“People spoke about the fight with Mayweather and Oscar bringing boxing back. [But] this is the card right here that could help to save boxing.”

Powerful words. But more importantly those words are sweet music to the ears of fans of the sweet science’s more brutal aspects. Fittingly, that comment was made by Emmanuel Steward, someone whose voice matters and resonates, at a May 22 press conference for HBO’s July 14th card headlined by Arturo Gatti.

Steward, fresh off his disparaging comments on the lack of venom in the Taylor/Spinks weekend bout, was full of praise for a card filled with aggressive and often reckless fighters.

The “Welter Skelter” line-up July 14 on HBO will feature Gatti (40-8, 31 KOs) vs. Contender alum Alfonso Gomez (16-3-2, 7 KOs) and Kermit Cintron (27-1, 25 KOs) vs. Walter Matthysse (26-1, 25 KOs) in Atlantic City, followed by Antonio Margarito (34-4, 24 KOs) vs. Paul Williams (32-0, 24 KOs) in L.A.

The stacked card will be Gatti’s 21st HBO fight, which places him 5th all-time in HBO appearances. He is also obviously a huge draw in his adopted home, Boardwalk Hall. For fans tranquilized by the timidity that has marked many big-time boxing events (we appreciate all of your comments), Gatti represents a fighter who always gives customers what they want: ACTION.

Purists will point out that Mayweather annihilated Gatti in their head-to-head bout, but pragmatics would point out that Gatti still made that fight---which was certainly the most exciting Mayweather match of recent vintage.

But what does he have in the tank now? Mayweather made an absolute mess of him when he stopped him in 5 and Carlos Baldomir did the same in sending him home in 9. But according to Steward, Gatti’s “reflexes and coordination are still intact” and he is as excited as ever to see him fight.

Later, Gatti appeared to be snoozing behind his shades as opponent Alfonso Gomez called into the conference by phone---hey, it’s refreshing to see a fighter that takes his breathers outside the ring. Gatti then took the podium and thanked Steward for his kind words and admitted, “Last fight (against Baldomir) I had major problems at home. I got involved with Satan’s daughter.”

I was unaware that Don King had a daughter (joke alert!) but Gatti seems convinced that with the help of old combatant and new trainer, Micky Ward (a man with whom he will forever be linked) that he can rise again---certainly something he’s come to be known for.

Ward noted that he was shocked when Gatti asked him to be his trainer and then described Gomez as a fighter with “a lot of heart and heavy hands,” but added that “I feel Gomez has slow

feet," which will cost him against a fighter like Gatti, who claims he still has the strongest legs in boxing.

As if Gatti wasn't enough of a draw in AC, the undercard is headed by Cintron/Matthysse. Of their 56 combined pro fights, only 2 have gone to judge's scorecards, with 53 KO's between the two of them. Adios controversy!

Cintron is now back on board with Main Event promotions after some personal differences and a brief respite. Another feather in his cap is training with Manny Steward. "Training with Emmanuel Steward I've been learning so much, it's unbelievable," said Cintron, clearly excited by the opportunities now in front of him.

The most star-studded bout of the evening will certainly be the L.A. portion of the HBO card, though. Margarito, the only pro to defeat Cintron (and the man many claim Mayweather has/is dodging), will take on undefeated riser Paul Williams in another intriguing bout. Neither of these fighters were present in New York for this press conference, but both are world-class.

To our loyal readers turned off by the last two mega-fights or for any new fight fans that swore they tuning into "Dancing With the Stars"----please check out this HBO card on July 14th. Best of all, it's free to subscribers.

We will have more on this fight as it approaches. In the mean time, please feel free to post any thoughts on these fights. What does Gatti have left in the tank? Is Gomez, or anyone from the Contender for that matter, legit or just another pretender? Got a thought? Let's hear it!