

Boxer's progress

Raging Bull
directed by Martin Scorsese
Capitol Square

review by David Orrell

Boxing movies have traditionally concerned themselves with the social morals of a sport that treats people like fighting cocks, and has about the same regard for their safety. *Raging Bull*, however, is about personal issues rather than social ones, and tells the tragic story of Jake La Motta, the Italian-American boxer on whose autobiography it is based. The latest in a number of films teaming Martin Scorsese and Robert de Niro, it is set, like many of its predecessors, in Manhattan's Little Italy, and again brings to the screen the innate violence of that tough community.

Being a Little Italian himself, Scorsese is as qualified as anyone to understand the people who live there. The dialogue soon settles into an easy rhythm with everybody keeping up the brisk exchange of foul obscenities that abates only occasionally. On one such occasion early in the film, with his first wife sobbing quietly in the bedroom, Jake (de Niro) tells his brother Joey (Joe Pesci) that his hands are too small, that he can't ever fight heavyweight Joe Louis, though he's better than Louis. Joey says that Jake is a middleweight who does not have to fight heavyweights, but the point is that Jake is setting himself impossibly high levels of satisfaction.

This is what makes La Motta's life a tragedy: he can dominate everyone around him, on the ring or off, but is incapable of attaining happiness. Why I don't know, unless it goes back to when he was a Raging Bullock.

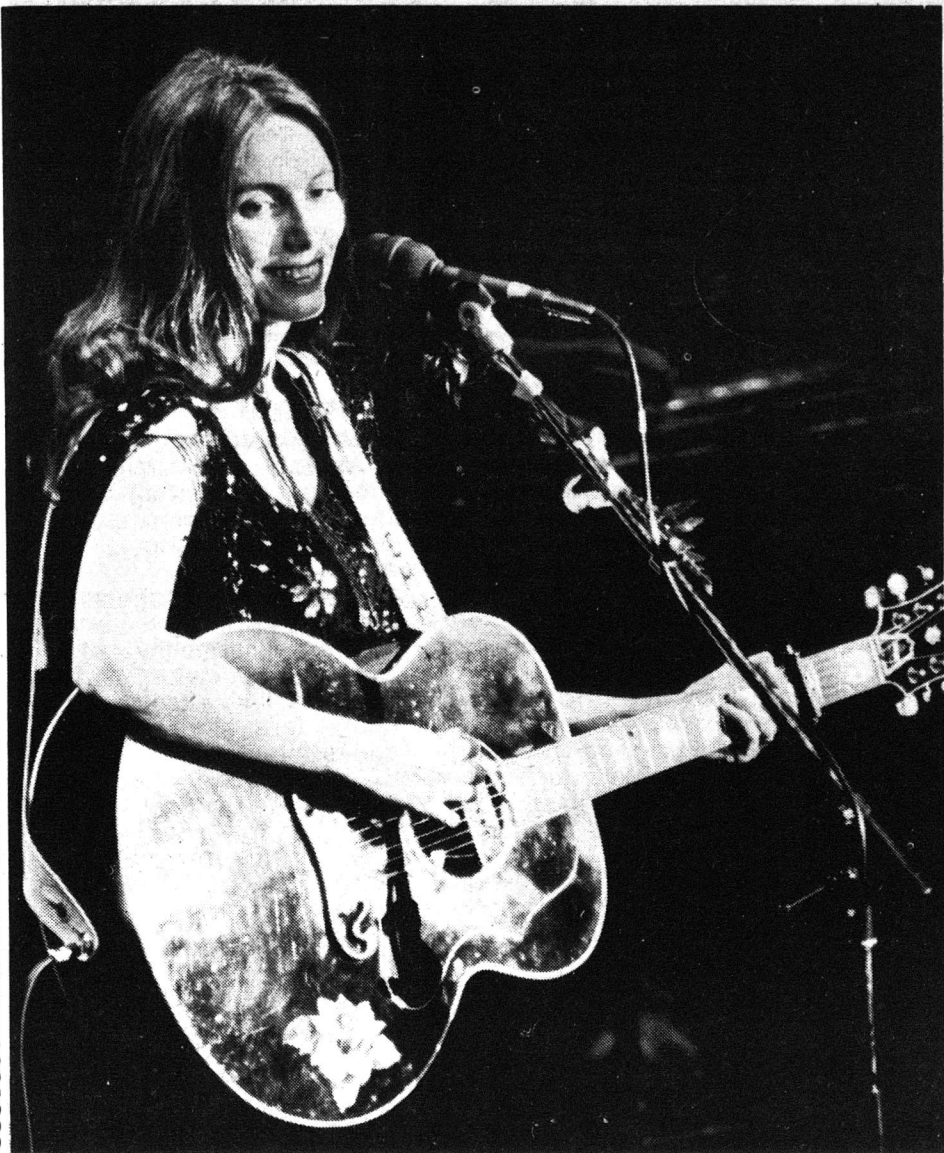
Robert de Niro plays Jake superbly with understanding but not sentimentality, and the transformation from lean, cocky, lower class boxer to fat, rich and much wiser night club owner is remarkably well done. And, as everyone says, "He even put on fifty pounds for the part," as if this was some act of immense dedication. Personally I think he just ran to fat like Elizabeth Taylor during one of the shooting breaks, and they had to build the film around him. I must admit, though, that the effect is impressive, especially the stomach, which wobbles well.

