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Exclusive. Alexander Marioiti, historical consultant for the Colosseum documentary. "If you complete crazy histories and start society from scratch, stadiums would start to be built again, a sport would be invented and there would probably be fights." The Colosseum is broadcast on the History Channel every Monday.

WRITTEN BY URBAN

NOVEMBER 8, 2022 - 10:30 - SPORTS - SPECIAL EDITION

On Monday, November 7, the documentary series Colosseum begins on the History Channel. A series in eight episodes that describes the rise and fall of the Roman Empire through the prism of one of the most spectacular and brutal arenas in the history of mankind - the Colosseum. From the cruel lives of gladiators to the spectators, thirsty for blood, who used to attend an amphitheater to demonstrate their total power. The Colosseum' offers viewers a unique and personal look into the life of the Roman Empire. Each episode highlights one of the key characters, all based on real people who lived.

Covering a period of several hundred years, the series unfolds chronologically, from the grand inauguration of the arena to the last games. Colosseum uses dramatic live action sequences and special effects to infuse centuries-old, the personal stories of such immortal figures. The series includes cameos with top experts, world renowned researchers and more.

Courtesy of History Channel's representatives, we present an interview with Alexander Marioiti - historical consultant for the documentary 'The Colosseum', specialized in the history of gladiators and the Roman army. I thank to thanks Bogdan Popescu for conducting this interview.

The documentary features amazing re-enactment scenes combined with expert discussions. But the action scenes are so vivid that even the veteran at home can enjoy "bread and circus". Does it have any meta level?

Alexander Marioiti: Yes, it really is bread and circuses. Yes, bread and entertainment and that's absolutely true. I think the documentary succeeded in this, and this is because, one of the questions that people ask me most often is: There are more great documentaries on this subject, why one more? My answer is that **there is no documentary like this, because documentaries are mainly about ancient Rome, but not about the Roman Empire. Rome is not the Roman Empire. For most users**, Rome is the city of the cities. It is. But we don't want that. We want to see the Empire, we want to participate in the games. And I think what the producers really understood was that the gladiatorial games were a spectacle, which comes from the Latin/spectaculum - spectacle for the eyes. **And that's what this documentary did, it gave people a spectacle for the eyes. There is history, but there is also the chance to travel back in time and be there physically, which we all want to do.**

The Colosseum was built as a place to impress the people of the Roman Empire. It conflicts the power over the people and to prove to the emotion that the Romans are no longer like other nations that the Romanian wanted to convey through this epic building?

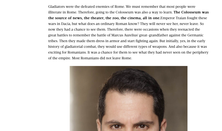
AM: I think another thing that the series did well is that it offered different perspectives. There are eight episodes, but there are eight episodes seen by different people. And that is magnificent at the end of the series, when you see the last episode, you see the last gladiator, you see the last bulls that say: The truth is that it was built for many things. And, in the series, you see through the eyes of different characters, it's like a wonderful theatre and it works. And you see it from everyone's perspective. The thing about the Colosseum is that **it was constructed as a great equalizer; because you have the most distant parts of society, the emperor, who is at the top, and the slaves, who are at the bottom, they all come together. The Colosseum is unique that, because everyone's attention from the least important to the most important in society is focused on the last people in society, the worst of the worst, the slaves, the gladiators**. But there are many different reasons why it was built and it represented many things.

It's also incredibly complex. One of the most important things for the Romanians is that they conquered everything. Right? They conquered the world. They conquered nature. This is what animal hunting is all about, it shows you something primordial. Even today, if you and I found ourselves in front of a bear, it would be terrifying. And there they are: astonishing you with bravery; here is a man who stands in front of a bear, a tiger, a lion and facts him. And if he can do that, he can do anything. And, in the Roman Empire, the Romanians were saying that humanity seeks to conquer to death. That's what the game feels about. It's a gladiator could stand and fight knowing he might die, which is a rare occurrence in gladiatorial combat - one of the things we talk about in the show - if he can prove such courage, then it is an unexpected result. What is left? Glory!

