

## Steve Corino talks wrestling in ECW, Japan, ROH and Puerto Rico

By Michael Benjamin The Steve Corino story is really quite remarkable. It's the story of a man trying to apply his trade 20 years after its sell by date. Picture George Michael trying to climb to the 2009 Christmas number one slot releasing "Wake me up before you go go" on a one sided cassette, it just wouldn't work. Steve Corino has however made a living with his in ring style and his name tag "The King Of The Old School". Whether it be in Canada, America, Europe or Japan, Steve Corino has earned cult status as one of the very few traditional professional wrestlers of this era. Michael Benjamin Thomas caught up with him to talk about his extraordinary career.

Michael Thomas: Steve, you are clearly a performer who likes to wrestle in a traditional 80's style. Where did you train to become a wrestler and who were the people you idolised?

Steve Corino: I was originally trained in suburban Philadelphia by a great guy named King Kaluha. The King is one of those guys that never made the big time but even now, at his age, he is a great teacher and person. He taught me what life is all about.

Michael Thomas: After a few years on the indie circuit you appeared for the WWF on several episodes of Shotgun Saturday Night. What was that experience like?

Steve Corino: When I started wrestling in '94 I had no idea that I would even be able to get a chance to wrestle more than one match. To actually be able to be a job guy with the WWF on about 18 to 20 occasions was awesome. I got to see how the big time worked and got amazing pay compared to what I made on the independent scene. The experience of being around some of the best wrestlers in the world made me better and made me make more goals for the future.

Michael Thomas: You left the WWF in 1998 and signed for ECW. Being a traditional wrestler in the land of hardcore, what was going through your mind?

Steve Corino: I was scared, but ECW was made up of the old Amarillo and Mid South wrestling styles with a new flair. It wasn't as new school in the ring as people made it out to be. I had a lot of great teachers while I was there. Guys like Paul Heyman, Jack Victory, Tommy Dreamer, Jerry Lynn, Justin Credible, Taz, Tracy Smothers, and even Sandman taught me a lot. It was a real fun two years.

Michael Thomas: It has been said that the best characters come from extensions of the performers personality. Was this the case in ECW. If you had it your way would you have done away with barbed wire, steel chairs and broken tables?

Steve Corino: All the hardcore stuff plus the high flying and the amazing athletic styles of guys like Jerry Lynn, Lance Storm and RVD made ECW so fun. There was something for everyone. If I had my way I wouldn't have changed a thing. If it wasn't for Paul and ECW I probably wouldn't be able to do this interview with you.

Michael Thomas: During your time there you had some pretty barbaric matches yourself, what did ECW teach you?

Steve Corino: ECW taught me about the road and how tough it can be. The fans had a lot to do with how we survived those crazy matches. Their energy was like the greatest pain medication you could take.

Michael Thomas: After ECW closed its doors you concentrated on a commentators role. Why did you want to be a commentator and do you think you will still pursue this goal when you retire?

Steve Corino: Actually after ECW I went right to Japan for Shinya Hashimoto's ZERO-ONE company. Commentary was actually Paul Heyman's idea. He thought I would be good for it and at the time I think the WWF was looking for a heelish co-host for Sunday Night Heat. I loved it then and still love it now.

Michael Thomas: You did some commentary for ROH and had a try out for the WWF. What made you want to return to in ring action?

Steve Corino: In the fall of 2001 I was ready to take time off from wrestling. I was the NWA World's champion, a title I dreamed of holding since I was 8, and probably the most miserable person ever. I hated the NWA promoters, not all of them, but at the time there were some real scumbags (since my reign all of them had been kicked out or left). Rob and Gabe approached me about doing commentary for their new company, Ring Of Honor, and it was so much fun. Me and Eric had great chemistry and the emotion I had during those voice-overs was 100% real. I loved the action so much. At the same time I was still going over to Japan every two weeks working for Hashimoto-san and having a ball.

Michael Thomas: When you returned you worked a number of indie dates and worked a few programs in Ring Of Honour. Why did you leave ROH?

Steve Corino: I was only a part time player in ROH and I was there for the Homicide feud. Gabe and Rob wanted me to wrestle because they wanted someone that could get heat. Christopher Daniels was picked to be the number one heel but he is just so cool in the ring, even when he is cheating fans want to cheer for him. Me, being totally old school, could get around that.

Michael Thomas: During your time there you were in the center of the infamous riot scenes. How did you feel about them and why do you think you were given the honour of instigating them?

Steve Corino: Gabe knew that if anyone could start a real riot it would be me and it was really well done.

Michael Thomas: You were famous for having an extended ring introduction. Where did the idea come from?

Steve Corino: I had bad jet lag one night and I was watching boxing and this guy, who was an awful boxer, had this huge entourage and Michael Buffer did his usual annoying intro and I thought to myself that if I brought my own crew and ring announcer out to the ring, people would just hate it.

Michael Thomas: Now you're working in Japan you are billed as Mr Wrestling 3. Whose Idea was it for you to take on this identity?

Steve Corino: Last year while I was touring Hawaii, Mr. Wrestling II and I struck up a good friendship and he wanted me to carry on the tradition of "Mr. Wrestling". It was such an honor that I couldn't say no. Sometimes I will wear the mask and sometimes not, but there is no more King Of Old School, it's only just Mr. Wrestling 3. And I was/am the only wrestler ever endorsed by Mr. Wrestling II to be the next incarnation.

Michael Thomas: Whats the difference between working in the States and working in Japan?

Steve Corino: It's basically based on the culture. The American style is based more on entertainment than actual wrestling whereas the Japanese style is based on the Samurai and Sumo spirit of never say die.

Michael Thomas: Where is the best case to showcase Steve Corino's talents?

Steve Corino: No doubt Japan. Especially now that I no longer do the comedy style and I am more comfortable going out there and wrestling.

Michael Thomas: Do you see yourself working for a promotion in the states again?

Steve Corino: No. Right now I wrestle full time in Puerto Rico's WWC for Carlos Colon and tour ZERO1 one or two weeks a month. I am in wrestling heaven. I make a very nice living and love what I do. I would be open to go to TNA as a wrestler but I could never see myself in the WWE as anything other than an announcer or creative.

Michael Thomas: What has been your favourite run in your career?

Steve Corino: I would usually say 2002-2003 ZERO-ONE in Japan but I am really starting to enjoy myself

again and loving this run. Michael Thomas: Your a former 1PW Champion. What do you think of the promotion and do you see yourself wrestling for them again? Steve Corino: I booked 1PW for seven months in 2006 when it was at its most popular. Today 1PW is going through a re-birth and they are trying hard. I might be back there in 2009, if they want me. Michael Thomas: Finally what would be your dream match. I mean if you could wrestle anyone in their prime from any decade tonight who would it be and why? Steve Corino: I actually had all of my dream matches with active wrestlers but if I ever could go back in time I would have loved to either wrestle or team with Eddie Gilbert. He was one of my true heroes. I would have also loved to have a 2003 CW Anderson & Steve Corino vs. 1987 Tully Blanchard & Arn Anderson match! I would like to thank Steve for taking the time to talk to me.