



The Fighter

Directed by: David O. Russell

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Production Companies: Relativity Media, Mandeville Films, Closest to the Hole

Presented by: Paramount Pictures, Relativity Media

In association with: The Weinstein Company

Executive Producers: Tucker Tooley, Darren Aronofsky, Leslie Varrelman, Keith Dorrington, Eric Johnson

Produced by: David Hoberman, Todd Lieberman, Ryan Kavanaugh, Mark Wahlberg, Dorothy Aufiero, Paul Tamasy

Co-producers: Jeff Waxman, Kenneth Halsband

Associate Producer: Louis Dibella

Executive in Charge of Production: Kenneth Halsband

Unit Production Manager: Mark Kamine

Production Co-ordinator: Jennifer Madeloff

Production Accountant: Dana Reaves Bolla

Post-production Accountants: David M. Rodriguez, John Rash

Location Manager: Colin Walsh

Post-production Supervisor: Christopher Kulikowski

Post-production Co-ordinator: Pascal Vaguely

1st Assistant Director: Michele Ziegler

2nd Assistant Director: Xanthus Valan

Script Supervisor: Karen Golden

Casting by: Sheila Jaffe

Screenplay by: Scott Silver, Paul Tamasy, Eric Johnson

Story by: Keith Dorrington, Paul Tamasy, Eric Johnson

Director of Photography: Hoyte van Hoytema

A Camera Operator: Geoffrey Haley

B Camera Operator: Dana Gonzales

Steadicam Operator: Geoffrey Haley

Gaffer: Mike Moyer

Key Grip: Woody Bell

Video Assist: Alex Applefeld

Still Photographer: JoJo Whilden

Visual Effects by: Comen VFX (Visual Effects

Supervisor: Tim Carras; Visual Effects Producer: Josh Comen)

Special Effects Co-ordinator: Steve Ricci

Editor: Pamela Martin

Production Designer: Judy Becker

Art Director: Laura Ballinger Gardner

Art Department Co-ordinator: Melissa B. Miller

Set Decorator: Gene Serdena

Graphic Designer: Kevin Raper

Property Master: David H. Allen

Construction Co-ordinator: Kurt L. Smith

Costume Designer: Mark Bridges

Wardrobe Supervisor: Debbie Holbrook

Department Head Make-up: Donald Mowat

Department Head Hair: Johnny Villanueva

Titles by: Comen VFX

Music by: Michael Brook

Strings Arrangements and Violin: Julie Rogers

Music Supervisors: Happy Walters, Season Kent

Sound Designer: Odin Benitez

Production Sound Mixer: Anton Gold

Boom Operators: Eric Thomas, Brian Courchine

Re-recording Mixers: John Ross, Myron Nettinga

Sound Recordist: Kaspar Hugentobler

Supervising Sound Editor: Odin Benitez

Stunt Co-ordinators: Ray Siegle, Ben Bray

Consultant: Salvatore Lonano

Cast:

Mark Wahlberg ('Irish' Micky Ward)

Christian Bale (Dicky Eklund)

Amy Adams (Charlene Fleming)

The Cinematic Life of Boxing

The Fighter

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

Inspired by an incredible true story, comes the gritty, affectionately humorous, yet stirring comeback tale of the unlikely boxing hero 'Irish' Micky Ward (Mark Wahlberg) and his half-brother, Dicky Eklund (Christian Bale), who had to come apart as opponents before coming together as brothers in a scrappy fight to win a long-shot championship and strengthen the bonds of their family.

Years in the making, *The Fighter* was shot in just 33 days on the blue-collar streets of Lowell, Massachusetts. Early on, producers David Hoberman and Todd Lieberman fell in love with the story of Micky and Dicky and saw that it was about so much more than just an underdog's athletic victory.

Star/producer Mark Wahlberg, director David O. Russell and a close-knit cast and crew united behind a vision to bring Micky and Dicky's deeply human family to life in a series of alternately comic, tender, bruising and triumphant moments that unfold as much in the living room as in the boxing ring.

