

Al Pacino Retrospective at BFI Southbank February – March 2014



16 January 2014, London.

Throughout February and March **BFI Southbank** will celebrate the career of one of the world's most popular living stage and screen actors, **Al Pacino**. Starring in some of the most iconic roles of all time, Pacino's illustrious career has seen spanned from such classics as *The Godfather Trilogy* (1972, 1974 & 1990), *Scarface* (1983), and *Serpico* (1973) to *Sea of Love* (1989), *Scent of a Woman* (1992) and *Insomnia* (2001). The recipient of countless awards, including an Oscar, 5 Golden Globes, 2 Emmys, a BAFTA and 2 Tonys, Pacino's acting talents are undisputable; however, he has not always been content to stay in front of the camera, taking on directing duties for *Looking for Richard* (1996), *Chinese Coffee* (2000), *Wilde Salomé* (2011) and most recently *Salomé* (2013). From a career that has (so far) produced over 40 film roles, the BFI Southbank season will screen 20 of his greatest films, with the centrepiece of the season being an **Extended Run** of a **4K restoration** of Francis Ford Coppola's masterly *The Godfather Part II* (1974), which returns to cinemas in a nationwide release from 21 February.

Pacino studied acting first at the Herbert Berghof Studio, then under Lee Strasberg at the Actors Studio in New York (where he is currently co-president alongside Ellen Burstyn and Harvey Keitel). During this time Pacino performed a number of minor stage roles, which eventually led to his breakthrough film role in *The Panic in Needle Park* (1971). Under the direction of **Jerry Schatzberg**, (whom he would work with again on the Palme d'Or winning *Scarecrow*) Pacino shone as a young New Yorker addicted to heroin. Following this role Pacino came to the attention of Francis Ford Coppola and despite reported protestations from studio execs at Paramount, he was cast in *The Godfather* (1972) as Michael Corleone, a role which proved to be career-making. The follow up *The Godfather Part II* (1974), netted Pacino a second Oscar nomination for the role, and *The Godfather Part III* completed the trilogy in 1990. In less than a decade Pacino quickly established himself as one of the finest actors of his generation by adding a further three Oscar nominations for *Serpico* (1973), *Dog Day Afternoon* (1975) and *...And Justice for All* (1979), all of which will screen during the

season. Pacino's foul-mouthed, power-crazed, coke-fuelled Cuban Tony Montana was another career highlight. With direction from **Brian De Palma** and a script by **Oliver Stone**, *Scarface* (1983) has, despite a lacklustre reception from critics, become a firm favourite amongst fans of the mob film genre. Also screening in part one of the season will be *Revolution (Revised)* (1985). This film about the experiences of a fur-trapper during the American War of Independence was famously released in a cut that director **Hugh Hudson** was not entirely happy with, and it performed poorly at the box office; this edit had around 10 minutes of footage cut and a voiceover added to clarify parts of the narrative, resulting in a revised version that was received by critics much more favourably when it was first released in the UK by the BFI on DVD and Blu-Ray in 2012.

After his remarkable first decade in film, the 1980s were a comparatively quiet time for Pacino in terms of film roles, not least because the response to *Revolution* led him to focus on theatre for several years. But with his warmly welcomed return to the screen in 1989's *Sea of Love*, followed by a scene-stealing cameo in Warren Beatty's *Dick Tracy* (1990), his film career was soon back on track. Part two of the season focuses on his high profile roles, most notably an ageing Michael Corleone in the final instalment of the Godfather trilogy in 1990. There was another Oscar nomination for *Glengarry Glen Ross* (1992), then, belatedly, a Best Actor win for *Scent of a Woman* (1992). These were followed by meaty roles in Michael Mann's *Heat* (1995) (where he finally got to appear on screen with his co-star from *The Godfather Part II*, Robert De Niro), *The Insider* (1999), Mike Newell's *Donnie Brasco* (1997) and Christopher Nolan's *Insomnia* (2001). Many of Pacino's most memorable performances have been in crime movies or dramas with a strong sense of risk, violence and vulnerability. He is well suited to the nervy mood of noir and was seductively Satanic in *The Devil's Advocate* (1997). Ambiguity and instability are core to his best work: he excels at playing characters who, like *Heat*'s Vincent Hanna, may shift in a second from relatively 'normal' behaviour to a scary, near-manic intensity; or characters like *Insomnia*'s Will Dormer, fundamentally good yet profoundly flawed. This recognition of the complexity of individuals is echoed in the actor's abiding love of Shakespeare, given most eloquent expression in *Looking for Richard* (1996). As the years have passed, the energy in Pacino's early work has remained gloriously in evidence.

