

Pacino doesn't do it justice at all

Movie review by Marni Stanley

All right Ladies and Gentlemen place your bets, can the young lawyer go fifteen rounds against the powers that be? Can he make the right decision in spite of the pressures on his career? Will his love affair with a lady lawyer survive the fact that she is on the ethics committee investigating him?

In *And Justice For All* Norman Jewison has brought us the Rocky of the courts. Al Pacino (as Allan Kirkland) is the young lawyer who has to choose between moral integrity and possible disbarment. The plot's main conflict rests on his decision to defend the cruel Judge (John Forsythe) who had jailed him for contempt, in front of the crazy Judge (Jack Warden) who almost killed him in a helicopter ride. It is every bit as contrived as it sounds. Pacino even goes for a run through the streets of Baltimore in his three-piece suit and street shoes and there are numerous shots of him bounding up courthouse stairs.

Not only is Pacino just too cute in his horn-rimmed glasses and rumpled ties as he stumbles in after a hard night of fighting injustice and tries to get shaving lotion from his deodorant can (yes folks he's that tired but he'll still go into court), he is not even very good.

He has added two new expressions to the glazed over look he wore throughout *Bobby Deerfield*, but a lopsided boyish grin and the hysterical passion of moral outrage do not a subtle characterization make.

Although the camera work of Victor Kemper makes full use of the contrasts in the locations, from the gothic grandeur of the courthouse to the filthy squalor of the jail, the brutal editing seriously mars the film. The cuts are so frantic that the experience is one of watching a collage and the director seems unable to decide if the film's subject is a Hero's fight against the odds or a montage of characters, victims and abusers of power.

What saves this "underdog makes good" film is the supporting actors. Lee Strasberg, the famed acting coach, is touchingly innocent as Kirkland's senile grandfather whose pride and humanity serve as an inspiration to the lawyer. Sam Levine is an unqualified delight as the Grandfather's friend and fellow nursing home resident, adding most of the film's genuine humor. Ralph Agee brings a poignant, childlike trust and naivety to his characterization of the frightened transvestite whom Kirkland defends.



Jack Warden plays the eccentric jurist Judge Rayford who enjoys eating his lunch on the fourth floor ledge of the courthouse.

Columbia thinks this film is important. The press kit they sent out has enough paper in it to float a small town bureaucracy for a month. In one of the releases the film is said to be cast in the tradition of American justice films like *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, *In the Heat of the Night* (also directed by Jewison), and even *To Kill A Mockingbird*. Perhaps it was just as well that Columbia brought up the relationship — the film on its own would hardly invite the comparisons.

Jewison bills this film as a "terrifying comedy" and in the sense that it shows many outrageous flaws in the system of justice I suppose it is just that. But what I

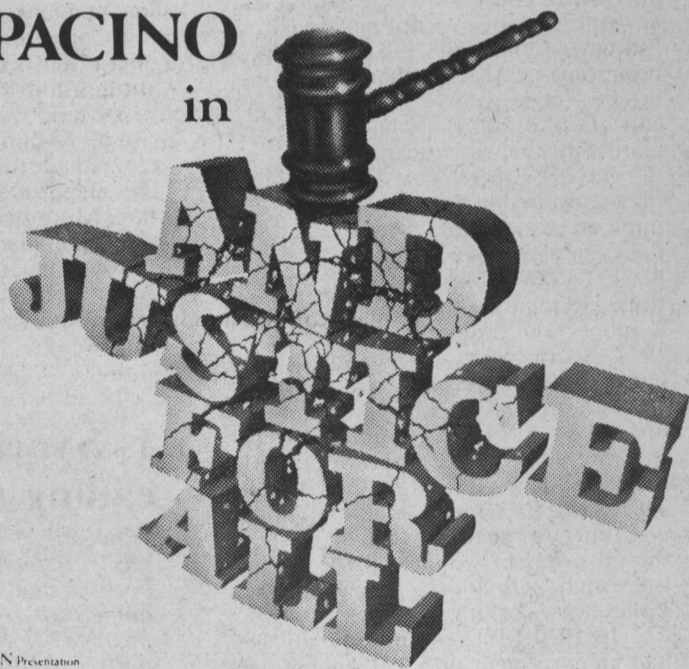
found most terrifying in this film was the brutality of its humor. There is very little wit in this movie, it relies for most of its laughs on emotional cripples involved in tragic situations. In one scene, the camera cuts from the police photos of a sadistically beaten body to a heavily jowled bull dog whose off camera owner is describing as having "that constipated look". This sharp juxtapositioning of the shocking and the ridiculous does much to defeat the humanism of the picture. Since when did it become funny to laugh at all the victims.

And Justice For All opens this Friday at the Odeon Theatre.

Once in a while
someone fights back.

AL PACINO

in



A JOE WIZAN Presentation

A NORMAN JEWISON Film

AL PACINO

"... AND JUSTICE FOR ALL" JACK WARDEN · JOHN FORSYTHE and LEE STRASBERG

Music by DAVE GRUSIN Lyrics by ALAN & MARILYN BERGMAN Written by VALERIE CURTIN & BARRY LEVINSON

Executive Producer JOE WIZAN Produced by NORMAN JEWISON & PATRICK PALMER

Directed by NORMAN JEWISON A Columbia Pictures Release Read The Ballantine Paperback



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