

# THE *Hollywood* REPORTER

THE DIRECTORS ISSUE

NOVEMBER 25, 2011

## TEFLON TITANS!

Which stars are immune to bad reviews

...

## BERG VS. SILBERMANN

The truth about ICM

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## GRAZER'S OSCAR CONFLICT

# Scorsese

With *Hugo* as his homage to movie history, the director reveals how his 12-year-old daughter led to his first family film and opens up about his legacy: 'The reality is, for people who create anything ... you always want to be remembered'

+ THE DIRECTOR ROUNDTABLE

Compliments of  
The Hollywood Reporter





"There are certain things I experienced that I couldn't talk about until I made *Goodfellas*," says Scorsese, shot in his office.

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THR.COM

Go online for exclusive video of Martin Scorsese and James Cameron's chat with *THR's* Jay A. Fernandez about *Hugo* and 3D. Says Cameron, "It's gonna break down doors in the minds of Hollywood."



**ON THE COVER**  
 Martin Scorsese was photographed Nov. 12 by Wesley Mann in the filmmaker's Manhattan office.



# THE DREAMS OF MARTIN SCORSESE

*Amidst the backdrop of Hugo, his pilgrimage to filmmaking past, the always insecure director measures himself against the greats, talks mortality and reveals how his 12-year-old daughter rules the roost*

By **JAY A. FERNANDEZ**

Photographed by  
**WESLEY MANN**



# A

RECURRING

Martin Scorsese nightmare goes like this: He is told that he must start shooting a movie. But he isn't informed what the movie is. He doesn't know what it's about or who the actors are. He only knows that the producers are pushing him to get this thing started, now. A dutiful artist, Scorsese dives in with help from frequent first assistant director Joe Reidy, only to notice that standing to the side of the set is a very famous older director. This mystery director is someone real, and great, but Scorsese, upon waking, never remembers who it is. The guy's presence unnerves him, and he says so to the producers. "Don't worry," he's told. "He's just here to observe. It's your thing."


"But I knew that he was probably going to take over what I was doing," Scorsese continues



Chloe Grace Moretz and Asa Butterfield (as Hugo) discuss a scene with Scorsese on the London set.

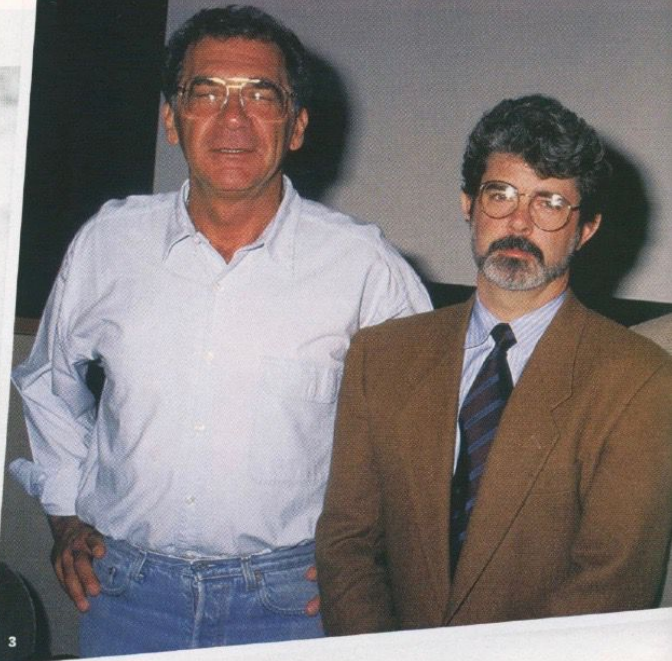






Scorsese is not afraid to contemplate mortality. "Oh, that's always in my head," says the director, pictured in his midtown production offices, where he hosts Saturday afternoon screenings for his 12-year-old daughter, Francesca, and her friends.





in hushed tones. “And slowly but surely, they say, ‘You know, if you could just sit down, we’ll let him handle this scene. ...’”

Scorsese guffaws at the anxiety-drenched punch line and shakes his head. He’s able to see the humor in it. At least it’s not the dream where he speaks to his late mother, or the one in which his long-departed bichon frise Zoe, who often sat in his lap while he directed *Goodfellas*, is found bloodied in the street — both of which are more likely to bring him to tears. But it’s undeniably a rich vision to be bouncing around the subconscious of a 69-year-old artist who long since has established himself as one of the greatest filmmakers of the modern era.

