

THE DEPARTED _____ 8/10

Brutal inside view of mob/cop culture

Screenplay by William Monahan

Directed by Martin Scorsese

Leonardo DiCaprio ...	Billy Costigan
Matt Damon ...	Colin Sullivan
Jack Nicholson ...	Frank Costello
Mark Wahlberg ...	Dignam
Martin Sheen ...	Oliver Queenan
Ray Winstone ...	Mr. French
Vera Farmiga ...	Madolyn
Anthony Anderson ...	Brown
Alec Baldwin ...	Ellerby

Speaking of insiders, *Departed* is the ultimate story of parallel universes of cop culture and crime culture, with spies on each side. The setting is Massachusetts, the local Mob leader is Frank Costello (Jack Nicholson) and the state-police leader of the organized-crime task force (OTF) [my acronym] is Oliver Queenan (Martin Sheen).

They're playing a chess match with young recruits, particularly Billy Costigan (Leonardo DiCaprio) and Colin Sullivan (Matt Damon). These two become the cream of the crop of a graduating class of Massachusetts State Police (staties); each has a past that makes him susceptible to the entreaties of the crime/cop leadership.

Colin was once an altar boy who Costello psychologically dominated then turned toward the criminal way; Colin becomes Costello's plant on the inside of the OTF. Billy comes from a family of small time crooks, and decides to become a cop to satisfy an unfocused anger; lacking any motivation otherwise Billy accepts the dangerous offer to go undercover in the Costello organization for the OTF.

The plot is thus a complicated mosaic complete with a love interest in the form of a beautiful and engaging police psychologist Madolyn (Vera Farmiga). She's a ray of sunshine in this brutal, unfeeling world, who truly believes she can help. Both the emotionally crippled Colin and the idealistic, yet impossibly burdened, Billy find solace there if not love.

I enjoyed the inside picture of a state policeman's mind—you see conflicting emotions: the will to violence, primal fear, passion for service, *esprit de corps*, need for respect, and so on. What tips one mind this way and another mind that way? As a broad observation, cops and criminals have more in common than one realizes... at least when crime threatens the pocketbooks of who the police truly work for.

The exceptional performances of the actors and the authenticity of the writing and directing, not to mention the cinematography and other artistic nuances, make all 151 minutes of this film completely captivating. You just know life on the mean streets of Boston is just like this.

The movie has the gritty, local-color feel of *Homicide: Life on the Street* combined with the explosive-blood flourishes of a Quentin Tarantino film. A lot of mayhem here, underscoring a sense of life that disturbs you for its plausibility.

Finally, Martin Scorsese wins his Oscar for best picture and best director of 2006. It's first class.

Once again, Jack Nicholson takes on a role that threatens to steal the show. Fortunately, performances by DiCaprio and Damon and the rest of a fine cast balance out Jack's overwhelming impact. He (Nicholson) did win some non-Oscar awards, but so did many of the other actors. Mark Wahlberg was the only actor in the movie nominated for an Oscar (best supporting), and he plays an interesting, energetic part. Is he a good cop or a bad cop, a good guy or a bad guy?

Well worth watching but spare the kids. Also, to avoid depression, consider grabbing a pick-me-upper like *The Sound of Music* for your second feature.