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Michael Keaton plays Ray Kroc in "The Founder," which is now out on Blu-ray and DVD.

'Consumption and consumerism and capitalism and the American Dream'

'Immigration is an integral part to all that,' says Michael Keaton, who plays McDonald's CEO Ray Kroc in 'The Founder'

BY STEVEN MACKENZIE
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He's starred in films from "Beetlejuice" to "Batman" to "Birdman." From "The Paper" to "Spotlight." Now, Michael Keaton plays Ray Kroc, the founder who didn't really found McDonald's. Keaton discusses the "The Founder," the American Dream and Donald Trump — even offering to build some wind turbines to annoy the president.

Steven MacKenzie: *Ray Kroc didn't found McDonald's — all he did was stumble across a restaurant operated by the McDonald brothers. So should the film be called "The Finder" rather than "The Founder"?*

Michael Keaton: Very possibly. That's pretty funny. Initially I thought what you thought — even though I wasn't clever enough to think of "The Finder." But if I was Ray Kroc's publicist, I think this would make for a good argument: He probably thought, yes, you created the system of serving the food, and yes you came up with the Arches but what I made it into — I founded that. I could kind of understand his rationale. I don't know if I buy it — but you know what I mean?

S.M.: *Whether the food or the franchising was*

more important to building the empire.

M.K.: Right.

S.M.: *The McDonald brothers and Ray Kroc have two very different ways of working toward the American Dream — doing the right thing versus success at all costs. Achieving the Dream is also tied to working hard, but by doing that, do you inevitably stomp over others on your way up?*

M.K.: I would disagree that by working hard you have to stomp on other people. To work hard, you have to work hard. But you're right that it's two different interpretations of the American Dream. They said they'd like to do quite well, and Ray said, I want to do quite well more than you want to do quite well. And now that I'm doing quite well, I want to do quite well. And then I think it became an issue of power and not about money. I don't have a problem with capitalism. Greed and consumption and abuse of power — I've got a problem with that.

S.M.: *Growing up, I used to think McDonald's was a Scottish chain of restaurants because I'm from Scotland, and it seemed to make sense.*

M.K.: Glasgow is one of my favorite cities.

S.M.: *It's a little rainy.*

M.K.: I know, but I've never been to a city where the people make me laugh as consistently. It would be a challenge to go to Glasgow and never laugh once — it's impossible.

S.M.: *People certainly wouldn't last long if they didn't have a sense of humor.*

M.K.: I was just fishing in Scotland a while back actually, fishing for salmon. Unfortunately they weren't co-operating, but I didn't really care because I love rambling the countryside.

S.M.: *Apologies on behalf of the fish. But the point is, McDonald's is obviously a foreign name, yet in the film they keep saying part of the chain's success was because it "sounds American."*

M.K.: I know, I know! You're the first person to bring it up, which as a Scot you would. I love that scene because Ray seemed to have some disdain for his own heritage, but when he says, "McDonald's, that sounds American" — in the back of my head I'm thinking, actually it's Scottish! I'm a half Scot myself; my real name's Douglas. So watch yourself.