



great movies

[Reviews](#) [Great Movies](#) [Answer Man](#) [People](#) [Commentary](#) [Festivals](#) [Oscars](#) [Glossary](#) [One-Minute Reviews](#) [Letters](#) [Roger Ebert's Journal](#) [Scanners](#) [Store](#)

CHICAGO SUN-TIMES [News](#) [Sports](#) [Business](#) [Entertainment](#) [Classifieds](#) [Columnists](#)

search

Search
powered by
YAHOO!

register

You are not logged in.

[Log in](#) »

[Subscribe to weekly newsletter](#)
»

related articles

[Scarface \(Review\)](#) »

answer man

[10/19/2003](#) »
[12/28/1997](#) »
[12/14/1997](#) »

times & tickets

[Fandango](#)
[Search movie showtimes and buy tickets.](#)

about us

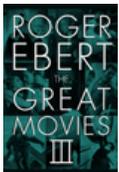
[About the site](#) »

[Site FAQs](#) »

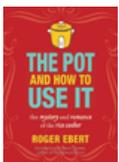
[Contact us](#) »

[Email the Movie Answer Man](#) »

on sale now



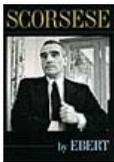
[Buy now](#) »



[Buy now](#) »



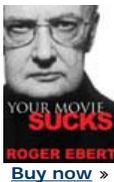
Buy now »



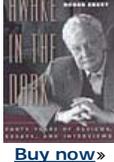
Buy now »



Buy now »



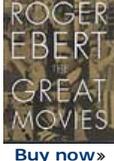
Buy now »



Buy now »



Buy now »



Buy now »



Al Pacino and Robert Loggia in Brian DePalma's version of "Scarface."

Scarface (1983)

BY ROGER EBERT / September 28, 2003

"Me, I want what's coming to me." "What's coming to you?" "The world, Chico, and everything in it."

-- Tony Montana in "Scarface"

Brian De Palma's "Scarface" rises or falls with Al Pacino's performance, which is aggressive, over the top, teeth-gnashing, arm-waving, cocaine-snorting, scenery chewing -- and brilliant, some say, while others find it unforgivably flamboyant. What were Pacino's detractors hoping for? Something internal and realistic? Low key? The Tony Montana character is above all a performance artist, a man who exists in order to gloriously be himself. From the film's opening shots, in which he is one more disposable Cuban ex-con in a Florida detention center, his whole drive is to impress his personality and will on others. He begins with no resources or weapons, except for his bravado, and fakes out more powerful men simply by *seeming* dangerous and resourceful. His act is a bluff, so there is no sense in underplaying it.

Montana is one of the seminal characters in modern American movies, a character who has inspired countless others. If the crime expert Jay Robert Nash is correct, and American gangsters learned how to talk and behave by studying early Hollywood crime movies, then "Scarface" may also have shaped personal styles. There is even a documentary on the new "Scarface" DVD about the movie's influence on hip-hop performers. The movie has been borrowed from so often that it's difficult to understand how original it seemed in 1983, when Latino heroes were rare, when cocaine was not a cliché, when sequences at the pitch of the final gun battle were not commonplace. Just as a generation raised on "The Sopranos" may never understand how original "The Godfather" was, so "Scarface" has been absorbed into its imitators.

It takes the name and some of the story structure from Howard Hawks' famous "Scarface" (1932), starring Paul Muni and inspired by the life of Al Capone. Both movies were assailed for their violence, both are about the rise and fall of a criminal entrepreneur, both characters are obsessed with their sisters, and both die because they used their own product -- in Montana's case, cocaine; in the case of the syphilitic Capone, prostitutes. But the De Palma movie is not a remake in any conventional sense; it takes a familiar story arc, which may even contain echoes of "Macbeth," and uses it to look at a new character in a new terrain -- the Florida of the early 1980s, after Fidel

buy / rent

[Scarface](#)
Al Pacino, Steven ...
Best Price \$1.99
or Buy New \$16.99
[Buy from amazon.com](#)

[Privacy Information](#)

The 1932 [Howard Hawks](#) original:

[Scarface](#)
Paul Muni, Ann Dvo...
Best Price \$3.28
or Buy New \$11.99
[Buy from amazon.com](#)

[Privacy Information](#)

[Printer-friendly »](#)
[E-mail this to a friend »](#)



Pain at the pump?

