

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	Intense, brooding piano in a minor key features prominently in the orchestral piece playing quietly throughout the introduction.
00:00:01	John Roderick	Host	Any podcast that covered a randomized selection of movies from throughout the history of movies would have to spend time wrestling with the ways that values have changed. They've changed dramatically over the last 100 years and even more dramatically over the last 10. So, even if <i>Friendly Fire</i> focused on courtroom dramas or domestic comedies or movies where—even briefly—kids were shown playing marbles, the hosts would end up talking about gender relations and representation.

War movies are about fighting, about enemies and politics and conflict between nations. And as such, we are always on the lookout for how well or poorly they do depicting peoples of nationalities, races, and religions other than those of the filmmakers themselves. It's a major way we evaluate films. And we pay special attention to the women in these films, because they're comparatively rare; they're frequently on the receiving end of the worst kinds of violence depicted often only in silhouette or implication; and because we're looking for validation of the contemporary idea that women of the recent past were disenfranchised and stateless beings held captive by an unchallenged patriarchy.

Interestingly, we've not found that to be universally the case. Women are comparatively rare and victims of unspeakable violence, yes. But we have been surprised to find so many strong female characters depicted as wise or valiant, full of agency, quick-witted, and no patsies. They're taken seriously by the films. The male characters seek their approval and alter their choices accordingly. And although they're often two-dimensionally virtuous, they aren't always uncomplicated. The cameras pan away when the shooting starts, often not returning to them until the end. But in most cases, they weren't just knitting. They were nursing or nunning or running a brothel, the three great tentpoles of civilization.

We can't help but watch a lot of American movies, too, because that's where Hollywood is. Making movies is one of the main things that America does. Believe me, if *Friendly Fire* could just watch movies made in Mongolia and the Ivory Coast, we would. As long as there was at least one scene where kids were playing marbles.

But being stuck watching Hollywood movies, we're also stuck looking through the American lens. Except when those lenses are made in Germany. Which means, in most cases, thinking about war as something that happens elsewhere. Wars are things we ship out to do. And when they're done, we come home. And that's not true for most the world, where wars are something that start happening around you, and when they're done, you're lucky to be alive and everything you knew is in ruins.

00:02:39 John

Host

In Stalingrad in World War Two, or in the villages of Vietnam in the sixties, the bombs didn't care what gender you were. In both the USSR and Vietnam—due in part to the social leveling inherent to communism—there were women under arms. Fighting unto death. Killing and being killed in battle. And that is closer to the true nature of war throughout history, and in most of the world presently, than the kind of post-Enlightenment, like, “Pip pip, cheerio!” war or “Death from above,” wars of the American present. War should miss no one.

In the USA in World War Two, the home front meant victory gardens and Rosie the Riveters and war bonds. But the UK—although never invaded—was blitzed and rocketed all throughout the war. It's a wonder there aren't more films about women in the UK during the war. That's why we were so excited to find a film like today's, where a young, ambitious London woman breaks into the male-dominated world of screenwriting, lending her talents to the production of patriotic war pictures being pumped out by the Ministry of Information to bolster the confidence of the citizens of the UK and to inspire the citizens of the United States to join the war.

Now, we have watched plenty of World War Two films that were produced during the war, and we'll watch plenty more. This movie shows us the other side of those cameras. And of the people writing and producing the very films that are our mainstay. It's a fascinating view of how people in the midst of a war might have felt about the propaganda they were helping to make. All that and we get to spend a lot more time thinking about Dunkirk and all the weird Boat Dad appeal that particular event holds. Truly this film is aimed at the very heart of *Friendly Fire*.

“Film, Mrs. Cole. Real life with the boring bits cut out. Don't confuse facts with truth, and for Christ's sake, don't let either of them get in the way of the story!” Today, on *Friendly Fire*, *Their Finest*.

[Background music crescendos dramatically and smash-cuts to the podcast theme.]

00:04:42	Music	Transition	<p><i>[Drumroll begins, which leads into the theme song.]</i></p> <p>“War” off the album <i>War & Peace</i> by Edwin Starr. Impassioned, intense funk.</p> <p><i>War!</i> <i>Huh!</i> <i>Yeah!</i> <i>What is it good for?!</i> <i>Absolutely—</i> <i>—nothing!</i> <i>Uh-huh!</i></p> <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> <p><i>[Song fades down and plays quietly as host begins to speak.]</i></p>
00:05:01	Ben Harrison	Host	Welcome to <i>Friendly Fire</i> , the war movie podcast that’s got just what the Ministry is looking for: authenticity and optimism. I’m Ben Harrison.
00:05:09	Adam Pranica	Host	<i>[Chuckling slightly]</i> I’m Adam Pranica.
00:05:11	John	Host	And I’m John Roderick.
00:05:12	Ben	Host	I didn’t see this movie coming. I didn’t know about this movie.
00:05:15	Adam	Host	No.
00:05:16	John	Host	I hadn’t heard about it, either.
00:05:17	Adam	Host	Probably because it didn’t come out around Mother’s Day, which is the yearly time that I go to see movies with my mom.
			<p><i>[Ben chuckles and John laughs deeply.]</i></p> <p>This would be right up her alley.</p>
00:05:29	Ben	Host	I was kind of delighted by this, though, because this is a movie that takes a look at a thing that we’ve been very interested in on the show lately, which is the World War Two films made during World War Two.
00:05:40	Adam	Host	Yes.
00:05:41	Ben	Host	Like, talking to the home audience. They show a lot of fun production stuff, like the miniature boat in the bathtub and all that stuff. And the, like, motivations behind the government and creative people that are trying to make them.

00:05:56	Adam	Host	I only mentioned the Mother's Day thing because I feel deeply that this film is perfect for all of our moms. But I also liked this movie quite a bit for all of those same reasons, Ben.
00:06:07	Ben	Host	Yeah, I told my wife after I watched it I thought she would have enjoyed it if she had watched it with me. And she said, "Yeah, I looked over at the screen a couple times, and I could tell I would have liked it, too." <i>[Chuckles.]</i>
00:06:17	Adam	Host	There's a lot of great sweaters in it.
00:06:20	Ben	Host	Oh, yeah.
00:06:21	Adam	Host	Very comfortable-looking sweaters.
00:06:22	Ben	Host	Yeah. Banging sweaters, great suits, great scarves.
00:06:27	John	Host	Although not the... not the greatest suits.
			<i>[Adam chuckles.]</i>
			I think that was part of—that was part of the story, right? That it was it—that everybody was a little shabby? But not—I don't know. Not even the greatest shabby.
00:06:40	Adam	Host	The agent has that line about, you know, "This is veal, but not in the pre-war sense."
00:06:45	John	Host	Yeah.
00:06:46	Adam	Host	So you're saying these are suits, but not in the pre-war sense, also?
00:06:47	John	Host	I, personally, don't feel that 1939 is peak style.
			<i>[Adam makes a thoughtful sound.]</i>
			I think that in women's clothes, I'm not into it. And in men's clothes, I feel like the lapels were positioned poorly. I mean, everything was made nicely, of course. But I don't think it's peak...
00:07:07	Ben	Host	The craftsmanship is there. It's the subtle aesthetic distinctions—
00:07:11	John	Host	Yes. I think there's a trough between—between the late twenties and the mid-fifties where style kind of bumped.
00:07:20	Ben	Host	Wow, that's interesting. What happened between the late twenties and the mid-fifties that would account for such a trough? <i>[Stutters]</i> Were the people of the world distracted by other events?
00:07:32	John	Host	<i>[Chuckling]</i> It didn't keep them from making crazy hats and hairstyles and and shoulder pads and crazy—it's crazy time is what it is. It's <u>crazy</u> time.
			<i>[Ben chuckles.]</i>
			I'm hoping that maybe we come out of this global pandemic with some exciting new fashion.
00:07:46	Ben	Host	Crazy time is something I try to just say, sort of, you know, put a little blowhardiness in my voice and say that every day. "Crazy times."
00:07:53	John	Host	<i>[Joining in with Ben, in a exaggerated announcer's voice]</i> Crazy times!

