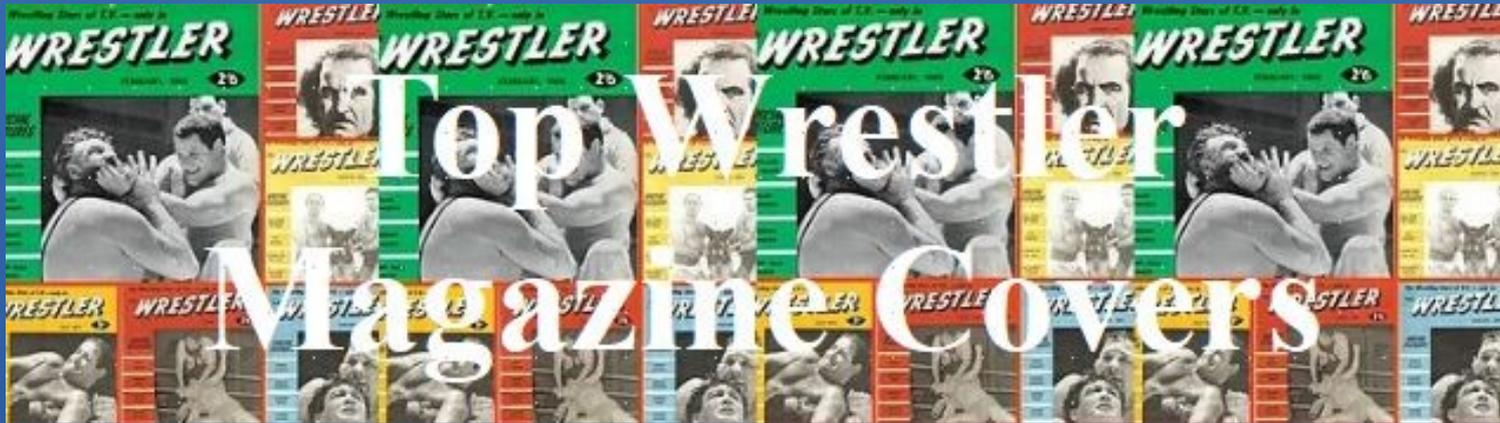


Top Wrestler Magazine Covers



In 1961 a new monthly glossy magazine was launched to cater for the still increasing interest in British professional wrestling.

149 months later "The Wrestler" would cease publication for reasons we have still to pin down. In fact, several aspects about the editorship and management of the magazine remain complete mysteries to this day.

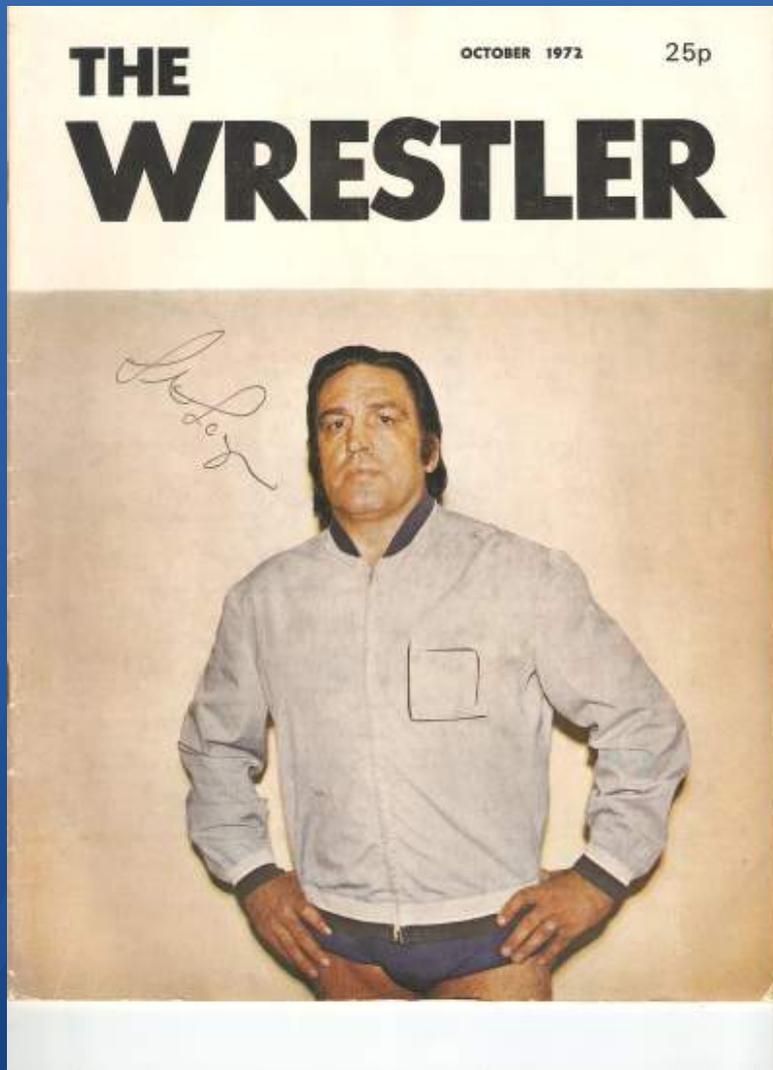
But "The Wrestler" leaves us with a healthy legacy, a record of what the industry thought about itself in the heady sixties when professional wrestling became the most popular indoor sport in Britain.

With his magazine vying for space on the newsagents' racks alongside boxing publications, the editor of "The Wrestler" needed to choose his cover page with care. Those choices still speak volumes in this twenty-first century.

And so we reject a third of the editions and commence our pictorial and historical countdown of the 100 best "The Wrestler" magazine cover pages. With our Heritage hindsight we add our own commentary and create in so doing yet another strand of wrestling history on this sprawling Wrestling Heritage website.

Where shall we begin? Why, at the end, of course!

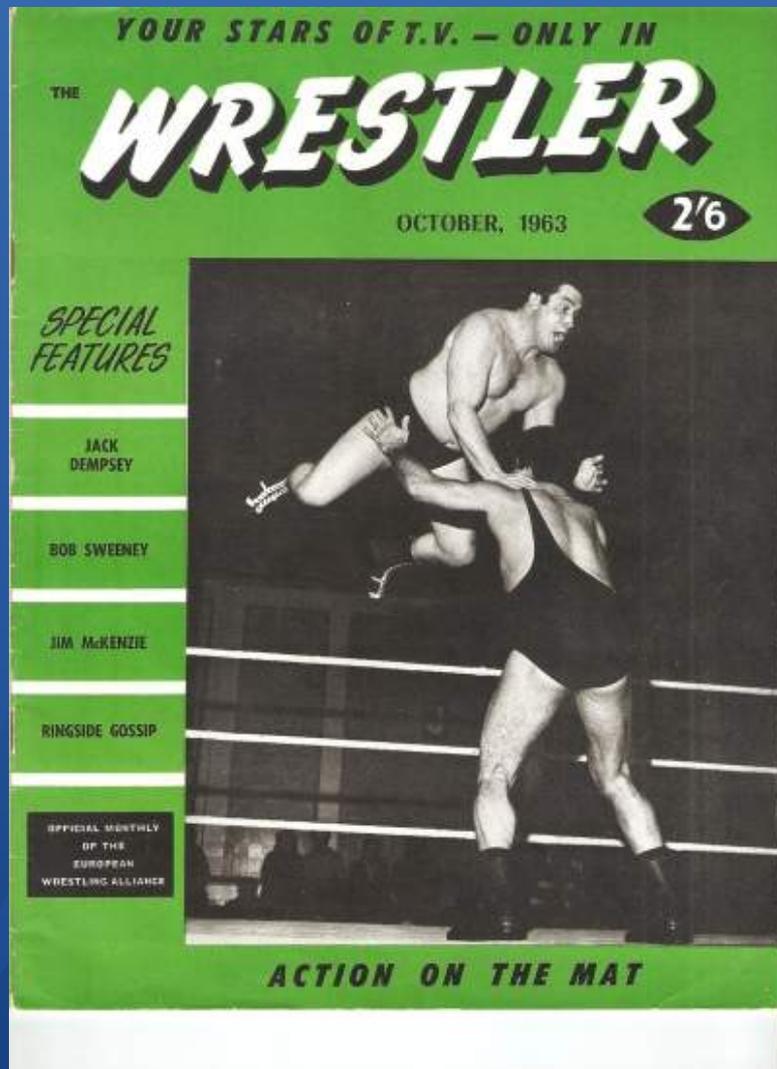
And yes, there are 101 covers. Find the extra one and all will be revealed.



Steve Logan's face really did tell it all. Completely unheralded, this October 1972 edition carried the bereavement announcement that it would be the last. We had detected no signs of a reduction in quality, if anything, the 1972 editions had been some of the best ever. We were flabbergasted and dismayed.

Surprisingly, thanks in no small way to "The Wrestler", wrestling history of the sixties is easier to piece together than that of the years that followed.

So we have no ringside reports of the McManus-Pallo feud that would re-ignite through three spectacular clashes over the ensuing nine months. No records of the newly arrived blond guardsman transforming into Big Daddy. And no record of this same scowling Iron Man's sensational gaining of the British Heavy-Middleweight championship just three years after the above photo was taken.

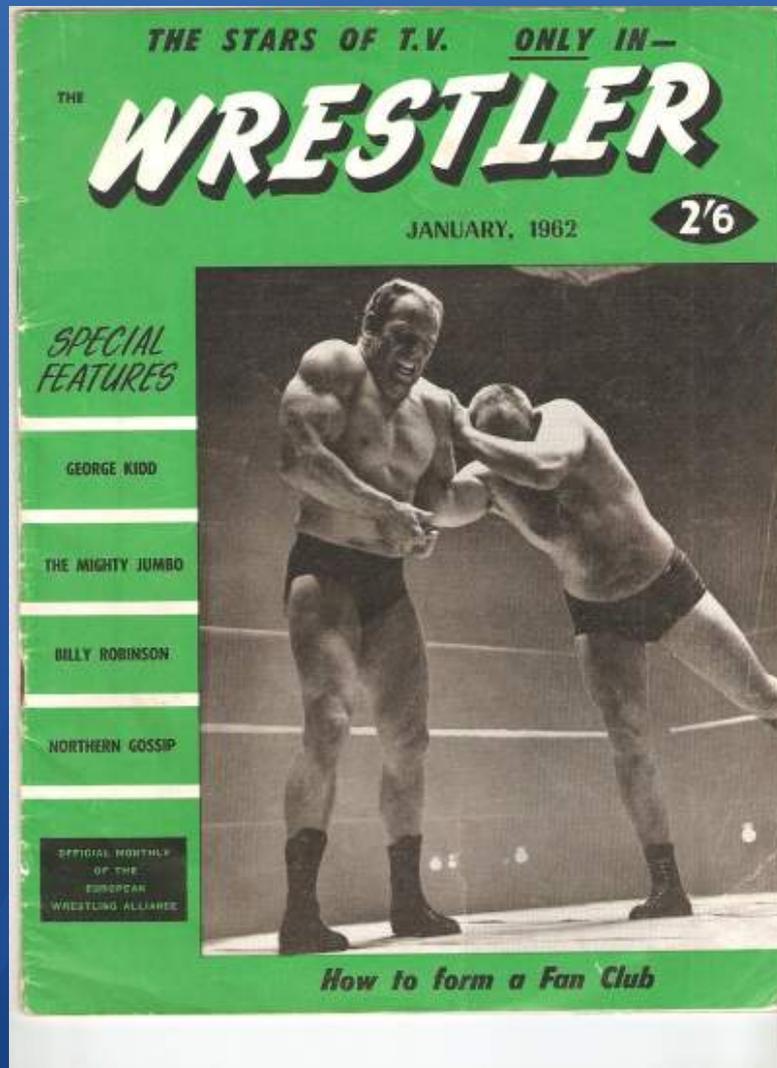


There were a variety of types of feature photos which can broadly be divided into four categories:

portraits
 action shots
 wrestling holds
 poses and oddities

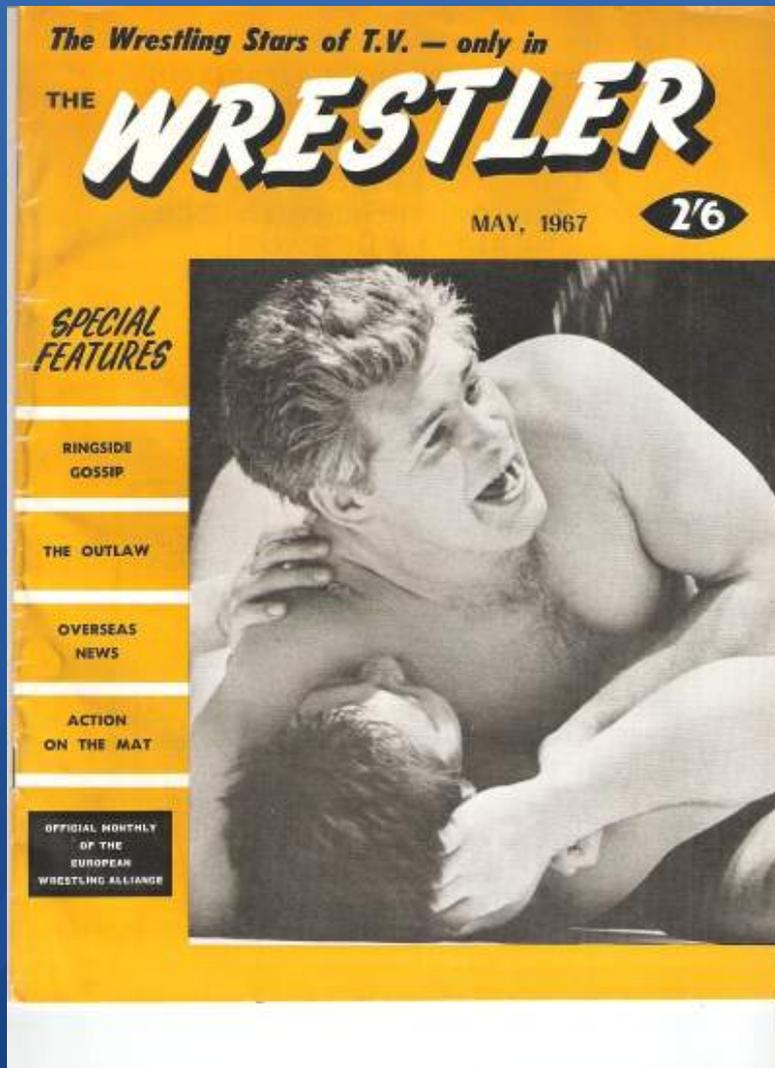
Some of the action shots snapped mostly by photographer H.G. Stevens are quite magnificent and feature already all over Wrestling Heritage.

At 99 we present, Henri Pierlot, who also wrestled in later years as Les Thornton, here flying high to take down Enrico Marques, with a follow up pin according to The Wrestler.



In terms of wrestling holds, where would dear Johnny Yearsley have been without his standing armlock, with which he held sway for the opening few minutes of most of his bouts. Low on impact and exertion, but a good chance for the audience to admire the billed "Weightlifting Record Holder" before he got all ruffled and, more often than not, disqualified.

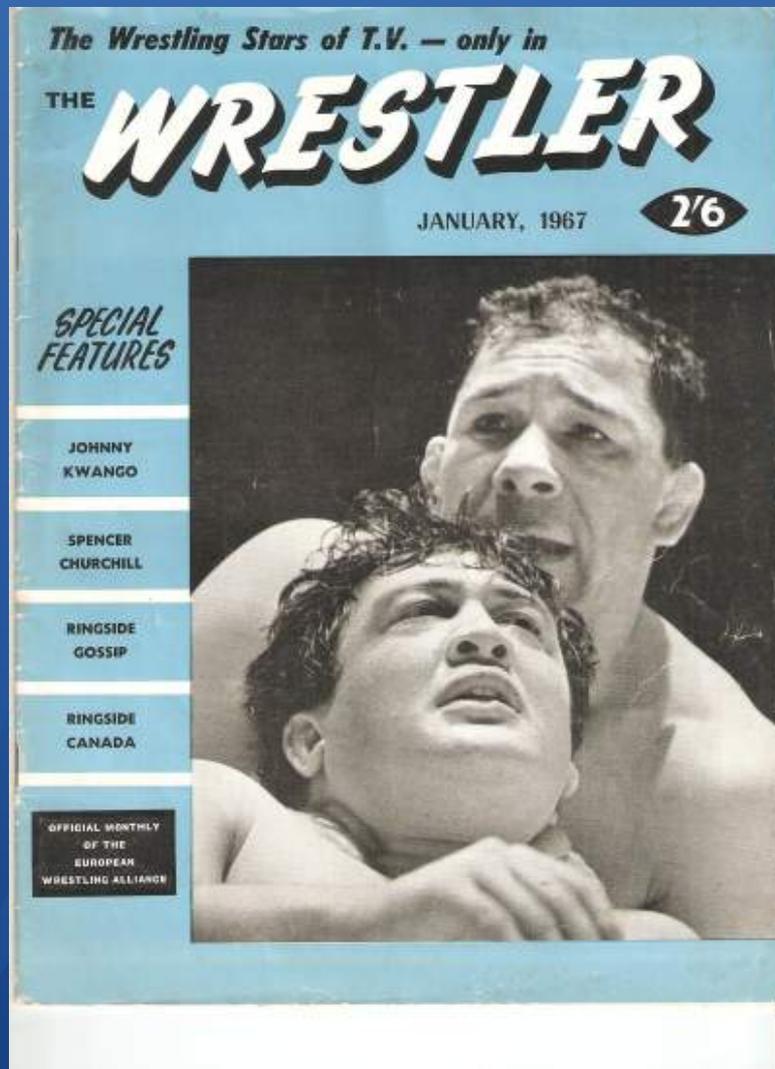
Johnny was around in our earlier days of watching the wrestling. A welcome visitor to any hall, but we don't recall him travelling north very muchh.



A very out of character smile from Southern England Middleweight Champion, Peter Rann.

Wrestling's villains often made the most of these quiet periods on the canvas, with their opponent subdued in a headlock, to engage in sarcastic and insulting badinage with ringside seaters, and the Camden Town man is probably doing just that here.

Later in this countdown you'll see the more familiar morose pose of Peter Rann.



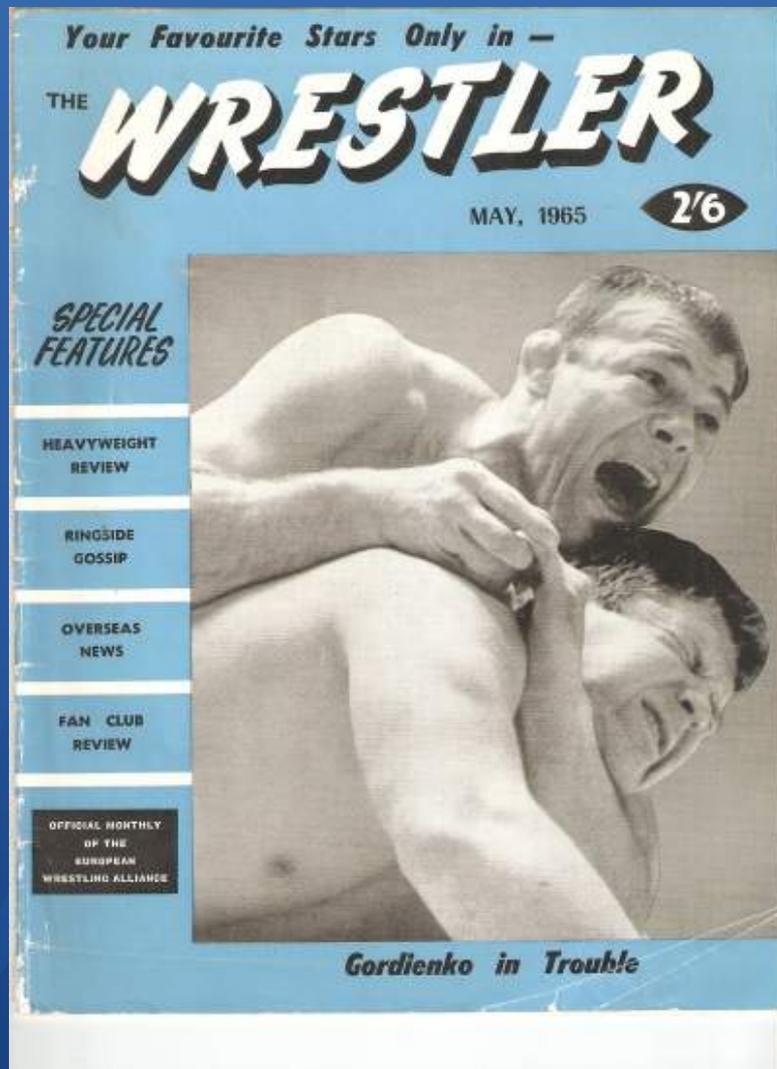
It's a similar scenario here as H.G. captures a nice shot of not one but two cauliflower ears.

Leon Fortuna may not have been a bill-topper but he was a big and almost household name. Whoever changed his ring-name from Young Sullivan struck a winning note. How the ladies hated seeing him getting duffed up!

For our Peter Szakacs it's all about business and letting his experience keep the youngster in check.

PETER commented:

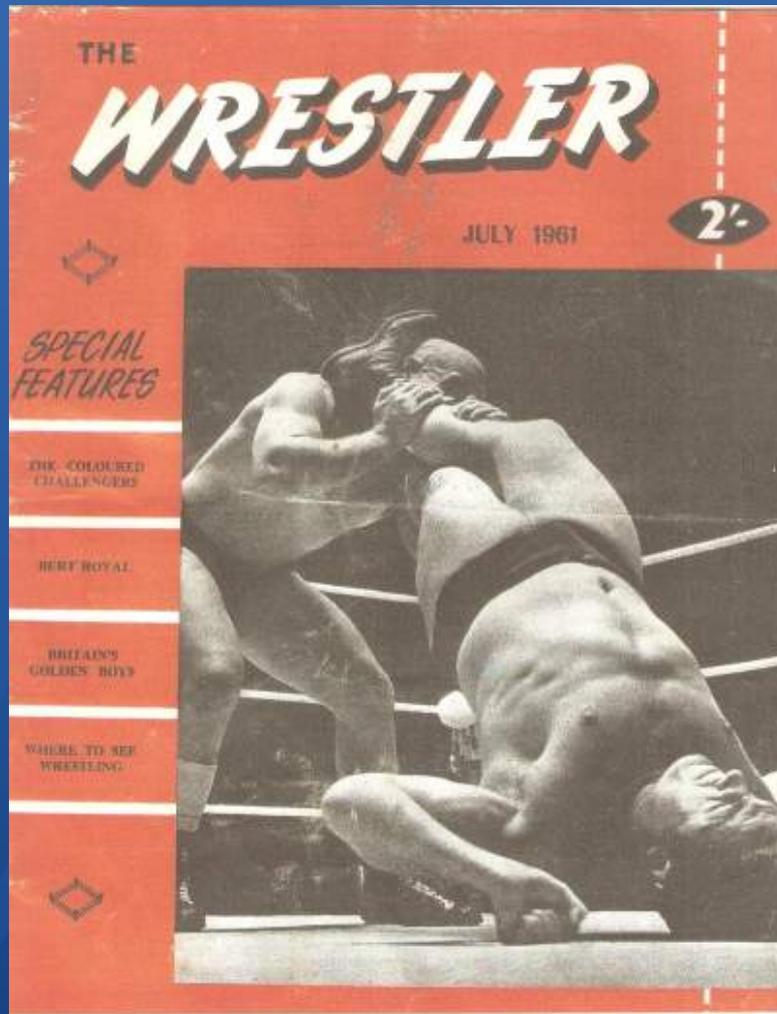
"Surprised you refer to Leon Fortuna as 'almost a household names .He was a household name well known for his serious demeanour in the ring but always in the forefront as a "blue eyed boy"



Meanwhile big brother Tibor exhibited the same Eastern European self-control in all situations, even when on top, as here against Canada's Georges Gordienko.

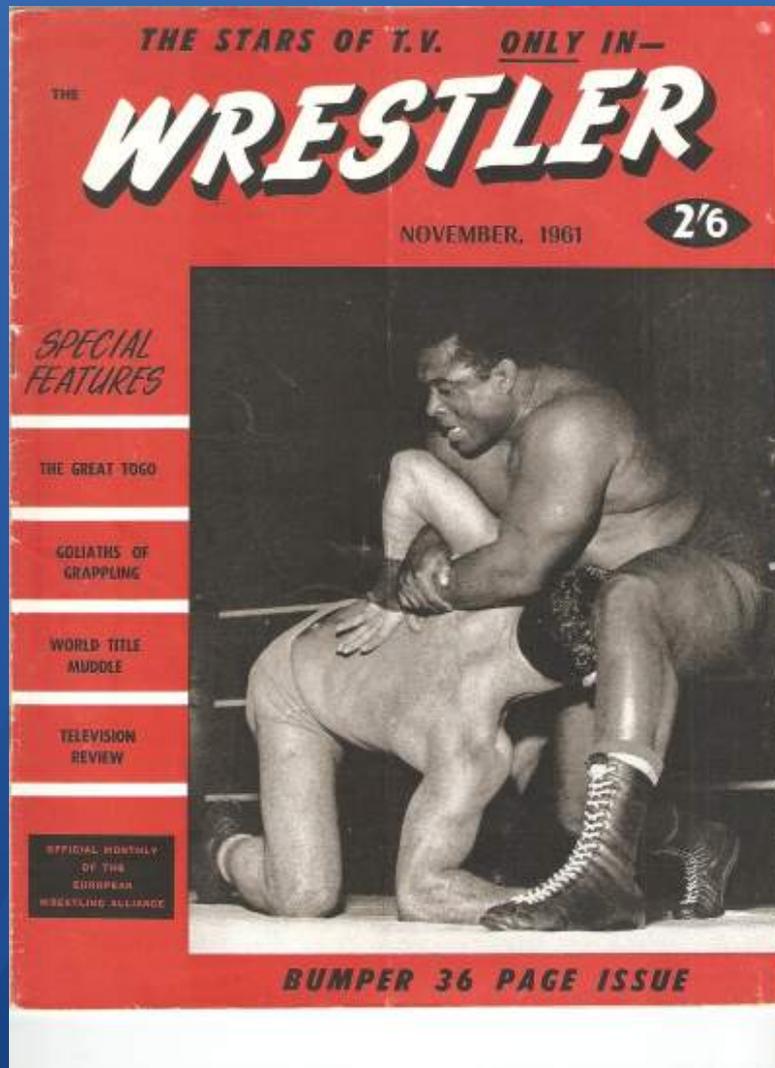
So many of our remaining photos of Tibor Szakacs show him with his mouth wide open, none of which prevented him from being one of the great stylists of the mat.

Some of the action shots snapped mostly by photographer H.G. Stevens are quite magnificent and feature already all over Wrestling Heritage. At 99 we present, from the second section, Henri Pierlot, who also wrestled as Les Thornton flying high to take down Enrico Marques in a double-leg nelson.



In the first few year's of The Wrestler's life, the cover page featured all manner of exotic international stars, most of whom few fans would ever have any chance of seeing in action. The attitude became far more business-focused from about 1967 as only regular Joint Promotions home-grown talent would be featured, with the very few exceptions of specially imported megastars.

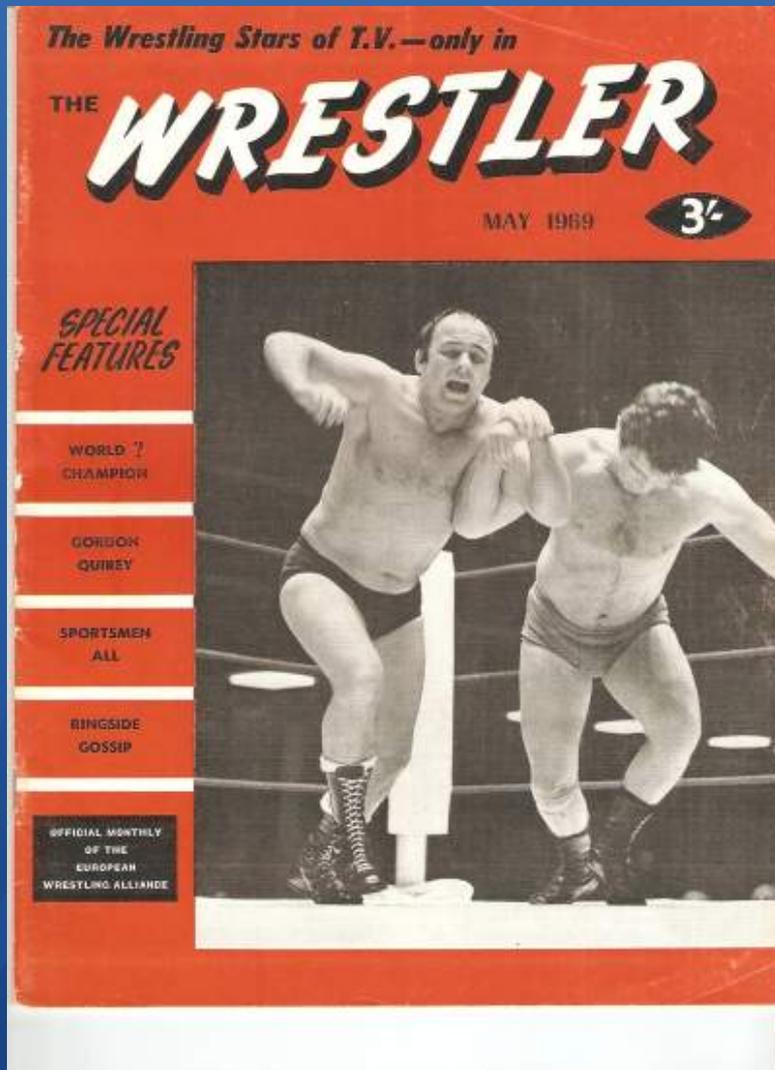
So here, in the second edition of a fledgling publication, the editor decided that Frenchman Bernard Vignalle's head scissors on The Polish Eagle would best attract new readers. If he twists Czeslaw's head just a little further to the left he'll be able to see a feature heading that uses language that would be most politically incorrect in the twenty-first century. But British professional wrestling stood proudly throughout the Heritage years not merely as being completely free of racial prejudice but able, at the same time, to highlight and rejoice in national stereotypes and physical features without causing any offence whatsoever.



No, we are not inviting captions for the photo! We wouldn't dare.

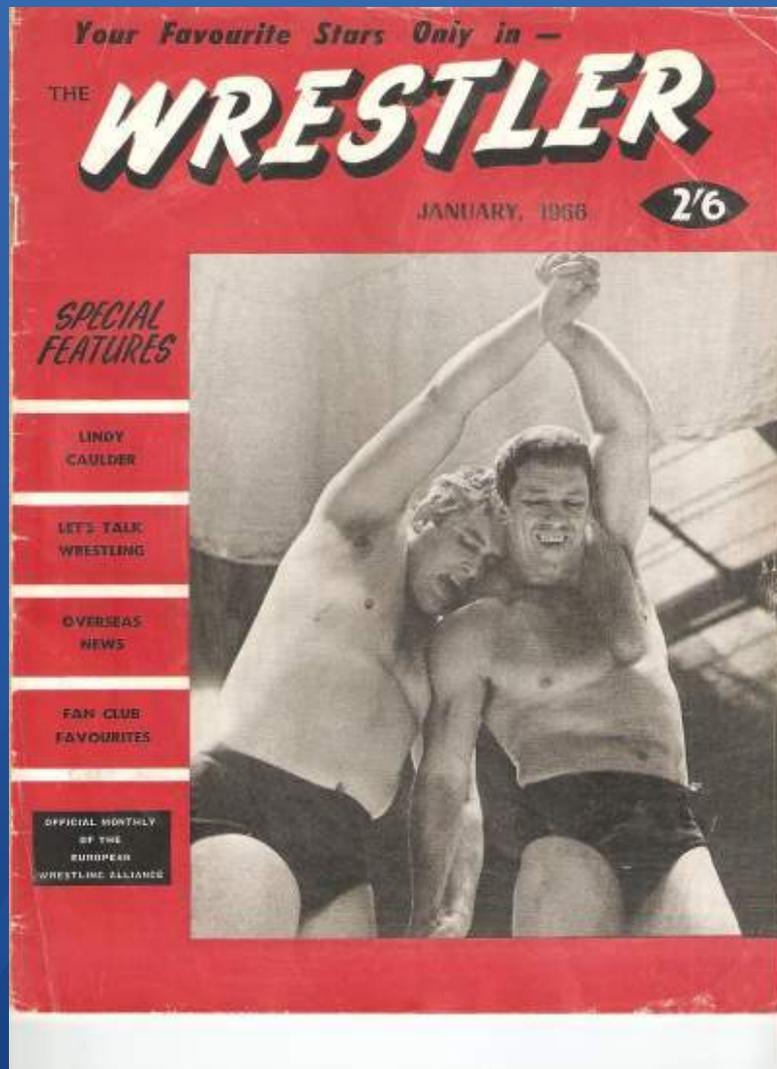
Once again, Edition Number Six features just a fleeting visitor, with America's Ricky Waldo shown on his UK debut bout in Leeds against Mike Marino.

Note how the price has risen by 25% in six short months.



This is much more the type of shot that might have attracted bookshop browsers to fork out three bob in 1969.

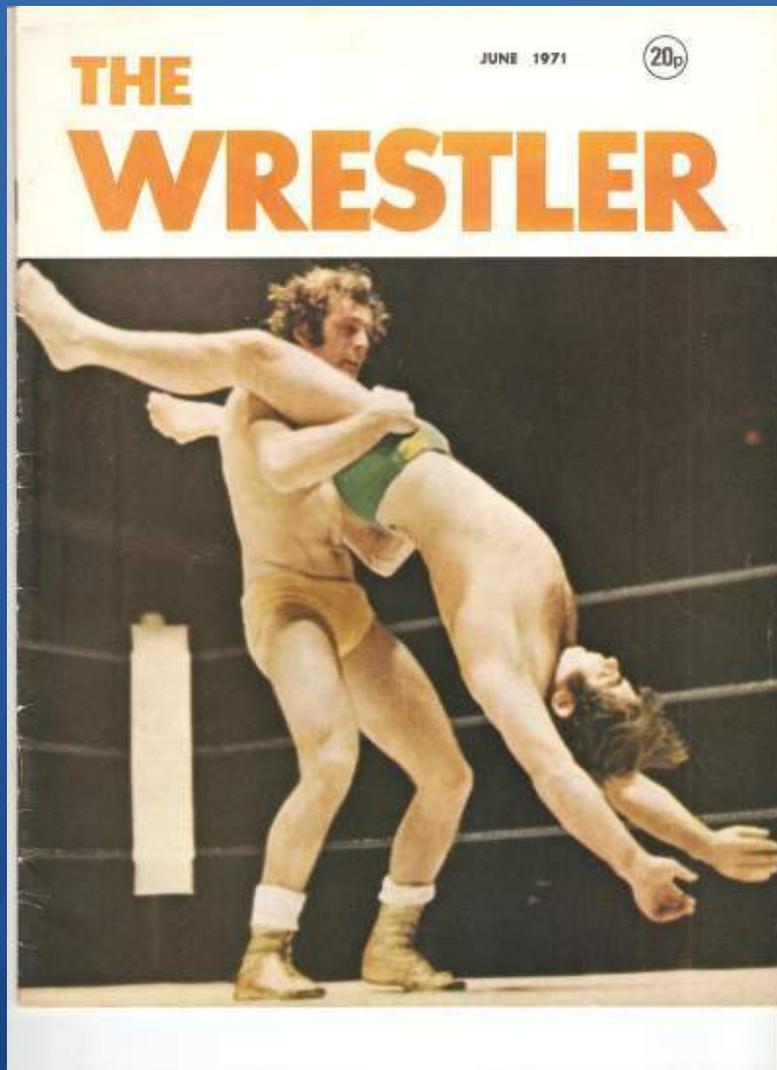
It may be a still, but the very grimace on Mick McManus's face immediately evokes what atmosphere there must have been in the hall as he got his just desserts from the British Champion whose middleweight belt he had his sights on later that year, Clayton Thomson.



It's HP again, looking quite different from Number 99, so much so that we think the caption may have been wrong and that this was actually Ray Fury - what do you think?

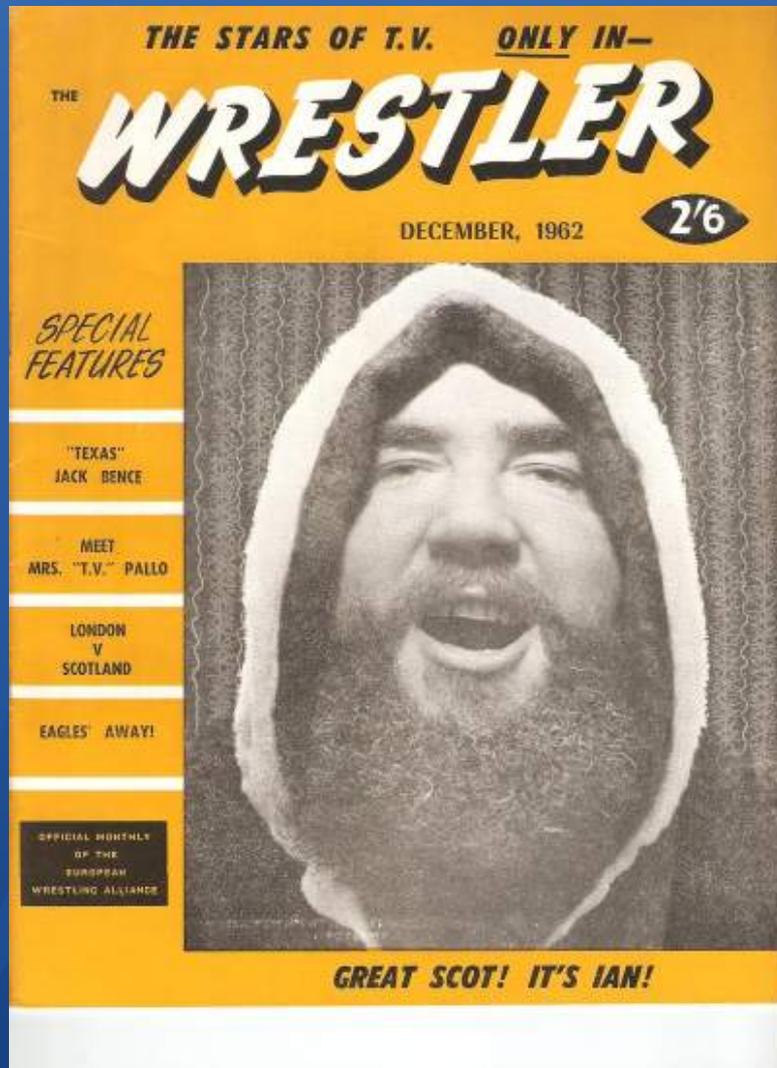
Holding hands here is the original wrestling coverman, Spencer Churchill from Kew. We are assured that Spencer Churchill is his real name. The trouble is with wrestling, the more we are assured, the more we doubt.