The show focuses on 8 key characters. Why there? Some kind of course: gladiators - who people associate most with the Colosseum, then we have the builders and the master of the beasts. And, of course, I want to talk a little about gladiators. Nevia, she was a free citizen and wanted to fight as a gladiator here. What does this say about the status of women in the Roman Empire and maybe not only about the status?

I think Nevia's story is not a true story. Initially, Nevia bought a wild boar and believed in a documented way, to mention in front of people, or she practically had the feminine features, that is, what the Romanians considered feminine. I think that the experience of the gladiators was rather to offer a little courage to show that free people became gladiators. And what impresses you, the main elements, is that **people voluntarily became gladiators**.Whenever we talked about the gladiators, people asked me: "Why would people become gladiators? Why would they do that voluntarily?" Because in the end, if you think about it, most people lived in absolute poverty, they were deprived of possessions. Sport has always been an escape for the poor. And even today, when society reaches a certain level and sport is at a certain level, it offers the poor the chance to change their social and economic status.

If we take, for example, Spartacus, you can come from the poorest parts of the world, you can become a footballer and you can earn money without having an education. So, you work physically through sports to change your status. Well, it's no different than what a gladiator did. It is surprising to us, but most people who learned to become gladiators - men or women - were in a very, very, very poor situation and they saw this as a way out. They saw the possibility of earning a lot of money and they would be able to lead a life better in all aspects. And if there are risks, well, everything involves certain risks. People become NBA fighters from the poorest parts of the world and become stars. NBA is quickly becoming the biggest sport in the world and involves entering a cage, one on one, and injuring another human being for the applause of the crowd, but maybe it's better than, I don't know, I'm a Romanian peasant and I'm working in the fields of Romania, where the truth is that we are just like them. But there is itself **was completely state history and start society from scratch, in a certain period, they would start building stadiums again and would invent a sport and probably it would be wrenching**. This is the key to the documentary and the key to Romanian history and the reason why it attracts so so much, because when you retrace the arrest and the landscape, the people remain. Historic dates not repeat itself, people do.



Tell me some interesting stories about the Colosseum. We've seen a lot of fictional movies that gave us an idea, but history might tell us otherwise. For example, if the Roman emperor could decide the fate of the gladiators by pointing his thumb up.

Probably the biggest is that Christians died in the Colosseum. And actually, what's interesting is that the only reference to the Colosseum stands the only reason we can say that the Colosseum is because the Pope read and was informed that millions of Christians lost their lives in the Colosseum. So he declared a period of martyrdom and stopped any dismantling of the Colosseum, because it was being dismantled to build other things, especially St. Peter's Square and the Vatican. So, the Pope said, "Stop, we don't want to do that, because Christians died here." The misconception is that most Christians were fed to lions. Yes, it never happened. We have no historical account of this. It very big misconception. You are right about the fingers. It's interesting that sometimes we take things for granted and that fascinates me. It's like I have everything and I say "How do I know this?" And there you discussion yourself and there is a phrase that a historian uses, which is "Tempus edax rerum" - time devours everything. Unfortunately, we don't have a tasting of the rhombs, a "Pollio vertu" And another is "Pollio's punishment" in case he "pressed" and one is "thumb turn". In the last year or the year before, the first example was found in France - a piece of pottery that shows this gesture and presents an editor - the editor, the person who organizes the games - holding his thumb horizontally - and I know it sounds life. We've not sure what it means, but we know that it's a sign that the person who was supposed to die, the main musician, that we like to think of "thumbs up" and "thumbs down" thumbs down? Because of the movies. Because in the 1970s, there was a silent film called *Madonna and Mrs.* and the director **Benjamin Albert Rolfe** were naturally invested that pointing the thumb up means - since Greek and Roman times, it was a sexual phallic, so it was always something positive - and pointing the thumb down is bad. Unfortunately, we have films and films copy other films, because there who work in the film industry in general, do not know history. So, chances are, if you're making a movie, you're sure Gladiator but not Dead Poets.

