



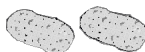
**THIS WEEK'S
COLUMN, IN
IT'S OWN WEIRD
WAY, IS MORE
OR LESS ABOUT
AL PACINO.
YOU GOT
A PROBLEM
WITH THAT?**

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SIMONE

NO SPUD 4U

THE RECRUIT



DRAGNET

NO SPUD 4U

This is the first week in a long time that I can't recall having had to shovel the snow. Is winter trying to finally tell us that we don't really live in Newfoundland, where shoveling snow is the national pastime? God I hope so. because it's right around this time of the year that I start getting pretty squirrely about the inordinate amount of time I have to spend indoors, because it's really no fun being out there.

DRAGNET (NO SPUD 4 YOU, JOE)

*I'm one of those Spuds who happen to believe that when it comes to TV concepts, messing with the past is not necessarily a good thing. Unfortunately, in the almost completely unoriginal world that is TV, messing with the past is usually all they've got. But whatever possessed a really smart man like **Dick Wolf** to think that anyone out there would want to see a remake of **Dragnet**, let alone a very unflattering one, only leads me to believe that the good old LA lifestyle must be starting to take its toll on Mr. Wolf's brain cells. Admittedly, the **Dragnet** concept is pretty close to the Golden Goose that is **Law & Order**, so the tendency on my part was to get a little interested. Add **Ed O'Neill**, who I found very interesting in last year's short lived and highly under-rated **Big Apple**, and I was actually becoming optimistic.*

IN A NUTSHELL: The 'Law' part of Law & Order I.E. two cops investigate a crime and eventually solve it, with a voiceover narration by Ed. That's about it. However, and there's really no way to sugar coat this, no matter what I think of Mr. Wolf and his formidable list of accomplishments, this show is utterly nonsensical. The real problem here for me, is that I actually remember the original **Dragnet. It was a unique combination of TV noir and docudrama. **Jack Webb**, who played the original Joe Friday, was a genius and played his character so straight and sharp you could cut cheese with it. And the entire show was more like a text book study in criminology than a "human" drama. The new **Dragnet** suffers from too much of everything the Old **Dragnet** didn't have, namely: too much direction, too much character development, too much talkiness, too much modern TV drama and too much lack of respect for the show upon which it was based. **FEARLESS FORECAST:** The NBC network will always cut **Dick Wolf** plenty of slack, because he makes them tons of money. But in this case, I would argue they're just cutting their own throats. This show is without focus or any actual personality. **Ed O'Neill** is wasted here and his partner, some emaciated young dude named **Ethan Embry**, has all the stage presence of a scatter rug. (He had the Princess of Pain in stitches, muttering things like, "This guy is so not hot, it's pathetic.") It's not a good parody of the original. And, in my opinion, it's neither bad enough to be an 'accidental comedy' nor strong enough on its own to make it past 13 eps, unless they radically change, well just about everything.**

SIMONE (WHO'S ZOOMING WHO NO SPUD 4 U)

*There was a time when an **Al Pacino** movie was something of an event, and while **Al** hasn't tumbled anywhere near as far down the Hollywood ladder as another Italian American from New York, who shall remain nameless, **Simone**, although I pray it's not true, could just be Slipup #1. (if you don't count "Revolution").*

*In **Simone**, **Al** plays an artsy fartsy Hollywood director who gets royally screwed over by a prima donna starlet (convicted shop*

lifter **Winona Ryder**), which causes his (not much of a) career to tank. As he's packing his stuff into his Jaguar to take to his Malibu beach-house to sulk, he is accosted by a wacko named Hank who swears he has conquered what's been missing in the digital realm and that it's now possible to create digital people for the screen that are indistinguishable from the real ones, yadda yadda. A few scenes later, Al commits to fabricating his own digital movie star, (in the form of a puffy lipped **Cameron Diaz**, and the movie turns into a kind of badly rendered Coen Brothers farce that goes on and on and on to the most ridiculous extremes you can imagine, because, hey, why the hell not? Al's a great actor, he can pull it off.

