Revolt! Dragon Gate USA www.DGUSA.tv $20.00 Reviewed by Joe Babinsack With all due respect to other promotions I follow, there are few that offer a professional wrestling product like Dragon Gate USA. While others are mired in booking patterns than often defy description, DG USA is tweaking its cards, changing things up and otherwise making adjustments that show a deep understanding of styles, matches and talents.

From DVD to DVD, this promotion is consistent at a high level. But beyond the consistency in workrate, matches and presentation, let alone the superior production values, Gabe Sapolsky continues to make the most of guest stars, distinguishes the different talents on the roster and most of all, let's the wrestlers do what they do best.

Which, I know is a strange approach, but letting wrestlers wrestle is a pretty cool concept when tried.

I'd like to roll out a "Pros and Cons" format, but the negatives are few, nitpicky and relatively minor. The positives outweigh by much. But here goes, getting rid of the negatives first. Like Bing Crosby, Johnny Mercer (any relation to Bill?) or Paul Heyman, the lyrics go "accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative".

That's what DG USA does better than most.

A couple things can be called out, though.

For one, the mixing up of the card was a bit odd. What's interesting is that Sapolsky lets us all know when the intermission is, and he tends to bring the action back with a squash or tryout winners battle match. Here, we get the "Comeback wrestler of the year" in BJ Whitmer taking on a local Boston kid. Everything else about that match was great – from the buildup of a clash with Brodie Lee to the feel of a returning talent with potential.

So much for negativity.

In general, the industry needs to mix up durations of matches, but at least DG USA has made nods to that. That's another positive to the Whitmer/Marseglia match (no drawn out battle there). I still think a relative squash here and there, and especially when unexpected, would add a strong dimension to professional wrestling. (Guys who are 'much better' than their opponent should show it somehow.)

Scraping for one more "Con", I'm coming back to the card sequence – we've got the D.U.F. in the opening acts, after headlining recently. More of a nitpick, since this faction is strong and put over strong. Also, I get that Sapolsky is playing around with expectations and card order… which says a lot about the other 95% of the industry that is utterly clueless about the same.

The positives are aplenty.

Styles are a distinction with DG USA.

From Jon Davis and his power moves, through BxB Hulk and a stunning array of kicks, plus a FRAY! with the most awesome assemblage of high flyers available in the industry, there's talent on display here, and not just the Dragon Gate house style, which in and of itself is light years ahead of the rest of the industry.

But when I speak of style, I'm not talking about subtleties or a nod or an homage.

Davis battling Sami Callihan spotlighted hard-hitting action, but more so, featured Jon Davis slamming, throwing and pushing Callihan around. With a roster of faster, smaller guys, Davis stands out, because he's not trying to be the same as everyone else.

Watching BxB Hulk, and setting aside all the other brilliance of the main event, is watching someone taking the most of martial arts and kicks, and upping the ante. Whether an unbelievable crescent kick, various kicks to the head, or a sequence of kicks and leg sweeps, this Hulk is distinguishing the difference between a "super kick" finisher and an attack style that uses leg strikes.

"High Flying" isn't just a suggestion in DGUSA. Here, with Pac at the forefront, with AR Fox being built up as a future star, with Ricochet once again showing his superiority, and with Rich Swann (despite those weird wings) hanging with the best of them, there is no better accumulation of high spot takers and makers around.

And then UHAA Nation defies gravity himself, pulling out a huge plancha, and two standing, shooting-star presses in a two minute time frame. Big guys aren't supposed to be able to do that!

Building up matches is a focus.

Before the main event, we see the video package on the 27 month feud between BxB Hulk and YAMATO. Despite initial hesitations about that match, this package set the table, made the match integral to the fabric of the DGUSA storylines, and hyped the anticipation, even moments before the ropes came down.

Packaging history, moves and interactions is part of the product here.