The anonymous dream director could be Ingmar Bergman, Akira Kurosawa, Michael Powell, Satyajit Ray, Orson Welles, Jean Renoir — any of the icons Scorsese has revered and chased with his art for decades. But the insecurity on display is clearly tied to what he and his fellow ’70s visionaries felt was a “denigration” of their film-school origins by the previous generation of self-made greats — the same men and women whose work he’s made it his life’s mission to preserve. It’s no doubt also tied to that greatest of mysteries: What legacy can he himself hope to leave behind?

Sitting in the downstairs family room of his Upper East Side brownstone on a crisp Sunday afternoon in November, Scorsese is as buoyant and thoughtful as always. He’s just grabbed a quick nap. His wife, Helen Morris, a producer, is upstairs. Their soon-to-be-12-year-old daughter Francesca is at a friend’s. His West Highland terriers Flora and Desmond are sequestered in the kitchen (but only after he’s given each a playful rub). And he’s enjoying the briefest of breaks from putting the final touches on the 3D effects in his latest film, *Hugo*, opening Nov. 23.

If Scorsese were to have that terrible dream today, the man looking over his shoulder could be Georges Méliès, one of the fathers of the moving image and a weighty personal and thematic

1 Scorsese, then 28, with *Woodstock* director Michael Wadleigh and fellow editor Thelma Schoonmaker, who has worked with him ever since. 2 The director in a cafe in New York’s Little Italy during the making of *Mean Streets* in October 1973. 3 From left: Fellow film preservationists Pollack, Lucas and Spielberg join Scorsese to create the Film Foundation in 1990.

presence in *Hugo*. In the movie, which takes place in 1931 Paris, Méliès is a neglected and bitter old man, an enthusiastic innovator whose magical work has been forgotten and destroyed, only to be rediscovered through his encounters with a young orphan named Hugo Cabret. Based on Brian Selznick’s Caldecott-winning 2007 novel *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, the \$100 million-plus 3D movie is a grand slam of Scorsese preoccupations: the transformative power of cinema, its unique ability to connect people, the need to preserve old movies and the truth that an artist’s legacy lives in those who treasure the work. Over the years, Méliès has become a mystery himself, and even film buffs often don’t have a grasp of just how profound his contributions to cinema were, despite their efforts to piece together the scraps of his legacy. In this, he could not have better cultural archaeologists than Selznick and Scorsese.

“I loved that all of human history was for him the history of film,” says Selznick, who first talked cinema history with the director in London before filming began. “Of course, Scorsese has been responsible for restoring the lost legacies of groundbreaking filmmakers. He is in the position of pointing the way for the public, showing us who has been forgotten and overlooked.”

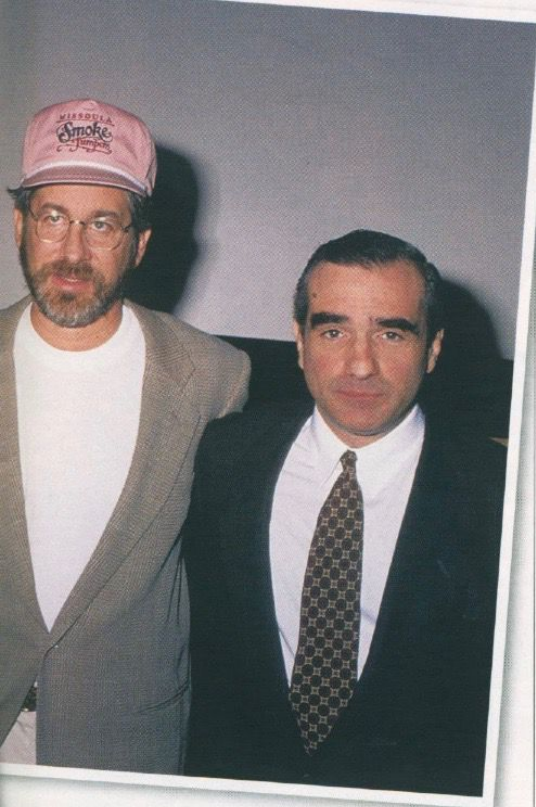


Scorsese traces his devotion to film preservation and restoration back to the emotional limitations of his childhood. The younger of two brothers in a very Old World immigrant New York family that lived in Queens and then the Lower East Side tenements, he repeatedly was told to keep his childish opinions to himself. As an asthma sufferer, he was always sick, which meant sports and pets were off limits, leaving him with an external and internal life that only could be opened in a movie theater. “It really opened up things that I wasn’t allowed to say much,” Scorsese says. “I wasn’t allowed to express my feelings about anybody or anything. These emotions and these questions that were being asked in my head and in my heart, a lot of this was being addressed in the films I saw.”