00:07:55	Adam	Host	When do you take the blowhardiness out of your voice? <i>[John laughs pointedly.]</i>
00:07:59	Ben	Host	When I sit down to talk to you guys on <i>Friendly Fire</i> . <i>[John chuckles.]</i>
00:08:03	Adam	Host	Are you supposing that Saville Row was in the crosshairs of the—of the Luftwaffe bombing runs? <i>[Ben laughs.]</i>
00:08:09	John	Host	<i>[Quietly]</i> Ohhh, interesting. Interesting theory. <i>[At regular volume]</i> Yeah, it did demoralize the British.
00:08:14	Adam	Host	We see a lot of rubbled roads in this film. I wonder.
00:08:18	John	Host	What threw me off about the movie was that it is pretty, um—I wouldn't say aggressively, but pretty prominently billed as a comedy. Like, a dramedy or a comedy-drama. What does it say here? "War comedy drama."
00:08:39	Ben	Host	Yeah, the the poster would—did not lead me to believe I was going to be weeping a lot, watching this movie.
00:08:45	John	Host	Yeah, and so you think, "Oh, it's a British comedy about the war." That—we have a lot to go on with that. Like, "Oh, it's gonna be like, funny and fun and there's just gonna be people slipping on things and bonking their heads."
00:09:03	Ben	Host	"We'll probably see an officious Nazi that that gets what's coming to him."
00:09:08	John	Host	That's right.
00:09:09	Adam	Host	Tom Buckley bonked his head.
00:09:10	John	Host	There's some head-bonking, but it is not—I would put the emphasis on the <u>drama</u> , <u>way</u> more than I would the comedy. I mean, it's—it's comedy in the sense that it is... I don't know, that it's that British subtlety of, like, um...
00:09:26	Clip	Clip	Roger Swain (<i>Their Finest</i>): We need more than... fat policeman toppling off ladders.
00:09:30	John	Host	It's a comedy of manners, I guess. But I didn't think this movie was funny. <i>[Chuckles]</i> I though this movie was pretty sad.
00:09:39	Adam	Host	That question of tone, I think, is crucial. And I don't know if you felt the way I did, but—I don't know, about half an hour in, when you get that first montage of Catrin and Tom looking wistfully. Like, they're apart, and they're thinking about each other, obviously. And I was like, "Come on. No." Like, I don't care about either of these people, and I don't want them to be together. And then by the end, like, before the lighting scaffold falls, I was like, "Oh, this is the best movie I've ever seen." <i>[John laughs.]</i> "I want these two kids to get together! This is amazing! I love them so much!" And it was a ditch that this movie dug itself that I was not

expecting to ever get out of. And I think it has to do with that tone. It really plays around with it.

00:10:28	Ben	Host	Yeah. The on-set accident crushing and killing one of the writers was not a plot beat that I saw coming. You know, there—it seems like the movie is setting you up for an air raid is going to take out one of our main characters. Because it's a thing that they're all coping with all through the war. That's not where it comes from. It's never where you expect it.
00:10:51	John	Host	Yeah, and I couldn't figure out whether—whether that was like, a elegant metaphor? But yeah, what a—what a weird device.
00:11:00	Adam	Host	And the film presents this magical realism, in that we cut back and forth to the imagined movie of Catrin's mind and real life. And after Tom Buckley's crushed by the scaffold, I was thinking, "Well, that's just—you know, she finally had her great moment. She's imagining that it's never going to last, and this is what her mind is projecting."
00:11:24	John	Host	Right.
00:11:25	Adam	Host	I kept on waiting for us to be pulled back into real life, where Tom's alive. And I was—I was out of the movie for a while because of that. Like, my critical eye was waiting for the cut back to real life that never came, and I feel like I might have missed the ten minutes that followed for that reason. 'Cause I was just trying to process how they were gonna do it.
			<i>[Ben chuckles briefly.]</i>
00:11:45	John	Host	The ten minutes that followed—it felt like the film wasn't sure how it was going to stick the landing. There was a fog and it was down by the porch—
00:11:55	Adam	Host	Yeah.
00:11:56	Ben	Host	Yeah
00:11:57	John	Host	—you could hear bells.

00:11:58	Ben	Host	<p>We have a lot of films that are in this tradition of the writer of the film kind of lionizing the writers of films. And, like, you're never going to get the the movie about how the best boy was considered critical to the war effort so he was you know, excused from enlisting so that he could, uh...</p> <p><i>[John chuckles.]</i></p> <p>Like, that's not a story that—that we ever tell. But, like, sticking the landing in is critical to the story that the story is telling, too. There's that moment where, like, he can't quite crack what the—what the third act is gonna be and she stays up all night writing it on his typewriter.</p>
00:12:38	John	Host	<p>I was following the meta-level there, where the movie they're writing in the movie doesn't have an ending, and this movie also doesn't have an ending.</p> <p><i>[Adam giggles.]</i></p> <p>But at a certain point, there were too many layers of that for me to believe that it was all a commentary on itself. And it felt just, like—<i>[chuckling]</i>—at some point along the way, some of these writers have—are, like, struggling to put the—put the end of this film on. But it worked. They got it. I mean, they landed the picture.</p>
00:13:12	Clip	Clip	<p>Speaker (<i>Their Finest</i>): I've seen it five times.</p>
00:13:14	John	Host	<p>The—that final scene where she realizes that they were shooting B-roll and actually included it at the very end of the movie and she—you know, and she sees herself—</p>
00:13:26	Ben	Host	<p>Yeah.</p>
00:13:27	John	Host	<p>She recognizes the—or, you know, that reference that, um—Ambrose Hilliard made it when he visited her in the house, where he said, "You were great in the film." You know, it felt like he was saying that you did a great job writing. But it—she realizes that she actually appeared in the movie and that's pretty touching. Pretty touching moment.</p>
00:13:48	Ben	Host	<p>God, I—I was a ball of tears in that scene. Like, this director was playing me like a fiddle at that point.</p> <p><i>[John laughs warmly.]</i></p>
00:13:59	Adam	Host	<p>Bill Nighy is so great in this. The entire way. And he plays ten different versions of his character in it.</p>
00:14:06	Ben	Host	<p>Yeah. I wondered in a pre-pandemic world, would I have bought his character? 'Cause his character seems so selfish, like—his nation is at war and he's, like, he's just concerned about his career and concerned about status and concerned about playing characters that make him look cool and attractive or whatever. And that had a ring of truth that is unexpected, or would have been unexpected. Not that the Blitz is perfectly comparable, but the idea that there are still people walking around, like, up in their heads and up their own asses about what this means for them.</p>
00:14:44	Adam	Host	<p>Two really big things happened to his character that help us turn that corner with him. It's Sammy's death and it's Sophie kicking him in the balls repeatedly.</p>

00:14:54	Clip	Clip	<i>[A clattering sound of metal shifting, then a thud.]</i>
00:14:56	John	Host	Yeah. Sophie is <u>such</u> a great character.
00:14:58	Adam	Host	Yeah, she's amazing. <i>[Chuckles]</i> She's so great! And I think in one of her first scenes, you know, she takes the place of her brother at that lunch and tells him that—that he should expect to be fired if he's not an earner. It makes Ambrose love his career more and value it more than maybe he ever has, instead of taking it for granted, right?
00:15:25	John	Host	Yeah, well... for the first 20 minutes, half hour of the movie, I felt like Bill Nighy was kind of being squandered in the role, because he was playing such a callow person, and it was like, "Oh, the callow actor thing." But as his character evolved—you know, we're used to seeing a villain at the beginning of the movie get transformed somehow. What usually happens is we realize that they have a heart of gold or they're put into some hard situation and rise to the occasion. But we watched his character really evolve over time. Not just—I don't think that the person himself was evolving so much as Bill Nighy's <u>portrayal</u> of him. You know, it's—again, a movie within a movie. But by the end I just felt like it was one of the great performances.
00:16:18	Ben	Host	Yeah, it was—it was really tremendous.
00:16:20	John	Host	A great role, and he went from being this character that I was like, "Ugh, don't cut to him. His story is really starting to get on my nerves," to "I just want to follow him everywhere." And when he sings by the piano and you realize what a beautiful voice he has?
			<i>[Music begins to play quietly as John speaks, piano and a vocalist singing something slow-tempo.]</i>
			I mean that whole—that whole scene in the pub where the twins were singing and he was singing.
00:16:39	Clip	Clip	<i>[Piano plays and the Starling Sisters sing "They Can't Black Out the Moon" by Rachel Portman from the film Their Finest. Sweet and endearing vocal harmonies.]</i>
			<i>Are you?</i>
			<i>Are you?</i>
			<i>Are you?</i>
			<i>[Music continues quietly as the hosts continue.]</i>
00:16:41	John	Host	God, the singing was so good. The music was so good. Uh, it—
00:16:45	Adam	Host	I was just gonna mention that scene, John. Like, that could have been so cheesy. It—like—
00:16:49	John	Host	Oh, and it—it broke my heart!
00:16:50	Adam	Host	On the page, it could have been awful, but in the film it was incredible. <i>[Music fades out.]</i>
00:16:55	John	Host	Yeah.

