01 Project Overview

LOGLINE & CONCEPT

Logline: A green American engineer, captured after the fall of the Philippines, must survive the Bataan Death March, hell ships, and a brutal Chinese labor camp—while forging an unlikely alliance with a British spy and Chinese resistance fighters—to bring himself and his men home. Then, back home, he discovers that surviving the war is not the same as winning peace.

> **Central Question:** How does a good man survive an evil system without becoming evil himself?

Grounded in True History

Based on the Bataan Death March, "hell ships" (Tottori Maru), the Hoten (Mukden) POW camp in Japanese-occupied China, Unit 731, and the US "Operation Paperclip" recruitment of Japanese war criminals — drawn from survivor testimony.

Multi-National Ensemble

A multi-front perspective spanning American, British, Filipino, Chinese, and Japanese-American characters, with complex antagonists (Murada's tragic backstory, Matsuda's bureaucratic evil) — no caricatures.

Core Themes

Resistance (sabotage / intelligence / underground network), friendship, betrayal, justice vs. revenge, memory & silence, and "Never Give Up."

Comparable Titles

The Pacific (HBO) · Unbroken · Empire of the Sun · The Bridge on the River Kwai · Shōgun (2024)

Dual Development Formats

Primary pitch: an **8-episode limited series** (approx. 480 min / 8 hours). Previously pitched as a **119-minute theatrical feature**. Positioned as a low-to-medium budget action/drama/history project.

Production Locations

Hengdian World Studios (China, ~36 days) + Hainan Island (14 days) + Maryland, USA (7 days) — approximately **57 shooting days**.

02 Story & Narrative Structure

PLOT & EPISODE BREAKDOWN

Full Storyline (adapted from the diaries of Allied POW leaders)

- **Prologue**: Autumn 1941, Maryland. Engineer Lt. William Anderson says goodbye to his wife and daughter before his assignment to the Philippines (USAFFE).
- **Pearl Harbor & the Fall**: On 1941-12-08 the Japanese air-raid the Philippines; MacArthur retreats to Bataan. Anderson meets British MI6 Major Robert Perry.
- **Bataan Death March**: A brutal 65-mile march under tropical heat, thousands of POWs dying; Anderson and Perry are separated; comrade Sgt. Díaz is executed.
- **Cabanatuan Camp**: Starvation, malaria, dysentery, half the camp dying; Anderson and Perry reunite, Perry becomes a mentor.
- **Hell Ships**: Sent to Japan-occupied China aboard the Tottori Maru; a US submarine mistakenly attacks, sinking the Asan Maru and killing 1,500 men in burning oil.
- **Hoten (Mukden) Camp**: Frozen forced labor at the Mitsubishi (MKK) munitions factory; Chinese foreman Lao Gao and young Li Lishui risk everything to help.
- **Unit 731**: The Japanese biological-weapons laboratory conducts vivisection on Chinese villagers and POWs; postwar, its doctors are recruited by the United States.
- **Escape & Execution**: Three POWs' escape fails; they are caught and publicly executed; Lao Gao gets 10 years; Anderson is locked in a blockhouse for 30 days in the dark.
- **Liberation**: B-29 raids, the atomic flash, and the OSS paratroopers free the camp.
- **Postwar**: POWs are forced to sign non-disclosure agreements, silencing them for 60 years; back home, Anderson spots Unit 731 doctors working at Fort Detrick — the historical shadow returns.

8-Episode Structure

Ep	Title	Core Emotional Beat	Cliffhanger
1	The Builder	Innocence lost	Bill and Perry speed through blacked-out Manila as air raid sirens wail.
2	First Blood	Courage born of necessity	The American flag is lowered. The surrender begins.
3	The March	"Never give up" is born	Díaz is shot. His body vanishes into the jungle.
4	Never Give Up	Hope flickers	Bill volunteers for the work detail. Destination unknown.
5	Guests of the Emperor	Hope crushed	Matsuda: "I will not rest until the last of you dies."
6	The Factory	Purpose found	Murada's backstory is revealed. He knows something is wrong.
7	The Escape	Devastation	Bill is dragged to the blockhouse. 30 days alone in the dark.
8	Never Again	Memory vs. healing	Bill confronts a Unit 731 doctor working for America. Then: home.

03 Character Roster

ENSEMBLE GUIDE

Lead · Lt. William "Bill" Anderson

American civil engineer, late 20s. From innocent idealist to battered survivor, he carries the trauma of war his whole life. Performance lane: Tom Hanks in *Saving Private Ryan* or Colin Firth in *The King's Speech*.

