

The Freshman: A must-see

Kathy Amen

The Freshman. Directed and written by Andrew Bergman; produced by Mike Lobell for Tri-Star. Starring Matthew Broderick and Marlon Brando. Rated PG. ****

Even for moviegoers who are not passionate fans of the *Godfather* movies, *The Freshman* is a pleasantly entertaining, well-made little picture. But for those who are, it's a definite must-see.

The Freshman accomplishes its affectionate satire of those mighty more-than-gangster movies of the seventies in both subtle and superficial ways. Brando, here as "godfather" Carmine Sabatini, looks and sounds just like he did as the more famous Vito Corleone (he's considerably heavier now, but that's the only real difference).

Sabatini's house looks a bit like the Corleone compound; Bruno Kirby, who played the young Clemenza in *Godfather II*, plays Sabatini's adoring nephew, Vic; and a film class attended by Clark (Broderick) regularly analyzes scenes from that movie.

You can even see the whole story

of *The Freshman* as a slightly twisted retelling of *Godfather*'s basic father-son relationship. As you can probably tell, I'm one of those passionate *Godfather* fans and I thoroughly enjoyed spotting references and tracing connections in *The Freshman*.

But this movie can certainly be enjoyed just for itself, too. Broderick is at his best as a naive but sardonic first-year film student. And Brando obviously has a lot of fun with Sabatini, making him a lot like, but also a little different, from Corleone.

The supporting cast is also good, from Kirby's flawless con man, to Penelope Ann Miller's coquettish Sabatini "princess," to Frank Whalley, as Clark's super-cool roommate. This crew would probably make even second-rate lines entertaining, but fortunately *The Freshman* gives them witty, well-written dialogue. And the story cleverly satirizes not only *The Godfather*, but also animal rights activists, bored jet-setters and film academics.

It may be a "little" picture, but it's a gem.



Clark Kellogg (Matthew Broderick) prepares to deliver a very rare Komodo dragon for a shady New York importer in the comedy *The Freshman*. (Courtesy photo)