

# 'Godfather'—magnate of the family business

Review by Larry Kubert

Every now and then, a motion picture comes along that is worthy of being called a major contribution to the film industry. *Doctor Zhivago* was one of these, *2001-A Space Odyssey* was another. And now *The Godfather* has joined this elite list.

*The Godfather* traces the fall of Cosa Nostra Don Vito Corleone (Marlon Brando), and the rise of his youngest son Michael (Al Pacino) to the role as the new Don.

But it's more than this. It's a story with juxtaposing themes. Violence and innocence; revenge and domesticity; and most of all, family unity. This is one of the most impressive features of the film, the love and unity exhibited by the Italian-American family.

Based on Mario Puzo's best-selling book, *The Godfather*, the film begins in 1945, with the marriage of the Don's daughter. While the wedding party waits for him, the Don takes care of "business," listening to pleas for help from his petitioners.

This is an important point of the movie—the concept of "business." Don Corleone doesn't

consider his activities necessarily illegal, rather they are occurrences in the life of a big business magnate. And anyone who attempts to upset the corporate cart is viewed as dangerous and expendable.

The acting in *The Godfather* is beyond reproach. As has been said by so many people already, Brando's performance as Don Corleone is one of the best things he's done. His muffled, raspy voice tends to disturb one at first, but it is quickly accepted as Brando spins a complex web of characterization, combining the qualities of father and killer into one loved and respected figure that convinces the viewer that he is truly the Don.

But although Brando is very good, it is Pacino who almost steals the film from him. Changing from a quiet war hero, who hopes to stay out of the family's "business" and lead a "legitimate" life, into the coolly calculating, brutal Don at the end of the film, Pacino's transformation is superb. By the end of the film, one almost admires Michael, knowing that the family's "business" and traditions have been left in capable hands.

Also turning in fine performances are James Caan

as Santino, the Don's oldest son; Robert Duvall as the family's adopted son and *consigliere*, Tom Hagen; Richard Castellano as family member Clemenza; and Diane Kenton as Michael's girl friend and later his wife, Kay.

There is much violence in *The Godfather*, but then, how do you make a gangster movie without some brutality? Perhaps some of the violence is overdone, but if it is, it is given a glossy veneer so that it doesn't stain the overall product.

One of the most striking scenes of the film is a contrast between innocence and violence, as Michael stands as godfather at a baptism, declaring his love of God and righteousness, as his men load their guns and kill off the family's enemies in a virtual blood bath.

One disturbing feature of the film is the intrusion of an intermission at the Cooper/Lincoln Theater, when it is neither needed or wanted by the audience.

Director Francis Ford Coppola has done a masterful job with *The Godfather*, and certainly (unless something exceedingly good comes along) when the Academy Awards roll around next year, *The Godfather's* mantle piece should have quite a few more statues on it.



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Hi folks! This is Willard "The Rain Maker" Schmellschwerber, down here at weather central, where we make the weather that makes the news.

This weekend, kiddies, the sky will be moist. Pioneers Park will turn into a living sponge. So, its looks like there'll be no playing with flying frisbugs this weekend.

Ah, here's a bulletin that's just been footed over to me. And it's the word we've been waiting for. The Taco Kid will—I repeat—will run its six tacos for a dollar special Friday through Sunday.

That's all the time we have, so remember Taco Kid's special. And remember our Weather Bird's Weather Word. And that word is... elevator.

Until tomorrow, kiddies, aw river.

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