Directed by Francis Ford Coppola
Based on the novel by Mario Puzo
Screenplay by Mario Puzo and Francis Ford Coppola
Produced by Albert S. Ruddy
Original Music by Nino Rota
Cinematography by Gordon Willis
Film Editing by William Reynolds and Pete Zinner
Production Design by Dean Tavoularis
Michael Chapman....camera operator
Walter Murch....post-production consultant
Conductor...Carlo Savina
Composer: additional music, mall wedding sequence...Carmine Coppola

Marlon Brando...Don Vito Corleone
Al Pacino...Michael Corleone
James Caan...Santino 'Sonny' Corleone
Richard S. Castellano...Peter Clemenza
Robert Duvall...Tom Hagen
Sterling Hayden...Capt. McCluskey
John Marley...Jack Waltz
Richard Conte...Don Emilio Barzini
Al Lettieri...Virgil 'The Turk' Sollozzo
Diane Keaton...Kay Adams
Abe Vigoda...Sal Tessio
Talia Shire...Connie Corleone Rizzi
Gianni Russo...Carlo Rizzi
John Cazale...Fredo Corleone
Rudy Bond...Don Carmine Cuneo
Al Martino...Johnny Fontane
Morgana King...Mama Corleone
Lenny Montana...Luca Brasi
John Martino...Paulie Gatto
Salvatore Corsitto...Bonasera
Richard Bright...Al Neri
Alex Rocco...Moe Greene
Tony Giorgio...Bruno Tattaglia
Vito Scotti...Nazorine
Tere Livrano...Theresa Hagen
Victor Rendina...Don Philip Tattaglia
Simonetta Stefanelli...Apollonia Vitelli Corleone
Angelo Infanti...Fabrizio

Corrado Gaipa...Don Tommasino
Franco Citti...Calo
Saro Urzì...Vitelli
Carmine Coppola...Piano Player in Montage
Gian-Carlo Coppola...Baptism Observer
Roman Coppola...Boy on Street Who Attended Funeral
Sofia Coppola...Michael Francis Rizzi

Academy Awards for Best Picture, Best Screenplay Based on Material from Another Medium, Best Actor (Brando).
National Film Registry (1990)

Paris Burning? 1966, This Property Is Condemned 1966, The Haunted Palace 1963, as well as the films asterisked earlier in this paragraph.


DEAN TAVOURIS (18 May 1932, Lowell, Massachusetts) had been production designer for 30 films, including all of Coppola’s films.


Talent in the family was not confined to the father. Coppola’s mother, the former Italia Penino, at one time acted in films. His older brother August is a writer and a professor of literature. His younger sister Talia Shire, who appears in both Godfather films, has become well known for her performances in Rocky and Old Boyfriends, and his nephew, Nicholas Cage, has starred in several recent films, Coppola’s Rumblefish and Peggy Sue Got Married among them. As a small boy Francis Ford Coppola (he dropped his middle name in 1977) seemed the least promising member of this ambitious family, “funny-looking, not good at school, nearsighted.” A polio attack when he was nine kept him in bed for a year—a miserable period in which he played with puppets, devoured television, and “got immersed in a fantasy world.” Coppola attributes to this testing childhood the fact that he is a worrier who nevertheless courts trouble: “My wife tells me I put myself in these tight spots to justify my anxiety.”

Coppola made his first movies at the age of ten with his father’s 8mm camera and tape recorder. In high school his interests broadened to include writing, music, cinema, and the theatre. About the time he graduated from Great Neck High School, Long Island, he discovered the films of Eisenstein. Coppola became so ardent a disciple that, though he was “really dying to make a film,” he chose to seek a rounded theatrical education first “because Eisenstein had started like that.” In 1956 he entered Hofstra College (now University) on a drama scholarship and almost immediately made a stir with an anti-administration story in a student magazine. In this and later student pieces his biographer Robert K. Johnson finds early evidence of Coppola’s predilection for “fast-paced, episodic structure,” “his interest in technology, his fascination with determined women, and his natural rebelliousness.”

At Hofstra, eager to master every aspect of the theatre, Coppola acted in student productions, worked on lighting and stage crews, wrote dialogue and lyrics. He won the Dan H. Lawrence Award for his direction for O’Neill’s The Rope and sealed his reputation by conceiving, producing, and directing Inertia, the first play ever written and staged entirely by Hofstra students. He also founded a cinema workshop at the college, sold his car to buy a 16mm camera, and worked on a movie that he never finished.

