

# Stallone's 'Rocky' sentimental, corny but not irritating

By HANK BAKER  
DTH Contributor

Sylvester Stallone has a cocky aggressiveness as a performer that establishes an immediate rapport with the audience. He makes you pay attention to him by his very directness, and it is precisely this quality that makes him such a winning personality in *Rocky*, which he wrote and stars in. Playing a down-and-out, 30-year-old club fighter who gets a chance at the World Heavyweight Championship, Stallone invests so much of himself in the role that he disappears into it. After seeing the film, you can't imagine him in any other role. He and the other actors are what make *Rocky* the small gem it is.

*Rocky* is one of the best American films of 1976, but then, only a small handful of American films were good last year, a rather appalling situation that is usually not the case. But after being battered by the dreary egomania of *A Star Is Born* and the ridiculous, condescending evangelism of *Network*, the simplicity of *Rocky's* good spirits is a real relief. Despite its big buildup as a " sleeper hit," I don't think *Rocky* is popular because it's about a seeming loser who makes it big as much as the

fact that its directness satisfies the audience without battering it. Despite its fairy-tale premise, the movie works on its own level and keeps its energy flowing instead of draining it and taking on hackneyed ideologies like so many other "small" films do.

The film's adrenalin and charm are provided by the performers more than anyone else. Stallone plays Rocky Balboa, nicknamed "The Italian Stallion," a small-time club boxer forced into having to collect debts for a loan shark to make a living. Rocky is a real hulk, and a not-too-bright one also, but he has a sense of humanity and individualism even when he knows he's headed nowhere. But his chance of a lifetime comes when the World's Heavyweight Champion, Apollo Creed (Carl Weathers) decides to fight a total unknown when his original partner becomes ill. Rocky is that unknown, and he strenuously works out to prepare himself, if only to last 15 rounds with Apollo.

There's a lot of room for corny and sentimental plot mechanics here, particularly when Rocky romances a shy young girl named Adrienne (Talia Shire). But even though some corny scenes develop out of this subplot and the main story, they aren't irritating at all. The entire film has a naivete about it that quickly dispels any oncoming

queasiness. Even though credulity is strained at times, the unabashedness of the script and performances concerning the sentimentality saves the film. If anyone involved had tried to be dignified about any of this, persons in the audience would be laughing at the screen. Yet *Rocky* is good-natured enough to avoid this; you realize what you're seeing is corny and obvious, yet you accept it because the dialogue and characters are loose, funny and energetic, and the film has an irresistible innocence about its themes.

Stallone has a knack for dialogue, and his characters never lose interest. Even in their dirty, drab surroundings, they're alive, striving to get out of the dumps. Adrienne starts out as a shy, repressed woman approaching spinsterhood; but when she finally begins her relationship with Rocky, she comes out of her shell, trying to release her energy. Her brother Paulie (Burt Young) is stuck in a meat factory and wants Rocky's publicity to help him out of his hole. Young has a dry, crackling tone in his voice that shows us a desperate guy who has been put down too much, and his performance never loses its grip. Shire, as Adrienne, captures the attention at first because of the marvelous simplicity and reserve in her voice and gestures. Her Cinderella-like change happens too fast, but Shire's earnestness and honesty make it work. A real surprise comes from ex-Oakland Raider Carl Weathers, whose Apollo Creed has the perfect blend of flashy impertinence and humor, particularly in his jubilation when he comes into the

ring dressed as Uncle Sam shouting, "I want you! I want you!"

Stallone is the center of the film, though, but he doesn't try to overpower the others. The role of Rocky belongs to him, and it's to his credit that he managed to hold out on selling his script until the producers agreed to let him star. He holds the film together more than director John Avildson does. This material may have appealed to Avildson's sensibilities, but the only discernible aspect of his style here is the way he lurches through the film as if he can't wait to get to the next scene. Though *Rocky* has a lot going for it, it isn't a particularly well-made film. The lighting in the neighborhood scenes is too carefully calculated to show us how poor people live. It's too dark, too dreary. The music is saccharine, particularly during the irritating disco song "Gonna Fly Now" that nearly ruins a sequence in which Rocky is preparing for the fight. Avildson has a good sense for locations, but his camera movements and placements seem arbitrary, as does the editing. The scenes play out, thanks to the actors, but there is no rhythm or flow to them. They just jerkily move along. The one exception to this is the final fight sequence between Rocky and Apollo, which is furious, exciting and all too convincing.

Considering the starvation diet we've been getting from films lately, it would be easy to overpraise a film like *Rocky*. But the film does succeed in entertaining on its own level, and that's more than most recent films even approach. *Rocky* provides a healthy dose of fun which anyone can use.



Contemporary poet Allen Ginsberg will autograph his books at 2 p.m. today in the Bull's Head Bookshop, along with fellow authors William Burroughs and Peter Orlovsky. At 8 p.m. the three will give a joint poetry/prose reading in Memorial Hall.

## Fleetwood Mac, Santana perform

The Fleetwood Mac show at the Greensboro Coliseum Saturday is practically sold out. Area Record Bars have been sold out since Tuesday, but WQDR-FM reported Wednesday afternoon that a few \$7.50 seats are still available at the Coliseum box office.

