

An Oscar Night to Remember

WRITTEN BY AL RUDDY

CLINT EASTWOOD AND AL RUDDY SHARE A SPECIAL MOMENT DURING ONE OF THE MOST MEMORABLE ACADEMY AWARDS CEREMONIES.



It was Oscar night 1973. We were surprised that *The Godfather* was even nominated because it had been out for a year already, which was unusual for Academy voting, but we decided to give it a go anyway. The night did not start well for the movie. Bob Fosse beat out Francis Ford Coppola. Marlon Brando surprisingly sent Sacheen Littlefeather to accept his award, and Al Pacino went home empty-handed. As fate had it, Charlton Heston, who was presenting Best Picture, got ill. Clint Eastwood volunteered to present it in his place. As a friend, he winked, and that wry smile assured me I would win. I told him, the only way to assure I would win would be to open the envelope and no matter what it said utter, "The winner is Al Ruddy." And then eat up the envelope and swallow it. I was stunned that I won and very honored. I thought Clint was full of it and saying my name because he was my friend. It was all the sweeter when we got to win one together decades later for *Million Dollar Baby*. ■



Decades after Ruddy's first Oscar win, he worked with pal Eastwood on another winner, *Million Dollar Baby*.