In 1960 Coppola went on to the UCLA film school. He was a graduate student but younger than most of the others, and he was lonely and disappointed. No one at UCLA seemed to share his interest in the dramatic bases of the cinema except the veteran director Dorothy Arzner, one of his teachers. Desperate to “fool around with a camera and cut a film,” he shocked the other students by hiring himself out as a director of porno films, then appalled them by going to work for Roger Corman.

Corman was in those days despised as a cheapskate manufacturer of exploitation movies, though even then it was clear he was prepared to take chances on talented young filmmakers. Coppola’s first job for him was to dub and reedit a rather
sentimental Russian science-fiction film, turning it into a sex-and-violence monster movie called Battle Beyond the Sun (1962). Corman paid him $200 for six months’ work but gave him his first screen credit (as “Thomas Colchart”). Often working all night (and making sure that Corman noticed), Coppola created a place for himself as dialogue director, sound man, and “all-purpose guy.”

He got his first directorial assignment by exploiting Corman’s notorious stinginess. Filming in Ireland in 1962, he pointed out that it was a pity to bring a crew so far for a single movie, and sold Corman on an idea of his own on the strength of a single ghoulish scene. Shooting began soon afterwards on a script that Coppola had written in three days, and he invited some of his American friends over to Ireland to join in. One of them was his set director Eleanor Neil, whom he married the same year. Dementia 13 was made for forty thousand dollars. It is a grisly confection of no great distinction about inheritances and ax murders, but it seems to Coppola now “the only film I ever enjoyed working on.”

Before 1962 was over Coppola, still enrolled at UCLA, won the Samuel Goldwyn award for a scenario and on that account was hired as a scriptwriter by Seven Arts (later Warner Brothers–Seven Arts). He made adaptations—later much rewritten by others—of Carson McCullers’ Reflections in a Golden Eye and Tennessee Williams’ This Property is Condemned, and in collaboration with Gore Vidal wrote Is Paris Burning? Frustrated by his inability to get a film made in his own way, he personally bought the rights to David Benedictus’ novel You’re a Big Boy Now, fusing it in his adaptation with a story idea of his own. He made the picture “on hope and credit,” with some backing from Seven Arts plus the fifty thousand dollars he had earned as co-author of Patton (a script that brought him an Oscar when it was eventually released in 1970.)

Coppola mustered a notable cast for You’re a Big Boy Now. Peter Krastner plays Bernard, a naive young man working in the New York Public Library. He is dominated by his parents (Geraldine Page and Rip Torn), jealously guarded by his landlady (Julie Harris), and pursued into impotence by a deviant actress (Elizabeth Hartman), who pre- and pursued into impotence by a deviant actress (Elizabeth Hartman), who pre- and pursued into impotence by a deviant actress (Elizabeth Hartman), who pre- and pursued into impotence by a deviant actress (Elizabeth Hartman), who pre- and pursued into impotence by a deviant actress (Elizabeth Hartman), who pre- and pursued into impotence by a deviant actress (Elizabeth Hartman), who pre- and pursued into impotence by a deviant actress (Elizabeth Hartman), who pre- and pursued into impotence by a deviant actress (Elizabeth Hartman), who pre- and pursued into impotence by a deviant actress (Elizabeth Hartman), who pre- and purs...
American Zoetrope in its original manifestation collapsed after a year or so. But not before Coppola had begun what has been seen as a "Hollywood Renaissance." Thousands of young filmmakers wrote to Zoetrope or visited or sent their films. Unfortunately, many exploited the place, stealing or breaking the equipment. The high hopes faded as the money ran out, and Coppola’s own reputation suffered when both Finian’s Rainbow and The Rain People failed on release. Zoetrope’s first film—Lucas’ *THX-1138*—was also its last. Warners, who were to distribute the Zoetrope products, disliked the picture and asked for their money back. At thirty, Coppola was three hundred thousand dollars in debt and apparently finished as a filmmaker.

