



The Main Feature

Season 43 – Issue 9 – Screening 25 January 2024

Dog Day Afternoon

US 1975
125 mins

Certificate 18 on release,
15 now

Directed by
Written by

Sidney Lumet
Frank Pierson (from an
article in Life Magazine by
PF Kluge and T Moore)
Victor J. Kemper
Dede Allen
Charles Bailey

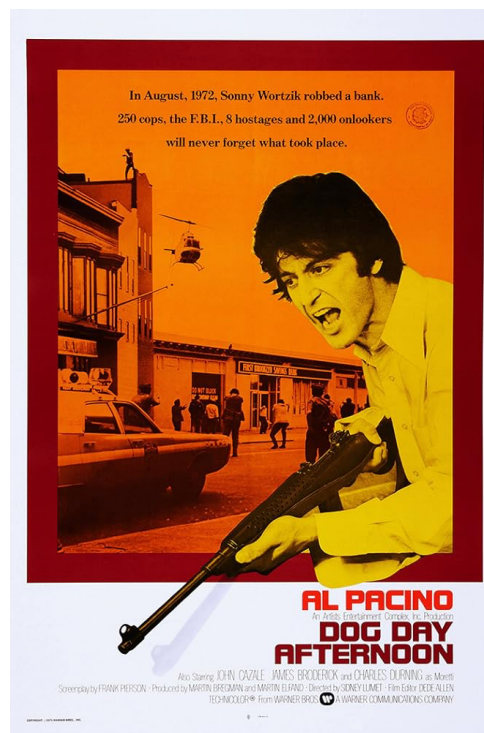
Cinematography
Editing
Production Design

Cast

Al Pacino
John Cazale
Gary Springer
Carol Kane
Penelope Allen
Charles Durning

Sonny
Sal
Stevie
Jenny (bank staff)
Sylvia (bank staff)
Detective Sergeant Moretti
(NYPD)
Sheldon (FBI)
Angie (Sonny's wife)
Mother
Leon

James Broderick
Susan Peretz
Judith Malina
Chris Sarandon



Our presentation this evening is a classic film from 1975.

On a sultry summer afternoon, Sonny, Sal and Stevie have a simple plan to rob a small bank branch in Brooklyn. The robbery goes wrong from the start, with Stevie bottling out and the other two finding that most of the cash has already picked up for the day and that there is just \$1,100 left to steal. Sonny takes the bank's travellers' checks and burns the register in a rubbish bin, but the smoke raises suspicion, and the building is surrounded by police. The two panicked robbers take the employees hostage. Sonny bluffs that he is prepared to kill them, though he releases an asthmatic security guard as a gesture of good faith. Sonny begins a dialogue with Moretti that culminates in his shouting "Attica! Attica!" to invoke the recent bloody prison riot, attracting a cheering crowd and the fawning attention of the local news media. It emerges that Sonny is a Vietnam vet and a former bank teller, with a particular (and unusual) need for money [no spoiler]. Sonny's estranged wife and mother try to talk him down (without success). Eventually a car is provided and Sonny, Sal and a few of the hostages are driven to the airport.

The film is based on a real-life robbery from August 1972, with only a few names altered. The original title was "The Boys in the Bank" but the director Lumet changed it because he felt this suggested a "light, fluffy comedy." There are moments of humour, and for a robbery film there is remarkably little gunfire (I counted two shots). The almost friendly bond that develops between the bank staff and the robbers is an example of "Stockholm Syndrome" the phenomenon in which hostages become sympathetic to their captors.



offered to Dustin Hoffman.

Al Pacino had worked very successfully with Lumet on *Serpico* (1973) and the part of Sonny was written with him in mind. He turned it down, saying that after *The Godfather Part II* he was "exhausted and infinitely depressed" and did not want a role that - given his dedication to Method Acting - would have left him in a daily state of near hysterical anxiety. He apparently changed his mind when he discovered the role was being

Pacino insisted that John Cazale be cast as his accomplice (even though the real-life robber was half Cazale's age) and many of the bank staff (in turns sassy and sympathetic) were Pacino's past co-stars from his off-Broadway plays. There is a poignant scene when Cazale (Sal) tries to dissuade one of the clerks from smoking because of "the cancer." Cazale died from lung cancer three years later. He only appeared in five feature films, all of which were nominated for the Best Film Oscar (*The Godfather*, *Godfather Part II*, *The Conversation*, *The Deerhunter* and *Dog Day Afternoon*). His partner Meryl Streep was with him when he passed away.

