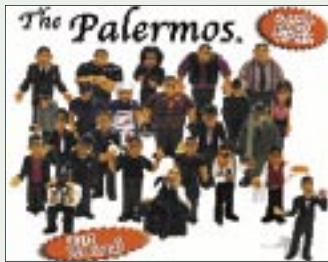


IT'S ONLY A MOVIE . . .

COMPILED BY DONA DE SANCTIS

Examples of how Italian Americans and their heritage are viewed in 21st century American society. Contributors' names are in parenthesis.

MAFIA ACTION FIGURES "Grow Your Own . . ." a series of miniature figures children collect, includes a "Grow Your Own Godfather," "Mobster" and "Hitman," each with an Italian name. Another doll collection, "The Palermos," offers up Italian American family members named Frankie the Hammer, Rocko the Trashman and Nicky No Neck. (*Santina Haemmerle, NY*)



ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT *House Arrest*, a new HBO "docu-comedy based on reality" stars Christopher Columbo, an alleged member of the Columbo crime family. Currently out on bail, charged with racketeering and extortion, he visits strip joints, psychotherapy and confession (!) before returning home to play poker with his friends. (*Tom Vitale, NY*)

CREDIBLE SLUR? In his nationally syndicated column Dec. 12, 2005, Robert Novak noted that Sam Alito was portrayed as a "jackbooted thug" by his critics. "This characterization might seem more credible for Alito, the son of an Italian immigrant, than for (Chief Justice John) Roberts, whose father was a corporate executive," Novak noted. (CSJ)

PIE IN THE FACE "Pizza Pile Up," a popular board game for children six and under, features an Italian pizza maker with a big belly and large handlebar mustache. Players lose a turn if they land on him. "Aunt Jemima" has been relegated to the dustbin of political incorrectness, but "Mustache Peter" is alive and well in Toyland. (*Camille Paglia, PA*)

COLUMBUS BASHING When 7th graders in Jamie Lyons' class at the Pierce School in Brookline, MA were asked if Columbus Day should be celebrated, all

responded, "No" because "Columbus enslaved the gentle Indians, robbed them of their land and killed 3 million Arawaks." The children expressed gratitude to teacher Lyons for "opening their eyes" during a two-week period devoted to studying Columbus and other European explorers. *Contact Brookline School Superintendent William Lupini at 617/730 2403. (CSJ)*

DA VINCI VANDALIZED Was Leonardo da Vinci a genius artist, scientist and engineer or an unqualified self-promoter with A.D.D., who padded his resume? The answer would appear to be the latter, according to a new History Channel documentary, *Da Vinci & the Code He Lived By*, which aired last December. Producer-director Robert Gardner stresses da Vinci's illegitimate birth (referring to him as "a bastard" six times in the two-hour film) and focuses on his failures and unfinished works. (CSJ)

SENATOR CROSSES LINE

"Having Senator (Rick) Santorum talk about [lobbying] reform is like having John Gotti talk about doing something about organized crime," Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) commented on Jan. 18 during the nationally televised PBS news program, *The News Hour with Jim Lehrer*. Part of the interview dealt with current scandals involving lobbyists bribing members of Congress with gifts, money and trips. Sen. Reid has ignored CSJ requests to apologize. (*Anthony Cagliostro, FL and others*)



CHASE AWARDED At least one citizen of New Jersey has no problem with the gangster image of the state and its people presented in *The Sopranos*. Last December then-governor Richard Codey presented the series' creator, David Chase with New Jersey's first filmmaking award for his "creative writing and rich character illustration." (*Stella Grillo, NY*)

Send your contributions to: "It's Only a Movie", Italian America Magazine, 219 E Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002. E-mail: ddesanctis@osia.org. Include name and daytime telephone number. No telephone calls please. Submissions cannot be acknowledged.