

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	Eighties-style synth-pop with strong drumbeat and staccato electric guitar plays in background of dialogue.
00:00:01	Adam Pranica	Promo	Hey, it's the hosts of <i>Friendly Fire</i> here, telling you to vote. And specifically, who to vote for. We've seen enough films on <i>Friendly Fire</i> to know what a "country descending into" type of genre gives you. We would very much like the story of these United States <u>not</u> to turn into <u>that</u> .
00:00:20	John Roderick	Promo	Boy, you said it, Adam! Whether you consider yourself to be a real leftist who isn't gonna vote for Biden 'cause the Democrats and the Republicans are just two sides of the same coin, <u>or</u> whether you're a red-blooded American Second Amendment fan who doesn't wanna lose their freedoms, and feels like they <u>should</u> vote for Donald Trump just to own the libs, we want to encourage you—as listeners of <i>Friendly Fire</i> —to join with us in voting for Joe Biden. The right-down-the-middle American candidate who <u>isn't</u> going to drive our republic into civil war.
00:00:54	Ben Harrison	Promo	And actually has a shot at winning!
00:00:56	John	Promo	Yeah. Don't—don't vote for the Green Party here, please. And don't vote for Trump.
00:01:00	Ben	Promo	The election is November 3rd. Make a plan. Make sure you vote early, if you have that option where you are. Or by mail, to stay safe, if you have that option where you are. Make sure you get your ballot in the mail earlier than Election Day. Give it plenty of time to get there, and be safe.
00:01:19	Adam	Promo	If you have thoughts about this preroll, you can email those comments to GoFuckYourself@Maxfunkenstein.sex .
00:01:25	Ben	Promo	Thank you.
			<i>[Music stops.]</i>
00:01:26	Music	Music	Dramatic action music from <i>The Secret Invasion</i> score by Hugo Friedhofer. Urgent brass fanfares and thunderous drums.
00:01:28	Ben	Host	Here's the setup: Some bad guys with life-sentence criminal convictions have a combined skillset that is perfect for a daring mission behind enemy lines in a Nazi-controlled compound. Now, you might be yelling at the podcast that we've already watched <i>The Dirty Dozen</i> ! "You gave it three and a half papier-maché maps or something!" But your concern is misplaced. Today's episode is about a different film that actually came out in 1964, three years <u>before</u> <i>The Dirty Dozen</i> . It is, as one reviewer called it, "the sawn-off antecedent of <i>The Dirty Dozen</i> ."

They're different in execution. The films diverge drastically on character development, coherence of plan, and the presence of Lee

Marvin. Today's film also lands our antiheroes in a Nazi jail about halfway through, serving up a nice irony that *The Dirty Dozen* never encountered. But clearly, there was something in the water in the mid sixties that was causing audiences to wanna see Allied bad guys get one over on even badder German bad guys.

A war film at its best can deliver us a distillate of human nature. These are stories about what people do when confronted with the most dire of circumstances. But this film's characters are hardened criminals—inherently unsympathetic, and well aware of their expendability. Even the major that puts the team together is expendable. It's a team of specialists like *Force 10 from Navarone*, but even more fatalistic. The challenges they face are as perilous as any war film, but the stakes are changed because we're taught to treat them with suspicion.

The director, Roger Corman, is a living legend among film nerds. He gave early work opportunities to many luminaries of the industry: Coppola, Scorsese, Cameron, Howard, Demme, Bogdanovich, just to name a few. He got his start directing just nine years before the release of today's film, after trying to work his way up from the mailroom at 20th Century Fox and quitting because they didn't give him credit when they started using his ideas.

00:03:24 Ben Host

Corman's legend is much more about quantity than quality, but he's had some bangers, and one side effect of the "throw shit at the wall and see what sticks" approach to filmmaking is that you occasionally get out in front of a good idea before everyone else. I think that's the case with today's film, which really diverges from his usual work, most of which are extremely campy films like *Death Race 2000* and *Battle Beyond the Stars*—neither of which are on our list. So don't ask. And while Corman's schlock is the stuff of Hollywood legend, he is also the stuff of Hollywood legend full stop.

"It's as much our mission as yours now." Today on *Friendly Fire: The Secret Invasion*.

[*Music crescendos before fading into the drumroll of the next song.*]

00:04:05 Music Music

"War" off the album *War & Peace* by Edwin Starr. Impassioned, intense funk.

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

War!
Huh!

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

Say it again, y'all!

War!

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

00:04:24 Ben Host Welcome to *Friendly Fire*, the war movie podcast that is glad we have this chance to pay society back for all the trouble we've caused it. I'm Ben Harrison.

00:04:31 Adam Host In gratitude, I'm Adam Pranica.

00:04:35 John Host And I'm John Roderick. Zero gratitude over here!

[Ben laughs.]

You never did nothing for me, America!

00:04:41 Ben Host *[Laughs.]* How much Roger Corman do you guys have in your movie-watching histories?

00:04:49 Adam Host I have read more about Corman, like, as a film studies person, than I have watched him. Which, uh, at the end of this film, felt like a huge mistake.

[Ben laughs.]

I want to watch more Roger Corman films, for reasons I know we'll get to throughout this conversation. But, uh—

00:05:08 Ben Host Yeah!

00:05:09 Adam Host It's interesting to read about how many other filmmakers learned at his knee, too!

00:05:13 Ben Host Yeah. Absolutely.

00:05:14 Adam Host Like, many, many, many other filmmakers were, like, grips and shit on Roger Corman productions, and then went on to be Marty Scorsese.

00:05:24 Ben Host Right! There's a pretty impressive list of people that came out of the—the Corman film studies program. *[Laughs quietly.]*

00:05:32 Adam Host Right.

00:05:33 John Host You know, I know the name—I'm so familiar with the name that I started scanning the movies he's done, saying, "Surely I've seen a Roger Corman film."

00:05:40 Adam Host *[Stifling laughter]* Uh-huh?

[Ben laughs.]

00:05:41 John Host And as I'm reading down and it's like, "*The Giant Bug-Faced Monster from Outer Space!*"

00:05:46 Adam Host *[Laughing]* Uh-huh!

[Ben laughs.]

00:05:47 John Host And then it's "*The 30-Foot Girl Made of Lizards!*" and the—and I'm like, "Okay, I haven't seen any of these."

[Ben laughs.]

And I keep going, and it's like, "Oh, sometimes he would make two movies back-to-back, just because craft services was still there—"

[Adam laughs.]

"—and it felt like, you know, they had all that food; why waste it?"

[Ben laughs.]

And, uh—and I was like, "Okay, that's weird, but sure." And then it was like, "And then he went into production." And he's made 700 films; I've never seen a single one of 'em. *[Stifles laughter.]* And I never read a—of all the titles of them, I was like, "I don't wanna—" I—seriously, I'm seriously not interested in the, like, *The Man That Lives in the Sewers*.

00:06:21 Clip Clip *[A lot of buzzing.]*

Eric Zinthrop (*The Wasp Woman*): Now, now, don't get nasty, my little friends! Your Bumpy's not going to hurt you one bit!

00:06:26 John Host *[In a French accent]* "Oh, and he was celebrated by *Cahiers du Cinéma*—"

[Ben laughs.]

—and he was, you know, given the—the *Croix de Guerre*, and paraded through the streets of Paris on the back of an elephant," *[accent ends]* and I'm like, "That makes me not wanna watch his movies even more!"

[Ben laughs.]

00:06:43 Adam Host I wonder why a guy like Corman, with his filmography, is given... Corman-style credit, versus a guy like Ed Wood—who, I mean, sort of has a similar quality of films—is, like, reviled, and made fun of. And I think it may take watching a lot more Roger Corman movies to answer that question, but it's strange how filmmakers with some of these similarities—you know, they don't all live on the same street, in terms of reputation.

00:07:13 John Host Ben, have you seen them? Have you seen a lot of Roger Corman films in your NYU days?

00:07:19 Ben Host Uh, no! He was not considered... uh, as far as I know. Like, nobody was pushing him on me, certainly. I mean, that may be the classes I took or whatever. But I took a whole semester-long class on Hollywood auteurs, and it was just a different, like, important sixties and seventies Hollywood director every week. And, uh, he did not come up. You know.

[John laughs, Ben stifles laughter.]

Like, Sam Peckinpah came up, but not Roger Corman. And I think that the DNA of the, like, Roger Corman production style is in a ton of stuff that I've seen, and a ton of stuff that I love. You know, like, he was—seemed almost, like, intentionally interested in—in, like, making schlocky stuff. And this is a kind of uncharacteristically mainstream film.

00:08:11 Adam Host Mm-hm.