Back to HP, and in case there are any collectors of trivia out there amongst our readership (as if that weren't a pre-requisite for Heritage membership!) note that, if this is indeed him, he is shown in the very month he famously tagged with Tibor Szakacs against the masked pairing of Kendo Nagasaki and Count Bartelli in the match in which the two masked men fell out, leading up to their challenge and the Count's unmasking two months later.

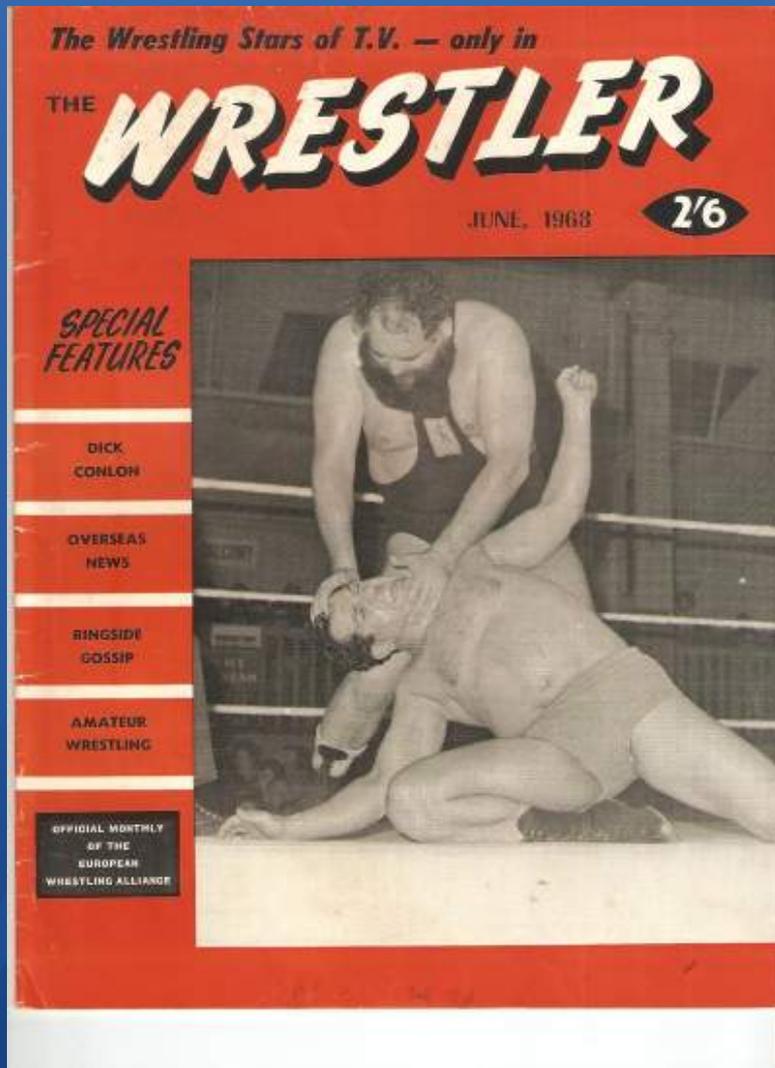


When The Wrestler went colour in 1971, most of the attempted action shots came out rather blurred by our highly pixelated twenty-first century standards. This is representative of those few; several of the others did not make our Top 100 for this quality reason. We chose to include this particular cover as it rather sums up Wrestling Heritage: two lesser lights nevertheless getting their moment to shine. Barefooted Shamrock Jim Fitzmaurice in death-defying flight at the hands of Australia's Ted Charlton. Steady Eddie?

Tom H commented: *"Nostalgia crept in when I saw the first 10 of The Wrestler covers as I recognised some of them from when I bought, but didn't keep, the magazines all those years ago. I'm looking forward to the rest"*



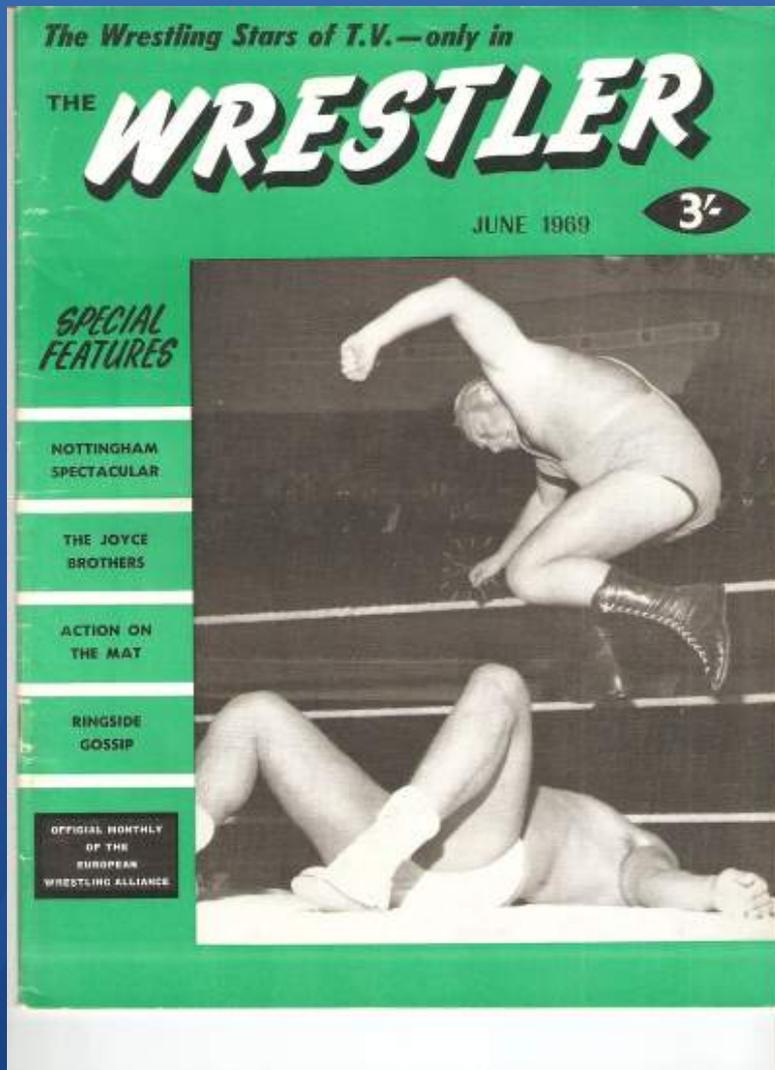
Wild Ian Campbell was a formidable opponent for all visiting and home-grown heavyweights in the early sixties. He seemed to have classical training and could swap hold and counter hold. But his persona was most erratic: at times disregarding every rule in the book only to return to the same hall a few weeks later in angelic mood. Here we see his youthful good side at Christmas 1962. On the back of this skilful and volatile profile Ian Campbell was snapped up later in the decade by Japanese promoters, but they found....



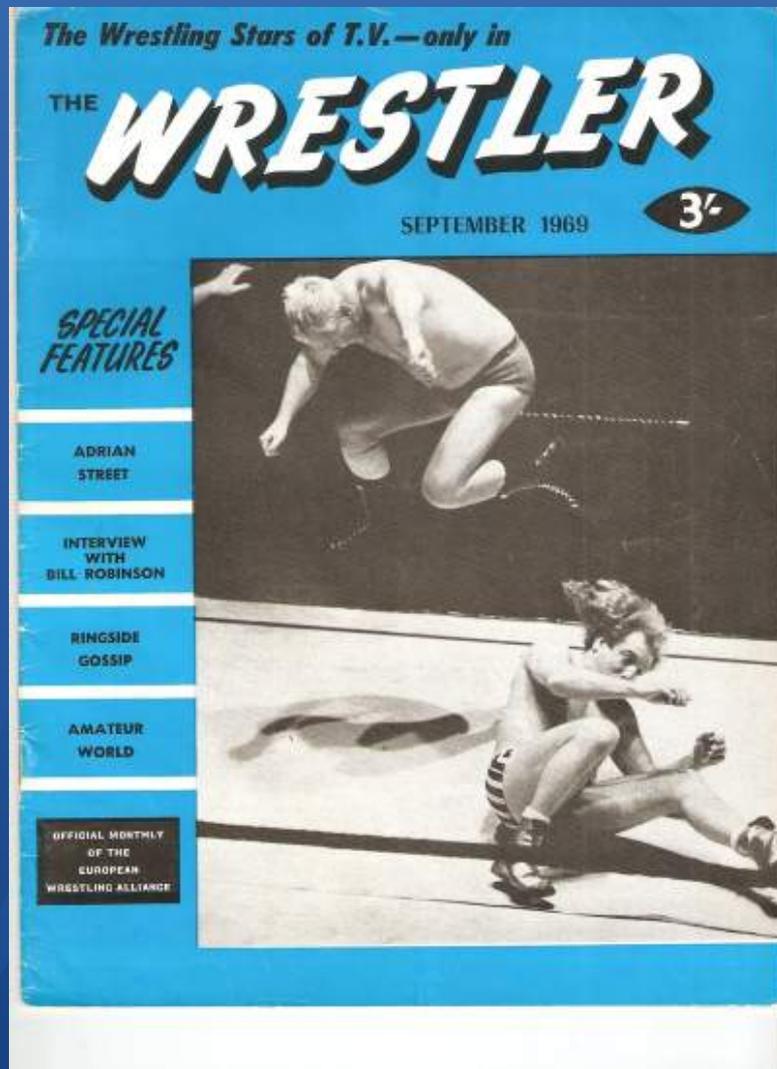
.....The fearsome Monarch of the Mat of the early sixties and even British Heavyweight Champion of 1966 had aged seemingly more rapidly than most in the late sixties. Here he is in action against a much favoured opponent, Mike Marino, just a couple of years before an abrupt but not altogether overdue retirement would see him grace cinema screens in *The Wicker Man*.

David Sutherland:

"Wild Ian Campbell was a bill topping heavyweight for years at St James' Hall in Newcastle however due to his frequent trips abroad it was a couple of years before I got to see him live. By then he had mellowed and his bouts were therefore more skilful as opposed to the ire raising affairs of which I had heard. He was very fond of making announcements in the ring at that time especially in connection with his opponents once announcing at the end of a bout against Earl Maynard that he had refused to wrestle in any countries that advocated segregation and another time having fought Josef Zaranoff praising USSR for publishing a commemorative postage stamp for Robert Burns."

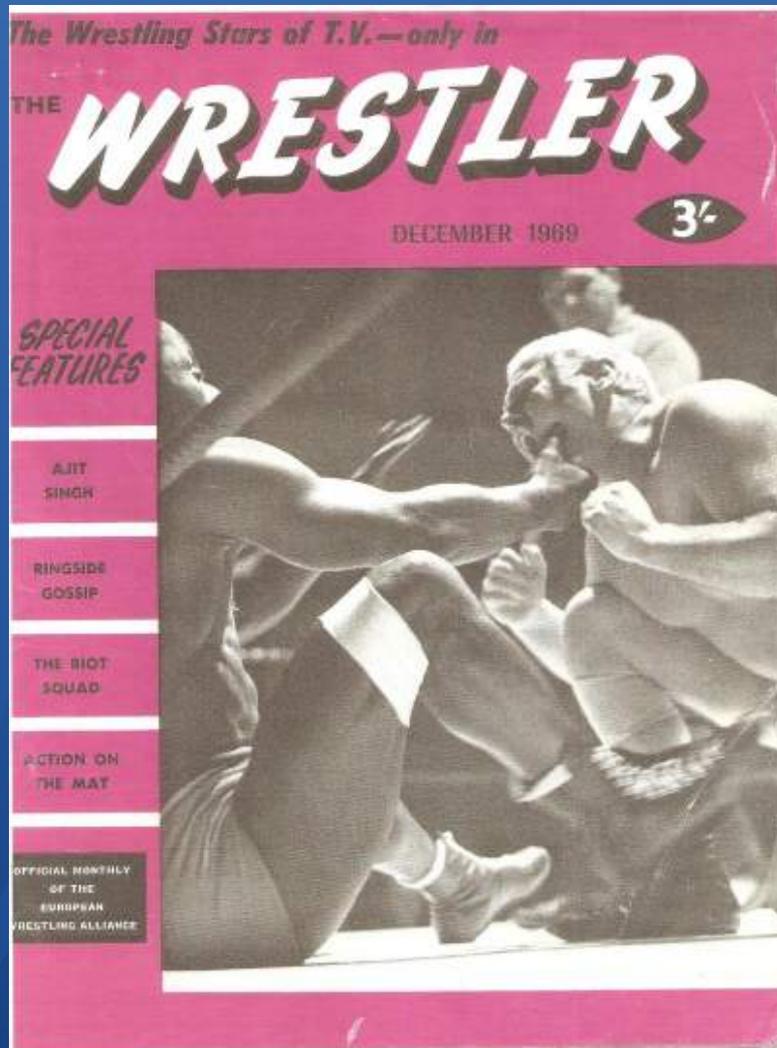


A nice action shot from the hard-boiled Irish Canadian ...

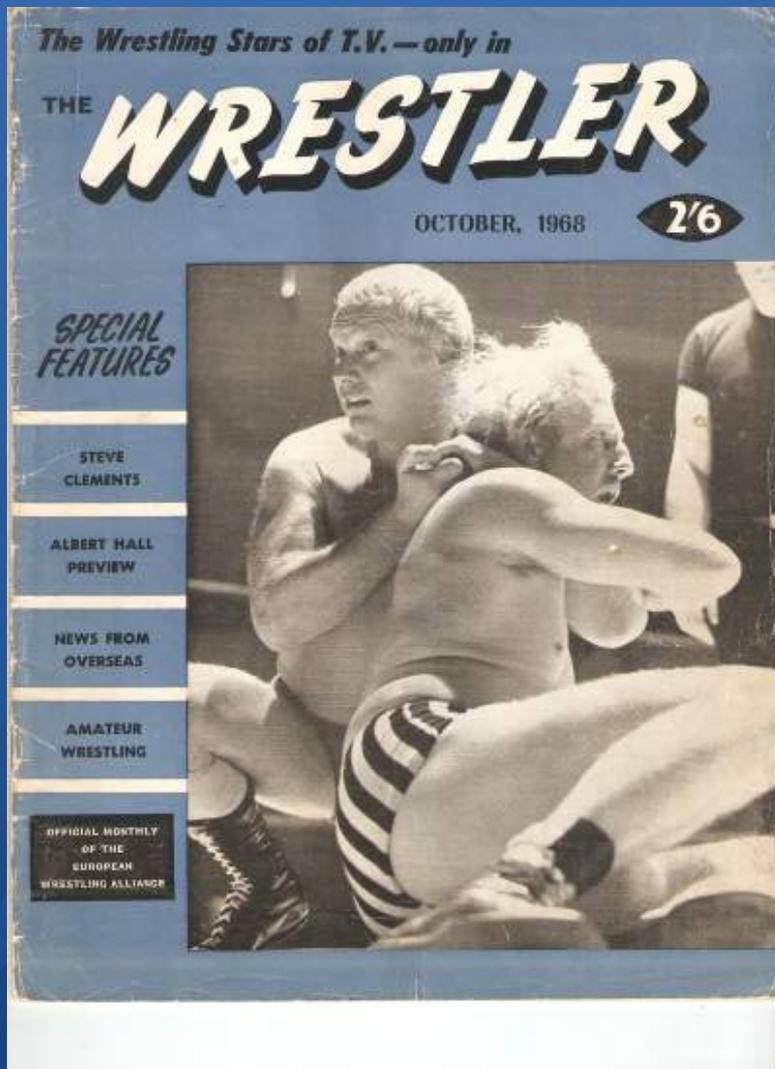


.... so nice that they repeated the same move just three months later. Unfortunately for Haggetty, Mr TV had read his June copy of The Wrestler and had, as a result, been able to develop a suitable counter manoeuvre in the interim. Ouch!

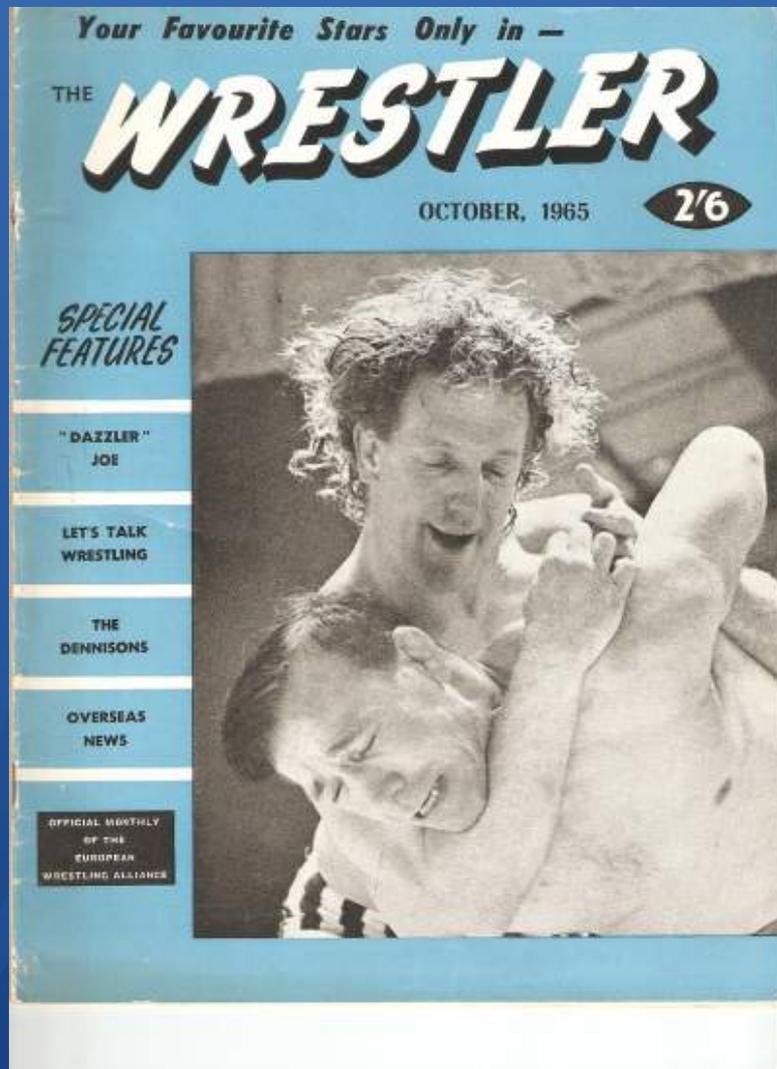
Tony St Clair commented:
"Steve wasn't only a fellow wrestler, he became a great friend. With Colin as his partner against Roy and I we travelled all over England, Scotland and Wales. Of all our tag matches I remember those against The Dangersmen better as any other."



And just three months later Steve Haggetty was featured once again. Johnny Kwango really was very photogenic, but this particular shot does provide a close-up of his famously bandaged thigh which would leak and had to remain covered at all times.

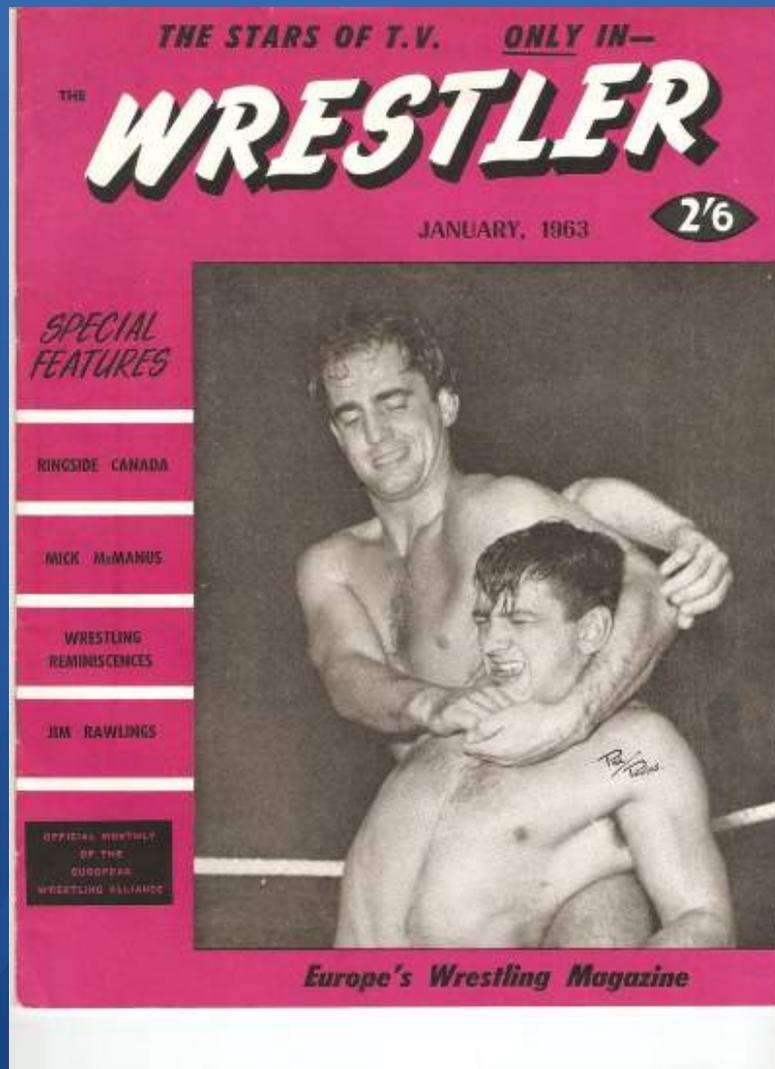


If you take into consideration Steve Haggetty's cover appearance the previous year, he was featured 4 times over 14 months. This is certainly a record and begs the question ... why? And a photo from the same bout would be used 11 months later. Sloppy stuff. But note how the half-crown price of *The Wrestler* had now not changed for fully seven years.

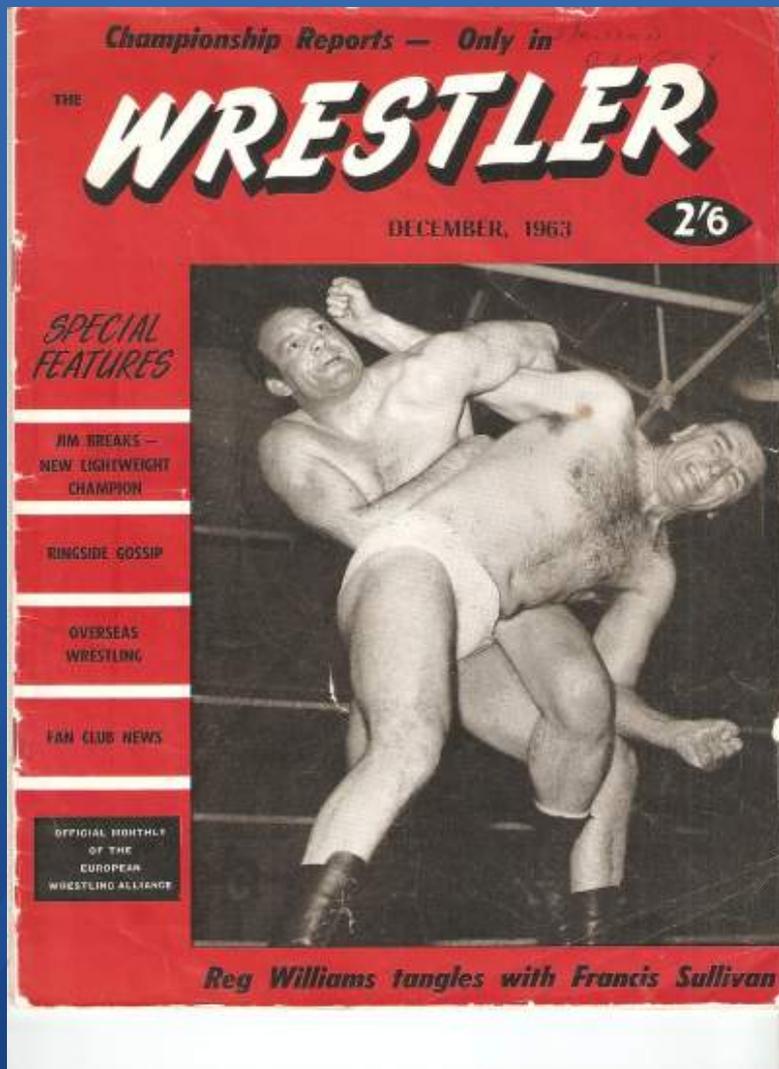


Who says Palo couldn't wrestle?

A slick headlock and bar akin to the famed chicken wing applied here to the great British welterweight champion, Jack Dempsey.

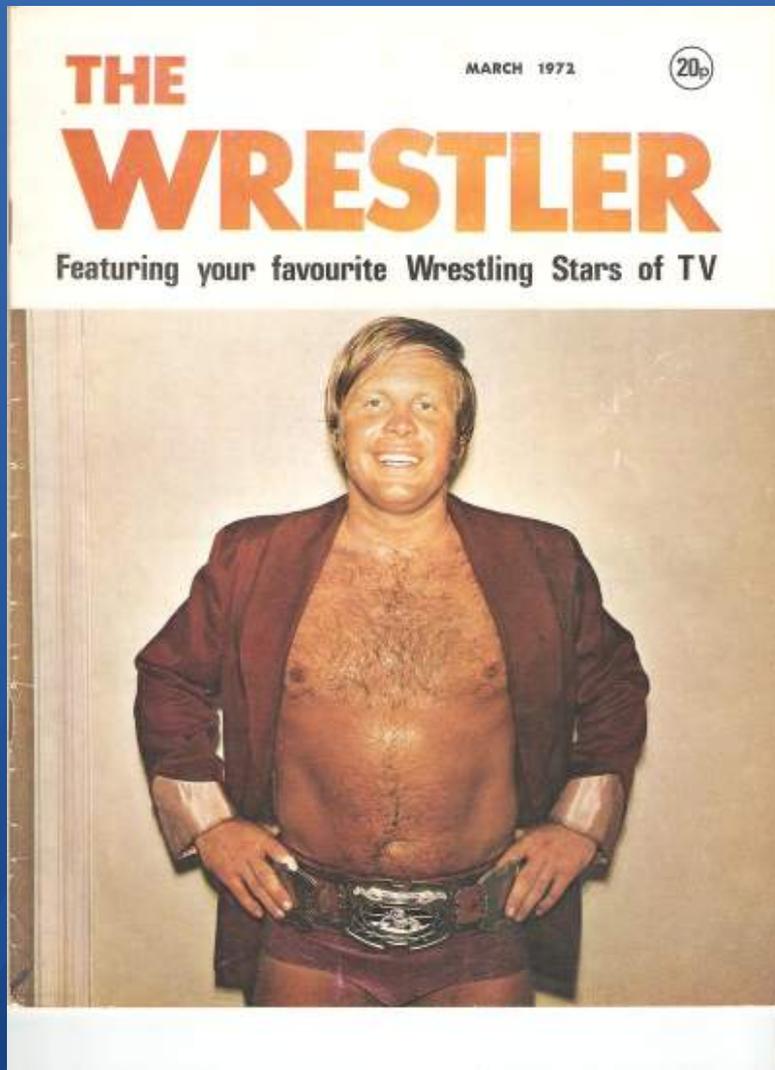


General De Gaulle may have been keeping Britain out of the Common Market in 1963 but *The Wrestler* was a gung-ho champion of all that was European, the self-proclaimed "Official Monthly of the European Wrestling Alliance", which may have been a bit too high-brow for some, so here they dumbed it down to being "Europe's Wrestling Magazine". The Entente Cordiale extended to having European wrestlers on the front page of the magazine, but invariably in a submissive position: Belgian Marius Daniels doesn't seem to have too many exit strategies at his disposal here.

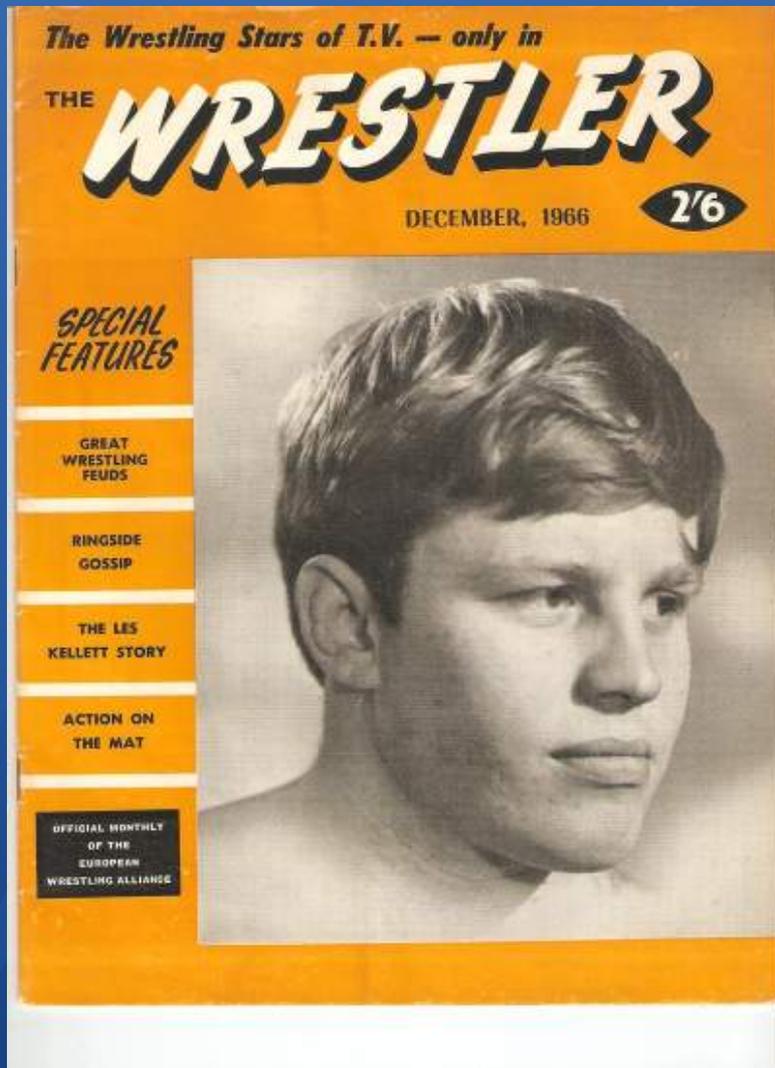


Especially for fans of Wigan's Francis Sullivan, foremost amongst whom is Heritage heavyweight Dave Sutherland.

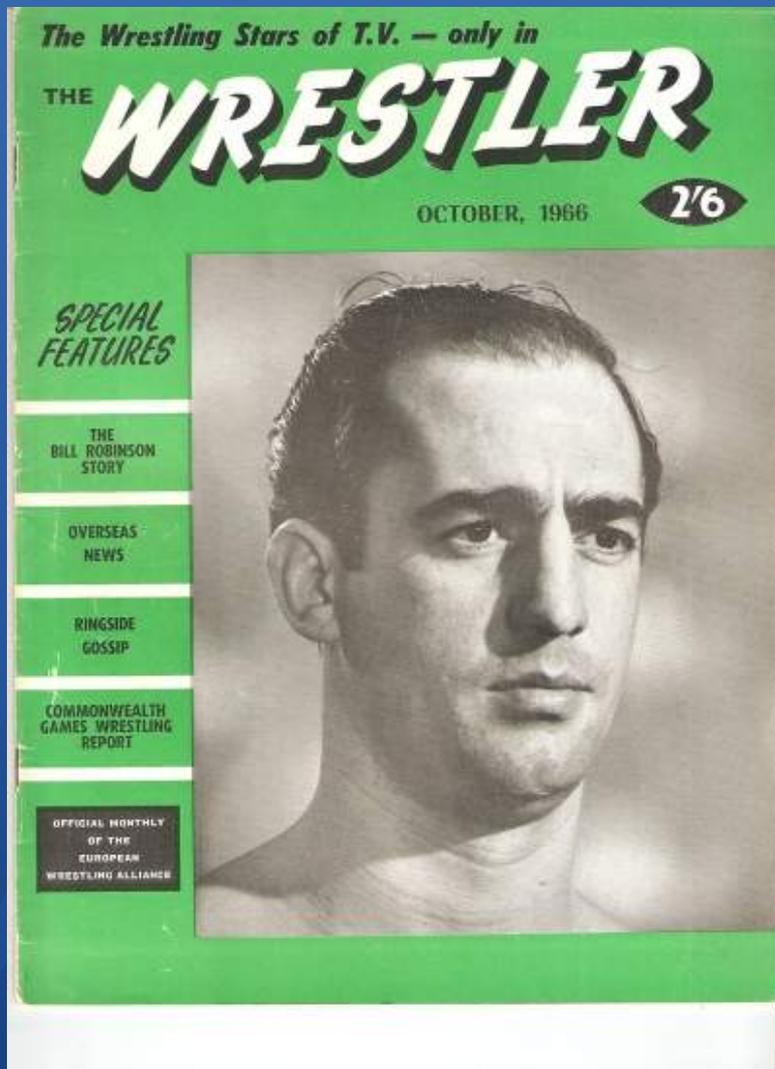
Not sure how many marks out of ten Zoltan Boscik would give Reg Williams for his effort here.



We kick off a set of ten portrait poses with the new British welterweight champion in 1972. Brian Maxine had had to relinquish one of his middle or welterweight belts and Vic Faulkner was coming off a recent loss of his European Middleweight title to Mick McManus. Smiles all round but why did they so often have the wrestler put his dressing gown back on after a bout when he could dirty it with sweat? Strange, but many of these colour portraits were shot this way.



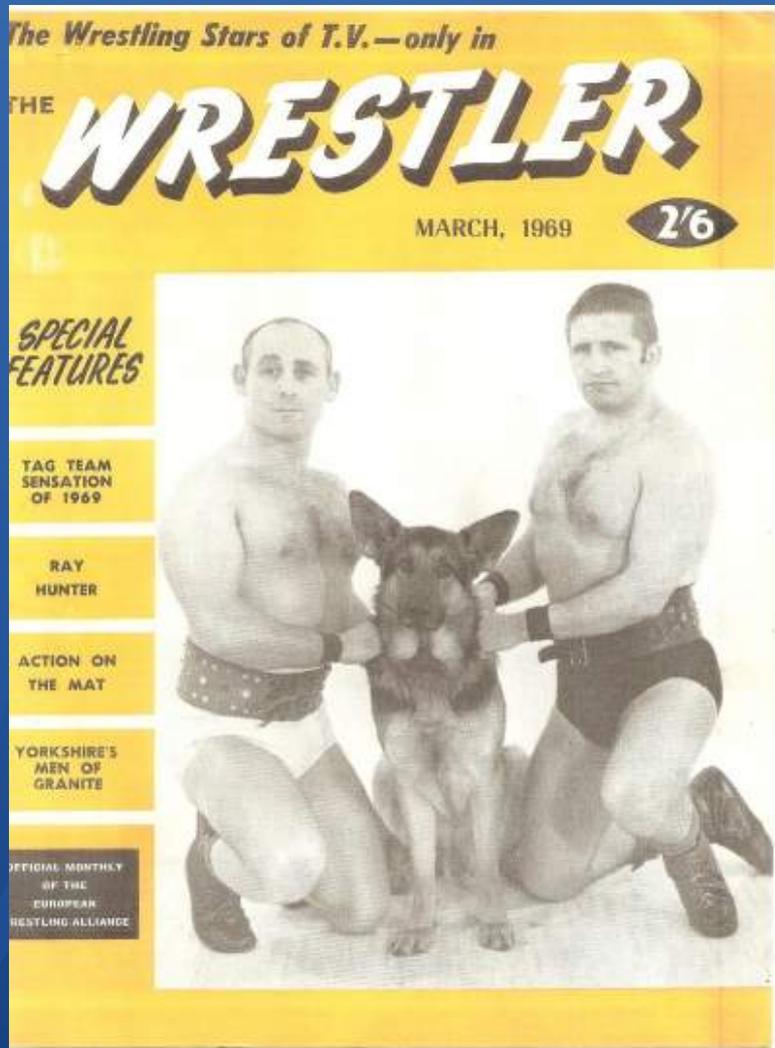
It doesn't really look like the same many just five years earlier, does it? This teenage pose was clearly taken several years before finally becoming a cover portrait .Vic Faulkner has shot to nationwide mid-sixties fame in tag action alongside ...



..... Bert Royal. The pair wrestled as brothers and Bert's shot too can be dated back to the 1950's - even though it was published just two months prior to Vic's.

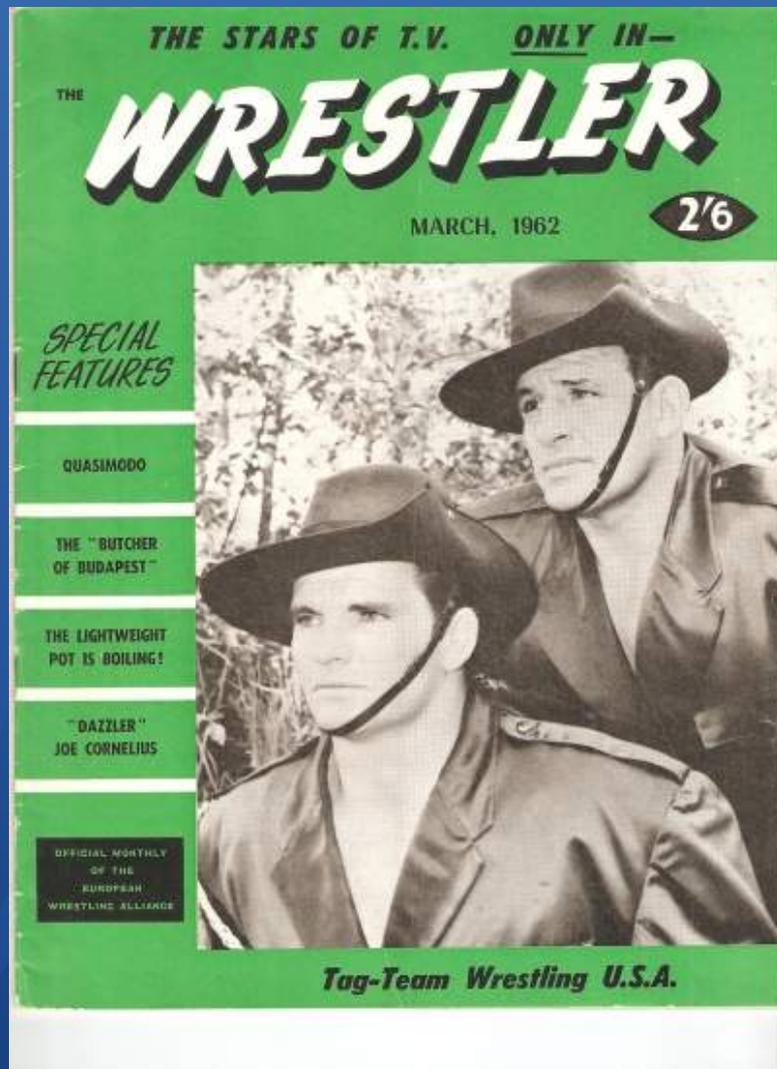
Royal had already been a professional for 16 years by October 1966.

