The Buffalo Film Seminars
Angelika 8 Theater

RAGING BULL (1980)

Director Martin Scorsese
Producers Robert Chartoff and Irwin Winkler
Music Robbie Robertson and Pietro Mascagni
Cinematographer Michael Chapman
Film Editor Thelma Schoonmaker
Script Paul Schrader and Mardik Martin (the shooting script was by Scorsese and De Niro), loosely based on the book by Jake LaMotta, Joseph Carter& Peter Savage

Robert De Niro Jake La Motta
Cathy Moriarty Vickie La Motta
Joe Pesci Joey La Motta
Frank Vincent Salvy
Nicholas Colasanto Tommy Como
Theresa Saldana Lenore
Mario Gallo Mario
Frank Adonis Patsy
Joseph Bono Guido

De Niro and Schoonmaker won Academy Awards for this picture and nominations went to Scorsese, Chapman, Chartoff and Winkler, Pesci, Moriarty, and the four sound editors. The Awards for best director and best picture that year went to Ordinary People directed by Robert Redford. Raging Bull is on the American Film Institute’s list of 100 Greatest American Films and has frequently been listed as the best film of the 1980s; Ordinary People hasn’t made either list.

MARTIN SCORSESE was going to be a priest but became a filmmaker instead. He’s a 1964 graduate of the NYU film program. In 1997 he received the American Film Institute Life Achievement Award. Scorsese has directed commercials for his friend Giorgio Armani, Michael Jackson’s “Bad” music video, and has written, produced, acted in, and/or directed some 70 fiction and documentary films, some of which are: Bringing Out the Dead 1999, Casino 1995, The Age of Innocence 1993, Cape Fear 1991, GoodFellas 1990, The Last Temptation of Christ 1988, The Color of Money 1986, The King of Comedy 1983, The Last Waltz 1978, Taxi Driver 1976, Alice Doesn’t Live Here Anymore 1974, Mean Streets 1973 and Boxcar Bertha 1972. His other Academy Award nominations were for The Age of Innocence (screenplay), GoodFellas (director, screenplay), and Last Temptation of Christ (director). More than anyone else, he has been responsible for the recent movement to preserve important American films.


JAKE LAMONTTA was born July 10, 1921. He fought 106 professional bouts. He won 83 (30 by Kos), lost 19, and drew 4. He fought Sugar Ray Robinson six times. The first five were 1942 (Robinson, decision), twice in 1943 (La Motta won the first, Robinson the second, both by decision), and 1945 (Robinson, decision). La Motta became middleweight champion with a 10th-round TKO over Marcel Cerdan in 1949. He defended his title twice in 1950—first against Tiberio Mitri and then in the famous fight against Lauren Dauthuille in which he was trailing on the scorecards but came back with an astonishing 15th-round knockout. The sixth and last fight with Robinson was in Chicago on February 14, 1951. For opponents and stats for all of LaMotta’s fights visit www2.xtdl.com/~brasslet/LaMotta_Jake_rec.htm.

“I was fascinated by the self-destructive side of Jake La Motta’s character, his very basic emotions. What could be more basic than making a living by hitting another person on the head until one of you falls or stops? Bob [DeNiro] and I then decided to take Paul Schrader’s script, with Paul’s blessing, to an island—which is hard for me, because as far as I’m concerned there’s only one island, Manhattan. But Bob got me through it, he’d wake me up in the morning and make me coffee, and we spent two-and-a-half weeks there rewriting everything. We combined characters and in fact rewrote the entire picture, including the dialogue. When we got back we showed it to Paul, who didn’t care for it all that much but, as he wrote in his telegram to us when we began shooting, ‘Jake did it his way, I did it my way, you do it your way.’

“I put everything I knew and felt into that film and I thought it would be the end of my career. It was what I call a kamikaze way of making movies: pour everything in, then forget all about it and go find another way of life.”

Martin Scorsese

“In RAGING BULL all the fight scenes were done in drawings. It’s very much like staging a dance to music. Instead of a verse with maybe twelve bars of music, it’s four bars of punches. Because it’s all choreography.”

Martin Scorsese

For more on Raging Bull, visit //movies.tiernet.com/ragingbull/index.htm. The best book on Martin Scorsese is Scorsese on Scorsese, ed. David Thompson and Ian Christie, Faber and Faber, 1996. The American Film Institute set up an interesting Scorsese web site when it gave him the 1997 Life Achievement Award: //www.afionline.org/scorsese/. For a good deal of information on De Niro and Scorsese visit //homeo.att.net/~vellinor/ –to receive the Angelika Film Center’s weekly film summaries and screening times, send an email to ldamelio@compuserve.com with your email address –for cast and crew info on almost any film: imdb.com/search.html or allmovie.com –for information on major American films, including detailed plot summaries: www.filmsite.org –email Bruce Jackson: bjackson@buffalo.edu –email Diane Christian: engdc@acsu.buffalo.edu –for the series schedule, links and updates: www.acsu.buffalo.edu/~bjackson/movies.html –to get on the listserv for the class send an email to listserv@listserv.acsu.buffalo.edu with this line & nothing else as the message-sub greatmovies-list Firstname Lastname

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