Suggested: Joel Courtney / Josh Hutcherson

Lead · Major Robert Perry

British MI6 intelligence officer, 40s, multilingual, married into a wealthy Chinese family. Anderson's mentor, chess partner, and moral counterweight. Lane: Ralph Fiennes in *The English Patient*.

Suggested: James McAvoy / Luke Evans

Antagonist · Lt. David Murada

A Stanford-educated Nisei (Japanese-American) whose family lost everything to internment; he now brutalizes American POWs to prove his loyalty to Japan. Lane: Michael Fassbender in *12 Years a Slave* — a villain with a tragic backstory, not a caricature.

Moral Anchor · Lao Gao

Chinese factory foreman, 50s, feeds and protects the POWs while his own family starves. Lane: Ken Watanabe in *Letters from Iwo Jima* — quiet authority, dignified restraint. Mandarin-speaking.

Suggested: Wu Jing / Jackie Chan

Key Supporting Roles

Role	Position	Function
SGT. Joe Chapman	Streetwise gambler, wisecracking enlisted man	Comic relief → escape attempt → executed
CPL. Pete Aliotto	19, nervous, vulnerable	Betrays the escapees under torture
S1C. Ferdinand Meringold	Catholic sailor, fragile	Tragic heart of the escape → executed
Li Lishui	Brave Chinese teenager	Child's perspective → heroism
COL. Genji Matsuda	Camp commandant	Bureaucratic evil, not sadistic
DR. Yoshimura	Unit 731 doctor	Vivisections; postwar works for America (core moral issue)
Jean / Julie Anderson	Bill's wife / 6→9-yr-old daughter	Ground the home front
SGT. Jorge Díaz	Filipino soldier	Dies heroically on the Death March
MAJ. Hennessy	OSS officer	Liberates the camp

04 Market Position & Timing

WHY THIS STORY, NOW

Filling the Gaps in WWII Storytelling

China-Burma-India Underserved

Most WWII dramas focus on Europe or the Pacific islands; the China front, the Burma Road, and the Japanese occupation of Manchuria are under-explored.

"Hell Ships" Never Dramatized

Tens of thousands of POWs died on these floating coffins; the Tottori Maru and Lisbon Maru sinkings are largely unknown to general audiences.

Unit 731 Is Buried Horror

The Japanese biological-weapons program was granted immunity by the US in exchange for data — a moral compromise never fully dramatized.

Recent Success Benchmarks

Title	Why It Worked	Parallel to Guests
The Pacific (HBO)	Intimate, brutal, character-driven	Multi-front survival arc
All the Light We Cannot See (Netflix)	Emotional, visual, hope amid horror	Civilian resistance threads
Transatlantic (Netflix)	Forgotten history, ensemble, urgency	Cross-cultural alliance
Masters of the Air (Apple)	Prestige production, true events, male ensemble	Brotherhood under fire
The Zone of Interest (A24)	Evil as bureaucratic, morally complex	Matsuda, Murada, Ishii

Platform Fit

Platform	Fit	Rationale
Netflix	High	Global reach, appetite for international WWII stories, proven successes
Apple TV+	High	Prestige branding, *Masters of the Air* audience, deep pockets
HBO/Max	Medium	Historical-drama pedigree, but saturated with WWII content
Amazon Prime	Medium	Works as an international co-production
Hulu/FX	Medium	*Shōgun* proved FX can do Japan-era prestige

Target Audience

Primary Audience

- Men 35–65: 45% (war history, survival, male ensemble)
- Women 35–65: 35% (character drama, emotional arcs, family)
- History enthusiasts: 15% (accurate period detail, untold stories)
- International (Asia): 5% (Chinese co-production, cross-cultural cast)

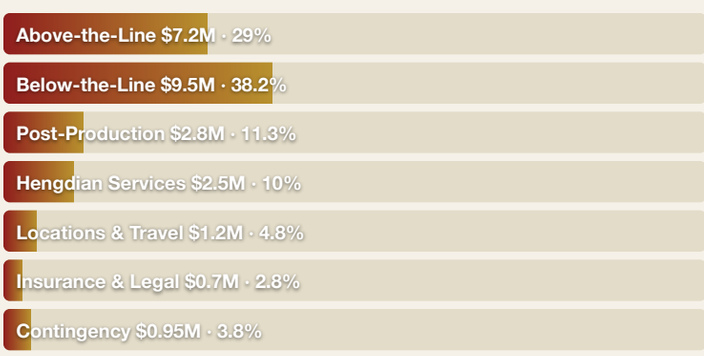
Secondary Audience

- Veterans & military families (authentic POW experience, brotherhood)
- Japanese-American viewers (Murada's complex, provocative backstory)
- Chinese domestic market (Lao Gao, Li Lishui, resistance heroes, Hengdian production)

