

Document Citation

Title	'Godfather II': an expic expanded
Author(s)	Charles Champlin
Source	<i>Los Angeles Times</i>
Date	1974 Dec 17
Type	review
Language	English
Pagination	1, 10
No. of Pages	2
Subjects	
Film Subjects	The Godfather: part II, Coppola, Francis Ford, 1974

MOVIE REVIEW

'Godfather II': An Epic Expanded

BY CHARLES CHAMPLIN

Times Entertainment Editor

What you could say is that "The Godfather" was such a hard act to follow that they preceded it instead. Actually, what now exists is one six-and-a-half-hour film, of which "The Godfather Part I" was the middle half and of which "The Godfather Part II" now provides the opening and concluding quarters. (I hope one day we'll be able to see it reported chronologically.)

The scale on which Francis Ford Coppola and Mario Puzo have told their tale is epic, spanning six decades and three generations, with a glimpse of the fourth. Their commercial success is already established as heroic, and there is no reason to doubt that "Godfather II" will join the top money-makers of all time.

But the creative, aesthetic success of this long enterprise is also, I think, on the heroic scale. "Godfather II" is quieter, less propulsive, less furiously violent than "Godfather I" and it demonstrably lacks the hypnotic patriarchal figure of Brando as Don Corleone. Still it is compellingly watchable.

Authentic Glimpses

The new film settles for its own strengths, and they are considerable, to say the least.

It gives us, superbly, the Mafia-dominated Sicily of 1901, from which the don-to-be flees as a small boy after his father, elder brother and mother have been murdered by the village chieftain.

I don't remember the first glimpse of the Statue of Liberty and the cattle-pen chaos of Ellis Island (with impatient clerks improvising names which families would carry for generations) ever caught more authentically.

As in "Godfather I," Coppola and his cinematographer, Gordon Willis, have engineered their color palette with superb and subtle ingenuity. The first Sicilian sequences are sun-bleached and flinty. The New York of the 1900s is redless, like faded lithographs, and has the sepia tone and the composition of the documentary still of Jacob Riis and the other *slum decriers of the period*.

Isolated and Besieged

Much of the latter-day action, particularly in the family fortress-encampment on Lake Tahoe, is heavily shadowed, closed off, both isolated and besieged. Few movies have used visual tone so varyingly to heighten, almost subconsciously, the operative mood of a story.

The young Vito Corleone (clerk-named for his home village) makes his way in the Italian ghetto of lower Manhattan that was to be updated 70 years later in Martin Scorsese's "Mean Streets." Indeed, the young Vito is played by Robert DeNiro from "Mean Streets" and "Bang the Drum Slowly."

It is a sensational performance, advancing Corleone from the thin, pale youth working for pennies in a grocery store to the solid leader of his family, returning in triumph to settle the old score in Sicily, parlaying thievery and murder into power and respect. DeNiro, hoarse-voiced and imperiously handsome as he grows in assurance, does an amazing job of preparing us for the Brando we remember.

The makings of an American overlord are half the story. The rise and fall of Michael constitute the other. To a great extent, "Godfather II" can, I think, be seen as a corrective, erasing any lingering romanticizing of the characters and the life-

Please Turn to Page 10, Col. 1

'Godfather II': Expanding the Epic

Continued from First Page

style that might possibly remain from Brando's foxy grandfather, romping among the tomatoes, or from Michael's reluctant turning from his own straight pursuits to honor his father's business.

Al Pacino, in yet another outstanding portrayal, moves Michael still further, from the cool and unemotional mastery of all he surveys to the prisoner of his own paranoia—fearful, vengeful, isolated from everything he genuinely loves, but too repellent to be pitiable. He has survived a Senate hearing (beautifully familiar) but lost his cover and his respectability.

The narrative flow so irresistible in "Godfather I" is intermittent here—and, in a couple of instances, surprisingly muddy and hard to follow. What "Godfather II" offers are en-



OVERLORD — Al Pacino, in "Godfather II," opening locally Wednesday.

Robert Duvall is on hand again as the family's legal counsel, ruthlessly loyal. John Cazale is Pacino's weak older brother, craven but dangerously resentful, and Cazale makes it a fine piece of acting. Talia Shire is Pacino's self-indulgent sister who hates his guidance but comes home as one of the last loyalists.

Trapped in the Coils

Michael V. Gazzo is vivid as a second-level mobster caught in power plays between Pacino and Strasberg. G. D. Spradlin is a smoothly corrupt Nevada senator trapped in the family coils.

Diane Keaton is again Pacino's proper New England wife, an outsider who finally can take no more of what she finds inside. She is touching as a victim, even if her scenes as written play less convincingly than those involving the family itself.

James Caan and Morgana King make brief appearances in the roles they established in "Godfather I" (Brando enters an off-camera room, and it is curious how potently we imagine his presence.)

Mariana Hill has some

fine, flaring moments as weak brother Cazale's trampy wife. Francesca deSapio is sweetly innocent as DeNiro's wife and Amerigo Tot is a faithful bodyguard.

The scenery ranges from Sicily to Cuba and the film is reported to have cost upward of \$15 million. The Cuban episode, in which Strasberg and Pacino conclude a deal with Batista just as the Castro forces topple him into exile, almost becomes a movie within a movie, although the elaborateness of it outruns its usefulness by a large margin.

Flashes of Violence

Peter Zinner was chief editor with Marry Malkin and Richard Marks. Although the film runs three-and-a-third hours, it seldom lags, despite its far-spaced flashes of violence.

Dean Tavoularis did the production design, crucial to the film's intentions, and Nino Rota the lush score, which occasionally

reprises his original "Godfather" theme and which was conducted by Coppola's father, Carmine.

In its way, "Godfather II" is more daring than the original, taking the risks inherent in establishing the context for a movie we have already seen and adding what becomes a kind of sullen epilogue to a movie which left us breathless.

The risks were worth taking, and the reward is that a single monumental segment of the American experience is neither glorified nor patronized, but made comprehensible and real, transmuted into drama of both scope and depth.

"Godfather II" opens Wednesday at the Bruin and Village in Westwood, the Pantages in Hollywood, the Rosecrans Drive-in the three theaters in Orange County.

'THE GODFATHER PART II'

A Paramount Picture. Produced and directed by Francis Ford Coppola. Co-producers Gray Frederickson, Fred Roos. Script Coppola and Mario Puzo from Puzo's novel "The Godfather." Photography Gordon Willis. Editors Peter Zinner, Barry Malkin, Richard Marks. Music Nino Rota. Conductor Carmine Coppola. Production design Dean Tavoularis. Costumes Theadora Van Runkle. Art direction Angelo Graham. Set decoration George R. Nelson. Featuring Al Pacino, Robert Duvall, Diane Keaton, Robert DeNiro, John Cazale, Talia Shire, Lee Strasberg, Michael V. Gazzo, G. D. Spradlin, Richard Bright, Gaston Moschin, Tom Rosqui, B. Kirby Jr., Frank Sivero, Francesca deSapio, Morgana King, Mariana Hill, Leopoldo Trieste, Dominic Chianese, Amerigo Tot.

Running time: 3 hrs., 20 min.
MPAA-rated: Restricted (some parental guidance advised).

vironments and characterizations. Its texturing of the Sicilian background and the tough, testing immigrant life in New York are meticulous and enlightening.

The characterizations include Lee Strasberg, practicing what he has preached to generations of actors, creating a vivid portrait of an aging, ailing, rival Jewish rackets boss, complete with small nervous cough and deceptively folksy charm.