

'The Wrestler' Lives Up to Acclaim

Contributed by Justin LaGrande -- Black College Wire
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Big comeback for actor Mickey Rourke

Pro wrestling has been a topic of ridicule for many in mainstream media. The fact that the outcomes of the matches are predetermined gives many detractors an excuse to call everything in the world of professional wrestling fake.

But the health risks are very real, along with the damage that families typically endure when a family member is away 300 days a year. All of these topics are addressed, along with some of the planning that happens before independent matches. They are all touched on in Darren Aronofsky's film, "The Wrestler."

The film focuses on former main event wrestler, Randy "The Ram" Robinson, played by Mickey Rourke. Rourke's portrayal of the seemingly washed up Ram is awe-inspiring at the very least.

Rourke actually volunteered to do all of his own stunts during the match sequences, electing to work with assorted pro wrestlers in several matches. He even performed in a "hardcore" match involving staples, glass, barbed wire and other hazards.

Along with Rourke, the film features strong performances from Marissa Tomei and Evan Rachel Wood.

Tomei plays Cassidy, an aging stripper who has feelings for Randy, but feels torn between her heart and the tip money he gives her. Wood gives a heartfelt performance as Stephanie, the estranged daughter of Randy who is highly resentful of her father's absence, but is willing to give him one more shot.

The film on the surface almost seems like a wrestling version of Rocky, but it has a decidedly grittier feeling. From Randy's dabbling with steroids to his daughter's seemingly abusive lesbian relationship, to Randy's struggling with the realities of life as a broken man, both financially and physically.

Randy's attempts at coping with a world that has either forgotten him or doesn't care about him anymore is heart-wrenching and will appeal to anyone who has moments where they just don't feel good enough.

The film's ending leaves fans wanting more, but it also leaves moviegoers with a question that I can't ask here since it will give away the entire film.

The Wrestler is just what every other critic has called it. The film is Mickey Rourke's greatest performance, Darren Aronofsky's masterpiece, and one of the best movies to come out this decade. The film is not only a must-see for fans of what I call "the art of fake fighting," but it also shows fans a stark, yet touching look into the lives of men who literally put everything on the line when they step through the ropes.

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Justin LaGrande writes for The Gramblinite, the Grambling State University student newspaper, which originally published this article.

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