00:08:12 Ben Host Like, the movie had a budget double the highest-budget film he had directed previously, I think. And you know, it was also an experience that convinced him that he didn't want to do anything further with mainstream studios, because they, you know, wanted to water down the characters. The—apparently the guy that the ragtag team of criminals was meant to rescue initially was a nuclear physicist?

[Adam chuckles.]

And the idea was that he was going to be the person who—you know, he knew the last little bit of information that the Manhattan Project was going to need to finish the bomb, and the studio was like, "So the—so when the good guys win at the end, they unleash nuclear war?!"

[All three laugh.]

And so they made him change it. And, uh—and I got the sense that he didn't take very kindly to that! *[Laughs.]*

00:09:09 Adam Host This felt, while watching it, like the production of a filmmaker who had been given a little more money than they're used to. And I feel like you can really see it on the screen! Some of the choices that were made about—I mean, location being one of 'em, but also, like, this movie looks really good. It looks a lot better than I expected. Like, really thoughtfully composed scenes of war! Like, cliffside war, where you see these territorial views of Dubrovnik.

Like, I was not expecting that to be where the thought went in this thing. I expected it to be, "Well, if we can afford one more tank to blow up, we should procure that tank."

00:09:54 Ben Host Right.

00:09:55 Adam Host But instead I feel like there was a lot of careful attention given to, like, a tiny guillotine on a guy's desk—

[Ben laughs.]

—or any number of other, like, really fine details I appreciated throughout.

00:10:06 Ben Host Boy, I thought for sure that guillotine was coming down on the forger's finger.

00:10:09 Adam Host Right.

00:10:10 John Host Right?!

00:10:11 Adam Host Yeah. That was Chekhov's Guillotine, for sure.

[Ben laughs.]

00:10:15 John Host I mean, and the—we've never watched a movie that opens with a credit sequence quite like this.

00:10:20 Clip Clip Another dramatic, brass-heavy selection from Hugo Friedhofer's *The Secret Invasion* score.

00:10:21 Adam Host *[Laughing]* Uh-huh.

00:10:22 John Host Like, the—*[laughs quietly]*—the screen is black, and then it opens on—

00:10:26 Clip Clip *[The music continues under the sound of gunfire and/or explosions.]*

00:10:27 John Host *[John makes a bunch of explosive noises.]*

For a full, like, straight five minutes of, like, just war sound effects, and phosphorous shells blowing up, and people going over the top and getting machine-gunned. *[Stifles laughter.]*

[Clip audio stops.]

00:10:45 Ben Host Yeah. Not—not really stuff that had much to do with the film that followed.

[Ben and Adam laugh.]

00:10:50 John Host Nope! Nope! Zero to do with it! Zero to do with it.

00:10:52 Adam Host Like, someone went to a stock footage library of war films, and were like—

[John laughs.]

"Well, I guess we gotta make a credit sequence. Let's see what we can do."

[Ben laughs.]

00:11:00 John Host 'Cause I was thinking, "This movie's called *The Secret Invasion*, but this does not seem like a secret, what's happening here."

[Ben laughs.]

00:11:06 Adam Host It's too loud to be a secret!

00:11:07 John Host "This seems like a tank battle that's—[stifles laughter]—that's happening between two armies!"

But I definitely felt like—uh, I turned to my movie-watching partner and said, "Well, this is a war movie!" [Laughs.]

00:11:18 Adam Host You know, in the beginning, we're in Cairo, and I can't remember watching many movies where we see Cairo from the air the way we do in this film! Like, sort of banking around.

00:11:29 Ben Host Yeahhh. That seemed like it was probably file footage. 'Cause it seemed to be of a very different quality than the rest of the movie.

00:11:37 Adam Host Yeah.

00:11:38 John Host There was a lot of file footage that was—that was kind of almost, um... like *National Geographic* stuff.

00:11:44 Ben Host Yeah. I just loved the way the guys all show up in Cairo via different conveyances.

[Adam laughs quietly.]

Like, it doesn't really, like, add anything to the story, but it is just fun and cool to see, like, "One shows up on a boat! One's on a train! One's in an airplane!" [Laughing] Like...

00:12:00 Adam Host The guy in the car—remind me of his name.

00:12:02 Ben Host Roberto Rocca.

00:12:03 Adam Host When we're introduced to him, we don't see all of his hands when he's smoking a cigarette, until I think it's the second inhalation when we see he's in handcuffs?

00:12:11 Ben Host Yeah.

00:12:12 Adam Host That is such a fun reveal!

00:12:13 John Host What's amazing about the guy that arrives in—that arrives via train... is I was trying to think of where you could start a train trip that would end in Cairo.

[Adam and Ben laugh.]

00:12:31 Adam Host You get the feeling that Major Richard Mace booked all of this travel, and he wasn't very good at booking travel for himself or anyone else, with—

[Ben and Adam laugh.]

—with the very expensive differences that all of these people had in their transit.

00:12:43 Ben Host Mm-hm. Mickey Rooney shows up and he's pissed that he didn't get the SkyMiles that he was looking to earn for this.

[John laughs.]

00:12:52 Adam Host We get, like, the Murdock scene from *Rambo*, where we get the gang's resumes being read right back to them.

00:12:59 Clip Clip *[Light, continuous creaking/clanking.]*

[Paper crinkling.]

Murdock (*Rambo: First Blood Part II*): Born 7/6/47, Bowie, Arizona, of Indian-German descent. That's a hell of a combination.

00:13:05 John Host I was so excited by that!

[Adam laughs.]

When the camera—when they were lined up in the office, and then you look over and you see those file folders—

00:13:11 Adam Host Yep!

00:13:12 John Host —just tantalizing, sitting on the edge of the desk, and you're like—

[Ben laughs.]

[Pounding the desk on each word] "Read! The! Files! Read! The! Files!"

00:13:15 Adam Host *[Laughs.]* You know what's coming!

[All three laugh.]

We're gonna know every one of these guys very well!

00:13:21 John Host "Which one's the explosives expert?! Which one's the master of disguise?!"

[Adam and Ben laugh.]

00:13:27 Adam Host Mickey Rooney in this scene really, I feel like, rope-a-dopes the viewer here, because his comment is so efficiently cutting, and you're like, "Oh! This is gonna be not a broad Mickey Rooney in this film! It's gonna be like, quippy, tight, like, interesting Mickey Rooney?" No way. He is as broad as broad can be for the rest of the runtime. This is a lie for him, this first scene.

00:13:52 Ben Host Did you guys read that Mickey Rooney is rumored to have actually written the script of this film?

00:13:59 John Host What?!

00:14:00 Adam Host I did not know that.

00:14:01 Ben Host In a—like, a biography of Mickey Rooney, it says that he actually, like—he actually wrote it, despite not receiving the credit. And that is a fantasy for—*[laughs]*—for me, to just sit back and think, like, "What was that like? Roger Corman and Mickey Rooney, working out the beats of a script." *[Laughs.]*

00:14:21 John Host Wooow. They—

00:14:24 Ben Host And I love that, like, if that's true, like, the part he wrote for himself is—

[Adam laughs.]

—is more satisfying, in a way! *[Laughs.]*

00:14:31 Adam Host Yeah. Yeah.

00:14:32 John Host The casting of it is so crazy. I mean, Mickey Rooney—Mickey Rooney was the biggest star in Hollywood 20 years before this. And Edd Byrnes was, like, the biggest teeny-bopper Fonzie TV star of the time. Super-big star. And Stewart Granger was—

00:14:54 Adam Host John, I just wanna say, you're not gonna see Henry Silva's poster on any teenager's wall, right?

[All three laugh.]

00:15:02 John Host Henry Silva just at the beginning of a brilliant career playing psychopaths.

00:15:06 Adam Host Yeah! *[Laughs.]* I think you're gonna have concerns about your kids if you find a Silva on the wall.

[Ben and John laugh.]

00:15:13 John Host But like, Raf Vallone is—

00:15:15 Adam Host Yeah.

00:15:16 John Host —a huge star in Italy, and he was amazing in this movie, but like—

00:15:19 Adam Host So great.

00:15:20 John Host —where did he come from? Why did we never see him again? Right? Like, why is Raf Vallone not in every picture from this moment forward?

00:15:28 Adam Host He's incredible.

00:15:30 Ben Host Apparently his name was the top of the poster when they, you know, distributed the film to Europe, which makes a lot of sense. Like, you can—

00:15:36 John Host Yeah!

00:15:37 Ben Host This is a movie that you can kind of, like, pitch to a different audiences as different things, and not be lying.

00:15:44 John Host I mean, he's absolutely the star of the movie, which surprised me, given how little I knew about him going in.

00:15:50 Ben Host Yeah.

