

= Rocky Balboa (film) =

Rocky Balboa is a 2006 American sports drama film written , directed by , and starring Sylvester Stallone who reprises his role as the title character . It is the sixth installment in the Rocky franchise with Balboa in retirement , a widower living in Philadelphia , and the owner and operator of a local Italian restaurant called " Adrian 's " , named after his late wife .

According to Stallone , he was " negligent " in the production of Rocky V , leaving him and many of the fans disappointed with the presumed end of the series . Stallone also mentioned that the storyline of Rocky Balboa parallels his own struggles and triumphs in recent times .

The film also stars Burt Young as Paulie , Rocky 's brother @-@ in @-@ law in his last appearance in the Rocky series and real @-@ life boxer Antonio Tarver as Mason " The Line " Dixon , the current World Heavyweight Champion in the film . Boxing promoter Lou DiBella plays himself and acts as Dixon 's promoter in the film . Milo Ventimiglia plays Rocky 's son Robert , now an adult . A pair of minor characters from the original film return in larger roles : Marie , the young woman that Rocky attempts to steer away from trouble , and Spider Rico , the first opponent Rocky is shown fighting in the 1976 film . There are many references to people and events from previous installments in the series , especially the first .

The film was released on December 20 , 2006 , by Metro @-@ Goldwyn @-@ Mayer , Columbia Pictures and Revolution Studios . It exceeded box office expectations and critical reaction was positive . Rocky Balboa was released in several formats for its home media release , and DVD sales have exceeded \$ 34 million . The film was followed by a sequel / spin @-@ off , Creed , released November 25 , 2015 .

= = Plot = =

Former Philadelphia boxer Rocky Balboa has been retired from boxing for 16 years and lives a quiet life as a widower following the death of his wife , Adrian Pennino Balboa , due to cancer four years earlier . He runs a small but successful Italian restaurant named after her , where he regales his patrons with stories of his past . He also battles personal demons involving his grief over Adrian 's death , the changing times , and his eroding relationship with his son Robert , a struggling corporate employee . Paul " Paulie " Pennino , Rocky 's brother @-@ in @-@ law and best friend , continues to keep by his side , but is tired of reliving the past .

Late one night , Rocky reunites with a much @-@ older " Little " Marie , a once mischievous neighborhood girl Rocky met when she was a child , now working as a bartender at Rocky 's former neighborhood bar , the Lucky Seven . She is a single parent of a teenaged son born out of wedlock : Stephenson , nicknamed " Steps " . Rocky 's friendship with the two blossoms over the following weeks . Marie becomes a hostess at his restaurant and Steps takes to him as a father figure .

Meanwhile , on the professional boxing circuit , Mason " The Line " Dixon reigns as the undisputed yet unpopular world heavyweight champion . ESPN broadcasts a computer simulation of a fight between Rocky (in his prime) and Mason ? likened to a modern @-@ day version of The Super Fight , a 1970 computer simulation of a 15 @-@ round fight between Rocky Marciano and Muhammad Ali in their prime (that Marciano " won " by a KO in the 13th round) ? which ends in a controversial KO victory for Balboa , riling the champ . In contrast , the simulation inspires Rocky to take up boxing again ? an intention that goes public when he successfully renews his license . Dixon 's promoters pitch the idea of holding a charity exhibition bout at the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino in Las Vegas to bolster Dixon 's falling popularity .

With some hesitation , both men agree to the match , creating a media buzz that stabs at Rocky 's has @-@ been status and Dixon 's credibility ; Dixon having yet to face a challenging opponent . Robert later makes an effort to discourage Rocky from fighting , blaming his own personal failings on his father 's celebrity shadow , but Rocky rebukes him with some advice : that to succeed in life , " it ain 't about how hard you hit ; it 's about how hard you can get hit , and keep moving forward " , and that blaming others won 't help him . The next day , father and son meet over Adrian 's grave and reconcile ; Robert has quit his job to be at Rocky 's side . Rocky sets straight to training with Apollo

Creed 's old trainer Duke who quickly surmises that the slow and arthritic Rocky cannot depend on sparring as he did in the past , and can only compete by building his strength and punching power as much as possible , focusing on " blunt force trauma " to pound his opponent .

