



Scarface

Directed by: Brian DePalma
©: Universal City Studios, Inc.
a Martin Bregman production
Executive Producer: Louis A. Stroller
Produced by: Martin Bregman
Co-producer: Peter Saphier
Production Auditors: Ron Filbert, Willie Kapahu
Production Co-ordinator: Shari Leibowitz
Unit Production Manager: Ray Hartwick
Location Managers: Frank Pierson, Susan Zwerman
2nd Unit Director: David Hans Dreyfuss
1st Assistant Directors: Jerry Ziesmer, Joe Napolitano
2nd Assistant Director: Chris Soldo
Script Supervisor: Jan Kemper
Casting by: Alixe Gordin
Extra Casting: Karl Brindle, Billy Cardenas
Screenplay by: Oliver Stone
Director of Photography: John A. Alonzo
Technicolor Colour Consultant: Phil Hetos
Technicolor Timing Consultant: Jack Garsha
Camera Operators: Michael Ferris, John Toll, Tom Laughridge
Key Grip: Bud Heller
Gaffer: Stuart Spohn
Video Consultant: Hal Landaker
Still Photographer: Sidney Baldwin
Rear Projection: Bill Hansard
Special Effects: Ken Pepiot, Stan Parks
Edited by: Jerry Greenberg, David Ray
Associate Editor: Bill Pankow
Visual Consultant: Ferdinando Scarfioiti
Art Director: Ed Richardson
Set Designers: Blake Russell, Steve Schwartz, Geoff Hubbard
Set Decorator: Bruce Weintraub
Set Dressers: Will Waters, Casey Hallenbeck
Leadman: Dan May
Property Master: John Zemansky
Construction Co-ordinator: Lynn Price
Costume Designer: Patricia Norris
Make-up: Steve Abrums, Barbara Guedel
Hair Stylists: Toni Walker, Janice Brandow
Title Sequence Design: David Hans Dreyfuss
Title Sequence Editor: Paul Neshamkin
Titles/Optical Effects: Computer Opticals
Negative Cutter: Donah Bassett
Music by: Giorgio Moroder
Music Arrangers: Arthur Barrow, Sylvester Levay, Giorgio Moroder, Kristian Schultze, Richie Zito
Music Co-ordinator: Laurie Kanner
Music Editor: Jim Henrikson
Sound Mixer: Charles Darin Knight
Boom Operator: Don Bolger
Re-recording Mixer: Buzz Knudsen
Technical Sound Consultant: David Concors
Sound Consultants: Steve Hodge, Brian Reeves, David Rideau
Supervising Sound Editor: Edward Beyer
Looping Dialogue Editors: Harriet Fidlow, Hal Levinsohn
Sound Effects Recordist: Andy Aaron
This film is dedicated to: Howard Hawks, Ben Hecht
Stunt Co-ordinator: Jophery Brown
Dialogue Coach: Robert Easton
Cast:
Al Pacino (*Tony Montana*)
Steven Bauer (*Manolo 'Manny' Ray*)
Michelle Pfeiffer (*Elvira*)
Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio (*Gina*)
Robert Loggia (*Frank Lopez*)

Moviedrome: Bringing the Cult TV Series to the Big Screen

Scarface

'What is a cult film? A cult film is one which has a passionate following but does not appeal to everybody. Just because a movie is a cult movie does not automatically guarantee quality. Some cult films are very bad. Others are very, very good. Some make an awful lot of money at the box office. Others make no money at all. Some are considered quality films. Others are exploitation.' From 1988 to 2000 *Moviedrome* was presented by Alex Cox and then Mark Cousins. Across that time, more than 200 features were shown, and generations of movie fans and filmmakers would be informed and inspired by the selection, alongside the wit and wisdom of the introductions that preceded each screening. *Moviedrome* was a portal into the world of weird and wonderful cinema. This two-month season features some of the most notable titles screened and wherever possible they are preceded by the original televised introduction.

Nick Freand Jones, season curator and producer of *Moviedrome*

Mark Cousins: The first extreme film we have for you is *Scarface*. This is a network premiere of the film and it's completely uncut. Before the 1980s had properly started, Oliver Stone, who who made *JFK* and *Platoon*, wrote a screenplay about a Cuban thug who goes to Florida and makes it big dealing in cocaine. The story was an update of the '30s gangster classic of the same name. The theme this time was modern gangsterism: greed is good, the deregulated Reaganite America where anything goes. Director Brian de Palma took this liberal script and stretched it paper-thin. When I first saw the movie I thought the marriage of de Palma and Stone – the moralist and the amoralist – was made in hell. De Palma seemed too into the super-skinny girls like Michelle Pfeiffer or the orchestrated violence like the chainsaw carve-up to get to grips with Stone's political critique.

