



**BIG SCREEN CLASSICS**

# Godfather Part II

Whichever way you look at it, *The Godfather* trilogy – thanks to its first two superlative instalments – undoubtedly ranks as one of the most highly respected achievements in filmmaking of the last half century.

I first saw the original film shortly after its initial release and was certainly impressed by its scale and sobriety. But it wasn't until a second viewing in the mid-70s, by which time I had changed from an ordinary, fairly regular filmgoer into a full-blown cinephile watching an average of around half a dozen movies each week, that I saw it again and came to recognise more of its virtues (and, indeed, more of its flaws).

In the meantime, I'd had the chance to see *The Godfather Part II*. This was just as I was falling head-over-heels in love with film as an artform (as opposed to the mere entertainment I'd been looking for as a schoolkid), and I was knocked out. It was a time when I was discovering the work of Ingmar Bergman, Michelangelo Antonioni, Jean-Luc Godard, François Truffaut, Orson Welles, Stanley Kubrick, Akira Kurosawa and Yasujiro Ozu, not to mention what seemed to be distinctly un-Hollywoodian American films by the likes of Robert Altman, Arthur Penn, Dennis Hopper, Sam Peckinpah, Terrence Malick and Bob Rafelson. And the *Godfather* films – especially the second one – seemed to mesh perfectly with the seductive combination of innovative art and adult entertainment purveyed by these directors.

Why Part II even more than Part I? For more than 40 years now, I've rated the sequel more highly than the original, even if it doesn't have Marlon Brando to lend it his peculiar brand of mythic grandeur. I like the first film enormously, for the performances by that extraordinary cast (besides Brando and Al Pacino, there's James Caan, Robert Duvall, John Cazale, Diane Keaton and Talia Shire, not to mention two more superb veterans in Richard Conte and the inimitable Sterling Hayden); for Gordon Willis' brooding cinematography; for Dean Tavoularis' art direction; for the carefully crafted dialogue, the measured pace and the stately sense of family ritual.

But *The Godfather Part II* has nearly all that (sadly, the veterans are no longer in the cast, though you do get the Actors' Studio's near-legendary Lee Strasberg as a welcome addition) and more – and I don't just mean Robert De Niro, at his most hauntingly beautiful as the young Vito Corleone.

There lies the key to the film's superiority and greatness: it's both sequel and prequel, extending the original film's timeframe both backwards to Vito's arrival in New York from Sicily at the start of the 20th century and forwards to his son Michael's ruthless protection of his own authority as family capo during a period of expansion into Las Vegas, Cuba and elsewhere.

Where the first film was to some extent simply about the constant conflict between the Corleones on the one hand and competing clans and corrupt cops on the other – with, by the way, the existence of innocent victims of organised crime barely if ever acknowledged – its successor is about something more dynamic: the changes that take place not only in the Corleones (and, more particularly, within Michael himself) but in America itself.

The pernicious and increasing influence of organised crime on ordinary people (including, initially, young Vito, his wife and children) and on the so-called bastions of society – not just the police but the politicians and judiciary – becomes a dominant theme of the film, which coolly chronicles one family's

inexorable progress from petty to corporate crime, from survival instinct to an icy, self-destructive obsession with power for power's sake.

It's why the film is imbued with such a strong undertow of melancholy; it's there, calm and chilling, in Michael's eyes. And it's that melancholy, that almost tragic self-awareness about what might have been and all that has been lost, that makes *The Godfather Part II* far, far more than just another gangster movie.

**Geoff Andrew, [bfi.org.uk](http://bfi.org.uk), 20 February 2014**

*The Godfather Part II* premieres in New York in December 1974 and it is everything Coppola has promised it would be; the film achieves a near-perfect balance between art and commerce, pleasing fellow artists, critics, filmgoers and executive at Paramount. It wins Oscars for Best Picture, Best Director, Best Actor in a Supporting Role, Best Writing, Screenplay Adapted from Other Material, Best Art Direction and Best Music, Original Score. By the time its first run is complete, *The Godfather Part II* earns a healthy profit as well: close to \$60 million in domestic box-office revenues off a \$13 million budget.

