



Willem Dafoe (far left) and Mickey Rourke team up for a suspenseful tale set in New Mexico. Below, Dafoe as the cynical Lt. Commander Virgil Cole in the wartime action adventure *Flight of the Intruder*.

whose shocking discovery of a corpse brings him into contact with the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The FBI agents, however, quickly display a sinister involvement with the case. And our sheriff soon finds himself carrying on a one-man war against the one-time heroes of his profession.

Not a hero. Just an ordinary guy in an extraordinary situation.

"Everybody wants to go see heroes, supermen," Rourke told *T.O.* magazine, with regard to another lawman-against-the-odds, the rough-hewn crusading cop he played in *Year of the Dragon*. "Sorry, I'd rather do something that's more or less like ... everybody. What can you do with a guy who's on a mission? The main thing is that he's got a sense of honor and a sense of truth. All he's trying to do is his job as best he can, on the side of right."

For his part, Dafoe doesn't feel comfortable playing a metaphor. "I'm not crazy about subtext," he said in *New York* magazine. "When a screenplay doesn't have strong physical action, I'm generally not interested because it doesn't play on my imagination."

So look for action in **White Sands**, and a certain amount of bad craziness. And look for two of film's most tightly strung performers to further negotiate the tricky moral line between dark and light.

— Jim Slotek



# WHITE SANDS

**G**ot a spooky, obsessive character — good or evil — to put on the screen? For better or worse, Willem Dafoe's your man.

The many faces of Dafoe? The actor sees them reflected in the faces of his fans. "Sometimes people will stop me [on the streets of New York, where he lives] and say 'Oh yeah, you're a bad dude, man!' and I'll know exactly what movies they saw.

"And then," he adds with a wicked laugh, "it's 'I see you got your teeth fixed.' And I know what movie they saw!"

The "bad dudes" are his psycho

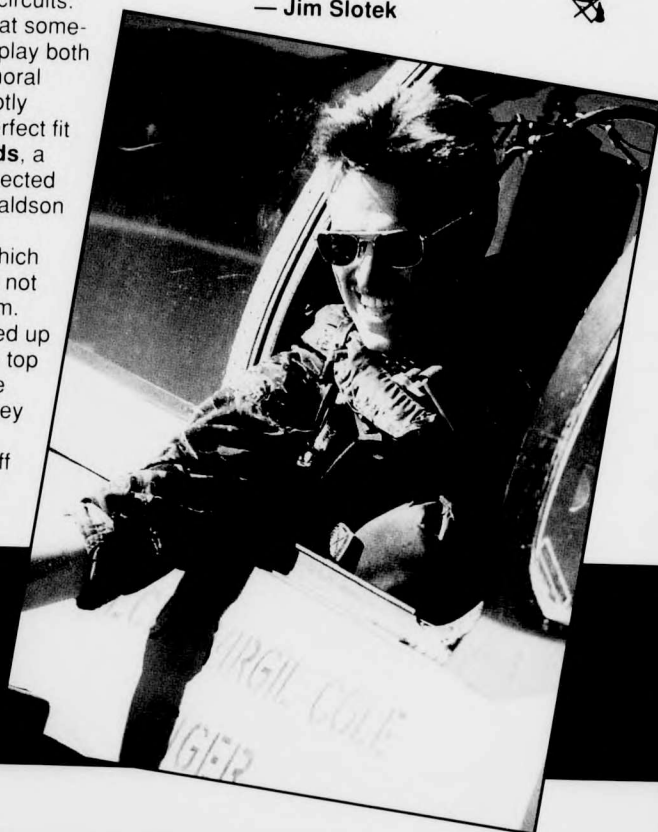
characters: gang leader in *Streets of Fire*, drug baron in *To Live and Die in L.A.*, and the rotten-toothed sexual predator Bobby Peru in David Lynch's *Wild at Heart*.

His "important" work? Well, it could be the concentration-camp survivor in *Triumph of the Spirit*, an almost-holy human face of war in *Platoon*, a by-the-book FBI agent in *Mississippi Burning*, and the Savior Himself (a spooky one, to be sure) in *The Last Temptation of Christ*.

"I think he is the best actor in the world," says John Milius, who directed Dafoe in *Flight of the Intruder*. "I think of actors as generators. I don't think of them in terms of skill, but by how much juice they give off. And Willem

can burn the circuits."

It figures that someone who can play both sides of the moral street so adeptly would be a perfect fit in **White Sands**, a new thriller directed by Roger Donaldson (*No Way Out*, *Cocktail*), in which good guys are not what they seem. Dafoe is teamed up with one of the top bad boys in the business, Mickey Rourke, in the story of a sheriff in a small New Mexico town



## WILLEM DAFOE DISPLAYS HIS THRILLER INSTINCTS

TRIBUTE