

STARS AL PACINO

By GERALD PRATLEY



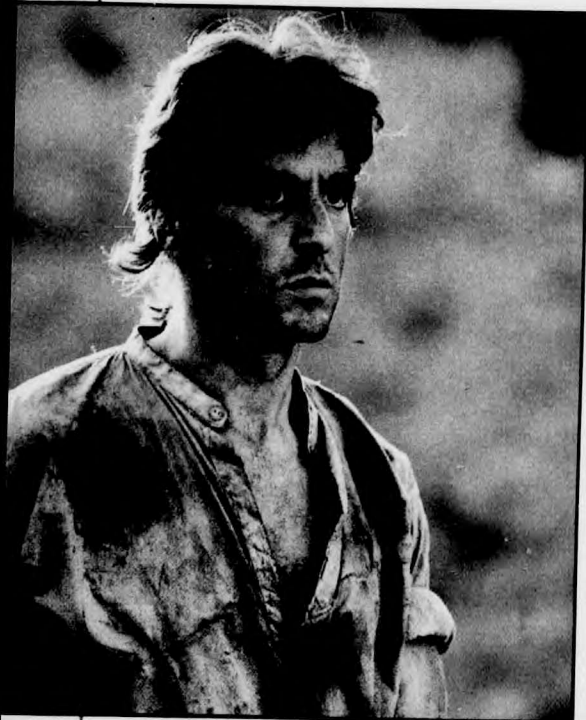
WARNER BROS.

REVOLUTION

The American War Of Independence

Although the American Revolution is an important turning point in the history of the United States, it has never received much attention from Hollywood.

There are two very good reasons for this: one, it is not a chapter of history to be treated lightly; and two, it was a matter of marketing. Until about ten years ago, Great Britain was Hollywood's largest overseas market. Nearly all of its profits came from the UK and it was thought that any film of the Revolution would be considered anti-British and would therefore fail to make money.



Now moviegoing has declined drastically in Britain. With the advent of VCRs, Canada has replaced Britain as Hollywood's largest market outside the U.S., so the fear of lost profits is not as important.

As a result of these factors there have been only two significant films made dealing primarily with the breakaway of the American colonies from the Crown: D.W. Griffiths' epic *America* in 1924, and Guy Hamilton's sparkling adaptation of Shaw's *The Devil's Disciple* with Laurence Olivier and Kirk Douglas, in 1959. Among others which touched on the subject were De Mille's *The Buccaneer* (made twice), *The Howards of Virginia* and lately on television, the mini-

series, *Washington*.

But now we have a picture **Revolution**, described as "the first major film drama to encompass the entire period of the American Revolution."

This movie comes to us full of amusing ironies. It is a British film from Goldcrest, produced by an American, Irwin Winkler, written by an American, Robert Dillon, directed by an Englishman, Hugh Hudson (*Chariots of Fire*, *Greystoke*), photographed by a Frenchman, Bernard Lutic, and starring Canadian Donald Sutherland as a British army officer, American Al Pacino as a Scottish immigrant and German actress Nastassja Kinski as a "high-spirited revolutionary."

To add to this odd assembly, **Revolution** was not filmed where it happened but in England, in King's Lynn, Norfolk and Plymouth, Devon, to be exact. The picture was announced in November 1984 and went into production in March of this year. Due to unforeseen difficulties, the original 13 million dollar budget has climbed to around the 16 million mark placing Goldcrest close to bankruptcy.

On location Winkler mused over the beginnings of the film: "Two years ago I came to realise how little I know about the American Revolution in spite of our celebration of it, and how little—*The Howards of Virginia* and the musical, 1776—there was on film.

"Our story concerns Tom Dobb, a boatman in his late 30s, his 14-year-old son, and a young woman, the daughter of a Loyalist politician, with whom he becomes involved during the entire period of the war from July 1776 to September 1783. It is set against the magnificent backgrounds of Yorktown and Valley Forge during the terrible winter of 1781."

Winkler went on to say that no historical characters will be depicted or glorified "except for one shot of George Washington in the background of a scene." He added, "This is not a historical document about the Revolution any more than *Gone With the Wind* was an historical document about the Civil War."

The choice of a British director (although **Revolution** is a British film) for such a revered American subject, raised some eyebrows, but as Hugh Hudson (a former country gentleman) says, "We are all related and I identify with the Americans. When you think that they came by the thousands from Britain to escape all that was stifling and oppressive about it, to be free from persecution and poverty only to find themselves taxed to pay for the occupying militia, well, that was the first serious blow against the "divine right" of Kings and courtiers—a nail in the coffin of the upper class."

