

THE NET-WORK

THE NET-WORK
VOLUME 2, ISSUE 1

NEW YEAR—NEW JOURNEY BY: TOM QUALTERS

The holidays have come and gone once again. The year is over. What a perfect time to reflect on everything from last year and what the new year has to offer. For me, it never fails that I find myself with a strong feeling of disappointment and excitement all rolled into one. The days leading up to Christmas, it seems for me, is a time for reflection over my "old" life. I think of all the promises that I didn't keep and all of the people I let down and all of the friends I have lost because of addiction. Most people like to try and forget "who" and "what" they were during their sickness. I find it healthy to acknowledge my addiction and realize that, even though I don't recognize that person anymore, it's still me. I may not like the person I was back then but that person helped form who I am today. I tried for a long time to run away from my past but I have learned that you can NEVER run long or far enough. Your past is "YOU" and all of the NA or AA meetings in the world will not change that fact. Coming to grips with my addictive self has made all the difference in my life. I can never change my past and I am finally able to say "I'm ok with that". That is a lesson that took me 27 years to learn.

After unwrapping all the presents and pretending to like the sweater that Grandma gave me I start to look forward to the New Year. For me the New Year evokes feelings of excitement and of fear. The day or two leading up to the New Year seem to carry my thoughts to the future. It's funny for me because I never saw myself with a future after addiction took everything from me. I felt I was fated for a life of sorrow and loneliness. I was wrong in so many ways about that. I realize that looking into the "future" makes "today" so much better. I now know that my addiction does not have the power to dictate who I have the ability to become. I realized that the future is out in front of every single one of us. I feel it is up to us to decide what we do with it or what we make of it. Like Confucius believed *"A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."* This solitary sentence has become somewhat of an epiphany for me; it has opened my eyes to a future that "I" set for myself. My past may have had a hand in creating the person I am today but my future is not set in stone. The options are limitless for each of us, if its going back to school, starting a healthy relationship, making amends for our past or just admitting to ourselves that we have a substance abuse problem. Whatever the case is, it is the beginning of a NEW YEAR and we should try to start this year clean and sober. We can all begin our journey with that single step in the right direction. Lets not look forward to the New Year for a new start on old habits.



Inside this issue:

Are We Really in Recovery?	2
Poet's Stage	3
Letter From the Doctor	4
Who's Who at NET Steps	5-6
One Addict's View Of the 12 Steps: part 2	7-8
At The Movies w/ Lou B	9-10
Inside Story	6

ARE WE REALLY IN RECOVERY?

By Max Forman

The other day, I heard something that really bothered me. I heard my old best friend, whom I haven't seen in a while, give his opinion on methadone-assisted treatment. This old friend, who used to be my best friend, ended our friendship with a huge fight over drugs. This old best friend of mine found out that I was on methadone and that I was attending outpatient therapy, and he bashed my choice of treatment. In a nutshell this guy said "If you think you're clean by taking methadone, than you're a nut, you have been fooled by legal drug dealers and you're getting high every day."

When I heard my former friend say this, my face turned hot and tingly. I was completely rattled. It shook me up so bad, that I couldn't stop thinking about what he said. I felt really bad because for a few moments, I agreed with him. I kept asking myself that if I had gone about treatment the drug free way, would I been able to have gone further with my life? Is methadone treatment a dirty trick? Do methadone clinics fill the pockets of greedy, evil people who use methadone as a cheap drug to keep people coming back? Then I thought that methadone treatment could be a scam that takes advantage of people in need of help. It keeps them addicted and enslaved to another drug instead of the one they are trying to quit. I thought these things because this is the way I used to think about methadone. This is the way many people, including some clients think about methadone treatment. A boatload of people say the same thing every day and it doesn't affect me, but now that my old best friend had said it, it really hit me hard. I calmed down when I found out that he was on his way to cop when he had said this to me, and I laughed because it revealed him to be a total hypocrite.

It was driving me crazy that I doubted my own sobriety, even if it was only for a day or so. Then I talked to a few people, which seems to be the best medicine in recovery, and they reminded me of how much of a better person that I have grown into, and that what I am doing follows the universal definition of recovery, which is growing into a better person while learning about myself. As people who get success at Net Steps, we get our families back, we get bright futures and we can do anything that normal people do plus more, because we know more about pain, determination and life in general. I have come to the realization that people that trash-talk methadone mostly have jumbled facts, and most of the time have no idea what they are talking about. I also realized that most of the things that I had heard about methadone were coming from drug user's mouths. So many people have the facts twisted. In fact I asked three people at my school what they thought about methadone, and all three had confused methadone with methamphetamine! This made me feel disappointed at their lack of education about methadone, but it was better that they didn't have bad information about medication-assisted treatment.