The fight becomes an HBO Pay @-@ per @-@ View event billed as " Will Vs . Skill . " Rocky is given little chance , and a TV commentator jokes that it is being called an " exhibition " because it can 't be called an " execution . " But Rocky enters the ring to the tune of Frank Sinatra 's " High Hopes " and wearing the same gold @-@ trimmed black trunks he wore when he beat Apollo Creed and the large crowd is clearly in his corner .

Dixon easily dominates the first round , only to injure his left hand against Rocky 's hip in the second . Rocky makes a dramatic comeback ; he manages to knock Dixon down once and then continues to surprise the audience with his prowess and chin against the younger and faster fighter . Dixon , unprepared for Rocky 's resilience , sends Rocky to one knee in the final round , but the elder fighter pulls himself to his feet for one last assault . The two continue to punish each other until the end . Rocky thanks an appreciative Dixon for the fight and leaves the ring to the adulation of the crowd before the result is even announced . It is a win for Mason Dixon by a narrow split decision , but Rocky clearly does not mind .

Back in Philadelphia , Rocky brings roses to Adrian 's grave again , thanking her for helping him .

= = Cast = =

Sylvester Stallone as Rocky Balboa : Retired boxing legend and former two @-@ time Heavyweight Champion of the World . After a virtual @-@ match created by ESPN determines that if Rocky (in his prime) fought the current Heavyweight Champion , Mason Dixon , he would win - publicity and attention from the media , brings Rocky out of retirement to again enter the ring .

Burt Young as Paulie Pennino : Rocky 's moody brother @-@ in @-@ law , best friend and Adrian 's brother .

Milo Ventimiglia as Robert " Rocky " Balboa , Jr . : Rocky and Adrian 's only son .

Geraldine Hughes as Marie : A woman whom Rocky originally met over thirty years ago (as seen in the first installment of the movie series) , who becomes a friend , and supporter of Rocky 's return to boxing .

James Francis Kelly III as Stephenson " Steps " : Marie 's son , whom Rocky befriends .

Tony Burton as Tony " Duke " Evers : Rocky 's trainer who has been his head cornerman since Balboa 's second fight with James " Clubber " Lang in Rocky III . Duke previously trained Apollo Creed , who was Rocky 's opponent in the first two films and later his friend in the third and fourth films .

Antonio Tarver as Mason " The Line " Dixon : Reigning Heavyweight Champion of the World , who challenges Rocky to a fight , after the attention of a virtual @-@ match says that Rocky would win . Dixon is shown as the current undisputed heavyweight champion of the world , but a fighter who is not shown the same respect as Rocky was when he was the world champion .

Henry G. Sanders as Martin , Dixon 's trainer .

Pedro Lovell as Spider Rico : Former local club boxer and opponent of Rocky 's early career . With the two now friends , Spider has become a strong Christian , eats for free , and works as dish @-@ washer at Rocky 's restaurant .

Jacob " Stitch " Duran as himself : Dixon 's cut @-@ man .

Mike Tyson makes a cameo appearance at ringside during the Rocky vs. Dixon match . Also appearing are ring announcer Michael Buffer , referee Joe Cortez , ESPN 's Woody Paige , Skip Bayless , Jay Crawford , Brian Kenny , and Dana Jacobson , and HBO 's Jim Lampley , Larry Merchant , and Max Kellerman .

= = Production = =

= = = Development = = =

Following the negative reception and poor box office performance of Rocky V , Stallone felt obligated to give his Rocky Balboa character a more proper closure . He began pitching his ideas to MGM studio executives in 1996 but was repeatedly turned down . After Harry E. Sloan became chairman of MGM in 2005 , the new studio executive and his team were willing to listen . Stallone also gained an ally in Revolution Studios president Joe Roth .

