

GET TO KNOW YOUR GANGSTER

Brian DePalma: going for that
"extra something"

With *Scarface*, director Brian DePalma's career has taken as sharp a turn as a filmmaker can make in one movie. You'll find none of the bizarre, macabre elements of a "Brian DePalma movie." No ingenues with supernatural powers. No psycho paths slashing away at helpless prostitutes. No shrivelled hands reaching out of the grave. Not even an exploding head!

After a controversial list of credits that includes offbeat hits like *Carrie*, *Dressed to Kill* and *The Fury*, this 42-year-old director has settled down to make what he calls "a character study."

"I think a director every once in a while should go out and direct something that is away from what he normally does, to try and expand his vision to some extent. I think I've benefitted from it."

Scarface is a departure for DePalma in many ways. It's not a tale of the supernatural, like *Carrie* or *The Fury*, or a bizarre murder thriller, like *Obsession*, *Blowout* or *Dressed to Kill*. It recalls no Alfred Hitchcock movies, as did *Obsession* and *Dressed to Kill*. An epic gangster film is new turf for this New York-based filmmaker.

In the past, DePalma's films have not been taken seriously by many critics. But that will probably change with the release of the three-hour epic, *Scarface*.

"There's no question about it, this is a very serious movie. It's very dramatic, very compelling. I think it's important that it come out at Christ-

mas, and not only because it cost close to \$25 million and should be released at a time when it can make back as much money as possible. It is not a light summer movie, it's a serious movie."

Had they taken a close look at his career, the critics would have known there was more to DePalma than cut-and-slash horror. His first three Hollywood films of note, *Greetings, Hi, Mom!* and *Get to Know Your Rabbit*, were comedies. But the first of his pictures to attract wide notice was a murder thriller named *Sisters* in 1973. By now his commercial career had gathered steam. But since horror and not comedy was in vogue at the box office, DePalma became typed for homicidal maniac movies.

DePalma was eager to take on the task of directing *Scarface* because he'd always wanted to make a gangster film and he had always wanted to work with Al Pacino. His involvement with the project began when he sought out Pacino for the role that John Travolta eventually played in *Blowout*.

"When I talked to Pacino, he said he wanted to do *Scarface* and he got me a cassette of the 1932 version with Paul Muni."

DePalma had seen the film several years earlier, when his friend, director Martin Scorsese (*Taxi Driver*, *Raging Bull*) showed it to him. "It's a favourite film of Marty's. He showed it to me years before it was on cassette or anything, when it was still tied up with the Howard Hughes estate, but he got a print of it somewhere. I really liked it."

By Jim Seale

MARQUEE