

Blu-Ray Review: Fantastic, Beloved ‘The Wrestler’ With Mickey Rourke

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on April 24, 2009 - 1:06pm

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CHICAGO – [Mickey Rourke](#) [8]’s multi-award-winning performance in “[The Wrestler](#) [10]” anchors one of the best films of 2008, now released on Blu-Ray and DVD. If you haven’t seen the film yet, you truly must do so as soon as possible, and if you love the movie like so many people do, you’ll be satisfied, if not overly impressed, by a decent HD release.

His speech would have been legendary, but Rourke not winning the Oscar for “The Wrestler” may have been the best thing that could have happened to the film. It keeps the actor, the movie, and the character as the beloved underdog everyone wants them to be. No one roots for the winner. The idea that the Academy got it wrong, not only in their choice of [Sean Penn](#) [12] over Rourke for Best Actor but in ignoring the film in other major categories like Director and Picture will only add to the allure of the film over the years. It’s going to be a prime example of where the Academy went wrong in a lot of fan’s eyes. Randy “The Ram” got screwed again.

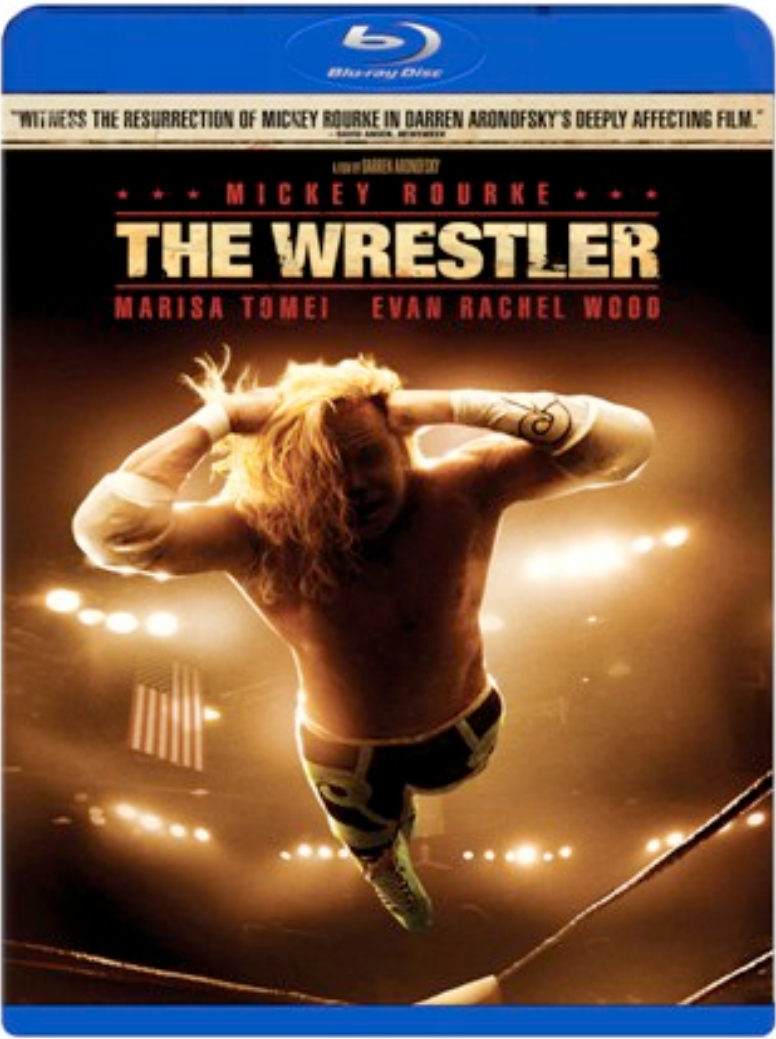


The Wrestler was released on Blu-Ray on April 21st, 2009.
Photo credit: Fox

If you’re unfamiliar, Rourke plays Randy “The Ram” Robinson, a former superstar wrestler who is now barely making ends meet in every arena of his life. He can’t pay rent on his lonely trailer. His health is deteriorating rapidly from nights spent in the ring. And as he sees his final rounds of life approaching he reaches out to a kind-hearted stripper ([Marisa Tomei](#) [7]) in a similar life situation (she too has made a living using her body) and to his estranged daughter ([Evan Rachel Wood](#) [5]).

The one thing about the response to “The Wrestler” that aggravated me a bit during awards season was the impression by some that this was a one-man show or even a three-actor showcase. That’s far from the truth. [Darren Aronofsky](#) [4]’s expert direction, Clint Mansell’s touching score, Robert Siegel’s brilliantly non-melodramatic screenplay, even Bruce Springsteen’s fantastic theme song - “The Wrestler” features arguably the best performance of 2008 but it’s also a lot more than just that. It’s a great movie all around.





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Photo credit: Fox

I’ve seen “The Wrestler” four times now and it’s been just as rich and accomplished every time. Films that hold up that well are the kind of films you want to own. So, I would never try to dissuade someone from buying the Blu-Ray of “The Wrestler,” just because the movie itself is so fantastic, but I do feel like the home release could have been a bit better and suspect a special edition may be coming down the road.

The video and audio on “The Wrestler” are good-not-great. Sometimes Fox transfers can look a little flatter than they should and there are moments of that in “The Wrestler”. Similarly, the audio in 5.1 DTS-HD won’t distract anyone in either direction. It gets the job done, not detracting from the movie, but also not really enhancing it as it could.

I’m struck a little bit by the paucity of the special features on “The Wrestler”. I have a feeling that in ten years, hardcore fans of this movie are going to be quoting it verbatim. It is one of the most widely adored films of the last few years and a movie I get asked about nearly as much as any other from 2008. With that kind of rabid fan base, couldn’t Fox do better than two featurettes and a music video?



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Photo credit: Fox

Where’s the commentary track? The deleted scenes? How about some of the publicity from awards season? I’d have gone up an entire ratings point if they had just included Mickey’s amazing Independent Spirit Awards speech. Aronofsky thought outside the box when he made this raw drama, but the Blu-Ray feels like nearly the minimum the studio could have done in return.

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To be fair, what is include is interesting. “Within the Ring” is a 43-minute behind-the-scenes documentary shot during production. It’s advertised on the case as “A No-Holds-Barred One-on-One with Wrestlers and Filmmakers”. Not quite. I was hoping for more insight into the production from actual wrestlers, the advisors on-set that made it feel so genuine. It’s pretty standard b-t-s material, interesting because the movie is so good, but not really a must-see.

Better is the “Wrestler Round Table,” a discussion with actual wrestlers that runs 25 minutes. Brutus “The Barber” Beefcake, Lex Luger, “Diamond” Dallas Page, “Rowdy” Roddy Piper, Greg “The Hammer” Valentine,” and moderator Damon Andrews provide a loud, spirited, lively conversation about wrestling that should be riveting for fans of the sport and gives a little insight into the truth behind the fiction of Randy “The Ram” Robinson.

The final extra is the music video for Bruce Springsteen’s excellent theme song to the film.

“The Wrestler” will stand the test of time. In fact, I expect its cult to grow significantly with each passing year. Darren Aronofsky proved with his drama that greater risks can often produce greater rewards. The Ram may have deserved a better Blu-Ray treatment (and I expect he’ll get it down the road), but you can’t complain about the film itself.

‘The Wrestler’ is released by Twentieth Century Fox and stars Mickey Rourke, Marisa Tomei, and Evan Rachel Wood. It was written by Robert Siegel and directed by Darren Aronofsky. It was released on April 21st, 2009. It is rated R.



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