While it may be true that Al can pull it off because he is a great actor, he's also a smart humanoid who knows when he's been bamboozled or bribed into playing the lead in a really dumbass movie, and it shows on his face. The fundamental sadness in his demeneour appears to be betraying more than the reflection of the decline and fall of his character. It appears to be betraying serious concerns about the decline and fall his heretofore illustrious career has taken as a result of agreeing to be in this movie.

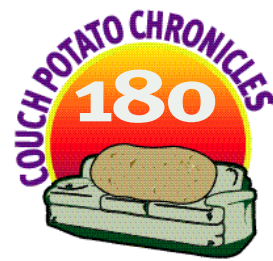
The Wife and I watched this film all the way through, but only because there was nothing else on TV at the time, and the Wife admitted freely to dozing through most of it. I, on the other hand sat like the stalwart asshole I am, thinking that maybe I was missing the point, searching desperately for whatever it was that intrigued Al enough to want to be part of this mind numbing attempt at big time Hollywood satire. Alas, I failed to see it, as I'm certain Al did. Yep. There we were, me, the Wife and the great Al Pacino, both hoodwinked by the same movie. It was a real Kodak moment alright. PS. We forgive you Al. Just don't do this to us again.

THE RECRUIT (2 SPUDS)

Here's Al again, and it's kind of like he's seeking redemption for putting me through Simone.

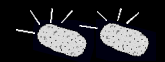
Of all the kinds of movies there are, this is my very favourite. The political thriller done right. **The Recruit** is an extremely high energy romp that takes us into the bowels of the CIA in the same sort of way that **Das Boot** took us inside the world of submarine warfare. Except for good old **Al Pacino**, who plays the Recruiter and **Colin Farrell**, who is the Recruit, there's not a lot of high priced big time talent in this film and that's just fine. The real stars here are the script, by **Roger Towne** (brother of screenwriting legend, **Robert Towne**) which is just great, the direction, by **Roger Donaldson** and the outstanding music track by somebody named **Klaus Badelt**, who obviously grew up listening to a lot of **Tangerine Dream**.

The Recruit is a strange kind of caper movie and because every Spud should see this, film 'cause it's entertaining as hell, I'm not going to tell you anything at all about it. But I will say that this is the first big time thriller I have seen in a long, long time that wasn't riddled with logic flaws or screamed out for excessive amounts of suspended disbelief. It's tight as a drum from start to finish, (albeit a little over the top here and there, mostly because of Al). It's so well put together that it carries you along rather effortlessly and leaves you feeling refreshed instead of tuckered out at the end. In my (humble) opinion, it succeeds on every level and even though it is about the CIA and its role in the greater scheme of things, it never lapses into any Yankee jingoism, which augers well for its money making capabilities in the world market.



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THE ESSENTIAL ROGER DONALDSON



This guy is an Aussie with quite a varied portfolio of work. The Must-Sees on this list are marked with (MS) Duh.

THE RECRUIT (2003) (MS)
THIRTEEN DAYS (2000)
DANTE'S PEAK (1997)
SPECIES (1995) (MS)
THE GETAWAY (1994)
WHITE SANDS (1992)
CADILLAC MAN (1990)
COCKTAIL (1988)
NO WAY OUT (1987)
MARIE (1985)
THE BOUNTY (1984) (MS)
SMASH PALACE (1981) (MS)
NUTCASE (1980)
SLEEPING DOGS (1977)

A TALE OF TWO OSCARS

The following email correspondence took place during the past week between Mike Elliot, Mike Waldin, Andrew Smith and me, after a rather heated dinner debate around the simple question, "How many Best Actor Academy Awards has Al Pacino won? Guys, you will relate. Ladies, it will deepen your understanding of guys, without necessarily increasing your appreciation for them.