From a very early age, he was watching everything from *Singin’ in the Rain* to Italian neo-realist cinema. His Aunt Mary once took him and a cousin to see a rerelease of *Bambi* at the Forest Hills Theater in Queens, only to have to first sit through the 1947 film noir *Out of the Past*. “I was way too young for that one,” Scorsese says with an eye roll. “I was saying to my aunt, ‘When’s *Bambi* coming on?’ She said, ‘Shut up, this is

PREVIOUS PAGE: HEAD: JAM BUETTEL/ANIMATION PICTURES AND OR FILMS; THIS SPREAD: CLOWNSHIP FROM TOP LEFT; EYEBIT COLLECTION; BOY: GALLERIA WERFAGGOTTI IMAGES; JACK: MANNING/NEW YORK TIMES CO. GILLETTY IMAGES





“You always want to be remembered. But eventually everything goes. You just have to accept that.” — Scorsese

good.’ The imagery stayed with me, that crazy poetic mood. It was really art.” But *On the Waterfront* broke through in a way that none of the others had before — he saw his hard-working uncles and cousins in every frame of Elia Kazan’s 1954 masterpiece. “It was literally as if the camera was in my apartment or on the street corner with us,” he says. “All of this meant a great deal to me and connected me with the outside world.”

By his mid-20s, Scorsese had graduated from film school and was looking to put his own experiences on the screen, most notably in his 1973 crime drama *Mean Streets*. But the fall-out of expressing his personal world in public ended up stinging him. “I had repercussions on that,” he says in a clipped manner that suggests the memory is still fresh for him. “Family and friends who were insulted.”

Once he found his own voice as a filmmaker, he and peers like Steven Spielberg couldn’t find decent prints of the movies that had fed them as kids, and they began a campaign to convince the studios that these classics had value. “They didn’t realize that to a whole generation, these were more than just commodities,” he says. “It was part of who we are. It was part of everyone who has any relationship with cinema. This is something we started to get militant about. ‘You may own them,’ I said. ‘But in actuality, you’re custodians for a culture.’”

Scorsese’s longtime editor Thelma Schoonmaker, who won Oscars for *Raging Bull*, *The Aviator* and *The Departed*, remembers his horror

after a LACMA screening in the early 1970s of a film classic whose print had turned pink. “It just never had occurred to him that these masterpieces that he was learning so much from could possibly disappear,” she says. “He was genuinely shocked. And ever since, that’s become his great mission.”

In 1990, along with Spielberg, George Lucas, Francis Ford Coppola, Sydney Pollack and others, he formed the nonprofit Film Foundation, and in 2007 he created the World Cinema Foundation to extend the organization’s restoration work to foreign films. “To pass it on, that’s the key thing,” he says. (His own prints, which number in the thousands, reside at the archive in the George Eastman House in Rochester, N.Y.) “It’s about knowing the past. You don’t get an accurate picture of history sometimes through film, but you get an accurate picture of the people who made it and what the world was like at that time and that place where they made it, their attitudes. It’s very important.”

Important enough to wage a stealth campaign to educate his own preteen daughter. Despite the wall-to-wall bookshelves, the Robbie Robertson Stratocaster from *The Last Waltz* and the wooden Laurel & Hardy figurines, the downstairs family room is Francesca’s turf. The Steinway she plays obscures a few of her artworks, and two parakeets that her dad complains ignore him provide a sing-song background while she does her homework. Although he takes an iPod everywhere, Scorsese says he doesn’t get to play his music down here. “Oh, no,” he says with mock seriousness, “no, no,” as if he were a scared flunky working for a mob boss. On occasion, he admits that he’ll stroll through humming Cream’s “Sunshine of Your Love” and get Francesca hooked.