Search by gas mileage for your next car at

todrive.com
search for new and used cars

[CLICK HERE TO START YOUR SEARCH](#)

BROUGHT TO YOU BY SUN-TIMES MEDIA

great movies archive

[Introduction to Great Movies »](#)
[Great Movies: The First 100 »](#)

[Complete List of Great Movies »](#)
[Printer-friendly Version of List »](#)

- 12 Angry Men
- Ace in the Hole
- Adaptation.
- The Adventures of Robin Hood
- After Dark, My Sweet
- After Hours
- The Age of Innocence
- Aguirre, the Wrath of God
- All: Fear Eats the Soul
- Alien
- All About Eve
- Amadeus
- Amarcord
- Annie Hall
- The Apartment

[Select Great Movie](#)

Richardson Refinance at 2.9% apr
\$160,000 Richardson mortgage for \$499mo. No SSN req. Get a...

TX Work At Home Jobs (EXPOSED)
Can \$97 Really Turn Into \$5130? We Investigated...

Stimberly Acai Free Trial
Lose Weight And Stop Hunger.4.95 Shipping and Handling 100% Money Back...

in theaters

latest reviews

- [Thor](#)
- [Bridesmaids](#)
- [Everything Must Go](#)
- [Forks Over Knives](#)
- [Hesher](#)
- [Louder Than a Bomb](#)
- [Make Believe](#)
- [Meek's Cutoff](#)
- [Strongman](#)
- [Twelve Thirty](#)

[more current releases »](#)

one-minute movie reviews

still playing

- [The Adjustment Bureau](#)
- [Arthur](#)

SAVE
50%
 TO
90%
 on the
best of
Chicago
 and the
suburbs.



wantsadeal
BROUGHT TO YOU BY SUNBELT

Your **Deals.**
 Your **Way.**

Movie Theater Deals
 Fantastic Deals Every Day With Discounts
www.LivingSocial.com

Watch Free Movies Online
 Watch Free Movies Online! It's Easy With
Movie.alot.com

MoviePoster.com Posters
 #1 Source of Original Movie Posters -
www.MoviePoster.com

Top 2011 Online Grants
 Grant funding may be available - Go Back
www.ClassesUSA.com

Ads by Yahoo!

- [Atlas Shrugged](#)
- [The Bang Bang Club](#)
- [Battle: Los Angeles](#)
- [The Beaver](#)
- [Bridesmaids](#)
- [Cave of Forgotten Dreams](#)
- [Certified Copy](#)
- [Cold Weather](#)
- [The Conspirator](#)
- [Desert Flower](#)
- [Drive Angry 3D](#)
- [Even the Rain](#)
- [Everything Must Go](#)
- [Fast Five](#)
- [Forget Me Not](#)
- [Forks Over Knives](#)
- [The Greatest Movie Ever Sold](#)
- [Hall Pass](#)
- [Hanna](#)
- [Henry's Crime](#)
- [Hesher](#)
- [Hidden Love](#)
- [I Am](#)
- [I Will Follow](#)
- [In a Better World](#)
- [Incendies](#)
- [Insidious](#)
- [Ip Man 2](#)
- [Jane Eyre](#)
- [Jumping the Broom](#)
- [Limitless](#)
- [The Lincoln Lawyer](#)
- [Louder Than a Bomb](#)
- [Make Believe](#)
- [Meek's Cutoff](#)
- [Nuremberg: Its Lesson for Today](#)
- [Of Gods and Men](#)
- [Outside the Law](#)
- [Paul](#)
- [Poetry](#)
- [Potiche](#)
- [The Princess of Montpensier](#)
- [Putty Hill](#)
- [Queen of the Sun](#)
- [Queen to Play](#)
- [Rango](#)
- [Red Riding Hood](#)
- [Scre4m](#)
- [Something Borrowed](#)
- [Soul Surfer](#)
- [Source Code](#)
- [Stake Land](#)
- [Strongman](#)
- [Super](#)
- [Take Me Home Tonight](#)
- [Thor](#)
- [Trust](#)
- [Twelve Thirty](#)
- [Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives](#)
- [Vidal Sassoon: The Movie](#)
- [Water for Elephants](#)
- [Win Win](#)

[moreYour Highness](#)
current

[releases »](#)

on dvd

new on dvd

- [Blow Out](#) ★★★★★ (4/26)
- [Dead Man](#) ★★★ (4/12)
- [Iron](#) ★★★★★ (4/5)

[more new on dvd »](#)

coming on dvd

[more coming on dvd »](#)

great movies on dvd

- [Santa Sangre](#) (1/25)

visited 5/18/2010

[more great movies on dvd »](#)



© copyright 2011, rogerebert.com

[Privacy Policy](#) [Terms of Use](#) [Submission Guidelines](#)

