

The Drink Tank Issue 53: Tube Poker

I hate subways. Wait, I don't hate them, in fact, I kinda love them. I love hopping on BART and heading up to San Francisco, reading a book on the way. Wait, I actually do hate it, the waiting, the cramped quarters, the transferring, worst thing imaginable. Except for driving. I hate driving into SF, trying to park, being forced to take out another mortgage to afford to pay for the first twenty minutes in the lot, not to mention the gas. BART is better. No...Driving is better. Damn, this must be why I don't go into The City much, but I did learn about something that will make my trips into SF better. it's called Tube Poker, and it's brilliant.

The Brits did another great short film called Tube Poker by a fellow named Simon Levene. It's a basic 15 minute short, with a bunch of British teenager types who sit around Tube stations and play a game with passengers on the Tube. Tube Poker is very simple: you stake out a set of seats five across and you wait for people to sit in them. That's the basic rules, but you also assign values to them which makes it more interesting.

Let's start from the beginning.

According to the film, Tube Poker started in the 1980s in a place called Tokyo.

The Yakuza, those dastardly villains who are the closest things that Japan has to the Mafia, would have guys staking out subway stations, likely selling tickets to the major Tokyo events or just keeping their eyes open for anyone they wanted to keep an eye on. The

story goes that when they got bored, they'd play a game, seeing the various combinations of people who would sit on the five across sections of the train. They assigned various people various points and whatever combination sat in those five seats, that's your hand. The other guy then has a couple of stations in which to get his hand. Apparently, the Yakuza is very creative when faced with boredom, at least in the world they portray in Tube Poker.

And that's part of the reason why I think Tube Poker is awesome: it's a fake documentary that just rings of so much plausibility. I could certainly understand if a group of people were to be on the train all the time commuting and just started playing this game. And name me something that doesn't gain cred when it's attached to a Yakuza origin story. That's right, you can't.

The story says that things in Japan got all wild, that folks started playing without cutting the Yakuza in on the profits and ended up leading to hits and fights. Then it came to the UK.

The game assigns the following point values to various people (note: it's only given the UK values, if you decide to play in any other area, you'll want to ensure that you have the local variation before betting



money). Aces are Senior Citizens, regardless of gender. Kings are men-folk, defined as college-aged through grey-haired. The females are Queens, while Jacks are given to Teens and tens to children. To the left is four queens with a king. A fairly good hand. It's fairly strong,



only beaten by a Royal Flush, Four Kings or Five of a Kind (show on the left of this page). Above is a strange mish-mash which is pretty typical. You have two kings, an ace, and a queen. The only way this hand will be saved is to get another King, because two pairs seldom holds up. I should know, I lose a lot of poker games.

The short film is fun, talking about things that made me realise that these guys must really be playing. They see a bum in the middle seat of a set of five. He is a lone king. The other girl is watching the set of five across the way, which has a cute woman who, as soon as they stop and people come, is surrounded by four men while the bum remains alone. They make a point

that you might get stuck with an off-putting character in your seating area and you're screwed. The typical bet ranges from 10 to 100 bob, which is significant money, it is.

The film, when considered as a film and not a training video for a game I'll be playing for

years to come, is pretty darn good. It runs a tad long, but it's funny and very English. There's a Japanese film called Penalty Salmon that has a similar feel, though that's decidedly science fiction as it takes place on a planet called Hokaido and is about a game that combines Iron Chef and Soccer. It's hard to talk about.

If you read my issue all about English Short Films, you'll see where this one fits in. The British youth are so aimless that they need to start creating things to make money. Instead of going and getting work, they'd rather spend hours in Tube Stations, looking for other teens, not realising that it's a gamble, that they might never make a pound doing it and might lose their shirts



instead. It's easy money which draws them, and which may get them killed.

So, today, I'm headed to the subway system to find myself someone else who knows the game, make the inquiring nod and then head in and see if I can get the Royal Flush.



'Rasslin' Old-School!

Like I said, I usually don't go in for Fanfests or Reunion shows, but this time, I did. I headed over to Newark for the Big Time Wrestling FanFest, which cost 69 bucks for the SuperTicket, but proved to be completely worth it. Here's how it went.

I got there extra early, with doors opening at 10 I arrived at 9:30. I thought three things: first, I'd get to chat with other wrestling fans, which is always a plus. I ended up in line with a guy who goes way back, like to 1945. We talked about Whipper Billy Watson and Stanislaus Zybysko and many other old timers. He's a big fan of Piper, plus he likes the current stuff, which is old for a long-time fan to say. I talked a bit and listened to his stories and then they let us in, which was the highlight. I was among the first fifty or so, and I got to the video tables before anybody else. Sadly, there wasn't much to buy. I did get a couple of videos, most importantly the History of the Tag Team Championship from about 1986 and a history of the Exploding Ring Death Match from FMW in Japan. The latter was a DVD I'd been meaning to get, though when I finally got it home,

I found that the matches themselves were pretty slow, though the explosions were psycho! The first one I know I've seen, but I got it so I could get The Iron Sheik to sign the cover, which he gladly did. When the doors opened, there were four people signing. Sunny and surprise attendee Virgil (or the NwO's Vincent), both of whom you had to pay extra to get autographs (and I did for Virgil). Sunny looked very puffy, and with the year she's had and the general lifestyle she chose for so many years, it's completely understandable that she's not looking her best. Still, I saw her holding a little baby for a tonne of photos during the matches later in the day and she was very nice. The other two were two of the reasons I came: The Iron Sheik and Captain Lou Albano. Capt. Lou is best known as the Manager of Champions, leading so many tag teams to the title belts that he used to own the belts because he would have guys who held them so often. I got his autograph first. He was looking better than he had the last time I saw him on TV, but he wasn't feeling very talkative early on, so I only got a handshake. Later, he took the mic and laid out a great "I'm here with the Iron Sheik" promo that was amazing. He signed a Capt. Lou figure for me. I got a picture of Virgil, then headed out to watch the matches.