At that low point, Coppola was invited by Paramount to direct a major film based on Mario Puzo’s bestselling Mafia novel *The Godfather*. It was not an easy picture. The crew at first had little faith in Coppola, who also had to fight hard to persuade Paramount to accept the stars he wanted and to make the film “in period.” There was bitter opposition from the Italian-American Civil Rights League (whose president, an alleged mobster, was shot at a Columbus Day rally during the filming). And Coppola had his usual difficulty in deciding how to end the film.

It is a study of a powerful Mafia family at the end of World War II, opening at the home of the patriarch, Don Vito Corleone (Marlon Brando), on his daughter’s wedding day. The family’s tame politicians and judges send their apologies for absence, and we encounter Vito’s son Michael (Al Pacino), a college-educated war hero who so far has disdained to take part in the family “business.” The film follows the gradual transfer of power from the Don to Michael, who is blooded in avenging an attack on his father. The old man dies peacefully, and the Corleones, led by Michael, wipe out their rivals in a bloodbath that coincides with the christening of Michael’s godson: “The gold and pomp of the Church,” as one critic wrote, “against the brutish, bloody machinations of the family”—a recurrent device in the film. Michael assures his troubled wife that he had nothing to do with the slaughter, but before the door closes and the screen goes dark, she sees the mafiosi troop in to swear fealty to the new Don.

*The Godfather* is immensely dramatic and exciting—a “dynastic romance” told with “a marvelously operatic use of pomp and violence,” It opens the door on the mores and rituals of an exotic subculture, and it is one of the great gangster films, Robert K. Johnson suggests that “no other film has so imaginatively presented murder in such a variety of visually vivid ways,” and Jay Cocks thought it “a mass entertainment that is also great movie art.” Serious claims have been made for it as an indictment of American capitalism, and Coppola encouraged this view by saying that the Mafia “is no different from any other big, greedy, profit-making corporation in America.” His opponents replied that if he had intended this sort of criticism, he should not have glamorized the.

Coppola’s fascination with technology is at the center of *The Conversation*, which he wrote, directed, and coproduced. It is a study of a professional eavesdropper, Harry Caul, who is splendidly portrayed by Gene Hackman. One day, using a rifle-shot microphone, he records a conversation between two young people that he cannot at first decipher, though he knows that it concerns murder. He eventually clarifies the significant phrase but, because he knows more about technology than most people, he misinterprets it. An obsessively private man, he nevertheless intervenes, and he is destroyed. Influenced by Hitchcock, Clouzot, and Antonioni’s *Blow-up*, the film owed much to Walter Murch, who handles both sound and editing and, according to some accounts, is primarily responsible for the brilliant interlacing of sound and image that gives the picture its unique quality. It won the Golden Palm as best film at Cannes in 1974.

*The Godfather Part II* carries the story both backward and forward in time. It begins in 1901 in Sicily, where a young boy is orphaned by vendetta. He is Vito Andolini (soon to be Corleone) and he emigrates to America; we see him (now played by Robert De Niro) finding his feet in New York, battling the Black Hand, and emerging as a power in the neighborhood. The film ends with his “respectable” son Michael in a position of unassailable power but without a wife, brothers, friends, or any vestige of common humanity. Coppola was anxious to correct the impression that he admired the Corleones and to some extent he succeeds—if Vito as a young man has something of the Robin Hood in him, his son at the end is wholly-corrupted and cold-hearted. Indeed, the darkness that surrounds Michael at the end of the film is a measure of his achievement: he is lord of the underworld, and king of the dead and the damned. A more analytic film than its predecessor, greatly
admired for the loving recreation of old New York in the early scenes, *The Godfather Part II* won Oscars for best picture, best director, best script (Coppola and Puzo), best supporting actor (De Niro), and best original score (Nino Rota and Carmine Coppola).

Coppola’s position in the movie industry now seemed assured. He put more money into the technical resources of American Zoetrope, invested in real estate, and bought a New York film distribution company. He also bought eighty percent of *City*, a San Francisco news weekly that reportedly lost him one-and-a-half million dollars before it folded. And by late 1975 he was at work on another movie, *Apocalypse Now*—a version of Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* updated to the Vietnam War. John Milius had written the original script under Coppola’s sponsorship years before, when George Lucas was to have directed it. Now Coppola took the project over. It tells the story of Captain Willard (Martin Sheen), an Army officer with CIA connections, who is sent upriver from Saigon to “terminate” a certain Colonel Kurtz (Marlon Brando), a brilliant officer who has gone off the rails and established a private kingdom in Cambodia.