Graham Bawden commented:
"Bert Royal and Vic Faulkner always made great front cover shots."



Now this was more of a way to promote a tag team, even though Syd Cooper had by this time moved south to London and Alan Dennison's new tag partner in the Dynamic Dennisons had become Ted Heath.

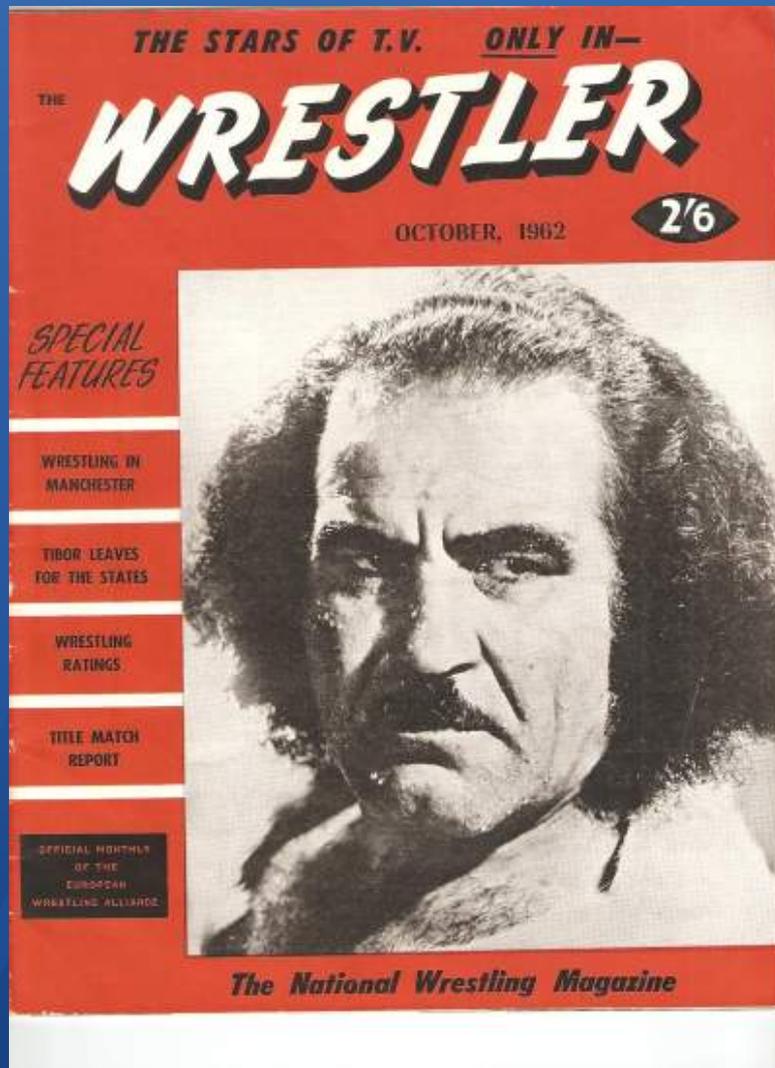
No leotards, strangely enough. But Alan's German Shepherd Hassan making up the threesome.



Another touch of international glamour:

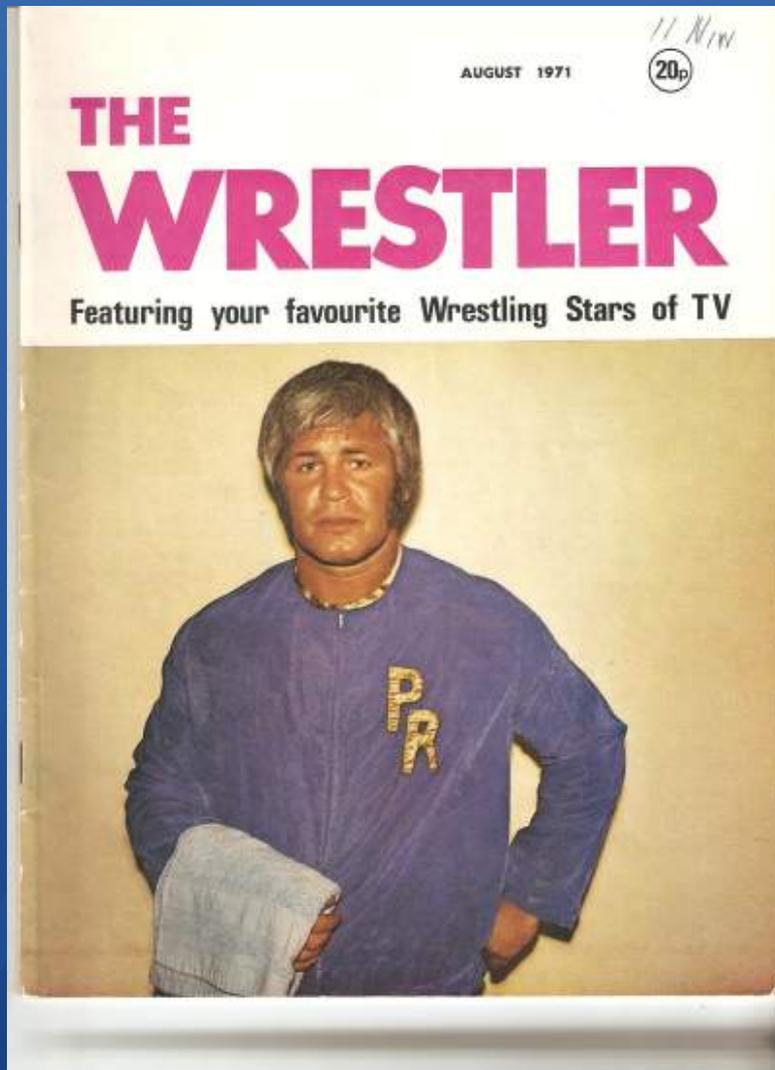
Roy Heffernan and Al Costello, the Fabulous Kangaroos. Not a sight of them in British rings.

This tells us clearly that The Wrestler had started out with a fair level of independence and merely some co-operation by Joint Promotions, who could have had little material interest in promoting names and faces that would never grace their bills.

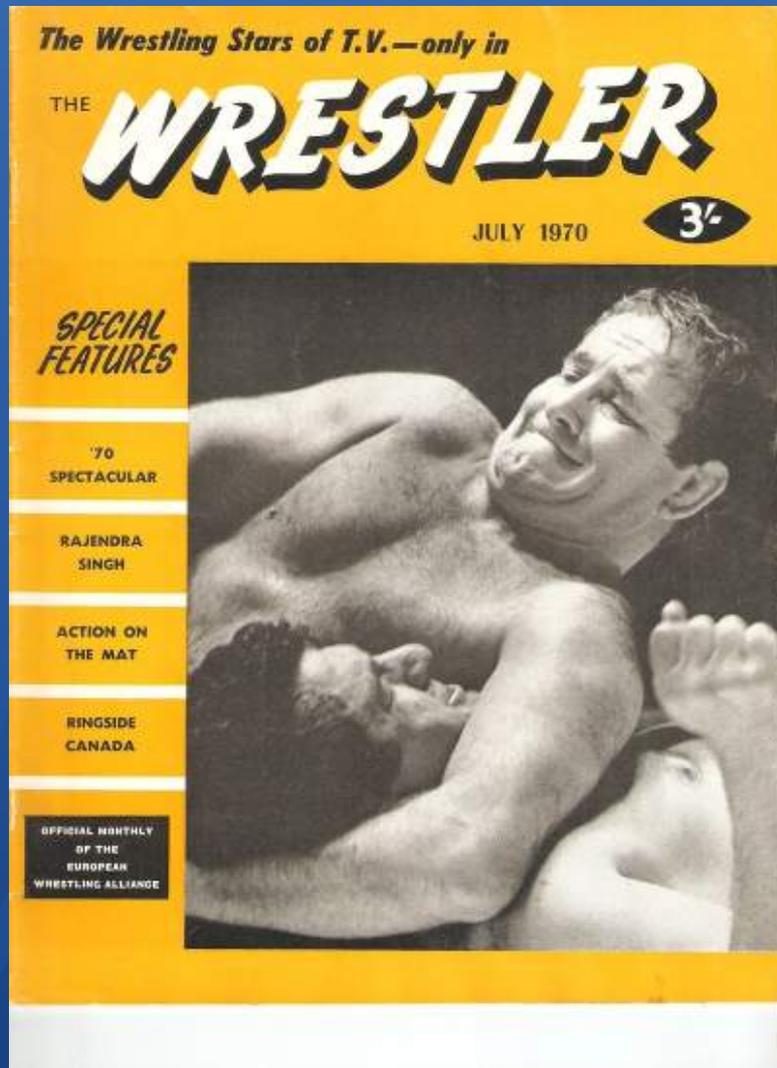


Nikolai Zigulinov, a Bulgarian heavyweight who was at that time "wrestling in Australia" is another case in point. What benefit could the magazine have by showing us wrestlers we would never see wrestle in British rings? We believe this to be very clear evidence that, once The Wrestler was established, it was taken over by Joint Promotions, and seemingly Dale Martin's. But back to 1962 and edition number 5 of The Wrestler. The magazine was clearly trying to find its identity, now claiming to be "The National Wrestling Magazine" as opposed to a European focused publication which it had done in its earlier editions.

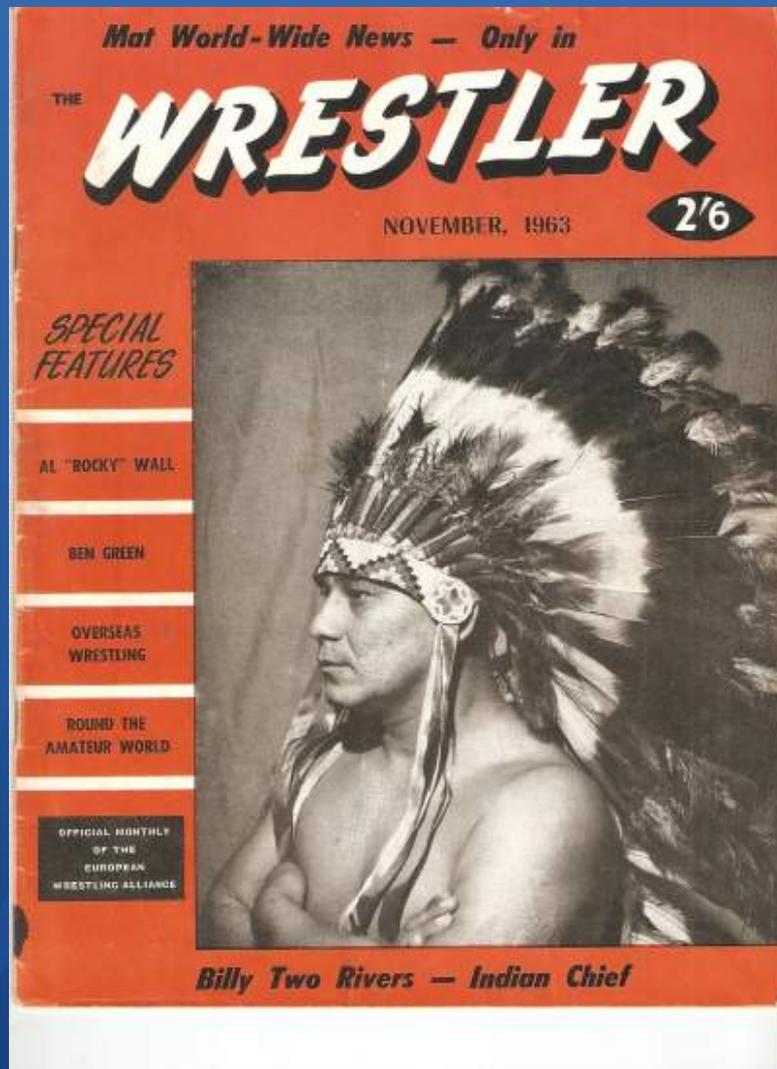
Tom H wrote: "The name Nikolai Zigulinov sounded familiar so I dug out my scrapbook and found a local newspaper cutting dated 5/1/61. That day was the first of many of my Thursday evening trips to the wrestling at Ilford Baths. The paper had a report of the previous weeks wrestling. Top of the bill was "wildman of Bulgaria" Nikolai Zigulinov. His opponent was Shirley Crabtree. The report went on to say Crabtree and Zigulinov put on a great performance of all in wrestling, and it was a wonderful sight to see two top class wrestlers put on such a fast show. Crabtree won the match by a knockout in round five. I wish I could have been there."



PR on the jacket certainly didn't stand for Public Relations! Could they possibly have selected a more dour and unappealing photo as a cover page? Was this shot likely to have new spectators flocking to halls nationwide? Nagasaki had just been unmasked on tv by Billy Howes, McManus had become an albeit portly European Middleweight Champion. And the industry's main mouthpiece came up with this funereal pose! What sort of favouritism was at play to accord Peter Rann such prominence? That demise was only 14 editions away, and Peter Rann seemed to know something.



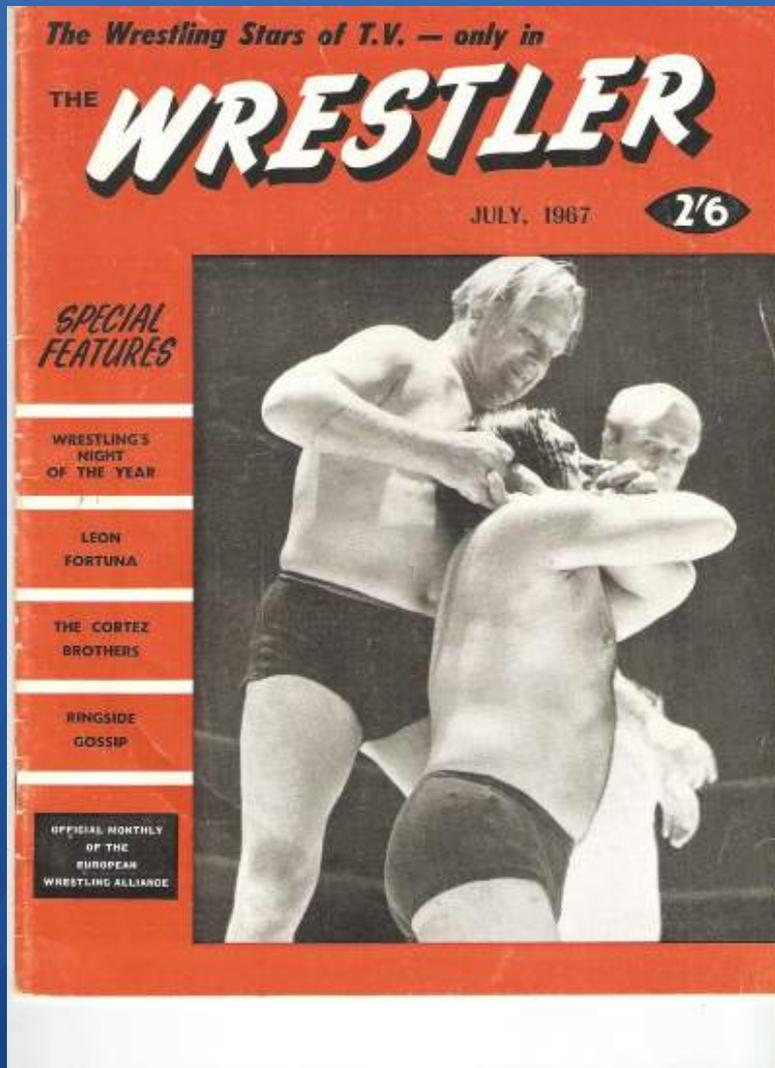
A bespectacled Professor Adi Wasser featured in the Top 100 Wrestling Heritage photos and weighs in again here at Number 73. They say he was a real hard shooter type. Which just puts into perspective that particular talent in a professional wrestling context (where it can't really be applied, in any case). We can't say we recall any great charisma from The Professor and can't fathom why Gaby Calderon would have wanted to restyle himself with such a name. Still, the ever-reliable Mike Marino, as here, probably allowed him to look good.



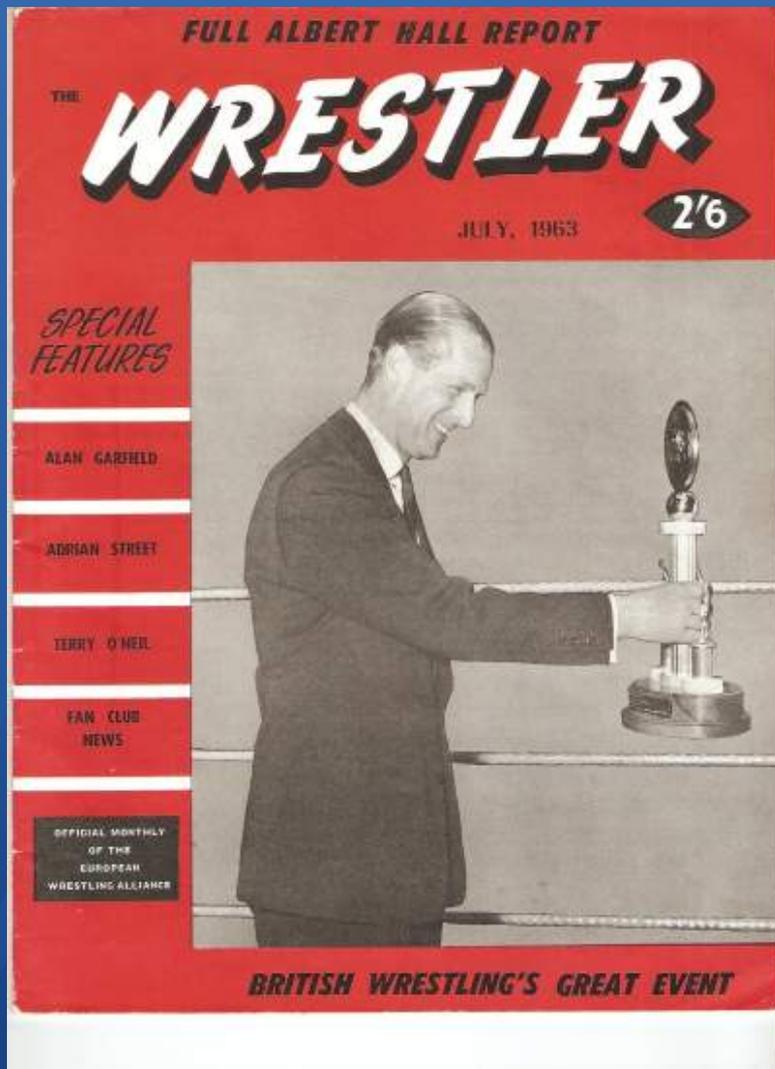
Now there's a pose!

Cowboy and injun films were still all the rage and this gimmick fed off the craze. Billy Two Rivers was bestowed near invincibility throughout his various extended UK tours.

The native Canadian has come in for some criticism from fans down the years but he certainly looked the part and was mostly appreciated at the time.

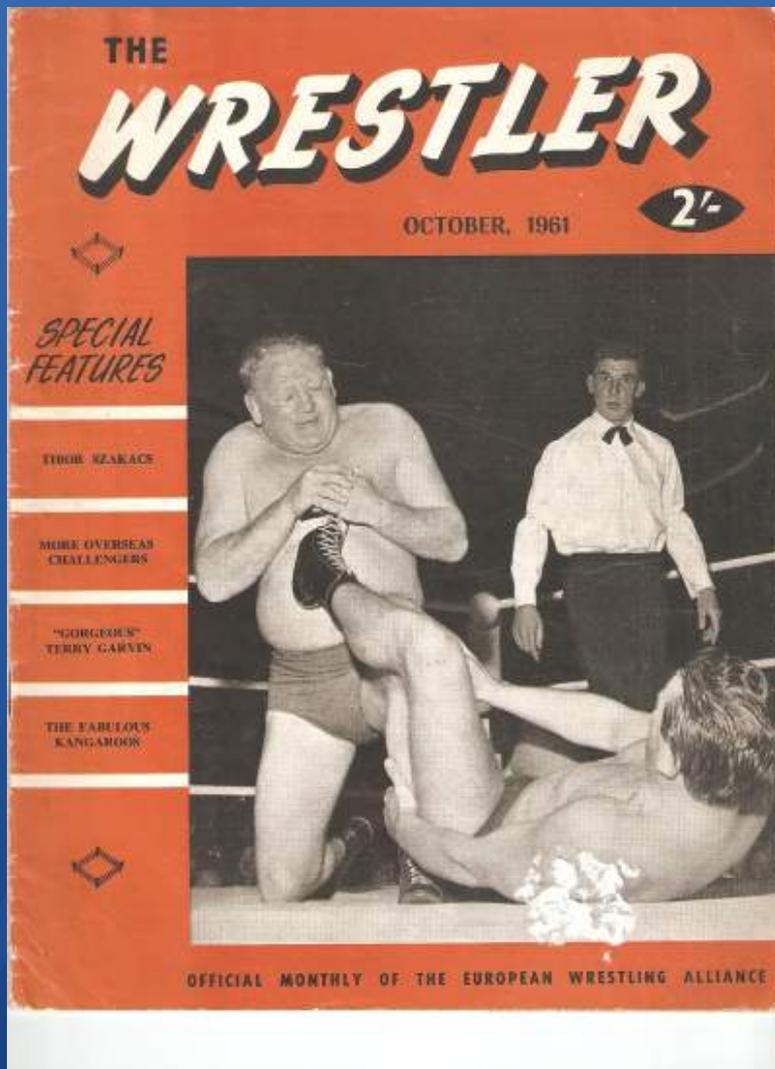


Formal portrait shots of Les Kellet are hard to come by and he never graced the cover of The Wrestler magazine in that format. But he did appear on several covers in ring action and a couple of those editions are included in our ranking, starting off here with his favoured Japanese strangle-hold on Steve Logan. This was good camerwork as Kellett often applied only a semi-Jap-strangle in his routine, leaving the opponents free arm to flail redundantly and implausibly.



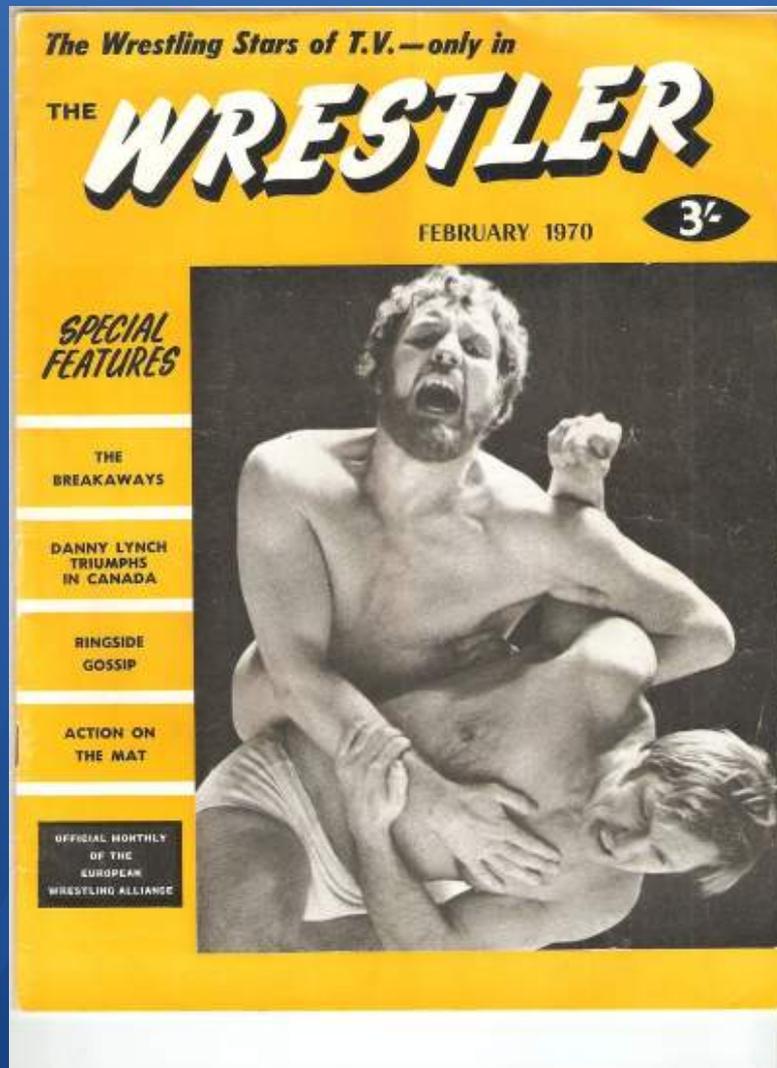
The magazine cover doesn't exaggerate and this really was a momentous night: the first of Prince Philip's two official visits to Royal Albert Hall wrestling. He is seen presenting the Royal Albert Hall Tournament Trophy to Tibor Szakacs after the Hungarian had defeated John Da Silva in the final, held over from the previous month. Wrestling had really arrived and both television stations moved to increase their coverage over the coming couple of years. Strictly as a cover page, however, this photo languishes at 70 in our countdown for the very peculiar cropping out of everyone but HRH. It hardly oozes atmosphere and even invites knockers to suggest this was fake - a mere cut and paste job. The same marking down awaits a later entry in our listing.

-



The referee's attire tells us a lot about wrestling in 1961 as Tommy Mann and Chic Purvey lock up at Belle Vue, Manchester. Gordon Smith looks very dapper for the formal matter of a night's wrestling. Promoters were still keen to achieve acceptance for the sport and insisted upon high levels of quality in every aspect of what, in twenty-first century parlance, would be called "the product". Mann was the British Middleweight Champion, a tough Londoner, domiciled in Manchester and wrestling on new home turf. His girth, however, clearly show signs of good living and he was a regular on television light entertainment shows throughout the decade.

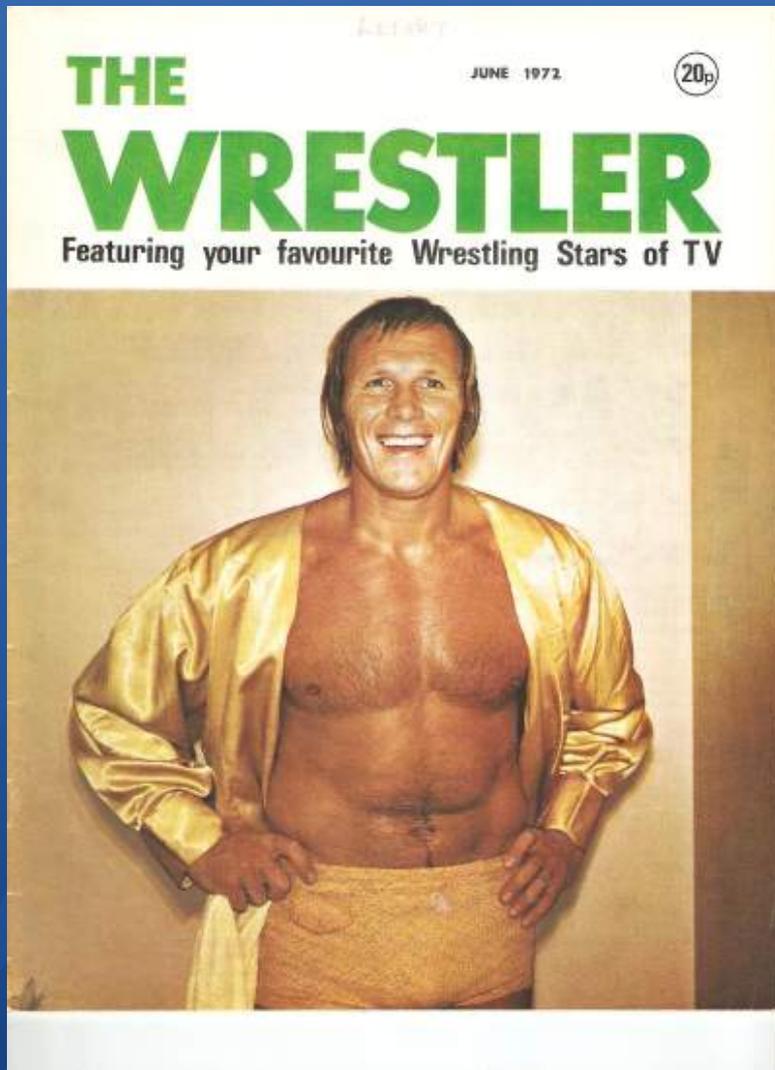
Bernard Hughes: "Tommy Mann, a lovely old man from way back. Saw him wrestle a few times at Newcastle. Nearly always giving weight away but generally came through. Knew the ropes and was a genuine hard man."



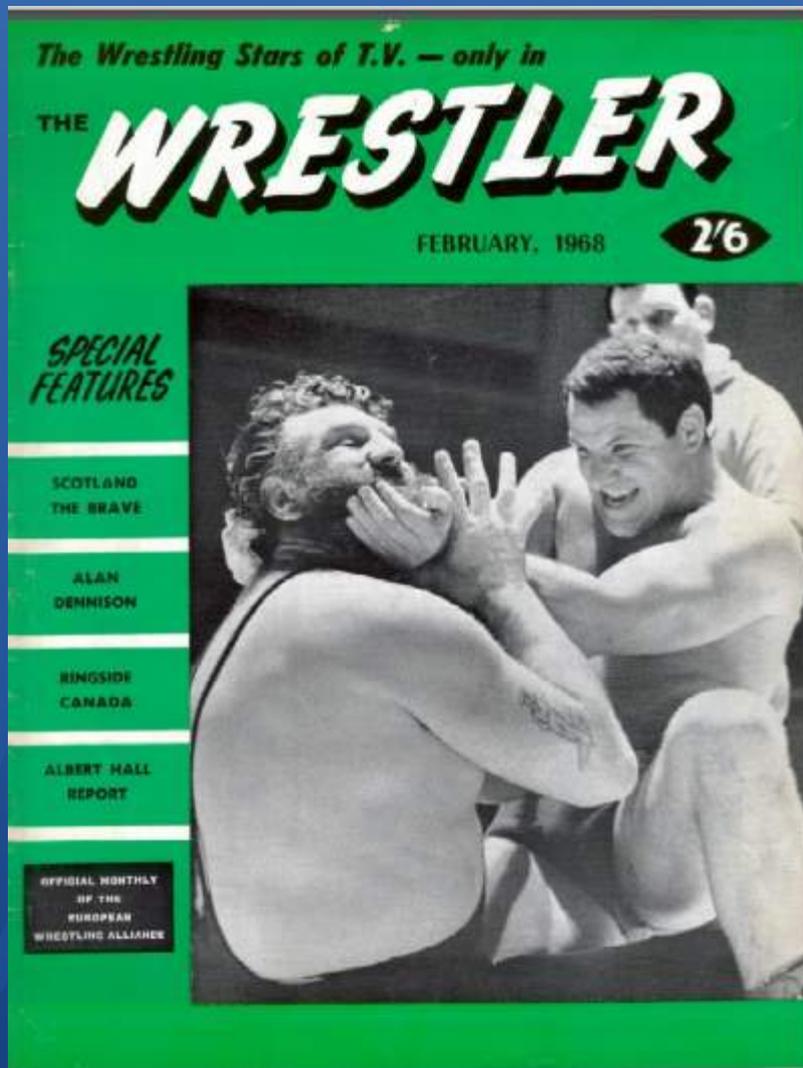
Peerless Pat Roach arrived on the Joint Promotions scene in the late sixties and his size and judo prowess instantly made him a formidable heavyweight challenger. But like most newbies he was required to serve a long apprenticeship before attaining the professional heights his true competitive skills merited, as you can read here.

Chris Newman:

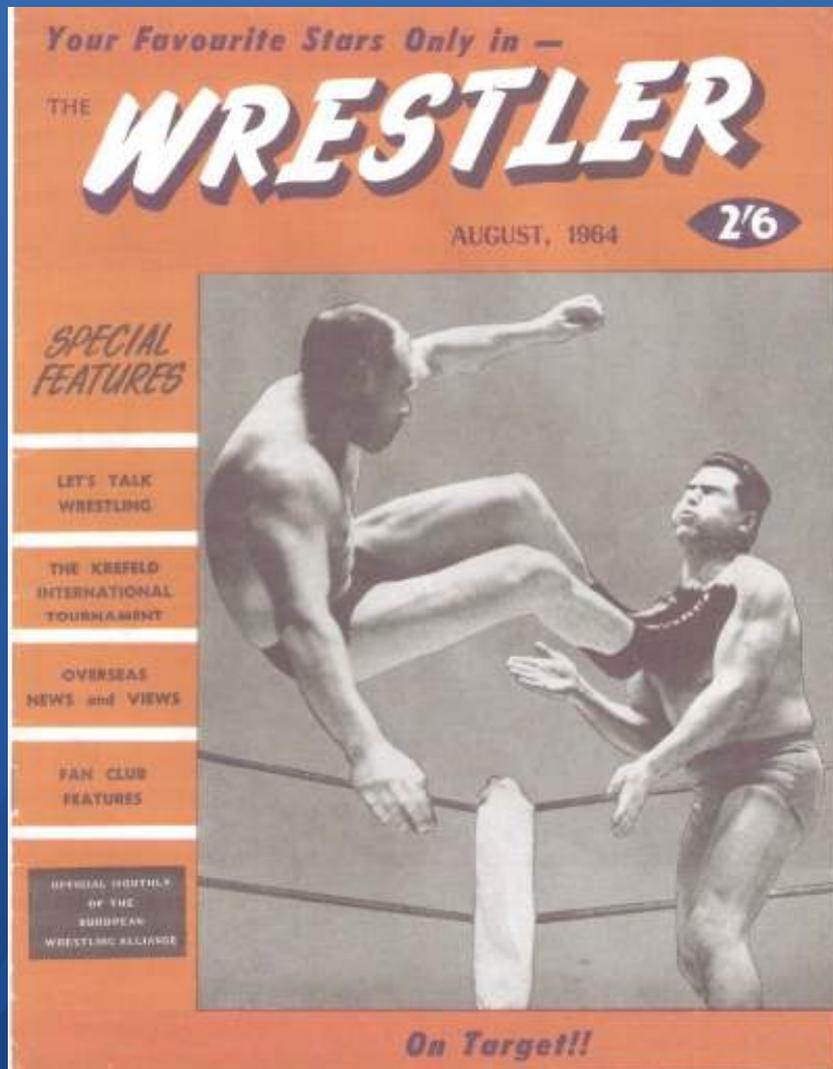
“As Big Pat Roach he was usually heel-like, as I remember it. But as Bomber Pat Roach, star of “Auf Wiedersehen” the classic comedy drama, he was all hero. I saw him wrestle several times during this period. Top-man. Always came on to the “Living Alright” theme. How though did he get that nasty scar, up near one of his armpits? I often wondered.”



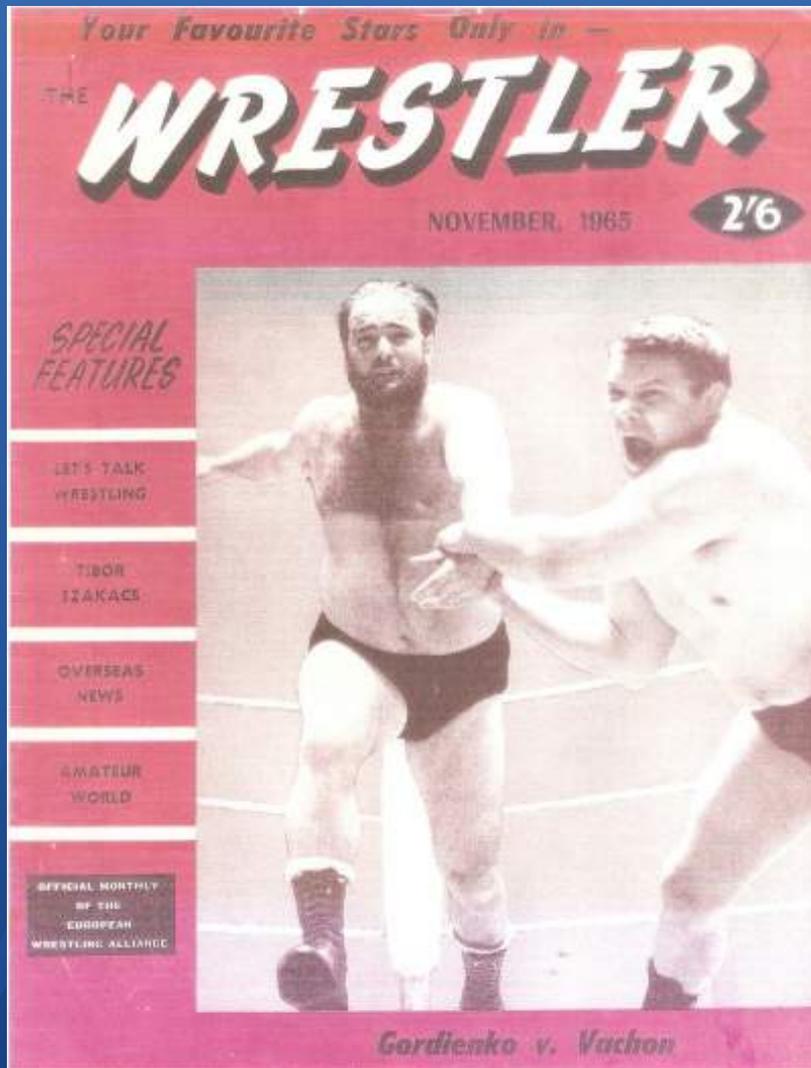
And here's Steve Vedor a couple of years later in a shot that encapsulates and successfully conveys the glamour and style of professional wrestling. His yellow and gold ring attire and flashing smile were his weapons, but do not overlook that this was another highly skilled professional wrestler, well aware of his own very special niche and astute enough to deploy it to the full.



The words "Grunt n Groan" were a fond synonym for professional wrestling. But another Gr remains more tangibly as a legacy in this particular context, and that's Grimace. Séan Regan suitably emphasises the strength he is exerting to twist the giant's neck, while Bruno Elrington shows a satisfying degree of helplessness. Professional Wrestling wasn't all about high-flying death-defying acrobatics. Stoushes like this, if carried out with full commitment, as here, could satisfy audiences for several minutes of most bouts. Referee Ward looks on dispassionately; he's seen it all before.



It might look like Linde Caulder but that's Bob Taylor executing a spectacular drop-kick on Johnny Apollon. The caption states that Taylor is "on target" - but where would you like to see contact happen? The drop-kick was a purely professional move with no amateur grounding at all - and audiences loved it.

