

Ethical questions fuel character clashes in *Broadcast News*

By BRUCE PLOURDE

Some go to a movie with a preconceived notion of what constitutes a good movie. Some have a checklist, which they consult from time to time as a bit of comedy or a piece of superior acting appears on the screen. Others have a checklist for the number of nudity or fight scenes. The movie fares well or poorly in their opinion according to the number of checks which they place in each category. Some people are born critics.

On the other side of the canyon are those who judge a movie as a whole, not just as the sum of its parts. For them a movie is a two-hour experience, gratifying or disappointing as the case may be. They do not reason out their fondness or dislike of a film by any use of logic. Instead they base their judgment on intuition. As a result of their persuasion, if someone should ask them about the movie they just stepped from ten minutes before, the most profound comment the intuitive spectator can possibly make will come out as either "I liked it, I

really, really liked it," or "I hated it, I really, really hated it." They follow William Hurt's "Big Chill" School of Appreciation, the basic tenet of which is, "Sometimes you just have to let art flow over you." Some people are born patrons.

Fortunately for both groups the salient features of *Broadcast News* are no real mystery. *Broadcast News* is a latter-day romance centered around the ethics of the news industry. The love triangle surrounds the Mr. Clean of broadcasting, Tom Grunick (William Hurt), the mildly psychotic but wildly capable Jane Craig (Holly Hunter), and the brilliant, albeit conceited and anti-charming, Aaron Altman (Albert Brooks).

Miss Craig and Mr. Altman have earned their positions through a great deal of hard work and ability. Mr. Grunick has risen to fame *gratis* his good looks. He represents everything that Jane and Aaron despise, in the main because they envy his easy affability, but also because he represents the worst kind of irresponsible journalism, the sales-

manship approach to newscasting. Though Alan easily maintains his jealous disdain of Tom, Jane falls in love with him in spite of herself. The unattainable person of this romance, the one put on a pedestal, is not a woman, but a man carved from ivory, Tom Grunick.

The touchy, philosophical questions of ethics don't dominate this film, but instead act as fuel for the fierce clashing of colorful characters. It is indeed a realistic look behind the scenes of televised news shows (Walter Cronkite even said so), but the audience doesn't care nearly as much for the code of ethics as for Tom, Jane and Aaron. Thrown together by chance, their lives become permanently revised and edited in the pursuit of their profession and each other.

Tom Grunick had a penchant for pulling the wool over people's eyes even as a child from Kansas City. As a handsome, wholesome adult from the heart of America he has perfected his art. Few bull-sh-t artists have attained the status of this, the Picasso of

bovine feces. He has beauty and presence, but he lacks (and he will readily admit it) sufficient brain processes.

He goes on the air reading the news and "selling" himself without any knowledge of what he's reading. He doesn't need to know; he has the teleprompter right before his eyes. But he feels uneasy under the weight of Jane's opinion, which he aspires to improve. William Hurt again puts in the great performance that his audience expects from him. He plays the role of the handsome and irresponsible romantic, which seems the only role he ever gets, with credibility.

But in all the movies that he has done his mannerisms haven't changed. They have both codified and stagnated at the same time. For instance, whenever someone insults him and walks away, he looks after them with a half-surprised, half-sarcastic

See BROADCAST, p. 7

Stone's persistence makes *Platoon* a cinematic experience

By JOHN HARRIS

Four, count 'em, four Oscars! Unless you've locked yourself in the "braire or been in an alcohol-induced coma for the last 18 months (like me), you most certainly have seen or at least heard about Oliver Stone's phenomenally successful Oscar-winning film *Platoon* (\$138,000,000 grossed to date). The film, as well as the story behind making it, threw Hollywood on its ears.

Stone's semi-autobiographical film recounts his experiences in a small Army detachment in Vietnam. More significantly, it is a story about the loss of innocence. Stone's character, woodenly portrayed by Charlie Sheen, arrives in Vietnam as an Ivy League dropout. Up to that moment he had been sheltered from the harshness of the real world, but through his experiences he is ultimately baptized into manhood by the horrors of war. His innocence and naiveté give way to the realizations of mortality and the conflicts within the human psyche. Oooh.

While the film itself is truly captivating, the story of Stone's struggle to get the film made is equally fascinating. Let's talk show-biz: Stone copped an Oscar in 1978 for his screenplay for *Midnight Express* (another must-see for you culturally deprived liberal arts droogs). That established him as a minor force in Tinseltown, until he hung himself with his second directorial effort, *The Hand*, a few years later. In the meantime, Stone had been shopping *Platoon* around from studio exec to studio exec, and they all rejected it.

It wasn't until the critical and minor box-office success of *Salvador* in 1985 that Stone received the financial backing he needed for *Platoon*, this time from a relatively small independent film company. Fifty-four days later Stone, cast, and crew returned from the Philippines (former homeland to that lady with the

buttocks o' shoes) with the film, on time and shot within the confines of a paltry \$5 million budget (a veritable shoestring budget by Hollywood standards).