Another misconception is the **Latin expression "Glory to You, Emperor, those who go to death salute you"** this Imperator, mentioned in salutant! It sounds wonderful, I've seen it in the movies, but it's actually not true. It was anti-semi, and it was said ironically, because the emperor was a fool. Caligula was a fool, Nero was a fool, Commodus was a fool, and they made the Senate going to catch fire. So, they knew they were going to die. Gladiators usually don't die and, in this case, they were sure it would happen. So they said: "Thank you very much, we, those about to die, salute you. Nero" And they refused to fight and were forced to fight. People think that's what's been said every time, which is very dramatic because it sounds like they're about to die. While the truth is that it was said almost ironically.

What impresses me in this episode about the Gladiators is the fact that they were fighting each other, but there was a sense of camaraderie. Most were the same team, they were friends. They became friends and had to fight to the death.

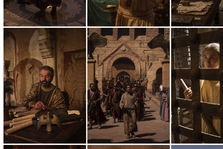
It's no different than NBA today. You look at NBA fighters, they train together, but then they end up fighting. It's the same with boxers. Not boxers who trained together. I like watching old boxing videos. And you see guys who knew each other - Frank Bruno was Tyson's long time ago and they fought together. They are teammates because the schools were teams. They had talent scouts and they would go to the provinces and they would bring people back to the school and they would concluded for a period of five years. So you find out that they exchanged players and exchanged players with each other. So, yes, these guys trained together, get together. In fact, they were called familiarius/gens that behaved almost like a family and had a hierarchy structure if they died or something happened to them, the tree collected the money and took care of the family and a tombstone was erected in their honor. But then again, it's like any other sport there today. Some boys to play football together. And then change the team and play against each other. The same is the case of fights. Yes.

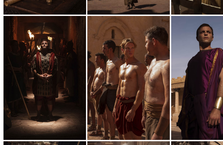
Do you know if there was any information about the Dacian gladiators? We know they had Thracian gladiators.

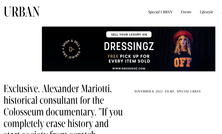
It is very likely because, of course, Trajan's famous wars, the two wars he fought, there is a very high probability that Romans themselves were too big people from a physical point of view and the tallest, most physically built people were the people who lived in the distant regions, who were Dacians. And, of course, they were taken prisoners of war and, of course, they were gladiators and could have succeeded in great gladiators. What you look at Dacians who lived in the city they don't had very hard lives. So in the case of the Swiss people during the Renaissance. Why did they choose the Swiss as mercenaries? Because these people lived in the hills. They had hard lives, they were hard working country people, and the same was true of the Dacian warriors. **So 100% there were Dacian gladiators**. We have no mention of them, but you can be sure they existed. I mean, they were invented warriors. And, of course, we have the Asia, which was a weapon used by the Thracians and which is a copy of the Ida.

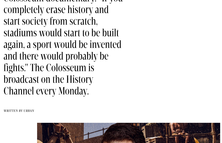
A very interesting thing was that the gladiators used the weapons of Rome's enemies.

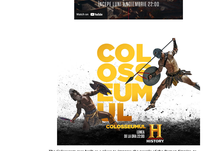
Gladiators were the defeated enemies of Rome. We must remember that most people were conquered people. So, of course, they used the weapons of Rome's enemies. **The Colosseum was the source of news, the theater, the zoo, the cinema, all in one.** Emperor Trajan fought three wars in Dacia, but what does an ordinary Roman know? They will never see her, never have. So now they had a chance to see them. Therefore, there were occasions when they invented the great battles to remember the battle of Marcus Aurelius' great grandfather against the Germans and the Germans were very, very, very important because they were the first time, in the entire history of gladiatorial combat, they would see different types of weapons. And also because it was exciting for Romanians. It was a chance for them to see what they had never seen on the periphery of the empire. Most Romanians did not leave Rome.

