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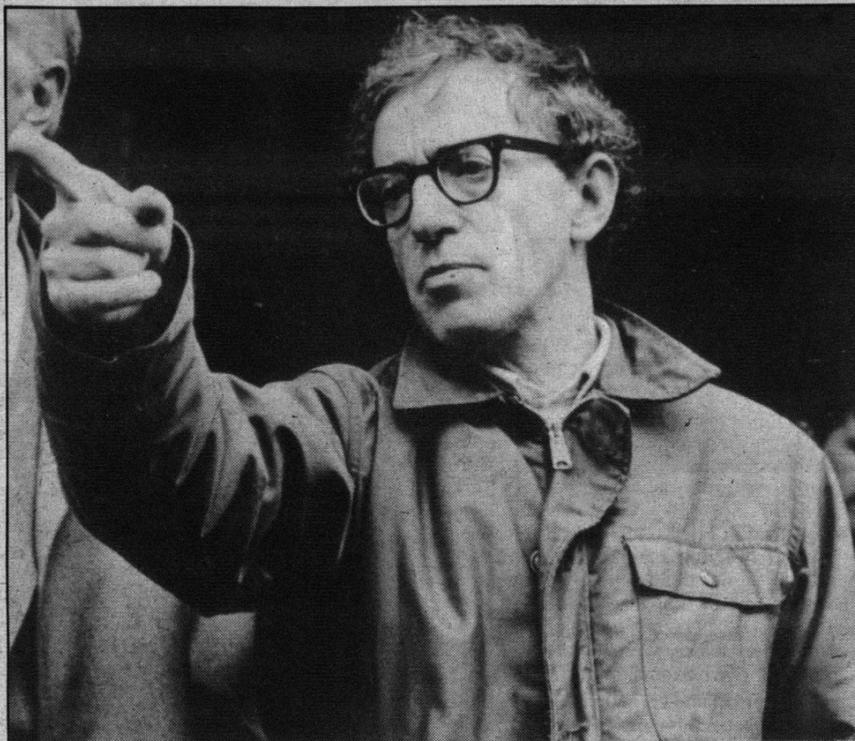
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## Woody Allen tackles big questions



You don't... You can't... You... just... I don't know... Th... My... Finger... is... it's... stuck. I think I'm getting an ulcer. I think I should go see my analyst.

**Crimes and Misdemeanors**  
Orion Pictures

review by Sue Goddard

In *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, a film written and directed by Woody Allen, Allen tackles some big questions. The film deals with good and evil, relationships, faith, failure, success and just about everything else.

*Crimes and Misdemeanors* is composed of several plots skillfully interwoven by character relationships. The primary plot centres on the character of Judah Rosenthal wonderfully played by Martin Landau. Rosenthal is a successful, established doctor, who has made one mistake that threatens to destroy all that he has accomplished. For the past two years he has been having an affair with Dolores Paley (Angelica Huston). She wants Judah to break off with his wife and start a life with her but he isn't willing to give up his family and his home. In desperation, Dolores threatens to expose their affair as well as a questionable financial dealing that Judah becomes involved in.

Judah tries to rationalize with Dolores, who refuses to listen to reason. She begins to call him at home, her behavior become increasingly irrational until Judah can stand no more. He turns to his brother Jack, whose lifestyle is at complete odds with his comfortable position.

Jack suggests a rather final solution to the problem. The Doctor is at first appalled, but as his situation becomes more and more threatened he decides to take his brother's advice. Hereafter, Allen has his character deal with the guilt that his actions have inspired. Judah's life becomes as hellishly difficult and intolerable as it was before.

While this is going on, Judah is treating Ben (Sam Waterston) who is slowly going blind. Ben is a Rabbi who has lived his life honourably and justly. His appointments become semi-confessional sessions for Judah, who reveals some of his actions and asks for advice. Ben gives wise, solid judgements that Judah carefully considers, ignores and then anguishes over.

Meanwhile, a third scenario is taking place. Cliff Stan (Woody Allen) is a documentary film maker who is married to Ben's sister

Wendy. Their marriage is falling apart and neither is doing anything to save it. Wendy gets Cliff a job filming her brother Lester (Alan Alda). Lester is a disgustingly successful and somewhat sleazy t.v. sitcom producer whose life is being featured in a mini-documentary for the popular t.v. program.

Halley Reed (Mia Farrow) is one of the executive producers of the program, and both Cliff and Lester fall in love with her. Cliff loathes the very air that Lester breathes and every moment he has to spend filming this documentary is a small bit of hell.

This rather complicated love interest gets more complex as the movie proceeds. Halley becomes infected with Cliff's enthusiasm for his private project on the life philosophy of a university professor. Soon, the two are spending time together checking tapes, mocking Lester and filming his documentary. As Cliff and Lester become more and more forward and vocal about their love for Halley, she backs farther away and eventually leaves New York to go work in London for three months.

The three plots move simultaneously in the film as Allen elegantly ties them together. The characters' lives overlap and clash into each other, demonstrating the various conflicts that each is going through. The acting is fantastic, the characters are sympathetic and it becomes difficult not to shadow their emotions.

*Crimes and Misdemeanors* follows the thematic line of Allen's last two full-length films. He deals with morality, faith, male/female relationships, justice and other really big and important things.

The director of photography, Sven Nykvist, has had a close working relationship with Ingemar Bergman. Accordingly, the film has a Bergman-like, New York-based appearance to it. The cinematography is beautiful and, as usual for an Allen film, the story takes place in New York.

Another typical Allen quality is the great music accompanying the action. Allen takes pieces of movie scores alongside classical, jazz and 20's tunes. If you've forgotten your glasses don't bother moving to the front, just close your eyes and listen to the soundtrack. Come back later and watch the movie. The combination of the music, the cinematography, the acting, and the beautifully-written script makes this a great film.

However, don't go to the theatre expecting to rupture your spleen with laughter, don't take anyone but a philosophy or English major to this as a first date, and above all don't go drinking afterwards. This is no giggly piece of fluff. Allen hems and haws over the big questions, and his conclusions are more than a little disturbing. There is typical Woody Allen humour throughout the film, but beneath that lurks Bergman-like themes.

So anticipate to be provoked into thinking, hide the keys to the liquor cabinet and fork out seven dollars. *Crimes and Misdemeanors* is worth the effort.

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