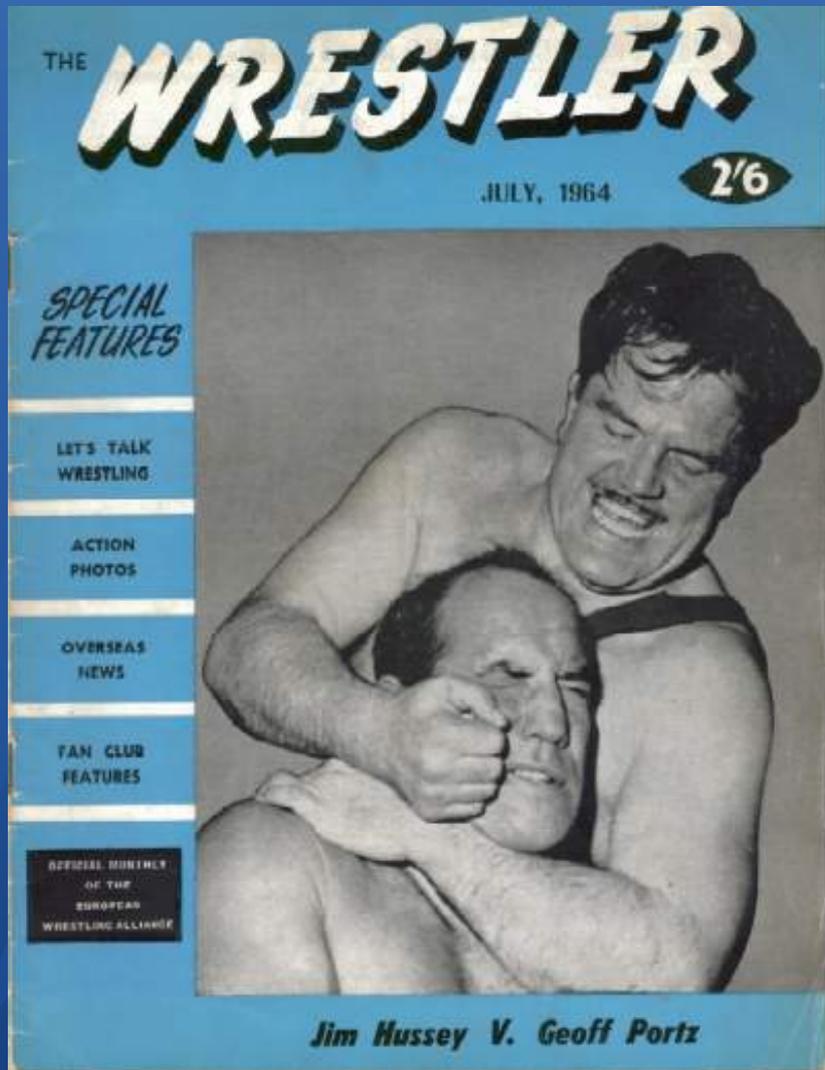


An all-Canadian affair as Butcher Vachon is posted by Georges Gordienko. The posting is another very professional move, one we have never ever discussed on Wrestling Heritage, rather surprisingly. But as we can see both in Number 64 and the two photos either side of it, when a purely professional move is executed enthusiastically by all concerned, the result is believable excitement.

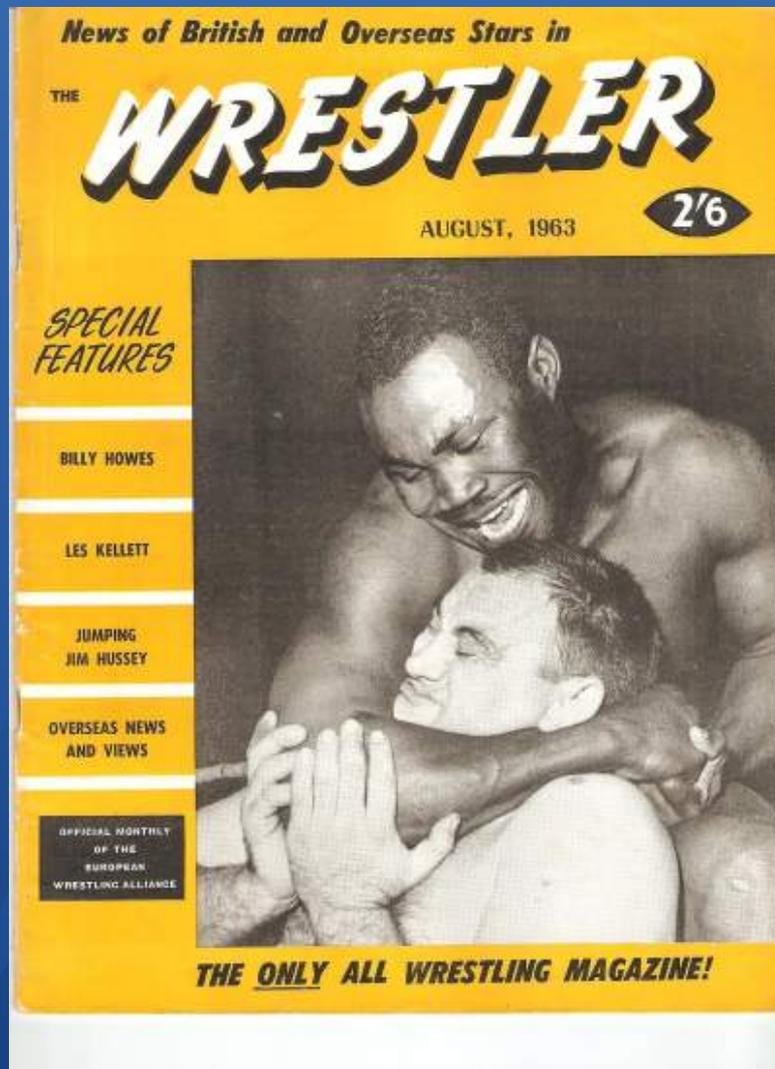
Ray Hulm wrote: "At it's best professional wrestling was an entertaining exhibition of wrestling holds and throws. At it's worst it was a nothing more than slapstick stage fighting. I suppose that most of the matches fell between the two extremes. But why did promoters demand all that posting, 'undressing ' Jap Strangle Holds, Irish Whips and so on? Were audiences less sophisticated in the old days and how much has all of this to do with the eventual decline of the game?"

David Mantell replied: "'undressing ' Jap Strangle Holds, Irish Whips and so on?' Nothing wrong with reversing/countering a hold or rolling out of an armbar."

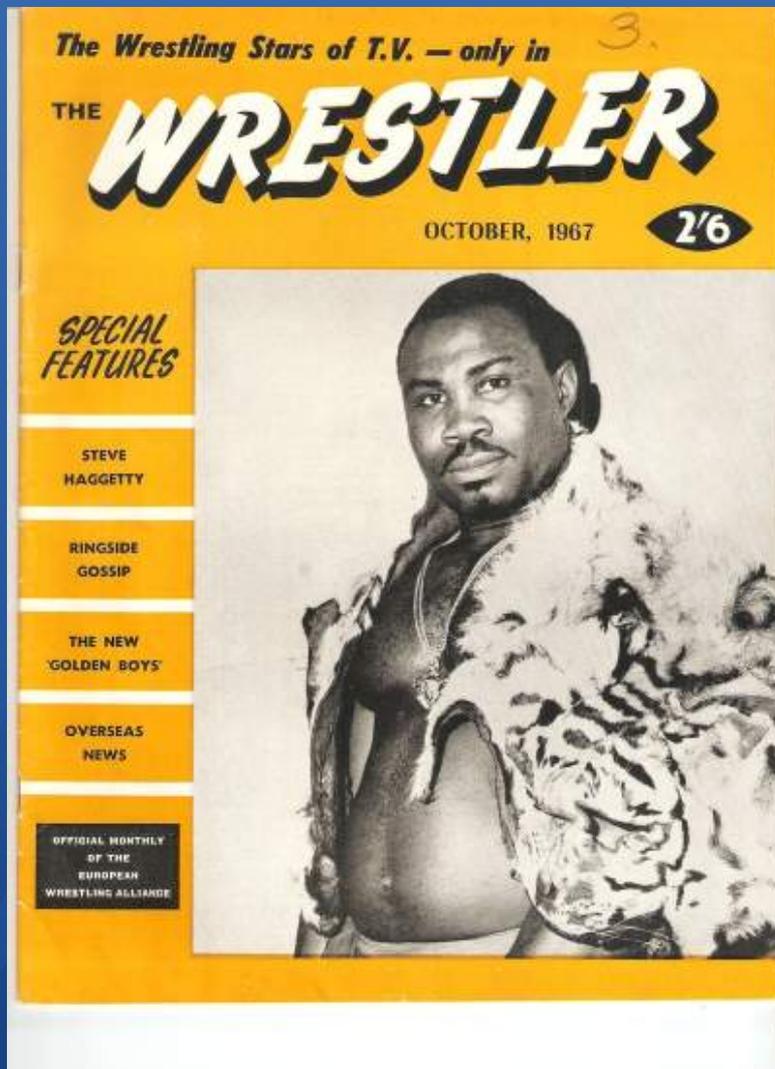
John Shelvey: "I always believed someone travelling at speed and suddenly coming to a shuddering halt always looked convincing (as long as it was done with gusto) and was a good set up for a back breaker over the knee, boston crab etc. In the 60s/70s over here in Aus. Con Tolios used to be hurtled into the turnbuckle (he went off on his travels like an Olympic sprinter) in every one of his matches, sometimes multiple times and the postings always made you wince. (Yes, he was years ahead of Bret Hart who would take the same bump regularly decades later). It is like everything, if it looks hurtfull it adds to the spectacle. "



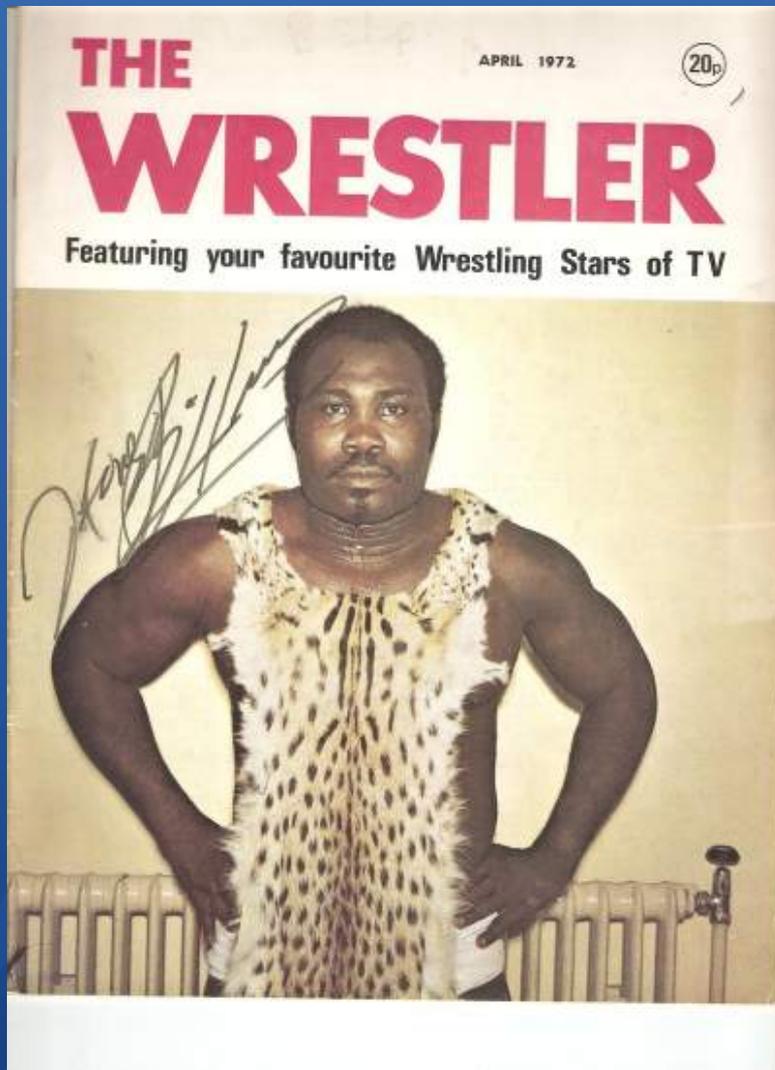
We met up with Jumping Jim Hussey in his final restful days a couple of years ago but this is how we prefer to remember the terror of the mat and Northern Area Heavyweight Champion.



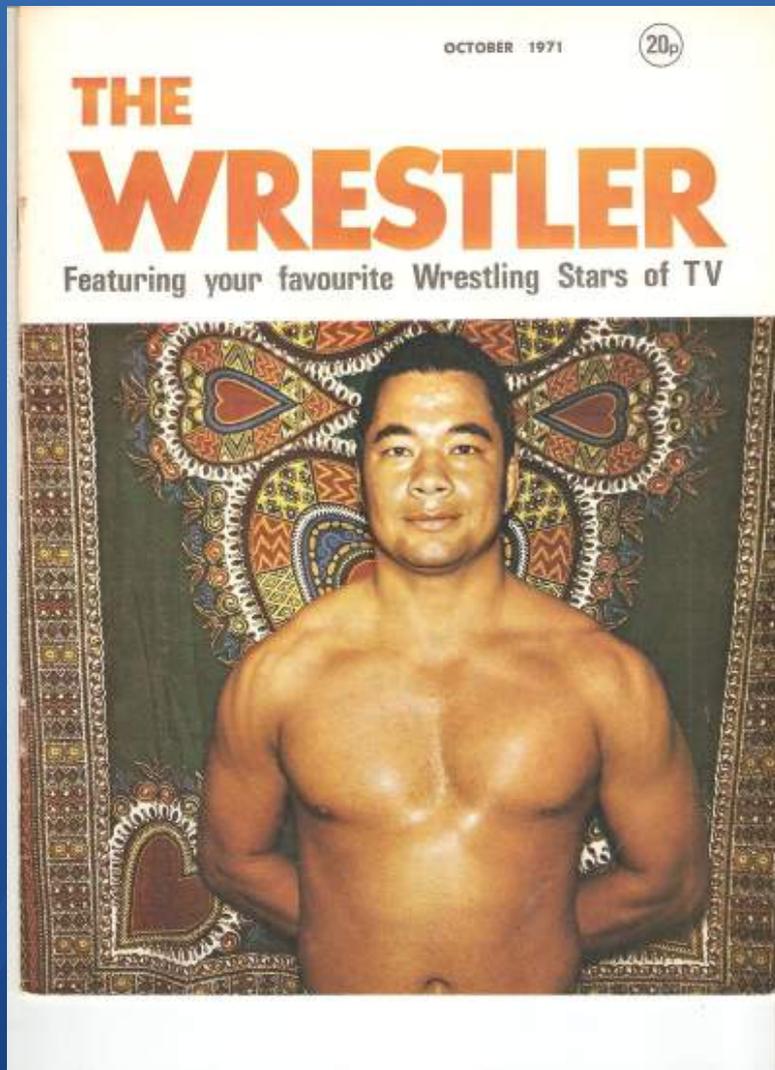
Monty Python couldn't have dreamt up a less fearsome name for the West African Warrior than Nigel. Here he is in 1963. They jiggled and juggled between Warrior Nigel and Nigel the Warrior but that streak of equatorial terror and exoticness just wasn't there. Finally...



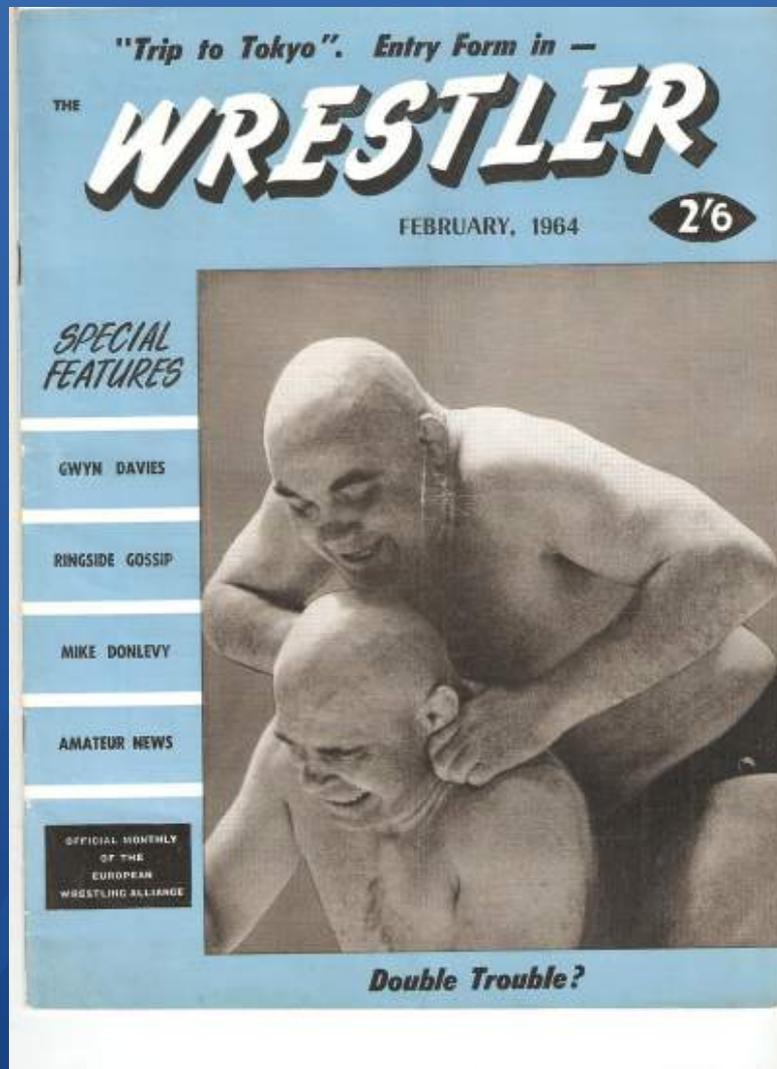
....the Lion King emerged in the form of Honey Boy Zimba and Freetown, Sierra Leone, became entrenched in our geographies like Clapham Common. But the tiger skin had to go if Honey Boy was to share a tag rope with the already established and leopard-skinned Masambula.



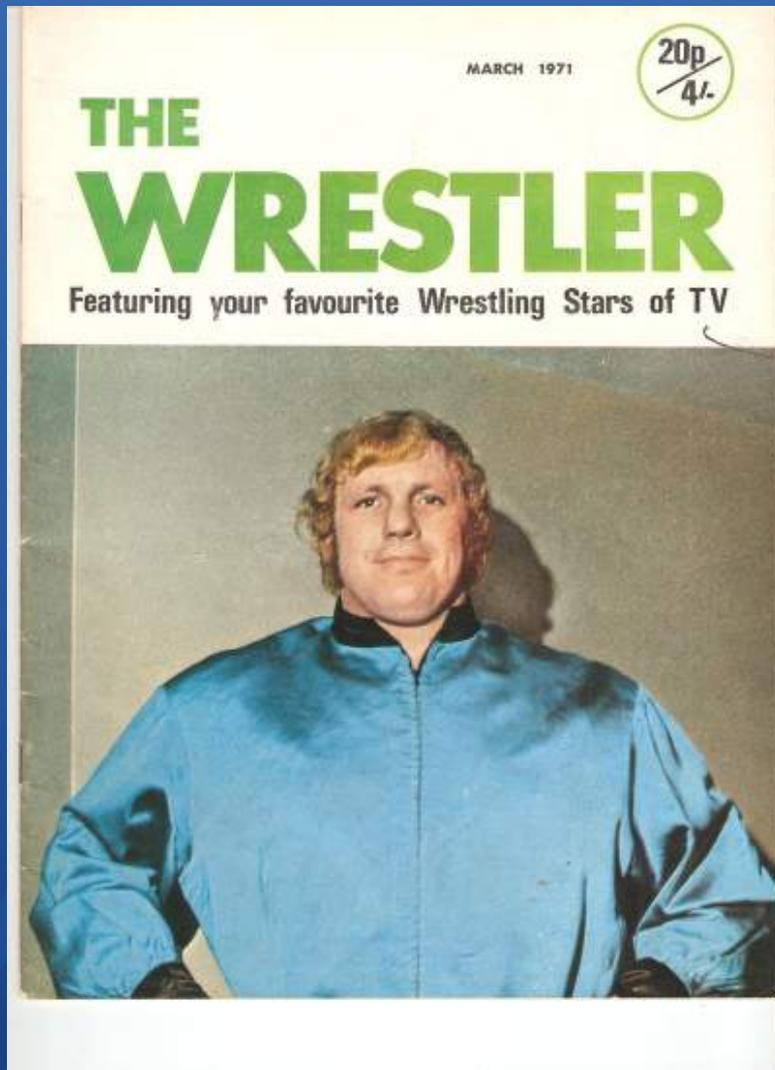
And here's Honey Boy as we remember him best. The perfect 15 stone 7 pounds pro who could outweigh and be outwitted by the veteran bill toppers of the early seventies; or face up forcefully to other skilful heavyweights; or, later in the decade, provide regular credible opposition to slow super-heavyweights. Only his Mancunian neighbour, Colin Joynson, enjoyed such a multi-purpose career.



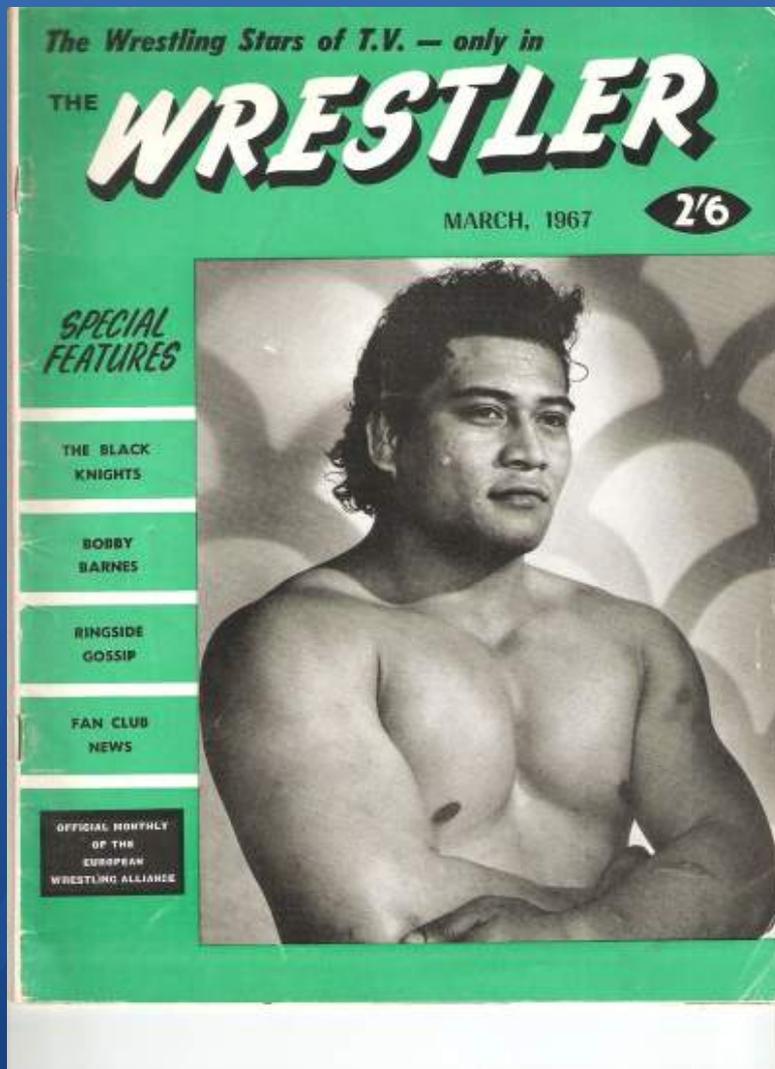
We first remember seeing Len Hurst on the other end of Zimba's tag rope in 1968 as the junior half of "The Honey Boys". In Dale Martin style, another exotic Caribbean location was put on fans' must-visit list as the West Indies Middleweight Champion was billed from Montego Bay. Lenny disappeared from the British scene in 1972, returning on the odd occasion, and found fame and fortune in North American rings as did five others featured in these ten covers listed in the fifties. Can you spot them all?



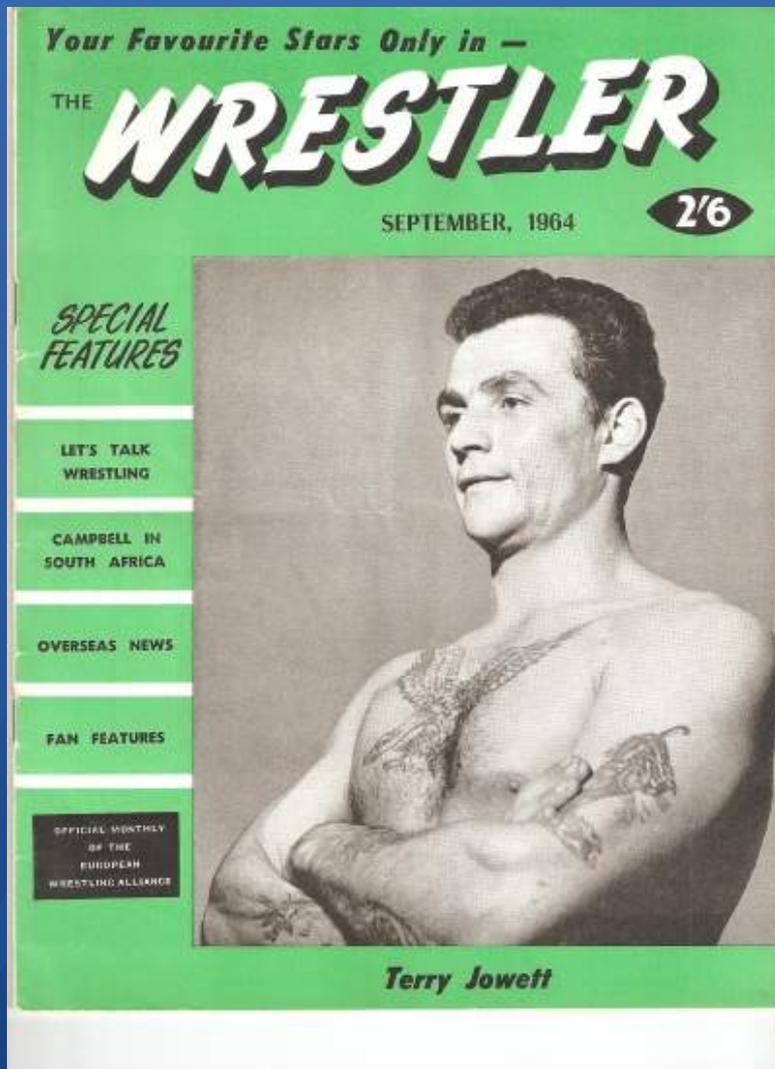
As we launched this countdown at the start of 2014 we heard of the sad passing of The Polish Eagle, Johnny Czeslaw, who only last year featured in the Number One wrestling photo, as selected by Wrestling Heritage. We hope this marvellously exotic utility wrestler - who would turn villain or baby-face or even comic according to his opponent, in the above case Karl Von Chenok - became aware in old age of this first professional wrestling championship of his career.



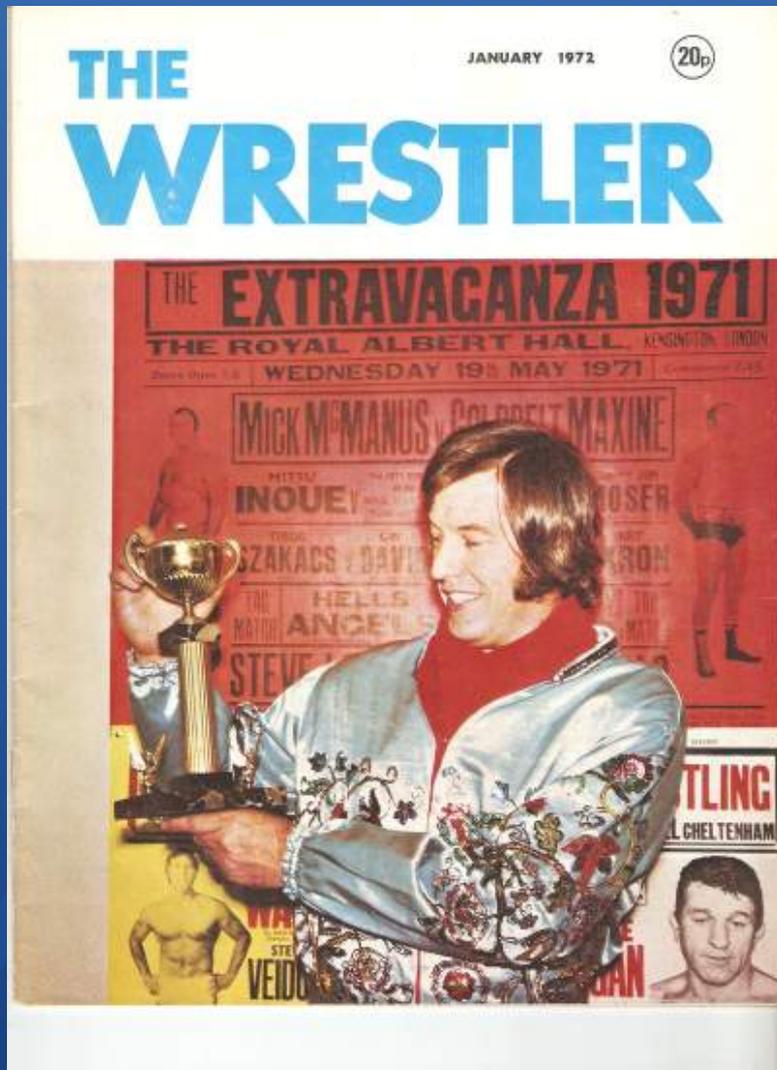
The first ever colour portrait to grace the cover of The Wrestler. Judo Al Hayes' glittering 21-year career was about to come to a close as he relinquished his Southern England Heavyweight Championship to Bruno Elrington and started, in ageless professional wrestling style, a further twenty-something years as a big name in North American wrestling fulfilling all roles from wrestler to manager to ring announcer to commentator and interviewer. Widely respected in all guises, Judo Al died a tragic death in the USA.



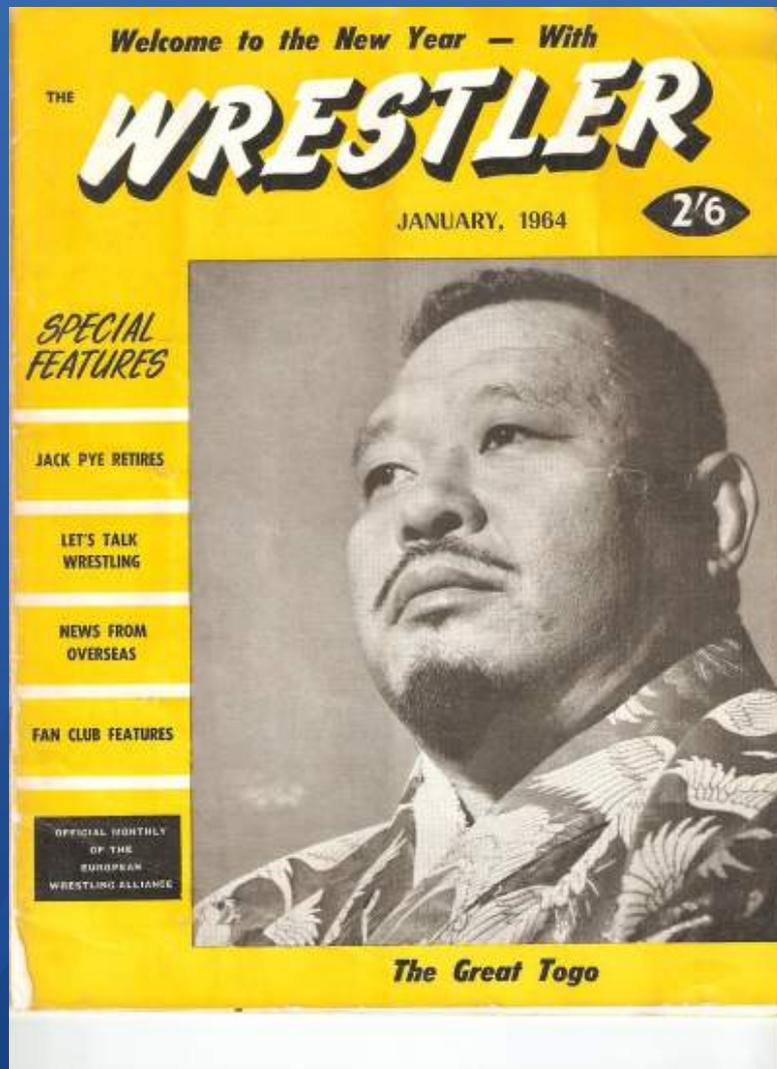
- Peter Fanene Maivia was a popular heavyweight throughout the mid-sixties and is remembered for resting across the angle of the top ropes between rounds as well as for the reports of his putting Billy Robinson through a window in Japan. Maivia too moved to the USA and sired a stable of popular heavyweights and film stars over the coming decades.



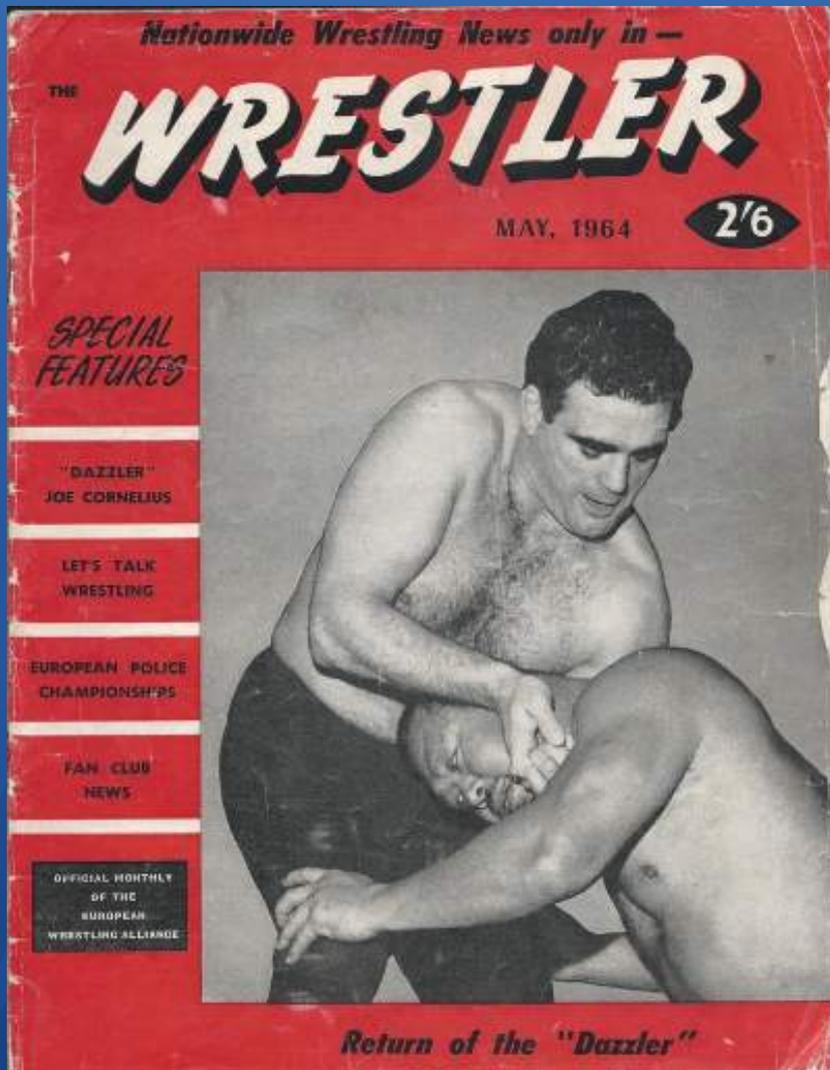
From the days when tattoos were special, original White Eagle Terry Jowett travelled far and wide with his tag partner over 5 or 6 years of intensive action against all the very top teams, including The Black Diamonds, McManus & Logan and The White Phantoms. But Terry disappeared from the scene just at the time he was abandoned by tag partner....



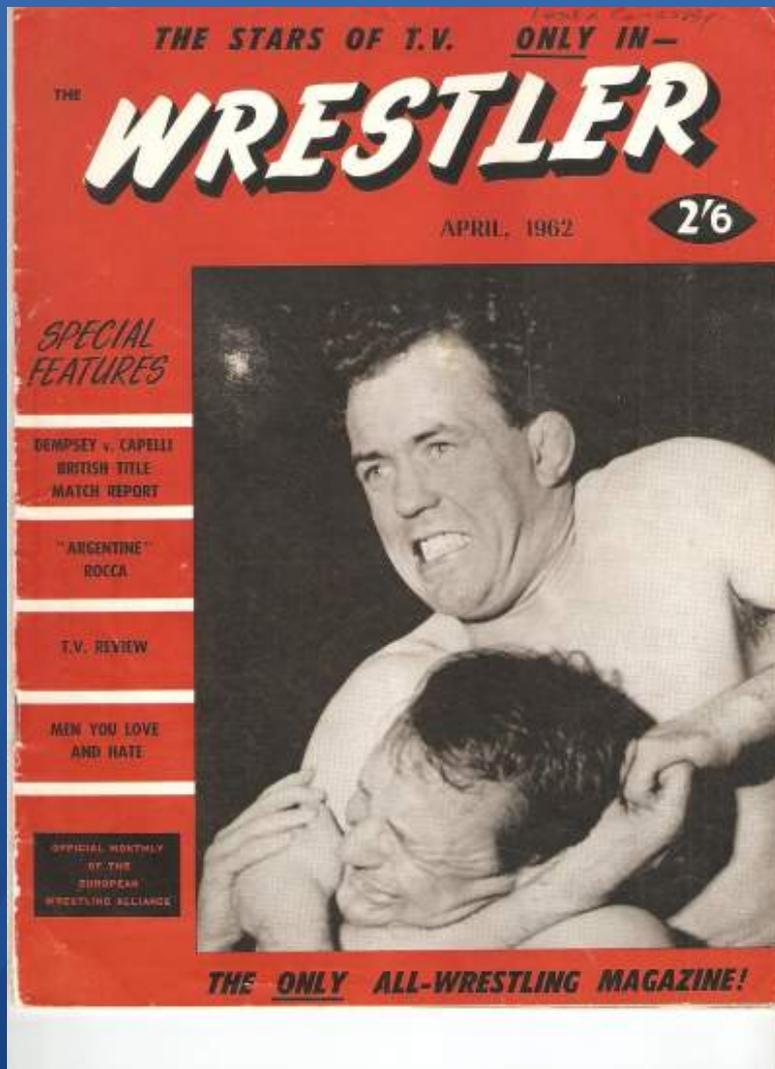
.....Johnny Eagles, yet another who would end up in America, via Japan. We do like this photo. It has meaning and provides us with lots of distractions. Rather like Tony St Clair, Johnny Eagles was a heavyweight just bursting to get out of his middleweight frame. Eagles later appearances frequently had him topping bills as he dwarfed Mick McManus, but the pair managed to make a good fist of things.



