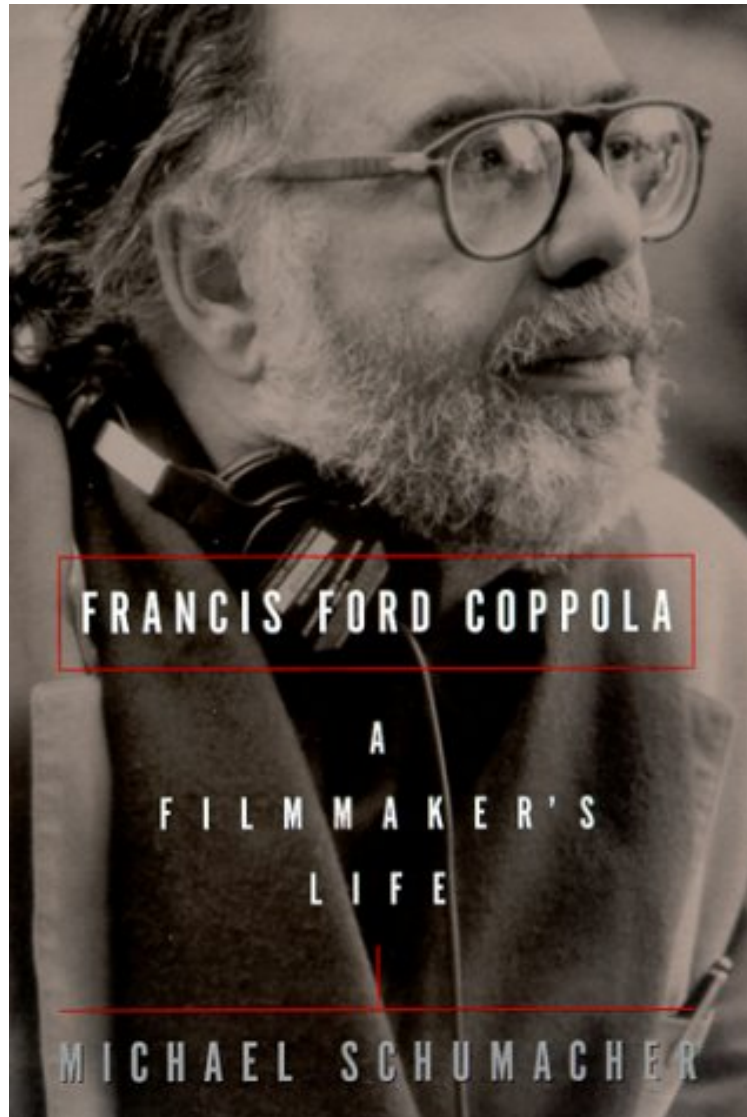


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Francis Ford Coppola: A Filmmaker's Life

Michael Schumacher

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Michael Schumacher : Francis Ford Coppola: A Filmmaker's Life before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Francis Ford Coppola: A Filmmaker's Life:

1 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Francis Ford Coppola: Hollywood Godfather of Creative Genius By C. M Mills Francis Ford Coppola was born in a great year for the movies! In 1939 the director was born to Carmen Coppola and his wife Italia. His parents were creative-Carmen was a musician in the Detroit Symphony and later in the New York Philharmonic under the baton of Arturo Toscanini. Carmen would later win a musical Oscar for the Godfather films. Francis was a younger son to his older brother who was everything Francis wasn't: handsome and