But the point is that no matter what happens in our lives, there are going to be people looking for an easy target like us. People will look at us in the methadone treatment community, to vent the anger in their own pathetic, meaningless lives. In the long run I would bet that we have more talents, abilities and potential futures than anyone that stoops so low as to hate people with a legitimate handicap. We must stay strong and proud of who we are and what we are doing in order to survive against the nasty ideas and feelings attached to us all. I know that if we stay focused and ready to take on challenges, that no one can harm us ever again.

Poet's Stage

I DON'T WANT TO BE SICK!

BY: Tom S.

Here I go again,
Worried about tomorrow.
I don't want to be
SICK!
But I do it to myself
again and again.

I can't think of a thing to steal
I can't think of one person to barrow from.

I'm starting to get antsy
I should have saved
That bag for tomorrow

I do it to myself
Again and again
I don't want to be
SICK!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP, YOU KNOW WHO YOU

The members of the P.A.C would like to express the biggest heartfelt **Thank-You** to all the people who took time from their busy holiday schedule to make this year's Christmas party a success. From Santa down to the dedicated group of gift wrappers who were busy wrapping gifts up until one hour prior the party. The party would never have happened without these selfless acts of kindness.



From The Medical Director—Bernard A Harris MD, ASAM To Drive or Not To Drive

Many people ask about driving while using methadone. There is a short and long answer to that question. One of the important questions is: how well did a person drive before using methadone? This alludes to that fact that many people were driving around under the influence of their drug of choice and often multiple drugs. I wonder how well they were driving then? An Australian study used thirty-four patients stabilized on methadone, LAAM, or buprenorphine for at least 3 months and 21 non-drug using volunteers participated in the study. Before one of the sessions participants drank ethanol to obtain a targeted blood alcohol level (BAL) of 0.05. Simulated driving performance did not differ among the opiate treatment subjects or between opiate treatment subjects and controls. However, impairment was observed in all groups after alcohol consumption. Importantly, the effects of alcohol in producing diminished performance were equal in all groups. Alcohol causes about 17 Thousand car accident deaths in the United States each year. Drunk driving is involved in 39 percent of all fatal accidents and about 7 percent of all crashes in the US. Driving while intoxicated by alcohol is a well-known risk factor for fatal motor vehicle crashes, and the heavy use of alcohol is common among illicit drug users. Opioids are intoxicating substances that can adversely affect, although they are much less commonly found in persons killed in fatal car crashes.

Data from the National Vital Statistics System Mortality Files state that poisoning is the second leading cause of injury death overall, and the leading cause of injury death for people aged 35-54 years, surpassing both firearm-related and motor vehicle-related deaths in this age group. For decades, auto accidents have led the nation in injury-related death. They are still number one overall, but drug overdoses are beginning to pull ahead in 15 states, reports the Center for Disease Control. Death and disability from unchecked opiate addiction continues to impact our community. This underscores the important of getting treatment to those who are affected by opiate addiction. There are scores of studies that show persons who are prescribed methadone and are compliant with a methadone treatment program have the same ability to drive a motor vehicle as their non-dependent counterparts. Numerous European studies of long-term methadone maintenance patients have shown that appropriately administered methadone does not cause significant psychomotor or cognitive impairment when administered regularly and when the subject abstains from all other drugs. Multiple studies conclude that typical community standards around driving safety should be applied to clients stabilized in methadone, LAAM and buprenorphine treatment. The key here is stabilized and in treatment...both critical elements to full rehabilitation.

Who's Who at Net Steps: Lou Cain by Jose DeLeon

Cain was never the same....

On February 22, 1990, after gaining consciousness from another drug overdose, something seemed to be a little different within this person. As he slowly picked himself up from off the floor and walked out of an abandoned house that was located on Lambert Street, he knew something had to change about who he was and who he had become over the past few years. He walked the rough, lonely cold, streets of Philadelphia for three days before making a decision that would become the first positive stone in building the foundation of his new life. He decided to enter a homeless shelter so that he could have a place to lay his while he began to think over the course of his life and where exactly he would go from that point. In the midst of all the coax that surrounded him within the shelter, he began to feel a sense of real peace and security, something which had been missing from his life.