All of Stone's concerted efforts are augmented by *Platoon's* excellent cast, though few faces in the film were recognizable to the general public at the time of release. Sheen's face is probably new to most audiences, unless you happened to catch a glimpse of him in *Red Dawn*, or the obscure release *Three for the Road*. Perhaps you caught his cameos in *Ferris Beuller's Day Off* and in brother Emilio Estevez's film bore, *Wisdom*. He can now be seen in the new Oliver Stone film *Wall Street* opposite Michael Douglas and Daryl (yawn!) Hannah.

Other cast members of *Platoon* include Tom Berenger (*The Big Chill*, *Fear City*) and Willem Dafoe (*To Live and Die in L.A.*, *Streets of Fire*) as the at-odds sergeants who battle for possession of Chris' (Sheen) soul. Another face in the film belongs to Forest Whitaker, a fine young black actor who is making the jump from relative obscurity (a bit part in *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*) to solid career moves (*The Color of Money* and *Good Morning, Vietnam*).

After the success of *Platoon*, the box-office bonanza of *Wall Street*, various co-screenwriting credits to his name (including Michael Cimino's *Year of the Dragon*), and after over a decade in the business, it is safe to say that Oliver Stone has arrived. As the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences will attest four-fold, *Platoon* is a triumph of both style and substance. *Platoon* is the most commercially successful movie since *The Sting* to win the Best Picture Oscar, and every frame of celluloid is all the proof you'll need. The *New Yorker* and *Time* magazines lauded the film and Stone. *USA Today* wouldn't

let it alone for weeks.

So my goal is not to give you a rehashing of what scores of film critics have been saying since the movie was released. My goal is to show you how a talented cast and a gifted and persistent filmmaker can blend together to bring you a magical cinematic experience. (Frank Lord will argue that point, but hey, it's my computer).

Platoon will be shown Wednesday night at 9:45 in dem 900 Zimmer, and again on Friday at 7:30 and 9:45. But even after singing all these praises for this tour-de-force film, I don't even get to see it (sob!). Like most of my other 2nd year Humes buddies I'll be holed up in my room Wednesday night churning out a disgustingly bad first draft of Paper #2, and Friday I'll be in Atlanta with Bill Giduz and a veritable trainload of neo-hippies at a juggler's convention. So

Confidential Health

You can't get AIDS by giving blood

Dear Confidential Health,

There has been so much attention given to AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) lately in the news. Can I get AIDS from donating blood at school blood drives?

AIDS is a serious disease and one that does merit attention but not great alarm. Your question is extremely important since there is a great need for blood donations.

No, absolutely not, never can an individual contract AIDS from donating blood. Each time a person gives blood, sterile equipment and disposable needles are used. Blood is badly needed and it is necessary to dispel this myth.

The confusion with AIDS and blood is concerned with blood transfusions. All blood that is collected at donation drives is screened for any virus, including

while you're turning Army green with envy (har-har) treat yourself to one of the most memorable films of the last few years; a movie that took the formerly taboo sub-

ject in Hollywood (the Vietnam fiasco) and made America take a jarring second look. A powerful film. A terrific cast. Lotsa blood. No bare hooters.

BEST PICTURE



WINNER
4 ACADEMY AWARDS

INCLUDING

BEST DIRECTOR
Oliver Stone

BEST FILM EDITING
Claire Simpson

BEST SOUND
Simon Kaye
John "Doc" Wilkerson
Charles "Bud" Grenzbach
Richard Rogers

PLATOON

The first casualty of war is innocence.

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AIDS. This is a process that is still being perfected. If a virus is detected in a donor's blood, then that blood is not used for transfusions. The donor would also be contacted if a virus was present. No one should donate if they suspect that they have been exposed to the virus.

The Davidson College population is an excellent donor group because they are generally in very good health.

AIDS is an infectious disease but it is not spread through casual contact. In fact, family members other than sexual partners have not developed the disease.

AIDS cannot be caught by sitting next to a person with AIDS, swimming in the same pool, eating from the same dishes, sharing the same bathroom, or from coughing or sneezing, to give a few examples. Scientists agree

that AIDS is not highly contagious.

We all need to be aware of how to protect ourselves. In a future "Confidential Health," safe sex and AIDS protection will be discussed. What we all need to remember is that AIDS can strike men and women regardless of their sexual orientation. It doesn't happen to us because of *who* we are but because of *what* we do.

If you know of someone with AIDS, it is important that discrimination and hysteria be avoided. Please be supportive of gay and straight friends who are concerned about AIDS.

If readers have questions about AIDS, please call the Metrolina AIDS Project at 333-2437, talk to a doctor at the Davidson Infirmary, or write to "Confidential Health," Davidson College Infirmary, Davidson, NC 28036.