Why the hell did he hire the worst composer in the world, Giorgio Moroder, to do the tinny synthesized music? Why not Coppola's grand rich opera? Then I saw the fantastic shot in the middle of this picture, which starts on a giant balloon in the sky emblazoned with the words 'The World Is Yours', and cranes down to the fakest coastline you've ever seen, with Al Pacino poncing in the middle of it. Then I noticed how often Pacino is slumped at the bottom of the screen, how small de Palma makes him. How he is increasingly dwarfed by the huge tacky sets and kitschy world he builds himself.

The things I hated about this picture: the soullessness of Florida, the greed of the characters, de Palma's empty scenes and style, became the things which made it brilliant. This film strips the reality out of shots, it makes everything look fake and cheap. Expertly so, because the guy who shot the picture, John Alonzo, also did *Chinatown* and *Close Encounters* and *Internal Affairs*.

When I watch *Scarface* now I'm really moved by the way it subjects its immigrant spick no-hoper greaseball to everything the wee macho runt deserves.

At the end of the film the camera cranes through a monstrous palazzo that Pacino built with his cocaine money. There's neon and wide-boy riches everywhere. Bullets spray the place like *Rambo* directed by Visconti. For me it's one of the greatest but hardest to watch moments in all of 80s cinema.

The World Is Yours.

Mark Cousins' original introduction for *Moviedrome*. With thanks to moviedromer.tumblr.com

Miriam Colón (*Mama Montana*)
 F. Murray Abraham (*Omar*)
 Paul Shenar (*Alejandro Sosa*)
 Harris Yulin (*Bernstein*)
 Angel Salazar (*Chi Chi*)
 Arnaldo Santana (*Ernie*)
 Pepe Serna (*Angel*)
 Michael P. Moran (*Nick the Pig*)
 Al Israel (*Hector the Toad*)
 Dennis Holahan (*Banker*)
 Mark Margolis (*Shadow*)
 Michael Alldredge (*Sheffield*)
 Ted Beniades (*Seidelbaum*)
 Richard Belzer (*MC at Babylon Club*)
 Paul Espel (*Luis*)
 John Brandon (*3rd immigration officer*)
 Tony Perez (*2nd immigration officer*)
 Garnett Smith (*1st immigration officer*)
 Loren Almaguer (*Dr Munoz*)
 Gil Barreto (*Cuban refugee*)
 Heather Benna (*Gutierrez child*)
 Dawnell Bowers (*Miriam*)
 Tina Leigh Cameron (*Saleslady*)
 Victor Campos (*Ronnie Echevierra*)
 Robert Hammer Cannerday (*Marielito*)
 Rene Carrasco (*shooter*)
 Albert Carrier (*Pedro Quinn*)
 John Carter (*Vic Phillips*)
 Richard Caselnova (*driver*)
 Gary Cervantes (*1st shooter*)
 Carlos Cestero (*Matos*)
 John Contardo (*Miguel Echevierra*)
 Roberto Contreras (*Rebenga*)
 Caesar Cordova (*cook*)
 Gregory N. Cruz (*2nd shooter*)
 Dante D'André (*General Strasser*)
 Richard Delmonte (*Fernando*)
 Wayne Doba (*Octavio the Clown*)
 Michel François (*maitre d'*)
 Ben Frommer (*male patron*)
 Edward R. Frommer (*taco stand customer*)
 John Gambel (*helicopter pilot*)
 Troy Isaacs (*Cuban refugee*)
 Ronald Joseph (*car salesman*)
 Mario Machado (*interviewer*)
 Joe Marmo (*Nacho 'El Gordo'*)
 Ray Martel (*Nacho's bodyguard*)
 John McCann (*bank spokesman*)
 Richard Mendez (*Gina's killer*)
 Victor Millan (*Ariel Bleyer*)
 Santos Morales (*Waldo*)
 Mike Moroff (*Gaspar's bodyguard*)
 Angela Nisi (*Gutierrez child*)
 Manuel Padilla Jr (*2nd kid*)
 Tony Pann (*driver*)
 Ilka Payan (*Mrs Gutierrez*)
 Barbra Perez (*Marta*)
 Michael Rougas (*monsignor*)
 Anthony Saenz (*Cuban refugee*)
 Geno Silva (*The Skull*)
 Arnold Tafolla (*1st kid*)
 Chuck Tamburo (*helicopter pilot*)
 Jim Towers (*Cuban refugee*)
 Robert Van Den Berg (*Gaspar Gomez*)
 Bob Yanez (*Cuban man*)
 Angela Aames, Nancy Lee Andrews, Dona Baldwin,
 Rose Lee Benton, Cynthia Burr, Lana Clarkson,
 Karen Criswell, Margo Kelly, Ava Lazar, Emilia
 Lesniak, Marii Mak, Shelley Taylor Morgan,
 Catharine Richardson, Pat Simmons, Terri Taylor,
 Charlie Adiano, Lisa Katz, Jeanette Linné, Margaret
 Michaels, Rhonda Sandberg, Kathy Shea, Marcia
 Wolf (*women at Babylon Club*)
 USA 1983©
 170 mins
 Digital 4K

