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SURFING THE WAVES OF POPULAR CULTURE
BY MICHAEL GILTZ & FRIENDS

MONDAY, JANUARY 08, 2007

I Love Bull Riding!

I spent the weekend at Madison Square Garden watching the first major tour stop by a rodeo or bull riding circuit in more than 50 years. (The last time they came through town, Gene Autry and Roy Rogers were among the attractions.) Local TV had fun with it, but except for a few minor pieces, the local newspapers just shrugged their shoulders. [You have to look to the Washington Post for a serious, lengthy, very fun look at the cowboys in Manhattan](#), which also shows bull riding to be the next breakout sport a la NASCAR. Sure, a little of it was kitschy fun -- cowboys and all that -- and it was a bit of a culture shock when they began the event with an invocation. I don't think that's happened at a MSG sporting event in a while. But it has the same appeal as Extreme Sports -- exceptional talent mixed with a major dash of craziness. Bull riding is dangerous, no two ways about it. I'm not waiting for a wreck, the way some people go to NASCAR for the crashes or hockey games for the fights. I'm hoping the riders don't get hurt, though at almost every event someone gets pummelled and the injury report (broken necks, broken ankles, broken vertebrae, damaged spleen) is a constant part of the game. And it's unique -- other sports like equestrian events feature animals, but this is the only one where the animal and the rider are pitted against each other (I'm ignoring other rodeo events, obviously). The bulls have fans, just like the riders and unlike the circus or rodeo events like calf roping, you NEVER worry about the bull. They are clearly in charge. It was great fun to see the show up close instead of on TV. (You can catch it every Sat and Sun night on Versus.) But the most fun I had was seeing all the good ole boys strolling around the Garden and in the streets outside. I was at a pizza place on 32nd St, sitting near two teenage girls. First one cowboy than another strolled by. Finally, when a middle-aged man with a huge gut and a cowboy hat moseyed on by looking like he'd just got off his tractor, one of the girls turned to the other and said, "What the FUCK is going on?" Culture shock is rarely that fun.



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