



Million Dollar Baby

Director: Clint Eastwood

©: Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc.

Production Companies: Malpasco Company,

Ruddy/Morgan Productions

Presented by: Warner Bros.

Presented in association with:

Lakeshore Entertainment Corporation

Distributed by: Warner Bros. Pictures

Executive Producers: Gary Lucchesi, Robert Lorenz

Produced by: Clint Eastwood, Albert S. Ruddy,

Tom Rosenber, Paul Haggis

Co-producer: Bobby Moresco

Malpasco Executive: Judie G. Hoyt

Production Accountant: Jason S. Gondek

Production Co-ordinator: Karen E. Shaw

Unit Production Manager: Tim Moore

Supervising Location Manager: Kokayi Ampah

1st Assistant Director: Robert Lorenz

2nd Assistant Director: Donald Murphy

2nd 2nd Assistant Director: Katie Carroll

Additional 2nd Assistant Director: Ryan Craig

Script Supervisor: Mable Lawson McCrary

Casting: Phyllis Huffman

Casting Associate: Susan Grennan

Screenplay: Paul Haggis

Based upon stories from 'Rope Burns' by:

F.X. Toole

Director of Photography: Tom Stern

Camera/Steadicam Operator:

Stephen S. Campanelli

Rigging Grip: T. Daniel Scaringi

Chief Lighting Technician: Ross Dunkerley

Rigging Gaffer: Sean M. Higgins

Video/Graphics Supervisor: Liz Radley

Still Photographer: Merie Weismiller Wallace

Special Effects Co-ordinator: Steven Riley

Special Effects: Dominic V. Ruiz

Edited by: Joel Cox

Assistant Film Editors: Michael Cipriano,

Gary D. Roach

Production Design: Henry Bumstead

Art Director: Jack G. Taylor Jr

Set Designers: Joseph G. Pacelli, Gary A. Lee

Set Decorator: Richard C. Goddard

Property Master: Mike Sexton

Construction Co-ordinator: Michael A. Muscarella

Costumes Designed by: Deborah Hopper

Costume Supervisor: Lynda Foote

Key Make-up Artist: Tania McComas

Make-up Artists: Jay Wejbe,

Nancy Worthen-Hancock

Key Hairstylist: Carol A. O'Connell

Hairstylists: Jan Alexander, Deena Adair

Titles/Opticals: Pacific Title

Music: Clint Eastwood

Guitarist: Bruce Forman

Music Orchestrated/Conducted by: Lennie Niehaus

Special Music Arrangements: Gennady Loktionov

Music Editor: Donald Harris

Production Sound Mixer: Walt Martin

Boom Operators: Jonathan Lee-Ger Fuh,

Tom Hartig

Re-recording Mixers: Christopher Boyes,

Michael Semanick, Tom Johnson

Supervising Sound Editor: Alan Robert Murray

Co-supervising Sound Editor: Bub Asman

Boxing Technical Advisers: Don Familton,

Lucia Rijker, Hector Roca, 'Boxing' Don R. Dinkins

Medical Technical Adviser: Michell L. Shuffett M.D.

Stunt Co-ordinator: Buddy Van Horn

Cast:

Clint Eastwood (Frankie Dunn)

The Cinematic Life of Boxing

Million Dollar Baby

SPOILER WARNING The following notes give away some of the plot.

'It isn't really a boxing story,' Clint Eastwood has remarked about his new film. But then, when are boxing films ever just about the noble art? *Body and Soul* (1947), *Rocco and His Brothers* (1960) and *Raging Bull* (1980) – they're all works of social commentary more or less bound up with issues of masculinity. And so is this, in its way. One of the best scenes in the film is when Eastwood's veteran trainer Frankie goes with Maggie, the young female boxer he reluctantly takes under his wing, back to the Ozarks to meet her family. We expect to meet the salt of the earth, poor but proud people who have made Maggie the person she is. Instead, we encounter her blowsy, sour-faced mother and sluttish sister, whose sole response to Maggie's gift of a house is to worry how it might affect their welfare payments. Poverty hasn't given these people hearts of gold, it's made them mean-spirited and grasping.

In a sense the movie is the American dream over again, with its tale of how boxing can offer a route out of a life spent in a place between nowhere and goodbye, as Maggie's home town is described. The twist is that Maggie is trying to make it in a sport all of whose traditions are aggressively masculine. Yet in the end not too much is made of that. Maggie has none of the amatory entanglements of the usual Hollywood heroine that might conflict with boxing, and is possessed of a burning ambition and physical resilience which render her adaptation to the boxing world unproblematic.

But boxing movies almost always end in tragedy, as if the brutality of the sport is a kind of metaphor for the harshness of life itself. Maggie gets her nose broken early on (Frankie sets it in the ring, making an audible click that had some viewers at the press show squirming in their seats). Yet nothing prepares us for the shock of her paralysing injury and its aftermath. One might think the scene is set for something like *The Wings of Eagles* (1956), where John Wayne heroically forces himself to overcome a similar disability. Rather, Maggie's swift descent into despair offers no final uplift, but the bleakest ending of any Eastwood picture.

