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Alan Alda and Mia Farrow are two of the many characters who have moral choices to make in "Crimes and Misdemeanors," Woody Allen's new film.

## Allen successfully mixes humor, pathos in 'Crimes'

NEW YORK (CNS) — "Crimes and Misdemeanors" (Orion Pictures), the 19th film written and directed by Woody Allen, brilliantly juxtaposes the large and small moral lapses of some predominantly Jewish upper middle-class Manhattanites.

Judah Rosenthal (Martin Landau) is a wealthy, highly respected ophthalmologist. His notable work as a physician and philanthropist bring him many testimonials, shared by his devoted wife (Claire Bloom) and family. Left out in the cold is flight attendant Dolores Paley (Anjelica Huston), his secret mistress of two years.

Fed up with her second-class citizenship, Dolores decides in a fit of hysteria to confront Judah's wife. She also threatens to spill the beans about his tendency to pocket some of the funds from his fundraisers.

Since reasoning with Dolores proves fruitless, Judah consults with his rabbi and eye patient, Ben (Sam Waterston), who urges Judah to confess all to his wife and hope for forgiveness. Ben's encroaching blindness does not blacken his positive belief that forgiveness will occur and will bring Judah a better, stronger relationship with his wife.

Judah's selfishness and deeply ingrained moral conflicts push him to seek the aid of his career criminal brother, Jack (Jerry Orbach). With Jack's encouragement and mob contacts, Dolores is ruthlessly snuffed out and Judah's illicit past is literally eradicated.

Judah works his way from remorse to acceptance of this horrific deed and eventually flourishes. Meanwhile, good guy Ben goes blind and Ben's oily brother, TV producer Lester (Alan Alda), becomes the focus of a PBS documentary about his re-

markable career.

The documentary, lead by Lester's brother-in-law, Cliff Stern (Woody Allen), catalyzes a final break-up between Cliff and his wife Wendy (Joanna Gleason). Wendy idolizes her brother Lester and ignores unsuccessful Cliff, who despises and probably secretly envies Lester. When shallow, egomaniac Lester steals the one woman with whom Cliff could have been happy, public TV producer Halley Reed (Mia Farrow), Cliff is dealt a final, dismal blow.

Writer-director Allen interweaves these complex characters magically on his film canvas, mixing humor, pathos and melodrama as he subtly compares and questions their moral and immoral choices. As Judah grapples with guilt, flashbacks recall his devout father and specifically a childhood seder that raised the issue of accountability. Do good guys finish first or does might make right?

In the end, Judah wins and Cliff loses, but do they? A bittersweet running narrative by the only other major character, Jewish philosophy professor Louis Levy (Martin Bergmann), injects a ray of hope into this unjust universe as he pinpoints the reality of love and happiness for imperfect mortals.

Due to some rough language and explicit sexual innuendoes, an adulterous relationship and a ruthless, off-camera murder, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG-13 — parents strongly cautioned that some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

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