Between a few matches earlier, a video trailer for Dragon Gate USA DVD's aired, and the hard-hitting, high-flying, all-around action presented was such to make any main stream fan mark out. I've said it before, and will say it again. If Spike is looking to make a real difference (ugh, almost said the "I" word), a half-hour airing of Dragon Gate would blow away any channel-flipper with a sliver of professional wrestling interest.

But whether it's the bonus footage of Chuck Taylor talking "occupy" Asylum Arena, or the interesting angle with AKIRA Tozawa and Rich Swann, or the establishment of the D.U.F. faction, or even the guest commentary by Arik Cannon and Taylor (and apparently Pinkie

Sanchez, although he's an ephemeral type), there are plenty of avenues of getting names, matches and hype across to the viewer.

Factions, Factions, Factions are the coolest.

The ever shifting alliances in the Japanese home roster do cause some confusion, but Dragon Gate USA is all about groupings, and groupings cause the kind of matchmaking dynamics that keep things fresh.

Even with YAMATO and BxB Hulk sporting different looks, the grudges get tied in, and the partners play their roles.

DGUSA's two home-grown factions, RONIN and the D.U.F. are not just jobber types. RONIN has some internal issues, but Taylor and Johnny Gargano are Open the Freedom Gate challengers (and then some) and Swann is a beat box machine that flies with the best of them. Cannon/Callihan/Sanchez are entertaining and deadly. And both groups are built up to be credible against the Blood Warriors and Junction 3, and whatever comes out of Japan.

I still think CIMA's gesture-based audience participation got cut off too soon, and could be emulated much like BxB Hulk's dance entrance (as in, let's give it to some WWE never-will-be!) but factions are the driving force of the company.

How about that main event!?!

No Ropes, No DQ.

Not sure when the last time I saw something like that, but the visual was impressive, and the more I thought about it, the more danger I realized about the match. What if halfway through, someone forgets there are no ropes?

Then again, how do you do light-speed Dragon Gate style, without bouncing off the ropes?

If anyone could, these guys would.

YAMATO is a class above heels in this country. BxB Hulk has a new, emo-like, goth inspired vision that includes what looks like dripping blood, a pale complexion and a haircut that just has to impair his vision.

But he's changed up his attitude, amped up his style, and the ongoing feud with YAMATO was well served by the stipulations. Even with the "Non Title" aspect, the build up trumped that consideration by spades.

Without ropes, they started out mat wrestling. The action eventually spilled out. YAMATO attempted a high spot off the turnbuckle (all four were stripped, but there.) and Referee Harding

threw out the ceremonial last string from the canvas before the action started.

But seriously, this was a spectacular match.

The “No DQ” played in Japanese style – as in, someone (Tozawa) gets involved, but everyone knows it will not lead to a finish. Tozawa did help with a plastic garbage can towards the end, but it didn’t quite play into things.

Several sequences stood out, including a couple of places with lots of Hulk kicks, and an incredible series of reversals near the finish, where Gallerias/EVOs and also some enzui-giris were attempted, traded and went back and forth with a speed that defied the lack of ropes.

Selling, mostly by YAMATO, was impressive. The Finish was also distinguished – it made the attempts, the near falls, the almost there efforts pale in comparison, and for once in a rare time with an indy main event, the Finish was appropriate and made the match feel like it ended at the right time.

This felt like a big match, built up to a big match, and played out like a special event. The lack of ropes kept the action more focused, and left little room for any sort of nonsense (there’s no locking up in this match, no bouncing off the ropes, no rope breaks … nothing but action).

With Revolt! there were some great tag matches, some all-around great spots, and a sense that Dragon Gate USA is hitting on all cylinders. Before, during and after this DVD, the matches of the event, before the event and for the next event were all important.

Which is what we should all be looking for in professional wrestling DVDs.

Joe Babinsack can be reached at
chaosonejoe@yahoo.com
. AAW, WSU and ROH to come. Likely Austin Aries 2 Disc set. I have Blood Red Turns Dollar Green by Paul O’Brien on queue as well.