

**Al Capone: Icon ★★★**

(2014) 60 min. DVD: \$24.99 (\$54.99 w/PPR). PBS Video. SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62789-122-6.

An unlikely figure to become one of America's most infamous, feared mob bosses, Al Capone descended from a family of pasta makers in a small Italian town, although his father became a barber in America. This PBS-aired documentary profiles the man who dominated and personified gangsta style during Chicago's Roaring Twenties. Like many immigrants, young Al pursued the American Dream, but quickly fell into a life of petty thievery, running with gangs in New York's "Five Points," and working as a bouncer in a saloon, where he acquired the nickname "Scarface Al" after a fellow hood slashed him during a brawl. When events required him to make a quick exit for Chicago, Capone was able to take advantage of the opportunities opened up by Prohibition—smuggling and distributing alcohol, while also promoting attendant vices (it helped that police and politicians accepted bribes). Hoodlums like Capone eagerly sought celebrity status, bragging that they simply provided what the public craved. In the emerging tabloid culture, Capone became the kingpin after mob boss Johnny Torrio fled the country and "retired," following a failed mob hit. Historian interviewees here describe the

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**Altina ★★★**

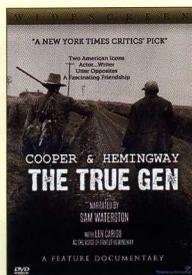
(2013) 89 min. DVD: \$27.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

In a life spanning nearly the entire 20th century, Altina Schinasi played many roles. Born in 1907, the youngest daughter of a Jewish-Turkish mogul who invented pre-rolled cigarettes, Schinasi enjoyed a privileged New York childhood but later defied convention by striking out on her own—di-

### Cooper & Hemingway: The True Gen ★★★1/2

(2014) 138 min. DVD: \$59.95 (\$299 w/PPR). Passion River. Closed captioned.

Hollywood idol Gary Cooper was cast as the lead in a slightly bowdlerized 1932 Paramount adaptation of Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* and wound up becoming a lifelong friend of the iconic author, despite their superficial differences in politics and temperaments. According to writer-director John Mulholland,



Cooper and the actor no had famous the actor no d in their era and brought out the o could drop in unannounced on his boorish behavior. Weeks after ingway shot himself. Mulholland's d long planned a cinematic project cameras—nicely meshes film and familiarity with, for instance, *For* e narrative gets tangled up in film Cooper-inspired? Really?), and the benefited from tighter editing. But ingway and Cooper to the artists' s in Hemingway's case; "method" n. Narrated by Sam Waterston, the e died is an A-list itself: Charlton eal, Robert Stack, George Plimpton, eleted scenes and text production

skills and the excitement generated by her candidacy. An extensive interview conducted with Ferraro after her 1998 cancer diagnosis is interwoven with news footage and family comments, along with remarks from journalists and political figures including Bill and Hillary Clinton, George H.W. and Barbara Bush, Mondale, Madeleine Albright, and Nancy Pelosi. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

### Inheritance ★★★1/2

(2012) 27 min. In English & Farsi w/English subtitles. DVD: \$20 (\$150 w/PPR). Center for Asian American Media.

Filmmaker Aggie Ebrahimi Bazaz, an American woman of Iranian descent, also narrates this account of her family's life in the United States. In the 1970s, her mother, Parastoo, married an engineer with ties to the U.S. After moving abroad, the couple had a son, but when the regime changed, they moved back to Iran, where Aggie was born. In 1988, Parastoo and her children settled in America, expecting the father to join them, but he never did. Instead, he returned his wife's dowry to her family and took up with another woman. From what Bazaz can determine, he started other families, and didn't stay with any of them for very long, but she has no theories about his serial abandonment (he also appears to have cheated on Parastoo during their marriage). Throughout, Bazaz peppers her mother with questions, because she believes that her father's absence has contributed to her difficulty in establishing relationships, but Parastoo doesn't want to live in the past. Regardless, she's saved every remnant of her marriage, from letters to home movies. While an interesting story lies at the center here, Bazaz undercuts the emotional potential by consistently focusing the camera on hands and backs instead of faces, which feels both distancing and distracting. Still, *Inheritance* does have value as a psychological study of an inquisitive daughter and an unsentimental mother. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (K. Fennessy)

### JFK: The Private President ★★★1/2

(2013) 53 min. DVD: \$24.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors). Closed captioned.

"It's not what you are, it's what people think you are," said Joseph Kennedy Sr., father of John F. Kennedy, commenting on the significance of image in American politics. The difference between image and reality is at the heart of filmmaker Kathrin Seelmann-Eggebert's *JFK: The Private President*, which serves up archival footage—both public and personal—that underscores what life was actually like for the late president and his family during his 35 months in the White House. No new dark secrets or scandals are revealed here: Kennedy's extramarital affairs are touched

working her first husband and becoming (as a single mother with two young sons) a designer of display windows for Fifth Avenue stores, while also studying art with George Grosz. She's perhaps best known for designing the Harlequin eyeglass frames that became a fashion standard, but her sculptures called "chairacters"—mixing human forms with furniture—are equally imaginative. Schinasi was also a filmmaker, producing an Oscar-nominated documentary on Grosz, as well as assisting her son Denis Sanders on his Oscar-winning short *A Time Out of War*. And she was an activist, aiding Jews in escaping the Holocaust, hiding friends who were being hounded by Senator Joe McCarthy, and working with Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks in the early days of the Civil Rights movement. Directed by Schinasi's grandson, Peter Sanders, *Altina* is clearly a labor of love, emphasizing Schinasi's personal life. In addition to excerpts from interviews that Schinasi gave in the 1990s, the film features extensive recollections by Schinasi's son Terry, as well as her two surviving husbands (the last, Celestino Miranda, tearfully recalls her death in 1999), backed with reams of archival material that is skillfully stitched together. Extras include the bonus featurette "Reflections on Altina" (with comments from friends and relatives), and an art and photo gallery. An informative, genuinely touching portrait of a remarkable woman, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

### Geraldine Ferraro: Paving the Way

★★★1/2

(2014) 86 min. DVD: \$89; public libraries & high schools; \$295; colleges & universities. DRA. The Video Project. PPR. Closed captioned.

In 1984, Geraldine Ferraro (1935–2011) became the first woman to run on a major American political party's presidential ticket. As the Democratic nominee for vice president and running mate to Walter Mondale, she broke ground for her gender in politics, but filmmaker Donna Zaccaro argues that she also faced unprecedented attacks aimed at her ethical and moral fitness as a candidate. *Paving the Way* traces Ferraro's story, from her childhood, education, and marriage up through her early career as a Queens prosecuting attorney specializing in child-abuse cases and sex crimes, followed by three terms in the House of Representatives. Focusing on the 1984 campaign, the film illustrates the political savvy and persona that made Ferraro a success; she was known for her Italian-American working-class background and her ability to work well with Congressional Republicans. But Ferraro's 1984 effort was hampered by assertions—alleged here to have been spearheaded by Nancy Reagan—of improprieties in her and her husband's finances and by pro-life demonstrations and admonitions from Catholic leaders who felt her pro-choice stance betrayed her faith. Footage from the Democratic convention and her debate with then Vice President George H.W. Bush highlight her political