



Martin Scorsese

a documentary by Alexis Trosset & Nicolas Schaller

A black and white portrait of Alexis Trosset, a man with dark, curly hair and a beard, looking directly at the camera.

alexis trosset

After majoring in directing at the International Institute of Image and Sound in 2000, Alexis Trosset directed Jean Davy, member of La Comédie Française, in his short film, *La Dernière Retraite*. Assistant-director on many short films and commercials, his mastery of editing and digital special effects has led to collaborations with the animation director Borislav Sajtinac, then to editing advertisements for various brands. In 2007, Alexis Trosset edited and supervised the special effects on *Penpusher*, a short film which won the Silver Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival and a nomination at the Sundance Film Festival. After 3 years producing and animating the cinema branch of the mythical french radio station "Radio Nova", Alexis Trosset is now creating movie trailers and bluray bonuses for the famous independant company Metropolitan FilmExport. He co-wrote Martin Scorsese with Nicolas Schaller, a book which has won an immediate success as well as critical acclaim (see cover on next page).

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A black and white portrait of Nicolas Schaller, a man with dark hair and a beard, looking slightly to the side.

nicolas schaller

Holder of a bachelor's degree in Cinema at la Sorbonne, Nicolas Schaller worked 10 years for the French edition of Premiere as a journalist and movie critic. Along this activity which takes him to numerous festivals, Nicolas Schaller writes for other magazines like Playboy and contributes to several making-of and TV shows on cinema (*Le Cercle* on Canal Plus). In 2004, he was the co-writer (with Alexis Trosset) of Martin Scorsese. He is now a movie journalist and critic for *Le Nouvel Observateur*.

NICOLAS SCHALLER

ALEXIS TROSSET

MARTIN SCORSESE



Schaller & Trosset' s book from 2004

the Project

Catholicism

Violence

Self-destructivness

Mafia

forget these clichés

forget these clichés

discover martin scorsese.

discover martin scorsese.

Every painting made out of one's soul is a portrait of the model rather than the artist's.

Oscar Wilde

His movies, his immoderate love for and his scholarly knowledge of the cinema, his over-excited temperament, his efforts to preserve and protect the world's cultural heritage... Everyone knows Martin Scorsese.

Since the 70s, Martin Scorsese has been the subject of many books, documentaries and articles of all sorts. These works have revealed the extent to which he was a cinematic silversmith, one of the greatest living directors, a movie buff... Evidence of all this can be found in his movies.

But summing up Scorsese as a gifted artist or a living encyclopedia whose pages can be turned is too simplistic. It is as if his movies were so dazzling that, because of our continuous efforts to understand them, to unravel their secrets, they ended up overshadowing their author.

Martin Scorsese's films indeed create the strange impression that we know him intimately. But the image reflected in his work is but a mirror image whose origin we would like to fathom.

For the first time, instead of Martin Scorsese talking about his movies, a movie will talk with Martin Scorsese. While working and in places which are meaningful to him. With his friends and collaborators. His story, his city, his country, his roots, his obsessions.

Thus will a portrait be drawn of the man with an outstanding talent, a complex personality and a unique career. A creator who, like the anti-heroes in his own movies, seems to be destined for an inescapable fate.

But which ?

Martin Scorsese's movies are not the subject of the movie. The subject of the movie is Martin Scorsese.

In *Raging Bull*, the director focused above all on Jake La Motta the man, while the athlete only appearing through the boxing fights which punctuated the movie. Similarly, we shall focus above all on Martin Scorsese the man, while the movie maker appears only as a watermark through his everyday struggle to make films.

To tell the story of Martin Scorsese, the (anti)hero of his life and his work.

: Everyday life

Like *Goodfellas*, the movie will retrace the career of its protagonist by following him in his everyday tasks. After often hearing him speak about movies, this time we shall see Scorsese make movies. Day after day, at the pace of his projects in production, editing, preparing or writing, of his related activities, meetings, appointments, phone calls... Seeing him work and communicate, observing his temperament daily will teach us much more about the man than simply interviewing him.

This daily log of Scorsese in the present tense will be used as the main thread around which the editing will be articulated.

: Themes

While going back and forth between the past and the present, the movie, like *Gangs of New York*, will shift constantly from the infinitely small to the infinitely large. We will tackle Scorsese's human dimension but will also place it in its context, at the heart of the cinematographic industry, in the United States... His story in History.

We will go from Scorsese's daily life, work, personality and obsessions, to Little Italy and New York, Hollywood, Italy, his past, his family, his collaborators, faith, love, music, politics.

From a visual point of view, we can start by extracting symbolic objects from his movies such as a crucifix, a revolver or a robe, to delve into and deepen Scorsesean subjects too often simplified and caricatured like the gangsters, religion, violence, etc.

: Work

While this documentary is not a Scorsese retrospective, some extracts will intervene interactively to launch themes or to act as counterpoints to validate or invalidate some statements. For instance, the sentence from *Casino* “the last time tough guys like us were ever given anything that fucking valuable again” will be used as an introduction to the part in which we will discuss the emergence of Scorsese and of the entire generation of directors in the 70s. Likewise, the sentence “You don't pay for your sins in church. You do it in the streets. The rest is bullshit and you know it” taken from *Mean Streets*, will trigger the question of Judeo-Christian guilt which has always haunted Scorsese.

