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There are some actors in the film industry that their work speaks for itself. Such actors like Marlon Brando, Al Pacino, Robert DiNero, and James Caan fall into this category. But there is one specific individual who has surpassed not only the American market but has also managed to tap into it internationally. That certain actor is the world renowned and versatile, Armand Assante. He has taken on so many roles and wore just as many hats in the industry, that it is difficult to ignore his contributions to the business.

Armand at first was not as attracted to films as he was to music. As a youth, he was a huge fan of music but especially the drums. His mother Katherine was a music teacher and his father Armand Sr. was an artist. The fusion of these two artistic individuals was obviously passed on to Armand and he was strongly influenced by both his parents and incorporated their talents to his success.

Raised in New York City, Armand was surrounded by the sights and sounds of the city. He eventually began playing the drums and immersed himself fully into music. Armand went on to become a professional drummer and graduated from Cornwall Central High School. After that, Armand decided to try acting and attended the American Academy of Dramatic Arts. His acting skills were soon to be splashed across the screen and stage. In 1969 he made his first stage debut at the Westport Playhouse in a play by Steve Tesich. About Tesich Armand said "Steve was an incredible writer. He was a genius I studied with him at the Academy. He went on to Hollywood and did very well. Unfortunately, he passed away at a very young age."

Following his graduation from the Academy, he went on to work with Joshua Logan and Jim Giamcova doing theatrical work. Two years after his introduction to Joshua and Jim, he appeared in the play "Lake of The Woods" (1971) which was also written by Steve Tesich.

Armand soon went on to Hollywood and had a guest spot on the TV program "Kojak". While he was working on the show, Sylvester Stallone was impressed by him and this led to his role on Paradise Alley.

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Armand's first big screen role was as a wedding guest in the minor cult film *The Lords of Flatbush* (1974) starring Henry Winkler and Sylvester Stallone. After that, he made a few guest appearances in several TV soap operas and then he went back *Paradise Alley* (1978). His next film was along side Goldie Hawn in *Private Benjamin* (1980) where he played a wealthy Frenchman. He next played the hard-nosed detective Mike Hammer in *I, the Jury* (1982). Following those soon to be hits, he made a grand performance as the title character role in *Belizaire the Cajun* (1986).

Armand also made his name known in TV miniseries, like his role as Napoleon in ABC's "Napoleon and Josephine: A Love Story" (1987) and receiving Emmy and Golden Globe nominations for his performance in "Jack the Ripper" (CBS, 1989).

Armand was always on the move when it came to catching interesting roles and it showed through the 1990's with more strong performances such as a drug baron in *Q & A* (1990) directed by Sidney Lumet, and the Cuban music spectacular *The Mambo Kings* (1992) with Antonia Banderas.

From there he went on to play an impressive role in the mob drama *Hoffa* (1992) and once more he was on screen with Sylvester Stallone in the film adaptation of the futuristic comic book *Judge Dredd* (1995). He even co-starred in the sexy Demi Moore film *Striptease* (1996).

Prior to *Striptease*, Armand went back to TV to star in the lead role of the movie *Kidnapped* (1995) (TV). During this time, he managed to create a massive following in nations like Romania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic and Croatia. Because of this, Armand produce several projects there. One of the most memorable was the film "Funny Money" with Chevy Chase that was shot in Romania. Armand stated

"I really enjoyed filming there and getting to know the people and the different countries which is always enlightening."

Recently, the film "California Dreamin" was released which was based in Romania and Armand played the lead role. The director Cristian Nemescu soon passed away after the making of the film. The film not only won the 2007 Cannes "Prix un certain regard" but also won another two awards in Brussels. The film was based on the Bosnian conflict.

Besides his films in Europe, Armand was still filming here in the U.S., the most notable was the HBO movie "Gotti" where he played the lead John Gotti in 1997. The film was the highest rated original telefilm in HBO history at that time, according to IMDB. Assante won an Emmy Award for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Miniseries or Special, for his performance and also a Golden Globe nomination.

"The writing was phenomenal. When I received the transcripts on Gotti I asked them, "Is all this doable since it mentioned so many names". I went on to work with Gotti's original lawyer Albert Krieger and Bruce Cutler. Much of the information was unbelievable. He was a revolutionary. Gotti was poetic. His words were powerful. He believed what and who he was. I took three months to hammer down his mannerisms."

This would not be the only mob film Armand was play. He showered us with his "wiseguy bravado" in films like "Marrying Man" (when he played Bugsy Siegel), "Federal Protection", "One Eyed Kings" and "Chicago Overcoat" alongside A-list actor Frank Vincent.

Armand did not stop there when it came to playing a high-level mobster. He soon took the screen as the mob boss in "American Gangster". The director Ridley Scott remembered Armand when he cast him in the film "1492" and brought him on after watching his performance in "Gotti".

Another colossal TV hit for Armand was the film "Odyssey" (1997) directed by Andrei Konchalovsky. "Andrei was a huge fan of mine and looked out for me. He asked me to play the role when Christopher Reeves was supposed to play the part. Andrei rushed me to Ireland to shoot. He was a great filmmaker. I left the project at first but came back eventually. It was filmed in Malta, Turkey, Gozo and England. It took seven months."