well liked at school. His sister Talia Shire would later be a movie star in his own films most notably the Godfather classics. Coppola graduated from Hofstra and received a master's degree in film from the UCLA film school. His early apprenticeship in film was under the tutelage of famed B director Roger Corman. Coppola emerged from nudie films and small pictures to direct "Finian's Rainbow" and began to emerge as a talented maverick whose creative/artistic wings were flying in the early 1970s. Despite arduous business and creative troubles he won fame and fortune and several Oscars for the Godfather films. His most controversial film was "Apocalypse Now" his take on the Vietnam conflict based on Joseph Conrad's novella "The Heart of Darkness." Coppola's career has more ups and downs than a roller coaster as he founded Zoetrope Films in San Francisco and went to themat in countless donybrook battles with studio executives. Coppola reminds me of Orson Welles in that he achieved fame early and then had a difficult career in tinsel town. He is a man of massive ego; intelligence; daring and creative attention to the details/minutia of film. He was unfaithful to his wife Ellie; grieved over a son yet emerges from this biography as a flawed but good man. He is gregarious and honest and a good friend. His friendship assisted George Lucas in launching his storied career! I like Coppola's rich textured films. His screenwriting from Patton to his latest project is outstanding. This meticulous account of Coppola's career in the Hollywood jungle will not appeal to everyone. Countless pages are devoted to business deals, legal disputes and the difficulties encountered by Coppola in making his films. For me who loves the Godfather and FFC this is a fine book. Anyone who seeks to explore this brilliant man's career would do well to begin with Schumacher's fine biography. 15 of 15 people found the following review helpful. Schumacher got it right By Jay Shoemaker I work for Francis Coppola today and know him pretty well. Michael Schumacher's book really captures the spirit and energy of this fascinating and complex man. I have read most of the other Coppola books and none combines an understanding for both the human and artistic side of Francis. This book, like no other I have read, reflects the passion, energy and chaos of the Coppola world. I can tell you from the inside there is no more exciting experience than being part of the Coppola energy. Francis loves to tackle the "impossible" and never gives up. I particularly like this book because it is clear that the author, like myself, has great respect for this whirlwind of a man. 2 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Apocalypse When By Lorenzo Scarfalloto I thought this biography was detailed mostly around this film. On page 262, first paragraph, I think Mr. Coppola would agree to mention the fact that "The Chief Phillips" made a life last attempt to end Willard after getting speared on the boat by Kurtz's mongrels. Overall, the book was a magnificent biography of an Italian-American film maker of our time.

"So you still want to direct films?" Coppola wearily asked one of his assistants after a long day of shooting on The Godfather. "Always remember three things. Have the definitive script ready before you shoot. There'll always be some changes, but they should be small ones. Second, work with people you trust and feel secure with. Remember good crew people you've worked with on other films and get them for your film. Third, make your actors feel very secure so they can do their job well." Pausing for a moment, Coppola considered his advice. "I've managed to do none of these things on this film," he concluded. Francis Ford Coppola is one of the seminal filmmakers of the generation that changed the way movies are made. Five of the films he's worked on are listed among the American Film Institute's top 100 films ever made. He is a man who's spent his life seeking to realize his own artistic vision even as he acknowledges the force that truly drives Hollywood--box office receipts. Francis Ford Coppola: A Filmmaker's Life is the first complete picture of the flawed cinematic genius who directed the Godfather trilogy, Apocalypse Now, The Conversation, and other distinctive films--some wildly successful, some disastrous. Coppola is on every film aficionado's list of Hollywood's greatest directors. But he is renowned nearly as much for his mistakes as for his masterpieces, for his bluster as for his brilliance, for the money he has lost as for the fortunes he has made. In an era when playing it safe seems to be the credo of the Hollywood/Wall Street complex, Coppola is a driven, unpredictable renegade who has repeatedly gambled everything in an effort to bring his ideas to life, regardless of the cost. In Francis Ford Coppola, we hear the entire story of this man's career covered in more detail than ever before: from his apprenticeship under Roger Corman to his winning a Director's Guild Lifetime Achievement Award. Along the way, we learn how he turned a pulp Mafia novel into a cinematic classic, how he almost literally killed himself during the filming of Apocalypse Now, and how he confirmed Hollywood's predictions about him, with various flops and follies along the way. In the hands of biographer Michael Schumacher--who gained unprecedented access to Coppola's friends, critics, peers, casts, and crews--the story of Francis Ford Coppola makes for irresistible reading and the first complete picture of this complex, conflicted genius.

