# Al Pacino reveals he donated his salary from 'gaysploitation' movie Cruising



Al Pacino has disclosed that he donated his entire paycheck from the 1980 film Cruising owing to its "exploitative" nature. This insight comes from Pacino's recently released memoir, Sonny Boy, where he reflects on his film career and personal experiences. Pacino, now 84, shared his reflections on this decision, which he made in the midst of the controversies surrounding the film during its production and release.

Cruising, directed by the late William Friedkin, is a crime thriller about a detective who delves into the gay S&M subculture of New York City to track down a serial killer targeting gay men. Pacino played the lead role of detective Steve Burns. At the time of its release, the film faced significant backlash, particularly from gay rights advocates who organised protests against its portrayal of the gay community.

While working on the film, Pacino admitted in his memoir that he failed to perceive the exploitative elements of the script. "I didn't see it as that when I was doing it," he confessed, acknowledging a lack of sensitivity to the subject matter back then. Despite being urged by producers to defend the movie amidst the growing controversy, Pacino sought some form of personal reparation, leading him to secretly donate his entire earnings from the film.

The Godfather star revealed in Sonny Boy that he took his paycheck, which was "a lot," and placed it in an irrevocable trust fund. The fund's structure ensured that, once donated, the money could not be reclaimed. Pacino chose to distribute these funds, along with accrued interest, to a variety of charities. This philanthropic gesture was kept under wraps for over forty years as Pacino opted for an anonymous donation to avoid turning it into a public relations exercise. "I just wanted one positive thing to come out of that whole experience," he stated, recognising that although it may not have completely "eased [his] conscience," the money nevertheless supported charitable causes.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.advocate.com/arts-entertainment/al-pacino-cruising-exploitative-paycheck> - Al Pacino's admission that 'Cruising' was 'exploitative' of LGBTQ+ people and his decision to donate his paycheck.
* <https://people.com/al-pacino-donated-cruising-paycheck-says-movie-was-exploitative-8729941> - Details from Al Pacino's memoir 'Sonny Boy' about donating his paycheck from 'Cruising' due to its exploitative nature.
* <https://www.mensjournal.com/news/al-pacino-donated-cruising-paycheck> - Al Pacino's reflections on not seeing the exploitative elements of 'Cruising' during filming and his subsequent donation of his paycheck.
* <https://www.reddit.com/r/TrueFilm/comments/14ur25k/cruising_1980_a_typical_exploitation_mystery/> - The controversial and ambiguous nature of 'Cruising,' including its portrayal of the gay community and the film's production issues.
* <https://aspectfilmjournal.web.unc.edu/2021/02/1144/> - The representation of gay life in 'Cruising,' the film's tumultuous production, and the backlash from the gay community.
* <https://people.com/al-pacino-donated-cruising-paycheck-says-movie-was-exploitative-8729941> - William Friedkin's comments on the film not being the best for the gay rights movement and the controversies during its production.
* <https://www.advocate.com/arts-entertainment/al-pacino-cruising-exploitative-paycheck> - Al Pacino's decision to place his paycheck in an irrevocable trust fund and donate it to charities anonymously.
* <https://www.mensjournal.com/news/al-pacino-donated-cruising-paycheck> - Pacino's motivation for the donation, wanting 'one positive thing to come out of that whole experience'.
* <https://aspectfilmjournal.web.unc.edu/2021/02/1144/> - The film's plot and themes, including the undercover role of Steve Burns and the serial killer targeting gay men.