

Q&A

MARTIN SCORSESE



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Q What are your memories of making films in Morocco?

We came to Morocco in 1983, originally, because that's when *The Last Temptation of Christ* was going to be made but it was cancelled by the studio because of problems with the fundamentalist Christians. But we were able to raise the money in 1987, and we came back to Morocco to the exact same locations that we had scouted in '83.

Q Where did you shoot?

There's a small village called Oumnast, about 25 miles outside Marrakech, and that became [the location for] Nazareth. We shot all around Marrakech, then we moved to Meknes, which in terms of architecture could authentically replicate what Jerusalem may have been like at that time.

Q What brought you back to Morocco for *Kundun*, your acclaimed film which is set in Tibet?

We were going to shoot in India, but they wouldn't give us an answer. Which we think, probably meant no. So, immediately, my production designer Dante Ferretti booked all the hotel

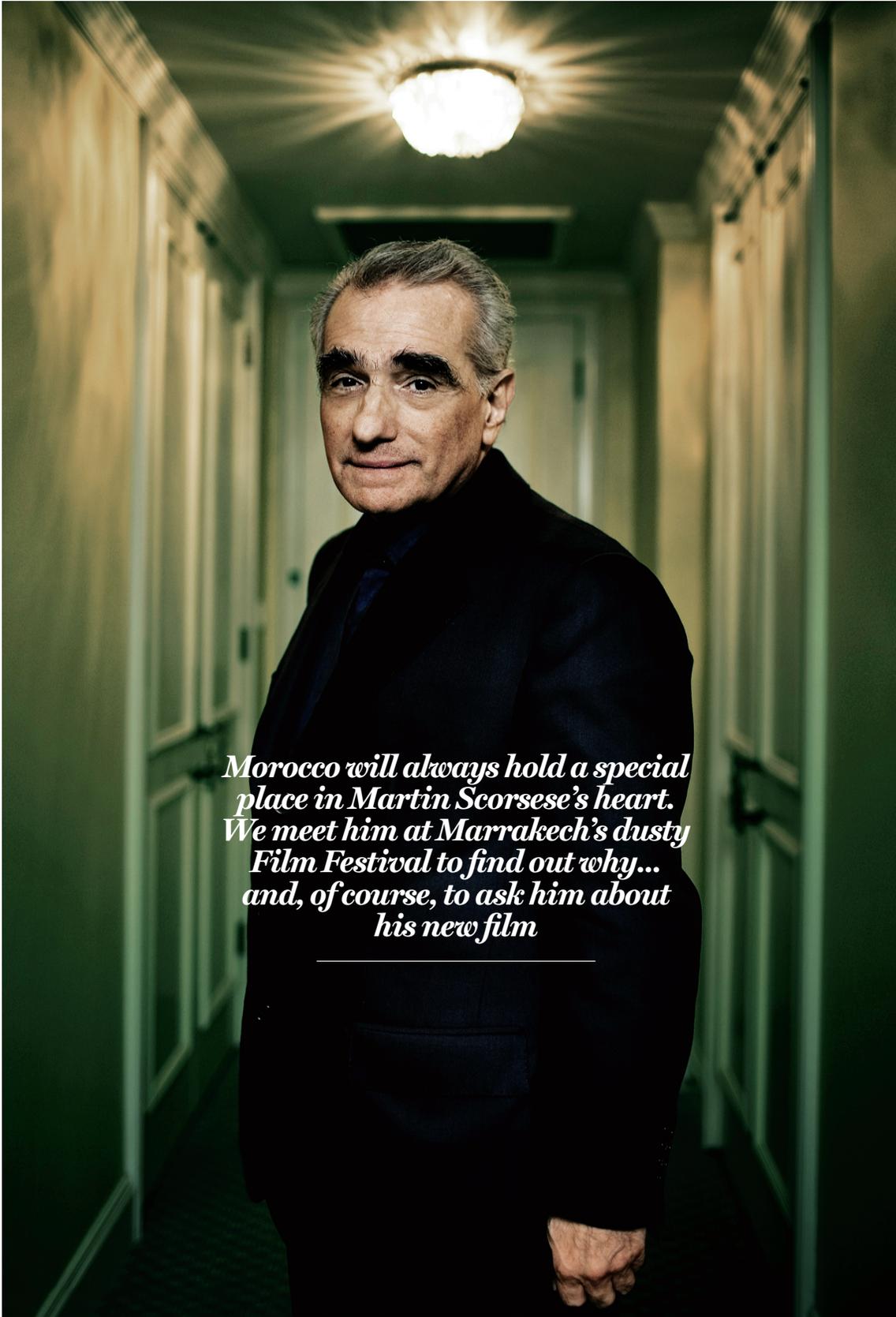
rooms in Ouarzazate we could get. I said, "But Dante, the Atlas mountains... I saw the Himalayas and they're so big." He went, "We'll just show the foothills..." And the Moroccan desert was perfect for it. We literally had pictures of Tibet and we just tried to make as much of a facsimile as possible.

Q Did it work out as well as you hoped?

