

Arum, King, Goldie: Watch, Learn From UFC

Written by Michael Woods
Monday, 19 November 2007 19:00

So I covered the UFC event in Newark, New Jersey on Saturday.

And while the card was sort of ho-hum, filled with a few too many journeymen, and disappointing showings for my liking, the production of the event was Grade A.

Bob Arum, Don King, Oscar De La Hoya, Lou Dibella, each and every one of you should get a ticket to the next UFC show, and note for the record how a live fighting event could and should be crafted.

Let me spare you the time Googling, and tell you guys that UFC is running a tear-end show, December 29, at the Mandalay Bay in Vegas. Gary Shaw, you are exempt because you've already seen the light, and diversified yourself into a sport that can no longer be dismissed as a "fad" by defensive boxing devotees.

I don't write this column to dish out a lashing to boxing for the sport of it.

I'm not jumping ship, and abandoning the sweet science, or TheSweetScience dotcom.

I'm writing to wake up some of the power brokers who are running shows that could be improved greatly, and help lure some of those fans that could get poached by the current vibe that I felt in Newark on Saturday at the Prudential Center.

I'm writing so our readers can perhaps attend some shows next year that feel like they've been crafted with an eye towards showmanship, and a desire to please all the senses. I'm writing to help encourage the promoters and event planners to leap boldly into the new millenium, because too many of your shows are, frankly, staid and have far too many gaps in which the fan is left to chat with a seat neighbor, or scan the crowd for hotties or fightfights, or buy a brew.

First off, the lighting at the UFC show was so slick, and added drama to the event, throughout the event. Contrast this to most boxing events, where ring entrances are spectacles, mainly for the main eventers, and after that, the production values drop off.

Second, the music used, while not to my taste, buoyed the card. The volume was high, but I left without tinnitus, I believe. The genre used is new age hard rock, you could call it, not my bag. But the tempo and the percussion add to the atmosphere, and got you fired up, even if the show lacked a showstopper attraction.

Third, the event producers use video clips throughout the event, and that whets appetites for bouts that are set to unfold shortly. Say I come with my significant other, who can't differentiate between Rashad Evans and Ahmad Rashad. The video clip, giving a little bio sketch, and explaining the stakes of his fight with Michael Bisping, draws her into the scrap. So smart, so simple, so DUH. Make better use of the Jumbotron, boxing guys!

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The montage of slams, KO cracks and sterling submissions, set to "Baba O'Reilly" was so impressive in Joisey, and got me so jacked, I would've watched it again, and once more after that.

Daltrey screaming "I don't need to fight/To prove I'm right," with Keith Moon's manic whaling and cymbal smashing set to coincide exactly with highlight reel smacks...impressive.

This column shouldn't, I'm sad to say, need to be written.

Video bits, effective use of music to reinforce or create a mood, lighting to do the same--none of this is so innovative that it leaves you awed at the ingenuity.

But it takes effort, and time, and a desire to force every fan in attendance to leave the building thinking they got their money's worth. Even if the main event was best suited for a Spike PPV.

I dare say 95% of the people in Newark would say that they'd attend another UFC show after soaking up the atmosphere on Saturday.

And that's saying something, because the main event didn't blow you away, the main support bout was a blowout, and the second main support bout was a pretty severe disappointment.

So Arum, King, Goldie, Louie etc...hit the next UFC big show. Wear a fake mustache and beard if you don't want to be seen sizing up your new rival on the block.

But do it, and borrow liberally. Boxing fans deserve an updated and compelling atmosphere for the prices they pay for tickets.