

Francis Ford Coppola

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Francis Ford Coppola at [Cannes 2001](#)

Birth name	Francis Ford Coppola
Born	April 7, 1939 (age 67)  Detroit, Michigan, USA
Spouse(s)	Eleanor Coppola (1963-)

Academy Awards

Best Original Screenplay
1971 *Patton*
Best Adapted Screenplay
1972 *The Godfather*
1974 *The Godfather Part II*
Best Picture
1974 *The Godfather Part II*
Best Director
1974 *The Godfather Part II*
Nominated: Best Director
1972 *The Godfather*
1979 *Apocalypse Now*
1990 *The Godfather: Part III*

Golden Globe Awards

Best Director - Motion Picture
1973 *The Godfather*
1980 *Apocalypse Now*
Best Motion Picture - Drama
1973 *The Godfather*
Best Screenplay
1973 *The Godfather*

BAFTA Awards

Best Direction
1979 *Apocalypse Now*

Francis Ford Coppola (born April 7, 1939) is a five-time Academy Award winning American film director, producer, and screenwriter. Coppola is also a vintner, magazine publisher, and hotelier. He earned an MFA in film directing from the prestigious UCLA Film School. He is most renowned for directing the highly regarded *Godfather* trilogy, *The Conversation*, and the Vietnam War epic *Apocalypse Now*.

Life and career (1960 to 1978)

Francis Ford Coppola was born to Carmine Coppola, at the time first flautist for the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, and his wife Italia in Detroit, Michigan on April 7, 1939, the second of three children. Two years later Carmine became first flautist for the NBC Symphony Orchestra and the family moved back to suburban Long Island, New York where Francis spent the remainder of his childhood. Coppola had polio as a boy, leaving him bedridden for large periods of his childhood, and allowing him to indulge his imagination with homemade puppet theater productions. Using his father's 8mm movie camera, he began making movies when he was 10. He studied theatre at Hofstra University prior to earning an MFA in film directing from UCLA Film School where he made numerous short films. While in UCLA's Film Department Francis met Jim Morrison, whose music was used later in one of Francis' most famous movies, *Apocalypse Now*.

In the early 1960s, he started his professional career making low-budget films with Roger Corman and writing screenplays. His first notable motion picture was made for Corman, the low-budget *Dementia 13*. After graduating to mainstream motion pictures with *You're a Big Boy Now*, Coppola was offered the reins of the movie version of the Broadway musical *Finian's Rainbow*, starring Petula Clark, in her first American film, and veteran Fred Astaire. Producer Jack Warner was nonplussed by Coppola's shaggy-haired, bearded, "hippie" appearance and generally left him to his own devices. He took his cast to the Napa Valley for much of the outdoor shooting, but these scenes were in sharp contrast to those obviously filmed on a Hollywood soundstage, resulting in a disjointed look to the film. Dealing with outdated material at a time when the popularity of film musicals was already on the downslide, Coppola's end result was only semi-successful, but his work with Clark no doubt contributed to her Golden Globe Best Actress nomination. During this period, Coppola lived for a time with his wife and growing family in Mandeville Canyon in Brentwood, California, according to author Peter Biskind in *Easy Riders, Raging Bulls* (Touchstone Books, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1998).



On the set of *Finian's Rainbow* with Petula Clark

In 1971, Coppola won an Academy Award for his screenplay for *Patton*. However, his name as a filmmaker was made as the co-writer and director of *The Godfather* (1972) and *The Godfather Part II* (1974), which both won the Academy Award for Best Picture — the latter being the first sequel to do so.

In between *The Godfather* and *The Godfather Part II*, Coppola directed *The Conversation*, a story of a paranoid wiretapping and surveillance expert (played by Gene Hackman) who finds himself caught up in a possible murder plot. *The Conversation* was released to theaters in 1974 and was also nominated for Best Picture, resulting in Coppola being the first filmmaker to have directed two films competing for the same Best Picture Oscar since the annual number of nominees was cut down to five in 1945. While *The Godfather Part II* won the Oscar, *The Conversation* won the 1974 *Palme d'Or* at the Cannes Film Festival.

During this period he also wrote the screenplay for the critically and commercially unsuccessful 1974 adaptation of F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby* (starring Mia Farrow and Robert Redford) and produced George Lucas's breakthrough film, *American Graffiti*. Also during this period, Coppola invested in San Francisco's *City Magazine*, hired an all-new staff, including mob daughter and writer Susan Berman, and named himself publisher. Although critically acclaimed, it was short lived. The magazine floundered until 1976 when Coppola published its last issue.

