

Mob tale, Irish saga put focus on characters

NEW YORK (CNS) — Ray Liotta, Robert De Niro and Joe Pesci are three hardened gangsters who dub themselves "GoodFellas" (Warner Bros.).

The film is told from the point of view of Henry Hill (Liotta). He narrates throughout, from the 1955 opening where he is a kid idolizing gangsters for their free-spending ways up to his arrest and decision to turn on his buddies to gain immunity.

Along the way he lustily enjoys a life of crime with his pals, "Jimmy the Gent" (De Niro) and Tommy (Pesci), who brutally murder anyone who says a cross word to them.

His wife (Lorraine Bracco), too, is seduced by the lavish material goods Henry's lifestyle and drug deals afford.

But their version of the good life ends abruptly when cops collar Henry on a serious cocaine charge and he falls from favor within the mob. Soon he implicates his friends and enters the federal witness protection program.

Director Martin Scorsese's fact-based film can be seen as a harrowing cautionary tale, though on the surface it certainly glamorizes crime, as it is told through a hardened criminal's warped perspective.

The flowing cinematography, fine details and commanding performances synthesize into a chilling re-creation of the empty glamor, endless greed and sick violence that characterize mob life.

This inside look at the daily workings of gangsters and how they think does not scrimp on graphic violence, but it does show the three leads as repulsive individuals for whom the viewer has no sympathy. The movie is rich in irony, especially as the theme of loyalty to the mob family is exposed as just another myth about the mafia.

Due to excessive violence and rough language, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-IV — adults, with reservations. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.

'Fools of Fortune'

The struggle for Irish independence shatters a peaceful, genteel family in "Fools of Fortune" (New Line).

A fire intentionally set by a British Black-and-Tan officer robs Quinton (Julie Christie) of her husband and two little daughters, leaving only her son, Willie (Iain Glen).

The grief-stricken mother turns to drink and eventually commits suicide. After her funeral a distant cousin, Marianne (Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio) comforts Willie in his bed but returns to England when he says nothing of marriage.

Willie is consumed by the need to



From left, Ray Liotta, Robert De Niro, Paul Sorvino and Joe Pesci star in Warner Bros. "GoodFellas," a film which spans 30 years in the life of a Mafia family.

destroy the officer who has obliterated his family. Once this is accomplished, he becomes a fugitive from the law, tortured by the memory of Marianne and unaware that she has returned to his village to raise the baby girl he has fathered.

Director Pat O'Connor uses jarring flash-forwards to tell the Quinton family saga. As the story spans 20 years, this technique is initially confusing and eventually exhausting.

It's a shame the story is told in such a muddled manner, because it tends to diminish the otherwise shimmering performances of Christie and Mastrantonio.

The primitive Irish backdrops are handsomely photographed and a welcome respite from the helter-skelter jump cuts from one decade to the next.

The apparently happy ending is unconvincing, even surreal, as it is seen through the eyes of Willie and Marianne's child (Catherine McFadden), who has developed psychic powers.

The film is best seen by viewers who are up on Irish history and motivated enough to be undeterred by the choppy editing and to pay close attention to the profusion of characters.

Due to some violence with gore and a very restrained sexual encounter, the USCC classification is A-III — adults. The MPAA rating is PG-13 — parents are strongly cautioned that some material may not be suitable for children under 13.

'Delta Force 2'

Deadlier than ever, Chuck Norris gets to show off his lethal limbs in "Delta Force 2" (MGM).

In this sequel to the 1986 action movie, Latin American drug lord Ramon Cota (Billy Drago) is quickly established as the thoroughly detestable villain. While visiting his coke crop he spots a young mother who has stopped harvesting to attend to her sick infant and promptly stabs her husband, rapes the wife and has the

baby killed so its body can be used to transport drugs through customs.

The U.S. Army's deadly Delta Force is called into action when Cota has a number of DEA agents machine-gunned and takes three Americans hostage. Delta's steeliest muscleman, Col. McCoy (Norris) has more than patriotism on his mind — his partner and the man's pregnant wife have also been brutally slain by Cota.

McCoy mounts a single-handed assault on Cota's compound, located on a mountaintop, by scaling its sheer granite face. He frees the hostages only to be captured by Cota, who relishes McCoy's dying gasps in a gas chamber until Delta Force arrives in a huge helicopter to provide the expected conclusion.

Director Aaron Norris offers viewers a witless, mindless parade of violence.

Because of excessive violence and gore and occasional raw language, the USCC classification is O — morally offensive. The MPAA rating is R — restricted.

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