

Film Review: ‘The Family’ Whacks Obsession with Mafia Movies

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on September 12, 2013 - 7:59pm

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CHICAGO – “The Godfather” saga, “Goodfellas,” “Donnie Brasco,” “The Departed” – the list of America’s obsessive adoration of organized crime and mafia movies goes on and on. Finally, one film comes along to virtually kill the genre, the almost-unwatchable “The Family.”



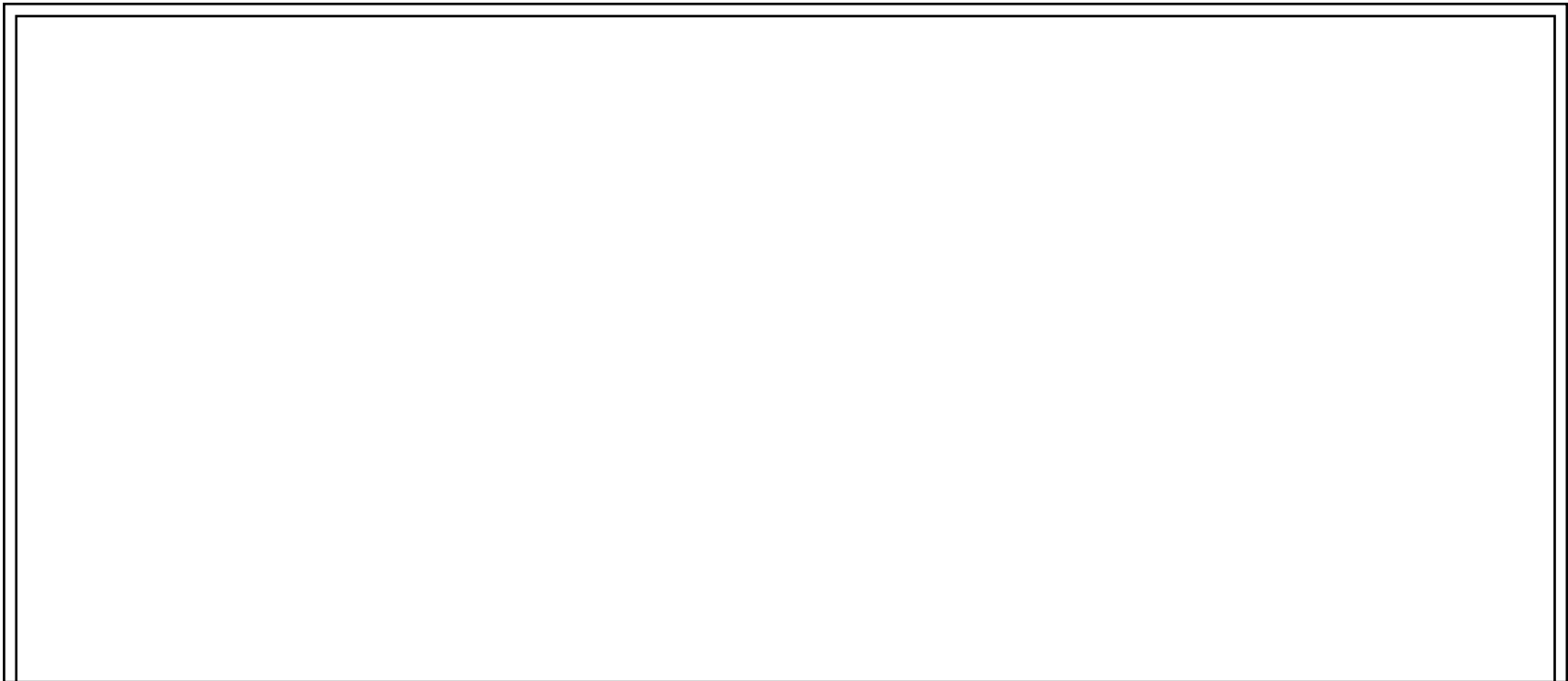
Mostly the film is damn lazy, and wastes a great cast with a phone-it-in script and formulaic performances which follows that telephone line. It basically makes these cartoonish Italian stereotypes into heroic figures, while in any other parallel world they would be viewed as dangerous sociopaths. The violence and the killings are so random and accepted, that arguments could me made that popular culture IS causing our love affair with weapons. People are beaten and killed by “the family” with baseball bats, tennis rackets, hammers and of course guns, but most irritating is that there is the assumption that a Mafia Don and his shrewish wife would train their children to be little paragons of brutish criminal behavior. And that folks, is what they call entertainment, in the board rooms of film production companies.

Robert De Niro is Giovanni Manzoni (I kid you not), a Brooklyn Don who decided to snitch on his fellow Mafia rats. This has given the FBI carte blanche to use our tax dollars to relocate the Manzoni family from the South of France to Normandy, to keep one step ahead of the bounty on Manzoni’s head. There is the wife “Maggie” (Michelle Pfeiffer), who has a criminal attitude to match her hubby’s, and the children “Belle” (Dianna Agron) and “Warren” (John D’Leo). The family are now the “Blakes,” and Giovanni (“Fred”) develops a cover as a writer.

Old habits die hard with this clan. Maggie blows up a local grocery for talking down to her, Giovanni beats up a plumber for disrespecting him, and the kids are either beating people or stealing from them. Apparently they moved to a town were no authority exists, save for their FBI surveillance team and their relocation agent, Robert (Tommy Lee Jones). This ain’t your momma’s Beaver Cleaver.

“The Family” opens everywhere on September 13th. Featuring Robert De Niro, Michelle Pfeiffer, Tommy Lee Jones, Dianna Agron, John D’Leo and Vincent Pastore. Screenplay adapted by Luc Besson and Michael Caleo. Directed by Luc Besson. Rated “R”

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Flashback: Giovanni (Robert De Niro) and Maggie (Michelle Pfeiffer) During Better Days in 'The Family'
Photo credit: Relativity Media

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