00:15:51 John Host He's got the best role. You know, his, like, file folder, is the best one.

00:15:56 Clip Clip **Major Richard Mace (*The Secret Invasion*):** Degrees in psychology, classic Greek literature, structural engineering. Strange that a man would choose to throw away his education planning crimes.

Roberto Rocca: I found it a challenging career.

00:16:07 Ben Host He's basically Batman without the, like, fighting crime, you know?

[John and Ben laugh.]

00:16:12 Adam Host This movie does an interesting thing between Mace and Rocca, which makes them equivalent almost immediately. Like, Mace is so permissive and, like, cool-teaching them right up front, that you never fear any kind of ordering around or drill sergeanteeing that you typically get from a, you know, "assembly of criminals in order to do a mission"—type of movie that you get. Like, the—like, he's not holding the reins tightly at all! And that allows Rocca to creep into that vacuum and be kinda the alpha of this thing.

00:16:45 Ben Host There's almost no training montage. Like, *Dirty Dozen* makes such a big deal out of, "We need—like, these guys are crazy and totally unhinged, so we need to, like, work really hard to, like, make them into a team."

00:16:56 Adam Host That's because there's no time, Ben! There is no time in this movie for anything! The pace is so fast!

[John laughs, Adam stifles laughter.]

We get a training montage where we get, uh, scary Henry Silva face to—

[Ben laughs.]

—to the major as live ammunition is being shot at him. *[Laughs.]* This may be the scariest part of the movie.

00:17:15 Ben Host They just gave them, like, unloaded rifles and sent them to scramble around on some rocks at the beach for one night—

00:17:20 Adam Host *[Laughs.]* Yeah.

00:17:22 Ben Host —and shot guns at them while they were doing it, and that was their training.

[John and Ben laugh.]

00:17:25 John Host If you think about the payoff for the training sequence at the end of the movie, like, there is no—there—or not the training sequence, but

if you think about the payoff of reading all their dossiers, of compiling this list of master criminals from around the world, really Mickey Rooney is the only one—like, Rocca takes over the mission, so it's clear that they picked the right guy.

00:17:48 Adam Host

Mm-hm.

00:17:49 John Host

The right, like, architect. Right? But Mickey Rooney, like, makes bombs throughout the movie, so it's obvious that you needed the bomb guy. But the master of disguise, and the forger, and the stone-cold killer? I mean, the master of disguise and the forger, they both come into play only at the very, very last scene, and it's a completely—or, like, the penultimate scene, I guess. And it's like a—it's—*[laughs]*—it's completely ridiculous! The guy forges a document with a potato?

[Ben laughs.]

And that's how they get out through the gate? And that's why he's on this whole mission?! For the one—for the one potato stamp?

00:18:23 Adam Host

I don't understand why that guy—*[laughs]*—I was keeping track of timecode throughout this film, because I just thought its pace was hilarious to me. Ten minutes into the film, he's already jumped off of that boat, and he's, like, rowing away. Like, we barely know him!

[All three laugh.]

00:18:40 Ben Host

I also love that they just don't even go close in on the document when he stamps it with the potato, because it obviously didn't work.
[Laughs.]

00:18:46 Adam Host

Yeah. Yeah, it looks like shit.

00:18:48 John Host

They didn't do a second take of it, even! It was like, "Wow, that looks terrible! Come on, man!"

00:18:52 Ben Host

Well, they didn't—they only had one copy of that secret document, you know? That was the problem.

00:18:56 John Host

But also, the secret document was just—they just had to stop—they had to stop while the master of disguise spoke, like, really badly dubbed German at the—

[Ben laughs.]

—at like the Yugoslav gatekeeper guy.

00:19:09 Clip Clip

Gatekeeper: *Achtung, Herr Oberst. Die toten darf nicht—*

00:19:12 John Host

And in the end, he didn't even accept the document! The guy just—you know, he said something quizzical to him. 'Cause there are no subtitles in this movie. So he said something, you know, like, *[in a French accent]* "Oh, I think that, uh, these are not the droids you are looking for," or whatever—

[Ben laughs, John drops the accent.]

—and they walk through the gate and then they are immediately fired upon! So...

00:19:28 Ben Host

Right.

00:19:29 Adam Host

What kind of prison were they in before this prison? Because it seems like no prison could hold these guys.

[John laughs.]

00:19:36 Ben Host

Well, also, why wasn't the plan just "get arrested" from the beginning?

00:19:39 Adam Host

Yeah.

00:19:40 Ben Host

Like, why the, like, elaborate "tunneling under the wall" scheme when obviously the thing that they need to do is get into the compound, and—

00:19:48 Adam Host

You never wanna be arrested, though, Ben. That's—that's plan B.

[Ben laughs.]

00:19:52 John Host

'Cause they all had to have that really, like, not very effective and not very bad torture, that they all had to endure?

[Ben laughs.]

The one guy got punched a bunch of times, and then someone else got tickled, I guess?

00:20:06 Adam Host

They bring in Henry Silva's character post–quote–unquote "torture," and he doesn't have a scratch on him. As the mind torture.

00:20:13 John Host

Yeahhh!

00:20:14 Adam Host

That was a great moment in this movie.

00:20:15 Ben Host

They were just like, "Hey. What happened to that baby? Can you tell us? What happens to the baby?"

00:20:19 John Host

[Laughs.] That baby thing was awful. And I honestly—I felt like the movie did not earn it. Right? The movie did not earn killing a baby.

00:20:30 Ben Host

Yeah. It wasn't the last episode of *M*A*S*H*. *[Laughs.]*

00:20:32 John Host

Right! Like—

00:20:33 Adam Host

To be fair, we see the baby smothered twice.

[John laughs.]

Uh, once by Mila's breast, and then the second time by Henry Silva.

00:20:42 Ben Host

Oh, yeah!

00:20:43 John Host

That was pretty progressive!

00:20:44 Adam Host

I thought so!

00:20:46 John Host Pretty progressive to have a breastfeeding scene in this movie. Also this movie didn't really earn that, but—

[Adam laughs.]

00:20:51 Ben Host There's a moment of pedantry about the breastfeeding scene.

00:20:53 Adam Host Oh, god.

00:20:54 John Host Breastfeeding pedant! Finally!

00:20:57 Adam Host A breastfeeding pedant should be on an FBI watchlist.

[Ben and John laugh.]

00:21:01 Ben Host Well, uh, sign me up, because—

[Adam laughs quietly.]

00:21:03 Sound Effect Sound Effect *[Beeping as Ben speaks.]*

00:21:04 Ben Host "There's a short close-up of the baby breastfeeding. However, the mother's shirt is a different color and design from the other shots."

00:21:09 Adam Host Hmm.

00:21:10 John Host Ohhh, it was a—some kind of nursemaid.

00:21:13 Ben Host It was a stunt boob.

00:21:15 Adam Host I love it, like, when you're Henry Silva, and you only have one expression. When he looks over at the breastfeeding happening, it doesn't look gross or bad, because that's the only expression that Henry Silva throws.

[Ben laughs.]

Like, it's not—it's not, like, lecherous or weird. He's just, like, staring down like, "Oh, you're gonna do that? Riding shotgun on the cart? Alright."

00:21:37 John Host He has always been such an—such an—a curious movie star to me, because he's, you know—

00:21:43 Adam Host He's so restrained, you are waiting for that explosion. At least I was.

00:21:48 John Host Yeah!

00:21:49 Adam Host Like, he's—it's just a coiled spring.

00:21:52 John Host The killing he does in this movie is just like the killing everybody else does. He just kills some people—kills 'em—he doesn't—he never does, like, some crazy—*[stifles laughter]*—except for killing the baby! He never kills anybody in a crazy way! He never—he's not, like, the stone-cold murderer.

00:22:05 Ben Host I mean, if he was, like, truly a psychopath, I don't think he would, like, be that performatively upset, you know?

00:22:11 John Host I guess it was supposed to be like, "This is the—we've seen his humanity now." I just feel like that's another thing that the movie didn't earn, because it never established his lack of humanity.

00:22:21 Ben Host Yeah.

00:22:22 John Host Other than the other characters saying, "He's really a killer. You can tell by looking at him."

00:22:28 Music Transition Brief clip of "War."

War!
Huh!

Yeah!

[Music stops.]

00:22:31 Adam Host I found the assassination of fake Quadri at the end to be, like, a suitable explosion, though, in thinking about it. Like, he gets pretty big and loud in that moment. Before he goes suicide-by-Italian-army.

[Ben laughs.]

00:22:48 John Host He does, but every one of the—every one of the characters dies by basically, like, self-sacrifice. Right?

00:22:54 Ben Host Yeah.