The other thing that wobbles well is Cathy Moriarty as Vicky La Motta. Jake sees the 15 year old Vicky wobbling away in a wading pool with the other pre-toddlers one morning, and it is love at first sight. The next day he rolls round in rented wheels, "Wanna go for a ride?" "O.K."

If this isn't romance, what is?

The film has excellent black and white photography by Michael Chapman throughout, and is punctuated with beautiful semi-slow motion shots. Some of these are of things La Motta watches but can't control: Mafia members talking to Vicky, her standing, turning, leaving with them. Others are things he can control, usually his fist rearranging some poor fellow's facial features. The overall effect is like a portrait of La Motta's dominating spirit, and puts to superb use the lyrical beauty obtainable in black and white.

But ultimately, finally, and in the end, *Raging Bull* is a film about spiritual redemption. I know this because they lay it all out for you at the end with a pretentious biblical quotation: "Whereas I was blind, now I see." And write autobiographies and sell the film rights. But that's not in the movie.



Yes, I know that we had a photo of Emmylou Harris last week but this one was just too good to pass up. The concert, of course, was excellent.

photo Ray Giguere

roundabout

review by Michael Skeet

The Vapours
New Clear Days
(UA LT-1049)

New Clear Days is a flashback to the sixties in more ways than one. *Turning Japanese* may well be the catchiest pop single of the past decade. It's irreverent, chock full 'o' hooks, totally pointless, and vacant - but it's fun. Like so many albums released in the early sixties (when the single was King), *New Clear Days* is almost hollow behind *Turning Japanese*.



There are good moments on this album, but they exist in isolation - almost a vacuum. *Sixty Second Interval* has a nice, lilting hook, but the song is for the most part flat. *Spring Collection* has great potential - what happens to the friends of those young-at-hearts who suddenly sprout blue hairdos and plastic shoes? Unfortunately, the tone of the song is flat - are these guys trying to come across as jaded, or something?

This listlessness pervades the album, and it's only on *News at Ten* that some

passion finally surfaces. It's a Peter Pannish sort of passion, admittedly (why should you want to grow up when you'll only become fat and dull?), but the final chorus is reasonably exciting, and that's better than is offered on most of the record.

In defense of the Vapours, it should be mentioned that *Somehow* and *Prisoners* are strong songs with catchy tunes and just a hint of reality. But even these songs hark back to *Turning Japanese* and, again, there's that flat sound. A lot of the blame should be heaped on the producer, but when an entire album goes by without any sound in the upper register, the creative (?) minds have to be questioned, as well.

Gruppo Sportivo
Copy Copy
(Attic LAT 1102)

Now here is a POP album! Inspired silliness from the beginning to end, *Copy Copy* succeeds mostly because Gruppo Sportivo refuse to take themselves - or anything else, for that matter - too seriously. Compared with the previous review, *Copy Copy* has a horn-augmented sound that is lush and full (and hits all registers, I might add).

The album starts with a pair of winners: *Don't Count on Me* is the 80s way of saying, "Hell, no, we won't go!" with a pie in the face. Top-40 radio admittedly sets itself up for a lot of abuse, and we've heard it all before, but *Goodbye Radio*, with perfect Top-40 music, manages lyrics that no Top-40 programmer would dare put in the

rotation.

One of the album's strong points is the presence of guest vocalist Anne Martin. Possessed of a strong voice that doesn't overexert its personality, Martin lends the proper tone to such lines as: "Leave your love behind me; I'm the one who's running away from you" (*I Don't Need You*).



The members of Gruppo Sportivo put on the costume of pop jester easily, and their shot at current social mores (*Only on Weekends*) works far better than the Vapours' *Spring Collection* ("I did it all for you - dreadlocks and a disco tie.")

This album is a winner - within its genre, of course. In anything stronger than a stiff intellectual breeze, *Copy Copy* begins to come apart. With these limitations in mind, though, I can heartily recommend it for anyone's collection of schlock-rock.

NEXT WEEK: Fear eats the soul! What? WHAT?

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The
Arts
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