Brian De Palma, like all good surrealists, is happier with knives and razors than with guns. He uses the intimate weapons of our nightmares – the ones that require the killer to stalk his victim, to close in, to feel, finally, the warmth of the victim's blood on his own hands – with poetic force. They hover, they fly, they gleam like wedding rings. The instruments of death so dominate De Palma's films that they become, like Buñuel's razor, important structural elements in the works. The structure of *Blow Out*, for instance, is the narrowing circle of the garrotte. And De Palma's new gangster movie, *Scarface*, is as distant, as impersonal, as linear as a gunshot – which is, perhaps, why it seems such a strange movie for him to have made.

With *Scarface*, De Palma is taking his shot at simplicity: telling a 'classic' story straight through, with no split screens or 360° pans, no dream sequences, no elaborate lyrical set-pieces, and up to a point he succeeds. This is an efficient gangster picture, a good, nasty entertainment. It's probably a conscious departure: his previous film, *Blow Out*, is in every sense a closed circle, the completion and perfection of all his work. It's no wonder that he's followed the complex, personal *Blow Out* with this distanced and straightforward narrative – the problem is, De Palma has no simplicity in him. Oliver Stone's script for *Scarface* is a fairly schematic updating of the Hawks and Hecht original, a rise-and-fall story with a few contemporary twists – Tony Camonte, the Italian immigrant who makes his fortune in bootleg liquor, becomes Tony Montana, a Cuban exile who strikes it rich dealing cocaine – and De Palma serves it well. Almost too well. He carries his Hollywood-style impersonality so far that it creates a kind of tension, an unease that transcends the predictable, classic line of the scenario. The movie seems to give off a sinister, mechanical buzz, like a chainsaw.

In a sense, *Scarface* is De Palma's first fully American movie: just as he once flooded lurid little horror numbers like *Carrie* and *The Fury* with elegant poetic effects, here he works against the grain of this big, respectable production by telling his story in the mean, harsh, disreputable style of a B-movie expose – the sort of work a Phil Karlson might have done in the 50s, complete with stock-footage prologue explaining the background of the 'shocking' social problem. This certainly isn't homage – De Palma is, of his generation of American filmmakers, by far the least reverent of the Hollywood past – but something closer to parody. It's De Palma's imitation of a Hollywood hack, performed with such ferocity that it seems to strip the style bare.

The film is all surfaces, and none of them shine: De Palma seems to have turned the Florida sunlight into a kind of cold fluorescence. But this rigorous superficiality gives the film a real, though perilous, coherence. The style combines with other elements of the work – Montana's machismo; the notorious overuse of the four-letter word for sexual intercourse; the presence of all that bright, white, neutral-looking powder, that provides its user with the illusion of mastery; the zombie-like remoteness of Montana's blonde wife – to produce a film that's essentially a bitter dirty joke about the limits of capitalist ambition: you grow, you expand, you become, as a businessman, something hard and unyielding; and yet you can't get in very far, you keep butting up against the harder surfaces of the culture. (Even in a purely geographical sense, Montana hasn't penetrated very deeply in American society – just the few hundred miles from Cuba to Florida.) The film's brightness and its wilful opacity define its distance both from the original *Scarface*, whose rich nocturnal images carry the sense of dark secrets discovered, and from De Palma's earlier work, which at its best seems to be breaking right through into our dreams: everything in this *Scarface* seems to be happening in the open, as if there were no crimes left so horrible that they need to be hidden.

Moviedrome transmission date: 8 June 1997

Terrence Rafferty, 'De Palma's American Dreams', *Sight and Sound*, Spring 1984