00:22:55 John Host Like, "I'm gonna stand in front of these bullets while you guys get away." Each one does it.

00:23:00 Adam Host When Fell catches a grenade and takes it off the cliff with him—

[John laughs quietly.]

—I've never even thought about that being a type of way a person dies in a war film. It was incredible.

[John and Ben laugh.]

00:23:09 John Host No! Yeah! You know, like, let the grenade bounce off the cliff, and fall as it was going to. You don't have to grab it and like, tuck and roll with it!

[Ben laughs.]

But that was a great special effect, because he grabs it, jumps off the cliff, and you—you basically see a man...

00:23:28 Adam Host Yeah.

00:23:29 John Host ...falling off a cliff, holding a grenade, and then it blows up, and it's a continuous shot!

00:23:33 Adam Host Yeah. *[Stifles laughter.]* You see him go all the way down.

00:23:35 John Host And then you see a half-Bob, but it's the wrong half!

00:23:38 Adam Host It is.

00:23:39 John Host It's the bottom half of a half-Bob.

00:23:41 Adam Host *[Laughs quietly.]* It's a Bob half, is what you're saying?

[John and Ben laugh.]

Maybe that's a *Friendly Fire* T-shirt. It's one of those stickers, you know? When you go to a place, and you write your name on the "Hello, My Name Is" sticker?

00:23:55 Music Music A few seconds of guitar and bass funk.

00:23:57 John Host Mm-hm.

00:23:58 Adam Host It says "Bob Half" underneath.

[Ben and John laugh.]

That's the *Friendly Fire* logo.

00:24:04 Ben Host Takes so much longer to explain than—

[Adam laughs.]

—even the premise of this podcast, which takes a long time to explain.

[John and Ben laugh.]

00:24:08 Adam Host Yep! All our T-shirt ideas are terrible.

00:24:12 Ben Host *[Laughs quietly.]* I encountered a pretty amazing, to me, fact as I was watching this movie. I was perusing the IMDb page, and the Wikipedia. This film had made some deal with the Yugoslav military to, you know, use troops and tanks and things, and that deal fell through because of an earthquake that happened in Yugoslavia, and the military was like, retasked to help with the relief effort. But that earthquake in 1963 killed my aunt!

00:24:50 John Host What?!

00:24:51 Ben Host She was in Yugoslavia at the time of this production and died in a hotel that collapsed!

00:24:56 Adam Host That is the last place I expected that story to end. What?!

[Ben and Adam laugh.]

00:24:59 Ben Host I know, right?! It was so weird to, like—I was watching this movie just thinking it was a dumb movie for *Friendly Fire*, and then it had this, like, totally insane connection to my family.

00:25:10 Adam Host Wow!

00:25:11 Ben Host That, like—yeah, it was like 300 miles away from where the film was shot. But—

00:25:16 John Host In Skopje.

00:25:17 Ben Host Yeah, in Skopje. And, uh, my parents were able to go visit her grave just last year, 'cause they—

00:25:23 Adam Host Whoa!

00:25:25 Ben Host And that was the first time my father had ever been able to get over there.

00:25:28 John Host Was that his sister?

00:25:29 Ben Host Yeah. His big sister was—was there. Then.

00:25:33 Adam Host I just recently learned that an uncle died by catching a grenade and jumping off a cliff. So...

00:25:39 Ben Host *[Laughing]* Oh!

00:25:40 Adam Host ...this movie has a special meaning to me, too.

00:25:42 John Host *[Laughs.]* I bet it does.

00:25:44 Ben Host Forgive me if I'm wrong about this, John, but don't you have a, uh, a cousin who took a grappling hook to the face at some point?

[Adam laughs.]

00:25:49 John Host Yeahhh. That—that was—I mean, *[stifles laughter]* it was just a thing that used to happen to my family.

[Ben laughs.]

Kinda weird! The number of grappling hooks that, like, pierced our cheeks, and, uh—

[Ben laughs.]

—and killed us. Just generation after generation. It's in our coat of arms.

00:26:03 Adam Host You know, those things aren't toys!

00:26:06 Ben Host It's amazing that the Rodericks are still around, given what a plague that was for such a long time.

[John and Adam laugh.]

00:26:11 Clip Clip **Mace:** Yeah, well, I'll take that risk.

Jean Saval: You'll take it without me!

Music: Dramatic horn sting.

00:26:17 John Host I have to say that that ending where the mission is over, only one man survives, he was the best guy, he's in an officer's uniform of a nation whose language he speaks, and we know, you know, that there's two years left to the war, but that he's now—you know, he's in

what will soon be liberated Yugoslavia. It's such an exciting end to a movie. Just imagining what Roberto Rocca does now.

00:26:47 Adam Host

Mm-hm.

00:26:48 Ben Host

Yeah!

00:26:49 John Host

Like, just watching him walk down those stairs, throw that gun down, and the credits roll. And it's like, "Start the movie now!"

[Ben laughs.]

00:26:56 Adam Host

Yeah.

00:26:57 John Host

I wanna see—I wanna see Rocca, like, go up to the corner and just make a decision whether to turn right or left! And who's the next person he talks to? What's the next decision he makes? Like, where does he go from here? I love that. It was the—it was honestly not only maybe my favorite part of the movie, but like, it was the thing about this movie that sparked my imagination the most. And we see it every once in a while, a movie that ends with, you know, a lone survivor. Although, not true of the movie *Lone Survivor*.

00:27:29 Ben Host

Mm.

00:27:30 John Host

But you know, to be, like, behind the lines or something, and have two Hershey bars and a—and some nylons, and a pack of condoms, and a .45? And just be like, "Now what do you do?" I kind of wish that I ever had that happen to me.

[Ben laughs.]

00:27:46 Adam Host

It's such a great realization of the potential of this film, and it's such a great choice in tone. Because this isn't like the somber moment—

00:27:55 Music Music

"The Lonely Man Theme (*The Incredible Hulk*)" by Joe Harnell. Slow, plaintive solo piano.

00:27:56 Adam Host

—that you get at the end of many war films where, like, you get the *Incredible Hulk* piano theme after Rocca closes Durrell's eyes and you aren't sure if he's gonna be okay after.

[Music fades out.]

Like, there's a visual language here, too. Like, we pop up and we shoot wide, and Rocca's walking down these stairs, and the entire world is out in front of him. All of his choices are ready to be made. He's—we've been told and we've been proven throughout the film that he's the most skilled one of the team. I mean, of course we see—we feel, like, the sadness of all of his other guys dying. But there's also this hope that you're talking about, John, of all of these—these future choices that he can make. It's a triumphant ending.

00:28:37 John Host

I bet he throws that gun down not because he's done with killing and done with war, but he throws it down out of frustration as he thinks, "God, I wish I had just had Simon Fell make me one document that says that I'm a colonel in the—"

[Adam and Ben laugh.]

00:28:52 Adam Host

Yeah!

00:28:53 John Host

"Like, one—if he had just stamped that potato on one more piece of paper, and now I would have..."

00:28:57 Adam Host

He goes through Fell's Bob half trying to, like, see if there's any pockets with any paperwork inside.

[John and Ben laugh.]

00:29:03 John Host

Yeah.

[Adam laughs.]

"Surely there's somebody's ID card or something! The first thing somebody's gonna ask me is for an ID card! Fuck!"

00:29:11 Ben Host

Yeah. It's a move that, like, feels dangerously close to that, like, "can't wait for the sequel" moment that you feel like some movies end with, that almost always turns me off. This seems to be pregnant with possibility at the end, without feeling like I was just misled into watching this so that they could have me come back for the sequel.

00:29:31 Adam Host

Yeah.

00:29:32 John Host

Yeah, it's definitely a—it's a version of, "We have no idea how to end this movie." It did feel—I don't know, hopeful and cool, and I'm still waiting for *Force 10 from the Secret Invasion*.

[Ben laughs.]

00:29:45 Adam Host

I wonder if one of the reasons why we feel the way we do at the end of this film is 'cause there's no time to really sit in the grief of any one character's death, because they fall so quickly. You know, we aren't given the intimacy of death in this film. I guess maybe outside of Rocca, who we get, like, we get right in on his face when his eyes are closed.

00:30:06 John Host

I don't think this movie ever established a single reason to like any of these people other than Rocca.

00:30:12 Adam Host

Yeah.

00:30:13 John Host

He's, like, such a chill dad.

[Ben laughs.]

He never yells at anybody. Everybody respects him just because he says the right thing, and he knows what he's doing. You really do like him.

00:30:23 Adam Host

Yeah.