The widely read *New Yorker* reviewer Pauline Kael, who in 1969 wrote in exasperation that Hollywood had 'devolved into rotting system in which mediocrity and skyrocketing costs work together to turn out films that would have a hard time making money even if they were good', lauds *The Godfather Part II* as a turning point for the director and for an emerging New Hollywood: *The Godfather Part II* is the work of a major artist... who else, when he got the chance and power, would have proceeded with the absolute conviction that he'd make the film the way it should be made? In movies, that's the inner voice of an authentic hero.' Writing for the *LA Times*, Charles Champlin is similarly effusive: 'The creative, aesthetic success of this long enterprise is, I think, on the heroic scale... in its way, *The Godfather Part II* is more daring than the original... and the risks were worth taking.'

By the time *The Godfather Part II* wound up its first run in the late spring of 1975 Coppola was indisputably at the pinnacle of his Hollywood career. But he did not stay there (at the top) for long. Just four years later, he would be the subject of press ridicule when the location shoot of *Apocalypse Now* clocked its 200th day. The director, paraphrasing Euripides, quipped to his co-workers self-effacingly: 'Whom God wishes to destroy, he first makes successful in show business.' The remark proved prophetic.

The development and production of *The Godfather* involved a surfeit of intrigue and conflict. The making of the sequel was a good deal less fraught. Indeed, the mostly cooperative and collaborative development and production of *The Godfather Part II* rather made the case that an indulgence of an auteur theory – that studio investment in the apparent genius of talented filmmakers – might actually work to the benefit of movie-makers and moneymen alike. *The Godfather Part II* marks the moment when everything seemed perfect for Coppola and for a new generation of filmmakers... just before things would never be so perfect for any of them again.

*The Godfather Part II* proved to be a turning point in the New Hollywood because it was also the turning point in the career of the industry's premier player: Francis Coppola. The director navigated the 1970s American film business expertly. In the space of seven years, he directed three box-office blockbusters (and was credited with a fourth as executive producer), received two Palmes d'Or at Cannes, netted 12 Academy Awards nominations (as producer, director and screenwriter) and took home five Oscar statuettes. His many side-projects – the magazine, the indie distribution and production units, the Directors Company experiment at Paramount and later his purchase of the Hollywood General Studio lot in 1980 – at first blush evinced the scale

and scope of his ambition, but they also set the stage for his comeuppance: 'whom God wishes to destroy', and all that. In 1974, Coppola was Hollywood's most famous, most important director. And *The Godfather Part II* is the reason why.

**Extracted from *The Godfather Part II* by Jon Lewis (BFI Film Classic, 2022)**

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## THE GODFATHER PART II

*Directed by:* Francis Ford Coppola

©: Paramount Pictures Corporation

©/Production Company: Coppola Company

A Paramount picture

*Produced by:* Francis Ford Coppola

*Co-produced by:* Gray Frederickson, Fred Roos

*Associate Producer:* Mona Skager

*Production Supervisor (Sicilian Unit):* Valerio DePaolis

*Location Auditor:* Carl Skelton

*Miami Co-ordinator:* Tammy Newell

*Production Manager:* Michael S. Glick

*Unit Manager (Sicilian Unit):* Mario Cotone

*New York Location Supervisor:* Ron Colby

*Location Co-ordinator:* Jack English

*Foreign Post-production:* Peter Zinner

*Production Secretary:* Nanette Siegert

*Research:* Deborah Fine

*Assistant Directors:* Newton Arnold; Henry J. Lange Jr., Chuck Myers, Mike Kusley, Alan Hopkins, Burt Bluestein (2nd); Tony Brandt (Sicilian Unit)

*Script Supervisors:* John Franco, B.J. Bachman; Serena Canevari (Sicilian Unit)

*Casting:* Michael Fenton, Jane Feinberg, Vic Ramos; Emy DeSica, Maurizio Lucci (Sicilian Unit)