Much of the film's dialogue is improvised. Pacino wore no makeup at all during filming, achieving his gaunt and burned out look by sleeping as little as possible and eating sporadically. That's Method Acting for you!

The film was widely praised on release, with The New York Times calling it a "gaudy street-carnival", and Lumet's "most accurate, most flamboyant" depiction of the city, while praising the "brilliant characterisations" of the cast. Though it was a few years before their famous TV film review show together, Roger Ebert rated it three-and-a-half stars out of four, welcoming its "irreverent, quirky sense of humour" and his erstwhile colleague Gene Siskel (four stars) described it as "superb", admiring the "scenes mixing the fear of violence with insane laughter".

A more recent review in Empire magazine in 2000 dubbed it "the granddaddy of all heist-gone-wrong films," lauding "a brilliantly handled crescendo into chaos" and "[a] daring and brilliantly constructed treatise on the many facets of a crime."

The film was nominated for 5 Oscars, winning for Original Screenplay but losing out to *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* which dysoned up all the awards that year. A box-office gross of \$56 million (equivalent to over \$300 million today) may have provided some consolation.

Its reputation has endured. In 2006, Premiere Magazine placed Pacino's performance as Sonny as the fourth-greatest ever in film¹. In 2009, the film was deemed "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant" by the US Library of Congress, which selected it for preservation in the National Film Registry. In 2012, the Motion Picture Editors Guild rated it the 20th best edited film of all time based on a survey of its membership.²

And remember – if you find the "reveal" about the motive for the robbery a little far-fetched (for 1975?) it's all true.

Eugene Smith

¹ Peter O'Toole was ranked first for Lawrence of Arabia. The full list is at <https://www.imdb.com/list/ls076231638/>

² Raging Bull was their number 1 – full list at <https://www.imdb.com/list/ls031302669/>

Eugene Smith Selects Some Pacino Performances

Alfredo James "Al" Pacino was born to Italian-American parents in 1940. After an undistinguished school career, he joined the prestigious Actors Studio in 1966, studying under Lee Strasberg, creator of the Method Approach that would become the trademark of many 1970s-era actors. Here are six notable films Pacino made – including one (at least) to avoid!

The First One That Was Noticed

The Panic in Needle Park (1971/Jerry Schatzberg/110 mins/PG)

Pacino plays a heroin addict who bonds with a homeless girl (Kitty Winn). It was banned in the UK for 4 years because of the graphic drug scenes before being re-cut (and re-rated). Coppola showed it to Paramount executives to convince them that Pacino was suitable for the coveted role of Michael Corleone in *The Godfather* (1972)

The Obvious One

The Godfather Part II (1974/Francis Coppola/202 mins/18)

Pacino plays Michael Corleone in the 1950s, attempting to expand the family business into Las Vegas, Hollywood and Cuba. A performance of controlled fury, securing Pacino a second Oscar nomination for Best Actor. A rare sequel that out-rated the (very successful) original.

The Sweary One

Scarface (1983/Brian de Palma/170 mins/18)



In 1980 Miami, a determined Cuban immigrant takes over a drug cartel and succumbs to greed. "Say hello to my little friend." Gratuitously violent, over-the-top cult film, written by Oliver Stone. Pacino reportedly stated that the role was one of his favourites. Not a good date movie (or one to watch with your sister).

The One That Finally Won Him an Oscar

Scent of a Woman (1992/Martin Brest/156 mins/15)



A teenage student needing money agrees to babysit a blind, quirky former US Army Lieutenant (Pacino). "Hoo-wah." Pacino would often remain in character off set, using his cane and never looking at anyone when they talked to him. This remake of an Italian film finally won him the Best Actor Oscar. Probably the tango scene with Gabrielle Anwar clinched it.