00:16:56	Ben	Host	I was at a memorial service about two weeks before the lockdown went in place at a retirement home, and that song was one of the songs that was—
00:17:09	Adam	Host	Wow.
00:17:10	Ben	Host	—sung. And it made me think about all those people living in that home and how scared they must be. I don't—I don't think I had any familiarity with that song before that, so I don't know what the significance of it is in the context of wartime, but it, um—it re—yeah. Like, I was a fucking mess watching this movie. <i>[Laughs ruefully.]</i>
00:17:32	John	Host	I mean, you— <i>[breaks off, half-chuckles]</i> .
00:17:33	Ben	Host	I didn't see most of it, 'cause I was—my vision was so blurry <i>[chuckles]</i> .
00:17:36	John	Host	You are <u>extremely</u> vulnerable to British costume dramas, though. <i>[Adam laughs.]</i>
00:17:40	Ben	Host	I know. I know. It's uh, it's my—it's one of my great weaknesses. That's a high-wire act, right? Like, that strikes me as being analogous to the scene in <i>Master and Commander</i> , where they do the Lord's Prayer. And it's like, "Boy, if, like—you better fucking nail it if everybody on screen starts doing the Lord's Prayer or it's going to be the corniest thing—"
00:18:04	Adam	Host	Mm-hmm.
00:18:05	Ben	Host	"—that ever happens in your movie." It's basically the somberest version of karaoke, what they're doing.
00:18:12	John	Host	<i>[Ben makes a couple of affirming sounds as John speaks.]</i> Just the format of two voices around a kind of, like, rinky stand-up piano. And then the people in the room sort of joining in as you would, in a kind of dr—in a drunk room where everybody kind of knows the song, but these girls have been do—have clearly doing this as a sister act for a long time. Everything about it was so charming, and the music—I mean, just the way they were singing together, it just had such a closeness.
00:18:40	Adam	Host	This is such a set-designed, "the movie" type of movie, and that's one of those locations that just feels—I think most people have been in a pub with the low ceilings and the piano in the corner. Like, you just know what that looks and that smells like. It felt so real to be there. That is also the scene where Catrin comes back from her awful visit with her boyfriend, right? And it's Tom that interrogates the trip a little bit, I think knowing how badly it had gone. What an interesting... background to that moment. Like, what is probably the most painful moment for Catrin, right?

00:19:21	John	Host	Well, yeah. I mean, on a—on the heels of a few painful moments. It's the moment where, you know, they go out and they're bathed in the moonlight, and the movie is flirting with being pretty cheesy. Not—not that them getting together there on the beach would have ruined, you know, all the other things that are great about the movie, but it was becoming a little pat. And then instead, they have a fight. A fight that feels kind of, like, unreconcilable. Not irreconcilable, but <u>un</u> reconcilable. And you're—and we're—we were all kind of left holding the fruit basket a little bit.
00:20:05	Adam	Host	You don't want to hold the fruit basket under a full moon. I mean—
00:20:08	John	Host	Hey, look. You're the one recording from his car.
00:20:11	Clip	Clip	<i>[Wild electric guitar riffs play as the speaker talks.]</i>
			Speaker 1 (<i>The Simpsons</i>): Gentleman, say hello to the Second Base—mobile.
			Speakers 2 and 3: Wicked!
00:20:16	John	Host	After he sits and sulks for a couple of days, she goes and fixes his script, and then also writes the end of their romance in the form of a script. I don't—that's all very, very writerly.
00:20:29	Ben	Host	Did you think that there was significance in the fact that she used his typewriter to write the end of the shooting script, and then <u>her</u> typewriter to write the end of their—their story?
00:20:40	John	Host	Oh, that's a good observation.
00:20:41	Adam	Host	Mm.
00:20:42	John	Host	I hadn't picked up on it.
00:20:43	Ben	Host	I don't know why that stuck out to me, but it—she, like, sits at his desk to do the—'cause the character is based on a real screenwriter named Diana Morgan who worked at Ealing Studios in in the UK, and, like, did basically this but mostly was uncredited. Like, she didn't get—uh, she didn't get, like, onscreen credits for the work she did. I guess because she wrote quote-unquote, "the slop?" I wondered if it was like a—it was like OPSEC, like, people can tell the difference between typewriters—
			<i>[John starts laughing.]</i>
			—so if this doesn't look like it came from his typewriter it won't be—
00:21:24	John	Host	That's—
			<i>[Adam sighs with amusement.]</i>
00:21:25	Ben	Host	You know, it'll be seen—met with suspicion or something.
00:21:27	John	Host	That's a good idea. Clever. Clever.
00:21:30	Adam	Host	The R's are always a little bit superscript—
00:21:33	John	Host	Right.
00:21:34	Adam	Host	—on one of the typewriters, so that's how you know.

00:21:35	Ben	Host	In looking into this screenwriter, I added a movie to our list called <i>Went the Day Well</i> , which is released in 1942, and it was a movie that, like, Graham Greene wrote the story for. And she worked on the screenplay, but I don't think got an onscreen credit.
00:21:54	John	Host	Yeah, that's actually explicitly said in the movie, that because she's working <u>for</u> the Ministry of Information it's, like, part of her—part of the deal that she wouldn't get screenwriting credit. Which is—
00:22:07	Ben	Host	Yeah.
00:22:08	John	Host	—what, you know, like—there is an—there is a lot of commentary in the movie about women in the thirties and their role in English culture as the war starts to take all the men out.
00:22:22	Ben	Host	It's very self-conscious at the beginning, I thought. Like, it a bit felt like it was just doing it to make my mom more interested in watching the movie.
00:22:33	John	Host	Yeah. And then all of those threads that felt like they were—that they were hitting us over the head, they all panned out in the script. Like, later on we got to actually feel resolution to those things and see—it added to the character struggle of Catrin. Or, it added to her hero arc, you know?
00:22:54	Ben	Host	Yeah. Absolutely. Yeah, I mean, I—the line that stuck out to me early in the movie was, “A lot of men are scared we won't go back into our boxes—”
00:23:03	John	Host	Yeah.
00:23:04	Ben	Host	“—after this.”
00:23:05	John	Host	That definitely was for your mom.
00:23:07	Ben	Host	Right. That's, like, still super-meaningful for my mom to, like, see and hear things like that in movies. And I roll my eyes at it a little bit, but then realize that my mom has lived through, like, a period of history where those boxes went from being, like, still something that women were expected to live in to, like—I mean, obviously, that struggle is not over or anything, but—but less and less so, right? Like, the—like—
00:23:38	John	Host	I don't want your mom to live in a box, Ben. I think I speak for Adam here.
00:23:42	Ben	Host	Well. <i>[Chuckles]</i> She's living in a tiny Airbnb right now, so...
00:23:48	Adam	Host	Might as well be.
00:23:49	Ben	Host	Yeah. Box-adjacent, as the realtor would say.
			<i>[John chuckles.]</i>
00:23:54	Music	Transition	Theme music plays, “War” by Edwin Starr. <i>War!</i> <i>Huh!</i> <i>Yeah!</i>

00:23:57	John	Host	The number of instances in the script where the movie that they're writing is reflecting the movie that we're watching is—and the movie that we're—and the people that are in the movie that we're watching are conscious of the fact that they're lives are being recapitulated in the script that they're working on—
00:24:17	Ben	Host	Yeah.
00:24:18	John	Host	Did start to—not—it never grated on me. But it does now feel like a puzzle that in the writers' room made them all stand up and high-five one another.
00:24:30	Ben	Host	<i>[Laughs]</i> And you reject the idea that they succeeded at solving that puzzle?
00:24:4	John	Host	Oh! No, I don't, but I think your—your observation that she sat at the one typewriter then went to the other <u>is</u> the type of thing that I could see the writers—again—feeling like it was an Easter egg that they were putting in their movie. There were—not instances, exactly, but a general feeling that I had that I was watching a thing that was—that was crafted. It's not where I could feel the director's hand or feel the writer's hand as much as it was—ah, I don't know. Just touching the gauze of being precious.
00:25:15	Ben	Host	I mean, it's not entirely clear to me that that that thing with the two typewriters would have been in the script. That's the kind of thing that you could work out on set when you're shooting that scene and saying like, "Ah, there's kind of not enough movement here. There's not enough you know, the—like, this is kind of a long scene and we need to accomplish a lot with her just sitting at a desk. So maybe—maybe we have her do one at one desk and one at the other just to break it up a little bit?"
00:25:45	John	Host	Don't you normally in a situation like that have a montage of a person sitting at a typewriter—
00:25:49	Sound Effect	Sound Effect	<i>[Paper being torn from a typewriter carriage and the carriage wheel being turned continue in the background.]</i>
00:25:50	John	Host	—ripping pages out and throwing them onto the floor, uh—
00:25:53	Ben	Host	Yeah!
00:25:54	John	Host	—from what, like, seven different angles? And then somebody says—
00:25:56	Clip	Clip	Speaker (<i>Their Finest</i>): I'm sorry, Paul. This is all wrong.
00:25:58	Adam	Host	I think that case is really well made. But I also wonder if, from that very same writers' room, you're trying to construct a moment that makes you feel the ultimate catharsis. And that moment where Catrin's in the movie theatre experiencing the film that she helped to write and we are in the quote-unquote "audience" watching her experience this and also watching the film made about her experience, there's such a concentration of whatever that feeling is, that catharsis, that—that moment, that I wonder if that's not the goal on the horizon we're going for, instead of the construction of all of the gearing that gets you there. Like, if you're not just writing it backwards instead of forwards, you know what I mean?
00:26:50	John	Host	Yeah.

