

# New York Stories

by Matthew Rainnie

*New York Stories* (released to video on Jan. 31) combines three stories, all set in New York City. Each segment showcases the talent of a different director; all three are among the most renowned and respected working today.

The first "New York story," titled "Life Lessons," is the most effective of the three. This segment, which features the talents of Nick Nolte and Rosanna Arquette, was directed by Martin Scorsese.

Scorsese has had a prolific, and at times controversial career.

He was born in 1942 and grew up in Manhattan's Little Italy. After a somewhat turbulent childhood he enrolled in New York University and received two degrees in film studies.

Scorsese's first feature film was titled *Who's That Knocking on my Door* and was released in 1968. It introduced Harvey Keitel (a Scorsese favourite) to the screen.

*Boxcar Bertha*, with Barbara Hershey, came in 1972.

Keitel was again featured in *Mean Streets* (1973), along with another Scorsese favourite, Robert DeNiro. This film, noted for its visual style, brought Scorsese to the attention of many.

Ellen Burstyn won the Oscar for best actress in Scorsese's *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*, released in 1974. *Taxi Driver*, a powerhouse film released in 1976, won Oscar nominations for best picture and best actor (Robert DeNiro), but not for best director.

DeNiro again appeared in *New York, New York* (1977). *The Last Waltz*, Scorsese's documentary of The Band's last concert, came in 1978.

*Raging Bull* (1980) presented Robert DeNiro with an Oscar for best actor and Scorsese his first nomination for best director. *Raging Bull* has been praised by many critics as the best film of the eighties.

Scorsese's other films of the eighties include *The King of Comedy* (1983), *After Hours* (1985), and *The Color of Money* (1986), which gave Paul Newman his first best actor Oscar. To much controversy, Scorsese released *The Last Temptation of Christ* in 1988, which gave him another Oscar nomination for best director.

"Life Lessons" is the story of Lionel Bodie (Nolte, in a wonderful performance), a painter who desperately wants his 'assistant' (Arquette) to love him like he loves her. Scorsese's visuals in this piece are perfect. The scenes where Nolte paints feverishly, with rock music pounding in the background, are hypnotic. The end of this segment gives the

viewer great insight into Dobie's true character.

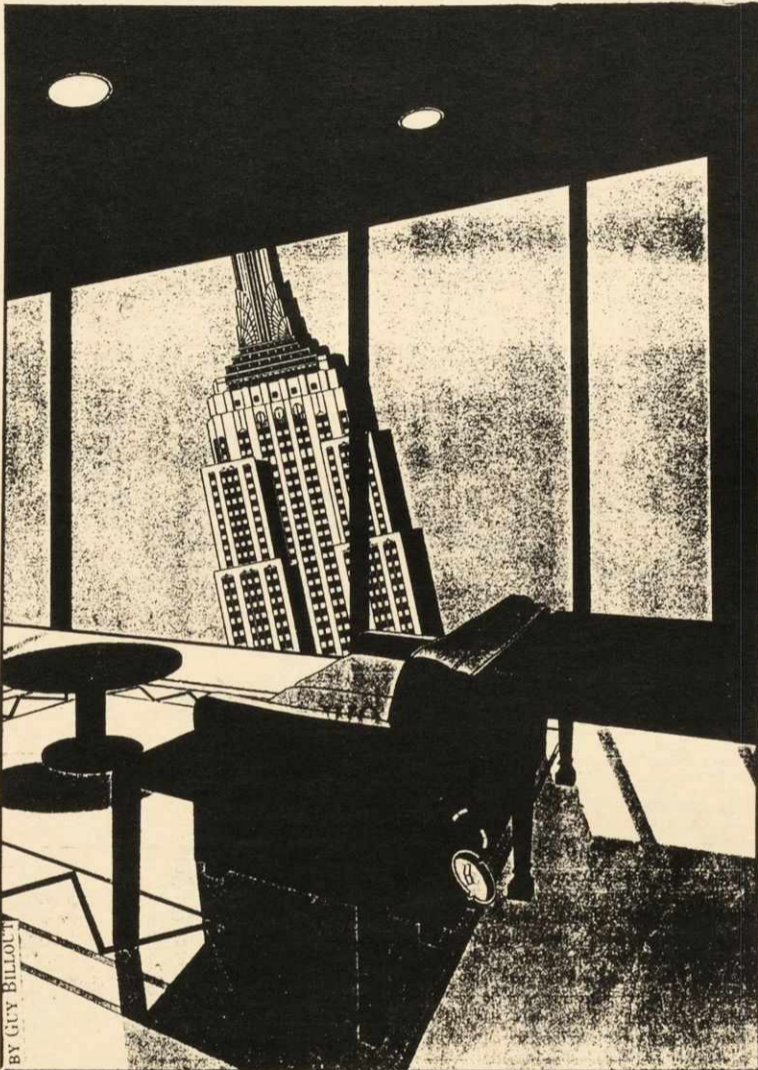
The second segment of *New York Stories*, titled "Life Without Zoe," comes from Francis Ford Coppola.