Screenings taking place during the season:

PART ONE

The Panic in Needle Park

USA 1971. Dir Jerry Schatzberg. With Al Pacino, Kitty Winn, Alan Vint, Richard Bright. 110min. Digital. 18

Scripted by Joan Didion and John Gregory Dunne, Schatzberg's film gave Pacino a meaty first lead role in a movie as a young New Yorker addicted to heroin but trying to make a success of his relationship with a homeless girl. He responded magnificently, drawing upon all the jittery nervous energy he could muster and bringing to the part an almost childlike vulnerability; Schatzberg, meanwhile, keeps things impressively raw and real.

Sat 1 Feb 16:00 NFT2

Tue 4 Feb 20:45 NFT1

Wed 12 Feb 18:40 Studio

The Godfather

USA 1972. Dir Francis Ford Coppola. With Marlon Brando, Al Pacino, James Caan, Robert Duvall, Sterling Hayden. 175min. 15

As David Thomson has written, Pacino's Michael Corleone dominates all three Godfather films: as the 'good' son of Mafia capo dei capi Vito (Brando), who is moved by an attack on his father to abandon his military-hero ways and make his first allegiance to family (in both senses of the word), Michael is a brilliantly conceived study in calm, quiet compromise and corruption. Thomson again: Pacino 'made the poison of vengeance and paranoia absolutely persuasive.' An endlessly intriguing and rewarding movie.

Sat 1 Feb 17:20 NFT1

Mon 10 Feb 19:40 NFT1

Scarecrow

USA 1973. Dir Jerry Schatzberg. With Al Pacino, Gene Hackman, Dorothy Tristan. 112min. 18

As Lion, a sailor who takes up with irascible drifter Max (Hackman) as he travels across country to reunite with his wife and son after years at sea, Pacino exudes irrepressible energy, good-humoured mischief and childlike charm. Yet Schatzberg's road movie – superbly shot by Vilmos Zsigmond – sidesteps the sentimental pitfalls of the 'buddy' genre, carefully situating the troubled partnership in an impoverished America of forlorn ambitions and dashed dreams.

Sat 1 Feb 20:45 NFT1

Sun 2 Feb 15:50 NFT3

Fri 7 Feb 18:40 Studio

Sat 8 Feb 20:50 Studio

The Godfather Part II

USA 1974. Dir Francis Ford Coppola. With Al Pacino, Robert De Niro, Robert Duvall, Diane Keaton. 200min. Digital 4K in NFT1, 2K elsewhere. 15. A Park Circus release

Probably the greatest of the three instalments of Francis Ford Coppola's Mafia epic, this hugely ambitious extending of the first film's timeframe remains a towering landmark of 70s American cinema. The narrative alternates – to profoundly resonant effect – between the early years of the 20th century, when young Vito Corleone (Robert De Niro), a recent immigrant from Sicily, is simply striving to get by in New York, and the late 50s when his son Michael (Al Pacino) is the family capo consolidating their influence in Las Vegas and Cuba. A stately, lucid chronicle of the seemingly inexorable progress from petty crime to corporate corruption, from survival strategy to a steely, paranoid obsession with the acquisition and protection of power for power's sake, the film succeeds both as an intimate tale of loyalty and betrayal, and as a richly detailed picture of the changes that swept America for over half a century. The performances are without exception unforgettably good, none more so than Pacino's as Michael, increasingly isolated in his ruminations on the immeasurable cost of control. Utterly magnificent.

Fri 21 Feb – Thu 6 Mar

Serpico

USA 1973. Dir Sidney Lumet. With Al Pacino, John Randolph, Jack Kehoe. 130min. 18

Based on a true story, Lumet's film boasts another excellent performance by Pacino as the eponymous NYPD cop, whose honesty and idealism, all in place when he enters the force as an innocent rookie, are sorely tested when he encounters the corruption of his colleagues. In repeatedly refusing to join them in taking kickbacks from the criminal community, Serpico increasingly puts his life at risk. Wisely, Lumet never over-eggs the pudding: sermonising and black and white characterisation are avoided.

Sun 2 Feb 20:20 NFT1

Tue 11 Feb 18:10 NFT1

Dog Day Afternoon

USA 1975. Dir Sidney Lumet. With Al Pacino, John Cazale, Sully Boyar, Charles Durning. 125min. 15

Again inspired by real events, Pacino's next film with Lumet sees him in marvellously energetic form as the bisexual bank-robber who ends up taking hostages, besieged by cops, and at the centre of a media storm. Cries of 'Attica! Attica!' may suggest a wider metaphorical reading to do with unrest and violence in Vietnam-era America, but this is essentially a witty, gripping and poignant character study of a highly volatile and voluble man.