There are plenty of \$4.50 tickets available for the Santana concert Friday at Duke's Cameron Indoor Stadium. Wednesday afternoon, the Record Bar on Henderson Street still had approximately 450 of the upstairs general-admission tickets, while the Record Bar at University Mall had 300 upstairs tickets left.

The show in Greensboro will be the first for Fleetwood Mac in two weeks. Their current tour was almost cancelled when Stevie Nicks developed a severe sore throat in San Diego. Doctors warned her that serious permanent damage would develop if she didn't rest her voice. *Playboy* named Fleetwood Mac the number one pop group in its current music poll.

Firefall, a relatively new group, will be appearing with Fleetwood Mac. *Rolling Stone* reported that Firefall is a band to watch. Their first album, released last summer, had two songs that scored high in the charts, "Livin' Ain't Livin'" and "It Doesn't Matter." They gave quite a show at Georgetown University in October. It was reminiscent of the Eagles three years ago. Mellow music with searing guitars. Listen to the lyrics.

Santana at Duke also should prove to be a wild show. On the current tour, they have been mixing their old Latin and soul beats with their new jazz and disco rhythms. Santana fans should be ready for some incredible guitar work by Carlos. Pure Prairie League, the group who had a hit song, "Amie," two years ago, also will appear with Santana.

Both shows begin at 8 p.m.

—JACK GREENSPAN

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Spring time is Pearl time

Don't Miss the Man from Minolta.

He'll Be Here For A

MINOLTA DEMONSTRATION

NOON TO 8 P.M. - TODAY

929-5555

PHOTO SYNTHESIS

10 a.m.-9 p.m. Mon.-Sat.

University Mall, west wing beside Optical Illusions

CLARENCES BAR & GRILL, Home of the Cheapest Brew in Town, Announces the Best Hot Dog in Town. Prove it to Yourself. Today thru Sat. March 19, Buy

3 HOT DOGS for \$1.00

or, if you prefer,

2 HOT DOGS and a GLASS OF BEER just \$1.00

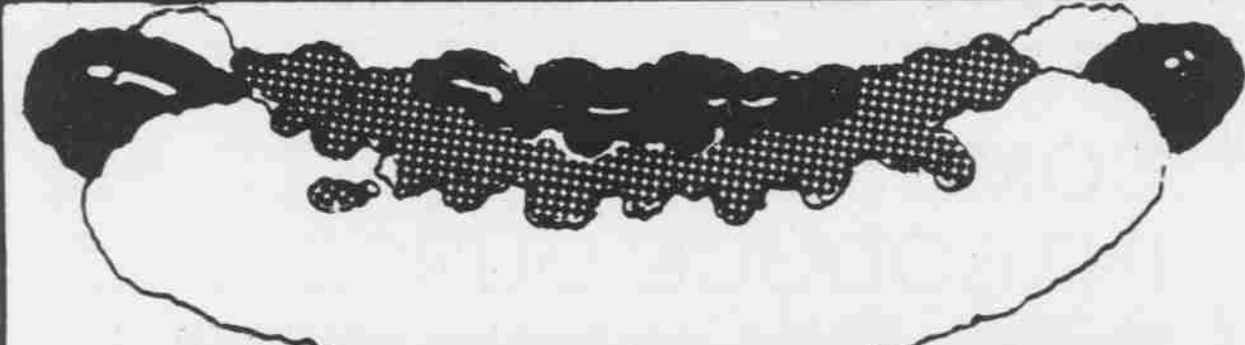
CLARENCES BAR & GRILL

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11:30 am til 1 pm SUN. 1 pm til midnight

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Homemade Chili • Homemade Slaw • All-meat Weiners

WEEEEEEEEEE DOGGIES!

New course additions to Carolyceum!

The Art of Massage  
Beginning Needle Work

Sign-up ends March 21st

Classes start the week of March 21.

**SUPER BEACH**  
Show and Dance!  
Four hours of super Beach music!

Maurice Williams and the Zodiacs

THE Showmen

Live!

THE Chairmen of the Board

Bill Deal and the Rhondels

Thursday March 31  
8:00 p.m.  
Carmichael Auditorium  
Tickets \$2.00

Available at the UNION Desk or Chapel Hill Record Bars.



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933-2285

Houston Ballet

8:00 p.m.

Reynolds Coliseum, Raleigh

March 25-26

Tickets \$2.00

Deep Jonah presents

Frank Dieter and Emy Reeves

performing from 8:30 - 11:00

NO COVER

Friday March 18

Bring your own beer & wine—food sold inside

**Casino Night!** March 23rd, 8 p.m. Great Hall



carolina UNION Recreation Committee presentation

How Raging Black Jack Roulette. Crap. Any-Duey - you name it - we'll play it!

free!

Plus...we'll give you \$30 to gamble with!!  
**PRIZES GALORE** —  
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Other Upcoming Concerts

Sun. April 17

The David Bromberg Band  
8 p.m.  
Memorial Hall  
\$3.00

Thurs. April 21

Jesse Colin Young  
8 p.m. Carmichael Auditorium

North Carolina's own

**PIEDMONT CHAMBER ORCHESTRA**

8:00 p.m.  
Sunday March 20  
Memorial Hall

Tickets \$2.00 for UNC students