'*The Fighter* is about family, love, relationships and overcoming adversity. The drama of the story is as powerful as the boxing is exciting,' explains Mark Wahlberg, who trained intensively for several years to take on the physically and emotionally demanding lead role of Micky Ward. 'David O. Russell really had a great view of the script, of this world and the people in it. David got that scrappy spirit of the movie, and we did exactly that.'

The story of Micky Ward's hard rise and unexpected transformation into a sports legend was such a gritty, real-life fairy tale that many people who heard about it remarked that it sounded just like a movie. Bringing the story to the screen would take nearly as much passion, devotion and hard work on the part of a whole team of filmmakers as to match Micky's own bid for a championship title. What excited producers Lieberman and Hoberman was that it was also about the invincible bonds between brothers and a family's quest for redemption. Those elements made the story worth fighting for, say the producers.

'We got involved in *The Fighter* when screenwriters Paul Tamasy and Eric Johnson brought us a 15-minute DVD on the lives of Dicky Eklund and Micky Ward,' explains Hoberman. 'When my partner Todd and I watched it, we were in tears. It's a story of overcoming the odds, of redemption in the face of adversity, and that's the kind of story we love to do. We asked them right away if we could partner with them and they said yes.'

Adds Lieberman: 'I must have watched that DVD 500 times. It was truly inspiring to learn about the story of these two brothers and what they overcame throughout the years. We felt it had a lot of parallels in terms of its mix of drama, redemption and brotherly love.'

The story would take three years and a fighting spirit on the part of the filmmakers to get to the screen. Mark Wahlberg had long wanted to make a movie about Micky Ward and Dicky Eklund. Hoberman and Lieberman were thrilled to team up with Wahlberg and director David O. Russell spurred the production into a rough-and-ready, fast-paced production schedule that immersed the cast full bore into their characters and the crew into the world of blue-collar boxing in America. 'Clearly, he was going to be the perfect Micky

Melissa Leo (*Alice Ward*)
 Mickey O'Keefe (*Mickey O'Keefe*)
 Jack McGee (*George Ward*)
 Melissa Mcmeekin (*'Little Alice' Eklund*)
 Bianca Hunter (*Cathy 'Pork' Eklund*)
 Erica McDermott (*Cindy 'Tar' Eklund*)
 Jill Quigg (*Donna Eklund Jaynes*)
 Dendrie Taylor (*Gail 'Red Dog' Eklund*)
 Kate O'Brien (*Phyllis 'Beaver' Eklund*)
 Jenna Lamia (*Sherri Ward*)
 Frank Renzulli (*Sal Lanano*)
 Paul Campbell (*Gary 'Boo Boo' Giuffrida*)
 Caitlin Dwyer (*Kasie Ward*)
 Chanty Sok (*Karen*)
 Ted Arcidi (*Lou Gold*)
 Ross Bickell (*Mike Toma*)
 Sean Malone (*Wolfie*)
 Jose Antonio Rivera (*Gilberto Brown aka Jose*)
 Richard Farrell (*HBO cameraman 1*)
 Matthew Muzio (*HBO cameraman 2*)
 Steven Barkheimer (*HBO producer*)
 Art Ramalho (*Art Ramalho*)
 Sugar Ray Leonard (*Sugar Ray Leonard*)
 Jackson Nicoll (*little Dicky*)
 Alison Folland (*Laurie Carroll*)
 Sean Doherty (*Jimmy, Laurie's husband*)
 Sue Costello (*Becky*)
 Thomas Benton (*businessman*)
 Ray Greenhalge (*Ray Ramalho*)
 Tino Kimly (*Pran*)
 Epifanio Melendez (*Carlos Garcia*)
 Jeremiah Kissel (*bald businessman*)
 Sean Eklund (*man in diner*)
 Roeun Chea (*Chan*)
 Brian Nguyen (*Brian*)
 Rikki Kleiman (*court clerk*)
 Michael Dell'orto (*WBU commissioner*)
 Paul Locke (*reporter 1*)
 Kim Carrell (*reporter 2*)
 Colin Hammell (*John Hyland*)
 Dale Place (*referee Mickey Vann*)
 Eddie Lee Anderson (*referee Joe Cortez*)
 Joseph Lupino (*referee Mitch Halpern*)
 Bonnie Aarons (*crackhead Bonnie*)
 Walter Driscoll (*court officer*)
 Matt Russell (*photo guy on street*)
 A. Joseph Denucci (*man on street 1*)
 Richard A. Eklund (*man on street 2*)
 George Michael Ward (*man on street 3*)
 Richard Eklund Jr (*man on street 4*)
 Jack Greenhalge (*man on street 5*)
 Kevin Paige (*man on street 6*)
 David A. Ramalho Sr (*trainer*)
 Ziad Akl (*inmate*)
 Simon Hamlin (*movie patron*)
 Gerald Greenhalge (*Uncle Jerry*)
 Matthew Russell (*running kid 1*)
 Tommy Eklund (*running kid 2*)
 Rita Mercier (*woman on street 1*)
 Deborah Bolanger (*woman on street 2*)
 Kerry Moore (*woman on street 3*)
 Philip D. Herbert (*Micky's cutman*)
 Raul Vera (*Sanchez trainer*)
 Jack Lally (*Neary trainer*)
 Carlos L. Smith (*Sugar Ray Leonard bodyguard*)
 Jerrell Lee (*fight spectator 1*)
 Hugh K. Long (*fight spectator 2*)
 Catherine Lynn Stone (*fan*)
 Eric Weinstein (*Micky's friend*)
 Bo Cleary (*cop*)
 Anthony Molinari (*Neary*)
 USA 2010©
 116 mins
 35mm