Wed 5 Feb 18:10 NFT2

Thu 6 Feb 20:30 NFT1

Sun 16 Feb 20:30 NFT1

...And Justice for All

USA 1979. Dir Norman Jewison. With Al Pacino, Jack Warden, Lee Strasberg. 119min. 15

Sounding distant echoes of Serpico as it deals with corruption within the Baltimore legal community, this has Pacino cast as a fundamentally honest defence attorney prevailed upon to represent a judge (with whom he's previously had problems) in a rape trial. The script, by Barry Levinson and Valerie Curtin, paints a worryingly corrosive portrait of the murky machinations that go on behind the scenes in the US legal system, and Pacino's dynamic sense of drama is entirely appropriate for the courts' sense of theatre.

Thu 6 Feb 18:20 NFT1
Sat 15 Feb 18:10 NFT2

Scarface

USA 1983. Dir Brian De Palma. With Al Pacino, Steven Bauer, Michelle Pfeiffer, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio. 170min. 18

It took some nerve to revamp Howard Hawks' classic gangster picture, but between them, director De Palma, writer Oliver Stone and star Pacino had more than enough. As Tony Montana, the foul-mouthed, power-crazed, coke-fuelled Cuban working his way from lowly henchman to crime boss in a Florida oozing with conspicuous consumption, Pacino has a ball. He's joyously, absurdly excessive in proclaiming his sizeable appetites, as if performance were the secret to taking control for Tony Montana.

Sun 16 Feb 14:30 NFT1
Wed 19 Feb 19:50 NFT1

Revolution (Revisited)

UK 1985. Dir Hugh Hudson. With Al Pacino, Donald Sutherland, Nastassja Kinski, Joan Plowright. 126min. Digital. 15

Famously, Hugh Hudson's ambitious epic about the experiences of a fur-trapper (Pacino) and his son during the American War of Independence was released in a cut the director wasn't entirely happy with, to mostly unfavourable reviews, and performed poorly at the box-office. Years later, he re-edited the film and added a voiceover by Pacino which clarified parts of the narrative and some of the protagonist's responses to the violently changing world around him. The Observer's Philip French greeted the new version as 'profound, poetic and original.'

Sat 8 Feb 20:30 NFT3
Sun 16 Feb 17:50 NFT1

Sea of Love

USA 1989. Dir Harold Becker. With Al Pacino, Ellen Barkin, John Goodman, Richard Jenkins. 113min. 18

After taking a break from movies for several years, Pacino made a welcome return with this romantic thriller in which his middle-aged divorcé detective, investigating the Lonely Hearts murders of a number of men in New York, inconveniently falls head over heels for one of the main suspects (Barkin). Though there's a top-notch supporting cast, Pacino effortlessly steals the show, savouring Richard Price's crisp, colourful dialogue.

Tue 18 Feb 18:50 NFT3
Sun 23 Feb 20:30 NFT3

PART TWO

The Godfather Part III

USA 1990. Dir Francis Ford Coppola. With Al Pacino, Diane Keaton, Andy Garcia, Sofia Coppola. 162min

Set in the late 70s, the third and final instalment of Coppola's epic about the Corleone clan finds Michael (Pacino) trying to go legitimate in order to impress his wife and kids. Trouble is, his daughter (Sofia Coppola) is falling for his violent right-hand-man (Garcia), and his attempts to find favour with the Vatican are threatened by other Mafiosi who have designs on his empire. An autumnal film, with Pacino bringing unexpected poignancy to Michael's dilemma.

Sun 2 Mar 17:30 NFT1
Sat 8 Mar 15:00 NFT1

Glengarry Glen Ross

USA 1992. Dir James Foley. With Al Pacino, Jack Lemmon, Alec Baldwin, Kevin Spacey, Alan Arkin, Ed Harris. 100min

A powerhouse of all-round thespian excellence, this version of David Mamet's play about the ruthlessly competitive world of real-estate salesmen casts Pacino as the ambitious Ricky Roma, a far surer bet for success – or so it seems – than has-been Levene (Lemmon). The vivid profanities and syncopated rhythms of Mamet's stylised demotic dialogue are beautifully served by the expert ensemble playing.