Coppola often worked with family members on his films. He put his two sons into *The Godfather* as extras during the street fight scene and Don Corleone's funeral. His sister, Talia Shire, played Connie Corleone in all three Godfather films, the last of which his daughter Sofia also appeared in. His father Carmine co-wrote much of the music in *The Godfather*, *The Godfather Part II*, and *Apocalypse Now*.

Career: 1979 to present

Following the success of *The Godfather*, *The Conversation* and *The Godfather Part II*, Coppola set about filming *Apocalypse Now*, a version of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, with the setting changed from colonial Africa to the Vietnam War. Before

setting off to make the film, Coppola went to his mentor Roger Corman for advice about shooting in the Philippines, since Corman himself was familiar with shooting a film in that area. It was said that all Corman advised Coppola was "Don't go". The creation of the film went into Hollywood's history books as one of its most notorious fiascos when the production was a disaster from the start, being beset by numerous problems, including typhoons, nervous breakdowns, Martin Sheen's heart attack, and an unprepared Marlon Brando with a bloated appearance (which Coppola attempted to hide by shooting him in the shadows). It was delayed so often it was nicknamed *Apocalypse Whenever*. The film was equally lauded and hated by critics when it finally appeared in 1979, and the cost nearly bankrupted Coppola's nascent studio American Zoetrope.

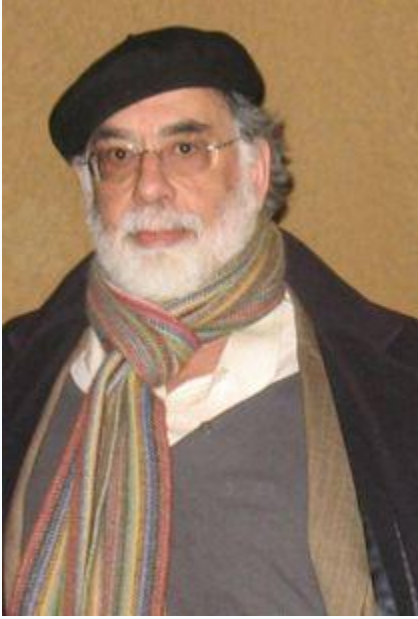
However, like *Citizen Kane*, its reputation has grown in time and *Apocalypse Now* is regarded by many as a masterpiece of the New Hollywood era. Roger Ebert considers it to be the finest film on the Vietnam war and included it on his list for the 2002 Sight and Sound poll for the greatest movie of all time.


To many, *Apocalypse Now* represents Coppola's highpoint, a feat he has been unable to equal or exceed ever since. The 1991 documentary film *Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse*, directed by Eleanor Coppola (Francis's wife), Fax Bahr, and George Hickenlooper, chronicles the difficulties the crew went through making *Apocalypse Now*, and features behind the scenes footage filmed by Eleanor.

After filming *Apocalypse Now* Coppola famously stated:

"We were in the jungle, there were too many of us, we had access to too much money, too much equipment, and little by little, we went insane."

Despite the setbacks and ill health Coppola suffered during the making of *Apocalypse Now*, he kept up with film projects, presenting in 1981 a restoration of the 1927 film *Napoléon* that was edited and released in the United States by American Zoetrope. However it wasn't until the experimental musical *One from the Heart* (1982) that he returned to directing. Unfortunately, the film was a huge failure, although it developed a cult following in later years.



 Coppola in 2007.

In 1986 Coppola, with George Lucas, directed the Michael Jackson film for Disney theme parks, *Captain Eo*, which at the time was the most expensive film per minute ever made.

In 1990 he completed the *Godfather* series with *The Godfather Part III* which, while not as critically acclaimed as the first two movies, was still a box office success. Some reviewers criticized the casting of Coppola's daughter Sofia, who stepped into a role abandoned by Winona Ryder just as filming began. Sofia Coppola had previously appeared in her father's films, but her performance in *The Godfather Part III* was subjected to critical ridicule, much of it mean-spirited. Sofia Coppola has since gone on to become a well-respected director in her own right.

His eldest son, Gian-Carlo Coppola, was in the early stages of a film production career when he was killed on May 26, 1986 in a speedboat driven by Griffin O'Neal. Coppola's surviving son, Roman Coppola, is a filmmaker and music video director, directing his first feature film, *CQ* and videos for The Strokes.

Coppola's father, Carmine, was a renowned composer and musician, and wrote the scores of many of his son's films; his nephew Nicolas Cage is an acclaimed actor. His other nephew is Jason Schwartzman of *Rushmore* fame.

