

Canopy

Engage with culture without disengaging your faith.



Genre: Drama

Rating: M

Length: 84 minutes

Starring: Khan Chittenden, Mo Tzu-Yi, Yoshi Yamamoto, Robert Menzies, Edwina Wren.

Language: English, Cantonese (no subtitles)

Director and Screenplay: Aaron Wilson

Brief synopsis:

This is a wartime movie with a difference. It is 1942. Singapore. An Australian fighter pilot, Jim, is shot down in combat. "A few atmospheric CGI shots establish the scope of the battle, with smoke rising in the distance and aircraft streaking across the sky. With little fanfare and no backstory, aviator Jim (Khan Chittenden) literally falls into the frame and, after cutting himself free of the cumbersome

canvas harness, is mired ankle-deep in thick black mud, the sounds of war raging around him. After frantically going through his survival kit to identify the items he might need, he begins a furtive trek that moves him out of the mud and into the verdant yet imposing jungle. In short order he literally runs into Seng (Taiwanese actor Mo Tzu-Yi), a Chinese resistance fighter on the run whose colleague has just been killed. Though they don't share a common language, they manage to survive together until the inevitable run-in with Japanese forces."

<http://variety.com/2013/film/reviews/canopy-review-toronto-1200605326/>

Questions for discussion

Some general questions might provide enough framework to get started:

- What stood out as the main points/highlights in the movie?
- What themes are explored?
- What assumptions were embedded in the story?
- What challenged you? What questions did it raise for you?
- Are there aspects of the story that resonated with your own experience or with the experience of others in a similar situation?
- Are there biblical or theological themes or characters that come to mind?

The Jungle

"I wanted it to be experiential," Wilson says. "Once Jim is dropped into this forest, you're in there with him. Time becomes fluid and it isn't like a typical film experience." Sound is the key. Wilson creates "a visual theater of the mind in which the majority of the action is heard and not seen. Thus the sounds of the forest intermingle with the chaos of war, as the sweat-stained faces of the protags register the fear and determination of the hunted." Margaret Pomeranz, [At the Movies](#), opined, "There are only so many leaves you can see in life . ." For some this can all become a bit tedious and give up on the movie. However for this writer who has trekked at length in New Guinea jungles, and at night, it was a true rendition of reality. The jungle is alive and speaks in many voices for anyone who stops and listens. It would also make sense to any servicemen who endured war in the jungles of New Guinea and SE Asia. For those wishing to get on with the story miss the point, that is the story.

"When I spoke to veterans, they'd talk about the quiet moments, about not being able to talk for fear of alerting the other side," says Wilson. "They'd hear all the sounds of the jungle, and they've stayed with them to this day." [Karl Quinn SMH](#)

In our current world of instant gratification are we able to hear the voices that speak to us?

Do we stay still long enough to immerse ourselves in the experience?

Can we truly know anything without experiencing it?

In the recent movie, Noah, it was said that God never spoke, because there was no "voice"! Perhaps the commentator was mistaken. God speaks in a multiplicity of ways, through nature, other people's actions and voices, and in our dreams. Maybe if we do not hear it is because we do not listen?

Has a life of faith become for many just tedious? Can real life only be alive when lived on the edge?

Who is the enemy?

Jim runs into Seng, a member of the Singaporean-Chinese militia, first believing him to be Japanese. Communication is difficult as neither shares the other's language. Seng's only weapon is a sharpened stick and Jim had lost his sidearm when he bailed out. However a comradeship develops as each supports the other in navigating the jungle and avoiding the Japanese patrols. Seng is unlucky to be hit by a stray bullet that was fired by Japanese searchers, probably as ill at home in the jungle and spooked by any sound or shadow? Jim drags Seng deeper into the bush and attends as best he can to the wound. Aaron Wilson the Writer / director attempts to show the human response to adversity and the mateship between the two men becomes apparent in their interactions. War seems to bring out the worst and best of humanity. Comment?

War Stories

Wilson says *Canopy* is simply a reflection of the stories he heard growing up in the Murray River town of Tocumwal. "You'd hear the war stories, you'd see the legacy. It was all around me growing up," he says.

"My grandfather's brother was in Borneo and Papua and when he came back he couldn't handle it. After about three months he went back to Papua New Guinea. And he's been there ever since."

Many servicemen on returning would not speak of their experiences and many will not march at Anzac Day. Thoughts?

Can any war be justified? Is humankind predicated to violence? Early Christians were largely pacifists and refused to serve in the Roman Army. What has changed? What do you think should be the Christian response to war?

Deeper Problems?

Canopy is Wilson's first feature but he has already shot the sequel. It picks up Jim's story in the 1970s, "once he's returned home and the connection, or lack thereof, to his family. It's about the legacy, how the war never leaves him." KQ-SMH

The film ends with a figure of Jim standing alone in a wheat field. What do you understand or know of the issues confronting servicemen returning from war? Have you any similar experiences of situations that have become indelibly etched in your memory? You may care to share them or not. Where is God in all of this?

Thanks to Palace Nova Cinemas for supporting the Movie Discussion Resource project.

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