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The Godfather (DVD) Review

By Britt Gillette

Winner of three Academy Awards including Best Picture, The Godfather was nominated for an

additional eight Oscars. The brainchild of celebrated author Mario Puzo, the film is considered the crowning achievement of Francis Ford Coppola's directing career. With intriguing depth, it provides audiences with a glimpse into the notorious underworld of warring New York crime families. As a result, The Godfather transformed a number of relatively unknown actors into Hollywood legends, among them being James Caan, Al Pacino, and Robert Duvall (all three of whom were nominated for Best Supporting Actor). In addition, Marlon Brando turns in, arguably, the most memorable performance of his career. Certainly among the top five films of all time, an excellent case could be made that The Godfather is the most perfect movie ever produced...

The film opens as "Don" Vito Corleone (Marlon Brando) hosts his daughter's wedding, where he actively entertains his friends and business associates. Vito's favorite son Michael (Al Pacino) has come home from the war (World War II), and he's determined to do something different with his life, and his ambitious plans don't include joining the family business. An idealist at heart, the young Michael seduces his girlfriend Kay (Diane Keaton) with inspiring tales of the fine and upstanding things he will do with his life. Through the eyes of Michael, the audience learns of the family's various business methods and the hierarchy of its system. Vito's eldest son Sonny (James Caan) is the heir apparent to his father's empire. Middle son Fredo (John Cazale) performs his part in the business, but few consider him a possible successor. Providing legal council to the family is Tom Hagen (Robert Duvall), a long-time friend of the family who Michael treats as a brother.

Life is good for the Corleone family until the day Vito is approached by an opportunistic newcomer named Virgil "The Turk" Sollozzo (Al Lettieri), an ambitious leader who aspires to become the number one distributor of illegal narcotics in New York. He asks for the Don's blessing so he can expand his operations. But Vito sees a big difference between the traditional mafia activities of gambling and prostitution and the less-than-noble profession of selling drugs in schoolyards and family neighborhoods. The Don's preference for placing family above all else creates a direct conflict with the changing landscape of his business world.

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When competing crime families are more accommodating to Sollozzo's business proposal, the enterprise sparks a deadly conflict between the crime families which quickly escalates into all-out war. Despite Vito's attempts to put an end to the conflict in its early stages, his beloved firstborn, Sonny, becomes the target of gangland assassination. When an attempt is made on Vito's life, Michael is drawn into the family business despite his reservations, and the overriding theme of "family first" comes to dominant his life in much the same way it's dominated that of his father...

A dramatic story of family and change, of youthful idealism and the pragmatism of adulthood, The Godfather is the greatest mafia film ever produced, and perhaps as the best drama in all of cinema history. Al Pacino would soon follow up his masterful performance with The Godfather II, and countless other films in the decades since, forever cementing his place among the immortals Hollywood. As such, The Godfather is a film all movie lovers should see at least one. Widely heralded as one of the best written films in existence, it's a definite "must-see" for any serious cinema aficionado...

Britt Gillette is author of The DVD Report (

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), a blog where you can find

more reviews like this one.

Recordable DVD formats explained

By Kenny Hemphill

Recordable DVD formats explained by Kenny Hemphill

Picking your way through the ton of information available on recordable DVD formats can be a nightmare. To help you out, we've done our best to distill it into this summary.

There are five recordable versions of DVD; DVD-R for General, DVD-R for Authoring, DVD-RAM, DVD-RW, and DVD+RW. None of the formats is fully compatible with the other although there are drives which will read, and in some cases write to more than one format.

DVD-R for General and DVD-R for Authoring are essentially DVD versions of CD-R. And DVD-RW is a DVD version of CD-RW. All three formats can be read in standard DVD-ROM drives and in most DVD video players. The difference between DVD-R for General and DVD-R for Authoring is that DVD-R for General is a format intended for widespread consumer use and doesn't support 'professional' features such as piracy protection or duplication in mass duplicators. The Pioneer DVD-RW drive which is the most popular PC device for writing to DVD uses the DVD for General format. And as as the case with CD, DVD-RW is essentially the same as DVD-R except that it can be erased and written to again and again.

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DVD-RAM is slightly different as it is a sector based disc which mounts on the desktop of a PC when inserted into a drive. Files can then be copied to it in the same way as any other mounted media. Some single-sided DVD-RAM discs can be removed from their caddy and inserted in a DVD-ROM drive which will then be able to read the content of the disc.

There are DVD video recorders which use the DVD-RAM format. This enables them to pull off clever tricks like timeshifting - where you can watch the beginning of a programme you have recorded while you are still recording the end on the same disc.

DVD+RW is the newest format and not supported by the DVD Forum, the body which sets the standards for DVD. However, it is supported by some of the biggest electronics and computer manufacturers, and is therefore likely to stick around.

It is also the format used by Philips in its DVD video recorders. Despite not being authorised by the DVD Forum, DVD+RW is claimed by its supporters to be compatible with more DVD video players than DVD-R and DVD+RW writers are found in PCs from quite a few manufacturers.

Kenny Hemphill is the editor and publisher of

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