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Welcome to issue one of Steelchair Magazine. What started off as a small section in VultureHound Magazine has now become Steelchair where we can focus entirely on wrestling. WWE, TNA, ROH, Lucha Underground and British Wrestling will all be covered.

Our cover star is TNA World Champion Bobby Lashley who discusses CM Punk, John Cena and Paul Heyman and more.

With this being the month of WrestleMania we couldn't not discuss it, so we've predicted some of the matches and results we expect to see.

Between issues stay up to date at Steelchair.co.uk with more results, reviews, features and interviews. If you agree or disagree with us I encourage you to tweet us @SteelchairMag and we will share the best tweets in the next issue.

Thanks for reading and I hope you enjoy.

David Garlick, Editor

 @DavidGarlick

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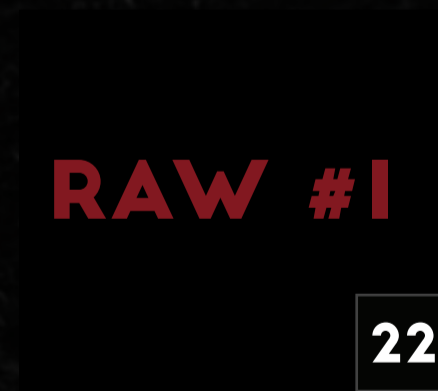


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CONTENTS



LUCHA UNDERGROUND

WORDS: COIRÉ MC CRYSTALL

AN INTRODUCTION TO

LUCHA

UNDERGROUND



LUCHA UNDERGROUND



AN INTRODUCTION

Lucha Libre has never been able to garner much more than a novel interest within the English speaking wrestling world. WWE has never really been able to accommodate more than one 'masked high flying wrestler' at a time (unless they're in a tag team!) and WCW, despite giving lucha stars a degree of exposure in the mid-to-late 90s, did everything they could possibly do to unravel that goodwill once Vince Russo started booking them in piñata-on-a-pole matches and other stereotypical gimmicks. With Lucha Underground, however, Robert Rodriguez and his El Rey network are showing that Lucha Libre isn't just a viable product for English speaking fans – its possibly the best made program today.

