

Jim Cornette Presents  
**BEHIND THE  
★ CURTAIN ★**  
Real Pro Wrestling Stories



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COVER ARTIST  
DENIS MEDRI

DESIGN  
CURTIS FANDANGO

ASSISTANT EDITOR  
ANNI PERHEENTUPA

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AS IF I NEED AN INTRODUCTION... I'M JIM CORNETTE—MY FRIENDS CALL ME "CORN," MY ENEMIES CALL ME MANY THINGS.

ONE THING THEY ALL ADMIT: I'M AN EXPERT ON PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING.

I FIRST LAID EYES ON THAT MAGICAL RING WHEN I WAS ONLY TEN YEARS OLD.



"THE SQUARED CIRCLE." FOR OVER 125 YEARS, PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING HAS THRILLED, AMAZED, ENRAGED, AND ENRaptured FANS WITH THEIR ACTIONS IN THIS BATTLEGROUND.

BUT FOR ALL THE DRAMA INSIDE THE RING, THE REAL STRUGGLES OFTEN OCCURRED ELSEWHERE, WHERE THE TRUTH IS STRANGER THAN THE FICTION.



NO MATTER WHETHER IT'S THE BIGGEST WORLDWIDE PAY-PER-VIEW OR A "MUD SHOW" AT THE COUNTY FAIR, ALL WRESTLING EVENTS HAVE ONE THING IN COMMON.

A CURTAIN.

A CURTAIN FOR THE WRESTLERS TO WALK THROUGH TO ENTER THE ARENA.

A CURTAIN TO SEPARATE THE FANS' WORLD FROM THE WRESTLERS' WORLD.

IT'S MEANT TO SEPARATE THE WORLD OF FANTASY AND REALITY, BUT WHICH IS WHICH?



PRO WRESTLING EXISTED FOR A CENTURY AS BOTH AN AMERICAN ART FORM AND A SECRET SOCIETY—

—ONE IN WHICH NO OUTSIDER WAS ALLOWED TO PIERCE THE VEIL.

NOWADAYS, EVERYONE KNOWS THE SPORT IS NEITHER COMPETITION NOR BLOOD FEUD, BUT "ENTERTAINMENT," AS THEY SAY.

LET ME TAKE YOU BACK TO A TIME WHEN IT WAS "STILL REAL" TO EVERYBODY. FOLLOW ME AS I TAKE YOU



★ BEHIND THE CURTAIN ★





PRO WRESTLING HAS BEEN A PART OF THE CULTURAL DNA OF AMERICA SINCE BEFORE WORLD WAR I.

THIS INCLUDES THE PRETTY ASPECTS OF AMERICAN LIFE—THE RAINBOWS, PICKNICS, AND FIREWORKS—BUT ALSO THE UGLY.

"JIM CROW," AKA LEGALIZED RACIAL SEGREGATION, WAS A NORMAL WAY OF LIFE IN THE UNITED STATES FOR OVER 100 YEARS AFTER THE END OF THE CIVIL WAR.

PEOPLE OF COLOR WEREN'T ALLOWED TO SHARE THE SAME PHYSICAL SPACES AS WHITES—ESPECIALLY IN ARENAS AND SPORTING EVENTS.

IT WAS AN ACCEPTED DOCTRINE THAT FEW DARED TO CHALLENGE.

SO, THE IDEA OF A WHITE MAN OPENLY DEFYING THE COVENANT OF BIGOTRY IN 1960S MEMPHIS WAS BARTH-SHATTERING.

YOU MIGHT WONDER HOW HE PULLED OFF SUCH A CONSIDERABLE FEAT IN A TIME WHEN THE MERE THOUGHT OF SEGREGATION COULD GET A PERSON KILLED.


COME ALONG, AND I'LL SHARE THE TALE OF—

**THE MAN WHO  
DEFEATED JIM CROW  
IN MEMPHIS**

GO BACK  
TO  
RUSSIA


KKK  
CONDEMN  
COMMUNIST  
RACE BAITER






ROSCOE MONROE BRUMBAUGH  
HAD JUST TURNED 30 WHEN HE  
ARRIVED IN MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE  
IN DECEMBER 1955.

