

The Notorious Life and Crimes of Don King: A Boxing Legend's Dark Underbelly



The Life and Crimes of Don King: The Shame of Boxing in America by Jack Newfield

★★★★☆ 4.3 out of 5

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In the annals of boxing history, the name Don King looms large. A charismatic promoter with a flamboyant style, King orchestrated some of the most iconic fights of all time, including the legendary "Rumble in the Jungle" between Muhammad Ali and George Foreman. But beneath the glitz and glamour lay a dark underbelly of controversy and crime.

From Humble Beginnings to Boxing Supremacy

Born in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1931, Don King grew up in poverty. As a young man, he was involved in petty crime and spent time in prison. However, in the 1970s, he stumbled into the world of boxing and quickly recognized its potential. With his magnetic personality and sharp business acumen, King rose through the ranks, becoming one of the most influential promoters in the sport.

King's first major success came in 1974 when he promoted the "Rumble in the Jungle," the epic heavyweight championship fight between Ali and Foreman in Kinshasa, Zaire. The fight became one of the most famous sporting events of all time, and King's reputation as a top promoter was cemented.

A Trail of Controversies and Scandals

Throughout his career, King was dogged by controversies and allegations of wrongdoing. He was accused of cheating boxers out of their earnings, bribing officials, and engaging in other unethical practices. Despite these allegations, King continued to promote major fights, amassing a vast fortune and becoming one of the most recognizable figures in boxing.

In 1998, King's darker side came to the forefront when he was convicted of manslaughter in the death of his former business partner, Sam Garrett. King claimed he acted in self-defense, but the jury found him guilty and sentenced him to four years in prison. After serving two years, King was released on parole.

The Tyson and Holyfield Debacles

King's involvement in two of the most notorious fights in boxing history further tarnished his reputation. In 1997, he promoted the heavyweight championship fight between Mike Tyson and Evander Holyfield. During the fight, Tyson infamously bit off a portion of Holyfield's ear, leading to his disqualification. King was widely criticized for not stopping the fight sooner, raising questions about his competence and safety protocols.

Four years later, King promoted another controversial Tyson fight, this time against Lennox Lewis. The fight was marred by a bizarre incident in which

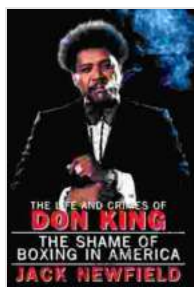
King was accidentally knocked out of the ring by Tyson. The incident drew widespread ridicule and further damaged King's reputation.

A Complex and Contradictory Figure

Despite the controversies surrounding him, Don King remains a complex and contradictory figure. He is credited with promoting some of the most memorable fights in boxing history, and he played a significant role in the rise of many great fighters. However, his criminal convictions and questionable business practices have cast a shadow over his legacy.

In his autobiography, King claimed to have reformed his ways, but critics remain skeptical. The life and crimes of Don King serve as a cautionary tale about the seductive nature of power and the dangers of unchecked ambition.

Don King's story is a tale of rags-to-riches, triumph, and downfall. He rose from humble beginnings to become one of the most influential figures in boxing, but his legacy is forever tainted by controversy and crime. Whether he is remembered as a visionary promoter or a ruthless criminal is a question that will continue to be debated for years to come.



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