00:26:51	Adam	Host	Like, in one direction, it's a little cynical. In the other direction, it's—it's less so.
00:26:57	Ben	Host	<i>[Thoughtfully]</i> Yeah. Well, they—and the cynicism is something that they point directly at, right? Like they put the two notecards on either end of the corkboard—
00:27:05	Adam	Host	Yeah.
00:27:06	Ben	Host	—and then write the movie from the outside in.
00:27:10	John	Host	As a writing exercise, that was very exciting to me. 'Cause I loved the moment where they had ten cards up, and he was like, "Now we just write the parts in the middle!" And I was like, "Why don't I work like that?!"
			<i>[Adam chuckles and Ben laughs.]</i>
			I just wish I had one other person in here that could put note cards up on the wall and then just tell me to write the parts in the middle!
00:27:30	Adam	Host	The cheapest heat was when Phyl would come in and all they had were titles, and they'd just give her fun titles that they were kicking around.
00:27:37	John	Host	Yeah.
00:27:38	Adam	Host	And they—they rang that bell a couple of times, and it worked every time.
00:27:40	John	Host	It did.
00:27:41	Ben	Host	<i>[Chuckles]</i> It was good. I liked also the idea that, like, screenwriter is a job that you can get by applying for it and then you go and sit in an office somewhere. Like, it makes the... the screenplay, the creative work almost like a commodity. Like, "Oh, you're the type of worker that can produce this type of widget? So—and we need this type of widget at this company, so we have hired you to produce it." Like, it is very unromantic about writing, in a certain way.
00:28:11	John	Host	But interestingly in this film, we see multiple instances of committees getting—you know, intruding on their script. People from the Ministry of Information, the Secretary of War, are all telling them, like, things that have to happen to their movie. But in most, I guess, films about making a film, we would feel like the movie was being just irreparably compromised and ruined by all those cooks. But somehow the fact that this is happening in wartime Britain, all the, like, meddlers also feel— <i>[chuckles]</i> —first of all that they're like—they're sensitive to the idea that it also should be good. Like the—
00:28:57	Ben	Host	Right.

00:28:58	John	Host	<p>—the Minister—the Secretary of War—although he's about to tell them that they need an American in their movie, he also spends the first minute, you know, doing a Shakespeare soliloquy.</p> <p><i>[Ben chuckles.]</i></p> <p>It feels like if this were made in, uh—if this were made about Americans at the time, there would be some crass cigar-chomper, who's like, "<i>[Imitating a raspy voice]</i> There needs to be more boobs!"</p> <p><i>[Ben laughs.]</i></p> <p>But you know, like, here, because it's set in wartime England, it's like, the script kind of isn't ruined. It's given challenges. But in the end they manage to make a beautiful picture. And that was a weird distinction between the way this would have been made about an Amer—about an American Ministry of Propaganda vs. a British one.</p>
00:29:47	Ben	Host	Hm.
00:29:48	Adam	Host	<p>That's such a, like, it's—it's another instance of <i>Their Finest</i> the movie looking like the notecards on the bulletin board. Because you can't just have the emotional arc of the film go up. You've got to keep letting air out of the balloon. And I thought where that air was let out most frequently were in those notes, right? You're like, "Oh, God, like, this film's going to be corrupted now." We get several instances of that, where in a strange way it made the film better.</p> <p>My question related to the idea of improving the film goes something like, "The whole point of making <i>The Nancy Starling</i> is to make a document that American filmgoers enjoy and then serves as an inspiration for the United States joining the war." It's—</p>
00:30:37	John	Host	Only later, though. That motivation comes in 3/4 of the way through the making of the movie, right? Or the writing of it.
00:30:44	Adam	Host	<p>Right. And I'm wondering—this is, like, cynical brain creeping in—how much of that improved the film?</p> <p><i>[John chuckles an affirming sound.]</i></p> <p>Because we see versions of the films that they make, and they fucking suck. Like, the crowd is laughing at—at parts that aren't supposed to be funny. They're bored by the stories. It's interesting that intent means so much in the quality of a thing. At least, that seems to be the case that <i>Their Finest</i> is making.</p>
00:31:15	John	Host	<p>The workaround that they came up with when they realized that Carl Lundbeck was a terrible actor and could not act, but he was—but they had to have him in the movie?</p> <p><i>[Adam laughs.]</i></p> <p>And they—</p>
00:31:25	Adam	Host	That was so fun.

00:31:26	John	Host	And they figured out, like, “Oh, we just, like, do voiceover and then just basically have him do nothing in the movie except look handsome and point at the horizon.” I loved that storyline. And then, you know, gradually, like—gradually, like, Hilliard teaches him kind of how to act. I mean, that was some of my favorite stuff in the film.
00:31:47	Ben	Host	And I loved the, like, clips that they selected for when she goes and sees the movie in the theatre. That, like, you can see—you can see the cracks. Like, you can see that he is not on the same level as an actor as the other actors in the movie.
00:32:01	Adam	Host	Yeah.
00:32:03	Ben	Host	But he is—he’s been brought up to a level—and plausibly. Like—
00:32:05	John	Host	Yeah. They made it work.
00:32:07	Ben	Host	—that is such a tricky needle to thread. Like, having an actor act poorly— <i>[laughs]</i> —and then—and then get better at acting, but not so much better than they’re actually good at acting.
			<i>[Adam and John laugh.]</i>
00:32:18	Adam	Host	He’s so camera-aware in the funniest way. Like, there are two points about his bad acting that really work. His terrible line reads, but also his awareness physically is so awful.
00:32:30	Clip	Clip	Carl Lundbeck (<i>Their Finest</i>): I’m not sure what to do with my hands.
00:32:31	Ben	Host	This is part of a trio of films that came out in 2017 on the subject of Dunkirk. Uh, the others being <i>Dunkirk</i> and <i>Darkest Hour</i> , which we watched back-to-back. And I think we had maybe discussed at the time throwing this one in as well, but we didn’t want to get totally overwhelmed with Dunkirk stuff. But I feel—I feel like that’s a pretty good film festival. They, like—your 2017-movies-that-cover-the-subject-of-Dunkirk in— <i>[laughs]</i> —film festival.
00:33:02	Adam	Host	At every angle. Yeah.
00:33:03	John	Host	Yeah. I mean the only thing that would be missing from that film festival was a movie that actually showed you anything about the rescue at Dunkirk that wasn’t, like, a weird space oddity.
00:33:16	Ben	Host	That wasn’t totally insane? Yeah. I mean, the conversations about how to characterize Dunkirk—like, is it the greatest retreat in military history or is it this, you know, regrouping so that we can come back stronger than ever is so interesting in this film. Because, like, using the biggest retreat as a—as the centerpiece of your propaganda film takes some backflips psychologically, right?
00:33:44	John	Host	That was such—that <u>line</u> was such a throwaway, but it was the actual—the tent pole of the movie. And it was such a great—the way that he threw that line off, as a way of kind of pushing back at the propaganda guys balking at the idea that, “Wait a minute, this was supposed to be a true story, and it turns out that it’s not.”
			<i>[Adam chuckles.]</i>
00:34:06	Ben	Host	Yeah.