*Screenplay by:* Francis Ford Coppola, Mario Puzo

*Based on the novel The Godfather by:* Mario Puzo

*Director of Photography:* Gordon Willis

*Camera Operator:* Ralph Gerling

*Camera Assistant:* Bill Gereghty

*Key Grip:* Bob Rose

*Gaffer:* George Holmes

*Special Effects:* A.D. Flowers, Joe Lombardi

*Editors:* Peter Zinner, Barry Malkin, Richard Marks

*Assistant Editors:* George Berndt, Bobbe Kurtz, Lisa Fruchtman

*Production Designer:* Dean Tavoularis

*Art Director:* Angelo Graham

*Set Decorator:* George R. Nelson

*Assistant Set Decorator (Sicilian Unit):* Joe Chevalier

*Properties:* V. Bud Shelton, Doug Madison

*Costume Designer:* Theadora Van Runkle

*Wardrobe:* Marie Osborne, Eric Seelig, George Newman, Tommy Welsh,

Marilyn Putnam, Nancy McArdle, Sandra Burke

*Make-up Artists:* Dick Smith, Charles Schram

*Hair Stylist:* Naomi Cavin

*Title by:* Wayne Fitzgerald

*Music Composed by:* Nino Rota

*Additional Music Composed by:* Carmine Coppola

*Conducted by:* Carmine Coppola

*Music Editor:* George Brand

*Production Recording:* Chuck Wilborn, Nathan Boxer

*Sound Montage & Re-recording:* Walter Murch

*Sound Montage Associates:* Pat Jackson, Mark Berger

*Sound Effects Editors:* Howard Beals, Jim Fritch, Jim Klingner

*Subtitling:* Sonya Friedman

*Senate Hearings Adviser:* Ed Guthman

*Production Facilities Furnished through:* American Zoetrope

*Sicilian Translation:* Romano Pianti

*Unit Publicist:* Eileen Peterson

## Cast

Al Pacino (*Michael Corleone*)

Robert Duvall (*Tom Hagen*)

Diane Keaton (*Kay Corleone*)

Robert DeNiro (*Vito Corleone*)

John Cazale (*Fredo Corleone*)

Talia Shire (*Connie Corleone*)

Lee Strasberg (*Hyman Roth*)

Michael V. Gazzo (*Frankie Pentangeli*)

G.D. Spradlin (*Senator Pat Geary*)

Richard Bright (*Al Neri*)

Gaston [Gastone] Moschin (*Fanucci*)

Tom Rosqui (*Rocco Lampone*)

B. [Bruno] Kirby Jr (*young Peter Clemenza*)

Frank Sivero (*Genco*)

Francesca De Sapio (*young Mama Corleone*)

Morgana King (*Mama Corleone*)

Mariana Hill (*Deanna Corleone*)

Leopoldo Trieste (*Signor Roberto*)

Dominic Chianese (*Johnny Ola*)

Amerigo Tot (*Michael's bodyguard*)

Troy Donahue (*Merle Johnson*)

John Aprea (*young Tessio*)

Joe Spinell (*Willi Cicci*)

Abe Vigoda (*Tessio*)

Tere Livrano (*Theresa Hagen*)

Gianni Russo (*Carlo Rizzi*)

Maria Carta (*Vito's mother*)

Oreste Baldini (*Vito as a boy*)

Giuseppe Sillato (*Don Ciccio*)

Mario Cotone (*Tommasino*)

James Gounaris (*Anthony Corleone*)

Fay Spain (*Mrs Marcia Roth*)

Harry Dean Stanton, David Baker (*FBI men*)

Carmine Caridi (*Carmine Rosato*)

Danny Aiello (*Tony Rosato*)

Carmine Foresta (*policeman*)

Nick Discenza (*Ritch, the bartender*)

Father Joseph Medeglia (*Father Carmelo*)

William Bowers (*senate committee chairman*)

Joe Della Sorte, Carmen Argenziano,

Joe Lo Grippo (*Michael's buttonmen*)