After the film's completion, it premiered in Greece at the Acropolis in front of 2000 people. "The best honor was that the Greeks appreciated it. The Russian director took the image and built on that poetic storyline. I studied the Iliad and was asked to lecture on it. It was a very philosophical story of man. It was a story of Western aggression. It was a very dense piece."

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Armand currently has branched out to be more a storyteller than just an actor. Even to this day he is still filming Independent films and is focusing on producing. He said "I was driven by great performances. Especially as a kid. I looked on how I can do what that actor did. People like Marlon Brando who was one the most poetic actors on film as well as Montgomery Clift and James Dean. I never take for granted when I see people like Jack Nicholson, Robert DiNero, Anthony Quinn and Cristian Nemescu did."

Armand's talents have also been passed on to his daughters Anya and Alessandra. Anya is a working as an actress in Los Angeles and Alessandra is involved in music. Alessandra has currently played the Bitter End and is looking to record her music.

Currently Armand, on March 17th, 2009 spoke for the first time at the United Nations. He was one of several hosts at the United Nations for the Humanitad Millennium Development Awards that honored both Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu and Dr. Kevin Cahill.

One of Armand's passion has been the Global Landmine Crisis for the last twenty years. He has contributed his own money to the cause and has effectively draw attention to the Landmine problems that have riddled Croatia since the Serbian/Croatian War during the nineties. Assante, using his own money, then began his own Documentary on the issue called "Blind Dragon". His activism has since been recognized by both Congress and the Red Cross.

Armand has entertained us and brought us to different levels of enjoyment with films and television both here in the U.S and aboard. With his talent and devotion to mankind he remains a legend among his peers in film and TV.

**More: 2 pages of Filmology**

**Filmology:**

The Lords of Flatbush (1974)  
Paradise Alley (1978)  
Prophecy (1979)  
Little Darlings (1980)  
Private Benjamin (1980)  
Love and Money (1982)  
I, the Jury (1982)  
Rage of Angels (1983) (TV)  
Unfaithfully Yours (1984)  
Belizaire the Cajun (1986)  
Napoleon and Josephine: A Love Story (1987) (TV)  
The Penitent (1988)  
Jack the Ripper (1988) (TV)  
Eternity (1989)  
Animal Behavior (1989)  
Q&A (1990)  
The Marrying Man (1991)  
The Mambo Kings (1992)  
1492: Conquest of Paradise (1992)  
Hoffa (1992)  
Fatal Instinct (1993)  
Blind Justice (1994) (TV)  
Trial by Jury (1994)  
Judge Dredd (1995)  
Kidnapped (1995) (TV)  
Striptease (1996)  
Gotti (1996) (TV)  
The Odyssey (1997) (TV)  
The Hunley (1999) (TV)  
The Road to El Dorado (2000) (voice)  
On the Beach (2000) (TV)  
Looking For An Echo (2000)  
Last Run (2001)  
One Eyed King (2001)  
Federal Protection (2002)  
Partners in Action (2002)  
Citizen Verdict (2003)  
Tough Luck (2003)  
Consequence (2003)  
Casanova's Last Stand (2005)  
Children of Wax (2005)  
Dot.Kill (2005)  
The Third Wish (2005)  
Mirror Wars: Reflection One (2005)  
Two for the Money (2005)  
Confessions of a Pit Fighter (2005)  
Funny Money (2006)  
Dead Lenny (2006)  
Soul's Midnight (2006)  
Surveillance (2006)  
Mexican Sunrise (2007)  
California Dreamin' (2007)  
When Nietzsche Wept (2007)  
American Gangster (2007)  
Shark Swarm (2008) (TV)  
La Linea (2008)  
The Man Who Came Back (2008)  
The Lost (2009)

The Bleeding (2009)  
Chicago Overcoat (2009)  
Order of Redemption (2009)  
Shadows in Paradise (2009)  
Killer By Nature (2009)  
Magic Man (2009)  
The Steam Experiment (2009)

**Television:**

The Doctors (1975–1977)  
Push, Nevada (2002)  
ER (2006)  
NCIS (2007)  
October Road (2008)

Awards and nominations:

**Emmy Awards**

1989 - Nominated Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Supporting Actor  
- Miniseries or a Movie for his portrayal of Richard Mansfield in Jack  
the Ripper  
1996 - Won Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Lead Actor -  
Miniseries or a Movie for his portrayal of Mafia Don John Gotti  
Golden Globe Awards

1989 - Nominated Best Performance by an Actor in a Supporting Role in a Series, Mini-Series or Motion  
Picture Made for Television for Jack the Ripper

1991 - Nominated Best Supporting Actor in a Motion Picture for Q&A

1997 - Nominated Best Performance by an Actor in a Supporting Role in a Series, Mini-Series or Motion  
Picture Made for Television for Gotti

1998 - Nominated Best Performance by an Actor in a Mini-Series or Motion Picture Made for Television for  
The Odyssey Screen Actors Guild Awards

1997 - Nominated - Outstanding Performance by a Male Actor in a Miniseries or Television Movie for Gotti