Big Time Wrestling isn't the best wrestling you'll ever see, but two of their guys, L'emperor and Hop Sing Lee are both really cool. The Emp even pointed me out as looking like Hillbilly Jim! That was awesome. The matches were weak, but the main event of L'emperor and Jason Styles vs. The Dream Team of Brutus Beefcake and Greg The Hammer Valentine was awful, but at least the crowd cared. With the exception of the group of SmartMarks I was sitting with, no one made much of a fuss. It was kinda sad that the washed-up guys were getting the best reaction.

Then came the time for the main autographing session. We got into line and waited. And waited. And waited. Then we slowly started to file through. What was nice about the long wait was that we all got a chance to talk to the guys for a couple of minutes. This was very cool. Rocky Johnson, father of Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson, was the first on the trip, and he wasn't talkative either. I got a photo with him, it's on the top of this article. I then got a chance to chat with Rick Martel, the former AWA World Champion and WWF Tag Team Champion. We talked for about five minutes since there wasn't a lot of demand for

his time. I brought up his former partner, Tony Garea, and his friend Johnny Garcia, long-time New Zealand champ. He said he saw Johnny, who had never really wrestled in the US much, and said that I was probably the first American who ever asked him about Johnny. Next was Rob Van Dam. We talked about the time he knocked me down at an ECW show. He then did the photo below where he tried to hit me with the ECW TV belt. He was way cool and easily got the most cheers, save for the star of the show.

Then was the most impressive part: Roddy Piper. I came up and he couldn't have been nicer. I told him that one of his matches was the first that I remembered. He asked who it was against and I answered "someone who's never been much of anything, Chavo Guerrero" who was his first big feud. He said that he wrestled every Guerrero except the Mom of the family, and she made him soup. He also said that if I found him in a bar after the show, he'd let me buy him a drink!

Last was Bret Hart and Jim the Anvil Neidhart. Bret didn't want to talk, or even shake hands, Neidhart was very friendly.

After that, I walked away, happy and broke. Good times with great wrestlers!



Best Things I Saw At FanFest

by

Manny Sanford

- 10) The Million Dollar Belt from Virgil (the belt actually belonged to a fan who showed up with it)
- 9) The Autograph of Nick Bockwinkel that Chris bought for 10 Bucks!
- 8) Tammy Lynn Sytch's cleavage
- 7) Rocky Johnson's sweet Scorpio Bling pendant. Rad.
- 6) The Bell Girl who had a Million Dollar Body and a Fifty Grand Face.
- 5) Rick Martel's Weird Shirt with loose stitching squares hanging all over it.
- 4) The Really Cute Girl who saw me in the line and started a conversation about ECW. This was the only place in California that would happen.
- 3) The WWF Madison Square Garden Wrestling Programme that I got signed by my man, Rick Martel
- 2) Roddy Piper's Sporrán (the purse like thing that Scots wear in the front of their kilts)
- 1) The Girl who sat next to me and said "I've slept with Brutus Beefcake". I said "That's actually kinda sad." She responded "I know, it was pity sex." I nearly died laughing.

Letter Graded Mail

Sent to Garda@computerhistory.org
by my Loyalest of Readers

This is Eric Mayer!

Hi Chris,

Is it time for another issue already?

It's always a good time to release a new issue of The Drink Tank!

You realize you've got Arnie Katz in a bad position in this issue race.

I mean to say, you've never announced a schedule, so you can just whip out some extras, whereas Arnie has named his zine a *weekly*. Maybe you two ought to come to a gentlemen's agreement to tie.

You know, I don't really consider it a race, mostly because Arnie has gone so

far beyond me in page count (I don't even think I'm half-way there in pages)

I'm not sure exactly what would qualify as lounge music. Ages ago I had a couple of Bryan Ferry albums with stuff like "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" and "These Foolish Things" (correct title?) sung in a rather lugubrious and/or overwrought manner which I thought were great. (He also did "It's my Party" which was another highlight). I guess lounge music implies a high level of insincerity? A little different than torch singing? Although the setting would be similar.

When you mention Sinatra doing the Stones, I'm reminded of one of the great covers of all times - Sid Vicious' rendition of "My Way." I had that on a tape once back to back with Sinatra's "New York, New York." When I lived in New York I got my hair cut in spikes once by this hairdresser to the punks who had an illegal shop in his apartment. The whole time he played, not punk music, but Sinatra, because his dad was a session musician who'd played on the set. Also this fellow played Jobriath. Even then everyone had already forgotten Jobriath. (Me, I've even forgotten how he's spelled) Have I said this already? I think I'm on the verge of beginning to recycle all my possible material for locs.

When you get to Jobriath you know you're near the bottom.

Such is the danger of eFANAC: Speed means lots more new material.

Why 100 word articles? Why not 99 words? In the late eighties Edd Vick published a mini-zine, like a mini-comic, basically a quarter sheet sized zine and I did a column, whose name I forget, but every installment was exactly 99 words, which about filled a quarter page and was an interesting exercise. So let me know when this 100 word issue will be.

I'm keeping to 100 words because it's easier for me to keep track of the numbers. I just know I'll blow it if I do 99. 100 is nice and round!

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Eric