On other occasions, the editing will allow us to insert a movie character asking a question and then to cut to Scorsese's answer, introducing a sort of dialogue between the characters and their maker.

: Participants

The purpose of our approach is to provide the man Scorsese with a frame so as better to apprehend his art and not the reverse (as has been done previously). In order to avoid constructing a narrow view of Scorsese, which would be only his or ours, several collaborators and friends who have influenced his life will confide their idea of the man. Thus, as this movie unfolds, the deep foundations of those movies will appear as a watermark.

While these encounters will be articulated around the themes evoked above and in conversations, most interviews with Martin Scorsese will take place as a simple discussion. Through memories and anecdotes, the relaxed tone will encourage genuine exchanges, helping to draw as true a portrait as can be.

The interviews will be done in places related to themes that emerge. For instance, when Scorsese talks with Robbie Robertson about the influence of music on his work, the exchange will take place in the concert hall of *The Last Waltz* (the Winterland Arena).

Likewise, Willem Dafoe is the ideal person to explain the way Scorsese described his concrete vision of Christ to him. In this specific case, we will obtain a surrealistic effect by interviewing Dafoe/Jesus in the street, in the heart of New York.

We would also like to organize an encounter with some actors of *What's A Nice Girl Like You Doing in a Place Like This?* and *It's Not Just You, Murray!*, Scorsese's first two short movies shot 40 years ago.

We will also orchestrate a special encounter between the director and a person of his choice, either because he wishes to meet this person, or because he wishes this person to be in the movie for reasons he himself will explain.

Finally, the movie will finish with a meal shared by Scorsese and Robert De Niro, during which they will discuss as naturally and as freely as possible. Edited as a continuous shot and therefore isolated from the rest of the movie, this sequence will endeavor to fully grasp the relationship between the two men whose collaboration remains one of the greatest myths of the history of the cinema.

: The Ten Commandments

The documentary will be interspersed with a thematic leitmotiv: the Ten Commandments. Alternately scorned or respected in Scorsese's movies, they will illustrate how Judeo-Christian teachings forged the man he is, an man who first contemplated to devote himself to God.

Each commandment will act as a counterpoint to movie excerpts or interviews. For instance "Honor thy father and thy mother" might be illustrated by *Italianamerican* or *Gangs of New York*, whereas "Thou shalt not kill," surrounded by several shots of murders, will offer a significant contradiction. The ninth commandment, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife" will be an ideal introduction for a discussion with Rosanna Arquette, Sharon Stone and Michelle Pfeiffer, on how Scorsese envisions women.

: Rhythm

A man whose energy is drained by extreme activity, Martin Scorsese knows no stasis, but expresses himself in motion. We will therefore favor movement and spontaneity so that the path and the style of the film espouse the personality and the dynamic of Scorsese himself.

The various sequences will systematically occur in a real-life situation so as to establish a carnal relationship between Scorsese and the subjects broached (as they are visually arid, the formal interviews in which the interviewee is sitting in a studio will be banished). For instance, when we evoke the director's childhood we will be driving in a cab, on to Elizabeth Street, passing by the places of his youth. To speak of religion, we shall go to Saint Patrick's church, at once a place of prayer and the set of *Mean Streets* and *Who's That Knocking at my Door?*. There we shall meet Harvey Keitel, who made his début in these two movies.

When looking at his cinematographic studies, we will go to New York University, where Scorsese learnt his trade and then taught it in turn. There we will meet some of his former students such as Oliver Stone. When we speak of the United States and especially of New York, a city to which Scorsese is inextricably linked, we will accompany him to all the places that he holds dear. Another great lover of New York, Abel Ferrara, Scorsese's direct heir, will be joining us. Then, using sequences excerpted from their movies, we will revisit some places used as sets, using this pretext to study the great mutations of "the world's capital" and of two of its illustrious inhabitants.

: Interactivity

The non-linear editing will espouse Scorsese's vivacity and intellectual flowering. We will pay particular attention to maintaining an interactive structure so that the movie is as unpredictable and inventive as its subject. This is why we will not hesitate to cut in during an interview to validate or invalidate a statement with other images, or directly to bring an answer from another interview, or even a movie.

: Conclusion

All the elements (daily shooting, directed sequences, archive images, movie extracts...) will be mutually embedded with analogies, mirror effects, counterpoints, parallels to achieve a living and playful portrait.

We will thus tell the story of Scorsese and his evolution from a marginal child in Little Italy to the student torn between the Church and the cinema, from the penniless apprentice-director to the darling of the New Hollywood, from the star-moviemaker to the self-destructive "enfant terrible", from the movie buff to the late oscarised star, from the misunderstood maverick to the unanimously respected institution.

We will trace back the flamboyant and chaotic story of this ambitious artist whose exemplary success hides an eternal dissatisfaction and a pessimistic temperament.

Understand how a divinity student from a poor family of Italian immigrants has become one of the greatest contemporary directors.

Unravel the mystery of this prodigious child of the American dream, a dream he never believed in.

With him.

Alexis Trosset & Nicolas Schaller

Two stylized, handwritten signatures in white ink, positioned horizontally at the bottom of the page. The signature on the left is more angular and geometric, while the one on the right is more fluid and cursive.

Design & conception: alexis trosset