



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on December 18, 2010

The Fighter: An Exciting Comeback Story

Set in the '90s, the movie depicts Lowell as a depressed city. The boarded-up buildings and desolate city landscape captured by the camera set the stage for what will prove to be the kind of comeback that residents in Lowell needed. (In real life, although Lowell had become a shell of its former self after the loss of its textile industry, the city rebounded in the 1970s with the help of Wang — which went bankrupt in the 1990s — and the computer revolution.)



From the age of 12, Micky was inspired by his brother Dickie — a boxer who acquired fame from taking on Sugar Ray Leonard in 10 rounds in 1978, which earned Dickie the title “The Pride of Lowell.” Dickie and Micky later became a team, with retired Dickie training his younger brother how to effectively bring an opponent to his knees. They were a dynamic duo — Dickie taught Micky the maneuvers and Mickey put them to work.

Micky became well known for taking hard jabs, waiting through the pain, exhausting his opponent, and then delivering a knockout punch. He was also famous for his destructive body punches. The late Arturo Gatti once revealed a cyst under his ribs that developed after such a blow from his good friend Micky Ward.

Though Ward was undefeated in the 1980s, the film begins after Micky hit a wall, having lost three matches in a row. He had developed a reputation as a “stepping stool” for other boxers who needed a few easy wins to get to title fights.

Micky decided to quit boxing, but found inspiration to resuscitate his career when he met Charlene Fleming (Amy Adams). She encouraged him not to resign himself to a life of street paving when he still had a lot of fight in him. She also made him aware of the destructive influence his family had on him, especially his brother Dickie, whose addiction to crack cocaine became so severe that he was the subject of an HBO 1995 documentary entitled *High on Crack Street*.

A skirmish between Dickie and the police landed Dickie and his brother Micky, who intervened in the fight, in jail, though Micky was released on only minor charges. Dickie's stint in prison proved to be one of the best things that could have happened to him, as he became spiritually and physically rehabilitated there. But it also showed Micky that his boxing career could only be salvaged if he kept a distance from his brother. It gave Micky an opportunity to be independent from Dickie and seek the help of others who were more capable of bringing him success.

Under the leadership of his new manager, Sal Lanano (Frank Renzulli), trainer Mickey O'Keefe (played



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by the real Mickey O'Keefe), and with the care of Charlene, and the professional and emotional support of his father who was unafraid to stand against the rest of the family, Ward returned to the ring and enjoyed another long reign of victories.

The film ends with a title match against England's Shea Neary. Ward's exciting victory was a celebration for Micky, for Lowell, and for America.

[Box Office Magazine](#) writes, "But the biggest battles were yet to come: three legendary fights with friend Arturo Gatti that crystallized Ward's status as one of the indefatigable, uncompromising characters in boxing history. And when Ward took his final bow, the blue-collar boy had made good with 38 wins, 27 Kos and three crowns for surviving Ring Magazine's Fight of the Year in 2001, 2002, and 2003."

The Fighter is an all-around exciting film. If you're anything like me, you will enjoy the dramatic boxing scenes and will likely find yourself yelling at the movie screen, growing frustrated by how Micky allows himself to be cornered on the ropes while he takes a beating. But when he musters up enough strength to deliver his knockout punches, watch out! Moviegoers throughout the theater cheered and applauded, including me.

Charlene Fleming often steals the show. With her spitfire, take-hell-from-no-one attitude, and incessant gumption, she is a lot of fun to watch. She's a bit rough around the edges, but in the end, holds Micky's best interests at heart. It explains why Micky later marries her.

Adam's representation of Charlene is a total shock given the acute differences between this role and her previous roles in films such as *Leap Year*, *Enchanted*, and *Night at the Museum*. I didn't think she had it in her to play a tough, street-smart girl with a mouth like a truck driver, but she did. She really proved her diverse acting abilities in this movie, and I predict this role could earn her a nomination as best supporting actress.

Christian Bale effectively depicts the downtrodden Dickie Eklund, whose downfall is truly shameful. Bale's performance really pulls at moviegoers' heartstrings as he artfully portrays a man whose flash-in-the-pan success sank him into a hole that only grew deeper as his addiction to drugs grew stronger. Viewers cannot help but like him, however, as his undying love for his brother is evident. No matter Dickie's own situation, Micky's success was always of paramount importance to him.

The only truly disappointing performance is that of Mark Wahlberg, who, despite both the scenario and his best attempts, always seems to come off as a whiner. Moments that called for fervor, anger, or enthusiasm all seemed to be devoid of any real passion. While Wahlberg certainly met the physical requirements for the part of Micky Ward, he fell short everywhere else.

The Fighter highlights the difficulties of choosing between loyalty to family and the chance at happiness that is often negatively impacted by family. It also reveals the formula for success and happiness that often entails far more components than originally expected.

Despite the film's length, it is captivating enough to hold your attention from beginning to end. So many facets of the film are enthralling, from the exploration of Ward's familial relationships and his interactions with Charlene, to the progress of his professional career laden with hurdles.

It is unfortunate that the film includes drug use, sexual content, and foul language, preventing it from appealing to all audiences. However, for anyone who is interested in boxing, dramatic personal relationships, or real-life comeback stories, *The Fighter* is an excellent choice.



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