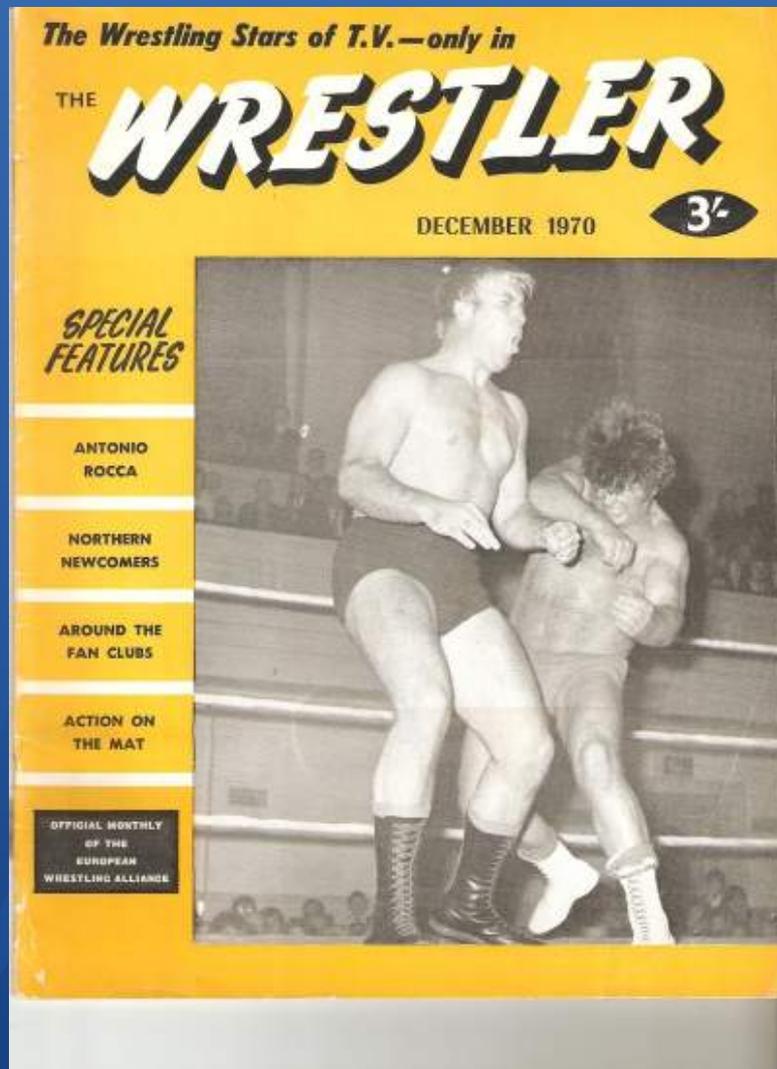
An enigmatic stare from a shot taken some little while before publication. An Olympic silver medallist in weightlifting in 1948, Harold Sakata was a jobbing North American heavyweight through the fifties until finding fame in British rings in the early sixties. Seen at his evil best in ring action alongside the plethora of home-grown heavyweight talent of those halcyon years, when he wrestled as The Great Togo, Sakata was spotted and snapped up for the lucrative and well-remembered villain's role as Oddjob in the 1964 blockbuster, Goldfinger. He immediately moved back to the USA, turning his back on British wrestling. It is hard for us to be any more gracious as The Great Togo seemed to owe far more to Britain and British wrestling than ever he put in. He had even won his Olympic medal in Britain! But we'll be pleased to proven wrong in the Talk Wrestling forum.



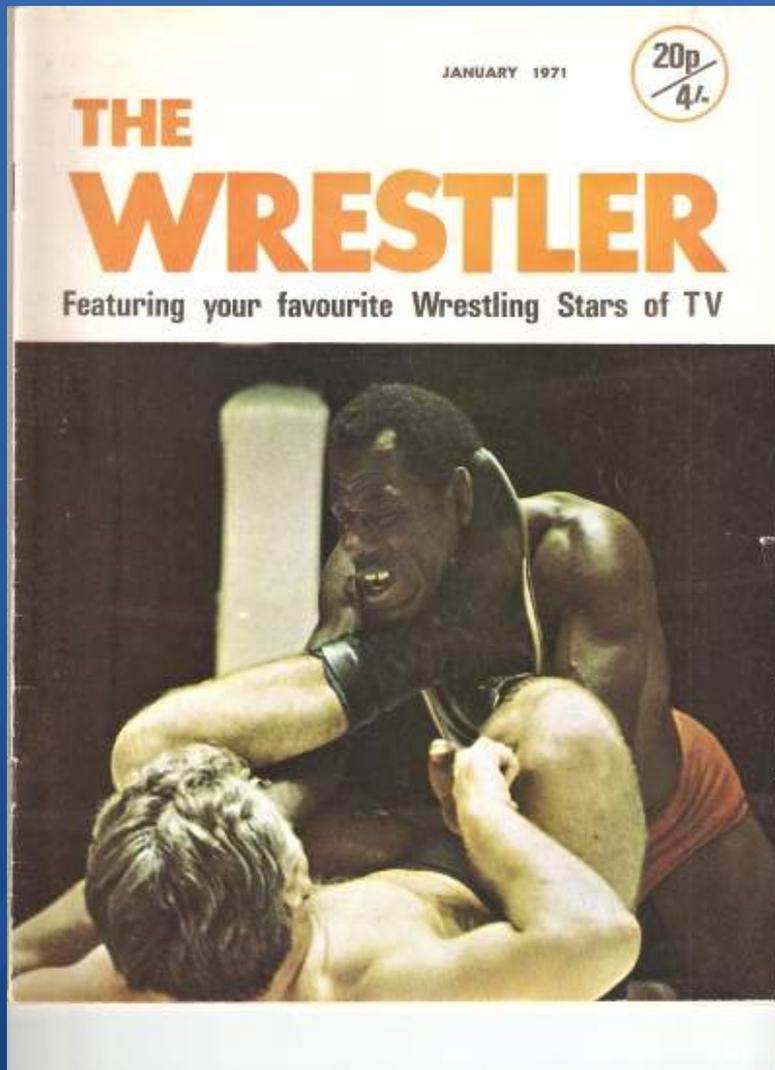
So we can particularly enjoy another shot that the editor of The Wrestler fished from previous years only to publish mischievously just as the filming of Goldfinger was coming to an end. Dazzler Joe Cornelius has the American helpless in a way the Bond movie's producers might not wish to have their latest invincible villain portrayed. The publication of this photo so prominently rather sums up what wrestling authorities thought about Togo by the spring of '64.



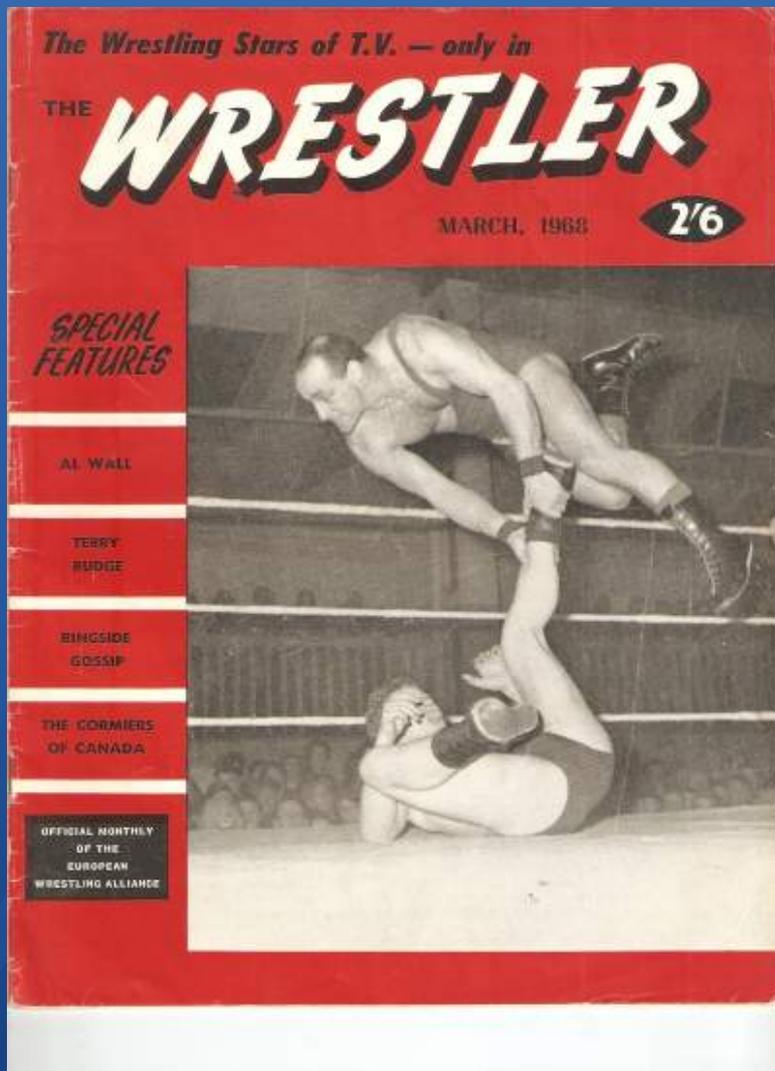
Nudging Fifty is one of the original Black Diamonds, John Foley, yet another of those featured in these fifty-somethings who made a great sixties name, honed his skills in Britain, and went off for a quieter life stateside in the seventies, where British ringcraft seemed automatically to elevate a wrestler to the top of the pack. An alleged aggressive shooter - Alan Colbeck doesn't seem to have any doubts - and subsequent trainer of novice wrestlers



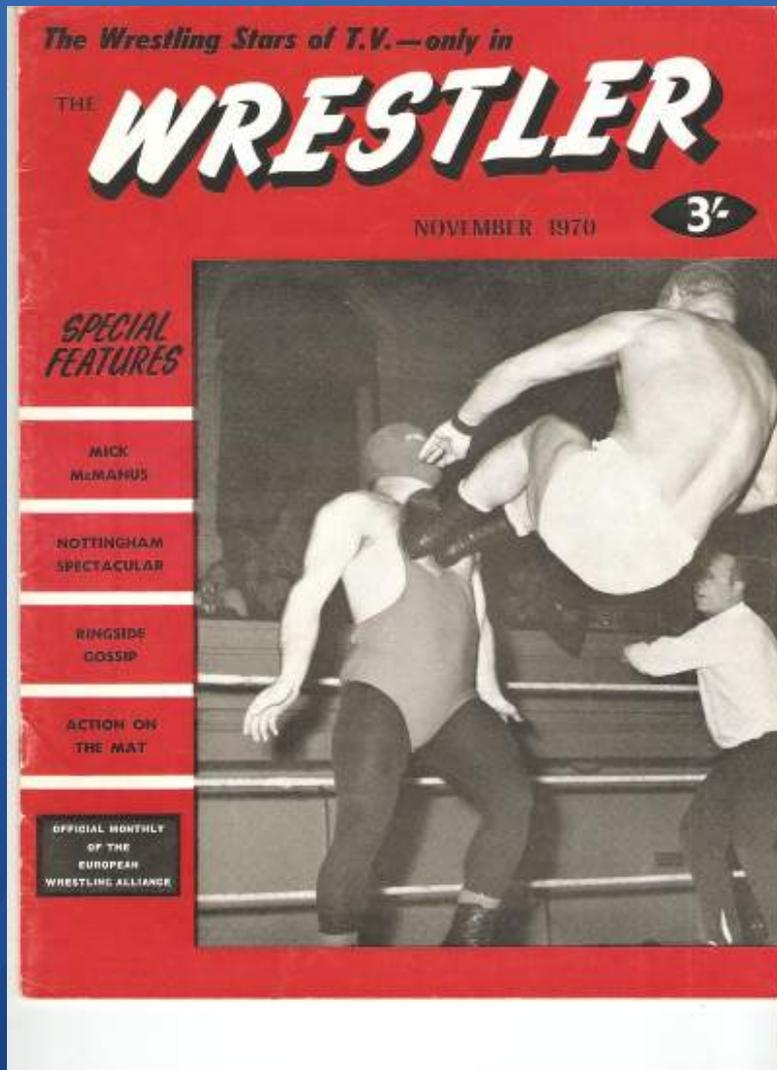
What words can we add to John Kowalski's expression! The final black and white photo ever to appear on the cover of The Wrestler magazine, and what a beauty it is, too. At 6'4", The Hampshire farmer was a formidable opponent to all heavyweights in the seventies and, as can be seen in this Scottish scenario, he travelled the length and breadth of the country.



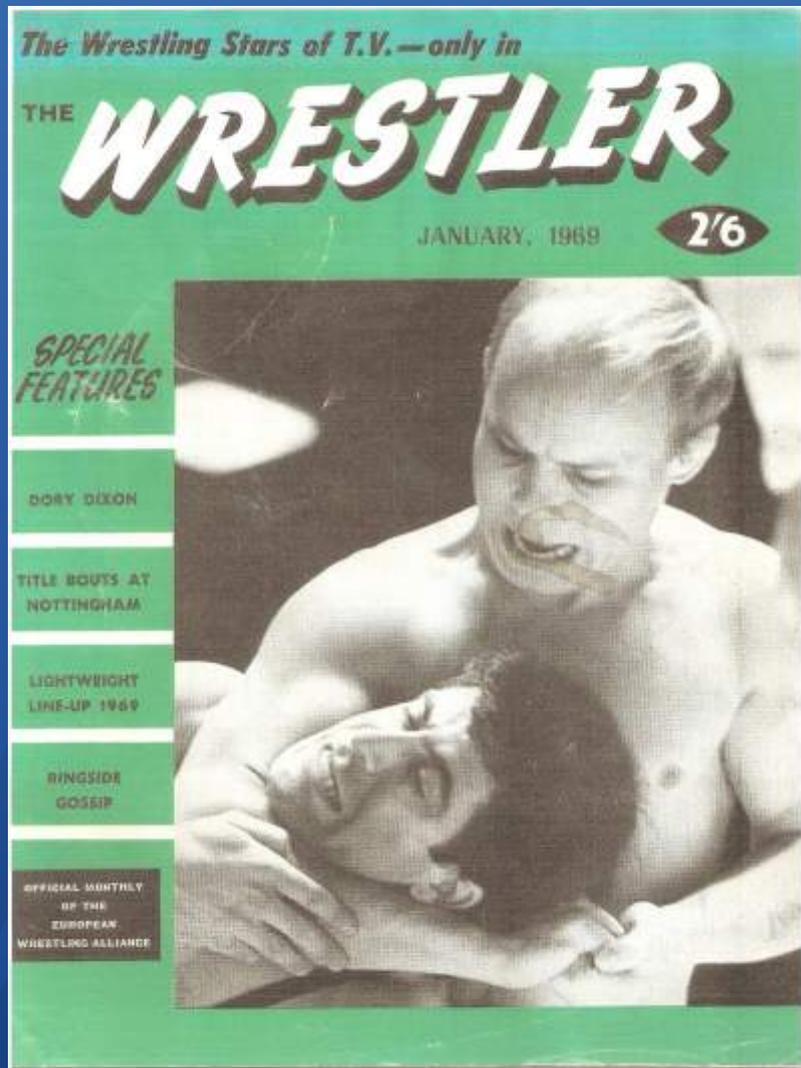
This immediately following edition seems to represent a turning point in so many ways. It seems clear that, from now on, The Wrestler was firmly in the managerial hands of Dale Martin Promotions, with room only for their boys on the cover pages. The price rose, too, by a whopping 33% and the spacing of the text in many articles became even wider with less and less content. But what makes us most of all want to place this edition at the very bottom of our entire collection of The Wrestler magazines is the choice of first ever colour photo. With the new-fangled medium now fully available and to accompany new and equally over-priced colour television sets, they managed to choose a dull and static pose, where Kwango's eyes are closed and his features can also scarcely be made out. Peter Rann once again comes in for the wrath of Wrestling Heritage.



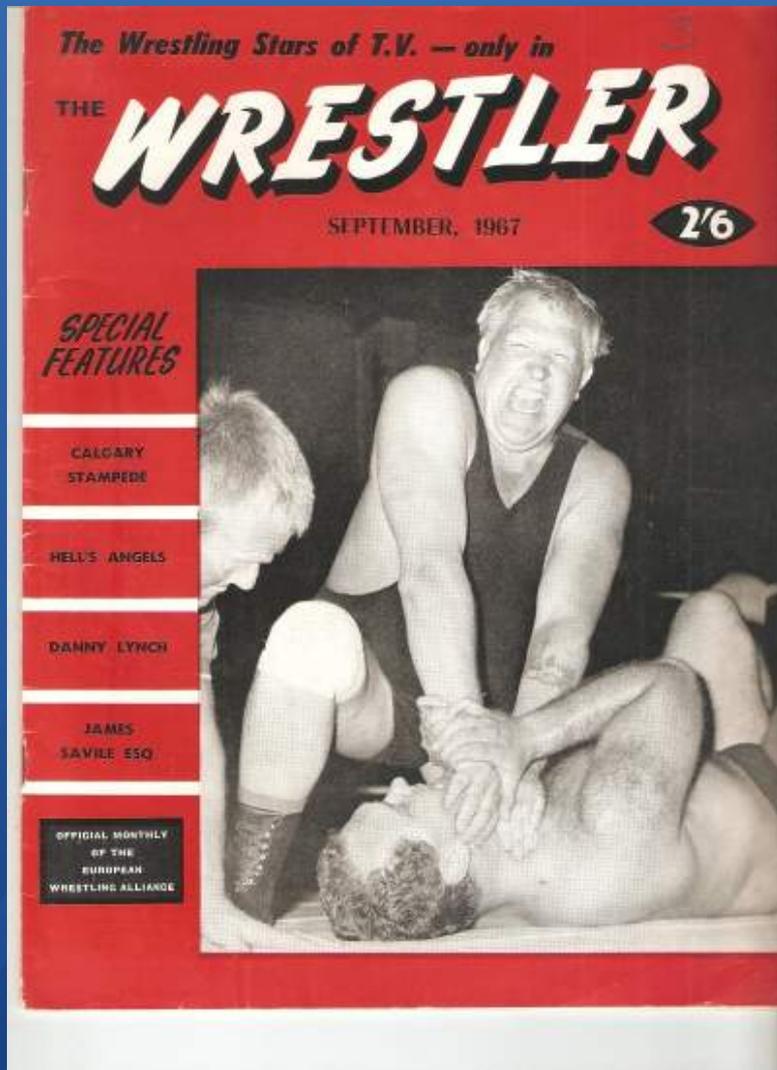
Back on track with a Dennison Duo. Not merely flying to execute his leg-stretch, Dennison gives his all judging by his expression. A great photo which also clearly captures and audience completely enthralled.



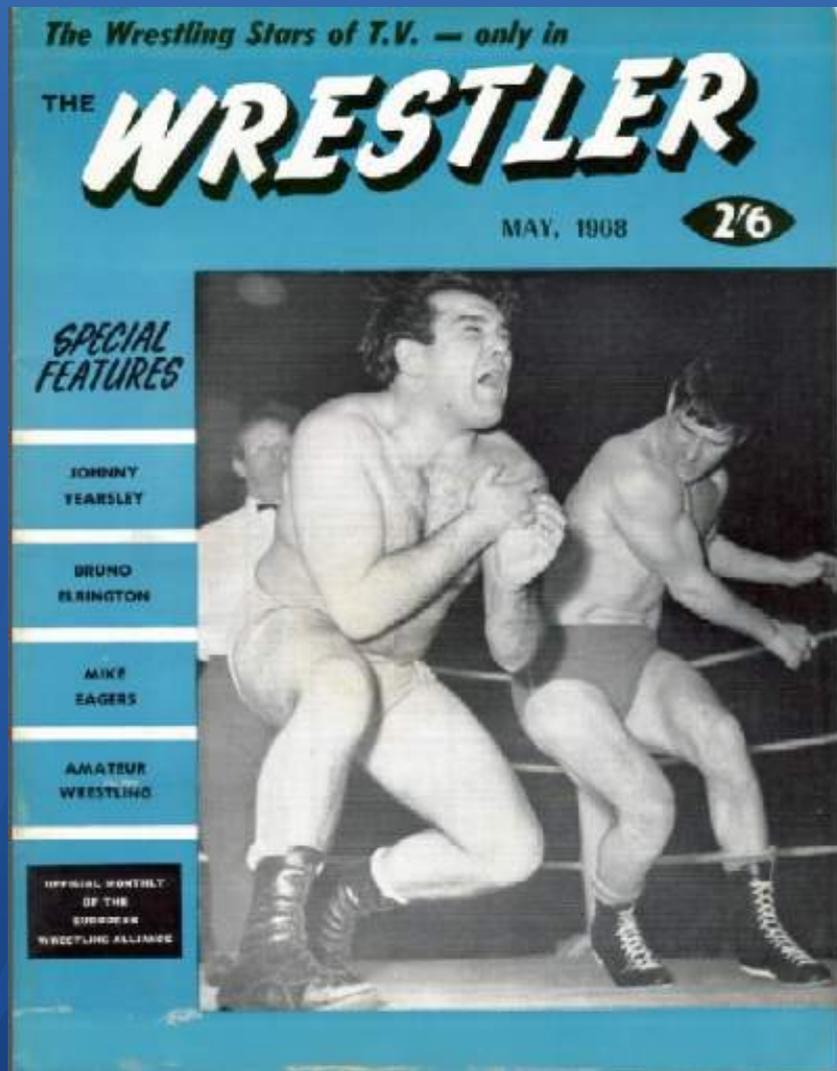
Here's Dennison in flight once again with a lovely drop-kick to Red Scorpion in Scotland. Whilst the Black Diamonds used their really rather obviously questionable leather helmets to ill-effect, the sixties Dennisons used much more subtle leather wristbands to the crowd's displeasure. We do remember those sixties devilish Dennisons with more affection than the clean-style Alan Dennison of the mid-seventies onwards. This intriguing shot actually shows Alan Dennison pitted against his new tag partner of the time. Note the delightful detail that Dennison did away with the red leotard (had he lent it to Ted?) and sported white trunks to show he was the one the crowd should cheer for here.



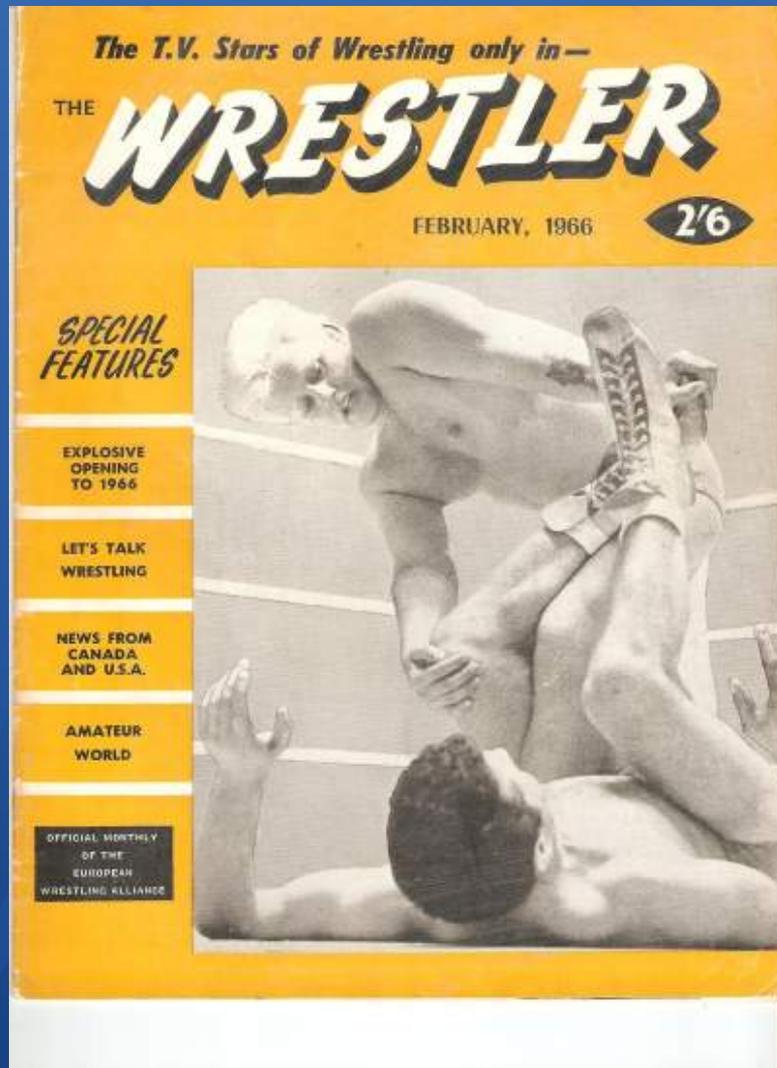
Peter Cortez in horizontal hold in one of his final appearances. Both he and Zoltan Boscik had been prominent undercarders on Paul Lincoln Promotions and, now fully immersed within Joint Promotions, Boscik would go on to be the first naturalised British Lightweight Champion at a time when the quality of British wrestler in this lightest weight bracket was quite outstanding.



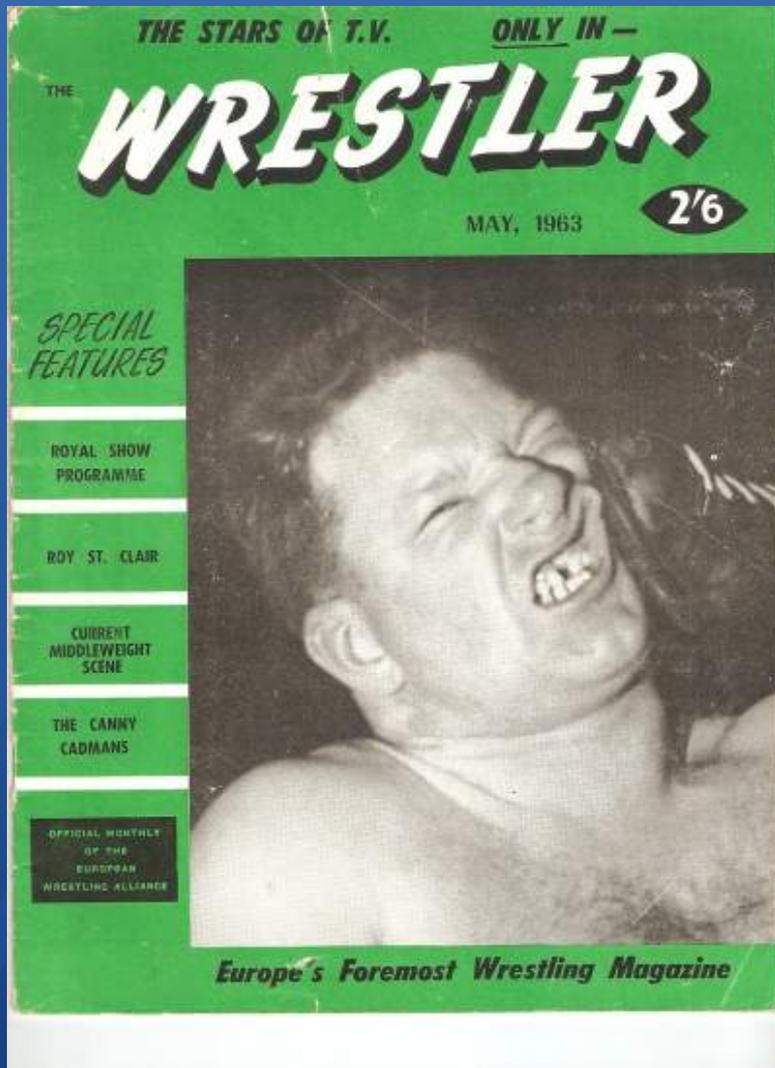
An interesting wrestler who gives another jolt to us all that he has been woefully under-discussed on Wrestling Heritage. Paul Luty was a 17-stone undershot Leeds heavyweight who shot to national prominence as the barman in ITV's controversial comedy series of the early seventies, *Love Thy Neighbour*, in which his character's name was Nobby Garside. Later that decade the wrestler would assume his fictional tv name for wrestling bouts. But as a wrestler, we await further informed comment and memories in the Talk Wrestling forum about Paul Luty, please.



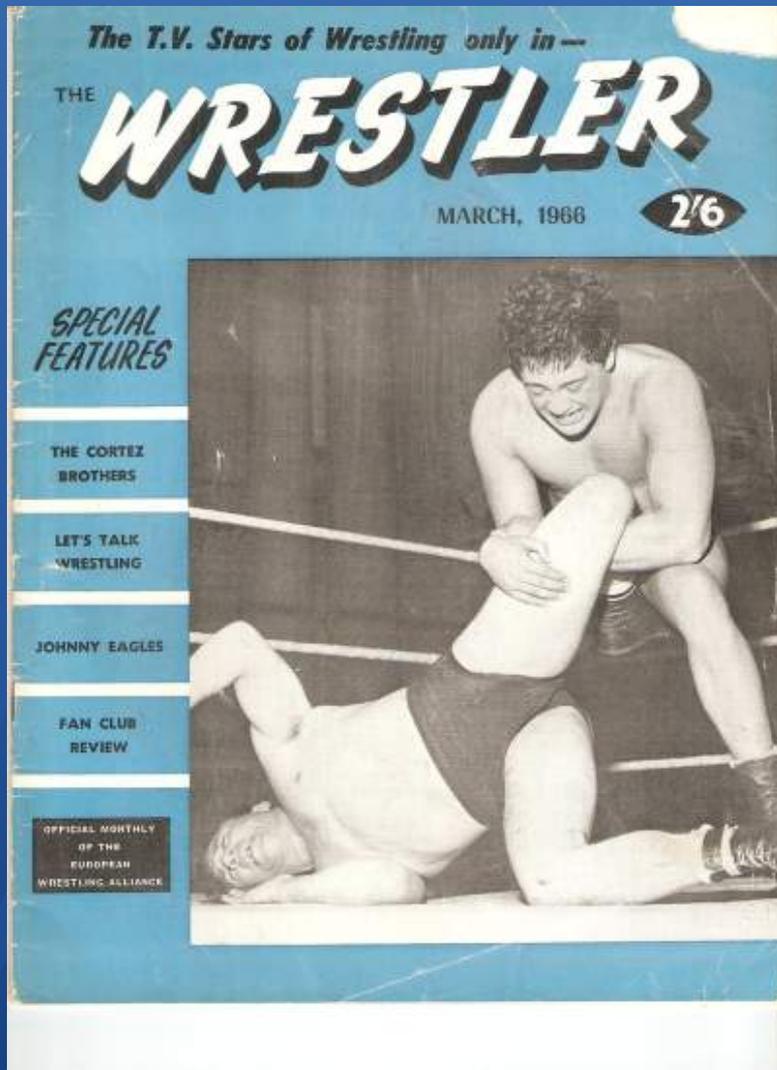
Is this photo from much earlier than its 1968 publication date? Mick McMichael feels the full brunt of Al Nicol's onslaught in a spectacularly well-photographed split second.



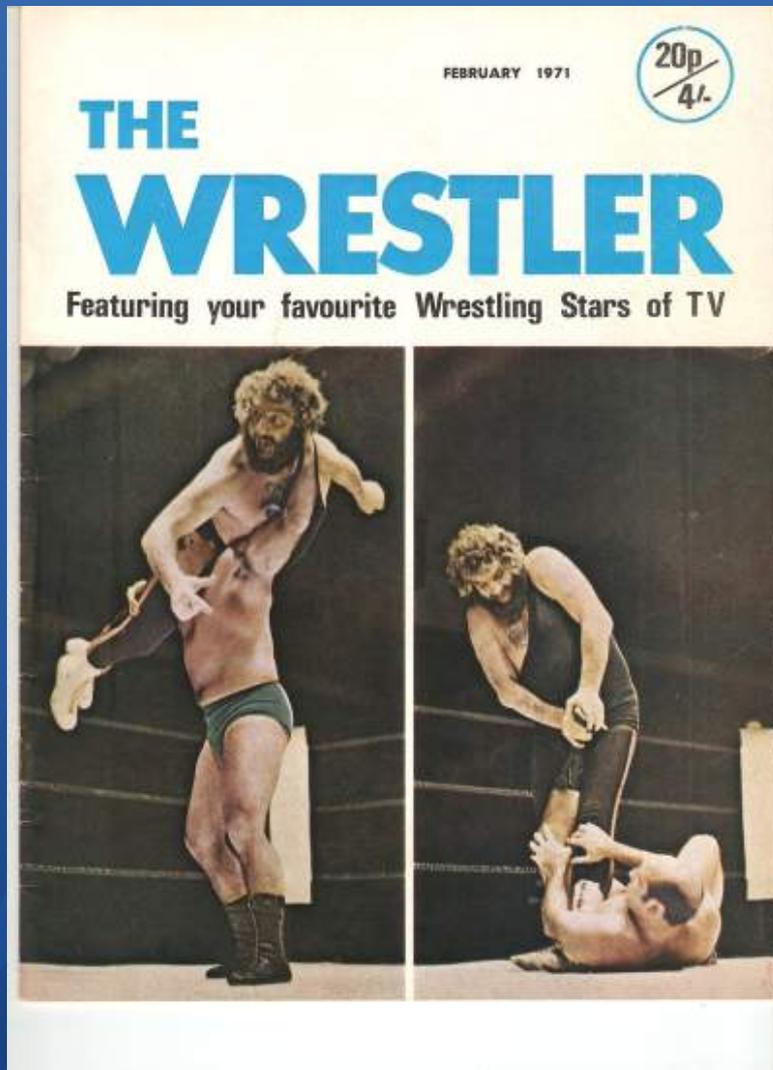
The mysterious Musa the Turk in trouble against an upwardly-mobile Adrian Street. Street had been promised world title challenges against George Kidd up north and didn't fancy much arriving on the back of a loss to an inferior opponent in Croydon. The tangle of their legs sums up the tangled webs of wrestling promotion, and the underlying story of a double-cross and raw ambition.



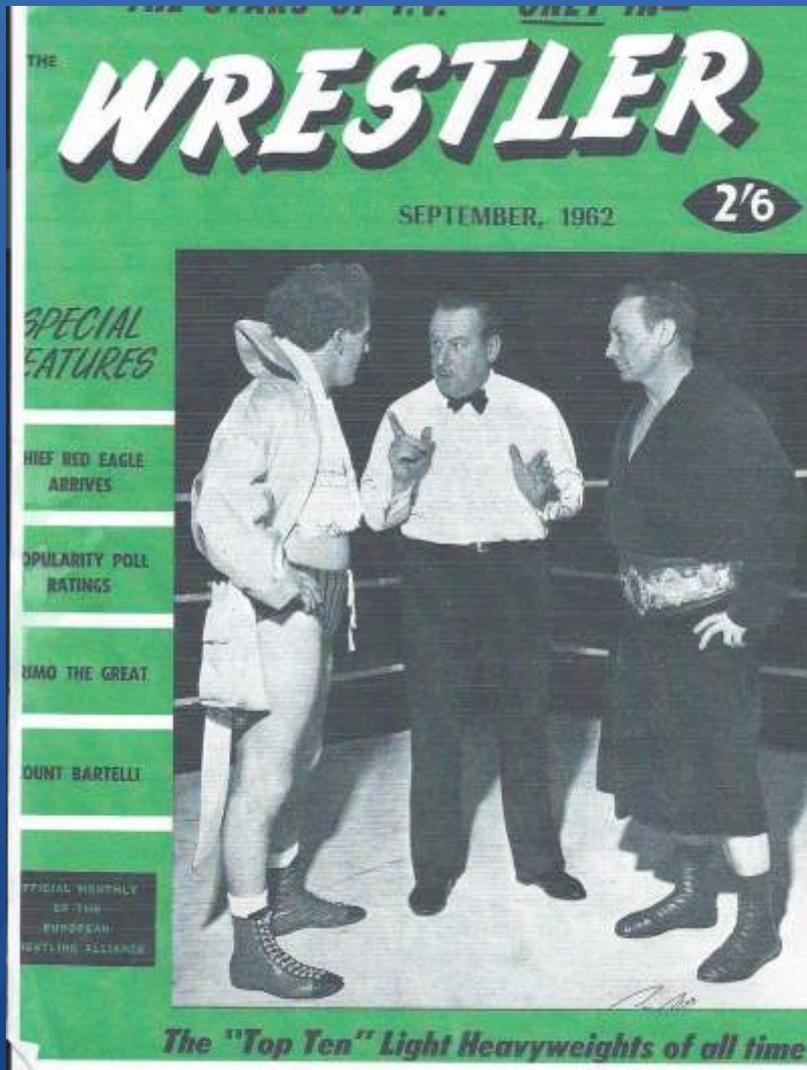
The dentist's delight.
Strongman Brian Trevors seems to have an early taste of foot-and-mouth.



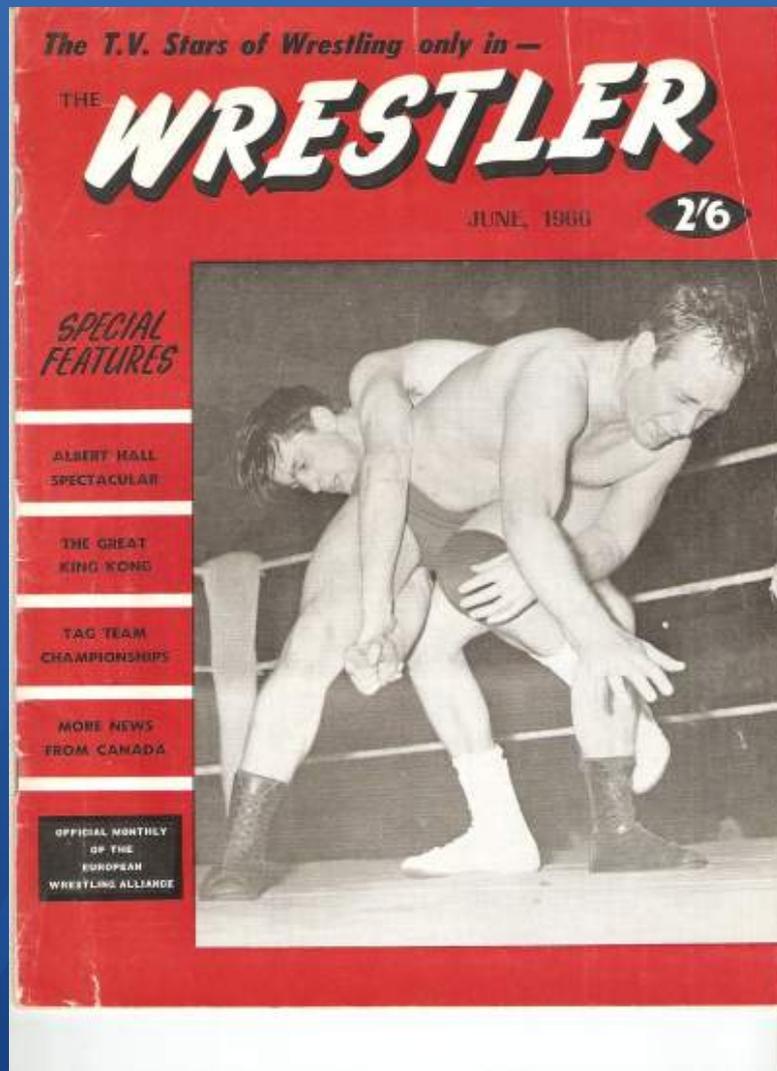
Wigan ace and British welterweight champion Jack Dempsey wrestled on for Joint Promotions until just about this time. Of all the Wigan Snakepit hard men and shooters, Demspey seems to have embraced the national scene and the professional aspects of grunt n groan more enthusiastically and with more success than most. Getting a leg up here in his own fledgling career is the wrestler previously known as Young Sullivan, Leon Fortuna.



