

Devotion (2022 film)

Devotion is a 2022 American biographical war film based on the 2015 book *Devotion: An Epic Story of Heroism, Friendship, and Sacrifice* by Adam Makos, which tells the comradeship between naval officers Jesse L. Brown and Tom Hudner during the Korean War.^{[6][7]} It is directed by J. D. Dillard and written by Jake Crane and Jonathan Stewart.^[8] The film stars Jonathan Majors as Brown and Glen Powell as Hudner, along with Christina Jackson, Daren Kagasoff, Joe Jonas, Nick Hargrove, Spencer Neville, and Thomas Sadoski in supporting roles.

Devotion premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in IMAX at the Ontario Place Cinesphere on September 12, 2022, and was released by Columbia Pictures through Sony Pictures Releasing in the United States on November 23, 2022.^{[9][10]} While it received positive reviews from critics and audiences, it was a post-COVID-19 box-office bomb, grossing only \$21.8 million worldwide against a \$90 million budget.^{[2][11]}

Plot

In early 1950, Lieutenant Tom Hudner transfers to Fighter Squadron 32 (VF-32) at Quonset Point Naval Air Station, where he meets Ensign Jesse Brown, the only black member of the unit. Hudner integrates well into the squadron, which is assigned F4U-4 Corsairs – powerful planes with a reputation for fatal accidents if not handled properly. After Brown's car breaks down, Hudner starts giving him rides and eventually meets his wife Daisy and their young daughter Pam. The Browns are doing well, but struggle with racist neighbors, and Brown has resorted to shouting racist abuse at himself in the mirror for motivation before missions.

VF-32 passes their carrier tests with the Corsair and transfer to the USS *Leyte*, which is deployed to the Mediterranean Sea to deter Soviet aggression. Before they leave, Daisy has Hudner promise that he will be there for Jesse. On the voyage, squadron member Mohring is killed in a crash while attempting to land a Corsair. Hudner questions why Mohring did not follow instructions, but Brown explains that one

Devotion



Theatrical release poster

Directed by	<u>J. D. Dillard</u>
Screenplay by	<u>Jake Crane</u> <u>Jonathan A. Stewart</u>
Based on	<i>Devotion: An Epic Story of Heroism, Friendship, and Sacrifice</i> by <u>Adam Makos</u>
Produced by	<u>Molly Smith</u> <u>Rachel Smith</u> <u>Thad Luckinbill</u> <u>Trent Luckinbill</u>
Starring	<u>Jonathan Majors</u> <u>Glen Powell</u> <u>Christina Jackson</u> <u>Thomas Sadoski</u>
Cinematography	<u>Erik Messerschmidt</u>
Edited by	<u>Billy Fox</u>
Music by	<u>Chanda Dancy</u>

cannot always follow directions – if Brown had solely done what he himself was told, he would have been stopped early in his career by the many racist superior officers who wanted him to fail.

The unit has shore leave in Cannes, France, where Brown encounters actress Elizabeth Taylor on the beach and secures invitations for the squadron to a casino, impressing them. After Hudner gets in a drunken fight with a Marine who had previously harassed Brown, Brown tells Hudner not to fight his battles for him, but simply to be there for him. Brown is given an expensive watch by *Leyte*'s black crewmen, who admire him for his work.

The next day, the squadron is informed that war has broken out between North and South Korea, and *Leyte* is redeploying to support the South. In November 1950, VF-32 arrives in Korea and learns that Chinese troops have entered the war on the North Korean side and begun to push American forces back. The squadron deploys to destroy a pair of bridges on the Yalu River between China and North Korea, though they are only permitted to fire on the Korean side of the border. Brown and Hudner fight off a MiG-15 fighter jet while the others attack the bridges, but one remains standing. While Hudner orders a retreat in the face of anti-air fire from the Chinese side of the river, Brown disobeys him and attacks the bridge solo, successfully crippling it.

