

The Tome Front

Five books that belong on any gift list—whether you're shopping for a loved one or yourself. **By Daniel Okrent**

The Annotated Godfather: The Complete Screenplay
Jenny M. Jones

(\$29.95, Black Dog & Leventhal)

It's like seeing the movie all over again, but with Francis Ford Coppola sitting next to you on the couch. Robert Redford was offered the part of Michael Corleone. John Wayne asked Frank Sinatra if he'd like him to punch out Mario Puzo. I was surprised to be reminded that Al Pacino and Diane Keaton were absolute unknowns before *The Godfather*; I was shocked to be reminded that the picture was released 35 years ago. Ouch.

Journals: 1952-2000
Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr.

(\$40, Penguin Press)

It turns out the late historian, presidential assistant, and tireless party animal had a shiv

in his pocket all those years that he was dining with Groucho Marx, chitchatting with Alger Hiss, getting down at Mick Jagger's, or helping plan the invasion of Cuba. He used it both artfully (Hubert Humphrey was "corrupted by the desire to please") and coarsely (Dan Quayle is "a rich jerk from Indiana"), but always with an absolute candor that lifts this book above the sanitized memoirs usually left behind by public figures.

The Rest Is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century
Alex Ross

(\$30, Farrar Straus Giroux)

Let's stipulate that you, like almost everybody, have little interest in 20th-century classical music. But let's also say that you admire incisive thinking, lucid prose,

and sheer mastery of one's subject. I believe that Alex Ross, who writes about classical music for *The New Yorker*, is the single finest critic—on any subject—writing today. Reading him is a revelation, and might even make you want to listen to music you've avoided.

The Nine: Inside the Secret World of the Supreme Court
Jeffrey Toobin

(\$27.95, Penguin Press)

Amazing: a Washington bestseller that actually deserves to be one. If you have (as I do) an unnatural curiosity about the Court's inner workings and want a large helping of authoritative dish (what does Scalia really think of Thomas?), *The Nine* is essential. But at its heart, this is a serious book by a deeply informed writer. Toobin's exploration was

enhanced by the obvious (if unacknowledged) cooperation of Sandra Day O'Connor, but I suspect a few other Justices whispered to him on the sly too.

30,000 Years of Art: The Story of Human Creativity Across Time and Space

(\$49.95, Phaidon)

A spectacular feat of cross-cultural history, visual presentation, and mathematics. (I invoke the last term because the 13-pound book costs only \$50.) It begins in 28,000 B.C. and ends with an earthwork under construction in the Arizona desert, and every page is devoted to a single piece of art, with a few informative paragraphs. An Italian Renaissance portrait, for example, faces an Iranian carpet created the same year. This book is staggering, in at least two senses of the word. ■