Ezio Flagello (*impresario*)

Livio Giorgi (*tenor in 'Senza Mamma'*)

Kathy Beller (*girl in 'Senza Mamma'*)

Saveria Mazzola (*Signora Columbo*)

Tito Alba (*Cuban president*)

Johnny Naranjo (*Cuban translator*)

Elda Maida (*Pentangeli's wife*)

Salvatore Po (*Vincenzo, Pentangeli's brother*)

Ignazio Pappalardo (*Mosca*)

Andrea Maugeri (*Strollo*)

Peter LaCorte (*Signor Abbandando*)

Vincent Coppola (*street vendor*)

Peter Donat (*Questadt*)

Tom Dahlgren (*Fred Corngold*)

Paul B. Brown (*Senator Ream*)

Phil Feldman, Roger Corman (*senators*)

Yvonne Coll (*Yolanda*)

J.D. Nicols (*Freddy, attendant at brothel*)

Edward Van Sickle (*Ellis Island doctor*)

Gabria Belloni (*Ellis Island nurse*)

Richard Watson (*customs official*)

Venancia Grangerard (*Cuban nurse*)

Erica Yohn (*governess*)

Theresa Tirelli (*midwife*)

James Caan (*Santino 'Sonny' Corleone*)

Herkulis E. Strolia (*Tahoe bandleader*);

Richard Matheson (*3rd senator*); Roman Coppola (*Sonny as a child*);

Romano Pianti (*gunsmith*); Julian Voloshin (*Sam Roth*); Themes Mars (*boy flutist*); Steve Peck (*dancer at Lake Tahoe party*)\*

USA 1974©

202 mins

\* Uncredited

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## BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

### Touch of Evil

Mon 27 Mar 20:45; Tue 4 Apr 14:30; Sun 9 Apr 18:30; Fri 28 Apr 20:45

### Wild Strawberries (Smultronstället)

Tue 28 Mar 20:50; Wed 12 Apr 18:10 (+ intro by Geoff Andrew, Programmer-at-Large); Fri 14 Apr 20:50; Mon 24 Apr 14:30

### To Sleep with Anger + Borom Sarret (The Wagoner)

Wed 29 Mar 18:10 (+ intro); Mon 10 Apr 12:45; Wed 12 Apr 18:00

### Rio Bravo

Thu 30 Mar 20:20; Sun 9 Apr 12:50; Fri 21 Apr 20:20

### Aguirre, Wrath of God (Aguirre, der Zorn Gottes)

Fri 31 Mar 21:00; Thu 13 Apr 21:00; Thu 20 Apr 18:15

### Last year in Marienbad (L'Année dernière à Marienbad)

Sat 1 Apr 12:50; Mon 3 Apr 20:30; Sat 8 Apr 18:20; Tue 18 Apr 20:45

### La Grande Illusion

Sat 1 Apr 13:00; Wed 12 Apr 20:40; Sat 15 Apr 18:00; Fri 21 Apr 18:15

### The Godfather Part II

Sat 1 Apr 16:00; Sat 22 Apr 18:40; Sun 30 Apr 16:30

### Nashville

Sun 2 Apr 17:50; Sat 8 Apr 20:00; Sat 29 Apr 16:30

### The Passenger (Professione: reporter)

Wed 5 Apr 18:00 (+ intro by Geoff Andrew, Programmer-at-Large); Fri 7 Apr 20:20; Sun 16 Apr 18:15; Thu 27 Apr 18:10

### Pickpocket

Thu 6 Apr 20:45; Tue 11 Apr 14:30; Mon 17 Apr 20:50; Mon 24 Apr 20:50

### The Portrait of a Lady

Fri 7 Apr 14:30; Wed 19 Apr 17:50 (+ intro); Sat 29 Apr 20:15

### Code Unknown (Code inconnu)

Sun 9 Apr 15:45; Wed 26 Apr 18:15

### The Lady Eve

Mon 10 Apr 18:15; Sat 15 Apr 12:40; Sun 30 Apr 14:15

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