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Module 2 Rewrite: *Rocky*

Introduction

The performance I selected is the 1976 film, *Rocky*. *Rocky* was written by Sylvester Stallone, who plays the film's main character, and directed by John G. Avildsen. The film was produced by Irwin Winkler and Robert Chartoff; Chartoff-Winkler Productions financed the film, with United Artists handling the distribution. *Rocky* was made on a small budget and branded as a sleeper hit, meaning the medium became prosperous with little promotion. In addition, *Rocky* became the highest-grossing film of 1976. This film received high praise and raised Stallone's popularity. Equally important, the film was selected for preservation in the United States National Film Registry by the Library of Congress in 2006. Furthermore, the film has generated six sequels over four decades with each film receiving the same prosperity as the first. This 1976 film entails, "A small time boxer gets a supremely rare chance to fight a heavy weight champion in a bout in which he strives to go the distance for his self-respect, (IMDB). In this paper, I will discuss the medium of the performance, cultural roots, and contemporary influences that is featured in *Rocky*.

Medium

The medium of this performance is motion picture or film by creative or contemporary artists. *Rocky* can be categorized as a performance focused on sports and everyday life. Important to realize, this performance functions to entertain and change identity. "Performances

mark identities, bend time, reshape and adorn the body, and tell stories,” (Schechner). First, the boxing match and training montage scenes would be great examples of entertaining the audience. Second, Rocky wants to change his identity of a brainless bum to an up-and-coming boxer. Sylvester Stallone wanted to present a film that would advise the audience to reflect on social realities; The audience could interpret this performance as make-belief. “Ingredients these early blockbusters have in common include expense, length, a focus on ‘weighty,’ ‘important,’ or epic-mythical subject matter, and...a largeness in the *staging* of the spectacular on-screen events. Rocky Balboa can represent the American Dream, which is to be successful and prosperous, by working hard in a filtered society. The director contrasted in different scenes of Rocky’s competitor, Apollo Creed. Rocky Balboa fight scene against Apollo Creed was a “fast-paced entertainment which is considered a spectacular spectacle,” (Kellner). A couple features such as motion control systems and movement of hand-held cameras which debut in *The Digital Revolution* is clearly present in the movie.

In reality, Rocky is seen as the humble underdog who finds the motivation to fight by Adrian’s support. Additionally, the core of Rocky wanting to prove himself was from past insults of him being a loser who has no brain. “Stallone wrote the movie’s screenplay over the course of three days, reportedly inspired by a 1975 fight between Muhammad Ali and Chuck Wepner,” (Bauer). The 1975 fight can be mirrored of the fictional fight between Apollo Creed and Rocky Balboa. Meanwhile, Apollo Creed goes for the opportunity to fight Rocky Balboa because of his catchy nickname, “The Italian Stallion,” and to attract more publicity for the boxing match. “That was the catalyst for his idea: A man who was going to stand up to life, take a shot, and go the distance,” (Ward). The publicity was definitely accomplished when the risk of popularity for Rocky began, which can be an example of society valuing competition, perseverance, and

success. The jaw dropping twist which created hysterical fans and caused a spectacle was during the fight when Rocky went the distance with Apollo, all fifteen rounds and almost beating Apollo. Although, Apollo has mastered skills and speedy techniques, Rocky had aggression and incredible ability to absorb punches. The sports spectacles exaggerate struggles, controversies, and loves of athletes plus fans. “Sports have long been a domain of the spectacle... These cultural rituals celebrate society’s deepest values (i.e., competition, winning, success, and money),” (Kellner par. 17). All athletes dream about winning some type of recognition of being the best or being granted a monetary achievement to believe they have won in their athletic career. However, athletes can struggle to not divert from healthy competition to becoming a sore selfish loser. The American Dream has lived on to become how you interpret success or happiness. Is the American Dream a fantasy? Are Americans realistic about dreaming to strive for accomplishments? “Media culture not only takes up always expanding amounts of time and energy, but also provides ever more material for fantasy, dreaming, modeling thought, and behavior, and identities,” (Kellner). This film created a wave of popularity for underdog stories in the sports genre which were featured in other movies such as *The Karate Kid* and *Rudy*. The main character, Rocky Balboa, returns a sense of hope for the audience that no matter what background or insecurities which set you back, anybody can really accomplish anything if you set your mind to it.

Although, *Rocky* was low-budget film, it proved to be an iconic success. Usually, music creates an atmosphere that can portray the emotions or conflicts of the plot more clearly. Without music, scene changes can be harsh, while the actor’s blank expressions can have no substance. “The music that accompanied the scenes during which *Rocky* prepares for the fight became iconic, and the locations where he trained...” (Bauer). Additionally, Rocky builds the audiences’

excitement by showing Rocky Balboa's training montages. Generally, these montages are guided by a popular song that represents Rocky's determination and progress while he is training. Furthermore, *Rocky* embraced technology which made the film stand out amongst other sports films by using the Steadicam (camera stabilizer). "When *Rocky* director John G. Avildsen wanted to film part of the original training montage, he wanted the audience to move with Rocky, (Maher). The Steadicam is now considered a standard piece of filmmaking equipment. Additionally, John G. Avildsen and Sylvester Stallone orchestrated a low-budget film and positively embraced any minor production issues, by creating a humorous tone in many scenes. Most importantly, filmmakers have to understand what factors of directing a movie are vital, such as paying for extras or using new technology.

Conclusion

Rocky is amongst the exclusive list as one of the greatest sports films ever made. With grand pleasure, *Rocky*, "...was nominated for 10 academy awards and won three, including Best Picture..." (Bauer). Notably, Rocky's worldwide percentage return was over 11,000 percent. Although, the drastically low budget to produce Rocky created financial pressures such as filming locations and casting, Sylvester Stallone still pulled off creating a masterpiece for a little over one million dollars (excluding miscellaneous costs).

Works Cited

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