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Fabian

Al Pacino & Andy Garcia in *The Godfather Part III*

THE GODFATHER PART III (R)

(PARAMOUNT)

Color/1.85/Dolby SR

164 Mins.

Cast: Al Pacino, Diane Keaton, Talia Shire, Andy Garcia, Eli Wallach, Joe Mantegna, George Hamilton, Sofia Coppola, Bridget Fonda, Raf Vallone, Franc D'Ambrosio, Donal Donnelly, Richard Bright, Helmut Berger, Don Novello, John Savage, Franco Citti, Mario Donatone, Vittorio Duse, Enzo Robutti, Michele Russo, Al Martino.

Credits: Produced and directed by Francis Ford Coppola. Written by Mario Puzo, Coppola. Executive producers: Fred Fuchs, Nicholas Gage. Co-producers: Fred Roos, Gray Frederickson, Charles Mulvehill. Director of photography: Gordon Willis. Production designer: Dean Tavoularis. Costume designer: Milena Canonero. Edited by Barry Malkin, Lisa Fruchtmann, Walter Murch. Music by Carmine Coppola. From Zoetrope Studios.

Poignant and powerful conclusion to the saga of mob boss Michael Corleone boasts a ferocious performance by Al Pacino and a star-making one by Andy Garcia. 91-01

The wait is over. Sixteen years after *The Godfather Part II*, the only sequel in movie history to win the Academy Award for Best Picture (like its predecessor), *The Godfather Part III* is finally a reality. Expectations are impossibly high, but Francis Ford Coppola's new Mafia epic is a lush, ambitious and haunting continuation of this landmark series.

Coppola and Mario Puzo's screenplay offers a fascinating new take on Michael Corleone, the brooding mob chieftain so reluctantly drawn into his father's life of veiled corruption, fierce power struggles and coldblooded vengeance. Now, two decades after the cutthroat climax of *Part II*, Michael has nearly purged his business interests of illegality, having sold off his casino operations and invested heavily in the worlds of real estate and high finance. In his mind, the don is keeping a long-ago promise to his WASP ex-wife Kay, with whom he began in *The Godfather* as an earnest young "civilian" set apart from his family's dark traditions. As *Part III* opens, in the year 1979, Michael is being feted by the Catholic Church with the prestigious Order of St. Sebastian (in return for a \$100 million donation "to aid the poor people of Sicily"). Soon after, he uses his connections with the Vatican Bank to gain control of a major European conglomerate, Immobiliare. But Michael's dream of legitimacy is threatened by the bad blood between his hungry young bastard nephew, Vincent Mancini, and the man he works for, Joey Zasa, a sharp-dressed

gangster who has taken over the former Corleone gambling business in New York. As it always does in the *Godfather* films, violence breaks out between rival factions, and Michael is forced back into the killing game, with Vincent as his eager surrogate. Meanwhile, all is not well at the Vatican, as a newly elected Pope makes it his business to bring down the shady characters tied to the Vatican's riches.

As a character study of Michael, *The Godfather Part III* is a fitting end to a trilogy. Where in *Part II* the new don seemed so coldly embedded in his father's world as to be beyond redemption, *Part III* revives his soul; his role in the murder of his brother Fredo is the one sin Michael can't seem to wash away. Though now in his 60s, Michael seems more alive in *Part III* with the promise of legitimacy, but as his past once again closes in on him, he becomes more poignantly downtrodden than ever. Trapped by an almost preordained destiny, Michael here becomes one of the screen's great tragic figures, boldly embodied by Al Pacino in one of his best performances.

As Vincent, Andy Garcia (who looks like a young Pacino) is the reverse image of the young Michael in the first *Godfather*. The illegitimate son of Michael's slain older brother Sonny, Vincent is as combustible as his father, and anxious to earn his place in the Corleone dynasty. Vincent has none of the introspection and moral ambivalence of Michael; one doubts he ever will. Michael may supply the human dimension for this saga of underworld monsters, but it's Vincent, this time, who makes it sizzle. Garcia is absolutely electric, reveling in violence the way Cagney once did, and this movie should certify his stardom.

Not so fortuitous—not by a long shot—is the casting of Coppola's daughter Sofia in the key role of Michael's naive daughter Mary. A hasty substitute for the then-ailing Winona Ryder, Coppola is physically right for the part, but she wears her inexperience like a billboard. That might not have been a problem if Mary's love affair with Vincent weren't such a crucial plot element, especially in the film's searing climax.

Coppola's performance is a major weakness but, thanks to her father's confident handling of all other aspects of the film, it's not a paralyzing one. The aforementioned climax, in which the various players are assembled in Palermo and Rome, is an extended masterpiece of cross-cutting in the trademark style of the previous *Godfather* finales. Here, Vatican intrigue and an assassination attempt on Michael are brilliantly woven against a performance of the Sicilian blood-feud opera *Cavalleria Rusticana* at the Teatro Massimo in Palermo. Other startling set-pieces include a massacre in Atlantic City and a killing in Little Italy that neatly echoes young Vito Corleone's first test of mettle in *Part II*.

Part III also welcomes back Diane Keaton, still rueful as Michael's estranged wife, and Talia Shire, whose Connie Corleone has evolved into a funny, matronly harridan. Eli Wallach as a shrewd old family friend and Joe Mantegna as the cocky Joey Zasa are especially good in supporting roles. As always, Gordon Willis' seductively dark cinematography and Dean Tavoularis' solid production design are invaluable effective. *The Godfather Part III* is a worthy and provocative close to the mournful tale of Michael Corleone.

—Kevin Lally