Hudner's after-action report praises Brown but also mentions that he was acting against orders, which Brown tells Hudner will be used as an excuse to deny him promotions for the rest of his career, despite Hudner's attempt to revise the report. On another mission to support besieged Marines at Chosin Reservoir (including the Marine who earlier harassed Brown), Brown's Corsair is crippled, and he is forced to crash-land in a clearing in the mountains of North Korea. Hudner sees that Brown is alive but trapped in his cockpit and deliberately crashes his own plane in the clearing in order to aid Brown. Though he puts out an engine fire, Hudner is unable to extract the wounded Brown from the wreckage, and Brown dies shortly after a Marine Sikorsky helicopter arrives to assist him. Back on *Leyte*, Hudner's commander determines that it is too risky to attempt to recover Brown's body from the Chinese-controlled area, and VF-32 (minus the injured Hudner) is instead sent on a "funeral flight" to destroy the downed Corsairs, with Brown's corpse still inside.

Several months later, a heartbroken Hudner receives the Medal of Honor from President Harry S. Truman for his attempts to save Brown. Hudner speaks with Daisy after the ceremony and apologizes for failing to rescue her husband. Daisy remarks that she only made him promise to be there for Jesse, not to save him, and Hudner tells her that Jesse's final words were about how much he loved her.

Production companies	<u>Columbia Pictures</u> <u>STXfilms</u> <u>Black Label Media</u> <u>Stage 6 Films</u>
Distributed by	<u>Sony Pictures Releasing</u> (North America) ^[a] STX International (International)
Release dates	September 12, 2022 (<u>TIFF</u>) November 23, 2022 (United States)
Running time	139 minutes ^[1]
Country	United States
Language	English
Budget	\$90 million ^{[2][3]}
Box office	\$21.8 million ^{[4][5]}

The film ends with a note that Brown's remains have never been recovered from North Korea, and that Hudner and Brown's families remain close friends to this day.

Cast

- [Jonathan Majors](#) as [Ensign Jesse L. Brown](#)
- [Glen Powell](#) as [Lieutenant Junior Grade](#)^[12] [Tom Hudner](#)
- [Christina Jackson](#) as [Daisy Brown](#)
- [Thomas Sadoski](#) as [Lieutenant Commander Dick Cevoli](#)
- [Daren Kagasoff](#) as [Bill Koenig](#)
- [Joe Jonas](#) as [Marty Goode](#)
- [Spencer Neville](#) as [Bo Lavery](#)
- [Nick Hargrove](#) as [Carol Mohring](#)
- [Boone Platt](#) as [Buddy Gill](#)
- [Dean Denton](#) as [USS Leyte \(CV-32\) Captain T.U. Sisson](#)
- [Thad Luckinbill](#) as [Peters](#)
- [Joseph Cross](#) as [Charlie Ward](#)
- [Serinda Swan](#) as [Elizabeth Taylor](#)
- [Bill Martin Williams](#) as [President of the United States Harry S. Truman](#)

Production

In March 2018, Black Label Media optioned the rights to *Devotion* on [Glen Powell](#)'s recommendation, coming aboard as a producer and commitment to play [Tom Hudner](#).^[13] In December 2019, it was announced that [Jonathan Majors](#) was cast as [Jesse Brown](#) and [J. D. Dillard](#) was set to direct.^[14] In September 2020, it was announced that [Sony Pictures](#) would distribute the film under the [Columbia Pictures](#) label in North America, while [STXfilms](#) would handle international sales and distribution for the film.^[15] In February 2021, [Serinda Swan](#) was cast as [Elizabeth Taylor](#).^[16]

Dillard felt a close personal connection to the subject as the son of a naval aviator himself, relied on stories related by his father as the lone [black](#) man in a predominantly white aviation community. In an interview with *Deadline Hollywood*, he said, "Both technically and socially, they both dealt with isolation and there's so many pieces there that I think ultimately just became the DNA of the film."^{[17][18]} Dillard's father also visited the set and served as a technical advisor for the film. His contribution to the film is recognized by a separate card in the end credits.

Powell, who read Adam Makos's book when it first came out in 2015, brought it to [Molly Smith](#) of Black Label to option and went to visit [Thomas J. Hudner Jr.](#) shortly before he died in 2017.^[19] He was struck by the photographs and mementos of [Jesse Brown](#) around the house, remarking that, "I saw what weight that was on him. It wasn't a celebration, it was a constant reminder of a friend he lost and I carried that weight into this role."^{[17][18]}

Principal photography began on February 4, 2021, in [Savannah, Georgia](#).^[21] Filming also took place in [Charleston, South Carolina](#), [East Wenatchee](#)^[22] and [Pasco, Washington](#), [Statesboro, Georgia](#), and from March 17 to April 13, 2021, at the [Statesboro-Bulloch County Airport](#),^[23] where a full-size recreation of the [USS Leyte](#) was built.^{[24][25][26]} The wintry landscape of Washington state stood in for the [Battle of Chosin Reservoir](#).^{[25][27]}