= = = Budget and timeline = = =

Filming began in December 2005 in Las Vegas , Nevada . In 2006 , it moved to Los Angeles , California and Philadelphia , Pennsylvania . The production budget on the 38 @-@ day shoot was projected to be \$ 24 million . The film was scheduled for release during the President 's Day holiday in 2007 , but was moved up to right before Christmas 2006 . In late March 2006 , the first movie teaser was released on the Internet . The full @-@ length trailer accompanied the theatrical release of Pirates of the Caribbean : Dead Man 's Chest on July 7 in select theaters .

= = = Casting = = =

The film gives nods to previous installments via the casting . The most obvious is the return of Stallone , Young , and Burton : the only actors to portray the same characters in all six installments . Tarver 's appearance marks the sixth time an active professional boxer has appeared in the series . Previously , Joe Frazier (Rocky) , Pedro Lovell (Rocky) , Roberto Durán (Rocky II) , Tommy Morrison (Rocky V) , and Michael Williams (Rocky V) have appeared in the series . Stallone initially wanted Roy Jones , Jr. to portray Dixon , but after Jones did not return Stallone 's phone calls , he tapped Tarver to fill the role . The character of Marie appeared in the original Rocky ; she was portrayed by Jodi Letizia . For this film , Marie is portrayed by Geraldine Hughes . (Letizia did reprise the role for Rocky V , but her scene was deleted . In that version , Marie was homeless on the streets of Philadelphia .) Another recognizable character who appeared in the previous five films , sportscaster Stu Nahan , provided the commentary for the computer @-@ generated fight between Dixon and Balboa . Nahan was part of the ringside commentary team during all the bouts in the first three films and the Apollo Creed / Ivan Drago fight in Rocky IV ; he was then one of the members of the press , seen asking questions to Rocky upon return from Russia in Rocky V at the start of the movie , and then again towards the end with new champion Tommy Gunn . He was diagnosed with lymphoma during the Rocky Balboa filming , though , and died on December 26 , 2007 . Finally , Pedro Lovell , who portrayed Spider Rico in the original film , returns to the role in Rocky Balboa as a guest and later employee at Rocky 's restaurant .

A number of sports personalities portray themselves . Jim Lampley , Larry Merchant , and Max Kellerman comprise the ringside broadcast team (all three were commentators for HBO Boxing at the time of the film 's release) . Sportswriters such as Bert Sugar , Bernard Fernandez and Steve Springer also appear . As for actual boxers , Mike Tyson (who had retired by the film 's release) makes a cameo appearance , taunting Dixon as the fighter enters the ring . Lou DiBella , a real @-@ life boxing promoter , portrays himself as Dixon 's promoter . Several of ESPN 's personalities also portray themselves . SportsCenter anchor (and Friday Night Fights host) Brian Kenny is the host of the fictional Then and Now series , while Cold Pizza and 1st and 10 hosts Jay Crawford , Dana Jacobson , Skip Bayless , and Woody Paige also appear . Ring announcer Michael Buffer appeared as himself , as did referee Joe Cortez .

Regarding his decision not to have Talia Shire reprise her role as Adrian , Stallone told USA Today that , " in the original script , she was alive . But it just didn 't have the same dramatic punch . I thought , ' What if she 's gone ? ' That would cut Rocky 's heart out and drop him down to ground zero " . Shire herself said that , in her view , " The film has great regard for the process of mourning . Sly utilizes mourning to empower Rocky , and Adrian is made very mythical . "

= = = Music = = =

Composed by Academy Award winner Bill Conti , the Rocky Balboa film score is both an updated composition of Rocky music and a tribute to the music that has been featured in previous Rocky films . Conti , who has acted as composer on every Rocky film except Rocky IV (which was instead helmed by Vince DiCola when Conti had other commitments at the time) , chose to compose the score almost entirely from musical themes used in the previous movies . Only one original theme was written specifically for Rocky Balboa , which is the theme written to represent the character of Marie .