Shooting began in the Philippines in March 1976 and continued on and off for sixteen months, hindered by every conceivable kind of problem. Coppola replaced his leading actor, with great difficulty, after filming had begun. Typhoon Olga destroyed the sets. Martin Sheen had a heart attack. Before the film was finished, Coppola had mortgaged everything he owned to cover personally some sixteen million dollars of the thirty million it cost. Nor was the price only financial. Eleanor Coppola, who went to the Philippines to make a documentary about the filming, has written a book about the ordeal and the strains it placed on the marriage. In March 1977 she wrote of Coppola in her diary: “I guess he has had a sort of nervous breakdown. ...The film he is making is a metaphor for a journey into self. He has made that journey and is still making it.”

Editing continued throughout 1978, with Coppola unable to decide how to end the film: “Working on the ending is like trying to crawl up glass by your fingernails.” He even arranged previews of the picture as “a work in progress,” hoping to learn from audience reactions how best to complete it. *Apocalypse Now* had its world premiere in May 1979 at the Cannes Film Festival, where it was joint winner of the Golden Palm, and was released in the United States a few months later. There was something like universal praise for the way Coppola handles Willard’s journey up the river—notably his encounter with an air cavalry colonel (Robert Duvall) who loves “the smell of napalm in the morning” and whose helicopters attack to “The Ride of the Valkyries.” Richard Roud called this passage “terrifying, beautiful, exciting, funny and disgusting, almost simultaneously.”

What happens when Willard reaches Kurtz’s empire of ancient temples and dangling bodies seemed to most reviewers an anticlimax—we meet not the embodiment of evil but “an eccentric actor who has been given lines that are unthinkable but not, unfortunately unspokenable.” About the film as a whole, opinions differed radically. David Robinson called it a “catastrophe...a majestic, failed enterprise,” while Philip French thought it “a towering achievement, one of the major pictures of the past few years.” Vincent Canby (one of the many who praised Vittorio Storaro’s photography) concluded that “individual scenes and images have tumultuous life but the end effect of the film is of something borrowed and not yet understood.”

At the box office the film was a major success, and Coppola rose once more from the ashes, his much-discussed plans for a quieter life apparently forgotten. He was soon gearing up a variety of projects for friends and protégés, starting with a script about the flamboyant carmaker Preston Tucker, and making notes for “a more personal, more theatrical film”—a love story set in Japan and America and based on Goethe’s *Elective Affinities*. Late in 1979 he was negotiating for the Hollywood General production lot in Los Angeles and Zoetrope, reestablishing this time as “a little factory, like a Republic or an RKO, making one movie a month in the old style and at an intelligent price. But I believe we’ll be the first all-electric movie studio in the world...It just takes the wisdom and the guts to invest in the future.”

The same year Zoetrope brought our *The Black Stallion* directed by Carroll Ballard, with Coppola executive producing, but despite that film’s broad critical success, the studio was by no means financially equipped for Coppola’s next directorial effort, *One From the Heart* (1982). When foreign investors suddenly withdrew support in the midst of production, Coppola mortgaged everything he owned—including Zoetrope and his own homes—to complete the ambitious undertaking. ...Though the sets [designed by Dean Tavoularis], as well as the music by Tom Waits, received praise, the film as a whole was a critical and box-office flop....

The artistically adventurous features that Zoetrope produced or co-produced in the early ’80s (*Hammett, The Escape Artist* and *Koyaanisqatsi* among them, with Kurosawa’s *Kagemusha* perhaps Coppola’s pet project) did little to help the studio’s flagging financial resources, and in 1982 Coppola was forced to sell Zoetrope. He did not, however, declare bankruptcy but instead undertook to repay the debts he had incurred with *One From the Heart*. Ripe for projects with more popular appeal, Coppola took on the task of...
filming The Outsiders, a novel for teenagers by S.E. Hinton. Coppola had been “selected” by a group of high school students as the ideal director for a film version about rich and poor adolescents in Oklahoma, and upon reading the book, Coppola agreed with them. He immediately began filming with Matt Dillon in the lead, and tried to cultivate a genuine rift between the young actors playing underprivileged “greasers” and those playing wealthy “socs” to effect realistic confrontations on the screen. Coppola was so pleased with his progress that he decided in the middle of making The Outsiders to use the same crew and some of the same actors to make a second Hinton adaptation from her novel Rumble Fish. This dreamy black-and-white film depicts the darker side of the gang dynamics seen in The Outsiders, and pursues the theme of competition between brothers that Coppola has returned to repeatedly. Dillon again starred, with Dennis Hopper and Mickey Rourke in supporting roles; the film was dedicated to Coppola’s older brother August.