00:30:24 John Host

I don't—I didn't like anybody else! The only thing any of them ever did that was heroic was die, at the end. And so I was like, "Oh. Oh,

look at that." Like, "Simon Fell, uh, put himself in front of a bullet." Like, "Oh! I guess he wasn't, like, a complete reprobate."

[Ben laughs.]

I'm kinda—kinda glad he died!

[Adam laughs.]

Like, it's better than having him be out in the world. Like, I'd rather he not survive this war! Guy's a shit!

00:30:46 Ben Host

Totally. Yeah. I mean, it's also, like—I mean, the end is so messy in so many ways. Like, the twist ending of "this was a body double," like, is so far out of left field. *[Laughs.]* But then, like—but it also kind of found a way to—they found a way to make that satisfying. Like, when we meet that Italian general, like, we've been talking about this guy the entire time. The whole movie is building up to rescuing this Italian general, and then he's just this, like, guy?

[Adam laughs.]

In a fucking uniform? He's, like, an utter disappointment.

00:31:20 Adam Host

"You mean my job was to be in jail for you until these guys spring me out?"

[John laughs.]

"That mission kinda sucks!"

[Ben and Adam laugh.]

00:31:27 Ben Host

Yeah! But then it, like—him being a body double is like, "Yeah!"

[Ben and John laugh.]

Like, "We're back in this weird movie!" *[Laughs.]*

00:31:36 John Host

That was a pretty inspired piece of writing, at the end, when they figured out a way to like, "Wait a minute, but what if we just... shoot—what if we just shoot him, but in our German uniforms, and that'll be enough? Like, he doesn't have to give his speech."

00:31:53 Adam Host

That pays off Henry Silva's character so well, because he dies several times in this film, emotionally. And you know that he's—like, he's running on borrowed time for the last—

00:32:05 John Host

Right.

00:32:06 Adam Host

—half hour of this film. That by—that in the moment he decides to assassinate the fake Quadri, it's—like, he already died with Mila in that field. It feels right and just that he's the one to do it the way that he does.

00:32:23 John Host Feels like one of those suicide mission plans where... there's no guarantee that's going to work.

00:32:29 Adam Host *[Laughing]* Uh-huh.

00:32:30 John Host He shoots the Italian general, and all the—you know, and then he's shot from five different places. But there's no—it's really the speech, then, that Rocca makes—

00:32:40 Adam Host Yeah.

00:32:41 John Host —that turns the tide.

00:32:42 Adam Host *[Laughs.]* I love how pregnant the moment is after Silva shoots Quadri. He's, like, standing up on the wall, and then he's like, "I guess I'm—" Like, "You guys aren't getting it. I guess I'm gonna Heil Hitler a couple of times until you shoot me?"

[John and Adam laugh, someone claps.]

Like he's got to—*[laughs]*—he really needs to emphasize his point!
[Laughs.]

00:33:01 John Host Yeah.

[Ben and Adam laugh.]

00:33:03 Adam Host It took me so long to remember how I know and love Henry Silva, until I realized he's *Ghost Dog* Henry Silva! Do you guys like that movie?

00:33:11 John Host Yeah, it's—

00:33:12 Ben Host I do like that movie.

00:33:13 Adam Host I love *Ghost Dog*.

00:33:14 John Host Every movie I've ever seen with him in it, he just has a face that you just don't see! It just—it—a face, like, that never appears. And so when you see it, you're like, "Whoa. Where—what planet is he from?"

00:33:29 Adam Host I think it's a really beautiful face. It's almost, like, impossibly symmetrical, I think is the thing that really gets me is, like—it looks like a math face. Like, mathematically created.

00:33:42 John Host I feel like any movie that he appears in that—where the characters do not go, "Whoa! Look at you!"

[Adam laughs.]

"You look really like somebody dangerous!" Uh, I think isn't being honest. Like, you can't have this guy walk into the room and not have everybody drop their drinking glasses.

00:34:00 Adam Host Can you imagine reading for a role, and you walk into, like, where everyone's waiting to go in for their audition, and Henry Silva's there?

[John laughs.]

You're like, "Well... I mean, I—*[laughs]*—I know who I'd pick. I've got this face, and he's got that." What a career this guy's had.

00:34:16 Ben Host Yeah. He's been in like, so many movies, and so many bad movies, but he's always good, you know? Like, whenever you see him, he's good.

00:34:23 Adam Host Yeah.

00:34:24 John Host How was he not in *Die Hard*? That's my question.

00:34:27 Ben Host *[Whispering]* Wow.

[Regular volume] What the hell? Missed opportunity.

00:34:30 Clip Clip *[Lots of gunfire and explosions.]*

00:34:34 Adam Host What did you guys think of the effects work in this movie? I think there are a couple of pretty large set pieces. You know in the beginning, when you see that boat explode behind two inches of Vaseline on the lens, you're like, "Well... buckle up."

[John laughs.]

Like, "This is gonna be that kind of movie." And it totally takes a left turn into—into Practical Actionville, where things feel credibly dangerous! All that rooftop stuff on those clay-shingled rooftops felt exciting and dangerous; all the cliffside stuff felt the same. It didn't feel as cheap as its budget by any means, I thought.

00:35:16 John Host The problem with that, though, is that the internal geographical logic of all of those scenes did not exist.

00:35:22 Adam Host Yeah.

00:35:23 John Host Like the scenes where the Germans are running around—the German troops are running around inside the prison? And it's just—we just get a shot of the same nine guys in Nazi outfits, running down a hall. And then we get the same shot in reverse, and then we see them running down the same hall. And it's really not clear where they're going, or why they're running. You know, there's no—

00:35:44 Ben Host Yeah.

00:35:45 John Host It's not like there's an alarm sounding or anything. And it's—the same is true with those—that rooftop battle. It's super-exciting, and incredible panorama of Dubrovnik while they're fighting. But if you try to put—if you try to draw a map where you're like, "The Germans are here..."

00:36:03 Adam Host *[Snickering]* Mm-hm.

00:36:04 John Host "...and our stars are here, and they're shooting across this distance at one another," and then you superimpose that map on any of the shots that you see, nothing lines up. They're just—people are—it's

just like, "Let's find a cool place in Dubrovnik where we can shoot some people shooting. And then we'll find another cool place—"

00:36:23 Adam Host That's so representative of, I think, the quality of the film in general. Like, the mission is something I had to rewind three times to understand what the point was, even.

[John chuckles.]

00:36:39 John Host Because this is about micro-battles, and not the war, really. The big battle scene at the end, where the partisans all come up out of the thing and they run down the hill, and the Germans are shooting, what those felt like were situations where Corman just had access to a thousand guys.

00:36:55 Ben Host It was very exciting when those guys—like, I saw that wall, and I was like, "Boy, won't it be satisfying if a thousand guys just pop their heads up and start shooting back at the Nazis?" And, uh, I was not disappointed. *[Laughs.]*

One thing I did not really feel like I got was the, "We all need to know exactly what one second is" thing. There's a whole thing about, "We're all gonna get super-good at counting super accurately, by—down to the second." If you look at *The Dirty Dozen* by contrast, like, we know the plan like the back of our hands by the time they're doing the plan. And then when it starts to go off the rails, or when they, like, execute something perfectly, like, it's interesting, because we know what the stakes are. And the, "We're all super-good at counting" thing in this movie I don't feel like was as well elucidated.

00:37:48 John Host Wait a minute! Ben... By the 15th time that we were given a scene where everybody—but especially Rocca, really drilling that, like, snap, that beatnik snap...

[Snap.]

00:38:00 Ben Host *[Laughing quietly]* Yeah.

[Adam chuckles.]

00:38:01 John Host And everybody's snapping all the time—

[Snap.]

—and tapping their hands on their legs, and he gives that long speech, like, "You gotta get down to the second." And we're snapping, and we're snapping, and I remember—

00:38:08 Ben Host "It's gotta just be in your bones!"

[Ben laughs, John stifles laughter.]

00:38:10 John Host I remember at the point at which I said, "Okay, this is—this is tired now. Will you please employ this snap? Because I'm tired of these

guys snapping. Like, employ it!" And then the whole end of the movie happens, and I forgot—I forgot to watch for that—for the snapping. And it never plays into any scene, does it?!

- 00:38:29 Ben Host There's, like, one moment where they, like, meet the Henry Silva character in the hallway after he's killed the German commandant or whatever. And it, like—it seems like they meet up right at the same moment. But I don't know why that was important, that they meet up at the same moment. Like, why they couldn't stand there for 30 seconds to wait for him to do the murder.
- 00:38:50 John Host But how did the snap fall into that, even? I mean, I was—I was waiting for him to say like, "Okay, 30 snaps from now, we all step out of a doorway," or—
- 00:38:57 Ben Host Two lines of dialogue like that would have made a huge difference in how that worked.
- 00:39:01 John Host Yeah. "There's gonna be a really complicated moment where everybody has to stand on their tiptoes at the same—" And it wasn't! It was just like, "We're gonna take the potato document. We're gonna give it to the man. He's gonna give us the Golden AN, and we're gonna take it to Stan."

