CULTURE VULTURE

Raging Bull 40 years later

Molly Shillinglaw reviews Scorsese's masterpiece after 4K restoration hits UK cinemas.

'Raging Bull' tells the story of Italian-American Jake LaMotta, a heavyweight boxer who sees his life shatter as a result of his self- destructive behaviour. Starring in the film is Robert DeNiro, Joe Pesci and Cathy Moriarty. The film is a biopic (based off of LaMotta's memoir) which Scorsese was initially reluctant to direct as he expected it to be his last feature. He had been introduced to the memoir by DeNiro and it was only until an almost fatal overdose that Scorsese agreed to make the film. After consideration of the text, Scorsese began to relate to LaMotta's character and later called the boxing ring 'an allegory for anything you do in life'

The film sees its main character engage in bouts of violence both from his sport and his personal affairs; it confronts the role of the mafia, infidelity, masculinity and family relations making it an important social commentary alongside a sports biopic. It's incredibly persuasive in its ability to show ageing. The first and end sequences show an old, bloated LaMotta rehearsing his symbolic 'I could've been a contender' monologue. DeNiro himself took two months off of filming to go on a 'food binge holiday' in order to create a realistic aesthetic.

Unlike boxing films before and since, 'Raging Bull' is almost overwhelmingly nihilistic; LaMotta's success was compromised by mob corruption, and his decline was marked by ingratitude and hatred.

LaMotta's violence is driven by jealousy, his aggressive fighting technique driven by his life at that moment. Namely, his obsessive thoughts which concern his wife being unfaithful. He is most violent to one of his opponents after Vicki comments that he is 'good-looking'; the stare he gives her after the fight is symbolic of his possessiveness over his wife. His relationship of synonymous of the Freudian speculation that men perceive women as untouchable, pure and ideal, until they are sullied with physical contact, after which they become suspect. This drives the rest of the film which portrays LaMotta as deeply insecure.

Ultimately, it is not a film about boxing. Scorsese himself was indifferent towards sport; when researching boxing he found himself sold on the 'heart of darkness' which was at its centre. It is a film about man's capacity to violence, a protagonist who lives in his own metaphor.

The Rise of The Board Games

Mr Heysham discusses all things board games, including his favourite picks

In the past, board games were often considered a pastime for children or a way to pass the time on a rainy day. I remember the arguments breaking out over who gets to be the car in Monopoly before we even started to play!

However, in recent years, board games have undergone a renaissance. They have become more sophisticated, with more interesting rules, intricate gameplay, and engaging storylines. They have also become more diverse, with a wider range of themes, genres, and styles.

One of the factors driving the rise of board games is the growing popularity of Euro games. These are games that originated in Europe and are characterized by their emphasis on strategy, resource management, and player interaction. Euro games often have a strong theme or storyline, but the mechanics of the game are just as important.

Where to get started?

A great idea is to follow the "Spiel des Jahres" or "Game of the Year" from Germany. This is one of the most prestigious awards in the board game industry. Many Spiel des Jahres winners have become classic games that are still popular today, such as Settlers of Catan, Carcassonne, and Ticket to Ride.

Try some classics?

Settlers of Catan, now known simply as Catan, is one of the most popular and influential board games of all time. It was first published in 1995 and has since sold over 22 million copies worldwide. In Catan, players take on the roles of settlers trying to build a thriving civilization on a newly discovered island. It has simple yet elegant mechanics, a beautiful board, and an emphasis on player interaction. Totally addictive and great fun.

Pandemic is another popular board game that has become a classic in its own right. It was first published in 2008 and has since sold over 1 million copies. In Pandemic, players work together to save the world from a deadly virus that is spreading across the globe. The game is known for its cooperative game play, its tense and challenging mechanics, and its high replay value.

There are lots I still want to try. Among them are games like Gloomhaven, which has been called the best board game of all time by some critics. Gloomhaven is a cooperative dungeon-crawler that features intricate gameplay, deep strategy, and a sprawling campaign that can take hundreds of hours to complete.It's on the list!

