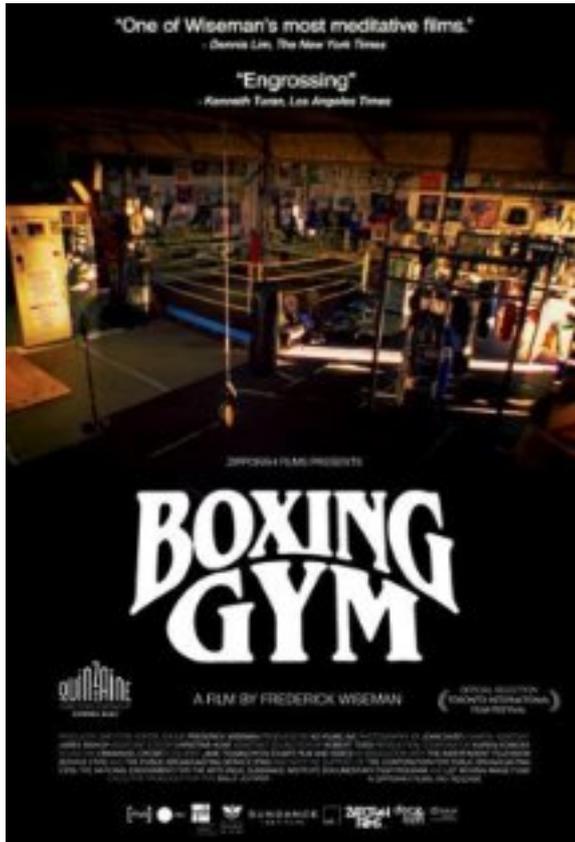


## SAVE THE TIGER

Written by Joe Rein  
Friday, 06 July 2012 10:19

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Letter to the Smithsonian Institute: find an old boxing gym being shuttered and put it in the museum. No more genuine slice of Americana, or more endangered. But do it soon. The hardcore gyms are vanishing fast.

They're shrines. Living archives of boxing -- yellowing posters -- layer upon layer -- plastered on the walls, fight cards, faded pictures of fighters mugging for the camera, biceps flexed, fists clenched; noir slogans: "Your opponent is training harder than you", "The more you sweat, the less you bleed." "Train till it hurts;" victors draped with championship belts; bare-knuckled gents in tights and lacquered hair, with names like "Battling" this or "Sailor" that; and anonymous Golden Age brawlers, some standing straight as a spear, others crouching as if to pounce on the camera...And always the icons: Joe Louis, Sugar Ray Robinson, Rocky Marciano and Ali exultant over a spread-eagled Sonny Liston.

A chronicle of American scrappers: Blacks, Mexicans, Irish, Italians...whoever was clawing-up the economic ladder.

For docents, I'd recommend gym rats -- ex-fighters, some of them-- the gray-hairs and no-hairs

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with busted beaks and eaves of scar tissue over drooping eyes -- road warriors; guys with "the" in the middle of their names: Harry "the Hammer," Kurt "the Crusher"; the club fighters, tomato cans who'd fight anyone anywhere for a hundred bucks: The guys who fought the guys who fought the greats.

And then there are the trainers. The scholars of the game; the Don Quixotes in quest of the Holy Grail: a world champion. Surrogate fathers with towels over their shoulders; elders whose tough love takes feral youth off the streets and off the needle.

Before the last boxing gym goes the way of the Saber-tooth Tiger, take one apart brick by brick and rebuild it where people can see it. Get all the equipment, too: The wobbly ring with saggy ropes, the heavy bag held together with duct tape, the speed bag yanking loose from the ceiling, the soggy wraps, the blackened mitts and the spit and sweat-smudged mirrors.

Put it all in the Smithsonian. Let folks get a good look at where kids who rankled under lock step reflected a broader society of rugged individualists who created the industrial revolution.

Part of America neglected in history books.

[Comment on this article](#)

### **deepwater says:**

great article.

### **KU99 says:**

Quality. Here's hoping these dwindling American treasures don't become extinct.....but if that's the inevitable.... let's hope we capture the history and stories of the fighters who's blood, sweat & tears drench the breeding grounds of so many great champions.

### **dino da vinci says:**

I never had idols growing up. Or heroes for that matter. But there were guys that I loved. Marciano, Pep, Armstrong in this sport, Celtic great Bill Russell in another, DeNiro and Pacino in yet another art form. And I love great boxing writers. Historically, it's the one sport that has

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been able to attract the elite masters of phrase.

I maintain there are some great ones applying their trade at this time. Over the years you've read some of the very best here. Guys who brought their 'A' game to every article they've penned. Springs Toledo and Tom Hauser are two of the best you can read in this space. And then there's Joe Rein. I love Joe Rein. In all my years, I've only read a handful of boxing stories that were perfect from the first word to the last. Joe Rein was the author of one of my favorites. I'm going to request Editor Mike repost it as I think most who may have missed it, will love it as well. Long live the great Joe Rein.

### **SouthPaul says:**

Detail for detail Tom Hauser is the best. His articles are mini books. This site...Mike Woods, Frank Lortiezo, Maxboxing- Steve Kim, BOxingscene, Tom Gerbasi, in fact all the cats going back to Houseofboxing turned out to be pretty good reads. I don't read much of Dougie Fischer or Mike Katz these days but they were all fun reads back then. Even if you aren't mentioned a hardcore appreciates the effort. Internet is where it's at for boxing.