

# Pacino excellent as tragic hero in Scarface

Review by Steve Abarlotes

A better director than Brian DePalma couldn't have been chosen to direct "Scarface," an effort by the "master of the Macabre" starring Al Pacino. DePalma's films have always maintained a high level of glitter and gore together with a swift and fanciful film technique that always seems to exceed a less creative storyline. I thought "Dressed to Kill" was all right. "Blow Out" was a superb film. At any rate,

## Film Review

DePalma's glittery and slightly unreal style has often times in the past accompanied rather empty stories.

"Scarface" is the story of one man's savage journey to the heart of the American dream. Al Pacino stars at Tony Montana, the ruthless and empty anti-hero, a Cuban with a dubious past who immigrates to Miami, along with thousands of other boat people exiled by Castro in 1982. He quickly stumbles onto some connections in the drug business, and works his way up the ladder with his savage pride and his fierce loyalty. Upon reaching the top notch in the drug smuggling ring, he breaks two rules he was told always to abide by: Don't get greedy and don't get high on your own supply. Unfortunately, he didn't hear these canons because he was too busy trying to act tough.

Montana is a tragic hero blazing a path along a tragic arc, violently bursting his way to an upper

class status, experiencing everything big, beautiful and expensive America has to offer. He then turns desperate and paranoid with his newly but illegally accumulated wealth and is thus sent spiraling to inevitable demise in a wave of shootouts and explosions.

Montana is really the great Gatsby of the '80s. Like Gatsby, he has illegally gained his fortune. He also forcefully and awkwardly gets the only girl that could ever accompany him in his magic kingdom. Elvira (Mary Fiefler) is so physically perfect that she may come off as uninteresting and shallow, but she's smart and she knows where she fits in. She melts right into tropical background, another empty symbol of a false paradise right along the tacky paintings of ocean sunsets framed with the silhouettes of palm trees. Montana does not have as much style as Gatsby, but what he lacks in style, he more than makes up for with violence.

"Scarface" contains a graphically violent scene that takes place around 35 minutes into the film. The scene revolves around a botched drug deal involving cocaine and a running chain saw. Most of the violence is implied, but we still see the blood and it flies everywhere. I glanced at my watch because I was wondering how much longer I was going to have to sit through all the carnage. But as it turned out, this is the most gruesome moment of the film.

"Scarface" is an intense, edge-of-the-seat, thriller that really bangs away at you and might very well leave you pretty beat up. In it you will find homages to "The Godfather." The film also is a tribute to the shoot-em-up gangster films of the 1930s.

As Montana, Pacino offers a solid performance.

His accent is believable and his character is honorable and traditional. You can see the momentary reluctance in his face as he tries to blend the old with the new. And with a little of the DePalma magic, Pacino presents an authentic portrayal of a reaction steeped in livid hatred when he discovers that his best friend has been sleeping with his kid sister. This is the best work Pacino has done in a while. His character is strong and confident, but it is hard to sympathize with him, which I think is one of the weaknesses of the film.

The film attacks many of the premises that this country was founded on. Montana, like the people who settled this country, is an immigrant who has arrived to escape persecution. He becomes the self-made businessman, an individualist who settles disputes with a gun (or in some instances, a grenade launcher), and in some ways this is more unsettling than much of the swiftly and gracefully choreographed violence. He has attained more wealth than he could ever use, but this leaves him lonely and full of despair. Gatsby ended up face down in his own pool and the same thing might happen to Tony Montana if he is not careful.

The photography gives off a detached and distant feeling. The editing is crisp and relentless. The film seems to have been cut to the tune of a meat slicer.

For the first time, DePalma has found something that he can get his cinematic teeth into. "Scarface," as a film is not only well put together, but it manages to make a point amid the killing and corruption about false and empty American ideals. This film forces one at point blank range to come to odds with the American system and the corruption within. This film will stick with you for awhile, and for good reason.



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