from *Spirited Away*, and then there was the third guy. Who was like a—Ichabod Crane kind of stork-limbed guy? Yeah. I didn't like any of those guys. They weren't bad, but they were just guys. No, I was the cricket. The cricket was my guy. I wanted so much more of that cricket. That cricket—that cricket set the matchmaker's pants on fire! And then went back in his little cricket cage and closed the door!

00:58:15 Ben Host *[Ben laughs.]*
00:58:17 John Host I like that the cricket can type by stamping on a piece of paper? Fantastic! The cricket is not just literate, but, like, literate in a pretty poetical Chinese! Because Mushu says, y'know, "Take the flavor out of it. This is a military communication," and then the cricket goes and writes it differently! So the cricket had it all. And this movie gave us the cricket and it wasn't Jiminy Cricket. It was a different kind of cricket. Chinese cricket. It was a chickity-China, a Chinese chicken!

00:58:48 Adam Host *[Ben laughs.]*
My guy's the Emperor. And I know it's easier to do a brave thing when you have a lot of power, but I like the gesture that he made at the end in bowing to Mulan and encouraging others to bow to him and I like when he fired his stupid moustache administrator. As John called him.

[Ben laughs.]

He may be an Emperor, but I think that he does have a bit of a heart of gold and I think maybe his experience with Mulan might effect some changes around the empire. Wouldn't that be nice! Maybe that's the happy ending I was hoping to have here in this movie!

00:59:29 Ben Host
00:59:30 Adam Host
00:59:33 Ben Host
00:59:37 John Host

That would be cool.
So yeah. I just felt like there was something more to him there.
My guy is horny grandma.
The end, huh?

[Multiple people laugh.]

00:59:39 Ben Host
00:59:40 Adam Host
00:59:44 Ben Host

Yeah.
Yeah. What she using that cricket for, Ben? I wanna know.
Yeah. That cricket's rubbing its leg to play sweet music. What's she rubbing? Uh, yeah. Horny grandma ruled.

00:59:51 Adam Host
00:59:54 Music Transition
00:59:58 Ben Host
00:59:59 John Host

She's great. Always love a horny grandma.
Short reprise of theme song "War."
Let's pick our next movie! What do you say?
Alright! Okay, emptying my dice cup of some coffee dregs. Here we go.

[Sound of die rolling around on glass.]

01:00:20 Music Music
01:00:22 Ben Host

Twenty...eight! 28! Picked number 28!
Sweeping, dramatic, almost-romantic movie soundtrack music.
28 is a John Frankenheimer film from 2002 set in the Vietnam... conflict.

[Someone laughs faintly.]

Path to War!

[Music fades out.]

It is a TV movie starring Michael Gambon, Donald Sutherland, and Alec Baldwin. And it's about the LBGA Foreign Policy Team debate deciding whether or not to withdraw from or escalate the Vietnam War.

01:00:48 John Host
01:00:51 Adam Host
01:00:53 Ben Host
01:00:54 Adam Host

01:00:58 Ben Host
01:01:01 John Host

Ohhh, this is my kind of film!
Good cast!
Yeah.
Oh boy, we got a Philip Baker Hall here, guys. And Bruce McGill, Ben.
Oh, boy. Love me some McGill.
I believe I'm about to get to talk about McGeorge Bundy, so I couldn't be more excited.

[Multiple people laugh.]

01:01:08 Ben Host

["War" theme song begins playing faintly in background of dialogue.]

01:01:15 Adam Host

I love Frankenheimer. It's surprising to see him doing a TV movie.
HBO Films.
Oh, cool.

01:01:16 Ben Host Should be an interesting one. Well, we're gonna leave it with Robs from here. So for John Roderick and Adam Pranica, I've been Ben Harrison. To the victor... go the spoiler alerts!

["War" theme song plays briefly at full volume, then recedes again as Rob begins speaking.]

01:01:32 Rob Schulte Producer *Friendly Fire* is a Maximum Fun podcast hosted by Adam Pranica, Ben Harrison, 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.

Would you like to hear more *Friendly Fire*? Last year we covered *Outside the Law*, a film that takes place between 1945 and 1962, and focuses on the lives of three Algerian brothers in France, set against the backdrop of the Algerian Independence Movement.

You can also gain access to our bonus episodes by heading to MaximumFun.org/join. For as little as \$5/month, not only will you receive our Pork Chop episodes; you'll gain access to all Maximum Fun bonus content! And don't forget—you can now follow us on Twitter and Instagram under the handles FriendlyFireRSS. Thanks for listening and we'll see you next week with another episode of *Friendly Fire*.

[Theme song plays at full volume before fading out entirely.]

01:02:51 Music Music

A cheerful ukulele chord.

01:02:52 Speaker 1 Guest

MaximumFun.org.

01:02:53 Speaker 2 Guest

Comedy and culture.

01:02:55 Speaker 3 Guest

Artist owned—

01:02:56 Speaker 4 Guest

—Audience supported.