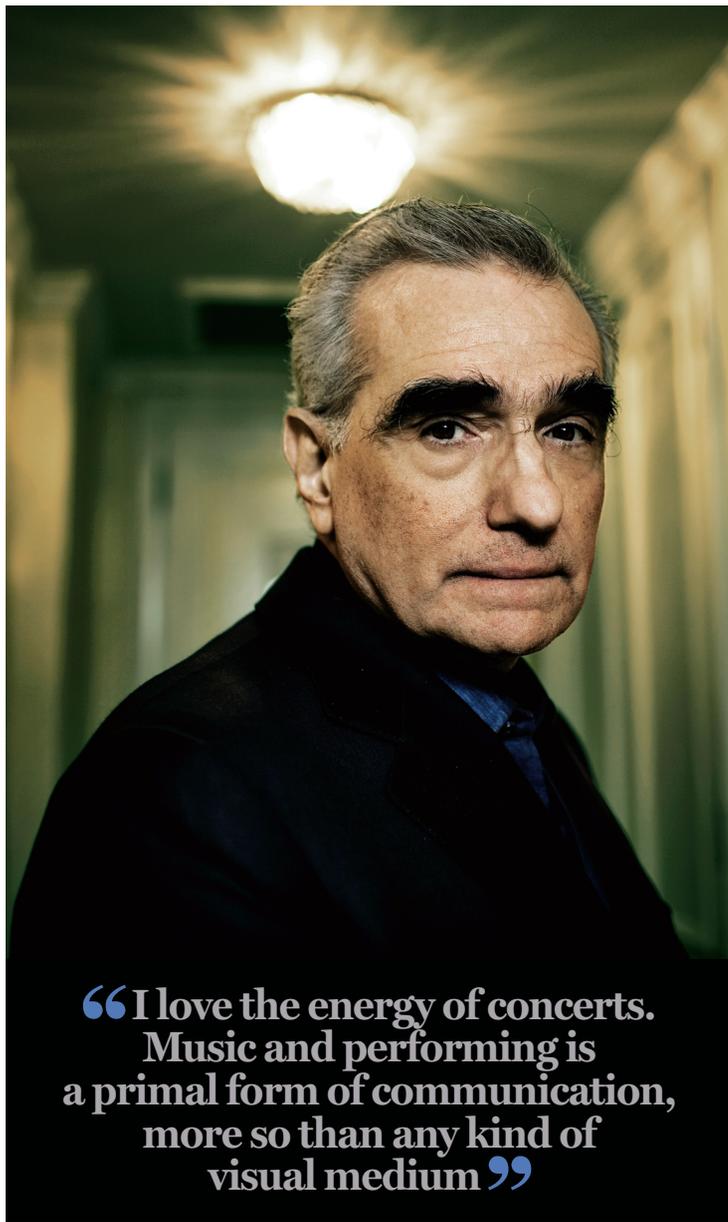
The cooperation here was amazing, because we had to bring in monks from Nepal, monks from India. We shot all around Ouarzazate, Marrakech, the Atlas mountains and then in Casablanca we shot [the location for] Beijing. We covered the entire town hall of Casablanca with a banner of Chairman Mao's face. That became odd, though, and after four days, it became problematic so we had to finish as quickly as we could!

Q You recently got involved in a different side of the film industry, in restoration and preservation?

Yes, at Cannes last year we officially announced the creation of the World Cinema Foundation, which is raising money to restore films from countries around the world. We started with

A portrait of Martin Scorsese, an older man with grey hair, wearing a dark suit and tie. He is standing in a hallway with wooden paneling and a chandelier hanging from the ceiling. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows.

Morocco will always hold a special place in Martin Scorsese's heart. We meet him at Marrakech's dusty Film Festival to find out why... and, of course, to ask him about his new film



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Transes, Ahmed El Maanouni's music documentary about the Moroccan band Nass El Ghiwane, and we showed the restored version in the Djemaa el-Fna square. It's an ambitious project and it takes a lot of patience.

Q Do you watch many Moroccan movies?

I am very interested in Moroccan cinema and North African cinema. I'd like to be able to see more of it. *Transes* is a favourite of mine. Back when I was doing *The King Of Comedy*, we were

editing the film at night—I used to edit all my films at night because nobody would call us on the telephone—and I had the television on and there was a cable programme showing *Transes*, which they kept repeating so I had it playing all night. I fell in love with the music and the film.

Q You've directed films about music yourself, including the upcoming film *Shine A Light*, which follows a Rolling Stones concert

I love the energy of concerts. Music

and performing is a primal form of communication, more so than literature or any kind of visual medium. It's the performer in relationship to the audience that crosses cultural barriers.

Q Do you feel like the Oscar you won last year, for *The Departed* should have come for an earlier film?

It doesn't matter if the Oscar arrived late. It arrived! I'm not going to send it back. It's nice. It helped the box office of the film, it helped me and my family personally. That's all I was interested in. But, most importantly, is that over the years when I thought I was going to get an Oscar and I wanted an Oscar, I didn't get it and what that did was to make me concentrate on the work, not the prizes. I've gone through different cycles in Hollywood—there were many times during the past 35 years I couldn't even get a phone call returned from anyone, let alone make a movie. But I've been able to continue.

Q There must have been times when the Oscar snubs exasperated you?

I think when I wasn't even nominated for *Taxi Driver*, let alone win, I was very disappointed. But I was young, and I realised it didn't matter, we got to make the movie. I didn't even think *Taxi Driver* was going to be shown in theatres for so long. I was surprised when the first day that it opened, Paul Schrader said, "Marty, go to the theatre, there's people waiting outside to get in." That's better than any award.

Q *The Departed* was your third film with Leonardo DiCaprio. Why has he become your favourite actor?

He is so concerned about detail and he has no fear about going into any aspect of a character. Working with him on these last three pictures has given me a second wind, a second wave of enthusiasm for making films again.

Q Do you still feel you are learning, when you go to the cinema?

I happen to be a very energetic person and I happen to express myself in a faster form on film, so it's very difficult for me sometimes to pull myself in and feel the rhythm of the world in a different way. That's why I love cinema. I can see it from different countries, especially from Asia and Africa, who are seeing the world in a different way, putting me in a slower rhythm, the rhythm of life. As much as I love New York City—and I couldn't live anywhere else – sometimes standing on the street corners can drive you mad.

Martin Scorsese's latest film Shine A Light is out this month