In recent years, Coppola with his family has extended his talents to winemaking in California's Napa Valley at the Rubicon Estate Winery, producing a line of specialty pastas and pasta sauces, and opening resorts in Guatemala and Belize, inspired by his accommodation in the Philippines during the making of *Apocalypse Now*, with decor supervised by Eleanor Coppola.

In 1997, Coppola founded Zoetrope All-Story, a flashy literary magazine that publishes short stories. The magazine has published fiction by T.C. Boyle and Amy Bloom and essays by David Mamet, Steven Spielberg, and Salman Rushdie. Since its founding, the magazine has grown in reputation to become one of the premier American journals of literary fiction. Coppola serves as founding editor and publisher of All-Story.

In 2001, Coppola re-released *Apocalypse Now* as *Apocalypse Now Redux*, restoring several sequences lost from the original 1979 cut of the film thereby expanding its length to 200 minutes.

The director is based in the San Francisco Bay Area where he co-owns the Rubicon restaurant alongside fellow San Franciscan Robin Williams and Robert De Niro. In addition to his restaurant, Coppola serves as the Honorary Ambassador of the Central American nation of Belize in San Francisco, California. On their official roster of worldwide honorary consulates found on their official website, he is referred to as "*His Excellency Ambassador Francis Ford Coppola*," although he is not a Belizean citizen. In November 2005, Coppola took part as a special guest at the 46th International Thessaloniki Film Festival in Greece.

Selected filmography

- *The Terror* (1963, uncredited director)
- *Dementia 13* (1963, director)
- *You're a Big Boy Now* (1966, director)
- *Finian's Rainbow* (1968, director)
- *The Rain People* (1969, director)
- *Patton* (1970, writer)
- *THX 1138* (1971, executive producer)
- *The Godfather* (1972, director)
- *American Graffiti* (1973, producer)
- *The Conversation* (1974, director)
- *The Godfather, Part II* (1974, director)
- *Apocalypse Now* (1979, director)
- *The Black Stallion* (1979, executive producer)
- *One from the Heart* (1982, director)
- *Koyaanisqatsi* (1982, co-producer)
- *The Outsiders* (1983, director)
- *The Black Stallion Returns* (1983, executive producer)
- *Rumble Fish* (1983, director)
- *The Cotton Club* (1984, director)
- *Captain Eo* (1986, director)
- *Peggy Sue Got Married* (1986, director)
- *Lionheart* (1987, executive producer)
- *Gardens of Stone* (1987, director)
- *Tucker: The Man and His Dream* (1988, director)
- *Powaqqatsi* (1988, co-producer)
- *The Godfather: Part III* (1990, director)

- *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992, director)
- *The Secret Garden* (1993, executive producer)
- *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (1994, executive producer)
- *My Family, Mi Familia* (1995, executive producer)
- *Jack* (1996, director)
- *The Rainmaker* (1997, director)
- *Sleepy Hollow* (1999, executive producer)
- *Lost in Translation* (2003, executive producer)
- *Kinsey* (2005, co-producer)
- *Marie Antoinette* (2006)

Trivia

- He is the father of directors Sofia Coppola and Roman Coppola.
- He has been granted the title of "Duke of Megalopolis" by the Spanish writer Javier Mariás, claimant to the micronation of the kingdom of Redonda.
- George Lucas reportedly based the Star Wars character, Han Solo on Coppola.
- The Italian word *coppola* stands for the typically Sicilian cloth cap that can be seen in many Mafia films.
- He is the uncle of Jason Schwartzman (who is the son of Talia Shire and Jack Schwartzman), Robert Carmine, also known as Robert Schwartzman, lead singer of the band Rooney, and actor Nicolas Cage.
- He is the nephew of Anton Coppola.
- Coppola was in the early stages of developing a script for a fourth Godfather film with Mario Puzo which was to tell the story of the early lives of Sonny, Fredo and Michael. After Puzo's death in July of 1999, Coppola abandoned the project, stating that he couldn't do it without his friend.
- Co-hosted with former "Cheers" star George Wendt on Saturday Night Live in 1986 as part of a running gag where he, Lorne Michaels, and Terry Sweeney (who was a writer and castmember) retool each sketch in order to raise SNL's dismal ratings at the time.
- He has adapted most of S.E. Hinton's novels into noted films.

Quotes

- "They didn't like the cast. They didn't like the way I was shooting it. I was always on the verge of getting fired."
- "*The Godfather* was a very underappreciated movie when we were making it. I almost got fired."