

Document Citation

Title	The Godfather
Author(s)	A. D. Murphy
Source	<i>Variety</i>
Date	1972 Mar 08
Type	review
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	The Godfather, Coppola, Francis Ford, 1972

The Godfather
(COLOR)

Powerhouse pre-sell of gangland tale alone assures box-office. Two strong performances, good production values. Must open big and mop-up.

Hollywood, Feb. 7.

Paramount Pictures release of Albert S. Ruddy production. Stars Marlon Brando. Directed by Francis Ford Coppola. Screenplay, Mario Puzo, Coppola, based on Puzo's novel; camera (Technicolor) Gordon Williams; editors, William Reynolds, Peter Zinner; production designer, Dean Tavoularis; art director, Warren Clymer; set decorator, Philip Smith; costumes, Anna Hill Johnstone; makeup, Dick Smith, Philip Rhodes; special effects, A. D. Flowers, Joe Lombardi, Sass Bedig; asst. director, Fred Gallo; music, Nino Rota, conducted by Carlo Savina. Reviewed at Paramount Pictures Studio, Hollywood, Feb. 6, '72. (MPAA Rating: R). Running Time: 175 MINS.

Don Vito Corleone	.....	Marlon Brando
Michael Corleone	.....	Al Pacino
Sonny Corleone	.....	James Caan
Clemenza	.....	Richard Castellano
Tom Hagen	.....	Robert Duvall
McCluskey	.....	Sterling Hayden
Jack Woltz	.....	John Marley
Barzini	.....	Richard Conte
Kay Adams	.....	Diane Keaton
Sollozzo	.....	Al Lettieri
Tessio	.....	Abe Vigoda
Connie Rizzi	.....	Talia Shire
Carlo Rizzi	.....	Gianni Russo
Fredo Corleone	.....	John Cazale
Cuneo	.....	Rudy Bond
Johnny Fontane	.....	Al Martino
Mama Corleone	.....	Morgana King
Luca Brasi	.....	Lenny Montana
Paulie Gatto	.....	John Martino
Bonasera	.....	Salvatore Corsitto
Neri	.....	Richard Bright
Moe Greene	.....	Alex Rocco
Bruno Tattaglia	.....	Tony Giorgio
Nazorine	.....	Vito Scotti
Theresa Hagen	.....	Tere Livrano
Phillip Tattaglia	.....	Victor Rendina
Lucy Mancini	.....	Jeannie Linero
Sandra Corleone	.....	Julie Gregg
Mrs. Clemenza	.....	Ardell Sheridan
Apollonia	.....	Simonetta Stefanelli
Fabrizio	.....	Angelo Infanti
Don Tommasino	.....	Corrado Gaipa
Calo	.....	Franco Citti
Vitelli	.....	Saro Urzi

With several million hardcover and paperback books acting as trailers, Paramount's film version of Mario Puzo's sprawling gangland novel, "The Godfather," has a large pre-sold audience. This will bolster the potential for the film

which has an outstanding performance by Al Pacino and a strong characterization by Marlon Brando in the title role. It also has excellent production values, flashes of excitement, and a well-picked cast.

But it is also overlong at about 175 minutes (played without intermission), and occasionally confusing. While never so placid as to be boring, it is never so gripping as to be superior screen drama. This should not mar Paramount's box-office expectations in any measure, though some filmgoers may be disappointed.

Francis Ford Coppola directed the Albert S. Ruddy production, largely photographed in New York. Dean Tavoularis was production designer and Gordon Willis cinematographer (Technicolor) for the handsome visual environment, which besides World War II and postwar styles and props, is made further intriguing by some sort of tinting effect. There are people under 40 who grew up in the period of the film and who recall such color tones as evocative of 20 years earlier, that is, the end of the roaring '20s and the depression. Evidently the artistic effect here is to show some sort of antiquity which no longer exists.

Puzo and Coppola are credited with the adaptation which best of all gives some insight into the origins and heritage of that segment of the population known off the screen (but not on it) as the Mafia or Cosa Nostra. Various ethnic countercultures are part of the past and part of the present, and the judgment of criminality is in part based on the attitudes of the outside majority. Nobody ever denied that a sense of family, cohesion and order are integral, positive aspects of such subgroups; it's just the killing and slaughter that upsets the outsiders.

In "The Godfather," we have the New York-New Jersey world, ruled by five "families," one of them headed by Brando. This was a world where emotional ties are strong, loyalties are somewhat more flexible at times, and tempers are short. In makeup and physical movement instantly evocative of Orson Welles as Charles Foster Kane in "Citizen Kane," Brando does an admirable job as the lord of his domain. He is not on screen for much of the film, though his presence hovers over all of it.

It is Pacino, last seen (by too

few) in "Panic In Needle Park," who makes the smash impression here. Initially seen as the son whom Brando wanted to go more or less straight (while son James Caan was to become part of the organization), Pacino matures under trauma of an assassination attempt on Brando, his own double-murder revenge for that on corrupt cop Sterling Hayden and rival gangster Al Lettieri, the counter-vengeance murder of his Sicilian bride, and a series of other personnel readjustments which at fadeout find him king of his own mob.

In a lengthy novel filled with many characters interacting over a period of time, readers may digest the passing parade in convenient sittings. But in a film, the audience is forced to get it all at one time. Thus, it is incumbent on filmmakers to isolate, heighten and emphasize for clarity the handful of key characters; some of that has been done here, and some of it hasn't. The biggest achievement here is the establishment of mood and time.

Among the notable performances are Robert Duvall as Hagen, the non-Italian number-two man finally stripped of authority after long years of service; Richard Castellano as a loyal follower; John Marley as a Hollywood film mogul pressured into giving a comeback film role (in a war film) to Al Martino, an aging teenage idol; Richard Conte as one of Brando's malevolent rivals; Diane Keaton as Pacino's early sweetheart, later second wife; Abe Vigoda as an eventual traitor to Pacino; Talia Shire as Brando's daughter, married to a weak and traitorous husband, Gianni Russo; John Cazale, another son who moved to Las Vegas when that area attracted the mob, including Alex Rocco as another recognizable character; Morgana King as Brando's wife; and Lenny Montana as a mobster.

Nino Rota's fine score, plus several familiar pop tunes of the periods, further enhanced the mood, and all the numerous technical production credits are excellent. So, at the bottom line, the film has a lot of terrific mood, one great performance by Pacino, an excellent character segue by Brando, and a strong supporting cast. That will be enough for some, only half the job for others. *Murf.*