After being in a shelter for a while, he realized that the only way that things were going to begin to change in his life is if he started to do some real work on himself that would cause this change to occur. He began to do different jobs within the shelter system which wasn't a usual thing for residence to do even to this day, but this man has never been usual he had been awakened to a purpose.

He began to go to twelve Step meetings and listen to everything that everyone was saying. He realized that there was truth to what was being said, especially when he began to apply these steps to his own life and lived by his new found principles. Every meeting isn't filled with fun loving people who are positive, but every meeting has free knowledge that will alter your life in the most positive ways. Changes were happening as a result of his new attitude and outlook of his life. He made a real decision, took a real stand which he still holds true to this very day as you read this article or listen as he echoes this in his groups; "Recovery must come first and everything comes after!" During this part of his journey, a job within the shelter was offered to him. Self-worth was pouring into his body like a blood transfusion. The more he was learning about new things on the job, the more he felt as though he was learning more things about himself. Helping others became a huge part of who he was becoming. He did what was suggested to him by others that were going to meetings and staying clean no matter what. At first it felt a little uncomfortable being around some of these "strange people", but he quickly got over that feeling as he realized that they were about some real positive actions, not just words. These people weren't strange because they looked different, but because they clean, sober, and all about that was right. There was important ingredient that was missing in his description of a real solid friendship. He listened to people who were clearly "living the program" and got himself a sponsor but realized that sponsorship is part of this life-changing process. You can't make pancakes without flour, and you can't fry eggs without cracking the shell. Point is that there certain steps that you can't skip over or do without. If the recipe calls for a sponsor, well, get one!

Things were different about this man both inside and out. Someone asked him one day why he doesn't go back to school and get his degree. That question ignited something within his mind, which is still lit to this day. After contemplating this question for a few days, he made another decision that would that would cause him to start climbing another level of the mountain of progress. He wanted more for himself and knew he truly deserved it. He signed up and went to Community College of Philadelphia where he enrolled and gladly finished in two years with his Associate's degree in Behavioral Health and Human Services. He got his transfer to Lincoln University where he studied for the next four years and graduated with his Master's.

Throughout all of his schooling, he still had his job working with and helping others while being active and involved with the Twelve Step Meetings. He worked as a director at the Otley House before coming to work at Net Steps in 2007. He always kept his recovery first and knew that without that, he wouldn't be in the position that he is in today. "Recovery Must Come First"



Who's Who at Net Steps: Lou Cain (continued) by Jose DeLeon

When asked why he thinks a good percentage of people in his group are doing well, his response is simple, "they're thinking differently today."

When asked what he would suggest people should consider when deciding to start the real change that being clean offers, his response:

1. RECOVERY MUST COME FIRST AND EVERYTHING ELSE COMES AFTER THAT:

This is a saying that no one can argue with. It has worked for millions of addicts throughout the world and continues to do so even to this day. This helps us keep our priorities in order. Every day we have a "to do list" and at the top of that list we should always have "Recovery must come first." Being around people who are experiencing life just like you, people who aren't giving up, but just doing the opposite and are determined to do all the positive things that were suggested to them in order to make their life just a little bit better, just for today

2. SETTING GOALS – GET RID OF FEARS:

Understanding and believing that you are worth more than people have been telling you while in your addiction. Whether it's getting your license, getting a physical or signing up for school, start with small goals and work your way up. Any accomplishment will build up anyone's self-esteem, self-worth, self-respect, ect. And with those accomplishments, the fear that kept you from moving forward will begin to evaporate.

3. FINDING OUT WHO ARE, SET NO BOUNDARIES FOR YOURSELF:

Besides being drugged up like a zombie all the time, you must figure out how to walk, talk and build healthy relationships without the use of a drug again. Doing real internal work is a must to finding who you really are. Why is it that you decided to beat your own ass for so long is something you really need to figure out. Whether it's a counselor, positive friends in or outside of the meetings, a sponsor or a higher power you need to get busy with finding who you are minus the drugs and relationships.

Lou, what do you think it takes to be successful in this career? : His response is; education is today's currency.

Lou, what is your most important accomplishment to date: An individual that I had the privilege of working with became an author, college professor and a newspaper columnist. Another has her PhD. Another has 2 master degrees.

How do you personally define success? : When PIR's successfully make the changes needed to improve the quality of their life.

His definition of success and his most important accomplishments to date are the successes of others period.

