

Sometimes I can't sleep... - an interview with Al Pacino

Have you experienced sleep deprivation like your character?

Yeah, sure I have. Sometimes it's purposeful. You're out for a few nights and I didn't want to go to sleep. But I think I can relate to the sleep deprivation. There were periods in my life where I found it difficult to either go to sleep or get up early after walking around in the middle of the night.

Recently Winona Ryder said in a story that you have 2 o'clock in the morning conversations.

I wish! I wish...

Has that happened to you?

When I'm very tired at 2 in the morning I guess I could call a costar, but I don't. I don't know why. There's something about

the nighttime and getting back to sleep and trying to do things that are not stimulation to get you to...they say you should get up and walk around or start to read or something cause reading is usually relaxing especially if it's something that's sort of innocuous. You read it and start to fade out. So a phone call might be too stimulating. Hey, listen - I'm recommending things to do for non-sleepers.

I'm curious as to, if at all, how much you referenced the character of Vincent Hanna from HEAT because I see a relationship between the two.

You do? Really? It wasn't in my



Al Pacino

W „Bezsenności” zwaśnie na ekranach kin

mind. Maybe it was something else. LA cop maybe? The only thing I can say perhaps is that I think both of these characters are very good at what they did. I mean Vincent Hanna was a...the real character was a top-of-the-line detective. Really. He had his own world. He did things by his rules. And I felt that

this was part of Dormer, Will Dormer, was. And I thought he was among his...elite. That's where that whole thing with that first scene is. Diagnosing the dead girl and everyone around is watching his technique. So I took that opportunity and that how I showed him as a "super-cop."

You've become kind of an iconic cop figure. Are you aware of that reputation? And if so, how much of that was a part in your choosing the role?

Well, I think that there are times when you people seem to see me in a certain kind of role so you want to do that from time to time. I made the decision because of Chris Nolan. And loved his work so much with MEMENTO and his approach to making films. That was the biggest reason I did the picture and again I liked the idea of a character who is in conflict. Like a good/bad guy. I like the good/bad guys.

How are your intuitions?

That's very interesting because it reminds me of You know there's been movies...I knew when I did certain films, like when I met Frank



Serpico, somehow I wanted to play him. It's almost like something you want to be. I didn't get that at all. I wish I did, but I didn't. I tried. But it was a strange feeling. I had that desire. I felt there was something that I was identifying with in him, something in his eyes. There were other people I've played and I just didn't respond in that way. So it is an intuitive kind of thing. I try to listen to it. Cause every time you don't listen to it...now, you don't want to be too quick to judge, but at the same time, it's a good thing to listen to. Hey, I'm still here you know?

Could you talk a little bit about working with Robin, both on-screen and off?

This is what I get for trying to be funny like Robin. I just love being around him. I'd like to see him personally after the picture and we'll try to get together. He's

a very bright, caring guy about the world and things around him. He's well-informed. And he's just so fun to be around cause he's so sweet and treats you right. I can't say enough about him. And as far as funny goes, he's out there.

Out of all your movie roles, which one would you say hits most to home and reflects you most as a person?

I was gonna say THE GEORGE WASHINGTON STORY. But I didn't do that. I-I-I have to think, and the classic answer you hear all the time, is that some of them are closer than others. But I really don't believe that there's...because there's so many gray areas. It's comfortable to me to look at it like a painter looks at an object to paint. Sometimes it's odd because the character that you think is the farthest from you turn out to be some of the best work you've done. And sometimes the characters that are the

closest to you don't make the best...don't take the same step. It's hard to know. Desire and passion to do a role doesn't mean that you're...that it's you. It's just like a desire to paint something. It's a complicated paradox sort of and I'm not smart enough to really understand it. I don't know. If I feel that there's something that there's a chance for me to do then I will maybe get a performance that I like. Sometimes I hit, sometimes I miss. That's all I go by.

See what I learned early in my life, as an actor, is that you try different parts in order to see if any of them will work and that's the benefit of repertoire. I mention that to young actors, to go into repertory work because you get a chance to play different roles. And you yourself find out what some of the pitfalls and you read a role on the page and say I could never do that and you find that you rehearse it and work at it and you're able to get to it. Then the roles where you



say I can really sink my teeth into that, you do and nothing happens. And the only way you learn that is through the actuation. Just do it. So it's important to do that. It gets tougher to do that on the main stage, if you know what I mean. Out there in the commercial world, you want to take chances but you don't want to get burned for them. Film is a medium where you're trying to serve an audience and appease them.