Personal Faves:

Wizard (card game)

This is a quick and addictive card game - you play by bidding on the number of tricks you think you can win in each round. Sounds simple (and it is) but totally engaging.

Camel Up (board game)

Faintly crazy game in which players bet on racing camels, which move around a track based on a roll of the dice. The camels are represented by colorful, stackable figurines that make the game visually appealing.It has a fun and lighthearted theme, along with its easy-to-learn mechanics - this is honestly a great choice.

King Domino

Fast and fun game where players build a kingdom by placing domino-style tiles on a grid. Each tile depicts different types of terrain, such as forests, lakes, and deserts, which players must strategically place to score points. Great art work, easy mechanics. Try it!

Board games have come a long way since the days of Monopoly and Scrabble. With the rise of Euro games, cooperative games, and other innovative types, board games have become more diverse, challenging, and engaging than ever before.

Whether you're a hardcore gamer or a casual player, there's a board game out there for you. So why not gather some friends, roll the dice, and join in on the fun?

LAST WEEK'S SONNET:
Viva La Vida - Coldplay

Can you guess the pop song from the Shakespearean sonnet? Correct answer in next week's Culture Vulture!

Good morrow, says this spectre from thy past;
may we discuss the sordid details of
the time we shared, the scars we then amass'd,
and the minutiae of long-lost love?
'Tis said time heals all wounds, although my heart
still aches, despite the distance years endow.
I can't recall the ease youth did impart,
or life before the world did to us bow.
I've sent these missives, o'er a thousandfold,
to give good morrow here from far beyond -
and make amends for all the wrongs untold,
but thou'lt not these messages respond.
I shout each 'sorry' t'ward thy distant shore
for deeds that do not pain thee any more.

Queen Charlotte: A Bridgerton Story

Miss Ramsay reviews the latest Bridgerton drama

Dearest Gentlereaders... for Bridgerton fans among you, the release of Queen Charlotte: A Bridgerton Story on Thursday 4 May seemed to be a good tie-over until the release of Season 3 in late 2023 or early 2024. The series, follows India Amarteifio and Corey Mylchreest as a young Queen Charlotte and George III as they navigate a marriage in scrutiny, all whilst George tries to keep his illness under wraps from his new wife.

Interspersed with scenes of Golda Rosheuvel, Adjoa Andoh and Ruth Gemmell as the Queen Charlotte, Lady Danbury and Lady Bridgerton we know and love, the series incorporates the young stories into the tales of Bridgerton we already know.

Directed by Tom Verica and written by Shona Rhimes and Julia Quinn, the mini series differs from the light-hearted 'ton' scandal of Bridgerton itself - focussing on tropes of loneliness, grief, uncertainty and madness in regency England.

A young Lady Danbury (Arsema Thomas) battles with her position in society after the death of her husband, whilst the older Danbury reminisces on love lost.

We see a young Violet Ledger (Connie Jenkins-Greig) who looks to her father for love due to the lack of attention from her mother. The elder Violet Bridgerton grapples with wanting to find love again after the death of her husband.

The eponymous heroine Queen Charlotte has a bleak story - both in the future and past. She struggles with loneliness, coming to terms with her husbands madness, trying to secure an heir to the throne, arguments with her children, and remaining trapped in time.

The new and old actors who portray the beloved characters do an excellent job of interweaving the new story with the old. The series is filled with hidden gems and stolen moments; particularly between Young Brimsley (Sam Clemmett) and Reynolds (Freddie Dennis).

Rhimes and Verica remain true to the Bridgerton landscape, whilst tackling mature themes. Their reimagining of regency England follows issues both old and new, as femininity, mental illness, race and love are all questioned. The series will have you laughing and crying, all whilst providing more backstory to the unwavering pillars of the Bridgerton story. *The series is available now on Netflix.*

Recommended by a student:

Baby Driver - DVD or Netflix

"Great editing, great colouration. Sound track slaps and the story is great - its well developed with interesting characters and it doesn't just have a 'happy ending'. "

Soundtrack to the week:
This week's soundtrack to the week has been built by editors and readers. If you would like to have your say, follow the QR code on page 5!

