

Features

Blood and knockouts

By Lena Burns
Staff Writer

Let's get ready to rumble!
"We like to see blood, we like to see knockouts," yelled the announcer of the Toughman Contest on Feb. 19 at the Asheville Civic Center.

The Toughman Contest, sponsored by Budweiser beer, is a two-day elimination boxing tournament. The first tournament on Feb. 18 consisted of amateur male and female boxers duking it out in several matches. The losers went home. The winners returned for the finals on Feb. 19. No professional boxers are allowed in the tournament.

The men's divisions included heavyweight (185 to 400 pounds) and light-heavyweight (160 to 184 pounds). The women are an open weight class.

The matches are strictly boxing. They allow no biting, no hitting below the belt, no kicking, no head butting and no body slamming.

Attendance was not great at the Toughman Contest. There was a good handful of people, but not a huge, electrifying crowd like one would see on pro-wrestling television

shows. Most of the people who came to see the contest sat in the general admission section located in the balcony.

Did the organizers of the Toughman Contest expect a large turnout when prices went from \$50 for ringside tickets, \$20 for floor and \$13 for general admission? This is Asheville, after all.

The contest began with loud, smelly motorcycles circling the ring, complete with adult dancers from Asheville's Trophy Club. The contestants came out behind the motorcycles and paraded around the arena.

The theme from "Rocky" boomed through the poor public announcement system. What an original choice song for a boxing contest.

The Toughman Contest consisted of three one-minute rounds of fighting. Judges surrounded the tiny ring decided the winner of the three rounds based on his or her fighting. The judges determined the winner by awarding points for aggression, power over the opponent, number of hits and



PHOTO BY JASON GRAHAM

The Toughman Contest, an amateur boxing competition, entertained the audience with plenty of rough fighting on Feb. 18 and 19 in the Asheville Civic Center.

defense.

If a person was knocked out, had a count-out (in which a contestant falls and cannot get up before the referee counts to eight) or shed blood, the round was automatically stopped. The referee would declare the other the winner.

The men had a few episodes of knockouts, blood-letting and broken bones which enthralled the crowd of half-drunk men and teenage boys.

What really got the screams from the crowd was the vulgar and unnecessary display of adult dancers parading around the ring in string bikinis.

The women were more en-

tertaining than the men were for the most part. The women didn't punch; they flailed and swung and closed their eyes and hoped to strike their opponent.

The crowd was a lot more enthusiastic about the women's fighting than the men.

The men and women were required to be amateur boxers, but overall, they were extremely good at it. There were no adrenaline rushes felt by the crowd and the fighting was not suspenseful, but overall the Toughman Contest showed some great fights.

And just as the announcer promised, we saw blood and knockouts.

"Blues in the Night" comes to UNCA

By Melissa Starnes
Staff Writer

Members of the Arkansas Repertory Theatre company will perform "Blues in the Night," a Tony-nominated musical, on Feb. 28 at 8 p.m. in the Lipinsky auditorium.

"Blues in the Night" is "a musical review of the blues," said Norris Pearson, a performer in the show.

For anyone who loves the blues, "we'll be there to perform it for them," said Pearson.

The play features 25 songs by such blues artists as Alberta Hunter, Bessie Smith, Duke Ellington, Harold Arlen, Johnny Mercer and Benny Goodman.

"The blues is sung with a lot of emotion. It tells a story," said Sharyn McDonald Groh, the director of student activities and the coordinator of the cultural and special events committee.

The blues also formed to include such human experiences as "pain, elation, the chill of loneliness and the heat and fire of passion," said Sheldon Epps, the playwright and original director of the play, in a press release announcing the event.

In the musical, the four characters, each having different experiences at different points in their lives, have come to stay at a cheap Chicago hotel in 1938.

"Each has a story," Pearson said. "Through such songs as 'Wild Women Don't Have The Blues,' by Ida Cox and 'It Makes My Love Come Down,' by Bessie Smith, the audience learns about each one's past loves, joys, dreams and sorrows, according to the press release.

According to Groh, students should attend "Blues in the Night" because they will hear great music.

"How often do students get to hear a show that was on Broadway?" said Groh.

"Blues in the Night" was first performed in 1980, directed by Epps. Two years later, it was produced on Broadway and was nominated for a Tony award for Best Musical, according to the press release. A five-member band and six

technicians accompany the four cast members. They will tour 25 states during the spring of 2000.

The play is one of the events being offered for the Black History Month celebrations. "The blues is a musical form that is really deeply rooted in African-American heritage," said Groh.

Three women are credited with writing the songs for "Blues in the Night." Smith, Ida Cox and Alberta Hunter were all influential blues artists.

All of the cast members have a lot of performance experience.

"It's an overwhelming experience," said Pearson. "I've been able to work with a phenomenal cast. Everyone is very professional and brings a different flavor to the show."

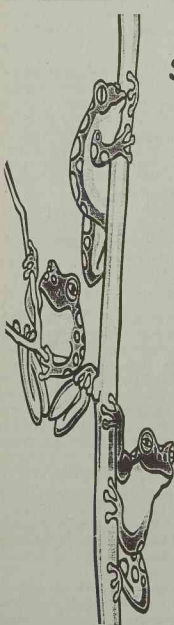
Pearson said that performing the play was an educational experience.

"I get the experience of not only learning about blues and jazz music, but also the feelings that went into creating and expressing the music," said Pearson. Hopefully, the audience will say the same thing after seeing the musical.

Student tickets are \$5 and are available at the UNCA ticket office.

Review

Clarification: The Double Decker Coffee Company seats about 35 people upstairs, is structurally sound, and is fully accessible to people over six feet tall. In reference to the Feb. 17 review in The Banner.



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Arkansas Repertory Theatre presents

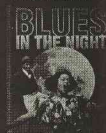


in the Blues in the Night

"A dark-toned honey of a show, entertaining to warm body and soul together."

—New York Post

Blues in the Night is the Tony-nominated musical hit produced by Sheldon Epps. Featuring blues, jazz and pop songs by such legends as Alberta Hunter, Bessie Smith, Duke Ellington, Harold Arlen, Johnny Mercer and Benny Goodman, it's a hot, torchy celebration of life, expressed through the soul-wrenching music that is the Blues.



Monday, Feb. 28 • 8 p.m. • UNCA Lipinsky Auditorium

Tickets

\$5 UNCA students
\$15 UNCA Faculty/Staff/Alumni/College for Seniors members
UNCA Ticket Office • 27 Highsmith Center
For information and to charge tickets by phone, call 828/251-6584.

Presented in partnership with
YMI Cultural Center and UNCA African American Student Association



UNCA Cultural and Special Events Committee