EMAIL # 1 : ME TO MIKE ELLIOT/ANDREW SMITH

Andrew wins. Pacino nominated a number of times but only won for Scent Of A Woman. Confirmation available below. (Academy Awards url attached)

EMAIL # 2: FROM ME TO MICHAEL WALDIN (COVERING MY ASS, CAUSE I FORGOT TO COPY WALDIN)

Here's the issue. At dinner last week, Elliot said that Al Pacino won more than one Academy Award. Smith jumped all over him and said that Pacino only won for Scent Of A Woman. I went home, looked it up and confirmed that, in fact he did win for Scent of A Woman and that was it. Elliot rebutted, pointing out that he never specified "U.S. Academy Award" and that Pacino did, in fact win two British Academy Awards for Dog Day Afternoon and Godfather II. Since I am the mediator here, and therefore neutral, the final opinion is with you. Smith thinks this is a cheap, win-at-any-cost ploy by Elliot. Elliot obviously takes a more panglobal view of the Academy Awards. So the deciding vote is with you. Hate to put you on the spot, but that's the way it is here in The Big City. Please relay your answer to all concerned.

EMAIL # 3: FROM MICHAEL WALDIN TO ME, MIKE ELLIOT & ANDREW SMITH

Aren't two imported beers riding on this? Jeez, the pressure! Well, when you do a search on Google for Academy Awards, the British Academy of Film and Television Arts, BAFTA, pops up twice in 100. The words "British" and "Academy" and "Awards" are highlighted, like a cheesy kidnapper's note, without making an actual claim to the title of Academy Awards, which is a registered name. BAFTA is known as Britain's answer to the Academy Awards, or the British Academy Awards, because the real Academy Awards provide the convenient, familiar reference point and tells people what a BAFTA is in a kind of euro film context. Hey! Sounds like positioning theory! But in my opinion that doesn't make it an Academy Award. In my books, there is only one. So if the question is which one is branded Academy Awards, I say the one from Hollywood. If it's about dinner and beer, well that could be another story. The jury finds for Smith.

EMAIL #4: FROM MIKE ELLIOT TO ME, ANDREW SMITH & MICHAEL WALDIN

I want it on record that I formally and vehemently object to what I think is a somewhat suspect ruling by a judge whom I only met once and has a close personal relationship with the other bettor or bettee... but I will abide by this ruling in the interest of not appearing as a cheap skate trying to escape on a technicality - but all I can say is that on the web site Jim Murray referred us to supposedly prove Andrew won actually refers to Pacino as winning the "British Academy Award" and that as citizens of a commonwealth country my assertion of being technically correct should be upheld and righteous!! Bottom line...I will buy his beer at the earliest opportunity!! (don't expect any free condoms from me Michael!)

EMAIL #5: FROM ME TO ANDREW SMITH, MIKE ELLIOTT & MICHAEL WALDIN

Congratulations to A Smith. In a purely objective sense, it appears to me that Waldin's logic is sound as a dollar in this instance. But I think Elliot's point needs to be acknowledged here as well, as I thought the playing of the "Commonwealth Card" was a bold and innovative stroke on his part. However, in our hearts we all know that The Academy Awards really does mean one thing and that is The Oscar. If we were having this chat in America right now, there would be no murkiness revolving around this issue, as none of us would even be able to find England on a map of Western Europe. The only real question that remains is how do we break the sad news to A Pacino that if he ever makes another movie like Simone, which I saw last night, he might very well earn a lifetime Oscar exemption.

EMAIL #6: FROM ANDREW SMITH TO ME AND MICHAEL WALDIN

Can we go back to the "Where's Waldin?" moniker on all emails relating to Waldin? I find it rather humorous.



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SPUD RATING LEGEND	
	Absolute Must See
	Check It Out / Was Worth It
	Take It Or Leave It
	Just Plain Sucks

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COUCH POTATO CHRONICLES
E-Mail: onwords@sympatico.ca