

Film shows friendships within mob



"Mobsters"



By Robert Richardson
Senior Reporter

Everyone has seen a shoot-'em-up, good-to-go, authentic Italian-accented, chase-'em-'til-you-kill-'em, Sicilian mobster movie. But director Michael Karbelnikoff's "Mobsters" is somewhat different, offering all the blood and a little more.

Karbelnikoff doesn't get hung up on minute details because the story he is trying to tell is too important to let it get lost in the muck and mire of a bad killing scene. Although there are

plenty of fatal "hits," they are often funny.

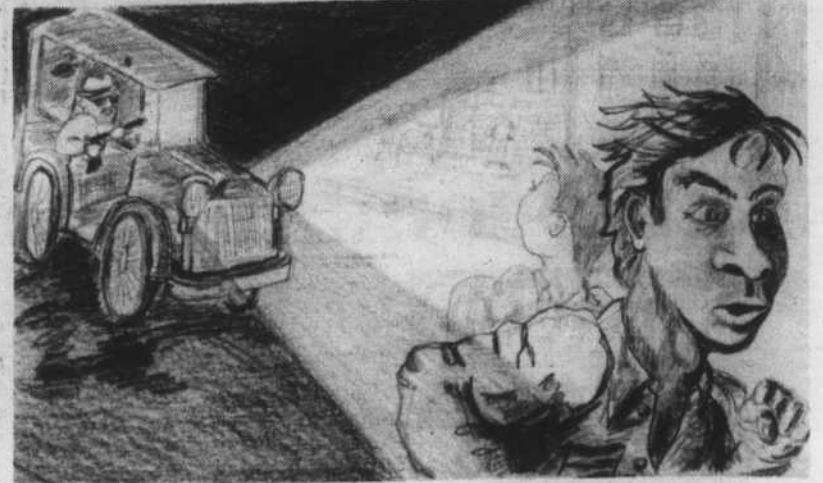
The story Karbelnikoff is trying to tell is one of friendship.

Giving audiences an underlying theme to follow, Karbelnikoff doesn't really let the audience get to know the big mob bosses but rather introduces the viewer to a gang of kids who grow up on the streets of New York watching each other's backs — because they have to.

Lucky Luciano (Christian Slater) and Meyer Lansky (Patrick Dempsey) meet about 1917 in an alley as Luciano saves Lansky's life from an upset knife-swinging thug. The two-some become inseparable friends who, along with Bugsy Siegel (Richard Grieco) and Frank Costello (Costas Mandylor), soon rise up above the street scum they so detest, but are so much like.

During the Prohibition era, the four make oodles of money running whiskey to illegal nightclubs. Their quick upward mobility is noticed by two main New York mob bosses, who both fight for the group's loyalty.

Acting, and not special effects, is a strong point in "Mobsters." Slater's



character is believable and humanistic. The audience can relate to his character, he is amiable but strong — not always two compatible traits.

Anthony Quinn as a mob boss is very natural. His small role isn't Brando, but it's still a fresh approach to an old situation.

Along with the acting, writers Michael Maherm and Karbelnikoff's portrayal of the mob scene make this

new outlook on organized crime a welcome piece of work. Maherm and Karbelnikoff's sarcasm rivals some of the best.

This movie is not the "Godfather" and it wasn't intended to be. The purpose of "Mobsters" is to tell the tale of four young men and their unconventional way of making a living. Outstanding efforts by writers, directors and actors make this movie a joy.

Love

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From here, the LP really goes downhill. While the songs are more musically and lyrically accessible, they are also more forgettable. The band's

overwhelming compulsion to make the lyrics rhyme ruins some otherwise OK tracks. On the tracks where the lyrics are better, staid and mechanical playing drags the songs down. At their worst, they sound like a copy of Survivor or someone from that era. Not good.

One good thing that can be said for

TLA is that they do play tightly. It's evident that they've played together quite a while, and know each other well. Drummer Michael Trask manages to lay down solid and interesting percussion on most of the songs.

The vocals, shared by guitarists Jay Bennett and Ken Hartz, often come off as two college boys who

whine too much. They get annoying pretty quickly. Lars Gustafsson does an adequate job on bass; he keeps reliable time without being overly flashy. Maybe he should flash a little more; it might make things more interesting, and keep this Titanic Love Affair from running aground.

— James Finley

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