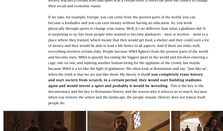


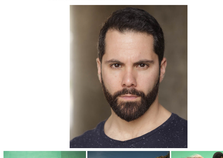












In the documentary it is mentioned that the gladiators were basically the pop culture characters of the Colosseum - they were the stars, but if we talk about the other key figures of the documentary - what role do they have?

The series covers a large period of Rome's history. It starts from the beginning of the history of the Colosseum, until the end. And so, in many ways, it offers different perspectives of different people but also different parts and different periods of history. What's great about the Colosseum is that it's a talking point. The decor is a great complete to see that Romans were incredible emerged from this

gladiatorial sport. I mean, it's fascinating to think about what Galen of Pergamon was doing in 180 AD. and that modern medicine is this pause in history.

And starting with 180 AD, the Colosseum is an even bigger point of discussion. What do people experience when they visit the structure? It fills your eyes and every time I think: "My God, someone sat down and thought about this and designed it architecturally with the drainage system. And this had to be on a slight incline, and the bathrooms, designed in reverse, so that they could be built quickly." I mean, it was a work of genius.

How exactly does the Colosseum show the rise and fall of the Roman Empire?

The Colosseum is a great model for society in general. Society reaches a certain point when it becomes excellent and tends towards excellence. And then you get to a point where it stagnates and there's always some kind of key moment where you build something or do something and it's perfect. Or it is close to perfection and it is powerful, and then it becomes an abuse of power. And this represents civilization in general, we are reaching a moment when there is too much temptation. You can see the Colosseum in a negative light, which we generally do, we look at these people who liked to watch other people kill each other and eat while people were beheaded. And this is not true. A lot of it comes from the early Christian historians who took everything and replaced a culture that was no longer needed and said, "Look, this is a terrible culture." And that's how we were raised. The historical truth is much more interesting and fascinating. That's why there are so many moments that will amaze the viewers. I think the series showed very well how complex and, in some ways, brilliant the Colosseum was. I mean,**from the spectator's point of view, life is short and terrible, exceptionally hard and difficult.**And here, for a moment, you can escape from all this, you can share this wonderful experience with your friends, with your family, with the emperor, with the most important people of your society. You can stay there for a moment. You can imagine sitting there and the silence that will fall before a gladiator comes out and the roar that resounds after he comes out. I get goosebumps just thinking about it. But you can imagine someone who was incredibly poor being fed and all that, and having a moment in his life where he's being cheered by 55,000 to 85,000 people in one brief, glorious moment and knowing that you will continue to live. And if they knew that they are still alive because we still talk about them, we still make shows about them. So, there is a religious aspect, there is almost a sacred aspect to the costumes, but it has become perverted. The Colosseum is really a commentary on humanity. And the problem with strength is that our hard times lead us to excellence and that excellence brings strength. And then the problem is that power is perverted and abused. And I want to say that the Colosseum is really a model of humanity, and that's why we're still talking about it, because it's universal. It is a universal theme that continues to exist today.

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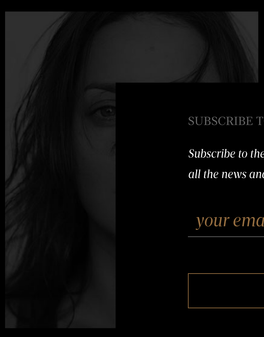

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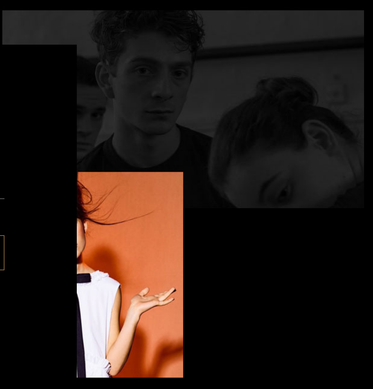

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