Coppola was born in 1939 and studied film at UCLA. His early films included *Dementia 13* (1963), *You're a Big Boy Now*

delayed the film's production. It earned Oscar nominations for best picture and director.

*One From the Heart*, in 1982, was a major failure, eventually forcing Coppola's film company, Zoetrope Studios, to file for bankruptcy.

Other Coppola films include *The Outsiders* (1982), *Rumble*



(1967) and *Finian's Rainbow* (1968), which starred Fred Astaire.

*The Rain People*, released in 1969, featured James Caan and Robert Duvall.

In 1972 Coppola was given the chance to make the film adaptation of Mario Puzo's novel, *The Godfather*. The film starred Marlon Brando and Al Pacino, as well as Caan and Duvall. *The Godfather* did well at Oscar time, receiving awards for best picture and best actor (Brando). Coppola did not win for his directing but did receive an award for the screenplay he co-wrote with Puzo.

In 1974 Coppola released two films, *The Conversation*, with Gene Hackman and *The Godfather II*. Both films were nominated for best picture but it was *The Godfather II* that obtained the award. Coppola won for his directing and co-scripting on the sequel.

*Apocalypse Now* came in 1979, after several problems (including Martin Sheen's heart attack)

*Fish* (1983), *The Cotton Club* (1984), *Peggy Sue Got Married* (1986). Coppola is currently preparing to direct *The Godfather III*.

Coppola's segment of *New York Stories* is the least interesting. Heather McComb stars as Zoe, a little girl who lives in a hotel with a butler (Don Novello, AKA Father Guido Sarducci) because her parents are often travelling. Although the piece is visually appealing it never seems to get off the ground in terms of plot. "Life Without Zoe" also stars Talia Shire (Coppola's sister) and Guancarlo Gianini.

Woody Allen concludes the film with his amusing segment, "Oedipus Wrecks" starring Mia Farrow, Mae Questel, Julie Kavner and Woody himself.

In 1935, Allen was born Allen Stewart Konigsberg in Brooklyn, New York. He began as a stand-up comedy writer (for such people as Sid Caesar) before getting into stand-up comedy and, eventually, film-making.

For his first film in 1966, Allen redubbed a Japanese spy movie, turning it into a very funny comedy called *What's Up, Tiger Lily?* He both starred in and directed *Take the Money and Run* (1969), *Bananas* (1971), *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex (But Were Afraid to Ask)* (1972), *Sleeper* (1973), and *Love and Death* (1975).

In 1977, Allen decided to make a seriocomic film about relationships. Originally titled *Anhedonia*, the film became *Annie Hall*, which featured Allen and his one-time lover Diane Keaton. Woody netted Oscar nominations for acting, directing and writing — the first time anyone had done so since Orson Welles (for *Citizen Kane*) in 1941. The film won best picture and Woody collected Oscars for directing and writing, though he was playing clarinet at Michael's Pub while the ceremonies were being conducted.

Allen followed *Annie Hall* with a drama, *Interiors*, in 1978. *Manhattan* (1979) was a critical success, yet *Stardust Memories* (1980) received a mixed response from critics. Mia Farrow joined Allen for *A Midsummer Night's Sex Comedy* (1982), *Zelig* (1983), *Broadway Danny Rose* (1984) and

*The Purple Rose of Cairo* (1985).

*Hannah and Her Sisters*, released in 1986, was nominated for best picture and Allen for best director.

More recent films include *September*, 1987), *Radio Days* (1987) and *Another Woman* (1988). *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, released in 1989, may earn Allen another Oscar nomination.

One can guess from the title of Woody's segment in *New York Stories* that it involves the relationship between mother and son. Woody's character, Sheldon Mills, is a successful lawyer who still feels intimidated and embarrassed by his mother (played to the hilt by Quetel). This piece is truly enjoyable from beginning to end. Sheldon's mother's disappearance and subsequent 'reappearance' are hilarious. You'll leave this one with a smile.

*New York Stories* grabs its viewers' attention from the beginning and will undoubtedly leave them satisfied. Unfortunately, the film sags in the middle. But a fast-forward button may be able to solve that problem.

Scorsese, Coppola and Allen are true geniuses of the cinema, and will hopefully continue to bless us with work comparable to that in the past.



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