

SEX, DRUGS, AND THE RAM JAM

How Mickey Rourke and Darren Aronofsky have found the formula to make you cry over pro wrestling

by Joseph Chilton
Editor in Chief

Here is a brief demonstration of the importance of variables.

The equation: Take washed up 80's star (x). Add a plot filled with guys juicing up on steroids and beating the hell out of each other. Throw in an aging stripper as a love interest and an estranged lesbian daughter.

The result: If (x)= Corey Haim- a straight to the \$5 bin at Wal-Mart debacle. If (x)= Mickey Rourke- a career resurgence.

Maybe it's because Rourke's own personal struggle over the last two decades is closely akin to that of his character, Randy "The Ram" Robinson, in *The Wrestler*. Or maybe he's just that great of an actor. Whatever it is, Rourke is perfectly cast for the task of eliciting sympathy for a character whose personal choices warrant none.

Randy has lost everything; family, health, career, self-respect; yet he still feels a calling to the same ring that has been the catalyst for his self-destruction.

Randy's heart can no longer take punishment it endures on weekends while pandering to nostalgic fans at small town civic centers and VFW halls. His daughter hates him because his Def Leppard-esque lifestyle of partying hard in dingy strip clubs after shows excludes her. It enrages Randy to be recognized at his side job (slicing meat at a deli) as "The Ram." And yet the high-pitched cadence of a crowd haunts Randy to the point where he joneses for a few more rounds between the ropes.

The film has already brought home two Golden Globes, and is sure to make out quite nicely by the end of awards season. And it deserves all the hardware it gets, as gritty handheld shots succeed in making the audience feel that they are part of a Jersey underbelly revolving around strip clubs, syringes, spandex.

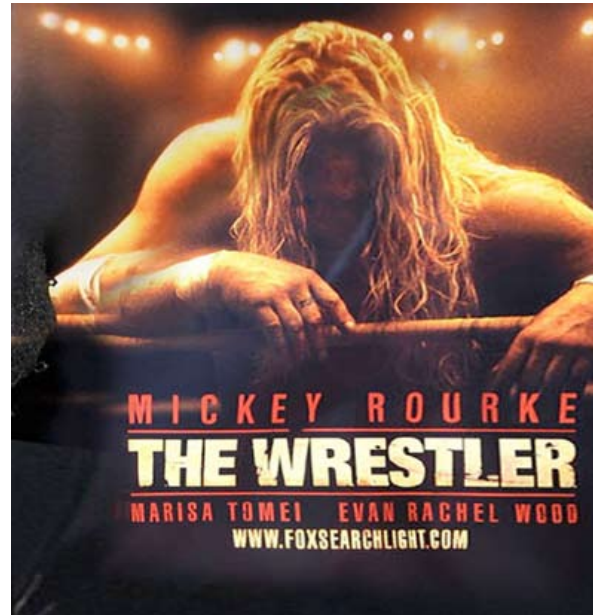
I've never been a fan of pro wrestling. I always thought that names like "Macho Man Randy Savage" were compensating for something, especially since these guys

spent their time rolling around on a mat with other half-naked dudes.

Which is precisely why I am now convinced that *The Wrestler* is brilliant. I could still care less about the WWE, but at least now I have some understanding of the plight of these guys.

Rourke is eerily close to being the acting version of a Randy "The Ram." His divorces, plastic surgeries and poor career choices have been scrutinized closely by the media since the pinnacle of his career over two decades ago. He knows the pain of falling from grace, and that comes through clearly in his portrayal of the downtrodden grappler who wants nothing more than two travel back to 1987 and crank it up to 11 one more time. (Sidenote: A line that Rourke delivered with startling certainty: "The eighties fucking ruled man! Until that pussy Cobain came and fucked it all up...I tell you something, I hate the fucking nineties.")

Ram-jamming people off the ropes;



hair metal; lap-dances from 45-year-olds. These are all things that most sane college students will normally try to avoid. But they are strangely what make *The Wrestler* endearing- the making of the repulsive to be interesting being the major sign that this movie has factored in the right formula.

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