05 Budget Structure ($24.85M)

BUDGET BREAKDOWN

By Category



By Category (Amounts)

Category	Amount	Share
A · Above-the-Line (Cast/Producers/Writer)	$7,200,000	29.0%
B · Below-the-Line (Crew/Production)	$9,500,000	38.2%
C · Post-Production (Edit/VFX/Sound/Music)	$2,800,000	11.3%
D · Hengdian Services (Sets/Costumes/Extras/Crew)	$2,500,000	10.0%
E · Locations & Travel	$1,200,000	4.8%

F · Insurance & Legal	$700,000	2.8%
G · Contingency (15%)	$950,000	3.8%
Total	**$24,850,000**	**100%**

Cost Per Episode

Ep	Title	Budget	Notes
1	The Builder	$2.8M	Home front, period sets, child actor
2	First Blood	$3.2M	Battle sequence, stunts, VFX
3	The March	$3.5M	Death March, crowd scenes, crocodile VFX
4	Never Give Up	$2.5M	Camp interiors, character-driven
5	Guests of the Emperor	$3.2M	Hell ship, train, camp arrival
6	The Factory	$2.8M	Factory interiors, resistance network
7	The Escape	$3.0M	Escape sequence, execution, blockhouse
8	Never Again	$3.85M	B-29 raid, liberation, Unit 731, homecoming

Note: The Chinese-language business report lists a total budget of approximately RMB 248.97 million (including development, pre-production, lead cast, shooting, post, distribution and marketing — of which marketing is about RMB 71.9 million).

06 Hengdian World Studios · Co-Production Advantage

THE HENGDIAN ADVANTAGE

The project has selected Hengdian World Studios as its prime production base for direct cost-saving benefits — the studio offers the world's largest film & TV production facility with five millennia of Chinese civilization in its standing sets.

Traditional vs. Hengdian Production Cost Comparison

Line Item	Traditional	Hengdian	Savings
Locations & sets	$3–5M	$500K	~80%
Costumes & props	$1–2M	$200K	~80%
Extras (crowds)	$1M	$200K	~80%
Visual Effects	$5–8M	$3–4M	~40–80%
Local crew	$2–3M	$1M	~60%
Travel & lodging	$2–3M	$1M	~60%
Total	**$40–60M**	**$25M**	**~50–60%**

Key Resources from Hengdian

Existing Sets

1930s-40s Chinese streets, Japanese-occupied city, factory interiors, prison camp — 80% of locations pre-built.

Costumes & Props

WWII Japanese, American, and Chinese military/civilian wardrobes — a major rental-cost reduction.

Crew & Extras

Experienced Chinese historical-drama crews plus a large pool of trained extras (essential for the Death March, camp, and factory crowd scenes).

Shooting Plan: ~57 shooting days — Hengdian 36 days (Episodes 5-7: POW camp, factory, city, Unit 731, hell ship, train), Hainan Island 14 days (Episodes 2-4: jungle, march, Cabanatuan), Maryland, USA 7 days (Episodes 1 & 8: home front, Fort Detrick).

07 Financing & Returns

FUNDING & ROI

Recommended Funding Structure (Target $24.85M)

Source	Amount	Notes
Hengdian in-kind (sets/costumes/crew)	$2.5M	Already reflected in Category D
China co-production financing	$5–8M	Provincial film funds, private equity
US tax incentives (Maryland)	$1–2M	Film tax credit (25–30%)
International presales	$5–10M	UK, Japan, France, Germany and more
Streaming platform license fee	$8–12M	Netflix / Apple / HBO advance
Equity financing (gap/supergap)	$3–5M	Completion guarantee required

Independent Co-Financing Model (2025 version)

- Private equity loans from individual investors + Great Avenue Capital Partners Ltd.
- Maryland (28%) and Western Australia (40%) tax incentives used as financing collateral
- International + domestic presales (Minimum Guarantees / MG) used as loan collateral
- Gap/deficit financing via Blue Fox Finance or BondIt Media Capital
- Coordination with Hengdian Pictures (503 cinemas / 3,154 screens) to set international presale (MG) estimates

Returns Distribution

Revenue Splits

- Theatrical: 55% to distributor / 45% to rights-holders (China)
- Sales-agent commission: 10%
- Equity investors: principal recovery + 15–20% agreed interest + net-profit participation

Long-Tail Revenue Streams

Theatrical box office, distribution licensing, SVOD, DTC, OTT, AVOD, PVOD, TVOD, cable TV, Blu-ray/DVD, airline VOD, and educational licensing.

Production cycle is typically two years; principal is recovered within 1–2 years of release, with the balance distributed over five years.