[Ben laughs.]

Like, we never even saw that!

- 00:39:19 Ben Host Bit strange. But it's interesting that, like, the mechanics of this movie have so much in common with *Dirty Dozen* also. Like, there's speculation that *The Dirty Dozen* came out a year after it was originally meant to. Like, they held off on producing it for a year because of this movie, and they didn't want to be accused of being, you know, the *Deep Impact* to its *Armageddon*, or whatever. *[Laughs quietly.]*
- 00:39:44 John Host But Corman made 400 movies. Like, there is no plot he didn't make a movie of, right?
- 00:39:50 Ben Host Right. *[Laughs.]*
- 00:39:51 John Host I mean, he made a movie where—where a insect girl married a garbage can lid boy. How the hell did he not come up with ragtag fugitive fleet?
- 00:39:59 Ben Host It's a bit of a "*The Simpsons* did it" problem for all other filmmakers?

[John laughs.]

Another thing I read about this is that when they released this movie—like, I think it had a \$600,000 budget, and they think made about \$3,000,000 at the box office, which was kind of—like, Corman made a ton of movies because he knew how to make a movie profitable no matter what the budget was. And apparently United Artists tried to get a little funny with the money and said, like, "Oh, yeah, uh, unfortunately, the film did not break even." And Corman

threatened to bring auditors to look at their books, and they were like, "Well, what if we give you \$400,000 to not do that?" And he accepted the payoff and also vowed never to work with them again.

00:40:48 Adam Host Good job by him.

00:40:50 John Host Listen. I will accept \$400,000 to not tell people how fucked up you guys are.

00:40:58 Ben Host *[Laughs.]* If only I had that!

[John laughs.]

00:41:01 Clip Clip **Music:** Melancholy woodwinds.

John Durrell (*The Secret Invasion*): I said no more.

[Clip audio stops.]

00:41:04 John Host This team was put together by a British officer, pusposably working on behalf of the British government. But none of the characters are British. It—it doesn't seem like it's a coordinated effort on the part of anybody. We never see anybody back at headquarters.

00:41:29 Ben Host Right.

00:41:30 John Host Nobody opens, like, a sealed envelope full of the plans. It really—*[laughs]*—it really does feel like this one British officer who was relieved of command and kind of disgraced—Major Mace—somehow got this team assembled from around the world? With no oversight.

[Adam laughs.]

Working on behalf of no one in particular.

00:41:53 Ben Host There are two steely-faced, like, Pinkerton-looking guys to bring each one of them to Cairo.

00:41:59 John Host Oh, right. They're all wearing matching sunglasses. Ray-Ban Squad.

00:42:03 Ben Host I'd wanna see some really convincing paperwork to my pardon at the end of this if I was one of these guys.

[John laughs.]

'Cause it all seems very shady.

00:42:13 John Host Also, I have to—

[Chair squeaks loudly. He brings this up later so should we mention it here?]

I have to comment on the fact that both Edd Byrnes and William Campbell—they have such early sixties haircuts. Like, Brylcreemed, like, doo-wop—

00:42:27 Ben Host *[Laughs.]* Yeah. The women have really sixties-y hair, as well.

00:42:31 John Host It really threw me off the first 20 minutes of this movie, 'cause I was like, "Why—if you're gonna set a movie in 1943, come on! Get the haircuts and sunglasses right! That's not that hard. You can't just throw—"

It's—well, it's kinda like putting Donald Sutherland in a war movie where he's like, "Cool, Daddy-o!"

[Ben laughs.]

"Slappity do and smack-a-da pow!" No...

00:42:52 Ben Host "Let's go fight some groovy Nazis!" *[Laughs.]*

00:42:55 John Host No, lame!

00:42:58 Adam Host This film gives a lot of time to Major Mace's eventual death. His injury is fatal, once he removes the tourniquet.

00:43:08 John Host Yeah, they hit him right in the red paint can.

[Ben laughs.]

00:43:11 Adam Host Yeah. And then he takes a long-ass walk next to a river, leading the dogs away from the rest of the team! I think you guys bring up a really interesting question about the character, like, how... how connected he is or isn't to his own military. And how related to that this side mission is. He almost felt like—like, the movie felt like *The A-Team*, but that character felt like the Robert Vaughn character in *The A-Team*, like, the puppet master. A guy who's only quasi-connected to the larger story.

00:43:43 John Host I'm afraid that you two guys are gonna have to fill me in on the, like, intricacies of the *A-Team* backstory, 'cause that's—

[Ben laughs, John stifles laughter.]

00:43:51 Adam Host You never watched *The A-Team*? That shocks me. You know what a war movie is, the *A-Team* movie!

[Ben laughs.]

00:43:57 John Host There's a movie?!

00:43:58 Adam Host Let's watch the *A-Team* movie for a Pork Chopper.

00:44:01 Ben Host That's for sure a Pork Chop film.

00:44:03 Adam Host That's a lot of fun.

00:44:04 John Host From before the TV show or after?

00:44:06 Ben Host Ten years ago, I think. Doesn't it have Bradley Cooper in it?

00:44:09 Adam Host 2010! It's a Joe Carnahan film, so you know—

00:44:12 John Host No way!

00:44:13 Adam Host —the action is gonna be top-shelf.

[Ben laughs, Adam stifles laughter.]

But it's Liam Neeson, Bradley Cooper, Jessica Biel, and a host of others.

00:44:22 Clip Clip *[A lot of chaos, shouting, sounds of struggle.]*

Murdock (*The A-Team*, 2010): Sorry boys, gotta run, can't finish the movie! Do let me know how it ends.

00:44:25 Adam Host Sometimes we do that thing on *Friendly Fire* where we're like, "You know, I could've used another ten minutes of this, or like, a little more backstory there." But I'm not hearing a ton of that for *The Secret Invasion*.

00:44:37 Ben Host No. I mean, I think that there are things that I wish they had explained at all, and ideas that had been executed a little bit more cohesively, but I think that this movie does—like, you're right. Like, the pace is bracing. And every time you think that they have three days, they really have six hours, and you're never bored. Like, there is a long sequence in the middle of this film where they are just in a cell together, and all of the action is taking place off screen.

[Adam laughs.]

It's like, a guy gets taken away to be tortured. They're learning how to count. They're, like, talking about what the next step is. It's an absurdly long set piece to basically, like, walk away from all the action and beautiful vistas of Dubrovnik that this film has offered so far. But even that moves really quickly, and is interesting and engaging, you know?

00:45:28 Adam Host Yeah.

00:45:29 John Host They do spend a long time digging that tunnel in the graveyard.

00:45:34 Ben Host Yeah!

00:45:35 John Host Where it feels like if we are—if we're really in a big hurry, if we've—if the clock is ticking down, um, it seems like we're working in shifts here to dig a big hole. And I was never clear of the geography of that, either. Like, there—we talked a lot in the movie—and even went on a surveying mission—to look at the tunnel under the city that was part of the Ancient Roman sewer. But then it seemed like—are we digging in the graveyard to get down to the tunnel of sewers that we looked at from the ocean? Couldn't we have gone in through the ocean side? And then what happens if you fall through the hole into the sewer? And I never understood, like, what the mission was.

And that felt like time was suspended. With the—like, within movie time.

00:46:30 Adam Host Yeah.

00:46:31 John Host Because all of that, like, "Okay," you know, it's—"Your shift is over. Go back to the hotel." People are coming and going all the time. Apparently a couple of German troops kept their bottle of Slivovitz, like, leaning against the very tomb—

[Adam laughs.]

—that our squad has been going in and out of for what seems like a week to ten days. That plan needed one more elucidation, I think.

00:46:55 Adam Host One of the details of that tunnel-digging that I really enjoyed, that I don't remember ever seeing before, was the idea of—of a fresh skull. A skull that actually, like, had some—some muck on it.

[Ben laughs.]

I don't know who it was that pops up out of the grave, I can't remember who it was, but he is horrified by the idea that this is a fresh grave that they're digging through, and he just can't take it.

00:47:19 Ben Host Yeah.

00:47:20 Adam Host Ugh.

00:47:21 John Host That was the William Campbell moment. That was his big moment to say, "I'm out."

00:47:25 Adam Host Yeah, "I didn't know there would be freshies down here."

