



GRAPHIC BY CHARLES APPLE | THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

A half century ago this month, “The Godfather” hit theaters, sparking one of the most popular film franchises of all time.

THE GODFATHER

RELEASED
March 24, 1972

Paramount Pictures commissioned “The Godfather” novelist Mario Puzo to write a screenplay but then the director they hired, Francis Ford Coppola, had strong feelings of his own how the plot should unfold. The two of them teamed up to write the script — winning Oscars for Best Picture and Best Adapted Screenplay for their efforts.

Marlon Brando played the aging leader of an organized crime family in post-World War II New York City who fights off threats from rival families and then transfers control of his empire to his war hero youngest son, who had aspired to stay out of the family business.

Brando was only 48 at the time, but heavy use of makeup turned him into the aging Vito Corleone. Brando won an Oscar for Best Actor, despite the fact that Al Pacino’s part as his son, Michael, carried more of the film.



BUDGET
\$6 M

DOMESTIC GROSS
\$133.70 M

WORLDWIDE GROSS
\$243.86 M

ACADEMY AWARDS
11 nominations, 3 wins

THE GODFATHER PART II

RELEASED
Dec. 18, 1974

Delighted with the success of the original, Paramount Pictures immediately commissioned a sequel.

This film intercut two stories — how Michael Corleone grows into his role as leader of his father’s organization vs. how a young Vito Corleone, played by a Robert De Niro, journeyed from Sicily to New York and built his empire in the first place, 40 years before.

Critics regarded the sequel even more highly than the original: De Niro won an Oscar for Best Supporting Actor, the series won its second Best Adapted Screenplay Oscar and another Best Picture Oscar — the first sequel to win that award.

Coppola had not enjoyed directing the first film and chose Martin Scorsese to direct this installment, but Paramount rejected his choice. Coppola directed himself and earned an Oscar.



BUDGET
\$13 M

DOMESTIC GROSS
\$47.84 M

WORLDWIDE GROSS
\$47.94 M

ACADEMY AWARDS
11 nominations, 6 wins

THE GODFATHER PART III

RELEASED
Dec. 25, 1990

Flash forward 16 years ...

Coppola and Puzo set out to make what they called “The Death of Michael Corleone,” but Paramount rejected that title. Coppola says he considers “The Godfather” to be a pair of movies, with “Part III” serving as more of an epilogue.

The story this time around: Michael — now in his 60s and full of regrets about leading a criminal empire and what that’s cost him and his family — seeks a way to “go legit” and exit the crime business by moving his empire to Las Vegas and by taking on the Vatican as a partner.

Coppola originally wanted Winona Ryder for the role of Michael’s doomed daughter Mary, but Ryder — exhausted from filming “Mermaids” — had to bow out. Coppola replaced her with his daughter, Sofia Coppola, who was panned for failing to overcome her California “valley girl” accent.



BUDGET
\$54 M

DOMESTIC GROSS
\$66.76 M

WORLDWIDE GROSS
\$136.86 M

ACADEMY AWARDS
7 nominations