08 Distribution & Marketing Plan

SALES, MARKETING & OUTREACH

Sales & Distribution

- **North American / Global sales agent:** Douglas Maddox of DBM Films
- North American markets: Canada, UK, France, Germany, Spain, Latin America
- Asia-Pacific: Korea, Japan, Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Australia/NZ, India
- Special screenings: PVOD; National Museum of the US Army, the Burke Theater–US Navy Memorial, AFM (Nov 5-10)

Media Outreach

- Press kit distributed via Cision to Variety, Hollywood Reporter, Screen International, The Wrap, Deadline and more
- Retrospective specials developed with The History Channel and Liaoning TV
- Orchestral score by John Keltonic of JDK Music

Government & Non-Government Partners

- US Dept. of Veterans Affairs, USO, Gary Sinise Foundation
- Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor, Mukden POW Camp Memorial Association
- Pacific Atrocities Education, OCA — Asian Pacific American Advocates
- Museum of Chinese in America (NYC), Chinese American Museum DC
- PGA AAPI Working Group

Educational & Cultural Partners

- Unit 731 Evidence Museum (Pingfang, Heilongjiang), Mukden POW Camp Museum (Shenyang)
- Heilongjiang TV, Liaoning TV, CCTV-9

Content Rating Advisory

TV-MA (mature audiences) Violence: intense (executions, torture, battle); Language: period-appropriate profanity; Nudity: none (starvation/emaciation implied); Sexual content: none.

09 Roadmap & Key Milestones

PATH TO GREENLIGHT

Packaging Timeline (from the GOTE Pitch Package)

- **Completed**
  Secure Hengdian letter of intent
- **60 days**
  Attach showrunner
- **90 days**
  Develop full pilot script + 50+-page series bible
- **120 days**
  Attach director (Episodes 1-2)
- **150 days**
  Approach talent agencies (lead roles)
- **180 days**
  Prepare teaser reel / sizzle
- **210 days**
  Submit to streamers (Netflix / Apple / HBO / Amazon)
- **240 days**
  Secure financing (deficit, tax credits, co-productions)
- **270 days**

Co-production approval (if applicable)

Current Status & Known Milestones

Completed

- Multiple script versions (English/Chinese); script v1 dated 2024-01-18
- Business plans from 2023 and 2025
- Financing / distribution plan (GOTE limited series ≈ $24.85M)
- Hengdian set & location guide, rate/local-crew quotes, insurance materials
- Hengdian letter of intent completed; NDAs signed with multiple parties in 2024
- Amazon Studios script notes (2023-11-30: "well-researched but needs tightening of characters and structure")

To-Do / Risks

- Project goal: "seeking packaging, financing, and distribution"
- No confirmed production start date yet
- Amazon notes suggest streamlining characters and structure
- Star talent, director, and streamer deal still to be locked
- Sensitive subject matter (Unit 731, Nisei traitors) requires careful handling of Chinese/Japanese/US perceptions

SWOT at a Glance: Strengths (Hengdian savings of 50-60%, fills a WWII storytelling gap, multi-national perspective); Weaknesses (sensitive subject matter, no star/director/distributor locked yet); Opportunities (demand for prestige WWII drama, China collaboration, pre-built sets); Threats (WWII market saturation, financing uncertainty, sensitivity review).

10 Creative Team & Contact

TEAM & CONTACTS

Douglas Ross

Producer / Writer / Editor, Wang-Ross Communications LLC (Maryland). PGA member with 40+ years in television, focused on AAPI and China-centric content. Produced *Black Hearts* (Unit 731/Mukden POW documentary), served as subject-matter expert on CCTV-9's *History Cannot Be Forgotten*, and produced *China: Engineering an Empire* for The History Channel.

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Hengdian World Studios Contact

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North America / Global sales agent: Douglas Maddox, DBM Films

Proposed director/executive producer: Dean Head ACS, Great REM Development Ltd (GRDL)

Proposed Creative Team Direction

Role	Direction	Notes
Showrunner	Experienced WWII/historical drama	e.g. The Pacific / Masters of the Air teams
Director (Eps 1-2)	War/period experience	Sets the visual language
Director (Eps 3-4)	Survival/thriller background	Death March intensity
Director (Eps 5-8)	Chinese co-production experience	Maximize Hengdian advantage
Director of Photography	Naturalistic handheld + composed drama	References: The Pacific, 1917
Composer	Minimalist, mournful, Asian instrumentation	Strings + erhu

This analysis is compiled from the project folder's documents (GOTE Pitch Package, 2023/2025 business plans, budget detail, screenplay, NDAs, etc.); no information has been invented. Proposed historical advisors: the estates of Linda Goetz Holmes and Sheldon Harris, Dr. Richard Frank, the Museum of Tolerance, and Hengdian's Chinese historical consultants.