At first dismissed as exploitation pictures, these two films have intrigued later critics, who have discerned here an inventive and unabashed romanticism at play in the confines of genre. Coppola worked closely with Hinton during the filming and achieved an unusual degree of creative control, especially over Rumble Fish, which is one of his own favorites. But as Richard Jameson remarked, a picture designed as “an art film for teenagers” ran the risk of bewildering its intended audience, who lack “a lexicon for its arty codes.”

Faced with such discouraging responses and still owing an enormous sum of money, Coppola felt “the key is to keep working....It’s annoying to have to work so much to pay for thing that happened in the past. But I’m tougher for it. I think I’ll come out all right.” Though Zoetrope was honored with a retrospective at the 1983 Santa Fe Film Festival, and Coppola himself received the Commander of the Order of Arts and Letters from France in 1984, he could not have found backing for his independent projects at this time, and so responded positively to Robert Evans’ plea for help with a “sick child”: The Cotton Club.

Evans had originally intended to direct the film about the famous Harlem nightclub himself, but when it became mired in financial and legal problems he brought in Coppola to placate the film’s investors. Coppola wrote almost forty versions of the script, working at first with Mario Puzo and then with novelist William Kennedy, finally coming up with a plot that blended classic Hollywood gangster and musical genres....

Coppola directed portions of the film from an elaborately equipped electronics van parked outside each location. ...Because the $47-million film was so technically complex and was repeatedly interrupted by litigation (following one series of lawsuits Evans lost ownership of the film; in a contract dispute, Coppola temporarily withdrew from the project) Coppola never achieved the creative control he sought, probably fulfilling his own dictum that “more money means less freedom.” Pauline Kael wrote that in Cotton Club “Coppola, seemingly tormented by his inability to fulfill his own ideas and talents, took refuge in unsubtle stylistics.”

...The emphasis on huge, state-of-the-art production methods that contributed to the expense and difficulty of making The Cotton Club nonetheless engaged Coppola more and more. In 1985 he made his first work for television, a dramatization of “Rip Van Winkle” for cable television. Coppola crafted many of the fantastic scenes in the fairy tale with computer imaging systems that allow for the exact imposition of many separately filmed images. He found the video medium very much to his liking, and hired Eiko Ishioku, who had done surrealistic sets for Paul Schrader’s Mishima, a 1985 film about Japanese author Yukio Mishima that Coppola helped produce, to design the sets for “Rip Van Winkle.” Though the director’s reliance on technology was faulted in The Outsiders and One From the Heart for distancing him from his work, Coppola insists that “film is already like the horseless carriage. Film is beautiful, but it is dead, it is not any longer relevant. The new medium, video, is so incredibly flexible and immediate and economical and can be as beautiful that it’s bound to take over.” In 1985 Coppola was able to indulge all his high-tech excitement in making Captain Eo, a 12-minute space fantasy starring (and with songs by) Michael Jackson, produced by George Lucas and with camerawork by Vittorio Storaro. The film will be shown only at Disneyland and Disney World, on huge Imax screens that emanate fog and laser beams....

Coppola swings between epic, high-tech behemoths and intimate studies and his uneven success rate are characteristic of many directors of his generation, according to David Sterritt, who maintains that Cimino, Scorsese, Spielberg and Coppola face “the difficulty of joining personal expression with big money and flashy show-biz traditions.” But despite his track record, the film industry has treated Coppola with unusual lenience, perhaps because, as producer Irwin Jablans has said, “he’s the last, or maybe just the latest, of the great old larger-than-life American directors. His failures are more interesting than many other directors’ hits.”