Did you ever experience a spiritual awakening? : One day when I came to, after another drug overdose which had left me unconscious for several hours. I metaphorically felt that it was a divine meeting with God and he allowed me to make a choice about living or dying.

Getting to know this person is a truly good thing, and proves that you should always get to know the fullness of someone before casting judgment on them. To be able to converse with someone whose own personal accomplishments are based upon the accomplishments of those who climb out from the empty pit of addiction is a beautiful experience. **RECOVERY COMES FIRST, EVERYTHING ELSE COMES AFTER!**



One Addicts Perception of the 12 Steps: Part 2

By: Sean Forman

In my humble opinion, steps four through six appear to navigate the direction in which individual recovery efforts seem to go. It seems to me that these three steps affect people in very different and very positive ways. I found it amazing that three measly little directions could enrich my once neglected spirituality, boost my sense of self worth, as well as strengthen both my social skills and my ability to talk about my shameful past. All three of these steps turn an adequate recovery effort into a strong and thorough system. Steps four through six tested my resolve and tested my willingness to remain sober. Even though they are not easily done, the rewards you may gain upon completion are an invaluable asset towards your continued success.

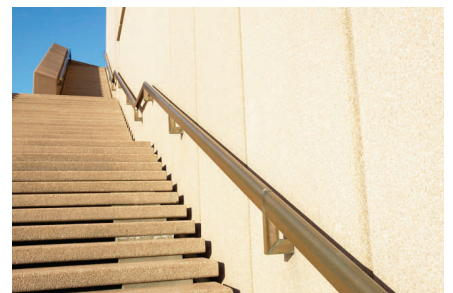
Step four forces people to observe themselves, which is generally not a very pleasant action. It is difficult to look at myself and honestly see the problems that led to my addiction. I don't know about anyone else but I have a tendency to overlook or even ignore my problems as a defensive action to avoid the awful truth. It seems to me that searching past all of the self denial and the "sugarcoating" of the truth is a painful venture. I would like to think that there were no underlying reasons why I drank and picked up drugs but just like many other addicts, I was clearly lying to myself. The truth hurts but its necessary to be aware of it if you want to remain clean. This step basically illustrates the fact that you must figure out what the problem is before you can go about fixing it. Once you can come to terms with the inconvenient truth about all of you problems and flaws, you can continue to look ahead and move toward a bright future in recovery. By acknowledging and searching my true feelings, fears, and behaviors I will do more than simply abstaining from drug use. I can build upon my self respect and my ability to trust myself instead of believing the constant barrage of lies I told myself in the past. Once I pull myself back together after that extremely difficult task of taking a personal inventory,

I can continue the effort by going to step five. To me, this is definitely one of the more difficult steps of the twelve. This step requires a generous amount of courage and a leap of faith. To venture back into the memories of what you once did to maintain your addiction could not only be painful, but can also be degrading and stressful. Admitting my wrongs to my higher power (which is God in my case) was the easiest part of the step for me, especially since He won't yell at me or spread rumors about me. I figure that admitting to my Higher Power basically means that incorporating spiritual-

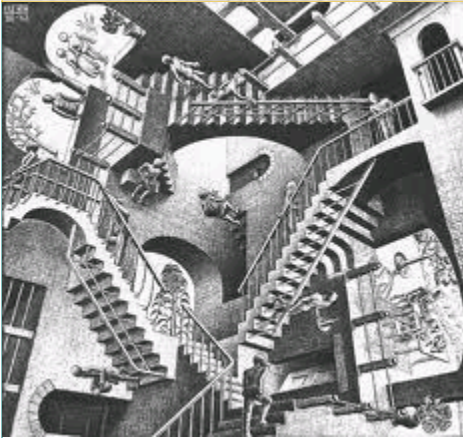
ity into this step can help me accept what I once was easier than I could do by myself. Being "inside your own head" can be very

counterproductive when it comes to fighting temptation and successfully remaining clean. The hardest

part in this step is recalling some of the most painful times during active addiction and sharing it with another person.

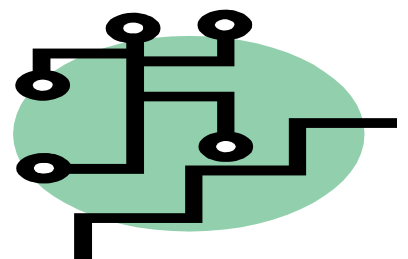


ONE ADDICTS PERCEPTION OF THE 12 STEPS: PART 2



It's difficult enough to remember what you would love to forget, but it's even tougher to share these shameful memories with anyone. Even though this step is painful to do, the benefit of doing it will be well worth it. I personally use my painful memories of my active addiction as a motivation to steer clear from that destructive path. After disappointing me by focusing on the true nature of my addictive personality and feeling guilty from remembering what my rock bottom was like, the only thing that stops me from picking up a drink or drug is the positive impact steps four and five had just had on me.