00:34:07	John	Host	<p>And he's like, "Well, how ma—" You know, like, "How true do you want your true stories to be?" It was <u>so</u> good. And, you know, that wasn't just happening in the production of this film. The whole British propaganda effort, like, coalesced around the idea that, "We can not make Dunkirk look like a failure. Because that's the end. It's the end of the war for us if we come—if we wade back home all bruised and ass-kicked. Um, we're done, right?"</p> <p>And so turning that story around and making it heroic was a incredible effort on their part and amazing that they kind of pulled it off, although we see nowadays that truth doesn't <u>really</u> matter. If a propaganda machine is, like, engaged, right? You can convince half the people of this country that an epidemic isn't real. And then three weeks later convince them that it is totally real.</p>
00:35:08	Ben	Host	It's real and that they believed it was real all the time.
00:35:10	John	Host	<p>That they believed it was real the whole time and that the people that had failed to believe it was real actually didn't fail. You know, like, the degree to which we're living in a world now where there is no—there is no truth that even spans three weeks from—you know, somebody can say something and three weeks later people will tell you that they said the opposite. And the fact that you can <u>watch it</u> happening just doesn't affect people somehow. And realizing that that was also true—that has been true throughout the ages. You know, there are guys sitting in that theatre watching that movie about Dunkirk who were at Dunkirk, and they're dabbing their eyes and like, "<i>[In a high-pitched British accent, as though crying]</i> It was s-so real."</p>
00:35:53	Ben	Host	Yeah.
00:35:54	John	Host	<p>"<i>[Continuing the voice]</i> It's—it's exactly how it happened."</p> <p><i>[Ben laughs.]</i></p> <p><i>[Resumes regular tone]</i> When it's like, "I mean, it was only—it was only four months ago."</p>
00:36:00	Ben	Host	<p><i>[Chuckling]</i> Yeah. I loved the scene where Bill Nighy comes up behind the, uh—the matte painting of all the soldiers on the beach.</p> <p><i>[Adam laughs.]</i></p>
00:36:09	John	Host	Great moment.
00:36:11	Ben	Host	God, that was so funny. What a great visual gag.
00:36:14	John	Host	<p>And it—it told—it taught me more about filmmaking than a—like, a hundred books.</p> <p><i>[Adam chuckles.]</i></p> <p>Just seeing that and go—and not knowing what was happening at first and like, "What is—whoa!" Because at first, you look at that matte painting, and you're like, "How did they get a cast of thousands?"</p>
00:36:31	Ben	Host	Yeah.
00:36:32	John	Host	Really effective.

00:36:33	Adam	Host	It's really great show-not-tell, and they do that a bunch in this film. You don't need to know anything about production to appreciate how difficult it is to tell a story this way.
00:36:44	John	Host	Just the fact that Bill Nighy's character hates electricians— <i>[Ben and Adam laugh.]</i> —and it's—and it's never explained.
00:36:50	Adam	Host	Yeah.
00:36:51	John	Host	But he says—you know, his agent is like, "Do you still refuse to share a bathroom with electricians?" And he's like—he kind of shudders, like, "Ugh. Electricians. Ugh." <i>[Ben laughs.]</i> It's—it's, like, never explained. It's so great, though.
00:37:05	Adam	Host	That idea of propaganda that you guys were interrogating is another example of how the film is so related to its source material. Because if they don't describe Dunkirk the way that they do in terms of its value in propaganda and how it's described and all the ways that it could be botched, I think you look at what they do to these sisters—to the sisters' story as a cruel joke on them. Like, and this is almost the beginning of this entire film's story being told. If they don't get that right, if it feels like we're taking advantage of the twins or cynically taking the kernel of their story and then warping into this propaganda that needs to be used to get the United States into the war, I don't think we're given the satisfying feeling at the end nearly as much as we get, right?
00:38:02	John	Host	Well, 'cause we never see them again, right? And—
00:38:04	Adam	Host	Yeah. And they're victims, too. Like, to victimize them again with our production machinery on top of the—what they've already experienced by their awful dad, that wouldn't have felt good at all.
00:38:18	John	Host	But you get the feeling that this movie comes out and they—and basically the only thing it shares with their experience is that it—the boat is named—the boat has their name. They—the characters have their names.
00:38:29	Ben	Host	There was a time when they were on that boat in the English Channel.
00:38:33	John	Host	Right. And nothing else resembles what happened. But I think that they probably went to the theater and everybody in their hometown lifted them up on their shoulders.
00:38:42	Adam	Host	Oh, sure.
00:38:43	John	Host	And after—you know, after watching the film, it replaced their actual memories.
00:38:49	Adam	Host	Yeah.
00:38:49	John	Host	And if you went to an old folks' home in 1985 and talked to them, they'd be like, " <i>[Puts on a high-pitched, stereotypical elderly voice]</i> Oh, yes, well, we saved all those boys." <i>[Ben laughs heartily.]</i>

00:38:57	Adam	Host	I think my point is if you have that Dunkirk description happen in a different scene or a little further away in the film, they're so unrelated that I think the story of the sisters is—feels a lot different than the way it does.
00:39:11	John	Host	I see what you're saying. Yeah.
00:39:13	Adam	Host	Because that conversation's happening in such close proximity.
00:39:16	John	Host	Right. Right. Absolutely.
00:39:18	Clip	Clip	<i>[Vocalizing and whimpering from a few speakers.]</i>
00:39:20	Adam	Host	Was there any part of you that... was unsatisfied by Catrin's total redemption throughout the film? Like, not only does she get the career that we want her to have, but she also achieves romantic freedom and independence from a—from a terrible ex. She turns the corner around her grief over Tom. Like, she wins every personal category that she possibly could. And I think in a lot of movies—again, like, I feel like we're talking a lot about the war on cynicism that a viewer might have when watching a movie like this. And I think a lot of films wouldn't be effective in making that feel real or making us feel good about it and watching it happen. And yet Catrin wins utterly at the end, and that feels very good.
00:40:22	Ben	Host	She doesn't, though. She doesn't—like, Buckley is dead.
00:40:24	Adam	Host	Oh, she'll be fine. She kissed Buckley <u>once</u> .
00:40:28	Ben	Host	There's a cynical way to take it at the end, if they got together and then she had to just kind of become his housewife, like, automatically because that was the expectation.
00:40:38	Adam	Host	See, this is—this is interesting. Like, I didn't see Tom as the love of Catrin's life! I saw him as an instrument of her independence.
00:40:48	John	Host	Tom isn't likable. And when they get together, it is—it does fulfill the romantic arc of the movie, but just as you say, Adam: if you think about their lives together at no point is it—does it feel even remotely possible that they are gonna develop a writing partnership as part of their relationship—
00:41:10	Adam	Host	Yeah.
00:41:11	John	Host	—and that after the war, into the fifties and sixties, the two of them will sit at matching desks in their country house and write hit movies. What it—what really it's set up to do is they're gonna work together on another picture, and then at the end of the war he's gonna go become a writer and she's going to have babies and—and these are going to be their memories. And he's gonna be kind of an asshole.
00:41:38	Adam	Host	Tom is totally Ellis. Like, this is—this is pre-Ellis Ellis.

00:41:43	John	Host	<p>This was the problem that I had. And I know that—I know that this is probably where we diverge, Ben, a little bit—was that I didn't really ever like Catrin or Tom. Certainly you don't like Ellis.</p> <p><i>[Adam chuckles.]</i></p> <p>I mean, the only people in the movie that I <u>liked</u> were Sophie, who's just wonderful. Who just comes in and, like, she's so much better at her brother's job than her brother ever was. And, you know, and Hilliard. And some of the supporting people. But, like, our main characters and their romance, I didn't... like. And I think that's kind of key to why the movie succeeds. Because if their banter had been charming—</p> <p><i>[Ben laughs loudly.]</i></p> <p>Because, you know, like, there was a—there was potential to have this movie be—the movie within the movie within the movie could have been a charming forties, like, banter comedy. The Brits are—that—they're <i>[sighs]</i>. Coming out of this movie, I was like, "How much of this is actual British subtlety confounding my American expectations? How much of this is, like, performative British subtlety that's being—that's actually, like, in the film intentionally to make it seem smart?"</p> <p><i>[Ben makes a couple of affirming sounds as John continues to speak.]</i></p> <p>"Or to make it seem <i>[puts on a posh British accent]</i> particularly British so that—so that the American—"</p>
00:43:16	Ben	Host	To f—to flatter a British audience that they're, like—
00:43:19	John	Host	Well, to flatter a British audience and also to flatter a <i>Downton Abbey</i> —loving American audience, you know?
			<p><i>[Ben laughs.]</i></p> <p>Who believes that movies that are a little bit more—you know, a little bit more subtle and dark are smarter and, you know, it makes us—it makes us feel wittier somehow. You know, all of that, I—at the closing credits, I really sat and kind of tried to sift through all of that.</p> <p>And how much of it was an actual kind of charmlessness that was accidental in the movie. Either as a result of casting or a result of the screen—the script trying to do too many things. And the one person they didn't have on the script team was an actual Catrin who could write believable, charming dialogue. You know, like, the screenwriters just might not have had their own Catrin who could make that love story—</p>
00:44:19	Sound Effect	Sound Effect	<i>[Sound of dot-matrix printing fades in and continues to fade up as John speaks.]</i>
00:44:20	John	Host	—actually sing rather than feel kind of workmanlike. Or that might have been the point!
			<i>[Ben and Adam chortle.]</i>
00:44:25	Adam	Host	<i>[In a mock surfer/stoner dude voice]</i> Whoa!