MONDAY: Recommended by a student
Acid Dent - Psychedelic Porn Crumpets

TUESDAY: Recommended by a student
The Story of Us - Taylor Swift

WEDNESDAY: Recommended by a student
Five Years - David Bowie

WEDNESDAY: Recommended by Jessica Furse
Cold World - 8 Graves

FRIDAY: Recommended by Bertie Williams
Black Magic - The Amazons

SATURDAY: Recommended by a student
Lover of Mine - 5SOS

SUNDAY: Recommended by George Clarke
Open the Gate - Zach Bryan

Lord of the Rings - The Greatest Film of all Time?

Leo Causon argues in favour of the LOTR trilogy

Well first I say Lord of the Rings instead of being specific on one of the films in the trilogy because I believe they are one 682 minute film. Not only does each film follow directly from the end of the last film, but all 3 films were filmed at once in New Zealand. The filming spanned over 438 consecutive days which in itself is a testimony to the cast and crew's dedication and shows us the care and love that went into making the film.

The hardest part of the fantasy genre is the world building. It's the biggest element of the genre and you have to find the right mix between detail and speed. The film needs to be quick and efficient, it needs to feed the audience the crucial bits of information while letting the audience decode the rest by themselves. The Lord of the Rings prologue does this perfectly. It introduces the audience to key characters, it introduces the main antagonist and shows to the audience why he should be feared, but most importantly it makes promises to the audience. Without the prologue, it takes over an hour for the first small bit of action. The promise the prologue makes is so important to keep a casual audience member from not getting bored of the film within the first hour because they now know that the light-hearted tone will be short-lived.

With the Lord of the Rings being the "founding father" of the fantasy genre, you might expect the characters to be traditional and formulaic. Although you can clearly see every character trope of the genre being used in these films, they all work perfectly and show why genre tropes are so commonly used. The biggest criticism of the characters is with the main protagonist Frodo. His character is used most to serve the plot. Without giving spoilers, at times you can see Frodo making decisions simply to create conflict for the plot. Sometimes you need a character to push the plot forward and not just to satisfy the audiences wants. But in Frodo's flaws, another character rises to the occasion. There is not a single Lord of the Rings fan who dislikes Sam.

He is loyal, he is kind and he is the most loved character in the fantasy genre. He is the one who carries the Hobbit's light-hearted principles laid out in the first hour of the trilogy, all the way to the climax of the third film. He personifies every message Peter Jackson and J.R.R Tolkien are trying to tell the audience through their story.

Finally, where the Lord the Rings truly excels and why I believe it to be the greatest film of all time is within its relationships. Firstly, the relationship between the characters is perfect. You can tell they filmed the films in one go because the chemistry between all the actors is spot-on. With the film focusing on themes of loyalty and friendship the relationships shown between the characters needed to feel real and they really do. However, the most important relationship in the trilogy, is the relationship with the audience. The fantasy genre is not about creating the most unusual world which has no relevance to the world we live in. It's about a creating a world that although contains unearthly elements, it still is a true retelling of our own lives. This is why the relationship between the characters and the audience is so important, everyone can find some sort personal identity within Lord of the Rings. Everyone has gone through friendships and has experienced the highs and lows that come along with it. Everyone has had their loyalty tested, but this is why Lord of the Rings is so good. It was made with care not only for the story that was already loved by thousands of people through the books, but for its care for the audience as it ensures everyone can find meaning in this film.

Some people will instantly turn their heads when they see the first elf or orc on the screen, but the people who stay will undergo the greatest test of loyalty and friendship a film has ever put to screen.

WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

As the weeks progress, we are hoping Culture Vulture will become jampacked with student articles, recommendations and reviews. If you would like to make your own creative suggestion, or have a piece of work that you would like to see in the next magazine, scan the QR code.

Alternatively, if you would like to contribute an article, film, album, book or podcast review, or have an itching to write a features piece about a current cultural affair, email aramsay@gordanoschool.org.uk with your idea and they can point you in the right direction. Who knows - you may see your name in print!

Make sure to encourage your tutors and friends to get involved, and let's make creativity central to the Gordano Sixth Form experience!