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Dealerscope

Scorsese Extols Blu-ray

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One of the most acclaimed filmmakers of the last half-century effusively praised the Blu-ray format this week, calling it the next-best thing to seeing a movie in the theater.

Martin Scorsese, addressing the Blu-Con conference via satellite from New York, extolled the Blu-ray format as having "the best potential to replicate the actual experience of seeing a film is the best I've seen, in 40 years as a filmmaker." He also praised the Hollywood studios for placing a greater emphasis than in the past on the quality of the presentation of films on home video.

"The audience at home demands the best-quality image and sound. Blu-ray now allows you to experience the film as close as it was meant to be," Scorsese said. "It is impossible to recreate completely the experience of watching in a movie theater, but I firmly believe Blu-ray is as close as you're going to get to that experience, at home."

Scorsese noted that just as many studios dug back into their vaults when DVD came along in the 1990s, the same thing is beginning to happen with Blu-ray now. The filmmaker also stated that when it comes to transferring films to Blu-ray, especially older ones, it is important most of all to present the film in its original form, especially when it comes to color and aspect ratio.

"The home viewer, luckily, is demanding the best quality they can get for the image, the quality, and greater fidelity to the original source materials."

It is especially important, he added, to remain true to the director's original vision for the film. He told the story about a recent restoration, for Blu-ray, of Stanley Kubrick's 1964 classic "Dr. Strangelove," in which he and a collaborator debated whether or not to edit out strings that could be seen holding up an airplane. The collaborator, a contemporary of the late director, decided they would, because Kubrick would have wanted it that way.

From a historian's standpoint, Scorsese pointed out that while his generation was studying film in the early 1960s, they had only around 30 years of film history to consider, counting back from the start of the post-silent era in 1929. "Now, young people have a hundred years of cinema to catch up with," he said, adding that Blu-ray restorations have a chance to play a huge role in that education. "I'm very

excited and optimistic, both a filmmaker and film lover," he said.

Scorsese's list of classic films includes "Mean Streets," "Taxi Driver," "Raging Bull," "After Hours," "Goodfellas," "Casino," and "The Departed," for which he won his first Academy Award in 2007. Most of his work is available on Blu-ray; Scorsese's next film, "Shutter Island," will be released early next year. Scorsese is also noted for his work as a film historian and preservationist.

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