00:44:26	John	Host	<i>[Copying Adam's tone]</i> Right? <i>[Resumes regular tone]</i> Or it might just have been the Britishness of it.
00:44:30	Adam	Host	You typed up a hell of a film paper just then. Were you using your typewriter or or someone else's?
00:44:36	John	Host	<i>[Laughs]</i> I wrote the love story part on <u>my</u> typewriter— <i>[Adam laughs warmly.]</i> —and I wrote the critique of British film on his typewriter.
00:44:45	Ben	Host	<i>[Chuckles]</i> I wasn't really paying attention to what John just said, but—
00:44:47	John	Host	I know. You were—you were weeping internally.
00:44:50	Ben	Host	Yeah, yeah.
00:44:51	John	Host	For the great love that was lost.
00:44:52	Ben	Host	The screenwriter of this film, Gabby Chiappe, was actually—she had a cameo in the movie. She was in that propaganda piece that they're working on at the beginning, where they're, like, replacing the dialogue. And the women are covering their mouths. And—
00:45:08	John	Host	Oh, yeah.
00:45:09	Ben	Host	—and she's, like, on the fly writing. She was one of the women in that propaganda piece.
00:45:13	Adam	Host	That was fun.
00:45:14	Clip	Clip	Speaker 1 (<i>Their Finest</i>): He's coming along splendidly. Speaker 2: An appetite like his father.
00:45:18	Ben	Host	Do you guys want to hear a moment of pedantry from <i>Their Finest</i> ?
00:45:21	Adam	Host	Oh, yeah.
00:45:22	John	Host	Yeah.
00:45:23	Ben	Host	"At the start, Arterton's character is told, 'A page of script equates to a minute of screen time, or roughly 80 yards of celluloid.' Thirty-five millimeter cinema film is composed of 16 frames per foot and runs at 24 frames per second. So a minute onscreen—"
00:45:39	Sound Effect	Sound Effect	<i>[Morse code beeping continues as Ben speaks.]</i>
00:45:40	Ben	Host	"—is exactly 90 feet or 30 yards. 80 yards would be 240 feet or 2 minutes and 40 seconds. For a film about filmmaking, this is a ridiculous mistake to make."
00:45:51	John	Host	<i>[Laughing]</i> Wowww!
00:45:52	Adam	Host	Oof.
00:45:53	John	Host	I loved that comment right up until the super, like, grouchy, turns-out pedant.
00:45:58	Ben	Host	Yeah.
00:45:59	Adam	Host	And then I loved that comment even more. That—that little shittyness at the end just—

00:46:03	Ben	Host	Yeah.
00:46:04	John	Host	— <i>[laughs]</i> just amplified the coolness of that comment.
00:46:08	Ben	Host	Here's the thing about this. Like, I've shot film. Like, I—I went to film school and shot film, and I—I don't think that enough film crews are still working in the medium to have that knowledge at their fingertips anymore. And certainly a screenwriter could be forgiven for not knowing the conversions on, like, length—like feet of film per—per minute or whatever. But—
00:46:34	John	Host	True, but—but— <u>but</u> she put it in the movie.
00:46:37	Ben	Host	Yeah, it's—I guess it's something that you can go check.
00:46:40	John	Host	Yeah.
00:46:41	Adam	Host	She should have carototed that moment where the person speaking that line of dialogue covers their face with their hand and then you could just loop that in later with the...
			<i>[John and Ben laugh.]</i>
			—the right measurement.
00:46:53	Ben	Host	Fair enough. This jerk-off pedant on the internet is right and the— <i>[chuckles]</i> —screenwriter of this movie that we liked is wrong.
00:46:59	Adam	Host	Wow.
00:47:02	John	Host	You know, reading reviews of this film—a lot of film reviewers are like, "Oh! I loved the banter between Catrin and Tom!" And I—and reading the reviews, I felt like I wanted to say, like, "You mean you recognized that there was banter between them."
00:47:18	Adam	Host	<i>[Surprised and interested]</i> Oh.
00:47:19	John	Host	Like you—you didn't love it. You just noticed it. Or you realized that's what was ha—that's the part of it that you were supposed to love and find charming. That's where the comedy-drama hyphenate is—is located? But their drama is not charming.
00:47:35	Ben	Host	I liked the part where she threw his chips <i>[Cockney accent]</i> in the sea.
00:47:39	John	Host	Yeah, there's, like, the one moment where there's a little lightheartedness. But, like, the back and forth—he puts her down through the whole film.
00:47:47	Ben	Host	<i>[Regular accent returns]</i> Yeah.
00:47:48	John	Host	But—but he doesn't put her down as a... um, like, he's not a chauvinist past a certain point. He's very aware of his chauvinism. Or, he's aware of chauvinism as an issue.
00:47:59	Ben	Host	Right.
00:48:00	John	Host	Like, he's definitely above that. He just puts her down as a, like—'cause he's a bitter, frustrated, you know, drunk, shitty person. And that's not <u>funny</u> . Or fun.
00:48:13	Ben	Host	They talk about, like, why he hasn't been sent to the war, because he's, like, too important to the war effort as a propaganda writer.
00:48:22	John	Host	Right.

00:48:23	Ben	Host	But we never get his side of that, as far as I could tell. Like, how he felt about the fact that he's an able-bodied younger guy that is not enlisted or, you know, in the military in any way.
00:48:36	John	Host	We get his backstory, that he grew up in pubs because his dad was a World War One vet that was just a drunk abuser. And we get her backstory, you know, that her Spanish Civil War fake husband brought her out of Wales because she was, you know, like, a teenager in one of his paintings. But neither one of those stories is very redemptive. Neither one of them is—we don't—there's no—there's nothing light in them. Takes away from the comedy. And I just didn't—I didn't feel like the last—when they started making out backstage, I felt kind of like if two friends of mine got together and I saw that they were bad for each other.
			<i>[Ben laughs.]</i>
			You know, I felt a little bit like, <i>[makes an uncertain, groaning sound]</i> .
00:49:27	Ben	Host	I understand why she likes him. He does have excellent glasses frames.
00:49:31	John	Host	He's got great glasses frames. He's <u>very</u> talented. There's no question about it. But, like, she's gonna wake up ten years into this marriage and he's gonna talk to her like he's talked to her through this whole film. This is gonna be a bummer.
00:49:43	Adam	Host	She's never gonna not write the slop.
00:49:46	John	Host	And that's what we want out of this. You know, we <u>want</u> that moment at the end of the movie where the—she's finally in a bright room, sitting at the big desk, working on the big screenplay. But, you know, the day this war ends, she goes back to—
00:50:00	Adam	Host	Yeah.
00:50:02	John	Host	You know, some East End tenement.
00:50:04	Adam	Host	Until this conversation, I never knew how much we needed Tom to die in this movie. The first—like, when I watched it happen, I saw it as a tragedy. And now—now I see it as the only thing that could possibly happen to ensure Catrin's independence.
00:50:20	John	Host	Tom's gotta die.
00:50:21	Adam	Host	Yeah.
00:50:22	John	Host	In fact, all Toms have to die.
00:50:23	Adam	Host	Yeah.
00:50:24	Ben	Host	Yep.
00:50:25	Adam	Host	All Toms everywhere.
00:50:26	Ben	Host	And that's why we're switching topics for this podcast from being about war movies to just being about a jihad on Toms.
00:50:33	John	Host	<i>Tom omnes debent mori.</i>
00:50:36	Ben	Host	That's the crest of— <i>[chuckles]</i> —of <i>Friendly Fire</i> .
00:50:39	Adam	Host	That's going on our coin.

