

Sputnik Monroe

Roscoe Monroe Brumbaugh (born **Rosco Monroe Merrick**; December 18, 1928 – November 3, 2006) better known by his ring name **Sputnik Monroe**, was an American professional wrestler. He was a headliner in many territories, and was best known in Memphis, Tennessee, where he and Billy Wicks set an attendance record that lasted until the Monday Night Wars boom period. Debuting as **Rock Monroe** in 1945, Monroe began his career by wrestling in traveling carnivals. He changed his name to **Rocky Monroe** in 1949, and adopted the nickname "Sputnik" in 1957.

He became a noteworthy figure in Memphis cultural history. During a period where legal segregation was the norm at public events, and during a general decline in the popularity of professional wrestling, Monroe recognized that the segregated wrestling shows (whites sat in floor seats while blacks were required to sit in the balcony) were not properly marketing to black fans. The witty, flamboyant Monroe began dressing up in a purple gown and carrying a diamond tipped cane and drinking in traditionally black bars in the black area of Memphis. Because of this, he was frequently arrested by police on a variety of trumped up charges, such as moperly. He would then hire a black attorney and appear in court, pay a fine, and immediately resume fraternizing with black citizens and drinking in their bars. Due to this, and in spite of the fact that he was a heel at the time, his popularity soared among the black community. At his shows, although floor seats in arenas would be half empty with white patrons, the balcony would be packed to capacity with black patrons with many others unable to enter due to the balcony selling out.

Monroe having become the biggest wrestling draw at the time, soon refused to perform unless black patrons were allowed to sit in any seat at the Ellis Auditorium. Thus, his wrestling shows were desegregated and the shows then completely sold out with Monroe's many black fans filling the auditorium. Soon, other southern sporting events, recognizing the enormous financial benefits, began to desegregate as well.

Monroe had three children, the youngest of them, Bubba Monroe was also a pro wrestler. Monroe trained him. Sputnik passed his sleep on November 3, 2006 in Florida, he was 77 years old.

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