00:47:28 Ben Host *[Laughs.]* I mean, that just by itself is its own, like, Roger Corman film premise, you know? *[Laughs.]*

00:47:33 Adam Host Yeah. *[Laughs.]*

00:47:34 John Host Yeah, right. *[Laughs.]*

00:47:35 Music Transition Brief clip of "War."

War!
Huh!

Yeah!

[Music stops.]

00:47:38 Adam Host Well, I really enjoyed talking about *The Secret Invasion* with you guys, but it isn't an official *Friendly Fire* episode until we rate and review the movie using a rating system dug up in the film we've just talked about. Uh, it's not gonna be wet skulls, though.

[Ben laughs.]

That is too gross! Not gonna be that. I wanted to choose a rating system that was related somehow to the idea of putting a new spin on an old favorite. Like, this—the genre is not anything that's new to the assembled hosts of *Friendly Fire*, the idea of assembly—

assembling a flawed group of people to go out on a suicide mission. Like, an actual suicide mission is what the guy calls it.

[Ben laughs.]

And—*[laughs]*—and you know, when the film starts out, you think, you know, "What are the chances that there's gonna be anything new to this story? There's no meat on this bone! There's no meat on this skull, even!" Like, "How could this film be distinguished from all of the others of its kind?"

And I think the film makes a strong case for itself and its existence in a couple of ways. Like, these are not new ideas, but the way that they are presented feel new and fresh to me. One of the ways early on that we experience this—I think, Ben, you were referring to it—when they board that German patrol boat, they're throwing the grappling hooks up. The last—the very last thing I expected was a grappling hook going through someone's cheek.

[Ben laughs.]

00:49:11 Adam Host

I could've written a list of 40 things. Like, "What are—how do you get on the boat? What do you use? What happens when you try?" Grappling hook through the cheek, not on my radar. And as soon as that happened, I was brought to attention. Like, expect an unexpected twist on this old favorite story. And it's gonna be one to five grappling hooks for me, because it really sets the tone!

[Ben laughs.]

Sets the tone for the whole thing. Can you get on board this movie, using a grappling hook? I think so. I love its pace. It's a pace that is almost self-aware about, like, "I'm not gonna give you any time to think about what major problems there could be in the plan, or what details you aren't super-clear about. I don't care. We're just gonna pedal-to-the-floor this thing all the way to the end." And I respect the idea of—like, one of the things I read about Roger Corman was like, he's very poppy. Right?

Like, you go in there, you put in your 90 minutes in a movie theater, you're gonna expect something fun and interesting, and then you're out! You're out to enjoy the rest of your day! And I—in a war film environment, where often we are asked to sit and endure a two-and-a-half-hour, or a three-hour film, I respect Roger Corman—I—I'm grateful to Roger Corman for respecting my time. *[Stifles laughter.]* You know?

[Ben laughs.]

I love that the problems and the solutions come together so fast. I wish I had seen more Roger Corman movies up until now. I know it's

something I'm gonna make more of a point of in the future. This film was a lot of fun! You don't often get fun in a war film the way that you get it here. I want to believe that it was fun to make a film like this, too. This feels like the sort of fun that shines through its production.

00:50:58 Adam Host

I don't know. It was a great introduction to Roger Corman, and a bunch of actors that I look forward to enjoying the careers of down the road. I'm gonna give it a solid four grappling hooks.

00:51:09 Ben Host

That is a... good score. And yeah, I think that... I was expecting this movie to just kinda, like, come off the rails and fall apart, and be unsatisfying, and you're right. Like, it does resurprise at every turn. And that is to its credit. Like, there are a lot of ideas in this movie, and some of 'em work and some of 'em don't, and the movie forgets about some of them and never comes back, but yeah. Like, it's a— it's kind of a perfect *Friendly Fire* movie in a lot of ways. It's just like a, like, "Put the team together, go do a crazy mission," and all the twists and turns that that entails were exciting and fun.

And it's like—you're definitely not going to, like, walk away from this with like, a better insight into what World War Two was about, or like, why the British military would get a bunch of international criminals to aid in their—

[Adam or John laughs quietly.]

—uh, you know, turning the Italians against the Germans in the Balkans??

[Adam laughs.]

Per se?? [Laughs.] Like, all of that is very hand-wavy and like, "Who gives a shit?" But it's like—it, like—I think the story behind it is he literally came up with the idea to do a movie in Dubrovnik because he was reading an article about how great Dubrovnik was while he was, like, at the dentist getting a tooth drilled. It's kind of the Adam Sandler effect. Like, "Where would be nice to go spend a month making a movie? Dubrovnik? Cool, let's go do it."

And—you know, in Adam Sandler's case, there are mixed results with that formula. But in this case, I think they came home with something really fun. So... four hooks to the face!

00:52:46 John Host

Wow. Augh!

[Adam laughs.]

Agh! Boy, my squeaky chair is gonna get a workout.

[Ben laughs.]

At—[stifles laughter]—at one level, this is a—this is, uh, a textbook *Friendly Fire* movie. It's got all the elements. It's got the... It's got the file-reading, it's got the team put together out of a mash of people, it's got the hard-to-parse suicide mission, it's got a lot of set pieces, it's got a lot of red paint. But... this is an awful movie!

[Ben laughs.]

00:53:25 Adam Host

Oh no!

00:53:26 John Host

From the beginning to the end! [Laughs.] A—an absolute travesty. I watched this movie wondering if I could invent a new rating scale for it! A rating scale that was four-dimensional.

[Adam laughs.]

That also involved, like, on a time scale, giving it a low rating.

[Adam laughs.]

And—and largely it is that this was—[laughs]—this movie felt like it was written on a napkin, and written on a napkin by people who aren't writers. Who were given a reprieve of their death sentences if they could write a script in an hour. And then directed by those same people.

Like, I could not find a thing in this movie that had not been done so much better elsewhere... in other lame B-movies! Like, that's the thing. The things that were done in this movie were done better elsewhere, and those movies are bad!

Anyway. This was a slog. You know, when I used to play with my *Guns of Navarone* toy set, I had more interesting plots than this. So I am gonna give this movie one grappling hook.

00:54:44 Ben Host

Ouch!

00:54:45 Adam Host

Oof.

00:54:46 Ben Host

Wow. Well, it was a brutal review, but did you have a brutal guy, John?

00:54:52 John Host

Uh, my brutal guy was a gal. She does not appear in the credits very prominently. But she plays a pretty key role in the film. She's the girl that takes Mickey Rooney into the town by pretending that he's drunk and she's slapping his face.

00:55:09 Adam Host

Is this Stephania?

00:55:11 John Host

Stephana had that *je ne sais quoi*. And all I really want is the movie to be about Stephana. It turned out that Stephana was played by Nan Morris—Nan Morris, who has no other film credits on IMDb. Her primary credit on IMDb is that she's been married to Gene Corman since 1955.

[Ben laughs.]

But how—how could someone with as much screen presence, as much just, like, natural charisma as Nan Morris... have this be her only film credit, and have this film neglect her so badly? So she's my guy.

00:55:55 Ben Host

Good guy. Did you have a guy, Adam?

00:55:57 Adam Host

[Sighs.] I think from jump, if it's not Raf Vallone who catches your eye in every scene, it's Simon Fell! He has these, like, piercing blue eyes. And his—like, he seems to be the one that is maybe taking this the least serious throughout. He's always wanting to escape. The thing that endeared me to him immediately might have been more of a visual joke than it was a character moment. But when he gets into the boat to escape, and he's rowing and rowing and rowing, and the fog breaks, and you see him row right into the hull—

[All three laugh.]

—of that German patrol boat?

00:56:40 John Host

That's pretty good.

00:56:41 Adam Host

The reaction that he has, and then when he's dragged up, like—he never gets serious in a way you expect. He's always experiencing his circumstances from a kind of comedic remove, in a way that isn't, like, broad, like Mickey Rooney does. But I just liked his vibe throughout. Like, he's—he's got this, like, confident, semi-comedic, David Bowie affect to him throughout, and I just, like—I dug him as a guy in this movie. So I'm gonna make, uh—and also, like, the way he goes out. *[Laughs.]* I'm always gonna respect catching a grenade and going off a cliff.

[Ben laughs.]

Uh, he—he am become, uh, Bob Half! So. He's my guy.

00:57:29 Ben Host

Simon Fell indeed.

[Adam and Ben laugh quietly.]

00:57:31 Adam Host

Half of him fell.

[Ben laughs.]

The other half was—was turned into a mist and sprayed on the cliff.

00:57:37 Ben Host

Yeah.

00:57:40 John Host

I think, actually, the guy that blew him—that caught the grenade and blew himself up was William Campbell as Jean Saval. And that Simon Fell—

00:57:48 Adam Host

Really??

00:57:49 John Host —Simon Fell took a bunch of machine gun bullets. Sorry.

