



the jokes are still funny and painful. On Thursday, January 10, at 7 PM, the Leeperhouse will show two Brooks feature films.

THE MT VOID

Page 2

Albert Brooks

MODERN ROMANCE (1981) dir. by Albert Brooks

LOST IN AMERICA (1985) dir. by Albert Brooks

Occasionally a man has to do what a man has to do. In M\_o\_d\_e\_r\_n  
R\_o\_m\_a\_n\_c\_e, Brooks knows it's time to end his longterm relationship with Kathryn Harrold. No Prince Hamlet, he acts and breaks things off. Within hours he decides breaking up may have been the dumbest thing he ever did and wants to win Harrold back in the worst way. And that is how he sets out to do it.

In L\_o\_s\_t\_i\_n\_A\_m\_e\_r\_i\_c\_a, Brooks plays a corporate executive passed over for that expected and all-important promotion. Rather than continue with the indignity of his job, he buys an RV, packs his wife (played by Julie Hagerty), and sets out to find the real America, like the heroes of E\_a\_s\_y\_R\_i\_d\_e\_r. Will they find the real America? And will they like what they find?

2. The Learning Channel will be starting a new show on February 2, "The Incredible Film Show." This seems to be a collection of excerpts from very bad or very strange films, many of which are science fiction. Check your local listing for details. [-ecl]

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The market-place is a place set aside where men may deceive and overreach each another.

-- Anacharsis

THE GODFATHER PART III  
A film review by Mark R. Leeper  
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Capsule review: The Corleone saga continues in another story of honor and revenge. This is not the Best Picture of 1990 but it is good enough that it will probably be nominated for that honor. While it is less than totally original, major similarities to the other parts may well go unnoticed. (The afterword to this review is a spoiler.) Rating: high +2 (-4 to +4).

In these days of making popular films into series, by far the most respected series is the now three-part "Godfather" saga. Both

The Godfather Part II won the Best Picture Academy Award and it is very likely we will be seeing a campaign to get The Godfather Part II the same award. No sequel other than The Godfather Part II has

ever won Best Picture. The series has even outlived the accuracy of the title, since Michael Corleone was certainly not the Godfather in  P a r t I, and seems only rarely to use the title of "Godfather." In many ways this is also the most deserving of being a series since the stories really do build on each other and lose a great deal if viewed out of order. There is now authenticity from the fact that when a character remembers an event from years earlier, the audience also remembers it from a point in time that is genuinely years earlier for them. If Michael remembers the death of his first wife many years ago, I also remember it from eighteen years ago.

It is not that there is really such original writing. In many ways we are repeatedly seeing the same story. (For fear of spoilers I can list only some superficial parallels here and will say more in the afterward.) Each film starts with a long sequence that is a celebration of an important family event: a wedding, a confirmation, an award from the Pope. Each also concludes with a family event. One thinks of the films as being about the family business but, in fact, the subject is very rarely even mentioned. There is very little about how the Corleones acquire their money. Instead, these films are almost exclusively about meta-business issues such as the politics of dealing with the competition; the issue arises in each film. Perhaps the reason for the chosen concentration is that the Corleones would be much less sympathetic if the films were about their day-to-day business. Even visual touches are repeated. There is always a scene in the Corleone kitchen with a big pot on the stove.

As the film opens Michael Corleone--do I really have to say he is played by Al Pacino?--is still trying to whitewash the family name and to live up to the nobility of the name Corleone (Lionheart). He has contributed vast sums of money to charitable works. At one point we see a hospital named for Vito Corleone and probably not because Vito

provided them with patients. At the opening Michael is contributing \$100,000,000 for poverty relief for Sicily and receiving the order of San Sebastian from the Pope. Of note is that there is far less of the ethnic Italian feel to this event than there was at Connie's wedding. The Corleones are apparently assimilating American styles. Michael feels that he is finally achieving legitimacy and respectability.

But there is a problem with Vincent Mancini (played by Andy Garcia) who, despite the surname, is the son of Sonny Corleone (played by James Caan in Parts I and II). Vincent is the most likely heir to the family business, but he is also something of a loose cannon. He is as temperamental and power-hungry as his father was. Vincent has a feud with his current boss, a hood named Joey Zasa (played by Joe Mantegna).