Dillard was determined to create practical effects using real aircraft as much as possible, including several F4U Corsairs, an AD Skyraider, two F8F Bearcat fighters, one of the few remaining flyable HO5S-1 helicopters, and a MiG-15.^{[18][28][29][26]} The 11 aircraft were painted with the dark colors and prominent lettering of the squadrons of the period.^[25] Dillard hired aerial stunt coordinator Kevin LaRosa, who created the flight sequences for *Top Gun: Maverick*.^{[28][29]} A modified L-39 Albatros trainer was used as an air-to-air camera platform.^{[28][29]} Interior footage of actors flying the Bearcat was created using a Hawker Sea Fury with its rear seat modified to resemble a Bearcat cockpit and visible parts of the aircraft painted like a VF-32 Bearcat, allowing actors to simulate piloting the aircraft during actual aerial maneuvers.^{[29][26]} Real audio of a Corsair in flight was captured with five microphones for use in the soundtrack.^[30]



F4U-1A Corsair painted as F4U-4 for the film^[20]

Music

Chanda Dancy, a graduate of USC Thornton School of Music, composed the movie soundtrack,^[31] which was released by Lakeshore Records. The soundtrack was shortlisted for Best Original Score on Dec 21, 2022 for the 95th Academy Awards,^[32] but did not get the ultimate nomination on Jan 24, 2023.^[33]

Joe Jonas and Khalid wrote and performed a duet to the end credits song called *Not Alone*,^{[34][35]} but the single was not part of the soundtrack,^{[36][37]} and not shortlisted for Academy Award for Best Original Song.^[32]

Track listing

No.	Title	Length
1.	"The Forgotten War"	2:22
2.	"The Lighthouse"	4:06
3.	"The Corsair"	0:54
4.	"Jesse"	1:42
5.	"Procedure"	2:17
6.	"Quiet Night"	2:23
7.	"On the Edge"	5:05
8.	"Pam"	1:41
9.	"You Belong in the Sky"	2:48
10.	"Carol's Death"	2:35
11.	"You Can't Always Do What You're Told"	3:10
12.	"All Bets Are On"	2:35
13.	"I Fight My Own Fights"	0:50
14.	"Sinuiju"	1:59
15.	"Sortie"	4:20
16.	"River Run"	2:11
17.	"Hagaru"	2:36
18.	"We See You"	1:18
19.	"A Gift for Daisy"	2:23
20.	"Return to Chosin"	1:21
21.	"Metal Angels"	2:07
22.	"Jesse Crashes"	2:50

30 critics, indicating "generally favorable reviews".^[54] Audiences polled by CinemaScore gave the film an average grade of "A−" on an A+ to F scale, while those at PostTrak gave the film an overall 91% positive score.^[49]

Matthew Creith from Screen Rant wrote "Stylized and cultured, *Devotion* soars when least expected and is brought to life by its talented ensemble cast led by Jonathan Majors and Glen Powell."^[55]

Accolades

Award	Date of ceremony	Category	Recipient(s)	Result	Ref.
<u>African-American Film Critics Association Awards</u>	March 1, 2023	Best Picture		Nominated	^[56]
<u>Black Reel Awards</u>	February 6, 2023	<u>Outstanding Film</u>		Nominated	^[57]
		<u>Outstanding Actor</u>	<u>Jonathan Majors</u>	Nominated	
		<u>Outstanding Production Design</u>	Wynn Thomas	Nominated	
<u>Georgia Film Critics Association</u>	January 13, 2023	Oglethorpe Award for Excellence		Nominated	^[58]
<u>NAACP Image Awards</u>	February 25, 2023	<u>Outstanding Actor in a Motion Picture</u>	Jonathan Majors	Nominated	^[59]

Notes

- a. Theatrical distribution only, the home media rights in the US and Canada were handled by Paramount Home Entertainment.

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External links

- [Official website \(https://www.devotion.movie/\)](https://www.devotion.movie/)
 - *Devotion* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt7693316/>) at IMDb
 - *Devotion* (<https://www.allmovie.com/movie/v732502>) at AllMovie
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