00:50:40	Music	Transition	<p>Theme music plays, “War” by Edwin Starr.</p> <p><i>War!</i></p> <p><i>Huh!</i></p> <p><i>Yeah!</i></p>
00:50:43	Adam	Host	Well, all episodes of <i>Friendly Fire</i> need to be rated and reviewed, right?
00:50:49	Ben	Host	Hm. Yeah, let’s review this episode. Let’s leave the film alone.
00:50:52	Adam	Host	<p>Yeah.</p> <p><i>[John laughs.]</i></p> <p>Well, I think this episode of <i>Friendly Fire</i> gets the full five things.</p>
00:50:58	Ben	Host	Yeah, head to Apple Podcasts and give it the full five stars, why don’t you?
00:51:02	Adam	Host	I liked this film coming into it, but I—but the conversation makes me like it even more. And that’s in the spirit of the best <i>Friendly Fire</i> episodes, right?
00:51:11	Ben	Host	Yeah, absolutely.
00:51:13	Adam	Host	<p>Wow. Uh. <i>Their Finest</i>. Was it the finest war movie we’ve ever seen?</p> <p><i>[John and Adam chuckle.]</i></p> <p>I don’t thi—I don’t think so, but what a refreshing reprieve from the gore war that we’ve seen quite a bit over the last few months. It was nice to just button up a cardigan and sit on the couch and watch something pleasant.</p> <p>I don’t know who made this observation, but one of you was talking about just how sharp and witty the dialogue was written. Like, and how the appreciation or even just the observation of that made it a satisfying watch for a certain type of person.</p> <p>It reminded me of <i>30 Rock</i> in a weird way, when it really leaned into the witty. Except, in <i>30 Rock</i>, I never wanted Liz to kiss Jack. And in this movie, they do. And the first time I watched it, I was rooting for Liz and Jack to hook up. But after this conversation, it’s the last thing I ever wanted. It’s so weird how our conversations on this show can—can change a feeling about a movie or about a character.</p> <p>In this case, it only changed my feelings about some characters. It did not change my very positive feelings about this movie. I thought it was splendid. Which is a word that’s thrown around in this film. A lot like, “aloha,” it means a ton of things.</p> <p><i>[John laughs heartily.]</i></p>
00:52:45	Ben	Host	<i>[In a light, British accent]</i> “Splendid.”

00:52:47 Adam

Host

It means “good,” and it also is almost a “bless your heart” kind of cut that I really like. Gets thrown around quite a bit in the film in a fun way. There is an object in this film that I think best represents its sensibility. And that is—you know, so much of this film is spent indoors, that when we finally go outside, like, to the shooting location, it’s so verdant and beautiful and fresh-feeling that, oh, you almost forget that you spend most of your time in either an office writing or in an apartment with a boyfriend you hate or a—or in a studio space that’s being lit up with a dangerous lighting scaffold.

And we’re cautioned by this a bunch, right? Catrin’s boyfriend admonishes her about going outside when she does, and says, “You know, if the bombs start falling, get into the subway. Like, get into the station. It’s your safest spot.” But one of the moments that she’s outside on the surface, she does get bombed. She gets bombed directly. And she’s out in front of a department store, and as the bombs fall she ducks for cover.

And when the bombing run is over she sort of comes to and she sees all these bodies strewn around. But they’re not bodies, they’re mannequins! So many mannequins around, she starts laughing ’til she turns a corner and she sees a real dead body. And it’s not funny anymore. But those mannequins are going to be the rating system for this movie. Because I think you could choose to see it as a film full of mannequins or you could see it as a film full of bodies, depending on how seriously you’re willing to take it.

I really like the film’s message about the importance of cinema during wartime. And I like the many meta aspects of it. Like, that—the ending was so satisfying to me. It felt like the end of *Rushmore* in all the right ways. In that, Catrin was Max Fischer and she gets to experience the ultimate joy of her creation becoming alive. And she gets to not only experience that for herself, but she gets to experience that with an audience of strangers. And it’s so rewarding to go through that with her.

I—it was so surprising, by the time we get through this journey with her and get to the end I wasn’t openly weeping, like Ben. I would never do that.

00:55:24 John

Host

No.

00:55:25 Adam Host But, uh—but I was affected greatly by it. It's a very movie movie. It's almost so much of a movie, it's like a musical without the songs.

[Ben chuckles.]

It's in such celebration of itself. And there's a special kind of magic about a film that can do that without making me instinctually, like, roll my eyes. I—I don't know how a movie does that. Like, the script, on paper, shouldn't have worked. And I think through the life that these actors give it through their talent and the way the film was constructed, it's just beautiful. It's beautiful throughout.

I'm gonna give it not a perfect score, because I don't think it's a particularly great war movie. But I'm gonna give it, uh—I'm gonna give it 4.7 mannequins.

[John makes a surprised exhaling sound.]

It's four mannequins and then a fifth mannequin up to, like, the jaw of the head.

00:56:20 Ben Host *[Chuckles]* Wow. Fuck!

00:56:23 John Host And the way that mannequins are dismembered in this movie, that—that could fill a whole street. *[Chuckling]* You know?

00:56:27 Adam Host Right. Yeah.

00:56:28 Ben Host Could strew that everywhere.

00:56:30 Adam Host Yeah. Great conversation, guys. Uh, I liked it a lot going in, but I might like it more after having talked it through.

00:56:38 Ben Host I also really liked the movie. I, uh... I don't—I don't really know what to do. 'Cause I wasn't going to go 4.7. But I feel like I really liked the movie. I want people to see this movie, and I don't want to, uh—I don't want to sound like I'm not as in love with it as I am, because I really liked it. I'm like—like, I finished it, and I was like, "I think I'm gonna, uh—I'm think I'm, like, gonna watch this again this weekend with the wife, because I think she's really gonna like it." I think it's worth seeking out if you're a person that forms your decision based on the reviews on this show whether to watch the film or not. Run don't walk. Yeah, I'll just—I'll just match you, Adam. 4.7

[John whistles and taps on a table in applause.]

It's a really good movie. I think that uh... I think it's maybe a little bit long? Like, it could—you could trim 25 minutes?

00:57:32 Adam Host Which half, Ben?

00:57:33 Ben Host The half you don't need!

00:57:34 Adam Host Yep!

[Adam and John laugh.]

00:57:37 John Host It's interesting that you say you would watch it again, because there are so many movies we watch on this show. Even movies that we are—we like and give good ratings to that we probably don't need to watch again or wouldn't watch again. And this is a movie I could see watching again. And seeing it again, I would spend less time—there was a point 45 minutes into the movie where I was, like, “Am I watching the right movie? This was described as a comedy.”

[Adam and Ben laugh.]

Like, “Am I... did I get a different *Their Finest*?” So to watch it again and just know, like, what the beats were, I think I might find it funnier. There's a thing about watching it for the first time and feeling like—you know, you're kind of watching an episode of *Inspector Morse*, right? There's like—there's a tone and temperature to British television, like dramatic, um—like, those detective series, where they're—where it's set in the war or something, and there's, you know, a guy in a fedora that was wandering around solving murders. There's a lot of that in this. A lot more of that than there is even *Downton Abbey*, right? That kind of—that detective procedural that's—that is so popular on PBS.

You know, Adam picked up on the—on that dynamic and connected it to *30 Rock*. And the *30 Rock* banter, the kind of—there's so much sexual tension in *30 Rock* that you hope never gets realized, right? Because—

00:59:12 Adam Host Right.

00:59:13 John Host —'cause it could never work. It could never—it wouldn't even work as a one-night stand. It would just—you'd barf in your—in your hand at the thought of the two of them having a one-night stand. But there's so much—just like—just... vivacious male-female dynamic between those two. And that—

00:59:32 Adam Host Sues.

00:59:33 Ben Host Sport.

00:59:34 John Host Sport, right. And—and that is here between Catrin and Tom. It just never gets to the level of—somebody needed to be just 10% more likable.

I love the writerliness of it. I think it's really smart. It hits so many different levels. You think it's—you think at the beginning it's, like, it's gonna be a feminist revisionism film, and then it—it never abandons that. It just adds so much to that idea until that idea is just like a—like, the seventh subtext of this film. And all movies that take place during wartime that portray civilian life I think are great to watch.

I'm gonna give it 4.2 mannequins. [Beat] I think it's a great—I think it's a good movie to watch and it will—any listener of *Friendly Fire* is primed to be flattered—to have their intelligence flattered by a movie with British accents. Right? That's just our—that's our core audience.

01:00:49 Adam Host In a way that our show never could.

[Ben chuckles.]

