

Platoon at a glance

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If you want to get the gist of what went down in the Vietnam War, then the movie Platoon is your ticket. Directed by Oliver Stone, this film is already considered by many to be a classic. It features Charlie Sheen as Chris Taylor, a new army recruit thrown into the clutches of battle. His superiors, Sergeant Elias played by William Dafoe, and Sergeant Barnes played by Tom Berenger, give outstanding portrayals, each having different viewpoints of the politics of war. Granted the movie focuses around Sheen, Dafoe, and Berenger, but all who took part in this film were outstanding.

All of the actors who portrayed soldiers of infantry did phenomenal jobs. The storyline is said to be so close to the realities of Vietnam, that some veterans find the film a bit disturbing. Filmed in 1986, Platoon was the recipient of several Academy Awards, including Best Picture, Best Director, Best Editing, and Best Sound Effects. The film jumps right into the treacherous grounds of Cambodia and guides you through the unsafe, unsanitary and essentially inhumane conditions that our soldiers had to endure to survive.

It also brings to life the friendships, the competitiveness, and the anguish that the infantry soldiers endured on a daily basis. Wading through snake-infested waters, waiting anxiously in fox-holes for the enemy to make a move, or just trying to stay awake with only a few hours of restless sleep, was how many days were spent by the soldiers in the film. Taylor (Charlie Sheen), makes it through a murky river bed only to find that he has brought with him several friends. Several leeches that is.

Mostly stuck to his face, he cautiously pries them from his flesh, leaving trails of blood trickling down his cheek. I'm not sure if that scene was done

with camera tricks or not, but it was as realistic as they come. One thing for sure is those eeches were real, and so were the chills that ran down my spine. The special effects in this movie were outstanding. You might even find yourself taking cover inside the theater from a grenade that looks as though it is heading in your direction. The authenticity of the explosions and the force of the gunfire were heart-stopping.

Of course, following this kind of action there is always scenes of the casualties. This may not be a film for the viewer with a weak stomach. Many of the combat scenes are so gruesomely realistic that they are hard to watch. Even those who think they can handle anything may find themselves turning heir heads during some scenes. The dialogue at times tended to be a little hard to comprehend. On several occasions throughout the movie, because of background noises like explosions, the actual verbal communication between the soldiers is hard to hear.

On the other hand, there were several times when hearing the words was not even important, what you could read or see in the eyes of the soldiers was of more value and spoke louder than words. Charlie Sheen does a superb job in bringing the emotional aspects of a soldier to the big screen. He tugs at your heart when writing a letter home to his randparents, scared and unsure of what world he has entered. Later in the film, however, he takes that fear and turns it into what we would call bravery.

Mid-way through, the plot is centered around scenes that involve the capture of a North Vietnamese village. Difference of opinions of how to deal with the prisoners sends tempers flying. The violent behavior a soldier has to partake

in begins to take toll. Half the platoon leans toward compassion, while the other half expresses nothing but hate toward the villagers. Some insisting that they be killed just for being Vietnamese. This scene was probably closer to reality than we would like to think. Stone uses events like that to prove what an impact combat has on humans.

Does war make us into killing machines? The movie made me ask myself that if I was in the same position as Sheen's character, would I, or could I, survive? Is fear and bravery one in the same? How does one handle not knowing one minute from the next if that shot you hear in the distance will be plunging into your body or maybe into the body standing next to you. This film brings you to the realization that there is no winner of a war. It becomes apparent in this film that, in some ways, even the ones claiming victory lost a great deal.

Oliver Stone delivers a film that takes a true story and makes the realities of it almost tangible. Even for those viewers who are too young to remember this era, by watching this film they will be able to imagine how much pain and suffering that the ones who fought so heroically for our country had to endure. It will become obvious to any viewer that the soldiers in this war unselfishly gave themselves, mind and body, to the cause. Lasting a full two hours, this movie will take hold of your mind and possibly never let it go. You may never again be able to talk of the Vietnam War with the same sense of casualness.

I know if someone brings up the subject of war to me, after watching this film the images that I viewed on the big screen will fill my head. You may become

overwhelmed with the feeling that you need to apologize to any veteran of war that crosses your path. I feel as if I need to personally thank every single soldier that I have ever met. " Thank you for defending my country, thank you for putting your life on the line, and thank you for coming home. " You may, as I did, gain a whole new perspective on battle and also an unlimited amount of respect for those who lived and those who died defending our country.