Their regular ritual has become Saturday afternoon movies that he screens for her and her friends. But how does he get a gaggle of girls to sit for serious cinema? “They don’t know,” he says, pointing out conspiratorially that you have to do it casually. “If you start them that young, they think this is normal.” He bursts into laughter and claps his hands, clearly aware that he’s foisting his own passion on them without remorse. “They’ll never know.” He gleefully explains how he lured them in with classic Disney animated films that he borrowed from the studio, then hit them with the original *The King and I*, MGM musicals, *Twilight Zone* episodes and Westerns such as *Stagecoach*, *My Darling Clementine* and *Shane*. (And yes, she did watch *Out of the Past* with him one night on TCM while he gave commentary on the camera moves; her mother won’t let her watch *Bambi*.)

Even in this fun daddy-daughter context, Scorsese is serious, thoughtful and specific about his approach, as if he’s crafting an MFA cinema studies class for students at his alma mater, NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts. He holds these little seminars in the screening room at his Sikelia Productions offices, rather than in the one at home, for one specific reason. “I have books and stacks of things around,” he says, mildly pained at the potential disturbance of his OCD-established ways. “The next thing you know, everything has fallen down. Their legs go this way, they stretch

## SCORSESE'S Adaptations

**Hugo** 2011 | PARAMOUNT  
SCREENWRITER: JOHN LOGAN

*The Invention of Hugo Cabret*  
2007 | AUTHOR: BRIAN SELZNICK

**Shutter Island** 2010 | PARAMOUNT  
SCREENWRITER: LAETA KALOGRIDIS  
ZERO NOMINATIONS | \$294.8M WORLDWIDE

*Shutter Island*  
2003 | AUTHOR: DENNIS LEHANE

**Bringing Out the Dead**  
1999 | PARAMOUNT  
SCREENWRITER: PAUL SCHRADER  
ZERO NOMINATIONS | \$16.8M WORLDWIDE

*Bringing Out the Dead*  
1998 | AUTHOR: JOE CONNELLY

**Casino** 1995 | UNIVERSAL  
SCREENWRITERS: NICHOLAS PILEGGI & SCORSESE  
ONE NOMINATION | \$116.1M WORLDWIDE

*Casino: Love and Honor in Las Vegas*  
1995 | AUTHOR: NICHOLAS PILEGGI

**The Age of Innocence**  
1993 | COLUMBIA  
SCREENWRITERS: JAY COCKS & SCORSESE  
FIVE NOMINATIONS, ONE WIN | \$32.3M WORLDWIDE

*The Age of Innocence*  
1920 | AUTHOR: EDITH WHARTON

**Cape Fear** 1991 | UNIVERSAL  
SCREENWRITER: WESLEY STRICK  
TWO NOMINATIONS | \$182.3M WORLDWIDE

*The Executioners*  
1957 | AUTHOR: JOHN D. MACDONALD

**Goodfellas** 1990 | WARNER BROS.  
SCREENWRITERS: NICHOLAS PILEGGI & SCORSESE  
SIX NOMINATIONS, ONE WIN | \$46.8M WORLDWIDE

*Wiseguy*  
1986 | AUTHOR: NICHOLAS PILEGGI

**The Last Temptation of Christ**  
1988 | UNIVERSAL  
SCREENWRITER: PAUL SCHRADER  
ONE NOMINATION | \$8.4M WORLDWIDE

*The Last Temptation*  
1953 | AUTHOR: NIKOS KAZANTZAKIS

**The Color of Money** 1986 | BUENA VISTA  
SCREENWRITER: RICHARD PRICE  
FOUR NOMINATIONS, ONE WIN | \$52.3M WORLDWIDE

*The Color of Money*  
1984 | AUTHOR: WALTER TEVIS

**Raging Bull** 1980 | MGM  
SCREENWRITERS: PAUL SCHRADER & MARDIK MARTIN  
EIGHT NOMINATIONS, TWO WINS | \$23.4M WORLDWIDE

*Raging Bull: My Story*  
1970 | AUTHOR: JAKE LA MOTTA

**Boxcar Bertha**  
1972 | AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL PICTURES  
SCREENWRITERS: JOYCE H. & JOHN WILLIAM CORRINGTON  
ZERO NOMINATIONS

*Sisters of the Road*  
1937 | AUTHOR: DR. BEN L. REITMAN



out, they ruin everything. The thing is that I need to retrieve stuff! It has to be in a specific place. It may not make sense, but visually I know it's there."

