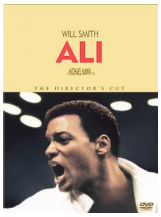
Ali [1]



view in catalog [2]

I visited the Muhammad Ali Center [3] in Louisville this past weekend, so it naturally occurred to me to watch Ali [4] again afterwards. While the film is noticeably uneven as a bio-pic, it does cover the most notable part of Ali's boxing career from his first fight with Sonny Liston [5] to his "Rumble in the Jungle" [6] with George Foreman [7]. The film also delves into his relationship with The Nation of Islam [8], his fight against being drafted [9] into the Vietnam War, his appearances on television with Howard Cosell [10], and so on.

Yet, it never really settles into who Muhammad Ali is as a person (or who he thinks he is). Even with a Director's Cut of 165 minutes (8 minutes longer than the theatrical release), the film leaves us as audience to speculate on any conclusions. The story does not give us much context [11] for what it does show, so this might turn off some viewers (though having to pay attention might make it a more immersive experience). Like all stories, it probably contains elements of fiction, but its refusal to paint the man as a two-dimensional 'hero' seems like a more truthful attempt that makes the movie worth seeking out. It's a beautifully shot picture using a mix of film and digital, as Michael Mann [12] is prone to do with his overtly stylized direction [13]. The boxing scenes are, from what I can tell, of almost Raging Bull [14]-like attention to detail (though in color). Will Smith [15] gives what is probably his most committed performance (and not just because he gained 35 pounds to match Ali's actual boxing weight [16] or took on actual sparring punches [17] for some of the scenes). We see a fully formed character here; it's not just an impersonation. Smith inhabits Ali in a way that many other actors could not pull off. Yet, ultimately, the film's story is not about finding the real Ali. Its focus is not just about the literal struggle of one man, but about a time in history where that man's role as a boxer becomes a metaphorical struggle for civil rights.

Posted by Brandon R. on July 9, 2013

Sights and Sounds [18]

Information, Answers & Reviews [19]

Links
[1] https://mcpl.info/blogs/sights-and-sounds/ali
[2] https://mcpl.monroe.lib.in.us/search/searchresults.aspx?type=Boolean&term=isbn=0767894650%20or%20upc=0767894650&by=KW&sort=RELEVANCE?utm_source=blogpost&utm_medium=publicsite&utm_campaign=blogpost
[3] http://alicenter.org/
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[13] https://mubi.com/notebook/posts/the-first-ten-minutes-of-ali
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