Ward,' says Hoberman. Adds Lieberman: 'From the moment we started enquiring into the story, we knew that Mark wanted to play Micky. Micky had always been one of his heroes and he knew this story as well as anyone.'

Having worked with Wahlberg twice before, including on the critically acclaimed Iraq War thriller *Three Kings*, everyone was excited to see what Russell's notably creative perspective could bring to *The Fighter's* mix of visceral sports drama and emotionally exposed family portrait. 'The great thing about David is that he's so passionate about everything he does and he's not afraid to fall in love with ideas and things and people. I think it's what makes him such a terrific director,' says Hoberman.

'I've known David for a couple of years now and we had looked at working together. As soon as I sat down with him, I saw and heard his passion for the movie,' comments producer Ryan Kavanaugh. He adds, 'He was approaching it from a very artistic point of view, but understood that this was a commercial story. We told him to keep the heart and soul, but that we needed more *Rocky* out of it. He gave us everything we wanted and then some.'

While *The Fighter* is as much about family as it is about fighting, Russell was committed to capturing the agony and the ecstasy of Micky's historic bouts in as visceral and true a way as possible. He neither wanted to romanticise the 'sweet science' of boxing nor to over-choreograph the fights, but to let them play out almost in real time with the raw, palpable, stripped-down realness of documentary footage. This was no easy task, as the entire film was shot at a rapid-fire pace, but Russell says that only helped to bring a heightened level of focus and intensity. In the end, all of the scenes in the ring were shot over just a couple of days right at the beginning of production – a trial by fire.

Since the three main fights were originally aired on HBO, it was decided to bring in an actual HBO crew to shoot some of the footage in the same multi-camera way HBO typically uses to shoot their popular fight coverage. (A fourth fight was shot in a smaller venue, without the HBO cameras, to give what Russell calls, 'a looser feel.') The unadorned footage seemed to capture the human struggle at the core of boxing with greater power than any swirling camerawork ever could.

Mark Wahlberg says that one of the reasons that the plan worked is that at the beginning of the shoot, he was in his best fighting shape. He later gained weight to shoot the part of Micky's life when he was heavier set, but the most important element of the boxing scenes for Wahlberg was to give the audience a sense of Micky Ward's physical courage and wicked left hook that came out of nowhere just when it looked like he was finished for good. 'I wanted the film to have some of the most realistic boxing ever seen on screen. That was my goal,' Wahlberg says, adding that he watched every single bout Micky Ward ever fought 'at least a hundred times each.'

Production notes