BORN IN THE WILD WEST TOWN  
OF DODGE CITY, KANSAS, HE  
HAD SERVED A STINT IN THE  
NAVY, HAD TAKEN ON ALL  
COMERS AT A CARNIVAL  
ATHLETIC SHOW, AND HAD  
BECOME A PRO WRESTLER  
NAMED SPUTNIK MONROE.




THE ONLY THING  
HE HADN'T DONE  
WAS BECOME A  
HOUSEHOLD NAME.



A 5'9", 215 POUND FIREPLUG  
WITH A CHEST LIKE A BANTY  
ROOSTER AND A VOICE LIKE  
HE GARGLED RAZOR BLADES—



—HE PROCLAIMED HIMSELF "THE  
DIAMOND RING AND CADILLAC  
MAN" AND "THE WORLD'S  
GREATEST WRESTLER," BUT TO  
BE THOSE THINGS, HE HAD TO  
PRODUCE AT THE BOX OFFICE.



MEMPHIS WRESTLING  
CROWDS HAD BEEN  
POOR FOR YEARS, BUT  
A NEW PROMOTER, ROY  
WELCH, HAD GOTTEN A  
TV SLOT FROM A LOCAL  
STATION'S STUDIO.


ALL HE NEEDED  
NOW WAS A STAR.



A muscular man with grey hair, wearing blue trunks and boots, is wrestling a large brown bear in a wrestling ring. A hand is visible on the left holding a rope. The background shows a crowd of spectators under bright arena lights.

SPUTNIK WAS DETERMINED TO BECOME THE BIGGEST STAR IN THE TERRITORY.

EVERY MONDAY NIGHT AT THE BLUE AUDITORIUM, HE WRESTLED LOCAL FAVORITES OR BOXED A FORMER BOXING CHAMPION. WELL, SPUTNIK EVEN FOUGHT A 600-POUND BEAR!


A close-up of the muscular man, shirtless and wearing blue trunks, speaking into a large microphone. He has a confident, slightly aggressive expression.

EVERY SATURDAY MORNING ON TV, HE TRASH-TALKED LIKE A MASTER.

MEMPHIS IS FILLED WITH NOTHING MORE THAN A BUNCH OF IGNORANT PUKES!

YOU'RE ALL MOONSHINE-SWILLIN' HILLBILLIES WHO CAN'T READ OR WRITE A LICK!


I'M 235 POUNDS OF TWISTED STEEL AND SEX APPEAL WITH A BODY WOMEN LOVE AND MEN FEAR. RESPECT ME OR SHUT YOUR MOUTHS!

The muscular man is standing in a crowd of people. He is wearing a blue short-sleeved shirt and white pants. A young man in a light blue shirt is pointing at him. Other people in the background include a man in a suit and a woman in a green dress.

THE WHITE FANS DESPISED SPUTNIK, BUT THE BLACK COMMUNITY STARTED CHEERING HIM, LOVING HIS OUTRAGEOUS PERSONALITY AND FLAMBOYANT STYLE.

SPUTNIK, YOU TELL 'EM MAN!

THAT'S RIGHT, BROTHER! WHUP THOSE REDNECKS!


A scene of a city street at night. The muscular man, now in a light-colored suit and tie, is walking towards the camera. A person in a black jacket is walking away from him. In the background, there are city buildings and a streetcar.

SPUTNIK DIDN'T RUN FROM HIS BLACK FANS—HE EMBRACED THEM. HE DRESSED IN LOUD CLOTHES AND REGULARLY VISITED BEALE STREET, THE BLACK SIDE OF TOWN.

MONGEE'S POPULARITY SOARED IN THAT COMMUNITY.

THIS LED TO A MAJOR PROBLEM FOR JIM CROW—ERA MEMPHIS.





SPUTNIK'S BLACK FANS FLOCKED TO THE ELLIS AUDITORIUM, AND SOON NEWSPAPERS WERE REPORTING THE "BIGGEST WRESTLING CROWD IN YEARS" NEARLY EVERY WEEK.

THE TINY BALCONY, CALLED THE "CROW'S NEST," WAS RESERVED FOR BLACK PATRONS AND WAS FILLING UP.

THOUSANDS OF PAYING FANS WERE BEING TURNED AWAY, EVEN THOUGH THE WHITE SECTIONS STILL HAD PLENTY OF ROOM.