Step six was a little easier on me since there were no harsh truths or difficult memories to depress me. The sixth step appears to be a beginning of a lasting process of change and improvement. This step is much more than simply being ready to have our character defects removed by our Higher Power. I believe now that we know in full detail what our defects are (thanks to steps four and five); we can safely be ready to let them go. We are now ready to move on now that the foundation of our future recovery plans is built. I personally believed that I needed more than just willpower to forcibly remove my character defects. Similar to step three, step six illustrates the importance of a Higher Power in recovery. I have learned that trying to ignore or hide my character defects from others often backfires, leaving me more depressed than before. Getting one's personal defects removed seems to be crucial in the recovery process. When we are ready to have these defects ripped from us, I truly believe that we can handle anything that comes our way. Steps four, five, and six can produce lots of pain and a difficult inner struggle. I think I was a completely different person before I practiced these steps. I was content in my ignorance of my personal faults, but I am now very happy with the fact that I know myself much better. I am happy to have worked on my character and to have prepared myself for the release of my personal defects. I can't say I wasn't overly frustrated while attending to these three steps, but I can say that I am happy to have done it. It's a huge relief to not have to lie to yourself (or to others) all the time. Two major changes I've noticed about several individuals (including myself) once they had worked these steps are that they had a richer, deeper spirituality and that they were more courageous and outgoing when it came to socializing and speaking about recovery. Completing these steps will no doubt strengthen the foundation of your recovery effort and keep you happy and healthy.



At the Movies With Lou B: "The Fighter"



There are a lot of people who will go into *The Fighter* expecting to see the next *Rocky* or *Cinderella Man* – i.e., blue-collar fighter overcomes personal hurdles and/or demons to become a champion and American icon against all odds.

Well, imagine taking that cinematic cliché and rubbing it in the dirt while still managing to give it a touch of wit and a heavy dose of charm. If you can visualize that strange image, you'll understand exactly what director David O. Russell has created with *The Fighter*.

This true-life story follows "Irish" Mickey Ward (Mark Wahlberg), a welterweight boxer living in the working-class town of Lowell, Massachusetts during the early '90s. Mickey – labeled a "stepping stone" in the boxing ring – lives in the shadow of his half-brother Dicky Eklund (Christian Bale), a former boxer who is known round town as "The Pride of Lowell" for a famous losing bout in which he supposedly knocked down the great Sugar Ray Leonard in the ring before being defeated.

Dicky is Mickey's idol and his trainer – little brother heeds whatever brother tells him to do. The boys' mother Alice (Academy Award Nominated, Melissa Leo) works as Mickey's manager, making Mickey's career a nice tight family operation – one that has already hit the rocks and is falling apart. Dicky is a full-blown drug addict; Alice is a drinking, chain-smoking dragon-mother who is still living off the glow of Dicky's expired fame. Mickey can't seem to navigate his way through this quagmire of dreams, obligations, family and loyalty – that is, of course, until he meets Charlene (Amy Adams), a local barmaid who wants to help Mickey get his head on straight. However, despite all the drama and chaos surrounding him at the end of the day Mickey Ward can only be a champion if he himself decides to step up and be one – inside and outside the ring.

The Fighter is a rare movie in terms of its quality, but it is certainly even more of a rarity within the sports drama sub-genre. Tales of athletic conquest lend themselves so easily to the dramatic side of cinema, yet David O. Russell, along with his exceptional cast, has managed to craft a sports drama that is actually more of a stripped-down dark comedy about the delusions and realities of fame, fortune and success in America. Sure, the basic framework is the same as that of Rocky Balboa's story (with Massachusetts grit substituting for Philadelphia grit), but it is the shape and tone of the flesh over those bones that distinguish *The Fighter* from so many other movies like it.

This film is a character piece, pure and simple. While Mickey's stumble and ultimate rise through the boxing ranks provide the narrative arch, the film is focused squarely on the players riding along for the journey – Mickey, Dicky, Alice, and Charlene. It's clear that Russell came across this story and recognized the value of unique and vibrant characters like these (I refer to both the real-life Ward/Eklund family as much as their onscreen counterparts), and not just the generic sports story that has been so thoroughly mined by Hollywood.