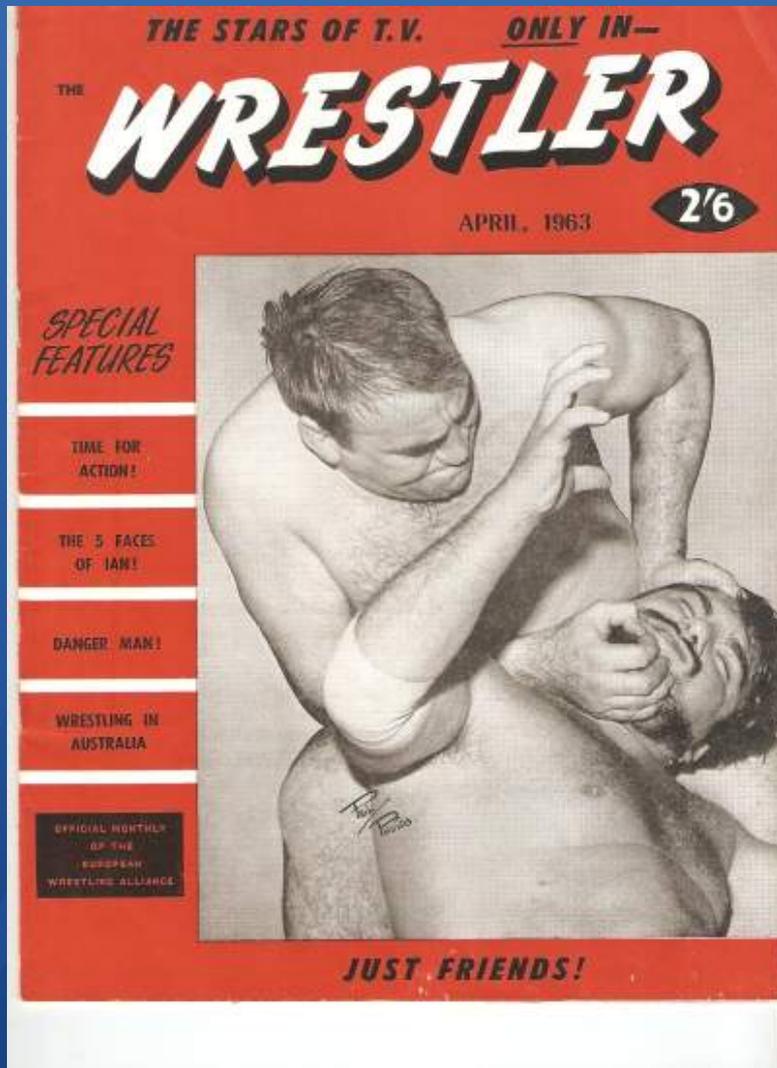
The second stab at a colour cover page and the first "The Wrestler" magazine of the decimal era. Who can fail to be impressed as Geoff Portz hoists a suitably bewildered twenty-stone Bruno Elrington for an aeroplane spin par excellence! These shots somehow convey and enhance the excitement of wrestling at your local hall as opposed to on the small screen.



Wrestling was serious business in 1962. Alan Colbeck's European belt is fastened unusually around his dressing-gown. Mr TV had just a faint whiff of flamboyance but could still wrestle over 50 minutes without repeating a move, and could go with all the Yorkshireman's technique. A modest referee nevertheless manages to impose his authority. Audience's lapped up the seriousness of it all.

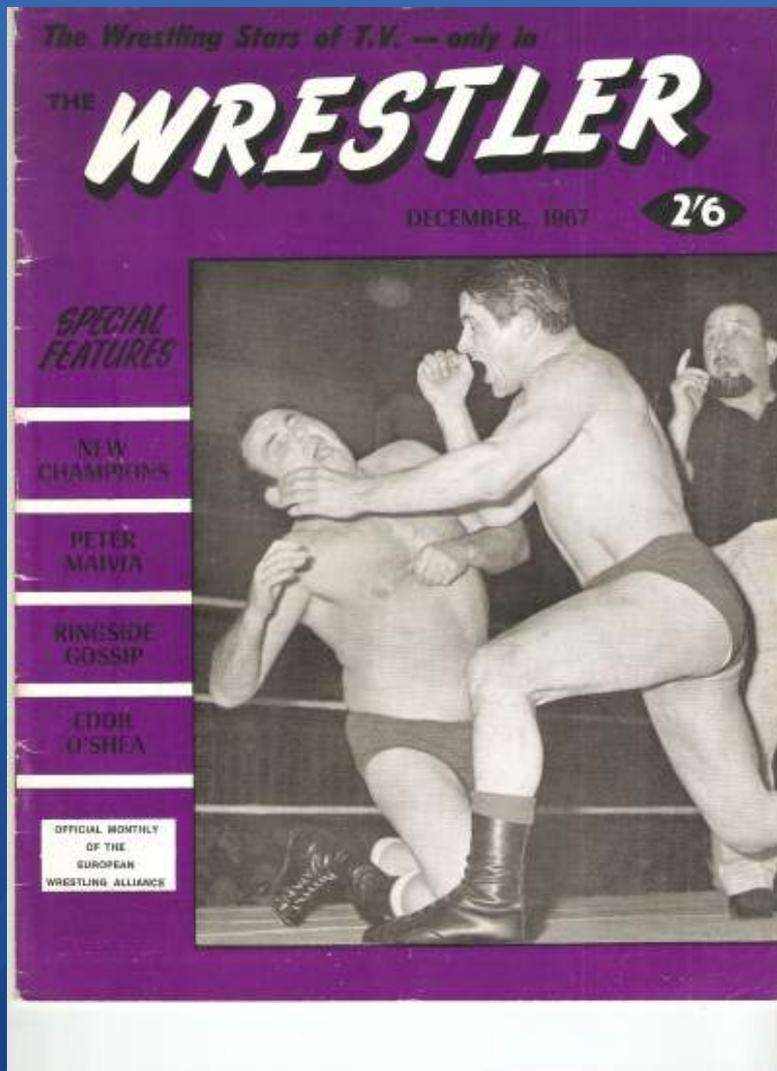


White-booted Mike Eagers won the monthly Cloak of Gold and Alan Colbeck was still able to exude class four years after the cover above. With the World Cup in full flow, and Alf Ramsay calling the Argentinians "animals", wrestling nestled comfortably into its World of Sport niche.



Phil Photos were produced by The Wrestler staff photographer, Phil Childs. See he leaves his indelible mark on his work. An amusing caption, too, as Farmer Johnny Allan seems to be practising the December treatment on one of his Christmas turkeys - but the victim here is Sheikh El Mansouri.

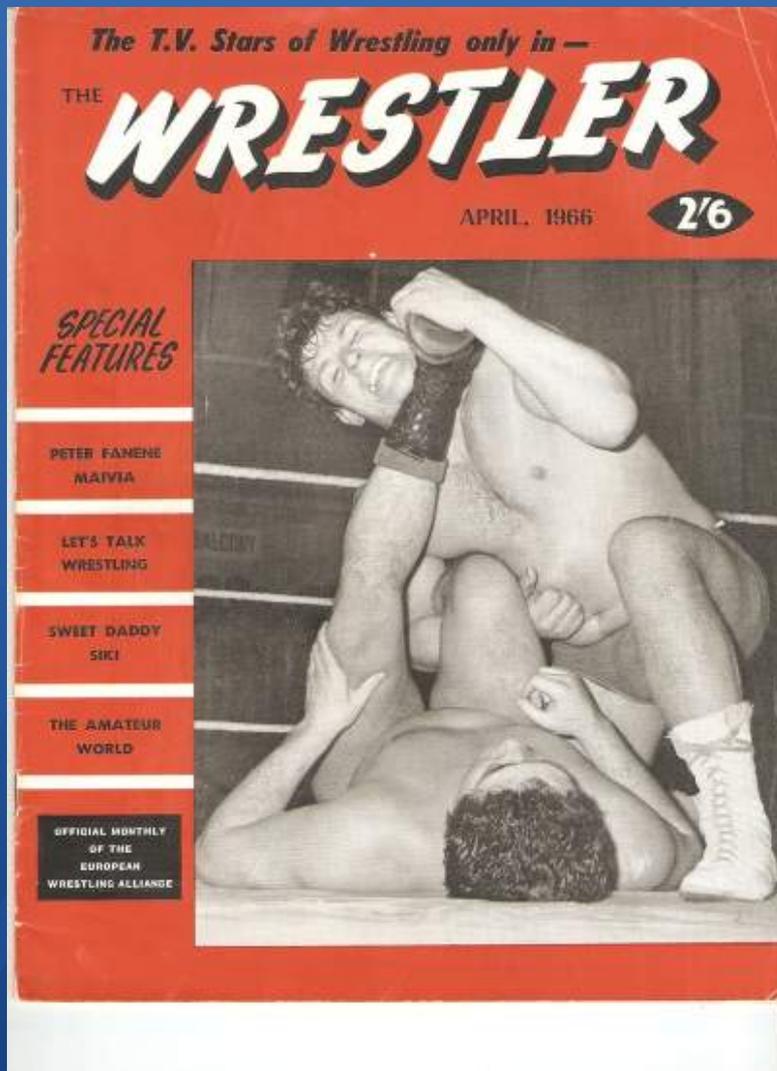
-
- Eddie Rose told us: "Phil Childs of Sheffield provided so many of the photos for Wrestler magazine. I worked with him via Charles Mascall initially and behind many of the front pages are articles by Eddie Caldwell aka Eddie Rose. Phil was a lovely guy, usually accompanied by his wife Dot, and we had many a meal after Belle Vue shows at Tommy Mann's Club Roma Ristorante in Manchester city centre."
-



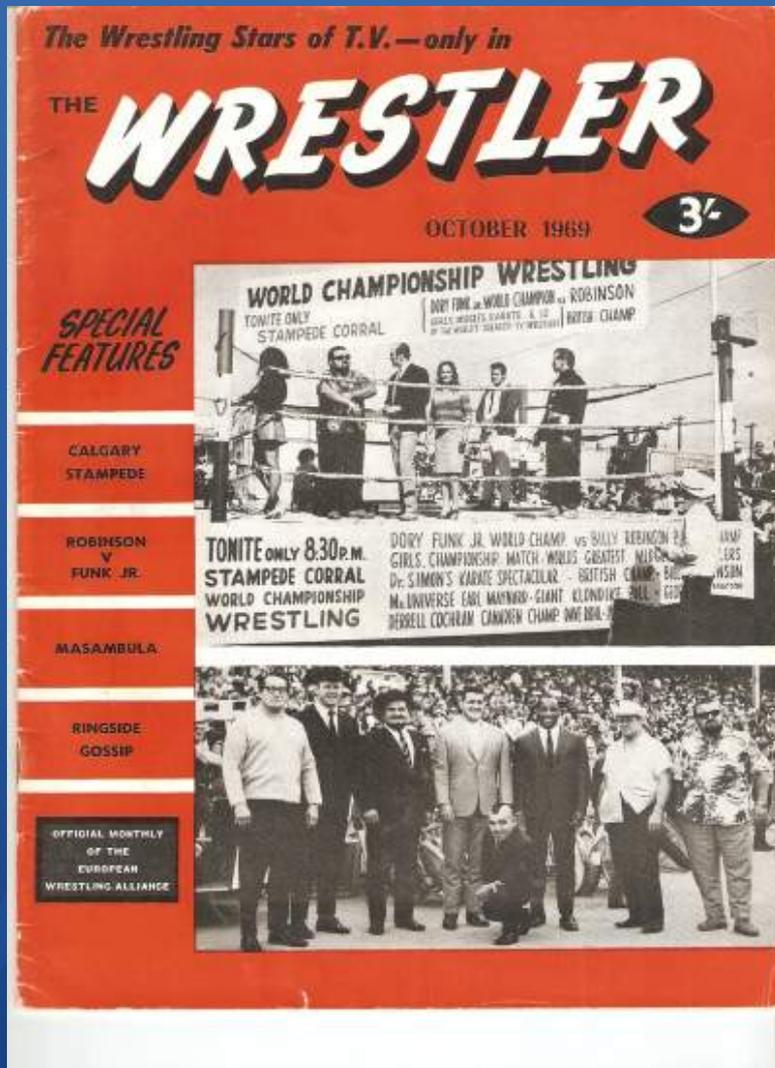
Southern Area Champion Mick McManus taking on the popular Brit domicile Frenchman Julien Morice.

But Julien could still hold sway at times and bring the house down here as he slay the London tearaway. No doubt Mick rose to the occasion.

Referee Jackie Harris, one of the great old timers, looks on.

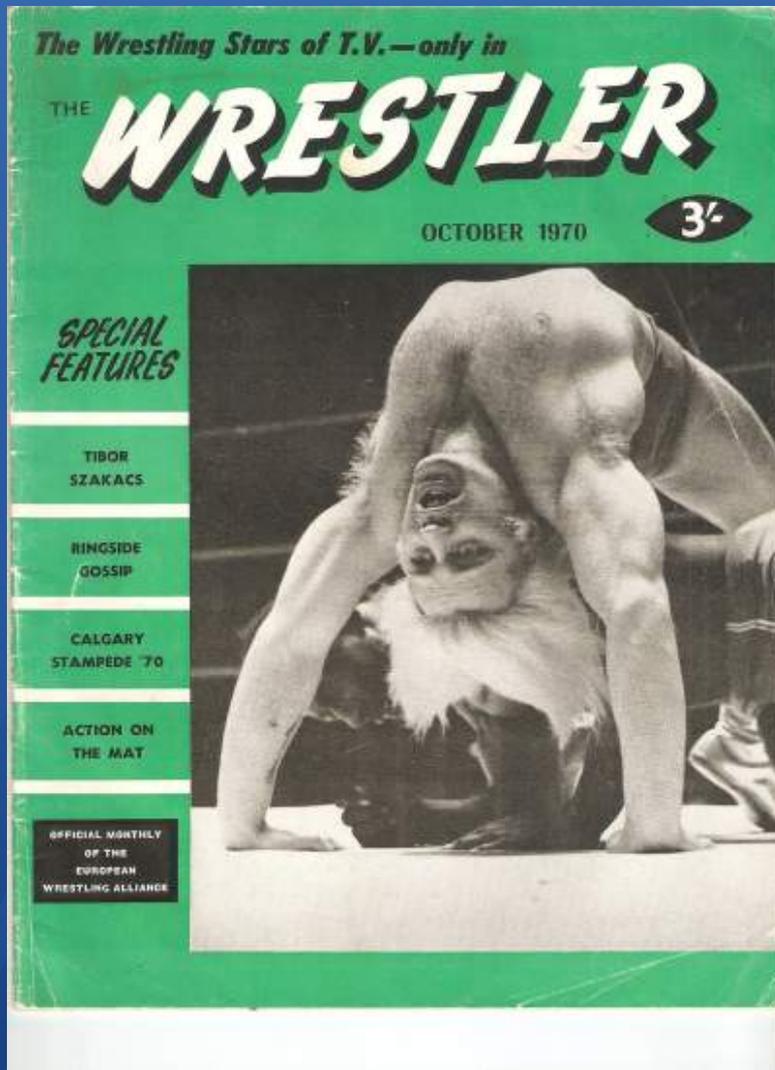


The caption read: "Andy Robin with a leg-lock on Roy St Clair." It looks to us as if the Cornishman is the aggressor, however. So many cover photos came from this same Scottish venue.



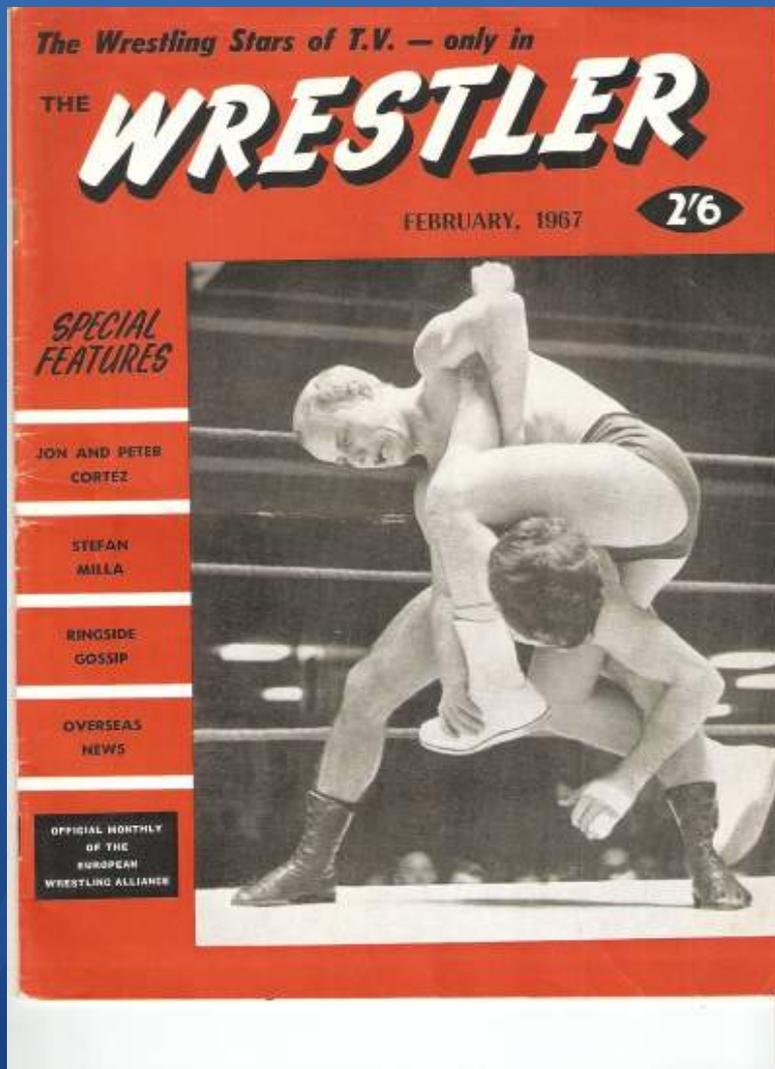
Billy Robinson on the championship trail. The British champion shared his coverman status with a motley crew at the Calgary Stampede, reported by Heritage friend the sadly missed Bob Leonard.

This was the last "The Wrestler" cover to expound the success of our boys stateside. Those were the days.

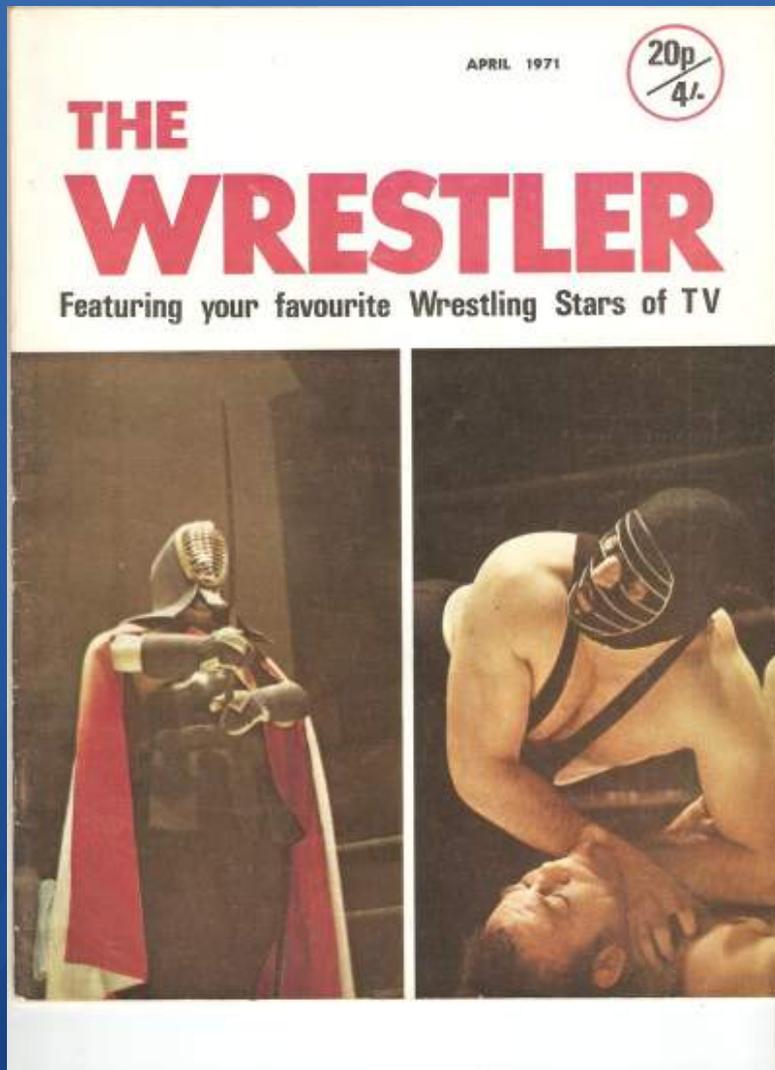


Another Heritage favourite, our boy from the valleys.

An astonishing pose that really needs the anatomist's full analysis. Adrian Street put his all into every second of every bout. The Americans may have benefited from the best make-up and costumes he had; but UK fans saw Street at the peak of his wrestling powers for 5 glorious years.

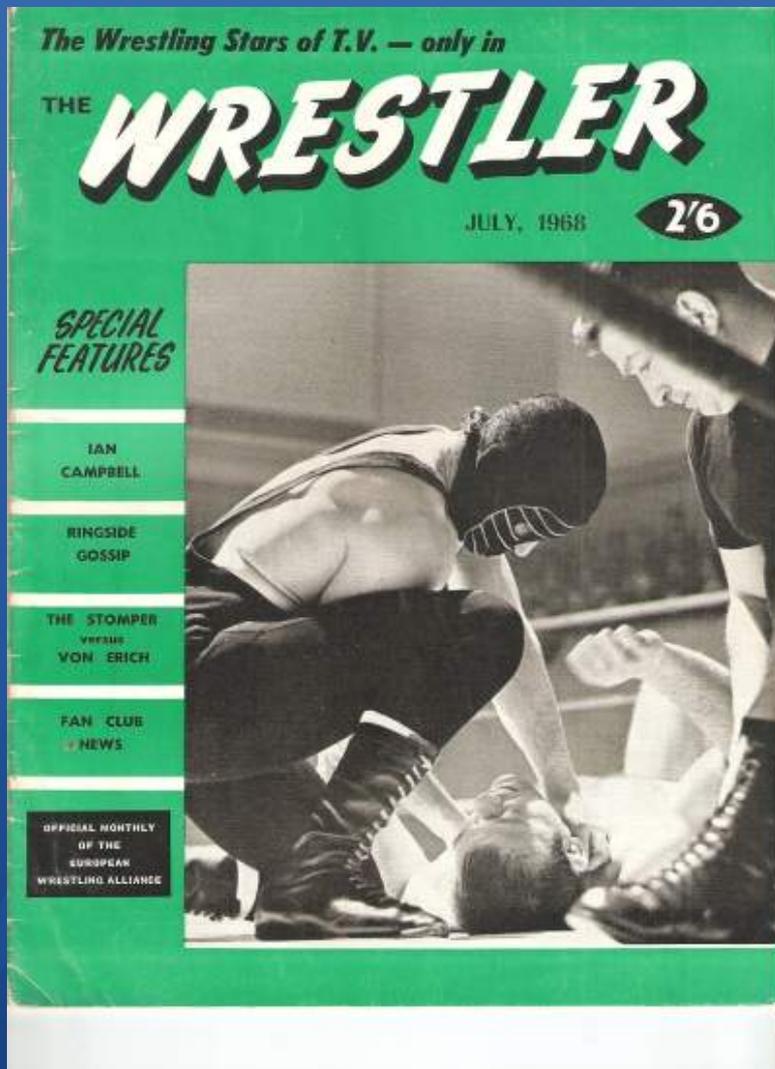


Three in one. Zoltan Boscik is completely elevated from the canvas as he applies his trademark speciality.

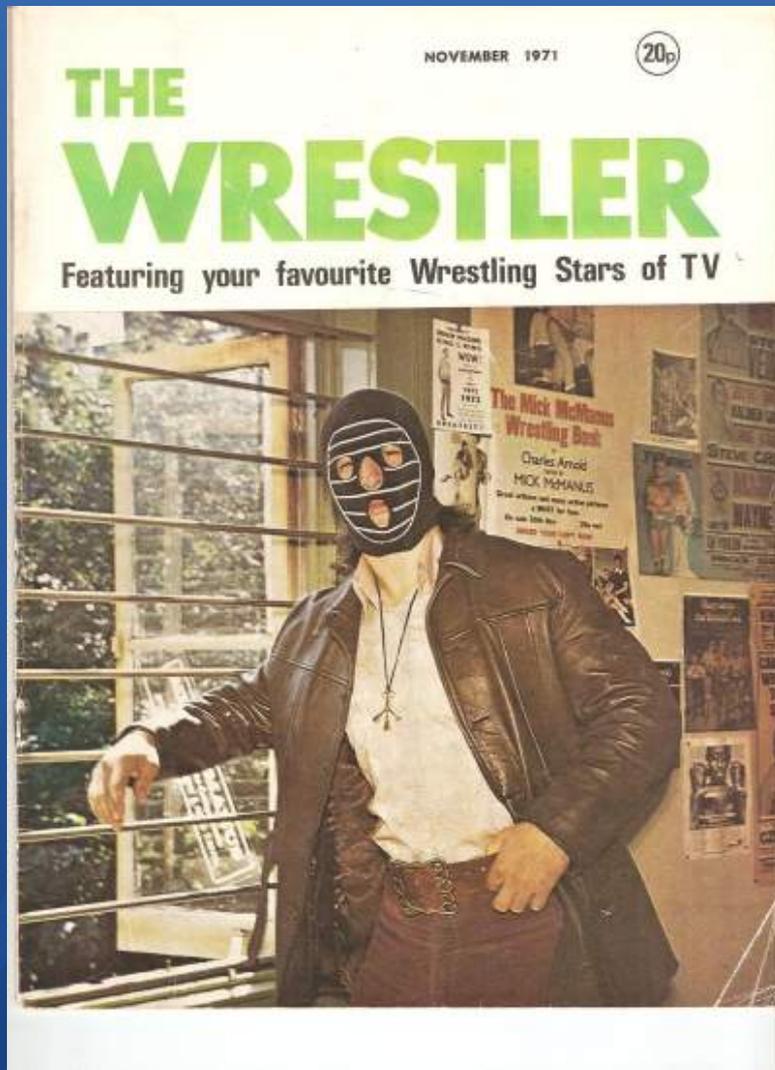


We kick off our mini Nagasaki run of three with a cover page published in the month that the masked man made his television debut.

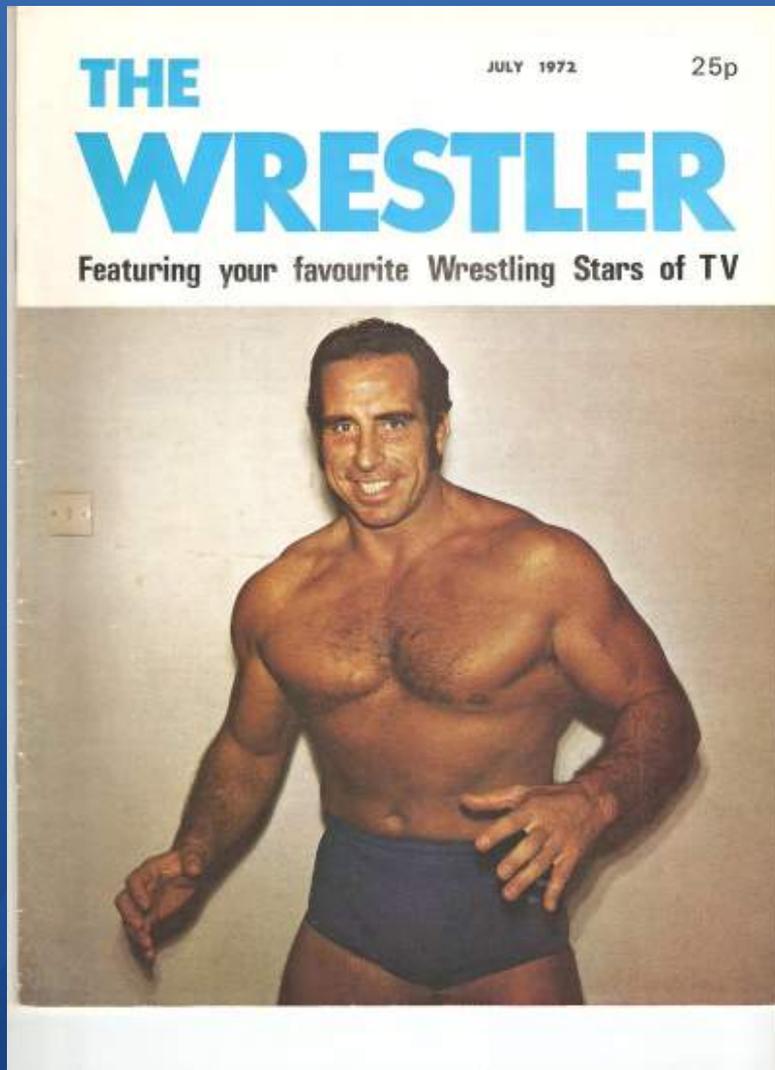
Monochrome viewers will have been surprised at the left-hand photo as the sword ceremony was not aired that Cup Final Day. Just a few months later and no hardened or even casual fan will have been in any doubt as to the full Nagasaki regalia.



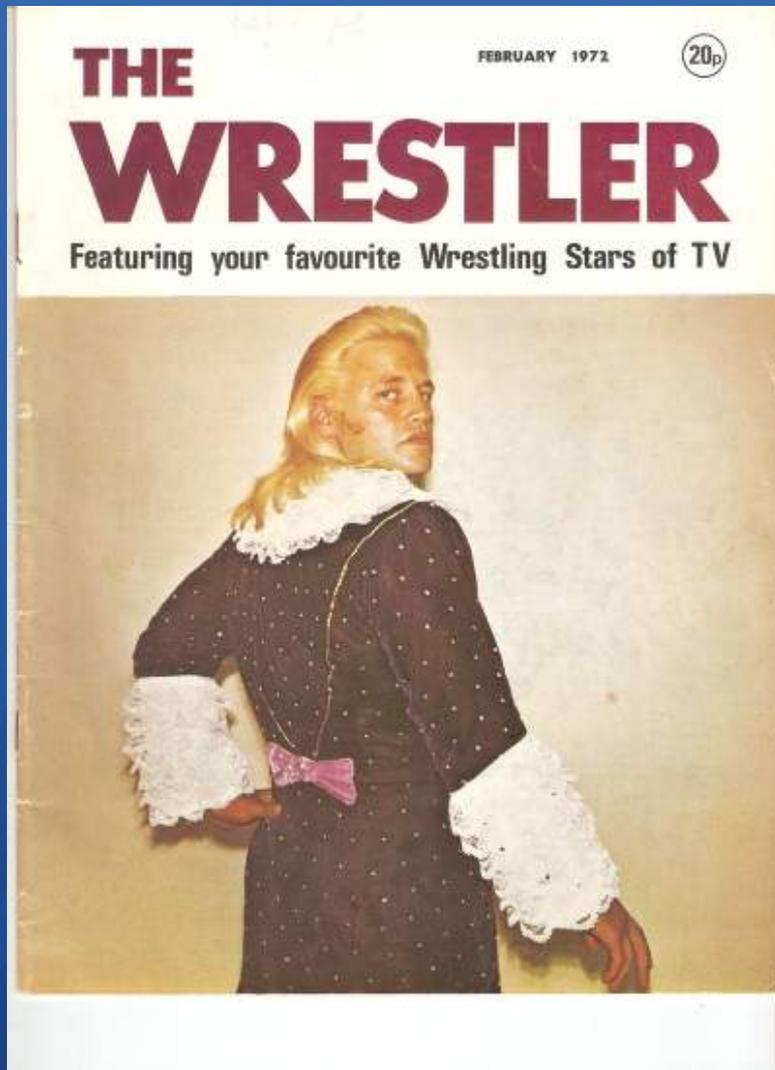
The same opponent three years earlier. Tibor Szakacs never seems to have claimed victory over Nagasaki, though there are reports other his regular adversaries did. With no Kent Walton to tell us what to think, Nagasaki was a complete and utter mystery to 1968 fans.



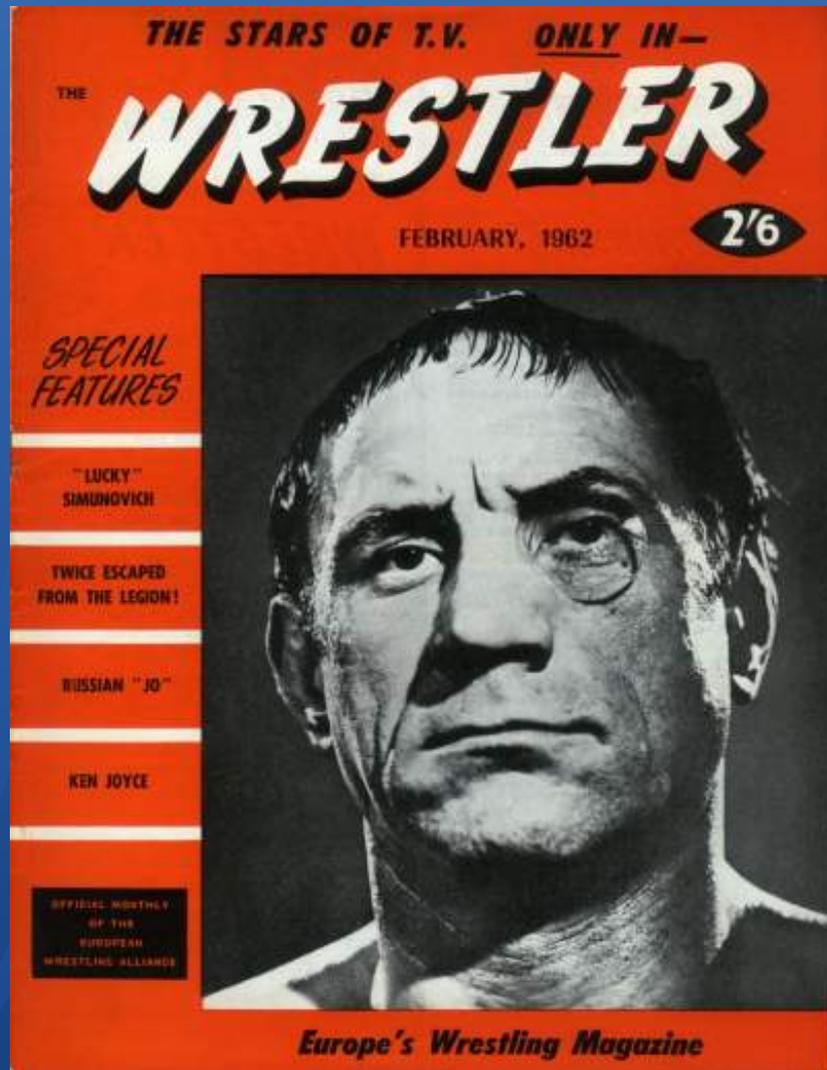
We complete our mini Nagasaki run with easily the most captivating of his cover appearances. A carefully staged pose teases us with clues and possible red herrings about his personality and identity: the window sticker and wall posters bear all the hallmarks of an avid fan; the shoulder-length hair that we remember bobbing so obviously, even blonder before his tv bouts; the deliberate slanting of the eyes; ostentatious buckle and pendant; the unmissable missing finger. The whole was accompanied inside that issue by a fairly revealing interview with Pam Edwards. Revealing inasmuch as Nagasaki clearly chatted away and made no attempt to maintain the Japanese persona he had worked hard to develop during the sixties.



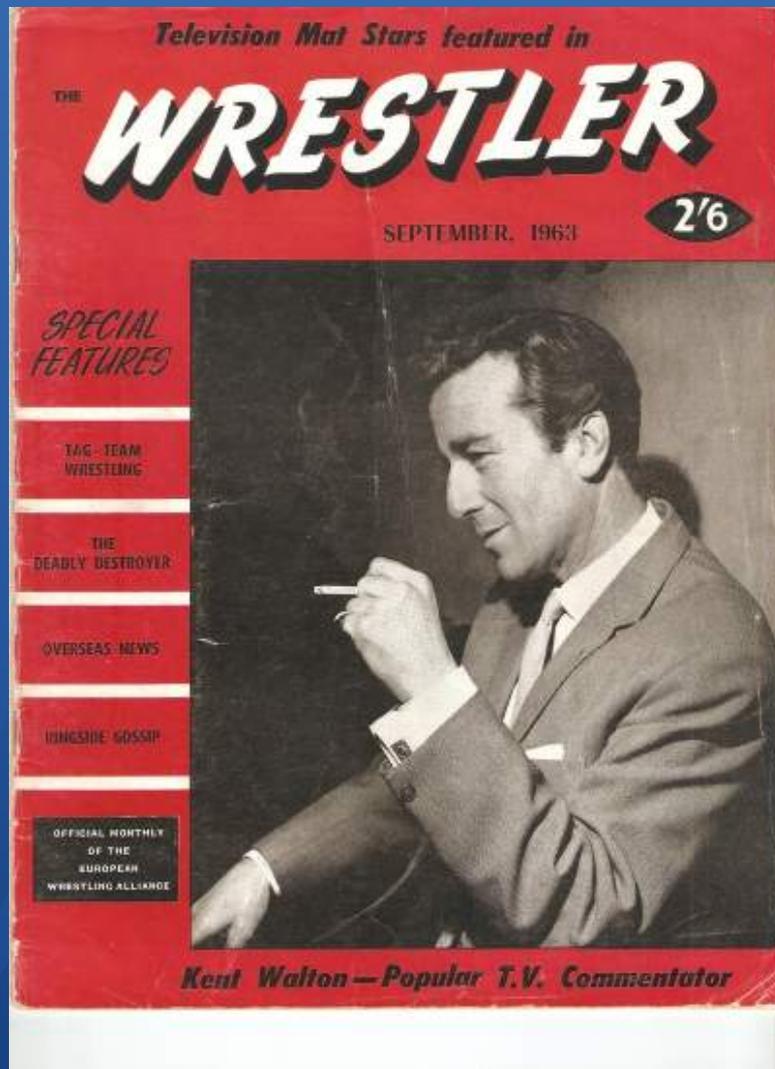
And here's the very same "Mr Universe" John Lees. Supremely creditable heavyweight, even title contender, over many years, with no aspirations whatsoever to being any kind of hooker or shooter but with his own talent and headline-grabbing attributes that fitted in perfectly in the ensemble cast of professional wrestlers.



