

**August 16, 1996** Armand Assante gave an interview to **The Detroit News**, with the title:

**"Assante wrestled taking the role of a Mafia boss"**

"HBO pursued me for a long time---But I was very reluctant to do it. I felt uncomfortable about the project. I didn't know if the case (against Gotti) was completely resolved. I did a lot of homework. But even though it was resolved, I still felt uncomfortable. I asked if HBO had gone to members of the family to find out if they wanted this done, but nobody had. "

"So I went to Gotti's lawyers and asked them to approach his family and find out if they are aware of this project. There are six books out, Columbia wants to do a film and HBO wants to do a film. I don't want to be involved if his family has a problem with it. I walk right now. I'm not even interested----They came back and said that 'the fact that you've been this courteous, we would have no problem with you doing it. It's going to be done anyway'---So I said, 'It's a great part, and I will portray him as humanly as I possibly can'"

Gotti was surely not an innocent man, and Armand proceeds: "We certainly tried to humanize his predicament, I heard glowing things about him from everyone I interviewed. He was admired by a lot of people. But I guess the biggest thing at stake for us when we made it, if we had an ax to grind, it's that Gravano is walking away with the millions he extorted from the people he murdered and John is in the hole. If we had an ax to grind making the film, maybe that's the ax we had to grind."

Armand doesn't think that the movie about Gotti glorified the mobster lifestyle.

"I don't think the film glorifies the mob in the way The Godfather and Goodfellas did. This is about men who despise themselves and despise the predicament they've gotten themselves in. And that's the difference. If you watch Goodfellas, you'll see it's about the good times, what a great time we're having. But in this film, ultimately, there's a loathing about what these people are finding their lives to be." Doing Gotti was the first time in a long time, anybody had given Armand Assante the leading role in a film.

"If I'm in a big-box-office-film, I have no doubt I'll get one thousand times the numbers of offers, and I'm offered a lot of work now. I've worked for 27 years straight nonstop in theater and films. That's a lot of work." Armand explains he won't be given a big role before his other work gets huge numbers (ratings) Armand admits there has been a lot of disappointments in his career and you have to keep the ball rolling, doing other parts than the most wanted.

"In my case, I've never had an enormous career. I've always had to keep the ball rolling. I also stayed in New York on my farm. I never pursued Hollywood banging my drum, because I was never in a film big enough to do that. I've been looking for good material. I've been looking for good roles. I'm at that point now where I really want to produce. I want to produce my own material, because I'm so frustrated by the material I read. Literature is air, and I'm suffocating in mediocrity. How many times can you reformulate a formula? They send the same things over and over again, two, three times a week.----I can't say I'm frustrated, because I work all the time.....but in a way I'm frustrated to be 46 years old, and at this point I want to make some classic films. I want to make some films that have some holding power." As Armand goes back in time remembering his passion sitting in the theatre as a child and being smitten by the magic of performance his face lights up, and he says: "My dream as a youngster was to be like Olivier. To be a great stage actor. To be a great Shakespearean actor. I would love to go back on stage. To me that is the Olympics of acting. To watch Olivier. I watch him over and over. I watched Brando over and over again. I watched the great actors for many years. That's all I did. And worked----(?) There was a pure dream there!"

And Armand received an award for doing Gotti, might be he would rather have liked a pile of better material?

*If you like to study John Gotti's life [this is the original Gotti site](#), I went here while Armand prepared himself for the role in 1996, I was nervous for him, (and didn't yet know about the above mentioned) and asked Gotti's bystanders if Gotti would be offended if he was performed in a way he didn't like and might get mad at Armand. They assured me they loved Assante and he could do whatever he liked. They trusted him. I told them that I had followed the trial and the before investigation of Gotti at Discovery and that I was against violence and crime although I understood his motive to help his people out and that I would grant him this:*

*Gotti never did crime to love! He was watched and surveilled by FBI for so long, had he had a mistress or two, it would have come forward. They replied: "You are a fucking nice lady. Call upon us, if you ever need help!" I'm sure they would help me any day...*

*You have to see people's lives from at least two angles and yet you can't say: I've been all around. Make your own judgement!*

*(webmaster: Gitte 2005)*