You did enough running, jumping and stunts in this movie to make Sly and Arnold jealous. How do you get ready for that?

Well, you go into the hospital for a few weeks, and you have people oil you and massage you and tie you up and mummify you, and then you pray, and then somebody says Action! and pray again and you go. That's all I know. It was really... I couldn't believe it as I was doing it. I said, Al, your legs are moving! One time, I was a young guy too, I was

playing softball in the park. I hit the ball and everything was the same, except it took me twice as long to get to first base. I wondered why. I thought, those trees are not going by as fast as they used to. It's just this thing. You do know that you have to get in shape to do it. You have to get in shape. I did one where I had to chase Bobby De Niro in HEAT, and I got up and pulled out of the camper at 3 or 4 o'clock and didn't stretch out and BOOM there goes my hamstring. did one take, and I said, Gee, I feel like the old Al, but I am the old Al...I have memories of when I did it and I said gee, sure I'll do another one or two. And then the third one it was over. And that was unfortunate because we had to stop for about a week and a half. They had somebody else do some running. So you learn from your experiences. So when I was doing this stuff here, I prepared. Cause I'm not the kind of guy who when he's not working, works out and stuff. When I get the urge to exercise, I lie down till it

passes. That's Oscar Wilde.

And why do you think that is?

First of all, I appreciate your comments and...I guess I like to do it and I still get something from it. It gets tougher to do. In one respect it does, in the other respect it gets easier and I'll tell you how. Movies are a lot of waiting around, and what I think I've learned to do a little bit, is deal with the downtime on a movie. I've found ways to help me get through the day of waiting. When I was a younger actor, waiting was impossible, and movies to me...doing movies, was all about that. I wouldn't do films early in my career because of it, I'd spend a couple of years between doing movies, and now I've found a way to deal with that waiting time. I've found a life that takes place during it. You learn how to distribute your time, I think that's the biggest thing I've learned in doing films. Every time I make a movie, as that last shot





comes, you think that's gonna be it for a while. I'm very fortunate to be making movies, to still be offered films, I really, really mean it when I say that, but at the same time, it's a comforting thought in thinking that maybe I could just float around for a while. I think I've earned that in the last couple of years.

A quote recently said that one of the movies you wish you hadn't made was THE GODFATHER III. Was that a true reference to something you said?

I never said that. I don't like to confirm or deny anything usually. But since we're here talking about that, I never said that. I did think that things changed with GODFATHER III. I think that at the heart of it, GODFATHER III was a different script to start with, but what people didn't foresee is that there were difficulties in the negotiations with different actors. Because of that, the basic story of GODFATHER III was changed, and it was moved into another place, the script was rewritten entirely, and

that was fine, because the script was very good. But it wasn't the way it was originally. In the original script, it took more access to some of the themes and lines of GODFATHER and GODFATHER II. It made it different. Francis Coppola can operate in any kind of crisis, he has the ability to change course, and he changed course in this picture. He took a thing that would've closed down most movies and reinvented it, so I have to give him credit for that.

How do you cope with the life of a busy actor, being away from home so often?

Well, you take the pictures that remind you of your life, you take a couple of people that I have working with me. The wonderful thing about movies is that you meet new people. Part of the thing a lot of actors feel is that feeling of getting together as a family to do the film.

How do you feel when you see actors that are thought of as being in a lesser calibre as far as actual talent getting more money for the roles

they play, whether it is based on looks or whatnot, while some of the truly talented actors miss out on those huge paydays?

Now what are we gonna do about this? I honestly think that things are the way they are because that's what people want and it's working. A lot of these movie stars are very good at what they do, and they're all very gifted. They project a certain kind of thing that makes audiences come, and that's a special thing. It should be rewarded and applauded, because not many people can do that the way they do it. I'm a great admirer of this.

When did you first know you were famous?

When I was on the street corner once, and there was a really attractive redhead standing there, next to me. And I turned, and I just kind of looked at her, just as a gesture of hello. And she said Hi Michael. And I thought, I'm not Michael, but then again, maybe I am also, so I'm gonna go home and have a cup of tea, because who knows what this could lead to. ■