The roughly 40 @-@ minute score was recorded in the summer of 2006 at Capitol Studios in Hollywood , California . Conti chose to pre @-@ record the string , brass , and piano tracks and then have those tracks mixed with the work of a 44 @-@ piece orchestra which he conducted . He also performed all of the piano work himself which is something he has done with each movie for which he has composed the score . Stallone also was involved in every part of the process and attended several of the recording sessions . A soundtrack album entitled Rocky Balboa : The Best of Rocky was released by Capitol Records on December 26 , 2006 to coincide with the release of the film , though most of its tracks originate from previous Rocky installments .

In addition to the score , the film features original tracks performed by Natasha Bedingfield , Three 6 Mafia , and Frank Stallone as well as classic tracks such as Frank Sinatra 's " High Hopes " and The Miracles ' " Ooh Baby Baby " . Of the original tracks , the most significant is the Diane Warren song " Still Here " , performed by Bedingfield , which was reported to be the film 's theme in early articles . Though it is still listed in the credits , the song was dropped from the film .

= = Inconsistencies = =

= = Continuity = =

A plot element from the fifth film is not addressed in Rocky Balboa 's plot . In the previous film , Rocky was diagnosed with brain damage and advised never to fight again . Stallone clarified this apparent inconsistency in an interview , remarking :

" When Rocky was diagnosed with brain damage , it must be noted that many athletes have a form of brain damage including football players , soccer players , and other individuals in contact sports such as rugby , etc . Rocky never went for a second opinion and yielded to his wife 's wishes to stop . So with the advent of new research techniques into brain damage , Rocky was found to be normal among fighters , and he was suffering the results of a severe concussion . By today 's standards Rocky Balboa would be given a clean bill of health for fighters . "

= = Cinematography and fight choreography = =

While the dramatic portions of the movie are shot in an obviously cinematic style , the bout between Balboa and Dixon is shot in a number of different ways . The lead @-@ in to the bout , as well as the first two rounds , are shot in a style similar to a major pay @-@ per @-@ view broadcast . Clips from fights in previous Rocky movies are used during the introductory teaser to introduce Balboa , while stock footage from actual Tarver fights , as well as footage from Dixon 's previous fight (shown at the beginning of the film) are used as clips for Dixon 's part of the teaser . The fight itself was shot in high definition to further enhance the TV @-@ style look of the fight .

After the first two rounds , the bout is shot in a more " cinematic " style , reminiscent of the way the fights in the other Rocky films were shot . However , unlike the other films in the series , the fight is less choreographed and more improvised than previous installments and is closer to an actual boxing match than a choreographed fight . This is a departure from the previous films , where every punch , feint , and step was carefully scripted and practiced .

There were also slight continuity problems during the filming of the final fight . This was said to have been due to the fact that real punches were thrown by both Stallone and Tarver , resulting in some

swelling and nosebleeds occurring earlier than scripted . " When you see the outtakes you 'll actually see Antonio [Tarver] coming up and hooking me , blasting me , and then he starts laughing in hysterics , " explained Stallone . " Then he said " What are you crazy ? ! " And I said " Look , I just couldn 't get out of the way , I didn 't want to get hit . " Just slow . You see it coming , you go " Move head ... head , move ... move . "

= = = Alternate ending = = =

While Rocky loses by split decision in the original theatrical screenplay (mirroring the ending of the original Rocky) , an alternative ending was filmed in which the third and final judge 's decision goes in favor of Rocky , making him the winner . The speaker starts " and still ... " for which Dixon enthuses while he continues " still ... Philadelphia 's undisputed heavyweight champion Rocky Balboa ! " . Dixon 's crew jeers while the crowd roars , but Dixon himself is still gracious even in defeat . From there , the ending continues the same as in the original .