Sat 1 Mar 20:50 NFT2
Tue 4 Mar 20:40 NFT3

The Scent of a Woman

USA 1992. Dir Martin Brest. With Al Pacino, Chris O'Donnell, Gabrielle Anwar. 157min

After many nominations, Pacino finally got his Best Actor Oscar® for playing blind, bitter, Vietvet Frank Slade, contemplating suicide until chance brings him together with a 17-year-old whose academic prospects, thanks to a prank by his classmates, are on the rocks. The weekend the ill-matched pair are forced to spend together has not entirely unexpected consequences, but the pleasure Pacino appears to derive from playing Slade exudes its own charm.

Sun 2 Mar 20:00 NFT2

Sat 8 Mar 17:30 NFT3

Carlito's Way

USA 1993. Dir Brian De Palma. With Al Pacino, Sean Penn, Penelope Ann Miller, Viggo Mortensen. 144min

The old story of an ex-con – here Puerto Rican Carlito (Pacino), released from prison to a nightclub job in New York – trying to keep himself clean is given a stylish revamp by De Palma and his frequent screenwriter David Koepp. Much is made of the Big Apple locations – particularly Grand Central Station – and the cast also includes Luis Guzman, John Leguizamo and Paul Mazursky, but it's Pacino's lead that steals the show.

Thu 6 Mar 20:10 NFT3

Fri 14 Mar 20:15 NFT3

Heat

USA 1995. Dir Michael Mann. With Al Pacino, Robert de Niro, Val Kilmer, Jon Voight, Amy Brenneman. 170min

One of the great Hollywood films of the 1990s, this famously brought Pacino and De Niro together on screen for the first time – in a brief coffeeshop conversation – as, respectively, Hanna, a workaholic LA cop, and McCauley, leader of the gang of thieves he's trying to nail. Abundant in vivid characters and pleasing subplots, making eloquent use of locations, decor and music, the film is as richly rewarding and consistently engrossing as a good novel – and its two leads both respond superbly.

Sun 9 Mar 14:50 NFT3

Sat 15 Mar 19:50 NFT1

Looking for Richard

USA 1996. Dir Al Pacino. With Al Pacino, Alec Baldwin, Harris Yulin, Kenneth Branagh. 112min

Partly documentary, partly an abridged adaptation of Richard III, Pacino's essay about the various issues and problems faced by anyone wanting to act in Shakespeare or translate his plays to the screen is witty, erudite and wonderfully entertaining. Fuelled by the writer-director's profound passion for the subject, the film fires off in all kinds of unexpected directions and includes a dazzling array of contributors, from John Gielgud to James Earl Jones, Vanessa Redgrave to Winona Ryder, Peter Brook to Kevin Spacey.

Sun 9 Mar 18:10 NFT3

Tue 11 Mar 18:10 NFT3

Donnie Brasco

USA 1997. Dir Mike Newell. With Al Pacino, Johnny Depp, Michael Madsen, Bruno Kirby. 127min

Based on real events, this explores the various dilemmas faced by FBI agent Joe Pistone (Depp) when he goes undercover as the titular small-timer and, thanks to the mentorship of made-man Lefty Ruggiero (Pacino), sets about amassing evidence against the Mob. Subtler and rather more plausible than many Mafia movies, it benefits from a strong, witty script by Paul Attanasio and from a terrific, finally very affecting performance by Pacino.

Sun 9 Mar 20:30 NFT3

Fri 14 Mar 17:45 NFT3

The Insider

USA 1999. Dir Michael Mann. With Al Pacino, Russell Crowe, Christopher Plummer, Diane Venora. 157min

Also taken from real-life, Mann's film derives plenty of dramatic tension, information and ethical insights from the story of Jeffrey Wigand (Crowe), a research scientist who – egged on by TV producer Lowell Bergman (Pacino) – takes on the tobacco companies by speaking out about the harmful effects of nicotine. The acting is spot-on throughout, though Pacino, Crowe and (as TV interviewer Mike Wallace) Christopher Plummer stand out; and Mann's control of atmosphere through performance, camerawork, music and locations is exemplary.

Sat 15 Mar 17:00 NFT3

Thu 20 Mar 20:00 NFT3

Insomnia

USA 2001. Dir Christopher Nolan. With Al Pacino, Robin Williams, Hilary Swank. 118min

Translating the original film's action from Norway to Alaska, Nolan elicits a superb performance from Pacino as the LAPD detective exhausted by private anxieties and the endless midnight sun as he investigates the murder of a young girl. The suspense and emotional sway are impressive, but what lifts the film is the cat-and-mouse interplay between the cop and his prime suspect (Williams), a writer who (like so many Nolan characters) realises that maintaining control in life depends on one's skill in credible storytelling.

Sun 16 Mar 20:40 NFT1

Wed 19 Mar 20:40 NFT1

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

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