

Review by andrewburgereviews – The Godfather

It is now past 1 PM and I just finished watching Francis Ford Coppola's "The Godfather". I should probably go to bed. It's late and tomorrow I have to wake up a bit early. But not early enough to postpone writing these lines. Now that I have seen it three times, the opportunity of sharing my thoughts and refreshed insights are too much of a good offer to sit on. So, bear with me.

This film works so well because it takes place in an underworld in which we are so embedded that we do not even observe it. Coppola puts us straight in the smack-dab center of what is, admittedly, a society made by criminals for criminals. It is also the reason why it's so welcoming. We are surrounded by its inhabitants--cold-blooded murderers, men who see crime like a 9 to 5 job masquerading as honorable men. And I do mean men. From the outside, we would only witness the horrifying, disturbing manifestations of their well-thought out actions.

But it goes even deeper than that. It all revolves around the Corleone family led by Don Vito Corleone (Marlon Brando). He is the most honest of these men, sitting right on the edge. But for people like him, who do not fully embrace this world, it's not easy. He avoids conflict until it is absolutely necessary. He is a man defined by moral principles. There is a scene at the beginning, in which, during his daughter's wedding day, one of his associates, Luca Brasi (Lenny Montana) practices his speech that he is going to give to the Don when he meets him. The scene with these two is funny and almost adorable. I could not help but sympathize both of them only to realize that I am feeling warmth for two mobsters. Not to even mention that Lenny Montana was an actual mob hit-man and that he was actually nervous as he said that line.

The more I watched the more I realized just how incredibly complex and ruthless this society is and how it has the power to corrupt anyone to come in contact with it. The best example is Corleone's youngest son, Michael (Al Pacino). He returns home for his sister's wedding as a war hero dressed the part

with his long-time girlfriend, Kay Adams (Diane Keaton). At first, he avoids this underworld, but necessity, first-hand exposure and just its sheer devilish appealing nature draws him in. As we get further in the film, the change is shocking and every outsider who ever got close to him is tainted in one way or another. If they survive it, they are drawn in as well as we are as viewers.

Inside, Coppola exposes the family to us fully, with a bold personal approach and we witness every discussion, every methodically calculated choice. Crime is done simply because it is the nature of their business, and we are put on a chair alongside them, so we easily relate. For us, they are the good guys, the rival families are the bad guys. This is the greatest feat this film managed to pull off--set apart good guys and bad guys in a world filled with bad guys.

This is a film of unmatched subtlety. No other movie sustains itself as good. No other film is done with such precision, attention and completeness. There are many layers which I probably missed and maybe will never notice. But I felt them. What director Francis Ford Coppola and his partner in crime (poor choice of words, sorry) Mario Puzo did is nothing short of a timeless piece of reference cinema whose influence is not based on reinventing the wheel, but rather perfecting it to the absolute maximum.

Most masterpieces are remembered for their historical contributions. "Citizen Kane" brought the biggest step-up to the art form, the same things did "Gone With the Wind" or "2001: A Space Odyssey". "The Godfather" is one of the few films that will be remembered simply because they are that good and I cannot possibly imagine a greater achievement.