The Under-rated One

The Insider (1999/Michael Mann/157 mins/15)

Based on the true story of a tobacco industry whistleblower (Russell Crowe) left hung out to dry by the "60 Minutes" hotshot producer (Pacino). Tense, wordy and twisty. A box-office failure but well-appreciated by Club members when screened in 2002 (score 7.61). Pacino had earlier worked with the director (and Robert de Niro) on *Heat* (1995).

The One that bankrupted Goldcrest Films

Revolution (1985/Hugh Hudson/126 mins/PG)

Pacino plays a trapper unwillingly pulled into the American revolution. Filmed mainly around Kings Lynn. Pacino was mis-cast and fell ill with pneumonia for much of principal photography. The film became the "biggest box-office disaster in British movie history." It cost \$28 million to make and grossed just \$0.4m in the US. Pacino returned to the theatre and didn't make another film for 4 years (but then bounced back with *Sea of Love*.)



We thank Red Eye for subsidising the cost of printing these notes. Red Eye Print, Unit 2D, Lansbury Estate, 102 Lower Guildford Road, Knaphill, GU21 2EP Tel: 01483 772111

Club website: www.wncc.org.uk. Prefer to leave your comments on the film and your score online rather than on paper? Email to reactions@wncc.org.uk by Wednesday 31 January 2024
Discs of previous shows are available to hire for a modest fee.

Comments and reactions to: **Living**

No of reaction slips received = 29

Average score = 7.62

Score	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	~	~	~	~	~	1	1	12	9	6	~

Exquisitely acted and photographed. Top notch!

Gentle humour and a bit of a tearjerker. A lovely film

A little bit toooo slow for me but still an excellent film

Sound was v loud – but I was in the front row, maybe why

Makes me want to see the original (Ikuru)

Very good and a great performance from Bill

Very engaging, despite being laid back in the extreme

The review in your sheet summed it up perfectly. The Kurosawa background style shows through. Very enjoyable and hospitable evening for our first visit.

Melancholic tearjerker

Thought provoking!

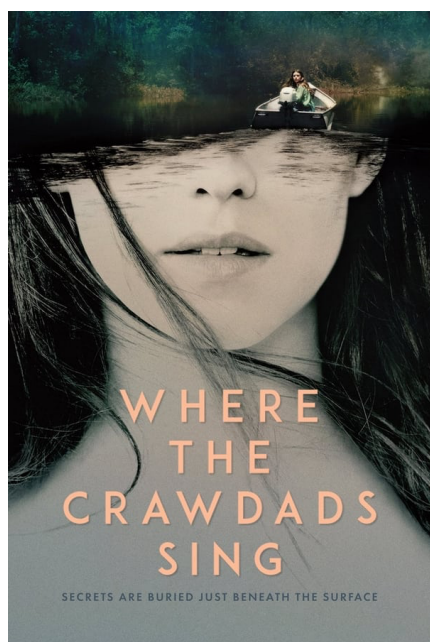
One of the best I've seen

Quietly amusing and touching

Excellent acting, very enjoyable

Position	Film	Average score
1	Living	7.62
2=	Mrs Harris Goes to Paris	7.58
2=	Downton Abbey – A New Era	7.58
4	The Lost King	7.38
5	The Banshees of Inisherin	7.06
6	Rams	6.40
7	Three Colours: Blue	6.18
8	Decision to Leave	4.59

Forthcoming attraction: 8 February 2024 – **Where the Crawdads Sing**



The film is based on the 2018 coming-of-age murder mystery novel by American zoologist Delia Owens. The story follows two timelines that slowly intertwine. The first describes the life and adventures of a young girl named Kya (Daisy Edgar-Jones) as she grows up isolated in the marshes of North Carolina. The second follows an investigation into the apparent murder of Chase Andrews, a local celebrity of Barkley Cove, a fictional coastal town of North Carolina. By April 2023, the book had sold over 18 million copies and had spent 41/2 years on the New York Times best-seller list. Wikipedia

Newcomer Edgar-Jones commands the screen. She is both forceful and coy as Kya. The actor conveys a jittery uncertainty that belies an inner resilience that grows in confidence and strength as the film progresses. It's the type of star-making turn that could easily vault Edgar-Jones into becoming a household name among younger

viewers. She's spectacular, and I'm confident we'll be seeing bigger and better things from her sooner rather than later. Moviefreak.com