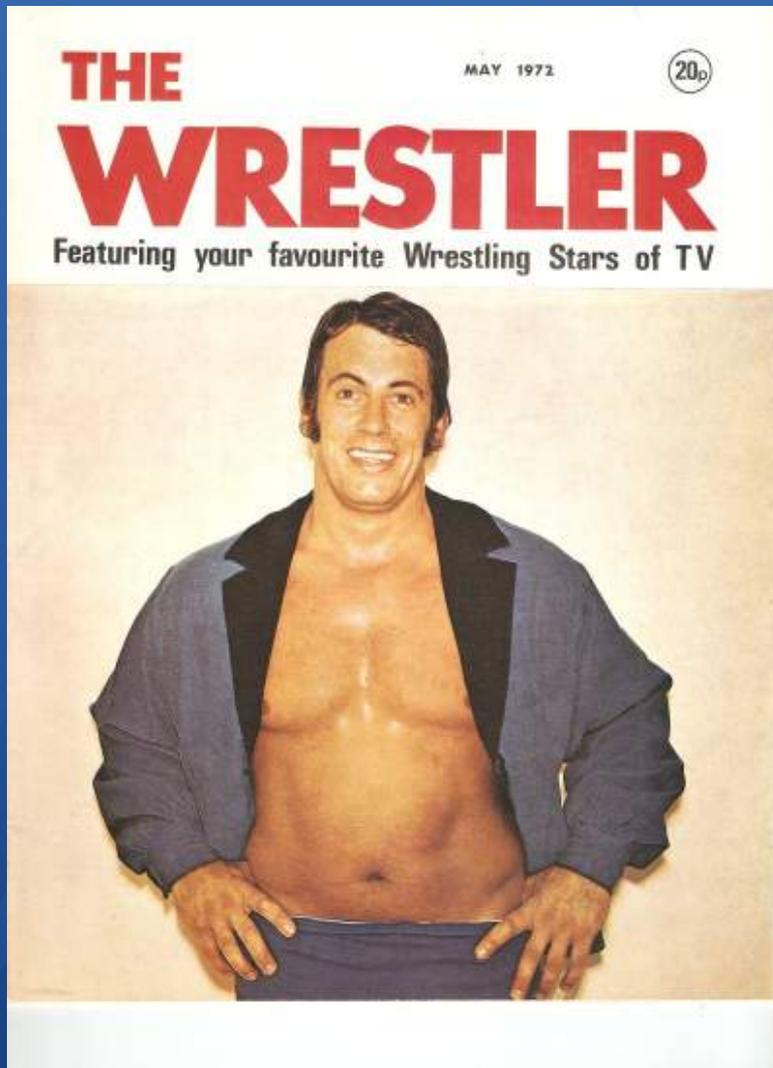
An undeniably delightful gown that fully merited all the slow strutting down the aisle to the ring, but just look at that supercilious sneer! Sheer timeless grace, and if anyone doesn't know who this is, we dare you to ask in the Talk Wrestling forum!



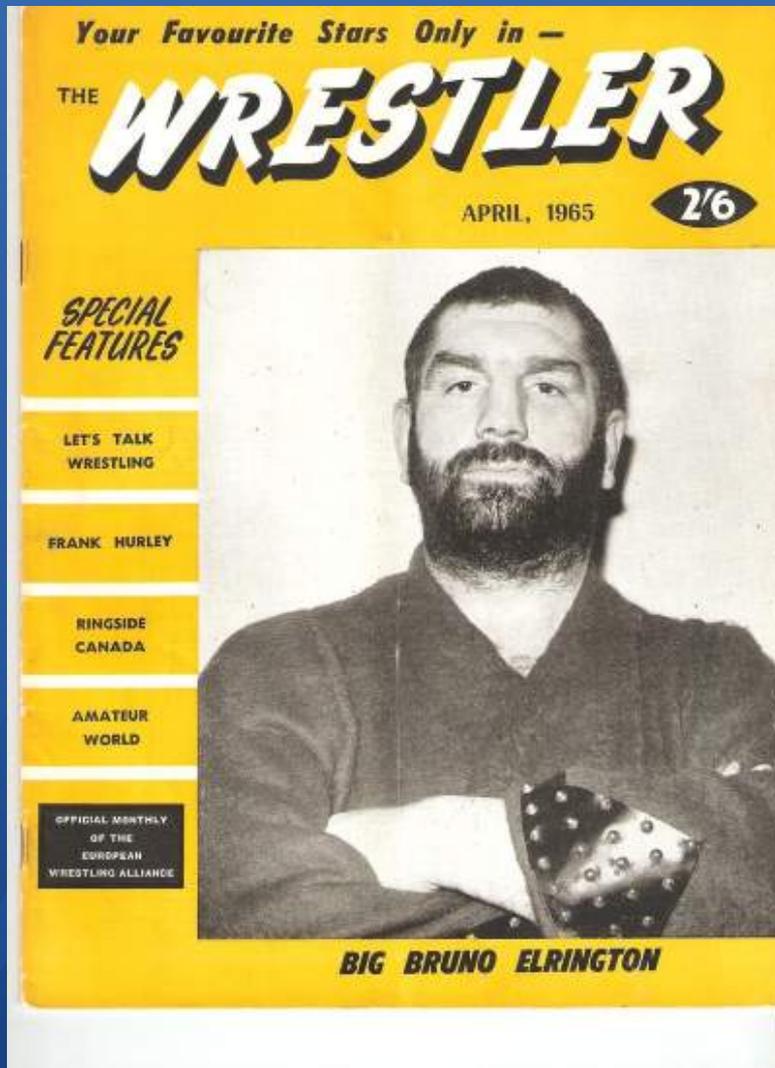
A name to die for. Only Professional Wrestling promoters could manage to encapsulate the Germanic leaders from both World Wars in this single embodiment of Doctor Adolf Kaiser!



These days we seem to know much more about the wrestlers than what the man behind the mike knew. Very much an artiste in his own right, we can still spot Kent quaffing on his trademark cigarette holder on World of Sport re-runs in the twenty-first century. This elegant profile clearly shows what style the man had. We can thank our lucky stars that we didn't lose him to the pop industry.

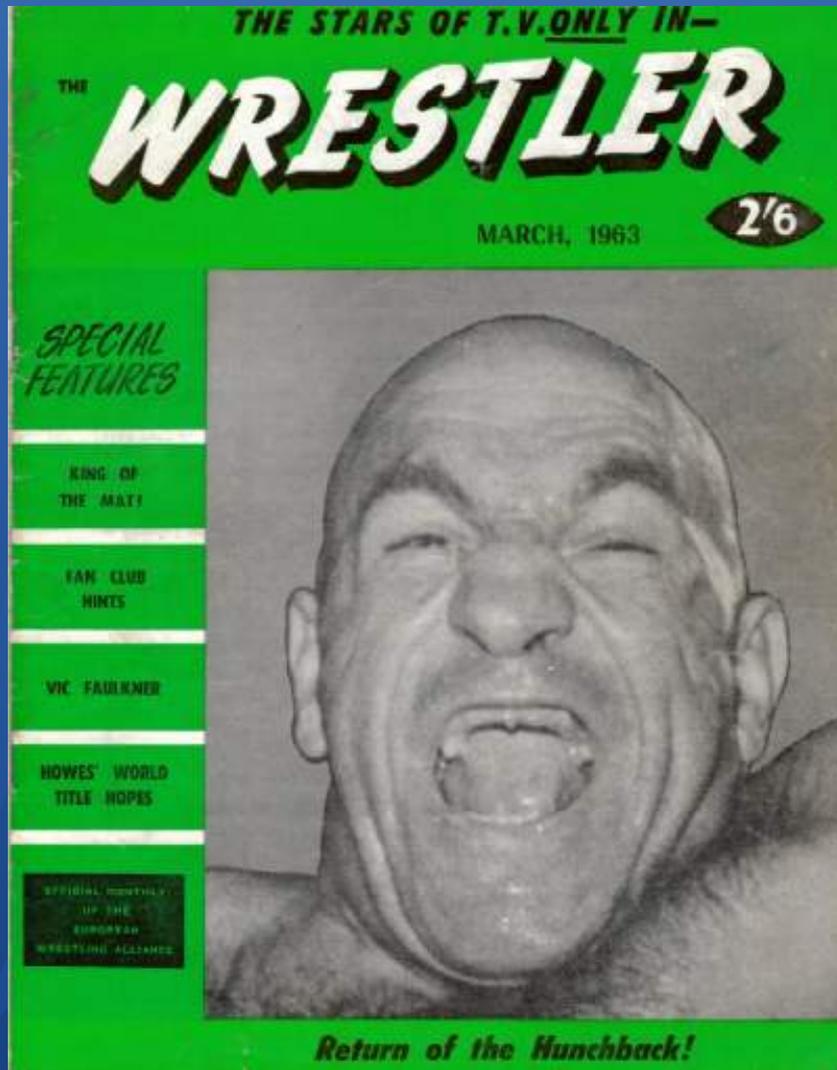


One of Kent Walton's original "good looking boys." With the sad passing of Mick McManus in 2013, the baton of great defender of the game's secrets and integrity passes to the Heavyweight Champion of Kent (later also the world), Wayne Bridges. An all-action lightweight style technician inside a 17-stone plus frame. Yet another career that did it all, though we remember most fondly of all his occasional spectacular heel turns.

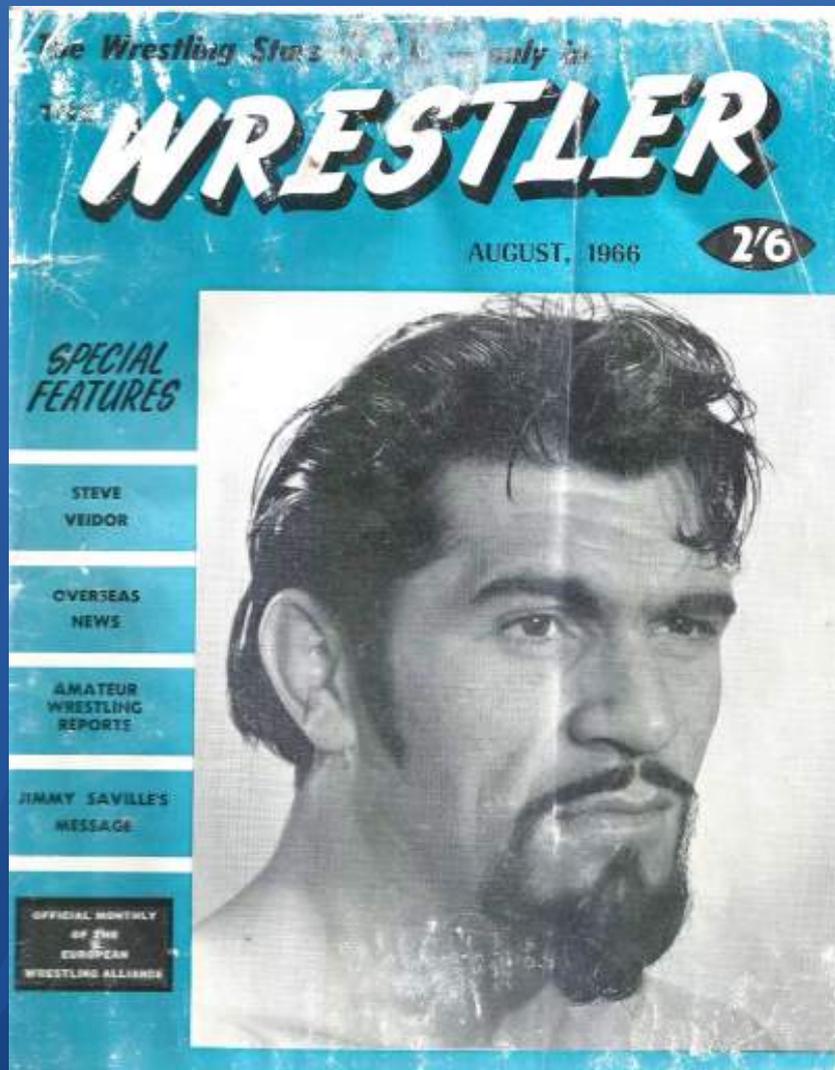


The many guises of Bruno Elrington. This stubbled one seems to step right out of a Popeye magazine. What do the studded cuffs tell us about this character?

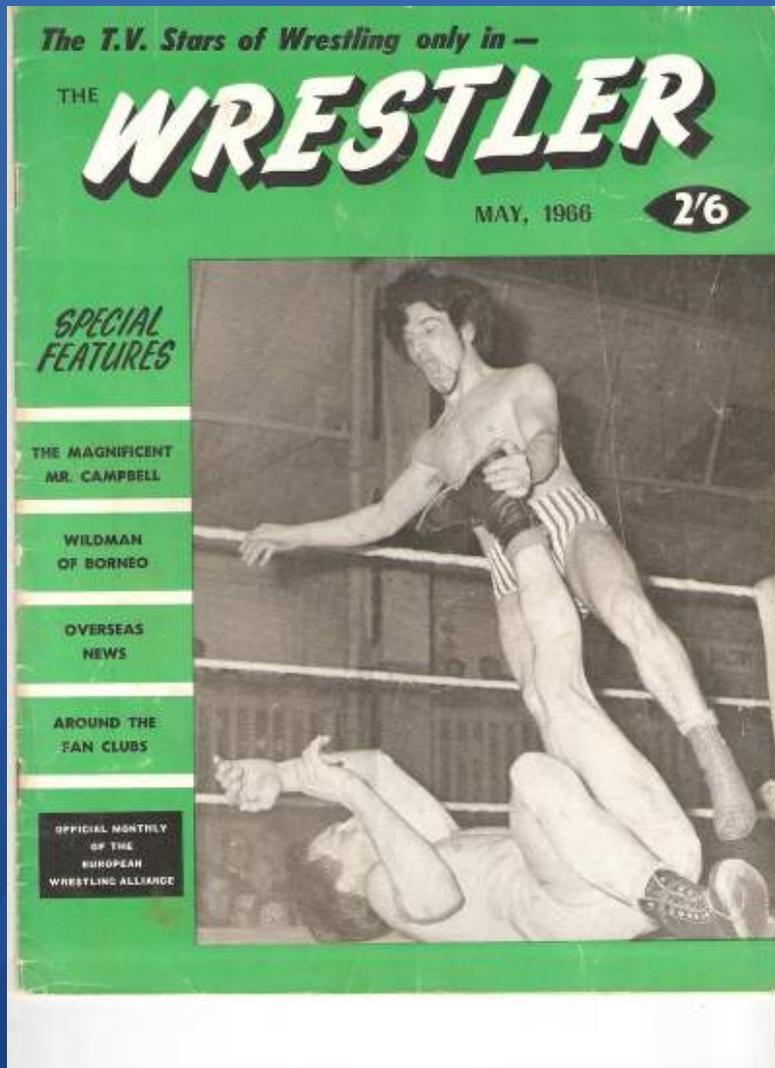
Bruno was only 3 years into his Joint Promotions career but had settled in like the old-timer he was, and this was the time of his Big Push: this very month he would win the prestigious Royal Albert Hall Tournament Trophy. Soon the locks would grow longer, and curl, and be dyed for his big screen moment. Then in the seventies they would grey, before whitening graciously. But his roar never diminished!



The marvellous paradoxes of professional wrestling. Fearsome bell ringer Quasimodo. Spaniard Vincente Castilla was in fact an absolute gent outside the ring and would invariably arrive at wrestling venues wearing a shirt and tie. Many of his more "colourful" black and white poses adorn Wrestling Heritage, but here he doesn't need to use props or even display his famous hunch to arouse spine-tingling anticipation - what a sight!



Just outside the top twenty "The Wrestler" portrait photos we place, perhaps a surprise to some of you, the India Rubber Man himself, Ivan Jason Penzeco. Penzy had risen to prominence. But he failed to find a suitable long-term partner to ride through the tag boom, his tagster in The Rebels famously falling out with him inside the ring. He seemed to lose the oomph to follow through as an out-and-out villain and he settled into generally undercard support in the seventies. In true Wrestling Heritage style, we do 100% away with the benefit of hindsight and place a youthful and athletic Ivan Penzeco right where he belonged and seemed to be headed in the summer of '66.

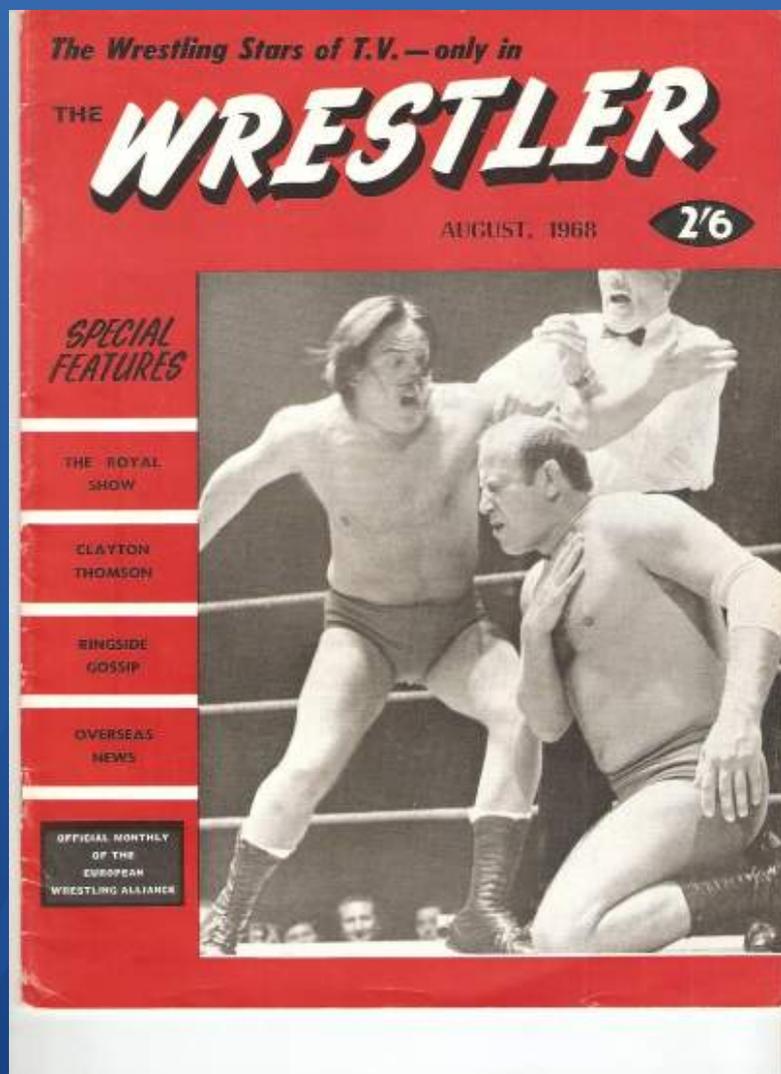


This might look like the self-same Penzy in high-flying action but it is in fact Pablo the Gypsy (or at least one of them) with a flying leg-stretch on Tim McAdam.

The A-Z of wrestlers on Wrestling Heritage is a wonderful resource of photos, memories and biographical details, the result of years of hard work and enthusiasm.

Yet Tim McAdam remains an enigma about whom we await Members' contributions to give him the prominence he no doubt deserves.

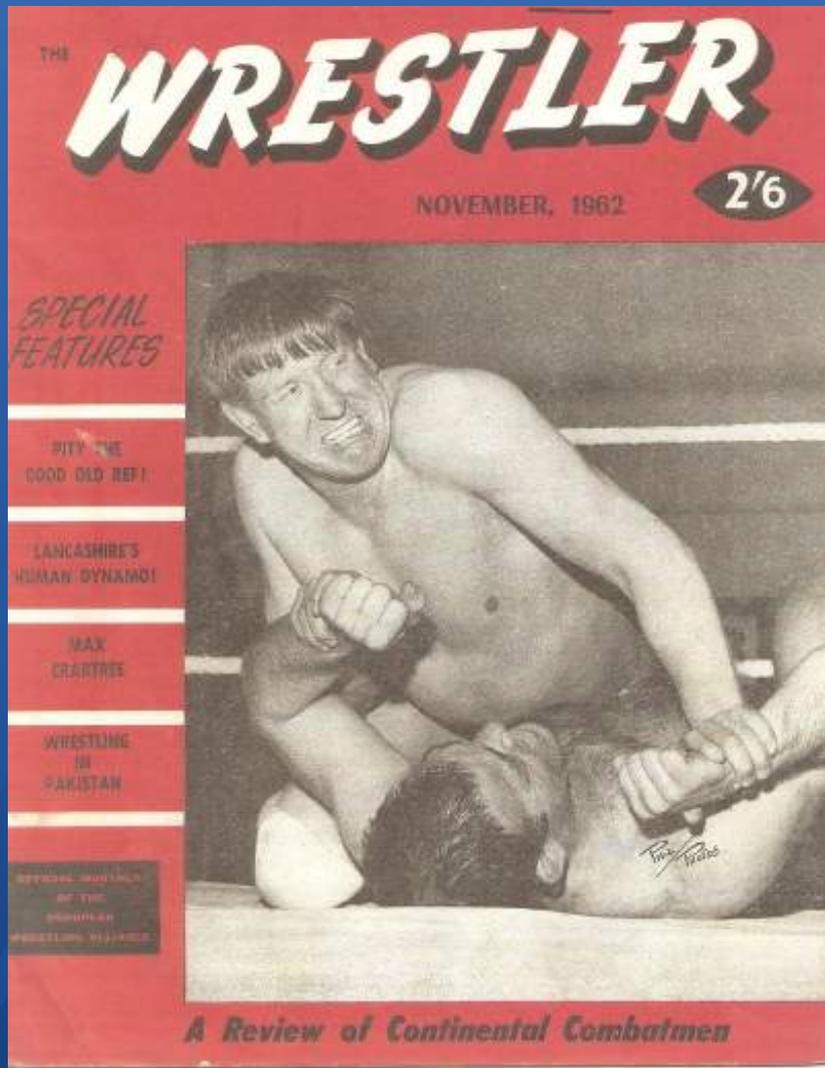
A moment of glory for Tim. Do let us know how you're getting on.



The referee's reactions in four of these top twenty really do enhance the spectacle, demonstrating the crucial role they played in creating a good match.

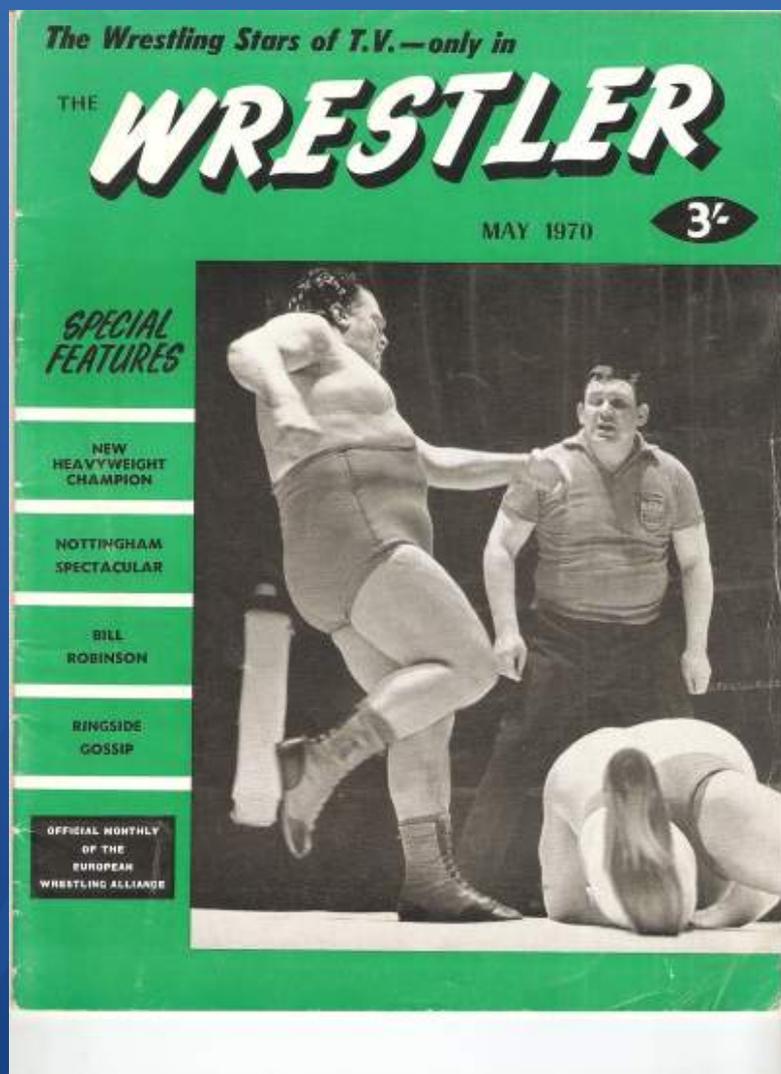
In this one the normally subdued Tony Mancelli steps in to prevent unlawful aggression to Bruno Asquini as the Iron Man Steve Logan lashes in to him in the pair's Capital Cities Trophy encounter in front of the Duke of Edinburgh. The match had taken place the previous month.

What a great photo!



Ongoing discussion in the Talk Wrestling forum really does seem to point to Billy Joyce being the British heavyweight technician par excellence, even amongst other British Heavyweight Champions from before and after his own reign. Largely considered responsible for the greatness that befell his protege, Bill Robinson.

Photographs of Billy Joyce at work are thin on the ground but see him here, fringed, and entangled with another from the very top drawer, Tibor Szakacs.

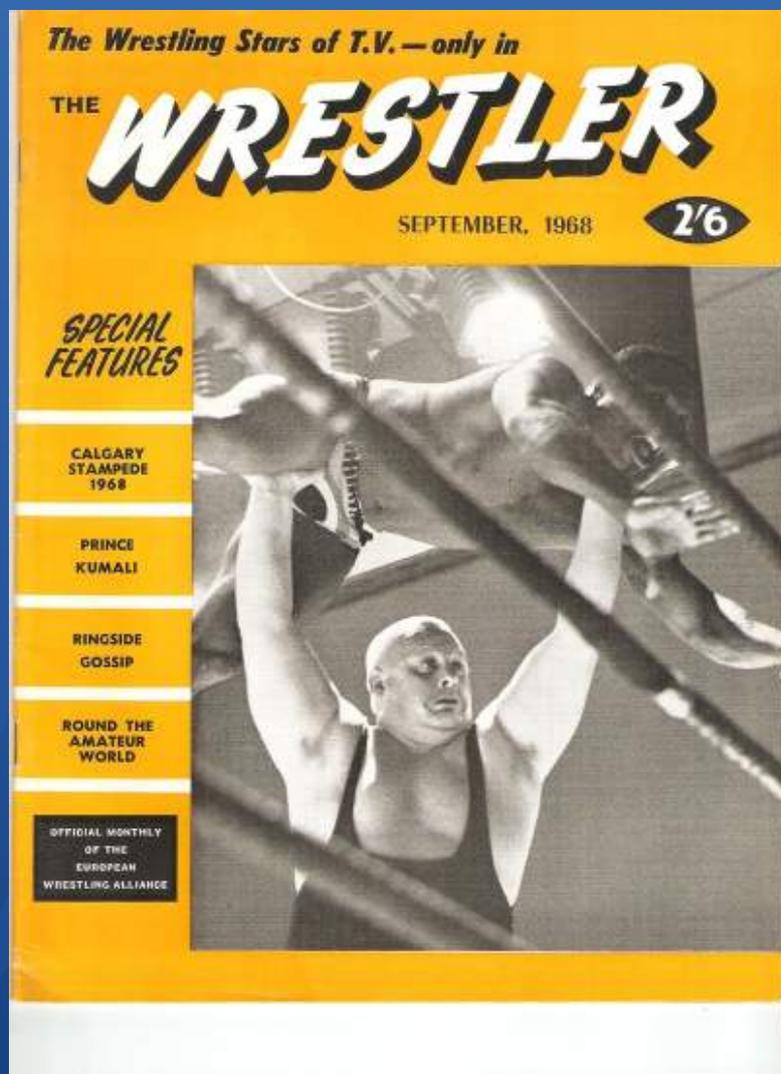


The twilight years of another wrestling great, Mr Ultra Reliable .

Jumping Jim Hussey followed the same career schedule as Wild Ian Campbell, whom we discussed earlier in this countdown, though Jim's career lasted much longer and went back to pre World war 2 days.

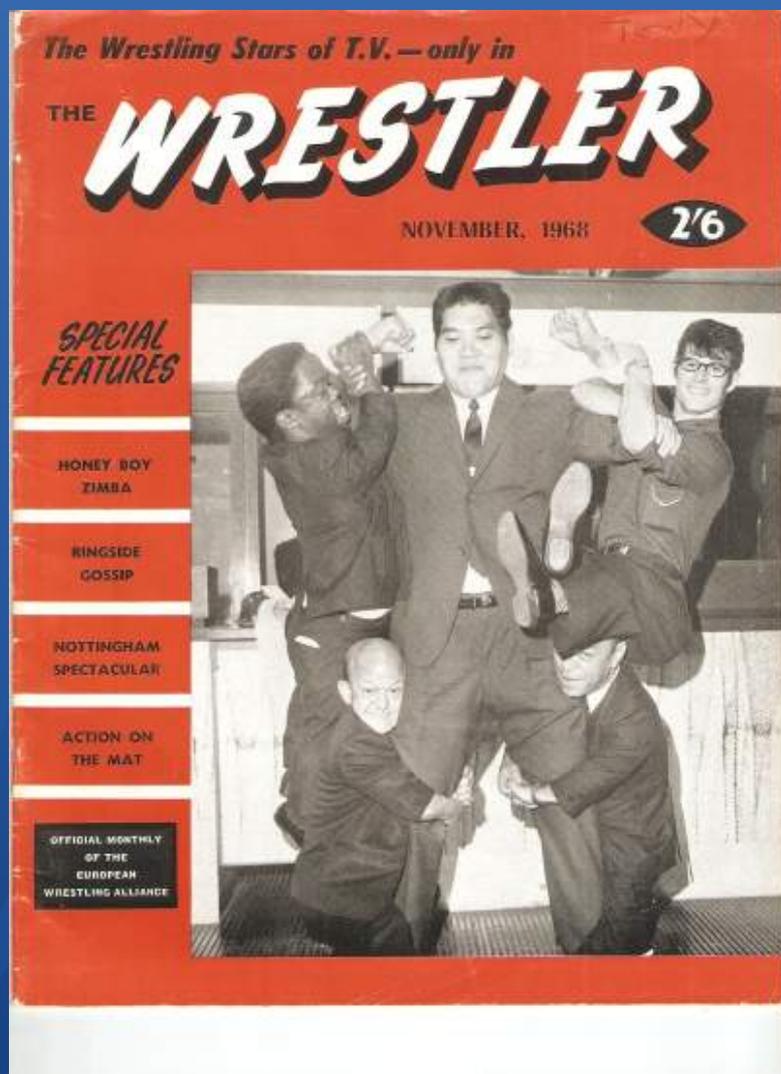
He travelled extensively in 1970 and 1971 with his son, Mark Rocco, by then frequently billed on the undercard.

By 1972 Jumping Jim was a full-time pub landlord.



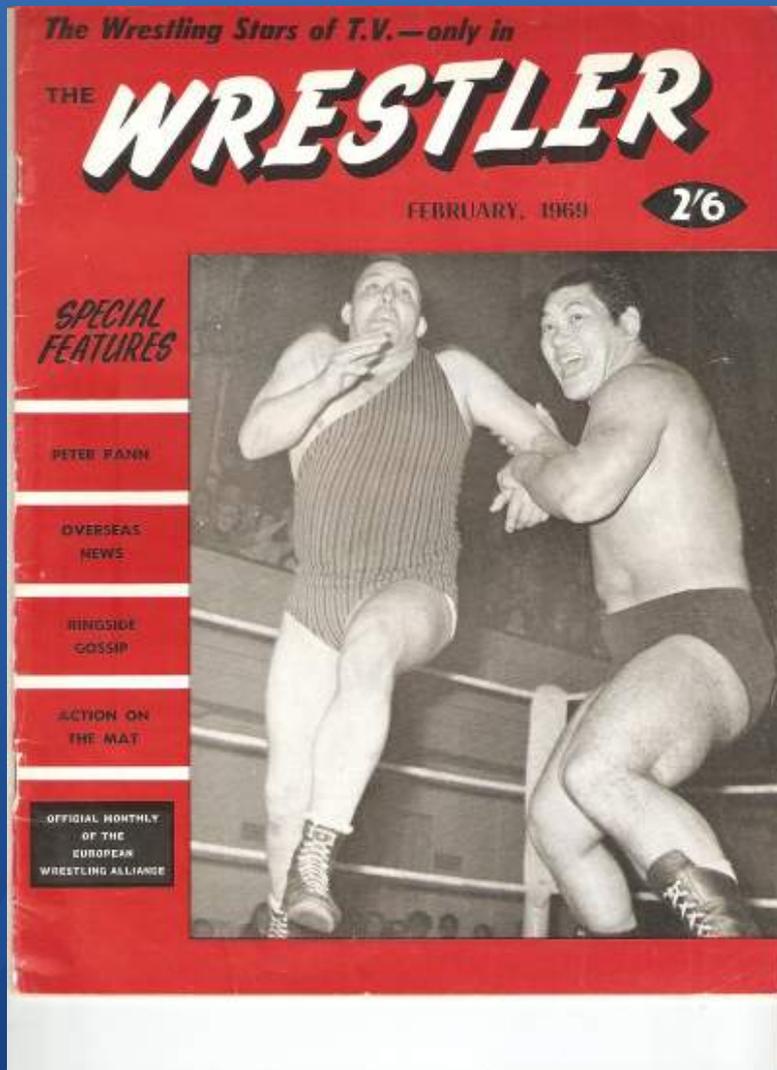
The only one not worried here is Dangerous Danny Lynch. The horizontal Honey Boy seems to know where he is headed. Just imagine the scene in the ringside seats, with spectators scrambling in anticipation of the landing. And it wasn't bluff, wrestlers would frequently end up in the laps of sometimes carefully pre-selected ringsiders. Another example is described here. In the case of Dangerous Danny, however, his signature sixties finishing move was a drop onto the top rope. Danny Lynch was the sole Heritage years wrestler regularly to perform this impressive military press.

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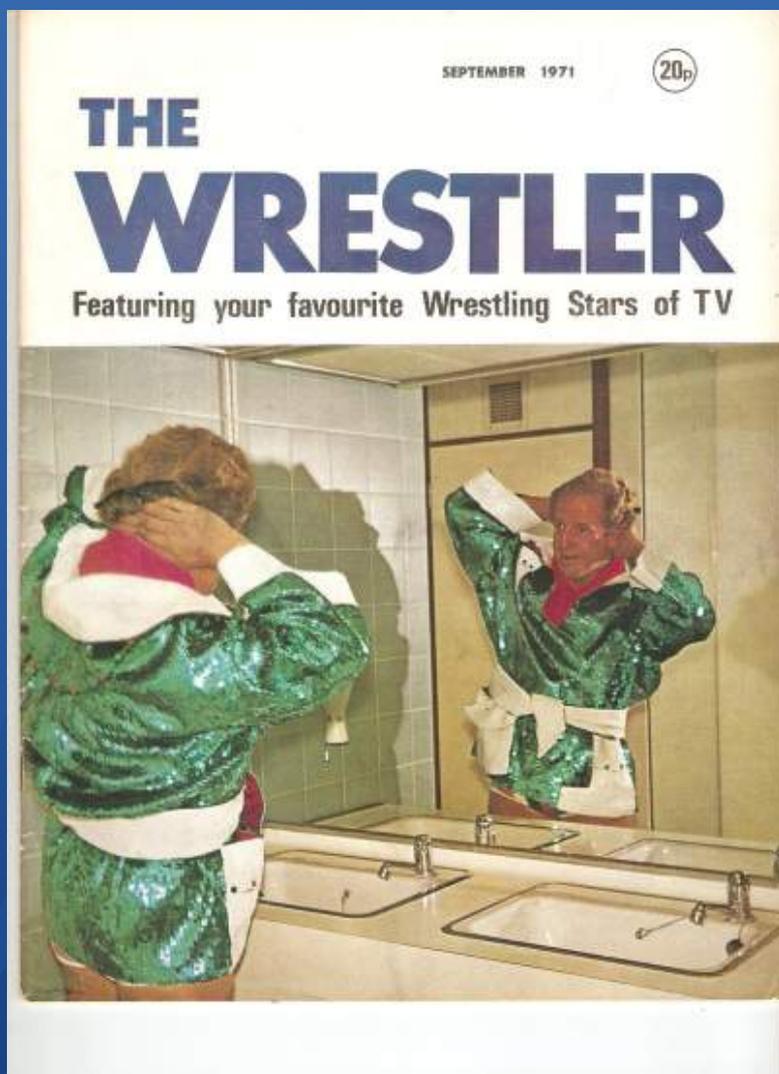
With the groundwork for a solid and well-organised industry successfully laid over the previous 20 years, promoters looked around far and wide to increase the variety of new top-of-the-bill stars. 6'4" Shozo Kobayashi was a prize acquisition and toured Britain extensively in 1968.

Also touring were the wrestling midgets. Note here the cleverness of the photographer in blending big with small. The following year it would be British giants Elrington and Campbell who would be hosted in wrestling's traditionally reciprocal manner in Japan.



