

A Thing of Beauty and a Joy Forever

By **Crispin Sartwell**
Capital Times Advisor

Professional wrestling is the most profound and characteristic art form of our culture.

Perhaps when you want to show what a deep and soulful person you are, you head for the museum to gawk at daubs of paint or to the opera to marinate yourself in the death howls of sopranos.

Me, I just turn on the tube and catch "WWF Raw" or "WCW Monday Nitro."

Wrestling now dominates our media and our culture. The highest-rated cable show is "WWF Raw is War." Wrestling has just in the last couple of weeks gone prime time on broadcast network.

The hottest politician in America is Jesse Ventura. These are all hopeful signs.

Like Greek tragedy, pro wrestling provides a perfectly

comprehensible spectacle of suffering.

In Greek tragedy, a great man is brought low, often because, deluded by overwhelming pride, he can't see the fate that awaits him. Everything proceeds as it inevitably must; everything is destined; nothing is left up to chance.

The audience achieves what Aristotle called "a catharsis of pity and fear" that can only come in a reconciliation with the inevitable.

All of this is true of pro wrestling as well. A pro wrestling match is always a strict application of destiny; everything follows inevitably from the character of the wrestlers involved.

When the Rock pauses after clotheslining Stone Cold Steve Austin in order to exult to the crowd, turning his back on his noble opponent, it is his pride

that will bring him down.

And no one could argue that Stone Cold is not a great man: ever seen him chug a beer?

The crowd screams its satisfaction; it feels purified of its negative emotions; it goes home having achieved a kind of reconciliation to the universe itself.

Like all great drama, the wrestling match often ends with bodies strewn around the stage, as the crowd and the cameras focus with unbelievable duration and intensity on the deepest, most public humiliation, or on a victory over insurmountable odds that signals transcendence.

As the Undertaker inflicts slow, inexorable damage on the beautiful Shawn Michaels, we see the future that awaits us all.

Life will snap suplex all of us in the long run, even the strongest and loveliest of us. Life will smash a chair across each of our backs. Life will bash

our heads into the turnbuckle of fate.

People will still tell you that pro wrestling isn't "real," as if that were news.

I'm surprised that Anderson hasn't done us all the service of informing us that the Titanic is not really going to sink tonight in your VCR, and suggesting that the movie's box office take is proof of human gullibility.

Believe it or not, the stuff described in the works of Jane Austen did not really happen.

Don't try skinny-dipping among Monet's water lilies.

Othello doesn't really smother Desdemona every night and twice on Sunday.

This question of what is "real" is an interesting one.

Certainly, four-hundred-pound guys are really lifting up three-hundred-pound guys and lobbing them out of the ring.

On the other hand, as every-

one who watches pro wrestling knows, the matches follow certain scripts and the outcome is known beforehand to those who compose these scripts.

The point is just to have the right script. That's why this thing is art, not sport.

And there are true masters of the drama in pro wrestling: Rick Flair, the ultimate bastard with the incredible line of patter; Randy "Macho Man" Savage, who always ends up crucified on the ropes like Jesus; The Dog-Faced Gremlin, Rick Steiner, who despite his severely limited intellect is always trying to do the right thing; Public Enemy, a tag-team of white guys who are laboring under the delusion that they're black.

These are masters of their craft, cultural icons. Pro wrestling is a thing of beauty and a joy forever.



From Our Readers

Fall Festival Omission

Editor:

I'm writing to address some omissions in the Capital Times article about the Fall Festival.

The article which appeared in the October 6, 1999 edition of the Capital Times failed to mention that the Lion Ambassadors club was present at Fall Festival.

I feel that this is of particular note since the Lion Ambassadors donated the helium and balloons handed out to the children attending.

We also wore the Lion Suit to entertain those at the festival.

Christopher J. Wood
Lion Ambassador
Oct. 7, 1999

Smoking Policy Sound-off

Editor:

Being uninformed of the University-wide smoking policy, I speak only on behalf of the smokers at Penn State Capital Campus.

About one and one-half years ago, the campus instituted an off-campus smoking policy. Attendees of Penn State are restricted from smoking outside while on campus grounds; entrances to buildings are off-limits.

Perhaps I am dating myself, but I remember when smoking was permitted within the buildings.

The University stopped that, and I agree with their decision. My decision to smoke should not affect any non-smoker.

However, I feel that the University has gone too far in instituting an off-campus smoking policy.

This decision puts the administrators in the center of a pseudo-political arena where smokers and non-smokers encounter the wrath of very vocal and generally very nasty anti-smokers.

This is not the place of the administration, in my opinion.

Certainly we smokers are aware of health risks we are taking by smoking, and certainly we

do not expect non-smokers to bear those risks.

Consider that the risk of second-hand smoke breathed out of doors is minimal to non-existent, and the University is doing a great disservice to its smoking and neutral non-smoking students by bowing to the demands of the anti-smokers.

I am requesting that the University review this policy with some seriousness. I am Penn State proud and wouldn't even consider another university for my graduate and post-graduate studies, but I refuse to be punished for smoking outside.

Respectfully,
Daniel M. Kane
Graduate Business
Administration Major
Oct. 10, 1999

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