One byproduct of spending more time with young girls again — Scorsese's two other daughters, Catherine and Domenica, are more than 20 years older — is that it helped convince him to make a family film out of *Hugo*. "You deal with them every day so that you're made to understand actually how they perceive the world around them, even from the level of their height," he says. "It's a different way of living entirely. But the thing about it is then [doing *Hugo*] seemed natural. It didn't seem like a stretch. Being around children, I'm very comfortable with them now."

As it happens, Scorsese's birthday is just a day after Francesca's (hers is Nov. 16), and he feigns exasperation that she gets top billing on their annual combined party. "She gets all the attention now," he says. "I've taken her aside a few times, as they say. I gave her the word: *Watch it.*" More seriously, he just walked one of his daughters down the aisle for the first time, and it hit him hard. His middle girl, Domenica Cameron-Scorsese, born right after he made *Taxi Driver*, a product of his marriage to Julia Cameron, was married Nov. 11 in Chicago. The milestone has shaken him; his voice softens, and he fumbles to explain the feelings it brought up.



Left: Scorsese, his daughter Francesca and wife Helen attend a benefit in 2009. Below: Scorsese with mother Catherine, father Charles and daughters Domenica (second from right) and Catherine in 1991.



"It was very moving, but ... she's our little one," he says. "It was kind of surreal, I didn't quite ... understand that it was actually happening in real time. I still can't quite grasp it. This is very good for my daughter and everything; she married a sweet young gentleman. But it starts something new. Your concern is in a different way now for them. There's not much you can do. You can help however you can, but you're older, you'll be dying. You're not going to be around. And this is it."

It's hard not to hear in that fatalism an echo of Scorsese's suspicions about the endurance of his own life's work, which now includes 30 features that have earned him eight Oscar nominations (and one win, for directing *Departed*) for writing and directing since his 1967 debut, *Who's That Knocking at My Door*. Self-deprecation to the contrary, somehow it's not hard to imagine film lovers cuing up *Taxi Driver* or *Goodfellas* centuries from now. Thirty years ago, *Kiss Me Deadly* director Robert Aldrich sent a letter after seeing *Raging Bull* that said, "In years to come, that'll be the one to be remembered." "I prize that letter," Scorsese says, then mulls the possibility with a mix of skepticism and hope.

"The reality is, for people who create anything, you always want to be remembered," he says. "You could be remembered for a year, a hundred years, you could be remembered for two thousand years, but eventually everything goes.

You just have to accept that. First, it may not stand the test of time. And if it doesn't, you did the best you could. You may have affected certain people's lives — maybe. You may have made people think differently. And that's what you were meant to do. And now it's over."

But does he not think that he has achieved this with his movies? "No," he says, explaining that while his predecessors' work was



fashioned in a true artistic atmosphere, the era that shaped his own films was more divorced from that kind of inspirational bedrock. "There was grown-up art all around them. Real art," Scorsese says. "They grew up in a different culture. I don't come from that culture. If I had made Bertolucci's *Before the Revolution*, or *The Red Shoes* or *Chimes at Midnight*. ... There were times when I thought I could. When you get to a certain age, you realize you may not, and you may never have."

"It took 10 years before *Raging Bull* was recognized as a significant film," says Schoonmaker. "He has experienced what it means for a great work not to be recognized. And he's seen so many of the masters he loved fall into oblivion, like Melies, so he's prepared for that. What's happened with his films is that they last, because they've got truth in them. Truth always lasts."

Scorsese seems to acknowledge this, finally, after a meaningful pause, the parakeets providing their own chattering commentary quietly behind him. He leans forward, his meditative eyes swimming in the split pools of his thick bifocals. Then he says, "A lot of them that I admire, they wouldn't have made *Mean Streets* — they *couldn't* have made *Mean Streets*. What happens is, in wishing that you made those, you feed off of it. And it goes into something you're doing. And if the material is right, and if the actors are right, and the script is right, and you're in the right head to make it ... that's your wish come true. That's it." **VIR**