.com The terrible fact about Francis Ford Coppola's career is that it will always be divided evenly in half, down a line called Apocalypse Now. Before that film is prodigious promise--an Academy Award for writing Patton, two uncannily fine Godfather movies, and the Antonioni-esque smallness of The Conversation. After, there is telescoping debt, talk of reinventing the studios, and multiple, hollow exercises in style. If that's a tough assessment, it's one borne out by this thick, fair biography. The author, Michael Schumacher, who has previously published books on Allen Ginsberg and Eric Clapton, makes much of Coppola's boyhood spell of polio, from which he emerged miraculously healthy and movie-mad. He orchestrated his life thereafter with a consequent mania, as though making up for lost time. While still

in film school, he sold screenplays and made Z-budget drive-in movies for Roger Corman. In two years, he wrote 12 scripts for 7 Arts, and in the mid-1960s started a family, made *You're a Big Boy Now* and *Finian's Rainbow*, pushed George Lucas to write *THX1138*, founded American Zoetrope, and took a job, purely for the money, directing *The Godfather*. The chapters on *Apocalypse Now* are the book's highlights, and without saying as much they explain the spent quality at the core of Coppola's films in the next two decades. After hurricanes in Manila, Marlon Brando, and the ungodly beauty of those helicopters at dawn, whose career wouldn't wing straight to twilight? --Lyll Bush

From Publishers Weekly This is not an authorized biography, though it often reads like one because Schumacher systematically defends director and screenwriter Coppola against the critics who have panned his films as contrived, excessively violent or a triumph of style over substance. Still, he presents a brisk and astute portrait of one of the most influential directors of the past 30 years, adept at both operatic blockbusters (*The Godfather*, *Apocalypse Now*) and smaller personal movies (John Grisham's *The Rainmaker*). The inner man remains elusive, although Schumacher delves deeply into such personal crises as Coppola's childhood polio, during which he recuperated by making home movies; his protracted affair with a young, unnamed screenwriter, which nearly wrecked his marriage; and the devastating impact of his son Gian-Carlo's tragic death in a boating accident in 1986. The book's real strength lies in its flavorful behind-the-scenes re-creation of the making of all of Coppola's movies. Cameos of Nicholas Cage, Marlon Brando, Winona Ryder, Fred Astaire and many other stars nearly steal the show. Schumacher tends to portray Coppola as an uncompromising visionary who waged a career-long battle to free himself from the Hollywood dream factory's constrictive commercial dictates. Yet the lingering question is why the relentlessly driven filmmaker abandoned his creative, auteuristic endeavors in favor of safer, more profitable work-for-hire films. In any case, Coppola fans will rejoice. 16 pages of photos. (Nov.)

Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Coppola made his reputation as a director by winning back-to-back Best Picture Oscars for *The Godfather*, Parts 1 and 2. The exuberant Coppola was like a godfather to the new American cinema movement of the 1970s. Since then, contend critics, he has not fulfilled his early promise, eclipsed by Steven Spielberg, Martin Scorsese, and others. Schumacher (There but for Fortune: A Life of Phil Ochs) has written a comprehensive review of Coppola's turbulent career with the cooperation of the director and many of his colleagues. Topics include Coppola's start directing nudie movies, his apprenticeship under B-movie mogul Roger Corman, and his friendship with George Lucas. On the personal side, Schumacher describes the involvement of Coppola's family in his films, including father Carmine, wife Eleanor (herself a gifted filmmaker), and son Gio, whose death in a boating accident devastated Coppola. Film buffs will enjoy the juicy details on the making of the *Godfather* films and anecdotes on the chaotic shoot of *Apocalypse Now*. Coppola is a larger-than-life subject, and this book deserves a large audience in public and academic libraries.

AS Stephen Rees, Levittown Regional Lib., PA
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