



## **Muhammad Ali was the perfect antidote for the ailing world during the early sixties.**

His arrival was as well timed as his razor sharp left jab. No other fighter not even the great Joe Louis had commanded the incredible amount of attention the media had garnished upon this loud mouth braggart. Lets disperse with all those weary clichés and adjectives used to describe him over the years. In the simplest of terms "before him there was none and after him there shall be no more!" Sure he was loud, brash and arrogant but man could he fight!

And what a glorious breathe of fresh air he was to a pugilistic world that had been stagnating hopelessly in mediocrity. Prior to his arrival the sweet science had gone sour, particularly in the heavyweight division were there had been an alarming decrease in popularity. This decline had begun with the retirement of one of boxing's most revered gladiators Rocky Marciano. The rock had abdicated his heavyweight throne in the autumn of 1955 following his sixth successful title defence, which had been a ninth round K.O. over Archie Moore. It was the conclusion of an extraordinary career in which Marciano had mauled and brawled his way through 49 fights without a loss.

With the absence of the rock, boxing had lost its biggest drawing card since the days of the legendary brown bomber Joe Louis and his royal sweetness the original Sugarman, Sugar Ray Robinson. While the current heavyweight champion Floyd Patterson was an amiable gentleman, his ring exploits or lack of did little to endear him to fight fans. During a disappointing four year rein, his title defences against weak opposition such as Pete Rademacher, Brian London, Roy Harris and Tom McNeeley, plus the two one round K.O.'s he suffered at the hands of the frightening Sonny Liston, had indelibly stigmatised his reputation as a champion. Patterson's successor was perhaps the most hated and vilified of all champions Charles "Sonny" Liston. An ex-con out of St. Louis Liston had served time in various crowbar hotels from St. Louis to Philly for every thing from mugging and armed robbery to knuckle sandwiching cops. He became the Bull's for the media who never missed an opportunity to malign him. Still the quick and brutal manner in which he disposed of Patterson left the sport's world perceiving him as an invincible monster. The only way to destroy him was with a silver bullet or to drive a stake through the heart. Liston was being hailed as the next Joe Louis and most felt that he'd be champion for years to come.

But there was a new comer on the boxing scene who was not buying it. He was a brash, bombastic 22-year-old trash talking kid out of Louisville Kentucky and oh was he shucking and jiving us. "I'm the greatest I'm the greatest", he proclaimed. "I'm going to whup Sonny Liston, he ain't nothing but a big ugly bear." While very few took his ranting and raving seriously, he was never the less a breathe of fresh air to a stagnating division. But even more he was a promoters dream.