“Castro-bearded and restless,” immensely knowledgeable about every aspect of filmmaking, Coppola has been described as “still something of the enthusiastic schoolboy eyeghead.” ...[His] second son was killed in a boating accident in 1986. “You know what it’s like to be a director?” he said once. “It’s like running in front of a locomotive. If you stop, if you trip, if you make a mistake, you get killed.” Coppola’s own career bears this out, but he has always refused to stay dead, and he has breathed life into those around him. “He subsidized us all,” John Milius says. “George Lucas and me. Willard Huyck and Gloria Katz, who wrote American Graffiti, Hal Barwood, Matt Robbins....He is responsible for a whole generation; indirectly he is responsible for Scorsese and De Palma. You cannot overemphasize the importance he had. If this generation is to change American cinema, he is to be given the credit, or the discredit.”

*The Godfather* (1972) is told entirely within a closed world. That’s why we sympathize with characters who are essentially evil. The story by Mario Puzo and Francis Ford Coppola is a brilliant conjuring act, inviting us to consider the Mafia entirely on its own terms. Don Vito Corleone (Marlon Brando) emerges as a sympathetic and even admirable character; during the entire film, this lifelong professional criminal does nothing that, in context, we can really disapprove of. We see not a single actual civilian victim of organized crime. No women trapped into prostitution. No lives wrecked by gambling. No victims of theft, fraud, or protection rackets. The only police officer with a significant speaking role is corrupt.

The story views the Mafia from the inside. That is its secret, its charm, its spell; in a way it has shaped the public perception of the Mafia ever since. The real world is replaced by an authoritarian patriarchy where power and justice flow from the Godfather, and the only villains are traitors. There is one commandment, spoken by Michael (Al Pacino): “Don’t ever take sides against the family.”

It is significant that the first shot us inside a dark, shuttered room. It is the wedding day of Vito Corleone’s daughter, and on such a day a Sicilian must grant any reasonable request. A man has come to ask for punishment for his daughter’s rapist. Don Vito asks why he did not come to him immediately.

“I went to the police, like a good American,” the man says. The Godfather’s reply will underpin the entire movie: “Why did you go to the police? Why didn’t you come to me first? What have I ever done to make you treat me so disrespectfully? If you’d come to me in friendship, then this scam that ruined your daughter would be suffering this very day. And, if my chance an honest man like you should make enemies...then they would become my enemies. And then they would fear you.”

As the day continues, there are two more séances in the Godfather’s darkened study, intercut with scenes from the wedding outside. By the end of the wedding sequence, most of the main characters will have been introduced, and we will know essential things about their personalities. It is a virtuoso stretch of filmmaking: Coppola brings his large cast onstage so artfully that we are drawn at once into the Godfather’s world.


“What are they getting so excited about? It’s only another gangster picture.” Marlon Brando, 1971.

Looking back thirty-five years after the release of *The Godfather*, one can’t help but marvel how the film ever got made, when every conceivable obstacle stood in its way.

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*A writer who didn’t want to write it.*

Mario Puzo was broke and needed to pen something commercial in order to write the kind of books he really cared about.

*A studio that didn’t want to produce it.*

The box-office failure of previous gangster movies made Paramount Pictures reluctant to pick up their option, but with the novel a runaway success, and other studios showing interest, they couldn’t let it slip away.

*A film no director would touch.*

Twelve directors turned it down, including, at first, Francis Ford Coppola. But Coppola, too, was broke, and needed a job directing a Hollywood production in order to make the kind of personal films he really cared about.

*A cast of unknowns.*

Except for one renowned actor, Marlon Brando, who was considered box office poison by studio executives.

*A community against it.*

Before filing even began, Italian-American groups protested what they perceived was to be the movie’s characterization of their culture, and amassed a war chest to stop the production.

And yet, *The Godfather* succeeded beyond anyone’s wildest imagination, to become one of the greatest cinematic masterpieces in history—a film that continues to captivate decades after its release.

*The Godfather* is a unique film in that it bridges many audiences, appealing to both erudite film buffs and TV couch potatoes alike. As film critic Kenneth Turan says, it is irresistible: “Like one of those potato chips, you can’t have only one of it. It is a film that once started or stumbled upon TV, demands to be seen all the way to the end. It is that well-constructed, that hypnotic, simply that good.” Even Al Pacino admits that when he’s flipping the channels and comes across *The Godfather*, he can’t help but keep watching.