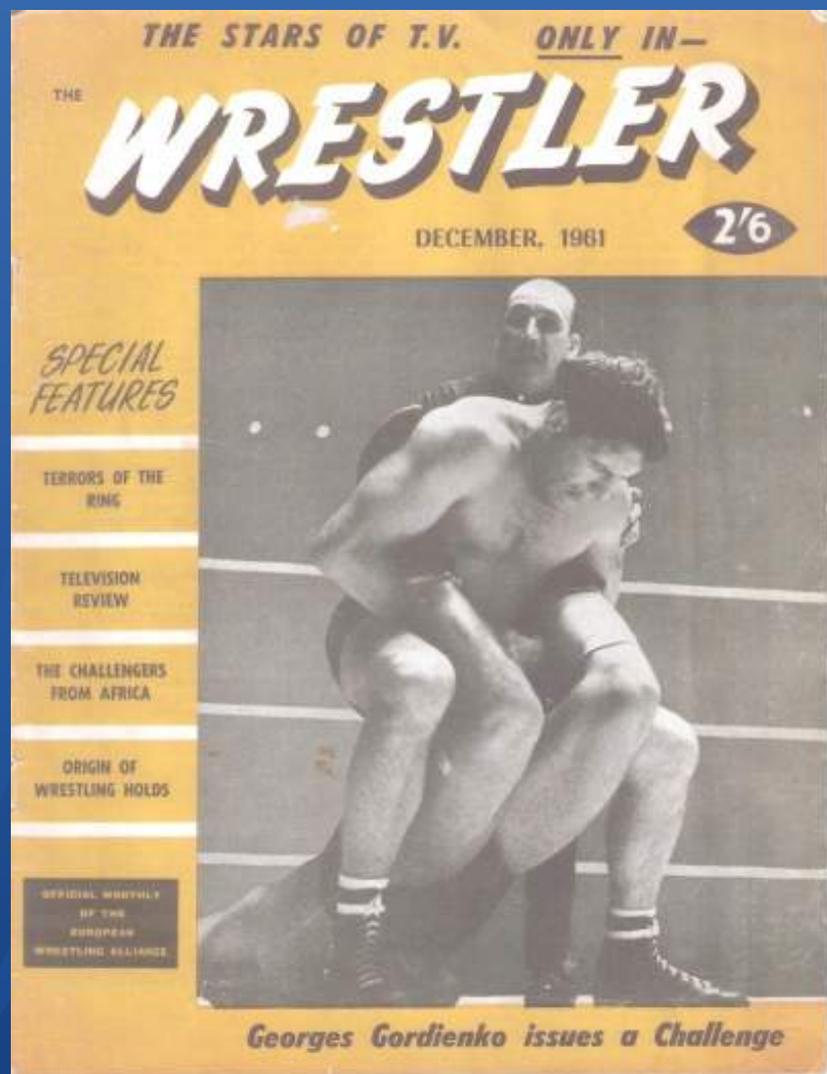
Here's Shozo again, embroiled with another Heritage heavyweight hero, the Yorkshire miner Mal Kirk, seen slimline as we certainly don't remember him in his rookie year.

Just look at the excitement in the balcony as the villain is finally getting his come-uppance. This atmosphere was recreated nationwide, and at numerous venues nightly.

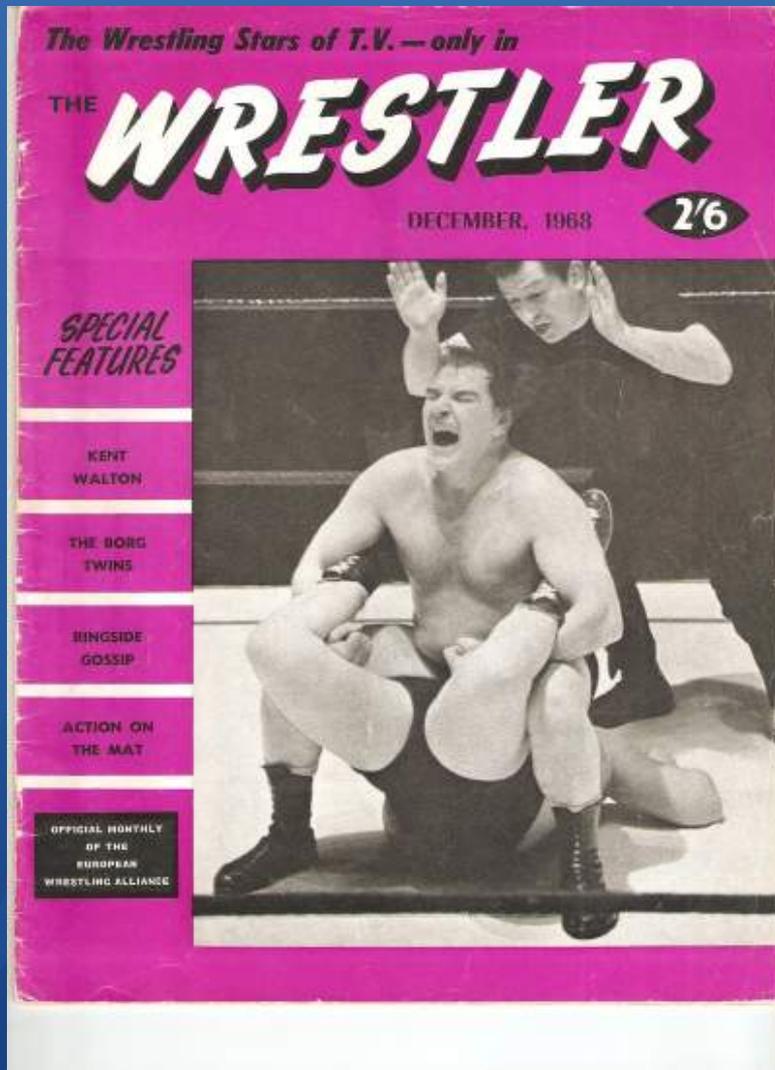


Portrait photos form a third of The Wrestler cover pages in this Heritage countdown. With no title, no active feud, and no teenage son yet ready to share his tag rope, Mr TV carried out his series of nightly meaningless top-of-the-bill 1971 performances with professional diligence. The shouts from the crowd would include provocation galore about his rivalry with Mick McManus. It should be remembered and recorded that, even though they may not have faced off in a high-profile match for over four years, the Londoners' rivalry was still a talking point around the country with their brief encounters of the previous nine years still creating controversy, and fresh in the collective memory. Pallas's star would rise significantly the following year, before going out of orbit just a couple of years after that.

This penultimate entrant in our portrait placings highlights the photographer's 1971 skill in conveying the glitzy glamour that was what Mr TV had to offer at this precise point in time.



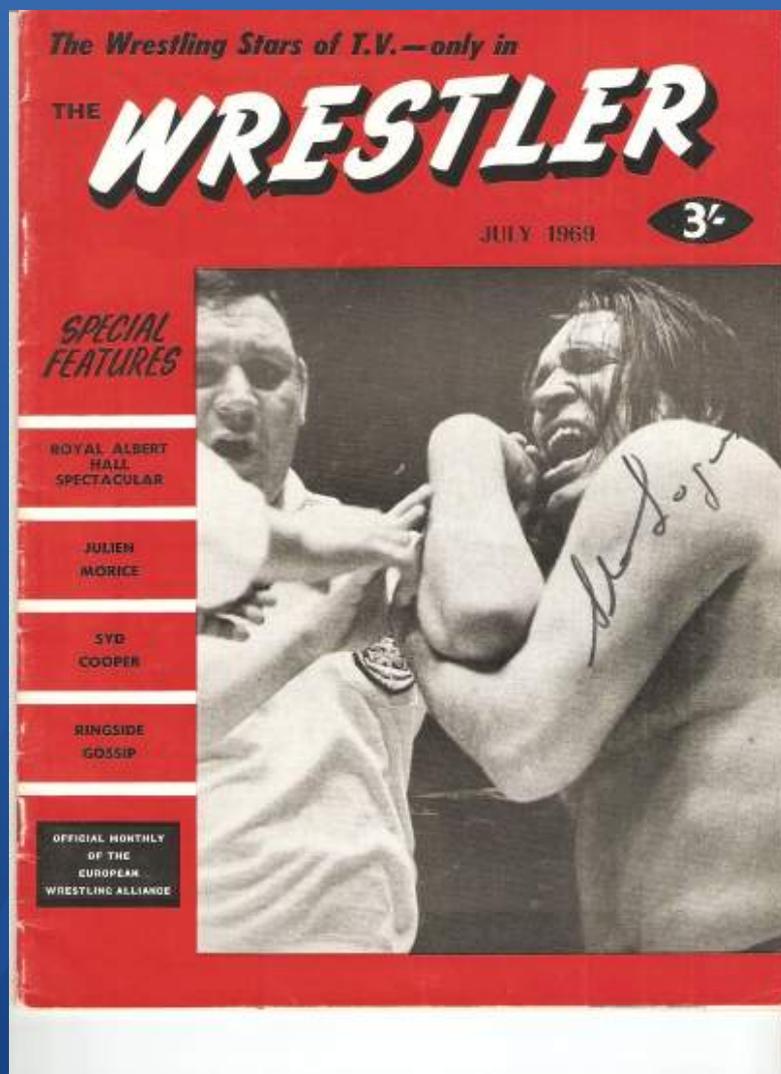
Our countdown is less about 149 magazine cover pages and more to do with creating, in a new way, a pictorial record of the varied exciting aspects of a nationwide industry that captivated Britain for many years. The selection of material for cover pages is highly significant. Our near-countdown of speciality manoeuvres certainly climaxed with the Boston Crab, an expression you can even hear used in the Japanese language on 2014 YouTube footage of our friend above, Shozo, engaged in home actions against visiting Brits. And so the Boston graced two covers of the magazine. Notice in both cases the essential role of the referee: in a sport with widespread claims of "Fixed" the Boston was genuinely inescapable at most times. Maybe the heat had made one wrestler, here Jack Dempsey, want to inflict true pain; maybe the din from the crowd had deafened the submission; but the referee, here Lou Marco, has to carry out his duty very speedily and effectively.



For the very reasons Alan Garfield's Boston Crab features so highly in Speciality Manoeuvres, so it does in this countdown.

Referee Joe D'Orazio's desperate imploring is once again essential in conveying the pain. Alan Garfield was one of the elite group of six original Shining Stars at Wrestling Heritage, partly to redress the balance of his absence from television screens and his lack of media coverage.

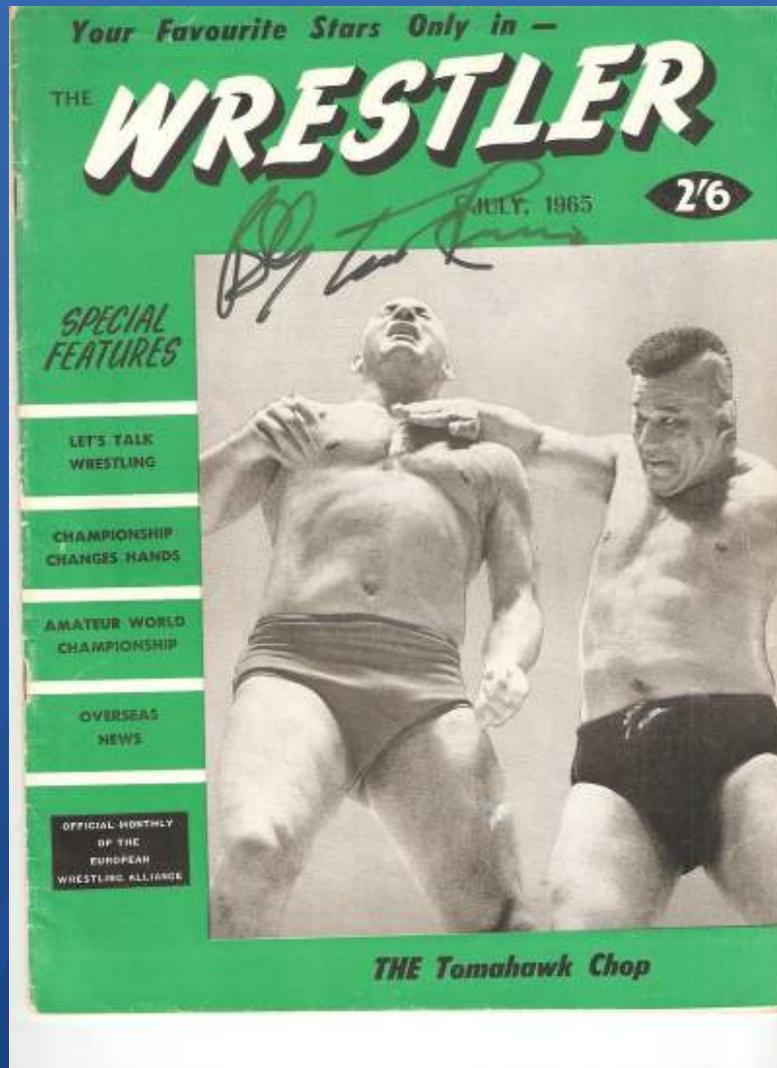
This is the only time he was featured on the cover of "The Wrestler".



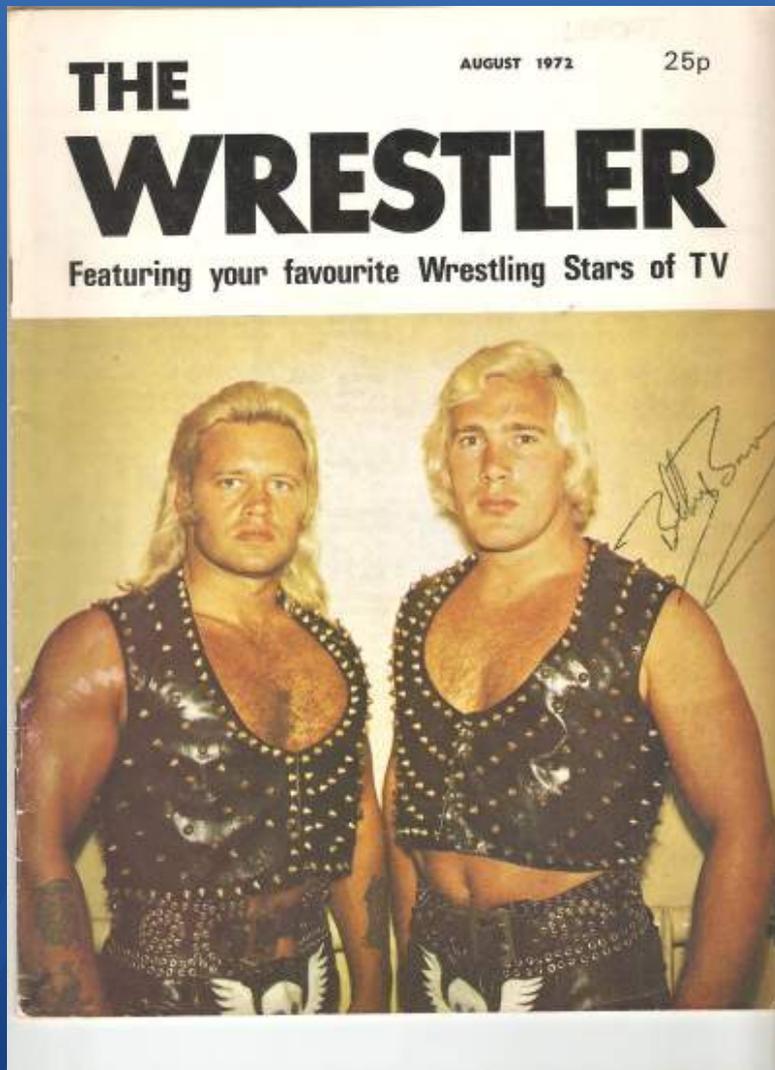
A mesmerising shot that still commands minutes of scrutiny decades later. It is made all the more nostalgic by the fact that the thirty fingers involved belong to three Heritage favourites.

This bout seems to feature in so many of our articles, and unashamedly Judo Al Marquette's London debut makes this particular Top Ten.

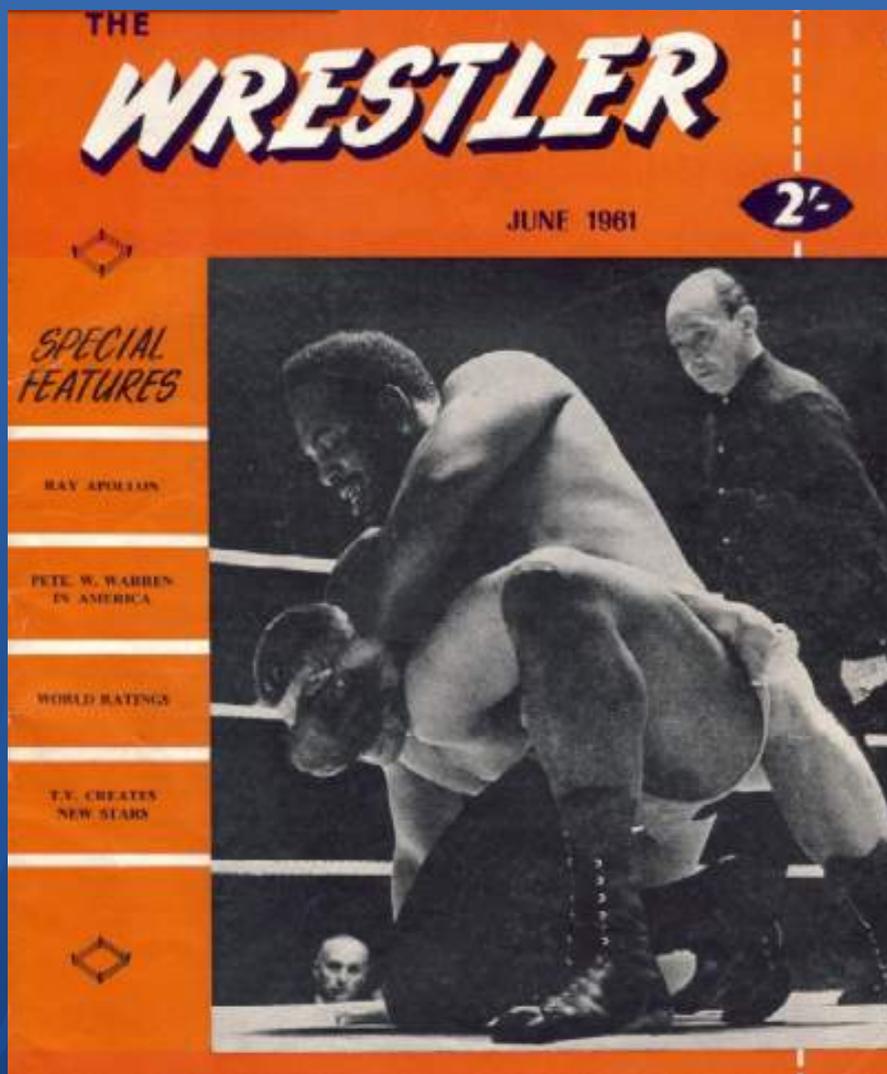
Judo Al applied his famed hand tie to Wrestling Heritage writers in 2010 shortly before his death so we can vouch with certainty as to the inescapability of the hold. Steve Logan's expression says it all here and we can forgive his rather sloppy autograph given that his grip must have been rather wobbly.



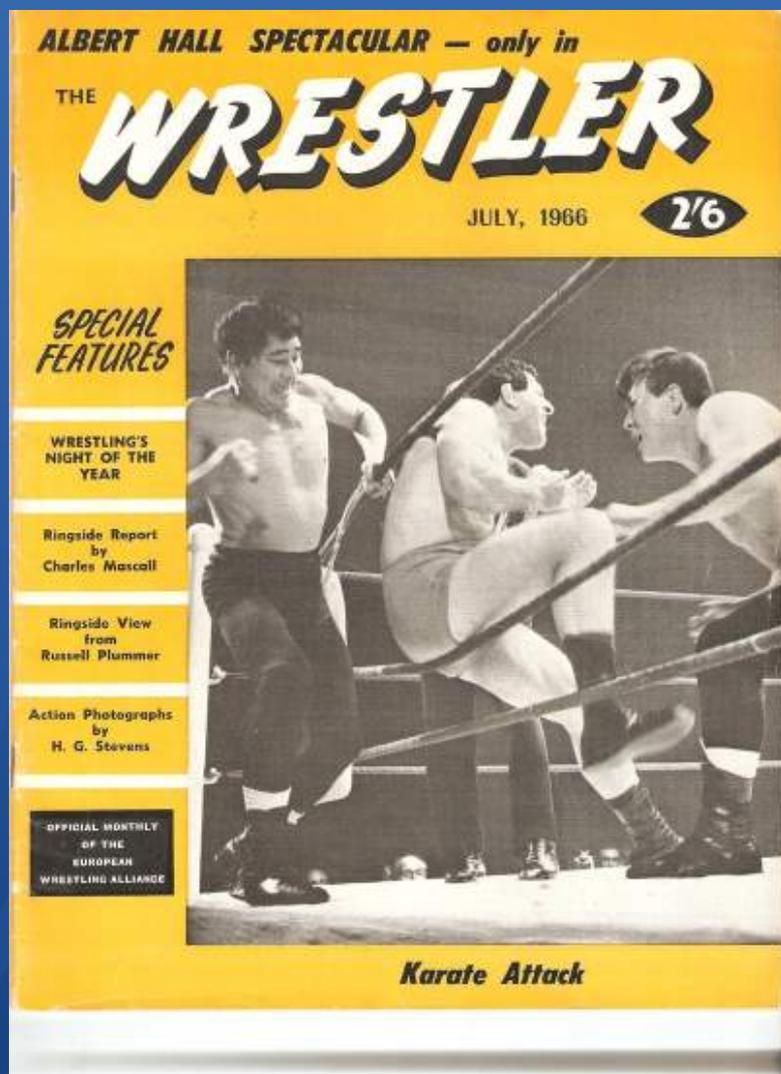
The soon-to-be masked American Outlaw reels (in anticipation?) from one of wrestling's most notorious specialities. Much imitated and controversial, Billy Two Rivers was big box office in the first half of the sixties. Notice here the use of capital letters to underline that this was the original administering THE original. As a still photo the move works well and merits its place at Number Nine. This all-Canadian cover undoubtedly sold copies at the time. Unfortunately in terms of what remains as action footage of the Tomahawk Chop, we are left with Johnny Yearsley selling a benign contact exaggeratedly.



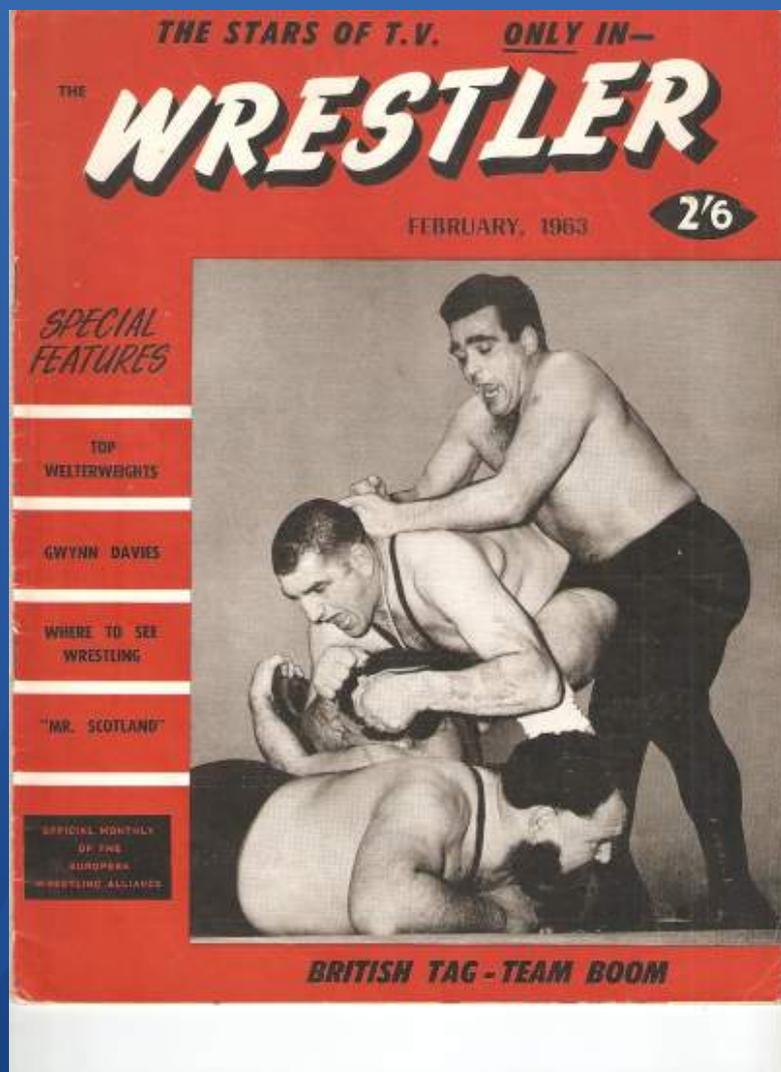
Our near nap hand of autographed cover pages remains in wait for Adrian Street to complete the job. Whatever the technical problems with introducing colour photography the previous year, the publishers of The Wrestler had clearly got it right by 1972 and this is quite simply the perfect portrait which requires no further description from us.



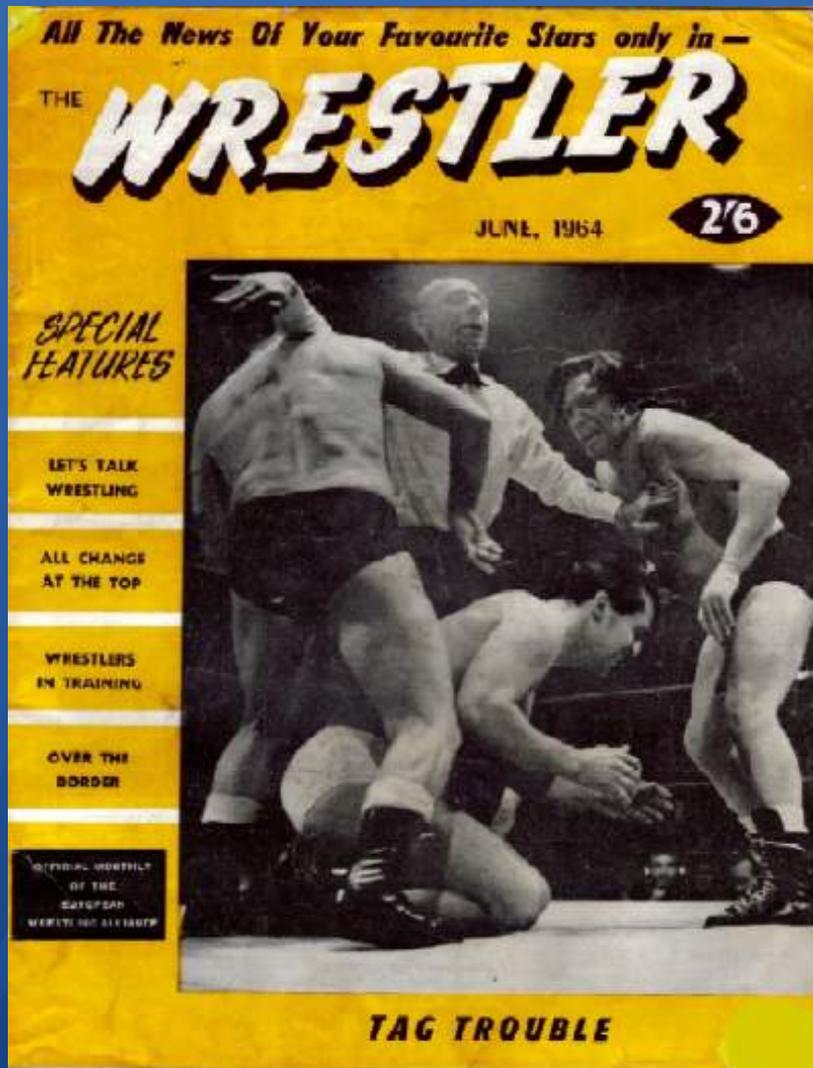
Ray Apollon in a not especially exciting cover page photograph. In fact the photo was so dull that the inside front cover focused on the referee! But look at the date. This is the very first edition of The Wrestler magazine, a peculiarly entitled publication that would give national coverage to a sport much loved by the nation but hitherto largely ignored by the national press. We doff our collective Heritage hat to those groundbreakers who managed to devise and implement the project whilst acknowledging that we all have to learn: 12 months later and the quality of cover page would be cranked up considerably.



The last ever British wrestling bout to be screened live on closed circuit television to cinema screens nationwide. This mini-run of tag scenes really does show how this new dimension managed to captivate sixties grapple gazers. The second world war was still fresh in the memories of many and evil Oriental mistreatment of British golden boys Marino and Viedor was perfectly designed to take audience outrage to even greater levels even into the fourth hour of this momentous 1966 Night of Nights.

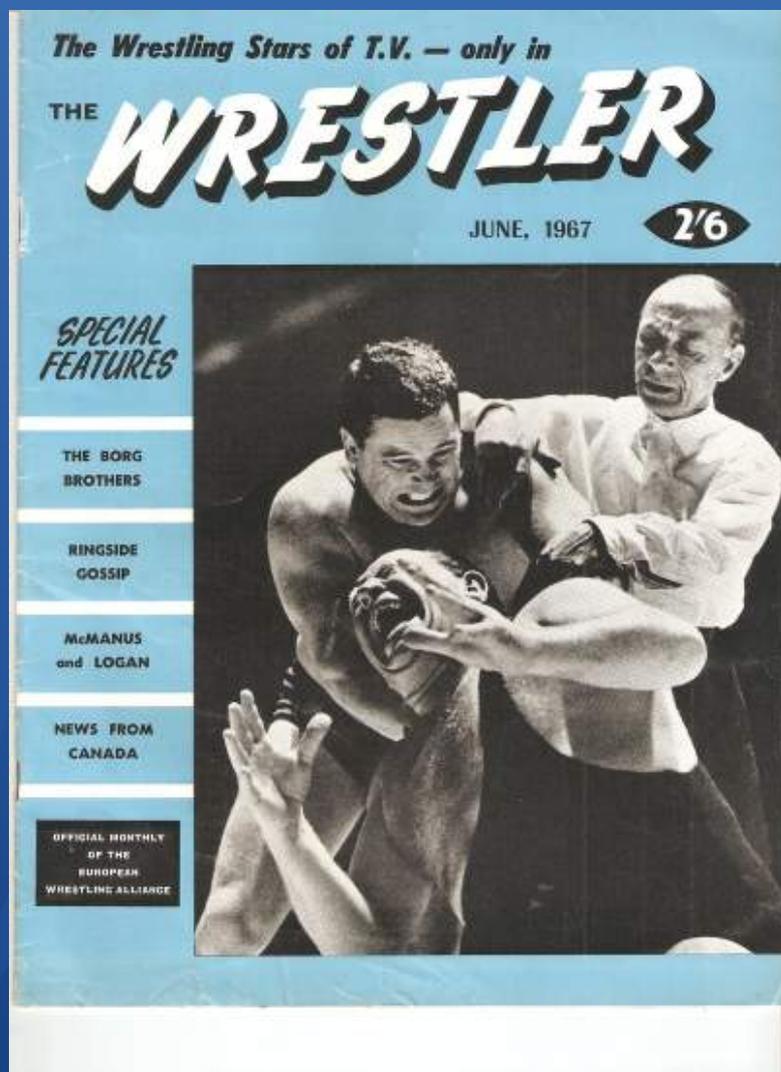


This mêlée may even have ranked higher had it not come in for the Prince Philip treatment as dished out to Number 70. The centrepiece of our tag-match treble shows beardless Bruno Elrington sandwiching Drop-kick Johnny Peters between his partner, Wild Ian Campbell. But Johnny's partner, The Dazzler, is wise to the move. Just imagine the uproar at the venue! You'll have to just imagine it as, for some unfathomable reason the editor has decided to blank out the referee and the entire crowd.

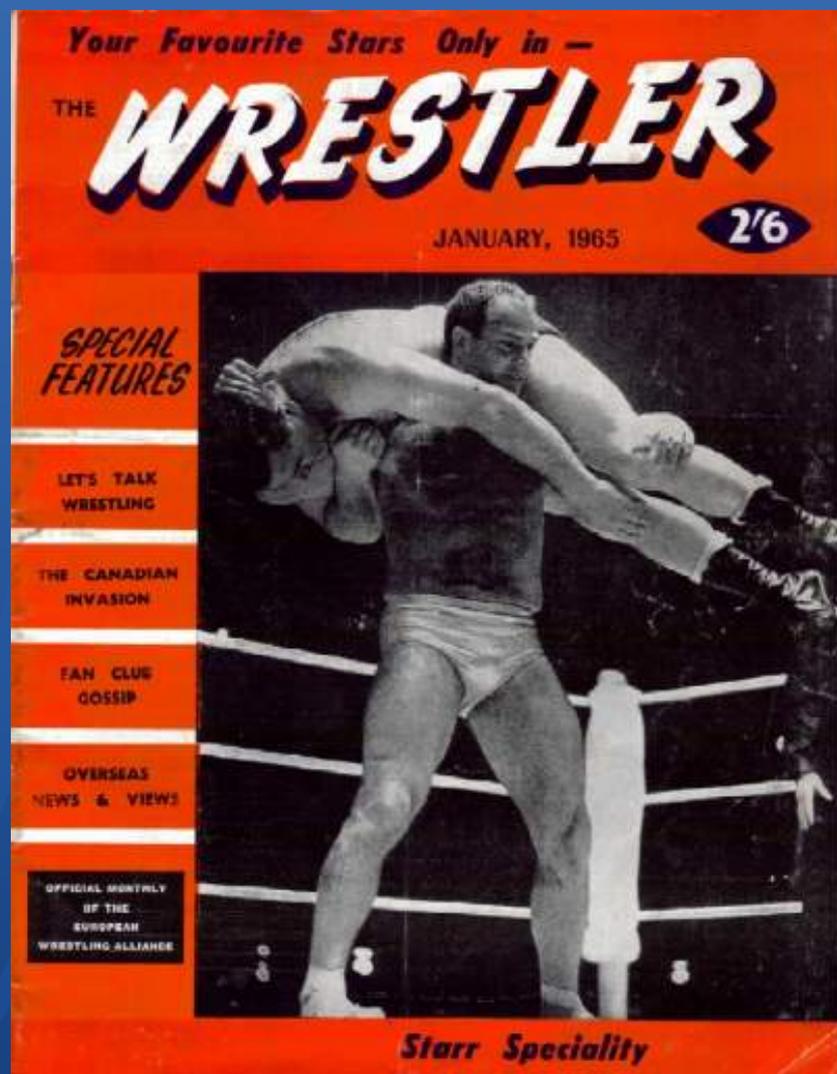


The unmistakable gnarled back of Mick McManus contrasts with the mystery of who the headphoned ringside commentator is. Your suggestions to the related forum topic, please.

The byline says it all, TAG really did mean TROUBLE. And audiences couldn't get enough of it. Two of the foremost teams in the country, as featured also in the Top Ten of Wrestling Heritage photos, apply all their developed professionalism to creating uproar and once again the photographer has snapped up and conveys the moment masterfully.



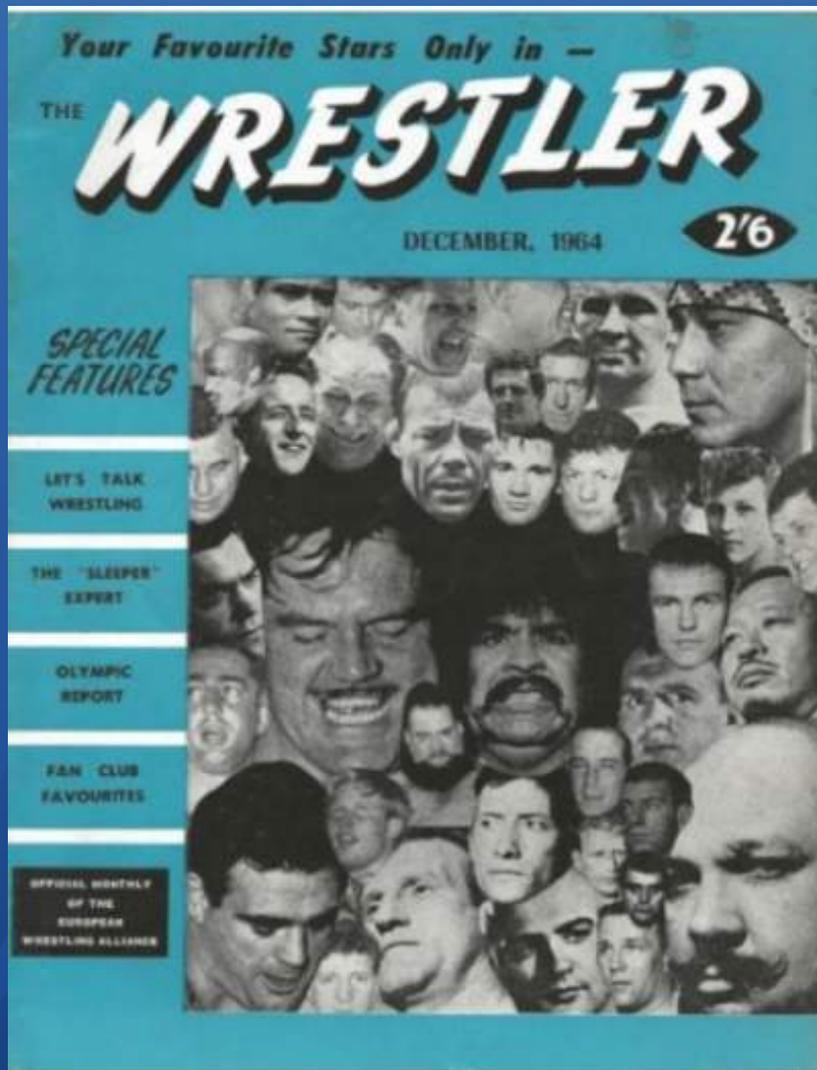
It opened the batting in the Wrestling Heritage countdown of the 100 best wrestling photos, and the same electric shot now weighs in as second runner-up in this more restricted pool. As we wrote then: "a scene that encapsulates, in one moment, the very essence of professional wrestling. After merciless injustices, the hero finally gets to extract revenge on the unscrupulous baddie. The referee strives to put an end to the instant justice, much to the spectators' frustration. Pat Barrett, Roy Bull Davis and Tiny Carr work in perfect unison." Whoever would have thought that the man with the most Top Four entries in this Wrestling Heritage countdown would have been Tiny Carr!



RUNNER UP

Ricky Starr at the height of his 1960s glory. The McManus and Pallo feud was at its own height but along came Ricky Starr to displace even that raging controversy as the national talking point in 1964, '65 and '66. Largely unbeaten in the UK in those heydays, Starr did suffer one notable British loss in Brighton in 1965...in the very bout photographed here.

Regardless of the fact that Heritage favourite Alan Garfield clearly survived this particular aeroplane spin, there can be no doubt that the move, as performed by the American, was a breathtaking highlight on monochrome sets nationwide. The move was also a fitting cover page to interest and attract even more fans in the boom years of British professional wrestling. Ricky Starr sadly passed away just a couple of months before our publication of this cover as runner-up.



The very BEST "THE WRESTLER" MAGAZINE COVER

We just love this cover for its inclusive variety of northern and southern and international wrestlers from a year when wrestling was at its peak of popularity. What cutting and pasting was involved in pre-internet 1964 to achieve this masterpiece?

How many of the great names can you find?