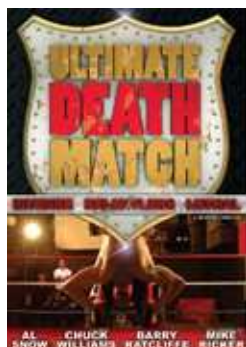


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## Ultimate Death Match

2009

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There have been a number of professional wrestlers who have tried their hand at acting. Hulk Hogan had a good run during the 90's but the films that he was involved in were comical action movies and when he tried to do more serious action, most fans couldn't have cared less. Triple H, Kane and even The Undertaker have also had their moments outside of the ring but to date the only wrestler who has successfully managed to make the transition to acting has been Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson. There will always be those however who at least make an effort.

*Ultimate Death Match* features Al Snow, probably the most notable thing which will draw many wrestling fans to the film, but this isn't a wrestling documentary. Jake Reed (Shawn Cain) has run into some complications with his wrestling federation after one of the athletes dies in the ring during a pay-per-view. He decides to rebrand things, take them online, and promises the fans that in his new tournament, the *Ultimate Death Match*, one of the participants will die in the final match. He's enlisted the assistance of Frosty James (Snow) at ringside to help with commentary, unaware that the FBI has already started to take an interest in what's going on and is ready to shut things down if they get out of hand.

Needless to say *Ultimate Death Match* lacks drastically when it comes to the plot. Actually I found the idea of a wrestling organization being shut down because of the death of a wrestler in the ring a bit preposterous since something similar has actually happened in the past. On May 23, 1999 in Kansas City, Missouri, Owen Hart fell to his death during a WWE pay-per-view event and this never caused the federation to close its doors although it did rethink some of the safety measures which were in place. But again, having a solid story isn't really what this is about; it's more of showcase of highlight reel of talent.

There are very few actors in *Ultimate Death Match* and instead professional wrestlers from the minors have been enlisted aside from Al Snow and an appearance by Kevin Nash. In doing some research it seems that the talent actually comes from right here in Portland, OR. While some might think that it's laughable that Portland has its own wrestling community you may be surprised to learn there are many notable figures in the industry that at one point were a part of professional wrestling. "Playboy" Buddy Rose, Kurt Henning, Roddy Piper, Greg "The Hammer" Valentine, Jessie Ventura, and Jimmy "Superfly" Snuka just to name a few. While it may not enjoy the same popularity that it had back in the 60's, Portland Wrestling is still alive and well, often turning out some fresh, young talent.

Snow and his counterpart Double R take care of the commentary during the matches. Everything including the backstage interviews seems to be improved, not a big shock considering the way in the industry works. Snow however seems to have been meant to be the color commentator but quickly takes control of the

matches which makes perfect sense as he'd know the moves. Double R is often absent from commentary for great lengths of time and unfortunately any humor the two try and add in ends up missing the mark completely. Snow however definitely is the strong link when it comes to everything else.

The matches also are improved with both obviously aware of who is supposed to win. I would imagine that beforehand they have also done what all wrestlers do and decided on a few key moves to include which will show their skills. Of the wrestlers seen here Azule seems to be one of the most promising with his high flying moves although it seems that the talents of Aaron Bolo were appreciated by the pro's as he made his debut in WWE in December of last year. Dash Venture I didn't find incredible in the ring but he does have interview charisma which is incredibly important.

The disc doesn't include any extra features which I found to be rather disappointing. Since many of the faces seen here aren't well known it would have been nice to see some bios on their careers, perhaps some shoot interviews, even some footage of matches outside of the movie.

*Ultimate Death Match* isn't going to impress anyone with its water thin premise or hackney script, but I don't feel that this is really what the movie is for. I found this to be much more of a way to show some up and coming talent, some of which will eventually make their way to the big time, and if you're a wrestling fan, I'd suggest giving this a look based simply on this aspect alone.

-mike-

Directed by:  
Shawn Cain

Cast:  
Shawn Cain  
Barry J. Ratcliffe  
Al Snow  
Josh Turner  
Chuck Williams

DVD Features:  
Aspect Ratio: 1.77:1  
Audio: English 5.1 Dolby Surround

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