What we get here are characters who are unapologetically flawed and trashy (even sweet Charlene defines herself as a screw up who partied away her chance at college) – but they're also characters who are refreshingly raw, lively, and quite hilarious. *The Fighter* solicits more hoots and belly rolling laughs than it does tears or goosebumps – and while there are a few heavy moments, those moments are never exploited for dramatic weight. Instead of working you over for the emotional payoff, Russell instead lets the audience's empathy for these characters carry the emotion for him – no need to hit anybody over the head with meaning. Rather than trying to tug at your feelings, screenplay/story writers Scott Silver, Paul Tamasy, Eric Johnson and Keith Dorrington make the smart move of injecting life into their characters and plenty of sparks into the whip-smart "colloquial" dialogue traded back and forth like daggers by the main players.

The cast (for the most part) does a phenomenal job bringing these rich and crazy characters to life – a crucial task in a film like this. Thankfully, Russell is working with some of the best actors in the business and they manage to hit the right stride.

The Lou Review: "The Fighter" (Continued)

There's already word that Christian Bale will be nominated for an Oscar for his turn as Dicky Eklund, and the recognition is wholly deserved. While not exactly the focus, Dicky is undoubtedly the driving force of this film, and the usually-reserved Bale manages to exude the mad (and infectious) charisma of his subject even in Dicky's worst moments, at once creating a heroic dunderhead and (as revealed by an appearance of the actual Dicky Eklund in the film) a pretty accurate nod to the spirit of his real-life counterpart. Bale goes so far as to nail down Dicky's lanky physicality perfectly, a subtlety of performance that is highlighted in one great scene in which Dicky and Mickey compare their fighting styles. By contrast, Mark Wahlberg pretty much portrays the same quiet, semi-vulnerable tough-guy persona we've seen in films like *Four Brothers* or *We Own The Night*. I'll leave it to you to decide if the close proximity between Wahlberg and Ward's actual working-class Massachusetts's upbringings give the actor's portrayal "authenticity," but for my part, I have to criticize Wahlberg for letting the supporting players outshine the lead so brightly.



While a lot of focus will be on two leading men's performances, for me it was actually the women of *The Fighter* who stole the show. Indie actress Melissa Leo is almost unrecognizable as Mickey's dragon-lady mother, Alice. With her withered townie look, perpetual veil of cigarette smoke and grating voice practically hissing each and every syllable in her New England brogue, Leo is a scene-stealer of the best kind. Amy Adams is handed the tall order of trading barbs with both Leo and Bale throughout the film, and here she proves just why she has been twice nominated for an Oscar so early in her budding career. Charlene is that "girl who gets the guy" type, but she is no Adrian to Mickey's Rocky, by any means. If anything, Charlene is a fearless, more level headed (read: no B.S.) version of Alice, and her confrontations with the dragon mother and Dicky's gang of sisters (an awesome ensemble of character actresses) make for the most hilarious and entertaining scenes in the movie.

Supporting performances by Jack McGee and Mickey O'Keefe -- as the two belabored father figures shoe-horned into helping Mickey along to greatness, while keeping the tainted side of the family at bay -- are equally strong (and funny). Russell's direction wisely keeps the focus set on these primary characters, and never wanders off into the tempting realm of sports action. In the boxing sequences (which are staged to mimic '90s-era HBO broadcasts, to good effect), the director keeps the camera tight on the faces and bodies of his primary cast, letting their expressions and gestures (whether they're in the ring or in the crowd) convey the context and story behind the sports spectacle -- which is the entire point of the film.

Outside of the ring, Russell makes his version of Lowell look gritty and real -- and I'm not talking that "polished grit" you see in films like Ron Howard's Depression-era *Cinderella Man*. From the "costumes," to the terrain, to the photography, cinematography and the (semi-) unflattering physical appearance of the actors (even the lovely Adams flashes some pale, fleshy curves and a washed-out look) this polished movie looks the part of an unpolished indie film, again relying on characters and acting instead of production values to carry it. A wise decision.

All in all, *The Fighter* is one of the top movie experiences of the year for me. Great performances, great filmmaking and a genuinely enjoyable journey following characters you'll likely have a hard time forgetting. The Fighter, as thoughtful as it is rousing, scores a **TKO!**

GRADE: A