= = Distribution = =

Rocky Balboa represents a partnership between Metro @-@ Goldwyn @-@ Mayer , Revolution Studios , and Columbia Pictures (Columbia 's corporate parent Sony holds a 20 % stake in MGM) . Since the Rocky series was originally produced and distributed by United Artists (now MGM 's subsidiary studio) , the partners jointly decided that the film could and should take advantage of MGM 's newly reinvigorated domestic distribution apparatus . 20th Century Fox handles its theatrical and DVD distributions outside of the United States and Canada , while Sony Pictures Home Entertainment handled its American and Canadian video distributions . Television syndication rights are held by Debmar @-@ Mercury and 20th Television under license from Revolution . In the Philippines and Switzerland , Fox released the film through joint ventures with Warner Bros. Entertainment . In Japan , the film was promoted by Fox as Rocky : The Final . It opened across Japan on April 20 , 2007 .

= = = Home release = = =

Rocky Balboa is available in three formats : Blu @-@ ray Disc , DVD , and UMD . It was released in Region 1 on March 20 and Region 2 on May 21 , 2007 . The film has made \$ 35 @,@ 622 @,@ 998 in DVD sales . Features on the Blu @-@ ray Disc and DVD include : Deleted scenes along with an alternate ending , bloopers , a commentary , and several featurettes . In addition , the Blu @-@ ray version features all of the DVD 's content in 1080p high definition video .

= = = Video game = = =

On December 13 , 2006 , it was officially announced by Ubisoft and MGM that a new Rocky video game , titled Rocky Balboa , was to be made exclusively for the PlayStation Portable handheld console . It was released on March 20 , 2007 , to coincide with the Blu @-@ ray and DVD release .

= = Reception = =

= = = Box office = = =

The film was an unexpected box office success and exceeded studio expectations , grossing over three times the opening night estimates of (at best) \$ 2 @,@ 000 @,@ 000 and doing so despite a harsh spell of winter weather . The film not only finished third in its opening weekend , grossing \$ 12 @,@ 540 @,@ 000 , but eventually became Stallone 's most successful starring role since 1993 's Cliffhanger and the sixth highest grossing boxing film of all time , topped only by the first four Rocky

films and Clint Eastwood 's Million Dollar Baby . Total U.S. box office gross receipts were \$ 70 @, @ 269 @, @ 899 while the international gross stands at \$ 85 @, @ 449 @, @ 806 , making for a total worldwide gross of \$ 155 @, @ 721 @, @ 132 .

= = = Critical response = = =

On Rotten Tomatoes , the film has a 76 % " Certified Fresh " rating , based on 176 reviews , with an average rating of 6 @. @ 5 / 10 . The site 's critical consensus reads , " Implausible but entertaining and poignant , Rocky Balboa finds the champ in fighting form for the first time in years " . On Metacritic , the film has a score of 63 out of 100 , based on 36 critics , indicating " generally favorable reviews " .

On the television show Ebert & Roeper , both Richard Roeper and guest reviewer Aisha Tyler gave the film a " thumbs up " rating . Among other positive reviews were those from Variety , David Edelstien of New York magazine , Ethan Alter of Premiere Magazine , Victoria Alexander of Filmsinreview.com , Jeanne Aufmuth of Palo Alto Weekly , Brett Buckalew of Filmstew.com , The Hollywood Reporter , and Owen Gleiberman of Entertainment Weekly .

Some criticism came from Christy Lemire , who described the film as self @-@ parody . Kenneth Turan of the Los Angeles Times also criticized the film 's premise as implausible and derivative , and the plot development as cursory . Colm Andrew of the Manx Independent said the film " captures the look and feel of the first Rocky but becomes too much of a sentimental homage " and overall " there is little point in joining Stallone on this ultimately dull nostalgia trip " .

Stallone was quoted as having told reporters that he would rather " do something that he enjoyed badly , than feel bad about not doing something he enjoyed . "

The film was greeted warmly by the majority of the boxing community , with many experts believing the Rocky character is still a key symbol of the sport and that the boxing scenes were the most realistic of any film . On the DVD , Stallone attributes this to the fact that he used realistic sound effects (the previous installments had become notorious for their unrealistic and loud sounds of punches landing) and the fact that both Stallone and Tarver threw real punches at each other .