01:00:51	John	Host	Even the people that listen to this show that are active-duty majors in the infantry. Even the people that listen to this show that comment on Reddit and reveal themselves to be chodes.
			<i>[Ben cracks up.]</i>
			They <u>all</u> are, like, very flatterable and—and a very smart group of people, I have to say. So they're gonna—they're gonna enjoy this movie.
01:01:16	Ben	Host	Did you have a guy, John?
01:01:19	John	Host	Oh, boy. There were a lot of guys. <i>[Chuckles]</i> Come—come back to me. Just a second.
01:01:23	Ben	Host	I'll say that my guy was Phyl Moore, the executive from the Ministry who came in to get—to get movie titles and endings and stuff a few times. She definitely is, like, coded as being gay. And, like, I think the people that can know that and not be scandalized by it know it and are, you know, treat her with respect. And the people that can't know that are oblivious to it. Like, she's one of the—one of the strongest characters in the film and one of the strongest women in the film. But she's not, uh—you know, she's not the central character. She's not who is going on the journey. She's just an example of a strong, independent woman that's there for, uh—for our character to experience. But she's... I don't know. She just—she lit the screen up every time she came in. She, like—I thought her, like, no-bullshit vibe was really great. And the fact that she's also not you know, going out of her way to jump on grenades for Catrin— <i>[chuckles]</i> —was really great. She's like, "Yeah, like, you know, I'm just gonna be me."
01:02:43	Adam	Host	Ben, I know you and I have worked with this type of person before, though. Like, this is the most thankless job that someone can have. It's the go-between between the monolithic corporation or government and the person trying to do the creative thing. And they're always seen as the enemy.
01:03:00	Ben	Host	They're always—yeah. They're the liaison that is seen as the enemy by both sides.
01:03:05	Adam	Host	Yeah.
01:03:06	Ben	Host	And it—it's a role that I think falls to women a lot in film production. I feel like the jobs that I've been on that have somebody like this, it's almost always been women.
01:03:19	John	Host	It's true in music, too. And I wouldn't describe it as "falls to." I would say there was a—there was an aptitude.
01:03:26	Ben	Host	Yeah. No, totally. Like, it's—it's just—it "falls to" from my perspective, because when I see somebody having to do it, I'm like, "Phew! I'm really glad that's not me! <i>[Chuckles]</i> 'Cause I would be bad at that!" Adam, did you have a guy?
01:03:40	Adam	Host	Yeah. I mean, God, he—he is—he shines so bright for a such short amount of time, but, you know, Jeremy Irons. You get him—
01:03:48	John	Host	Yeah. <i>[Chuckles.]</i>

01:03:49 Adam Host —in a movie like this, for his one scene. Like, I feel like if you're Jeremy Irons, then you're probably getting offer-only parts a lot. And you're probably barely even reading most of them. But when you pick up the script for this and you see one scene and you see the opportunity to do the St. Crispin's Day monologue... Like, what's better than that? There's nothing better than that! It's incredible!

And because this film is so meta, the meta aspect of my guy is also a part of it. Because I know how you guys feel when I start spooling up my rating and review monologue. It's—I mean, let's face it, it's my St. Crispin's Day monologue—

[Ben and John laugh.]

—of every episode of *Friendly Fire*. And I know you guys are rolling your eyes once I get through it and once I get to my review, which doesn't make any sense at all to anyone after—after everything I say up to that point.

[John chuckles briefly.]

But yeah, I saw something in the Secretary of War character that—that felt very familiar in that scene.

[Someone chuckles, muffled.]

So that's why it's going to him! And Jeremy Irons who plays him, who's just fucking great.

01:04:54 John Host My guy is the other screenwriter in the room, Parfitt. He's in so many scenes, just kind of beaver away over on his typewriter.

01:05:03 Adam Host Mm-hmm.

[Ben chuckles.]

01:05:04 John Host He—he's like a full co-writer of this script. Particularly if Catrin doesn't get an onscreen credit he's, like, writing half this movie. Like, he's there always, and he's a—he's kind of a delightful presence, but he has no problems. He's not in conflict with anybody. He takes everything in stride. He's pretty lighthearted about it when Catrin takes over. He's, like, fine with that, too. Wouldn't it be great to have somebody like that as your writing partner or as your collaborator? Just somebody that's not looking for a ton of credit, that doesn't want to be the smartest one in the room, but he's writing great—

01:05:44 Ben Host But he's one of the three screenwriters that does get a credit, so—
[breaks off, chuckling].

01:05:48 John Host Right, but he also—he's clearly doing great work and really churning it out. He's just not—he's—he has none of the—I've met a few of these people in my life, that are just like, "Hey, happy to be here. Just writing great stuff and, like, having fun. How are you guys doing?" And everybody else in the room is a tortured artist. And they're all like—

[Adam and Ben laugh.]

—you know, spilling their blood out on the floor and getting in romantic entanglements with each other and fighting. And he's just like, "Yeah, I'm just sort of having a—having a good ol' time here."

01:06:20	Music	Transition	Theme music plays, “War” by Edwin Starr. <i>War!</i> <i>Huh!</i> <i>Yeah!</i>
01:06:23	Ben	Host	Well, I think it’s about time for us to select our next motion picture, gentlemen. John, do you want to deploy your 120-sided dice?
01:06:32	John	Host	I have it right here.
01:06:34	Sound Effect	Sound Effect	<i>[Clinking sound of the die being rolled, clattering and spinning onto a glass or porcelain mug.]</i>
01:06:37	John	Host	Thirty-five!
01:06:39	Ben	Host	Thirty-five is another 2017 film—
01:06:43	John	Host	Whoa!
01:06:44	Ben	Host	Another one directed by a woman.
01:06:45	Music	Music	A haunting melody sung by a tenor vocalist underscored by strings begins to play, volume increasing as Ben speaks.
01:06:46	Ben		This one’s directed by Gabriela Cowperthwaite, set in the second Iraq War. It’s called <i>Megan Leavey</i> .
01:06:54	John	Host	<i>[Thoughtfully]</i> <i>Megan Leavey</i> . This is a—this is a film from three years ago. <i>[Music fades out.]</i>
01:06:59	Ben	Host	From three years ago. Another film from three years ago that I had not heard of.
01:07:05	John	Host	Another film with a female screenwriter and a strong female lead.
01:07:09	Ben	Host	And a strong female lead. Based on the true life story of a young Marine corporal whose unique discipline and bond with her military combat dog saved many lives during their deployment in Iraq. Wow.
01:07:18	John	Host	Oh, and it has a doggo for you guys!
01:07:18	Music	Music	Theme music, “War” by Edwin Starr, begins to play softly, volume increasing as the hosts speak.
01:07:21	Ben	Host	I am scared to see a dog get killed.
01:07:24	Adam	Host	And a main character with a name that we’ll pronounce all the different ways it can be pronounced.
01:07:30	Ben	Host	<i>[Laughs]</i> Well, that’ll be next week on <i>Friendly Fire</i> . 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.

01:07:42	Music	Transition	<p>Theme song fades to full volume. “War” off the album <i>War & Peace</i> by Edwin Starr.</p> <p><i>What is it good for?</i></p> <p><i>Absolutely—</i></p> <p><i>—Nothing!</i></p> <p><i>Listen to me</i></p> <p><i>War</i></p> <p>Music fades under Rob as he begins to speak.</p>
01:07:46	Rob Schulte	Producer	<p><i>Friendly Fire</i> is a Maximum Fun podcast hosted by Ben Harrison, Adam Pranica, and John Roderick. This podcast is produced by me, Rob Schulte. Our logo art is by Nick Ditmore, and our theme music is “War” by Edwin Starr, courtesy of Stone Agate Music.</p> <p>Wanna listen to more <i>Friendly Fire</i>? Last year, we put out an episode covering <i>The Hurt Locker</i> from 2008. Set during the Iraq war and directed by Kathryn Bigelow, this film follows a maverick sergeant who’s assigned to an Army bomb squad.</p> <p><i>Friendly Fire</i> is made possible by the support of listeners like you. You can leave us a positive rating and review on your podcatcher of choice, and you can also head to MaximumFun.org/join to pledge your support. If you do, you’ll gain access to our monthly Pork Chop episode, as well as all the Maximum Fun bonus content. If you’d like to chat online about the podcast online, please join the Facebook discussion group. Or just simply use the hashtag #FriendlyFire. You can find Ben on Twitter @BenjaminAhr. Adam is @CutForTime. John is @johnroderick, and I am @robkschulte. Thanks! We’ll see you next week on <i>Friendly Fire</i>.</p> <p><i>[Theme song plays for a while at full volume before fading out.]</i></p>
01:09:10	Music	Transition	A cheerful ukulele chord.
01:09:11	Speaker 1	Guest	MaximumFun.org
01:09:13	Speaker 2	Guest	Comedy and culture.
01:09:14	Speaker 3	Guest	Artist owned—
01:09:15	Speaker 4	Guest	—audience supported.