

Raging Bull: You Never Got Me Down

Sambhav Lamichhane

Raging Bull, directed by Martin Scorsese in 1980, is a biographical sports drama that delves into the life of boxer Jake LaMotta. At its heart, the film tells a story of self-destruction, as LaMotta's inner demons, his jealousy, insecurity, and uncontrollable rage which ultimately lead to his downfall. His greatest opponent is not found in the ring but within himself.

LaMotta's jealousy and envy are present throughout the film. Despite being married to the beautiful Vickie, his insecurities cause him to believe that she's too good for him, and he becomes obsessed with the idea that she's unfaithful. His paranoia and irrational suspicion consume him, poisoning his relationships and distorting his view of reality. Rather than enjoying the life he has, Jake's insecurity drives him to self-sabotage, isolating him from those who care about him.

One of the most iconic scenes in the film is LaMotta's sixth and final fight against Sugar Ray Robinson. By the 13th round, LaMotta had been leading on points, and the win was pretty much in the bag. But instead of playing it safe, Jake stands there defenseless, allowing Robinson to deliver a brutal series of punches. As Robinson briefly pauses to catch his breath, Jake, bloodied and barely recognizable, taunts him with the famous line: "Hey, Ray, I never went down, man! You never got me down, Ray!"

This line encapsulates LaMotta's twisted sense of pride. In his mind, as long as he doesn't hit the canvas, he hasn't truly been defeated. It's not about winning the fight on points; it's about proving that no one can bring him down.

LaMotta's paradox is that while his insecurities fuel his success in the ring, they are the very traits that prevent him from maintaining that success. His inability to control his emotions, particularly his jealousy and anger that, eventually destroys his relationships, leading to his unraveling. The final fight becomes a visual representation of this. Jake stands there, bloodied and battered, but with a sense of pride that he never fell, even as the world around him crumbles.

One of the most striking aspects of this scene has to be the visual contrast between LaMotta and Robinson. Scorsese uses lighting and camera angles to portray Robinson as an angelic figure, with bright lighting and low-angle shots giving him an ethereal presence. Meanwhile, LaMotta is framed in dim, smoky lighting, emphasizing his role as a fallen man. This contrast visually reinforces the idea that while LaMotta sees himself as the hero, he is, in fact, the villain of his own story.

While Scorsese's direction and Robert De Niro's performance are often praised, I strongly believe that Thelma Schoonmaker's editing is the very key to the film's success. Her work in the fight scenes, particularly the final one, creates a visceral, immersive experience that draws the audience into LaMotta's world. Schoonmaker's editing amplifies the intensity and brutality of the scenes, which helps to make *Raging Bull* one of the most unforgettable films in cinematic history.

In my opinion, *Raging Bull* is a movie about more than just boxing in the end. It delves deeply into inner turmoil, pride, and self-destruction. The narrative of Jake LaMotta serves as a warning on how even the strongest people can be destroyed by unbridled anger and insecurity. His greatest battle was never in the ring, but it was within himself.

