

The Screen

Ali-Frazier Bout Is Star of 'The Fighters'

THE FIGHTERS, produced and directed by William Greaves; editor, Mr. Greaves; associate editors, John Dandrea and David Greaves; directors of photography, Joseph Consentino, Steven Lerner, Terrence Macartney-Filgate, Jimmy Mannas and Roland Mitchell; a William Greaves Productions film, distributed by the Walter Reade Organization. Running time: 114 minutes. At the Apollo Theater, 253 West 125th Street. This film has not been classified. With: Muhammad Ali, Joe Frazier and others.

By VINCENT CANBY

William Greaves's "The Fighters," which opened yesterday at the Apollo Theater on 125th Street, is both a recollection and a coming attraction, being a documentary feature about the 1971 heavyweight title bout between Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier, who meet again at Madison Square Garden on Jan. 28.

Although "The Fighters" is primarily a round-by-round record of the extraordinary 1971 fight, won by Frazier on a decision, this footage has been ably supplemented by other material designed to give the fight some of the same impact it had when it was being billed as "the fight of the century."

Interviews, training-camp sequences and even a brief glimpse into the complicated financial negotiations that made it all possible frame the footage of the 15-round bout that increased the stature—and the bank accounts—of both winner and loser. "The Fighters" is a first-rate film of its unprepossessing kind.