Though in Hilary Swank's spirited performance Maggie is more than a cipher, it's Frankie who is at the centre of the picture. Two things rule his life: the estrangement of his daughter (never explained), for whom Maggie is an obvious – perhaps too obvious – substitute. And his guilt over the loss of an eye by Scrap in a fight that Frankie ought to have stopped. Scrap (a marvellously grizzled performance by Morgan Freeman) is Frankie's amanuensis, a relationship full of bickering and unstated affection, like an elderly married couple. This guilt prevents Frankie, brilliant trainer though he is, from pushing his boxers forward into difficult fights in which they might gain championships but sustain injury. 'Protect yourself' is Frankie's first law of boxing technique, and it's a lesson he has applied to himself. Maggie's enthusiasm and talent, together with his fatherly feelings for her, eventually persuade him to overcome his anxieties, with disastrous results.

The washed-out colour photography, the seedy urban locations, the peripheral low-life characters all give the film a pleasingly *noir* feel. And in *film noir* style the story is narrated in voiceover by Scrap, allowing for a series of pithy statements of hard-boiled philosophy. 'Boxing's about respect,' Scrap intones, 'getting it

Hilary Swank (*Maggie Fitzgerald*)
Morgan Freeman (*Eddie Scrap-Iron Dupris*)
Jay Baruchel (*Danger Barch*)
Mike Colter (*Big Willie Little*)
Lucia Rijker (*Billie 'The Blue Bear'*)
Brian O'Byrne (*Father Horvak*)
Anthony Mackie (*Shawrelle Barry*)
Margo Martindale (*Earline Fitzgerald*)
Riki Lindhome (*Mardell Fitzgerald*)
Michael Peña (*Omar*)
Benito Martinez (*Billie's manager*)
Bruce MacVittie (*Mickey Mack*)
David Powlledge (*counterman at diner*)
Joe d'Angerio (*cut man*)
Marcus Chait (*J.D. Fitzgerald*)
Tom McCleister (*lawyer*)
Erica Grant (*nurse*)
Naveen (*Pakistani*)
Morgan Eastwood (*little girl in truck*)
Jamison Yang (*paramedic*)
Dean FAMILTON (*ref 1*)
Dr Louis Moret (*ref 2*)
V.J. Foster (*ref 3*)
Jon D. Schorle li (*ref 4*)
Marty Sammon (*ref 5*)
Steven M. Porter (*ref 6*)
Ray Corona (*ref 7*)
Ming Lo (*rehab doctor*)
Miguel Perez (*restaurant owner*)
Jim Cantafio (*ring doctor 1*)
Ted Grossman (*ring doctor 2*)
Ned Eisenberg (*Sally Mendoza*)
Marco Rodriguez (*second at Vegas fight*)
Roy Nugent (*fan in Vegas*)
Don FAMILTON (*ring announcer*)
Mark Thomason (*radio commentator*)
Brian T. Finney (*Irish fan 1*)
Spice Williams-Crosby (*Irish fan 2*)
Kim Strauss (*Irish fan 3*)
Rob Maron (*Irish fan 4*)
Kirsten Berman (*Irish fan 5*)
Susan Krebs (*rehab nurse*)
Sunshine Chantal Parkman (*rehab nurse 2*)
Kim Dannenberg (*rehab nurse 3*)
Eddie Bates (*rehab resident*)
USA 2004©
132 mins
Digital

The screening on Wed 15 Apr will include a discussion with broadcaster and athlete Jeanette Kwakye and boxing writer Ruth Rapper

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for yourself and taking it away from the other guy.' As often in the movies, the hard-boiled carapace conceals a world-view just short of sentimentality, as Maggie is cocooned in the cosy family atmosphere of the gym. It's this which is torn apart by Maggie's fate and an ending that refuses any solace for the viewer. In a running gag throughout the film, Frankie goes every day to Mass, apparently seeking absolution for whatever sin drove his daughter away. But a vein of subversive humour keeps surfacing as he grills the priest on abstruse points of doctrine, with such persistence that the priest is provoked into calling him 'a fucking pagan'. When at the end Frankie asks for guidance on Maggie's request for euthanasia, the priest refuses to allow such an act. Frankie has failed to protect himself against getting involved; now he's out on his own.

Edward Buscombe, *Sight and Sound*, March 2005

Clint Eastwood interviewed

You don't appear to feel constrained by genre. You're not afraid to break rules, yet you're not flashy about it. Do you feel different from most of today's directors?

I don't think about that; I hate to get into looking inwards because that means I'm not looking outwards. But it's true I'm probably more influenced by that older tradition when people made a greater variety of films. Nowadays so many decisions about making films are about what's just been out there – the fad of the moment.

To get *Mystic River* and *Million Dollar Baby* made I had to go with hat in hand. Nobody wanted to make them. I took *Mystic River* to people I knew, but even Warner Bros. said, 'It's so dark.' Next I went to them with *Million Dollar Baby*. 'It's about a woman in boxing! Nobody'll want to see that!' So I went to Universal and they said, 'We've already got a boxing movie.' I said, 'It's not a boxing movie, that's just the world it's set in. There's more to it than that; it's a father-daughter love story.' Then Warner Bros. came back and said, 'We don't want you to make this anywhere else, but could you make it on a really austere budget?' So I told them it wouldn't be expensive, and I'd do it like *Play Misty for Me* for no money: they'd pay me a percentage if it made money, and if it didn't, that was fine by me. Same deal as 38 years ago. Anyway, it started slowly and went on to do very well, so we were right on that occasion. We could just as easily have been wrong, I suppose, but at least we're not making a picture because it's part of a trend or because another studio's making something similar across town. That shouldn't be important. You should make what you want to do. When we made *Unforgiven* it was a quiet period for Westerns, but I said, 'It's a special story, it'll have its own character.' You have to go with what you believe in.

Interview by Geoff Andrew, *Sight and Sound*, September 2008