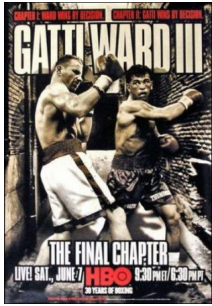


Here's What Micky Ward Would Like You To Take From "Gatti-Ward" on HBO

Written by Michael Woods

Thursday, 17 October 2013 16:40



I know I adored HBO's "Legendary Nights: The Tale of Gatti-Ward," which debuts Saturday night, during a Wednesday night screening at HBO headquarters in NYC.

But I decided that rather than first share my perceptions of the treatment of the Arturo Gatti-Micky Ward thrillogy, I'd instead show deference to a man who is a role model for me, for his heart, willpower and humility, Micky Ward.

The boxer attended the screener, along with Gatti's manager Patrick Lynch, trainer Buddy McGirt, promoters Kathy Duva and Lou DiBella, and others who were touched so immensely by the courage shown by the two men in the ring, and the touching nature of the bond forged in an unlikely crucible, the square ring.

I asked Ward, now 48, what he'd like viewers to take from the film, which was adeptly helmed by Bentley Weiner, the lady who heads up HBO's 24/7 series, and so skillfully touched all the right buttons, including awe, shock, sadness, hopefullness, sadness and the anger that the film and the sport inspire.

"How great friends we were," said Ward, who stepped away from the ring after his third battle with the Italo-Canadian brawler who made the International Boxing Hall of Fame this past summer. "How great a guy he was, and that you can fight the fight, without the trash talking. You can fight your hardest without trash talking. There's too much BS in this world. You don't need it. Just go in there and try to win."

Other standouts in the film include HBO play by play man Jim Lampley, who gets extremely emotional thinking about the rivalry, and the immensity of heart of the two men who gave so much of themselves in their quest to win, and to entertain us. Ward's wife Charlene steals a

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scene or two, as when she quips that her guy is "sick" for his ability to withstand punishment and refuse to lose. The ref for the first Gatti-Ward bout, Frank Cappucino, will draw chuckles on Saturday when he explains why he didn't pull the plug on the bout when it appeared to many that too much savagery was on display.

Ron Borges, of TheSweetScience.com, does a bangup job talking about why this rivalry will live on, long past the exploits of men blessed with more talent in the ring, but less of a willingness to risk parts of themselves for the fans, and to satisfy their urge for victory.

Gatti's manger Pat Lynch, it is clear, still struggles with the notion that Gatti might have committed suicide. I asked him after the screening how the film touched him. Was he left feeling wistful, or happy? "Happy," he said. It was good to see Gatti doing what he does best, confounding experts and defying expectations of valor in the athletic arena, he said.

I chatted with Weiner after the screener. She thinks viewers will watch the film and be left with varied emotions. "We all really wish Arturo were here to tell the story himself," she said. She told me that a feature film on Gatti, involving Mark Wahlberg and Mike Strahan, is in the works, and that will continue to build on the legacy of a man taken from Earth too soon. "What these guys gave and the sacrifice they made is amazing," Weiner said. "They sacrificed for us, for the fans, and I'm so happy the fights will be celebrated, after they gave so much of themselves."

I asked Ward what he would say to little Sofia, Arturo's seven year old daughter if, in ten years, she asked Micky about her dad. "I'd say, I knew him very well," Ward said, "and he was a great guy, and he loved you very much and he was a Hall of Famer boxer, but more than that, he was Hall of Fame man."

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