

# 'Platoon' shows grim reality of Vietnam War

Politicians, diplomats, generals, colonels and anyone else contemplating military action ought to watch "Platoon" (R). The film should convince everyone to search for alternatives to the horrors of combat.

Scripted and directed by Oliver Stone — billed as the only man in Hollywood with a Purple Heart and an Oscar (script for "Midnight Express"), "Platoon" is based on his Vietnam War experience.

It's a grim, unpleasant but realistic look at our Vietnam tragedy, a film that deals with the daily existence of an infantry rifle platoon in late '67-early '68 combat. It's the tale of men mired in gruesome jungle warfare and forgotten by their own world.

The men in this film's platoon are led by Sergeant Barnes (Tom Berenger) and Elias (Willem DaFoe). Pfc. Chris Taylor (Charlie Sheen) is assigned to their command. He's a college boy who volunteered for combat, something that the black soldiers can't fathom. They have no choice — but a smart honky who could have stayed in college?

An effective drama lets the story make its point while avoiding annoying, overzealous preaching. So often, screenwriters with "something to say" write terribly dull scripts.

To "Platoon's" great credit, the story of Pfc. Taylor makes the crucial point that American blacks suffered disproportionately in Vietnam because they were poor and couldn't afford college and the student deferments that came with a "C" average. That point is made as a matter-of-fact conclusion to plot and action.

"PLATOON" PULLS no punches in depicting the cruelty of war and the terrible acts men commit in the heat of battle. Most distressing, however, is the film's clear lesson that atrocities perpetrated under stress soon become normal, accepted behavior.

Despite its realistic horror and unpleasant presentation of jungle warfare, every high school student in this country should see "Platoon" and participate in rigorous class discussions about Vietnam War issues, problems that are still with us.

It wouldn't be a bad idea, as well, for adults to see this film. Vietnam was a terrible tragedy, one we commit anew each day when we forget. In the words of Pfc. Taylor, "... we were fighting ourselves ... not the enemy."

SINCE OUR MEDIA contain so much violence, "Platoon" should not offend. But if you prefer your violence as entertainment, "The Morning After" (R) is a pretty slick, well-paced murder mystery with Jane Fonda as an alcoholic actress on the downside of her career. She awakes in a drunken stupor one morning in bed with the corpse of a well-known L.A. pornographer.

Raul Julia, who shared William Hurt's cell in "The Kiss of the Spider Woman," is the husband from whom she's long been separated. Jeff Bridges is a bigoted ex-cop who befriends Jane in her time of troubles.

What's appealing about this film? It's well-written, nicely designed and convincingly acted. Each time you get it all figured out, there's a new twist to keep things moving.



the movies

Dan Greenberg

But if you just want to have fun, try Eddie Murphy's latest, "The Golden Child" (PG-13). Here is Murphy at his best, combining his particularly sharp and sarcastic view of the world with just the right amount of mystery, fantasy and comic spirit.

Murphy is Chandler, "the Chosen One." Chosen for what? You may well ask. To rescue "the Golden Child" (J. L. Reel) from the forces of evil, a weird collection of perversely appealing characters is led by Sardo (Charles Dance). Giving Murphy a big assist is a Tibetan Judo-lady, Kee Nang (Charlotte Lewis).

There's a tremendous amount of humor and very effective film production behind that simple storyline. It's not the story as much as the clever way in which Michael Ritchie directs it and the polish in every department. The special effects alone are worth the price of admission, as Lucasfilm's Industrial Light and Magic once more demonstrates its expertise.

BUT WHAT really makes "The Golden Child" work so well is Eddie Murphy's ability to mix his personality with Chandler's character so that neither intrudes on the other. Both are extremely entertaining.

At the other end of the spectrum, there can be only one nomination for Idiot-Movie-of-the-Year: "Wisdom" (R), a film that has none. It is so improbable and inconsistent that everyone's credulity should snap before the film is half done. It certainly is half-baked.

Never have so many suffered so much stupidity for no reason as John Wisdom (Emilio Estevez) and his gal Friday, Karen Simmons (Demi Moore), go on a criminal rampage for the good of mankind. No kidding, honest, that's the story. Avoid it. Don't waste two hours on this insanity. It'll drive you nuts.



Charlie Sheen is Chris Taylor, an innocent new recruit, and Keith David is King, an expert in the art of survival, in "Platoon," based upon writer-director Oliver Stone's real-life experiences in Vietnam.

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Eddie Murphy and Charlotte Lewis cross a Tibetan lake, seeking a sacred dagger at a monastery, in "The Golden Child."



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