00:57:53 Adam Host Man, I really tried to get that straight. Shoot.

00:57:55 John Host Sorry.

00:57:57 Adam Host Alright. Well, everything that I—everything in the first part happened to Fell. So...

00:58:00 John Host Yeah. Yep. It's true.

00:58:01 Adam Host There we go.

00:58:02 Ben Host Plus I got that great "Simon Fell indeed" joke in there.

00:58:05 John Host That was a great joke.

00:58:06 Adam Host Yeahhh. God, you wanna keep that!

00:58:08 John Host I didn't wanna knock it outta there, but I also, you know...

00:58:11 Ben Host This podcast prides itself on its accuracy.

00:58:14 Adam Host We also want to not connote any sort of stolen half-Bob valor—

00:58:19 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Ben:** Right.

00:58:20 Adam Host **John:** Exactly. Exactly.
—that does not exist, so...

You know what, maybe our challenge coin should be a half challenge coin.

[Ben and John laugh.]

00:58:27 Ben Host And it floats.

00:58:28 Adam Host Yeah! It floats for some reason!

00:58:33 Ben Host *[All three laugh.]*
My guy is, uh—I don't know if we know his name or not. It seemed to me that basically everyone in this movie that didn't have a speaking part was just a local from Yugoslavia who was either in the military or somebody they just grabbed off the street, because there are an awful lot of, like, SS officers walking around that don't—don't look like they are from, uh—*[laughs]*—from Northern Europe at all. And my guy is one such character. He's the, uh—kinda the *aide de camp* to the commandant of the fortress.

00:59:07 John Host Mm-hm.

00:59:08 Ben Host And he keeps coming in, and it just kept distracting me, and I couldn't figure out why, until I realized he looked like Yugoslavian Ted Danson.

[John and Adam laugh.]

And, uh—and once I realized he was Yugoslavian Ted Danson, he was, like, my favorite character to see come back into another scene. So for that reason, he was my guy.

00:59:30 Music Transition

Brief clip of "War."

War!

Huh!

[Music stops.]

00:59:33 Promo Clip

Music: Dramatic, movie trailer–esque music.

[The hosts use very "announcer" voices in this promo.]

Mark Gagliardi: We interrupt the podcast you're listening to to tell you about another podcast! That's right: [We Got This with Mark and Hal](#).

Hal Lublin: That's correct, Mark! This is Hal. We do the hard work for you, settling all of the meaningless arguments you have with your friends.

Mark: So tune in every week on the Maximum Fun network for *We Got This with Mark and Hal*, and all your questions will be asked... and answered.

Hal: You're welcome!

[Music reaches an apex and quiets down.]

Mark: Alright. That's enough of that.

Chorus: *[Singing] We Got This!*

01:00:01 Promo Clip

Music: A jaunty jazz combo.

Annabelle Gurwitch: Hi. Are you someone who thinks that when one door closes, another one opens?

Laura House: Someone who always sees the light at the end of the tunnel?

Annabelle: If you answered yes to one or both of these questions, good for you!

Laura: We are not those people.

Annabelle: Nope! I'm Annabelle Gurwitch, and I'm a "You know that other door opening? It probably leads to a broom closet" kind of person.

Laura: And I'm Laura House! When I see a light at the end of the tunnel, I assume it's a train! Headed right toward me!

Annabelle: Laura and I have created a brand-new podcast for people like us! It's called *Tiny Victories*. We're sharing personal tiny victories, or things we've read or seen that inspire resilience.

Laura: So if you're looking for a tiny reason to get outta bed each week, subscribe to *Tiny Victories*.

Annabelle: Available on Maximum Fun, or wherever you get your podcasts!

Laura: Let's get tiny!

[Music fades out.]

01:00:45 Music Transition Brief clip of "War."

Yeah!

[Music stops.]

01:00:46 Adam Host Uh, maybe we'll do something better for you next week, John. What do you say you grab that die and give it a roll, and tell us what it's gonna be?

01:00:55 John Host Let me get that die going. Here we go! Get that last bit of coffee outta here.

[Drinking coffee.]

Okay. The die in the cup. I got a—I got a Father's Day cup from my daughter. It says, "World's Best Farter."

[Adam and Ben laugh.]

"I mean... father."

[Adam laughs.]

01:01:13 Ben Host Wow.

01:01:14 John Host She's so proud of it. And...

[Ben laughs.]

One of the things that I taught her when she was—when she got old enough to do things, was I taught her how to get me a cup of coffee.

01:01:27 Adam Host Mm.

01:01:28 John Host So that I could say, "Hey, sweetie—" you know, like—like in the seventies, when dads would say—*[laughs]*—"Run to the store and get me a pack of cigarettes."

01:01:33 Ben Host *[Stifling laughter]* Mm-hm.
01:01:34 Adam Host Right.
01:01:35 John Host I don't have that option, but I can definitely say, "Will you go get me a cup of coffee?" And she, for the most part, still thinks that it's a fun mission.

[Ben laughs quietly.]

But she loves bringing it to me in the "World's Best Farter" cup. "I mean father." Okay, here comes the dice!

[Die rattles around in the cup for several seconds.]

Twenty-six!

01:02:00 Ben Host Twenty-six!
01:02:01 Music Music "G.H.Q." by Roy Budd from *The Sea Wolves* original score. Taut, nautical piccolo and snare drums.
01:02:02 Ben Host We are staying in World War Two, but heading over to India. This is a 1980 film directed by Andrew V. McLaglen. It's called *The Sea Wolves*.
01:02:13 John Host Hm! Right on.
01:02:13 Music Music *[The music is joined by an explosion before fading out.]*
01:02:16 Ben Host It appears to star Gregory Peck, and Roger Moore, and David Niven!
01:02:21 John Host Oh, yeahhh.
01:02:22 Adam Host Whaaat?
01:02:23 John Host Fun times!
01:02:25 Adam Host We're gonna get the return of Ben's great Gregory Peck impression!

[Ben and John laugh, Adam stifles laughter.]

That's what I'm hoping for.

01:02:32 John Host This movie would have been right in the sweet spot of me going to World War Two movies with my dad.
01:02:36 Music Music "War" starts fading in.
01:02:38 John Host I wonder if I saw it and I just don't remember it. I love David Niven.
01:02:42 Ben Host Yeah, this is gonna be a fun one.
01:02:43 Adam Host Good cast!
01:02:45 Ben Host Well, uh, I'm really looking forward to that little—little delight.

[Adam laughs.]

But we gotta—we gotta go for now, right? We gotta give these people a week off. So, uh, we're gonna leave it with Robs. And for

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

01:03:04 Music Music

"War" continues at full volume.

*Absolutely—
—nothing!*

Listen to me!

War!

[The song fades down and continues quietly as Rob speaks.]

01:03:08 Rob Schulte Producer

Friendly Fire is a Maximum Fun podcast hosted by Adam Pranica, Ben Harrison, and John Roderick. The 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.

If you're looking for more *Friendly Fire*, last year we reviewed a film from 2015 called *Eye in the Sky*. Starring Alan Rickman, Helen Mirren, and Aaron Paul, this film deals with the ethical dilemmas that come along with drone warfare.

And if you feel like supporting our show, head to MaximumFun.org/join. And for as little as \$5 a month, you're gonna gain access to all of our bonus Pork Chop episodes, as well as all of the Maximum Fun bonus content!

Don't forget you can now follow us on Twitter and Instagram under the handles FriendlyFireRSS. Thanks for listening. We'll see you next week with another episode of *Friendly Fire*.

01:04:01 Music Music

"War" continues at full volume.

*They say we must fight to keep our freedom
But Lord knows there's got to be a better way!
OHHH!*

War!

Huh!

God, y'all.

What is it good for?

You tell me.

Nothing!

Say it, say it, say it, saay it!

War!
Huh!

Good god, y'all.

[Music continues more quietly.]

01:04:21 Ben Host Roger Corman as of this recording is still alive! He's like 94 years old.

01:04:24 John Host Whoa. No shit!

[Music fades out.]

I bet he's a big fan of our show! Hey, Roger!

01:04:28 Adam Host Hey, Roger.

01:04:29 Ben Host Hey, Rog. You know how 94-year-olds are always super-up on the latest podcasts.

01:04:36 John Host Oh, yeah, well, I was just yelling at him over on Facebook 'cause he said something stupid.

01:04:39 Music Transition A cheerful ukulele chord.

01:04:40 Speaker 1 Guest MaximumFun.org.

01:04:42 Speaker 2 Guest Comedy and culture.

01:04:43 Speaker 3 Guest Artist owned—

01:04:44 Speaker 4 Guest —audience supported.