But why is the film still so compelling today? Certainly the thrill of looking inside the particular subculture that *The Godfather* explores, in conjunction with the movie’s intense action and drama, is endlessly entertaining. There are two other central reasons to love the film. The first is in the details. With each new viewing, a different, distinct detail reveals itself: the jarring crunch of gravel under Michael’s feet after Carlo is murdered; the blustery performance of Sterling Hayden; the exquisite marriage of Nino Rota’s haunting score with the dazzling Sicilian landscape. The details are no accident. In addition to Coppola’s dogged efforts to infuse the film with the flavor and intricacies of his own Italian-American experiences, he assembled an incredible collection of talent to create the film. From the cinematographer to the production designer, from the makeup artist to the special-effects wizard, from the costume designer to the casting director, from Brando to Pacino—only today can the wonder of such a gifted group, working together on one movie set, be fully appreciated....
The screenplay of the 1972 film featured herein incorporates much of Francis Ford Coppola and Mario Puzo's own wording from their final, pre-production draft or shooting script (officially titled “Third Draft,” completed on March 29, 1971. This look back at the monumental film also traces the development of the screenplay and explores the evolution of several subsequent versions and re-eds of the film that appeared after 1972. Among those different versions are The Godfather Saga, a four-part miniseries broadcast on NBC in 1977, which combined The Godfather and its sequel, The Godfather: Part II, in mostly chronological order, with some restored scenes that did not appear in the original theatrical release; The Godfather 1902-1959: The Complete Epic (a.k.a. Mario Puzo’s The Godfather: The Complete Novel for Television), a video boxed set released in 1981 in the same format as Saga but with fewer restored scenes; and The Godfather Trilogy: 1901-1980, a re-editing of all three Godfathers in mostly chronological order, with even more additional footage, released in 1992.

...When Paramount gave The Godfather the green light, finding a director turned out to be a difficult task. Twelve directors turned down the job many, including Peter Yates (Bullitt) and Richard Brooks (In Cold Blood), because they didn’t want to romanticize the Mafia. Arthur Penn (Bonnie and Clyde, Little Big Man) was too busy. Costa-Gavras (Z) thought it too American.

Robert Evans, Paramount’s head of production, sat down with Peter Bart, his creative second in command, to determine why previous organized crime films hadn’t worked, and decided it was because Jews made them, not Italians. So they sought an Italian-American director, a commodity in short supply. Bart thought of twenty-nine-year-old he had met when he had written a piece for The New York Times on a young wannabe director who paid his way through college by making “nudies,” otherwise known as skin flicks....Peter Bart first approached Coppola to direct The Godfather in the spring of 1970. Coppola tried to read the book but found it sleazy. His father advised him that commercial work could fund the artistic pictures he wanted to make. His business partner, George Lucas, begged him to find something in the book he liked. He went to the library to research the Mafia, and became fascinated by the families that had divided New York and run it like a business.

Coppola reread the novel and came to see a central theme of the story—a father and his three sons—that was in its own way a Greek or Shakespearean tragedy. He viewed the growth of the 1940s Corleone family as a metaphor for capitalism in America. He took the job.


In 1990 he made his third Godfather film. This trilogy of movies, taken together, represents one of the supreme achievements of the cinematic art.

**Michael Chapman said:** “Stills and movies, philosophically, are completely different. One is about stopping time, the other about going through time.”

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**NOSFERATU at ST. PAUL’S CATHEDRAL**

St. Paul's Cathedral, in conjunction with a grant from Trinity Wall Street, invites you to the first annual screening of the 1922 German Expressionist black-and-white movie classic Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens on All Hallow's Eve: **Sunday, October 31, 7:00 pm**. This silent movie will be accompanied by Ivan Docenko at the Cathedral Organ. Please join us in the comfort of the Cathedral to watch this earliest screen adaptation of Bram Stoker's classic novel Dracula on the big screen. All are welcome to this family-friendly, free event.

**COMING UP IN THE FALL 2010 BUFFALO FILM SEMINARS XXI:**

October 26 Hal Ashby The Last Detail 1973
November 2 Bruce Beresford Tender Mercies 1983
November 9 Wim Wenders Wings of Desire 1987
November 16 Charles Crichton A Fish Called Wanda 1988
November 23 Joel & Ethan Coen The Big Lebowski 1998
November 30 Chan-wook Park Oldboy 2003
December 7 Deepa Mehta Water 2005

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...for the series schedule, annotations, links and updates: [http://buffalofilmseminars.com](http://buffalofilmseminars.com)
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