

Joe Babinsack looks at Shimmer Volume 18

SHIMMER: Women Athletes DVD Volume 18 SHIMMER: Women Athletes
<http://www.visuex.com/shimmer/index.php> \$14.95 Reviewed by Joe Babinsack Without a doubt, if you're looking for the best professional wrestling promotion in existence today, you've got to look at SHIMMER. I know I've said it before, but can you imagine what Lou Thesz would be thinking about the product today, when the only promotion with true Old School values, the best assemblage of a talent roster, and the most respectful and traditional attitude of any modern organization is one that only features women? (I'll admit that there are some close seconds in my book, but I'm not reviewing ROH, FIP or ChickFight today.) Aside from the bevy of beautiful women, what I love about SHIMMER is the slow pacing, the dynamics of the card, the meaningful matchmaking and the psychological basis of the matches themselves. Gimmicks are at a minimum, and this is a promotion that didn't bother with a World Championship until they started a tournament on DVD #10, and began hinting about a Tag Team Championship with this installment -- #18. For the first ten Volumes, I would have barely worried about the lack of a Title. The revolving of main eventers, the ongoing feuds and the dedicated buildups of matches, the slow rise up the card, and the slow fall down the card were all well crafted enough. Add to the mix a solid roster, with veteran talent, enough up-and-coming players, as well as guests and names and an always interesting undercard. Maybe it's Dave Prazak, or maybe it's Allison Danger, but the nature of the SHIMMER business, from the DVD model to the atmosphere to the genuine feel of the wins and losses, the stellar announcing (even when I don't like Allison behind the mike) and especially the crafting of the wrestling, it's all vastly superior to other promotions, and it's all in the attention to the details. But SHIMMER is more than just the framework. It's about the talent. It's about allowing the talent to shine, to be creative and to connect with the fans. Match descriptions don't do the promotion justice. How do you capture the multi-dimensional nature of this product? This isn't about nonsense. It isn't about stroking the egos of the owners [WWE], about recreating the format (with no basis in any known, profitable reality, [TNA]) or even about upping the ante of extremism, fast pacing or hard-hitting action (often without a foundation in the historically accurate aspects of the industry [ROH].) Comparisons are due. Sure, those mainstream lemmings can complain about a wood paneled auditorium, a chandelier hanging from the rafters or the lack of dazzling displays. Sure, if your appreciation of wrestling is all about star-power, or pyrotechnics or larger than life bodies and egos, this isn't for you. Sure, we can complain and nitpick and criticize everything, but the bottom line for me, and hopefully for you, is that the love of the sport has to come out somewhere, or we should all just give up. But enough pontificating. SHIMMER just has the feel of an Old School promotion. And right now, that feel seems to me to be the best potential for the industry. Simplification of storylines, slow builds of feuds, rotation of talent and making each match meaningful, dramatic and worth watching. What more can we ask for? How about an assemblage of vastly interesting characters, with enough gimmicks, but not a whole lot of craziness. Sure, Shark Girl is nuts, but Shark Girl is the only masked wrestler in 18 Volumes of excellent SHIMMER DVDs. On the other hand, I still don't get why Amber O'Neal is jerking the curtain. I've not seen a fresher heel, someone who plays to the crowd, sells and displays all the right moves along the way. And what's better than a blonde in fishnets? What I liked about Volume 18 is that the card works from top to bottom. The opening matches feature varying degrees of talents, crafting matches with athleticism, with psychology and with comedy. Newcomers like Nicole Matthews, Jennifer Blake & Danyah, and the rapidly established Jetta are able to shine, to earn their spot. Veterans like Lee, Haze and Fyfe & Hosaka aren't just displaying their talents, they are making the promotion thrive with their ability to make their opponents look good, and to provide measuring sticks for judging that talent. Sure, there are rough spots. But there are far too many smooth moves, interesting interplays and in the end, you know if one lady beats the other, then next Volume she'll move up a little, or get a better opponent to challenge her, or be positioned to build upon momentum. One of the most important matches on the card, quite frankly, isn't the big Championship match, or the big Tag Team match that will help spur the chase for the Tag Team Championship, or the awesome semis, with displays of intensity by Kong and Basic, or the sheer talents on display from Stock and Melissa. To me, one of the most important matches was Mercedes Martinez pitted against Cindy Rogers.. Rogers triumphed in her series against Allison Danger, and put together good momentum, moving up the card. Martinez was missing from SHIMMER for some time, and returned to the promotion with this DVD. From what I know about SHIMMER, this is a match that will play out a few Volumes down the road. The winner progresses to challenge for the Title. The loser? Well, they won't be dropped, but there are ramifications to losing, just as there are for winning. Which means it is a match well worth watching, not just because of what they will do in the match -- these two greatly talented women -- but because of what they will do with the loss, or the win, or the nature of the battle. Mercedes Martinez is one tough, talented lady who can outwrestle, outmuscle or outmove her competitors. Cindy Rogers, in whatever variant of Bret Hart's phrase, has proven to have the mettle to eke out victories. So while I can laud the Title Change, and extol the virtues of the purity and simplicity and technical nature of MsChif against Sara Del Rey; while I can do the same and more for the altogether embarrassing (for TNA) match that features the beautiful Sarah Stock and the stunning Melissa Anderson, while they do a hard-hitting match that they'd never be able to perform on a stage of fools; while at the same time, I can watch the awesomely Amazing Kong display the instincts and craft that allows a newcomer like Wesna Basic look like a young Ricky Steamboat, a just breaking through Tommy Dreamer, or one of many talents that relied upon veterans to put them over. (Which, of course, is a skill and a situation not worth trifling with today, in the money promotions...) But, to get back to the point, I love SHIMMER because I can drill down into the core of the card, and find a gem of a match, and realize that the booking isn't about one wrestler, the atmosphere isn't about playing to the likes of one owner, and the announce crew isn't pretending to be awful or funny or something that they are not. Which, as

far as I'm concerned, is the depth and detail that I can't find in very many other places. SHIMMER-
WOMEN ATHLETES Vol. 18 (DVD)

1. Amber O' Neal vs. Shark Girl
 2. Nicole Matthews vs. Lorelei Lee
 3. Daizee Haze vs.. Jetta
 4. Lexie Fyfe & Malia Hosaka vs. Jennifer Blake & Danyah
 5. Portuguese Princess Ariel vs. Cat Power
 6. Mercedes Martinez vs. Cindy Rogers
 7. Lacey & Rain vs. Ashely Lane & Nevaeh
 8. Amazing Kong vs. Wesna Basic
 9. Cheerleader Melissa vs. Sarah Stock
 10. Sara Del Rey vs. MsChif (SHIMMER Title Match)
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Settled in to a degree with my move, and looking forward to watching, reading and writing about this crazy industry.
Send me suggestions, comments and review materials if you so desire.