



THE WAR BUDDIES

FROM LEFT Willem Dafoe (2 NOMINATIONS), Oliver Stone (11 NOMINATIONS, 3 WINS) AND Charlie Sheen

PHOTOGRAPHED BY Frank W. Ockenfels 3 ON FEB. 20 AT PIER 59 STUDIOS WEST IN SANTA MONICA

Mosquito-infected night shoots. Grueling humidity. Dense jungle sludge. If war is hell, then making movies is a close second. And no depiction of America's darkest hours in Vietnam better embodied our struggle to understand this complicated legacy than Stone's 1986 epic *Platoon*. "We had to acknowledge that the war had been badly represented in our media," says Stone, 65, a Vietnam veteran who saw his second ever feature film shake up the 1987 Oscars with eight nominations and four wins (best picture, director, sound and editing), beating out more digestible fare such as *A Room With a View* and *Hannah and Her Sisters*. "The movie was so difficult to make," says Dafoe, 56, who, along with co-star Tom Berenger, earned a supporting actor nomination. "So we weren't poised at all for the attention. It was a Cinderella story; the innocence made it that much sweeter." The \$6 million Orion-distributed drama went on to gross nearly \$139 million in the U.S. and showcased a slew of relatively unknown actors including Johnny Depp, Kevin Dillon, Forest Whitaker and Sheen, whom Stone says he cast because of his "honesty, earnest look and dark brows — like I'd had as a young man." Sheen couldn't attend the March 30 Oscar ceremony because he was already shooting Stone's *Wall Street* in New York — "a different jungle," Sheen, 46, says with a laugh — but says his *Platoon* mission remains that rare meant-to-be career milestone. "I'd been in the Philippines 10 years earlier with my dad when he was shooting *Apocalypse Now*," he says of his father, Martin, who advised him against taking the role in *Platoon* because the country was in too much turmoil "to care" about another war movie. "So to be there again, doing my own version of that story, even narrating the damn thing too, was too much to process," he says. And the film's Oscar legacy? "I felt like I was part of a championship team," says Sheen. "Being a part of something so special ... it was bigger than anything I'd ever experienced." — STACEY WILSON