

Valleywood Jan 2011: The Fighter Premiere – Live from the Red Carpet & More.

By [Beth Daigle](#) | Published: January 5, 2011



“Irish” Micky Ward and Mark Wahlberg at the Hingham premiere of “The Fighter.”

Months of anticipation over the release of “The Fighter” finally ended during the week of Dec. 6. A frenzy of press screenings, premieres and local celebrations filled the calendar, much to the delight of moviegoers and boxing fans alike.

If you have not yet seen the film, it is worth the trip to the theater. The drama and fight scenes sizzle, and strong performances by Christian Bale and Melissa Leo have generated early Oscar buzz. In my movie review, which can be read in its entirety [here](#). I describe the film as “a solid, likable drama that reminds audiences not to give up in the face of even the toughest of times and hardships.” For those of us in the Merrimack Valley, the familiar sites of Lowell and the many Lowellian extras added to the enjoyment.

Micky Ward and Mark Wahlberg undoubtedly were at the top of the list of those savoring the moment. At the Hingham premiere hosted by Wahlberg to benefit The Mark Wahlberg Youth Foundation, the actor proudly attended with members of his family and walked the red carpet with Ward by his side.

The mood was one of satisfaction as the film Wahlberg had stuck by for six years was finally making its debut. Wahlberg’s mother, Alma, expressed her enthusiasm for her son’s success. “He’s really been fighting for this for a long time,” she said. “I am really thrilled for him.” Robert Wahlberg, one of the actor’s brothers in attendance shared Mark’s passion both for Ward and the sport of boxing. He jumped at the chance to extol Ward’s virtues. “Micky Ward is one of the most unbelievable fighters I have ever seen in my life,” Robert Wahlberg said. “I am a big fan.”



Valleywood columnist Beth Daigle chats with Mark Wahlberg on the red carpet.

The proximity of the Wahlbergs hometown of Dorchester certainly was a factor in their interest and commitment to the story of Lowell born “Irish” Micky Ward. On the red carpet, Mark Wahlberg shared his thoughts with me. “Being from Dorchester, I am the guy who shepherded this project,” he said. He continued with his thoughts about filming in Lowell, saying, “It was fantastic, everybody worked hard.” Wahlberg trained extensively for the role and boxed on screen like a champion. He took real hits and portrayed Ward in a skilled manner. When asked if he would continue boxing, he gestured back toward Ward and said, “Yeah, we actually were all in the ring the other day before the L.A. premiere.”

A polished Ward said he thought the movie was “excellent.” In response to questions about his future, he revealed his “in the moment” style, saying, “I am doing this and enjoying the movie now.” The following night, a more casual Ward was back in Lowell at the Courtyard by Marriott for a packed celebration in support of “Team Micky Ward Charities.” The generally soft-spoken hard hitter told the audience: “Lowell is a great place. I don’t think the movie is bad for the city at all, I think it is great. There are parts that people may not like, but believe me, I always come back to Lowell. I love Lowell and everybody around it and the people in it. This movie was made for you guys.”

It was a nice, if not rare, moment as the crowded room burst into applause. Fellow writer and boxing history enthusiast Christine Lewis explains Ward’s generally quiet demeanor most eloquently: “Micky Ward expressed himself with his fists in the ring,” she says.



Lowell Police Sergeant Mickey O'Keefe and his wife admire the November/December cover of Merrimack Valley Magazine.

For Ward supporters, emotions run high as his success story continues to unfold. Ward's right-hand man and booking coordinator, Dan Cardillo, thought the movie was awesome. "It was emotional. Even though I know Mick and everything he has been through, the highs and lows of it were unbelievable," Cardillo said. "I thought they did a great job." Indeed, hype for the movie eventually will die down, and when it does, Cardillo plans to keep Ward busy with speaking engagements, motivational presentations and a lot of appearances.

"The Fighter" has brought Hollywood to Valleywood and put the spotlight on a local boxing icon who might have remained unknown to many outside the sport. For many, the experience has seemed surreal at times, but it has been a welcome source of entertainment, discussion and excitement.

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