Vincent is attracted to Michael's daughter, Mary. In fact, the choice of the plain-looking Sofia Coppola, the director's daughter, for Mary instead of the originally cast attractive Winona Ryder may actually work for the film. Coppola is not a great actress but putting a less attractive woman in the role creates interesting speculation as to Vincent's motives. There is no great mystery as to why Vincent would be interested in a woman as attractive as Winona Ryder. But Vincent has an eye for good-looking women and the power-hungry nephew's interest in Mary could well be power rather than physical attraction. In any case, Michael is dead set against a relationship between these two grandchildren of Vito Corleone. It is Vincent's feud and Michael's relation with the Vatican that are the springboard for this third story.

Michael's other child is Anthony who, like the young Michael, wants no part of the family business and wants instead to sing grand opera. In fact, his debut performance at La Scala, in the lead no less, becomes an important event in the film. The choice of opera, Pietro Mascagni's "Cavalleria Rusticana," is of course highly appropriate. The title literally translates to "Rustic Chivalry" and refers to the code of honor of the poor Sicilians of the story. The concept of this Sicilian code of honor pervades the "Godfather" films as well as the opera. The emphasis on this-favor-for-that-favor, how one treats the Don, and symbolic gestures such as "the Kiss of Death" are equally important in the series and in this opera of the hatred of Turridu and Alfio. In the time-honored Sicilian custom, Alfio challenges Turridu by embracing him and Turridu signifies he accepts the challenge by biting Alfio's ear. Naturally, the opera ends in bloodshed. The sweetly melancholic Intermezzo from "Cavalleria Rusticana" may already be familiar to filmgoers from its use in R\_a\_g\_i\_n\_g\_B\_u\_l\_l. Coppola uses it in T\_h\_e\_G\_o\_d\_f\_a\_t\_h\_e\_r P\_a\_r\_t\_I\_I to underscore the final scenes of the film.

So does this new film live up to its predecessors? It is flawed, of course, but then P\_a\_r\_t\_I\_I diluted its effect by jumping around in time to pick up pieces of storyline both before and after the first film. That was the flaw that television thought it could correct when it re-edited the first two parts into one chronological story. (Comments on that effort will appear in my afterword.) The third film is no more

flawed and probably in a league with the first two. I would rate it a high +2 on the -4 to +4 scale. (In case you're curious, I would rate

\_ T\_ h\_ e\_ G\_ o\_ d\_ f\_ a\_ t\_ h\_ e\_ r\_ a\_ +3 and \_ T\_ h\_ e\_ G\_ o\_ d\_ f\_ a\_ t\_ h\_ e\_ r\_ P\_ a\_ r\_ t\_ I\_ I a high +2.)

Spoiler-afterword: Earlier in this review I talked about a repeating structure in the "Godfather" films. Let me be more detailed. The films always start with a major family event and they always end with a bloodbath that coincides with another major family event: baptism, marriage-separation, son's operatic debut at La Scala. In each case Michael is trying to make himself or his whole family legitimate, but he is stymied. There is some unspeakable act committed by an apparent enemy: the Tataglias, the Rosatos, Joey Zasa. Michael decides his honor and the general safety of the family demand revenge. However, the perpetrator is only the apparent enemy. The real enemy pulling the strings does not show his face except as an apparent peacemaker: Barzini, Roth, Altobello. In the end the ersatz peacemaker and all his co-conspirators are dispatched in the bloodbath that spans only hours or minutes. This strikes me as being too strong a parallel in structure to be just coincidence. It, in fact, goes beyond formula. Each film is a repetition of the same melodrama. Michael is trying to be good. Someone interprets this as weakness and moves against him. The urge for revenge with Sicilian anger takes over. Vito's mother, too, promised Don Cicci that she and Vito would not take action against him and asked for peace. He murdered her in cold blood. Vito's Sicilian revenge must wait for the proper time but honor demands it. Vito's son Michael replays this melodrama in each film.

I did not see the television re-editing in which the first two parts were edited so they told one story in chronological order. I have been told it is an improvement. I find it hard to believe, however, since each story is a re-telling of an instance of Michael repeating his father's tragedy. Re-editing would violate the internal structure. The "improved" version sounds too much like taking Shakespeare's \_ H\_ e\_ n\_ r\_ y\_ I\_ V Parts I and II and \_ H\_ e\_ n\_ r\_ y\_ V, editing them together to make one long play, then showing it over five nights with commercials.

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