

# Assignment: critical analysis of a film raging bull by martin scorsese essay samp...

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Raging Bull by Martin Scorsese is now considered as a cinematic masterpiece. Ironically at the time it was made, Scorsese was as bewildered as it is possible, without actually climbing in the ring, having barely survived a distressing and violent period with cocaine and having being criticised heavily for his former New York, New York.

However, his near to death experience changed it all, and he was suddenly not only recognised but identified with the un likable Jake La Motta and his turnover from boxing champion to sleazy nightclub owner and third class comedian.

Raging Bull is based on a true story, Robert De Niro who takes away his second Oscar winning role, stars as Jake La Motta.

Jake La Motta was born on July 10th 1922 in New York. By the name of Giacobe La Motta, he was the well-known American boxer and world middleweight boxing champion, during the period 1949-1951. His stamina and brutality in the ring earned him the nickname " the Bronx Bull," and he often allowed himself to take a severe beating before wildly defeating his challenger. Many of his opponents were said to have failed knocking him down in 106 professional fights.

Instead of going down as one of the greatest boxers of time, La Motta ruined his career and family, as he was drawn in with the underworld and crime figures.

Robert De Niro plays this role exceedingly good. His remarkable masochistic performance shows the similarity to the middleweight prizefighter as he

famously piles on 50 lbs to play the older, obese, La Motta. The film concentrates on the destruction of himself and those around him, and all because of his uncontrollable temper and pitiable decision-making. He is a man fighting not to survive, but to be punished for what he feels are his own inadequacies, a lot like the director Scorsese himself. His masochism dominates the ring and the home, while it fuels the rage that has taken him to the top. We follow the young fighter's path from a competitive contender to an over grown nobody.

When we see that Jake gets married it seems as another start, and his most notably relationship with his wife Vicki, who is played by Cathy Moriarty, also in her first Oscar nominated role, gets out of hand and he begins to beat her. He was also having sexual relations with a 16 year old, considered as a minor at the time. All those closest to him were abused, even his strongest tie, his younger brother and manager Joey who gets cut during the course of his misfortune. Both of the people closest to Jake and a dear part to his life were governed by a paranoid jealousy.

Although he loses five of his six fights with Sugar Ray Robinson, who is often acknowledged as the world's greatest boxer. Jake's leading antagonist over the years was not Robinson, but his own self-destructive nature.

For Scorsese, the film became both a metaphor for his own fall and a chance to redeem himself after his addictive drug habit, which nearly killed him. Until then, him and his earlier films such as Mean Streets and Taxi Driver, which won the 1976 Palme d'Or at Cannes, were adored by the critics.

Raging Bull combines the explosive masculine energy of Mean Streets and uses the themes of emotional inarticulacy and estrangement that we see in Taxi Driver. His referencing styles however, do vary from director's approaches from films like, Good fellows, Snake eyes and Casino. After weighing just 109 lbs and snorting coke, director Scorsese had begun coughing up blood and was confined to a hospital bed. His friend Robert De Niro, who had given the director a copy of La Motta's autobiography some years earlier, visited him. Believing that there might be a movie in it. " I understood then what Jake was, but only after having gone through a similar experience," said Scorsese, " I was just lucky that there happened to be a project there ready for me to express this." 1

The 1980's action hero is as usual superficially a sign of masculine power. Changes in the qualities of the male hero are evident from the 1980's to the 1990's; from being the male body, which was a spectacle of muscle, toughness and bravery. In comparison the body of the early 1990's man is less a spectacle of male machismo associated with violence. The action film narrative is a series of workings out to do with class and sexuality situated within a cultural context in which masculinity has to some extent been denaturalised. ' The action hero plays out a drama of power and powerlessness, which is intrinsic to anxieties about masculine identity and authority embodied in the figure of the struggling hero.' Fight films such as Rocky (1976) and Raging Bull, although are very different films, but both do focus on the masochistic suffering and how much punishment the masculine body can take.

Raging Bull is one of the most technically accomplished films made.

Scorsese, aided by a brilliant editor, Thelma Schoonmaker and cinematographer, Michael Chapman, organize his entire film with cinematic tricks. The film being shot in black and white, as a means of protesting against the short life expectancy of the then extant colour stock, Scorsese luminously incorporates the main realist tendencies of the 1940's period. From the domestic scenes taking their prompt from neo-realism and the boxing scenes from the ring, from noir/expressionism.

Shot mostly in expressionistic monochrome Raging bull boasts the most primitive fights ever put on film. Nevertheless, the spectacular camerawork links to the emotional thrust of the story. And the violence is never more conspicuous than when De Niro and the camera are at rest in a domestic setting. The audience can feel the restricted rage in Jake as he struggles to come to terms with himself.