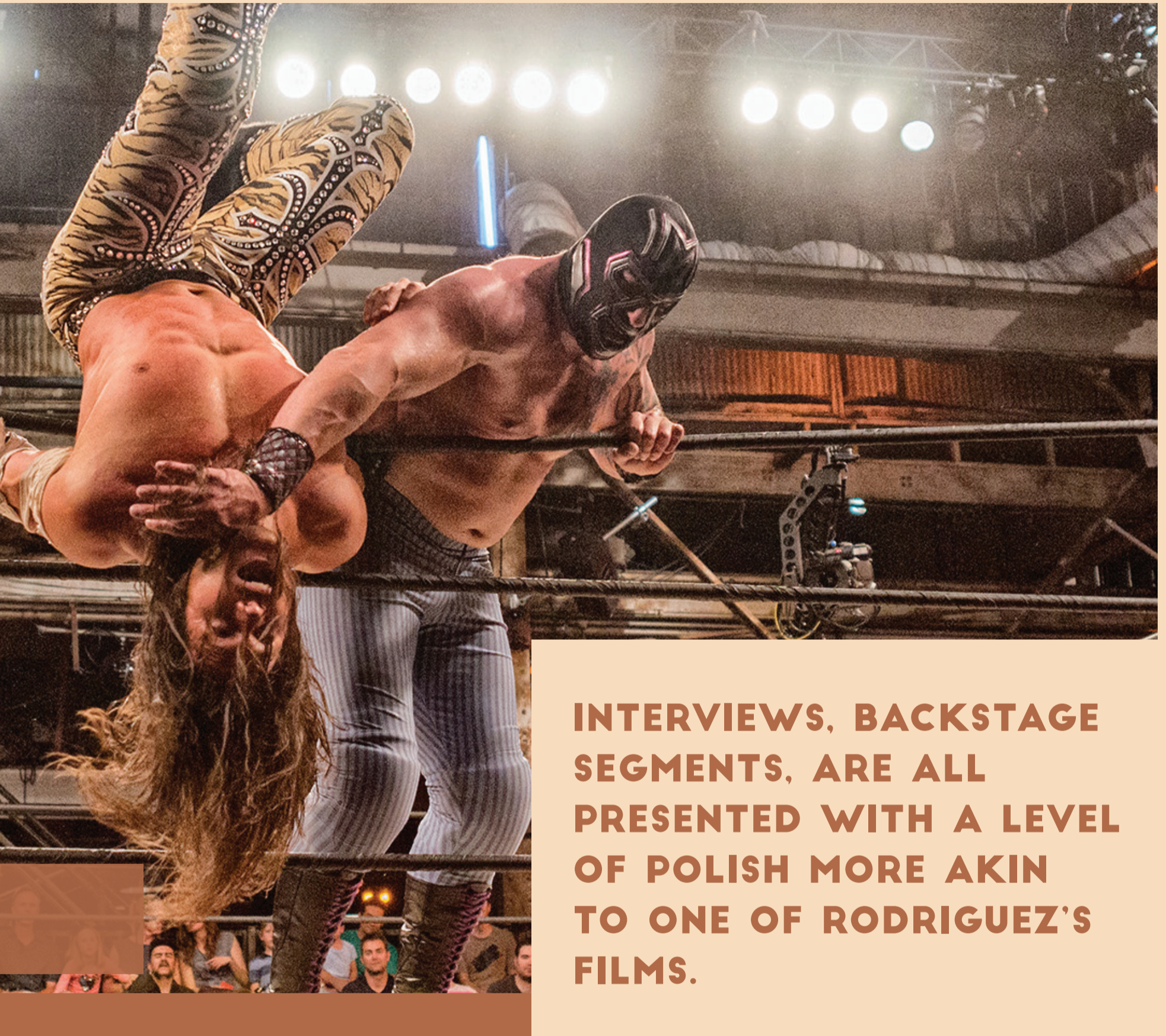
The set up for Lucha Underground is a strange mixture of new and old – in the ring it's all action – there are familiar faces such as the former John Morrison (now the copyright friendly 'Johnny

Mundo') and Ezekiel Jackson (now called 'Big Ryck', because he's big and his name is Ryck). However we also have a mix of high flying Mexican luchadores, El Santo-style 'strongmen' luchadores, and indy stars of all shapes and sizes. But what sets Lucha Underground apart more than anything else is its commitment to being a television programme. Anything not in the ring – interviews, backstage segments, vignettes – are presented with a sleek level of polish that's more akin to one of Rodriguez's films or a crime drama than a wrestling programme.

In terms of story, Lucha Underground starts with what's familiar – Dario Cueto is a wealthy eccentric who started his own wrestling promotion to exhibit his love for battle and conquest. He's the Hispanic Vince McMahon. You cross him and he'll make your life a living hell. We've seen 'evil rich authority figure' played out in every wrestling promotion known to man – but Dario Cueto has enough unique character to



set him apart. He also happens to have an affinity for Aztec culture and this can be seen everywhere on the show – from his frequent mentions of the 'proud and noble heritage of the Aztec Warriors of old', to the 'Temple' design of the studio where they shoot the show. This gives the show a clear identity – it is cartoonish at times, but it works more often than not – most of these wrestlers are vibrant masked personalities and setting them



INTERVIEWS, BACKSTAGE SEGMENTS, ARE ALL PRESENTED WITH A LEVEL OF POLISH MORE AKIN TO ONE OF RODRIGUEZ'S FILMS.

up against a backdrop such as this fits a lot better than merely having them wrestle in some bingo hall.

This leads to another useful storyline contrivance. So often when a promotion starts up, no reason is given for why any of the wrestlers are there – you can only see obviously inferior promotions refer to themselves as ‘the best wrestling promotion in the world today’ for so long

before you realise that that really isn't the case. Dario's Million Dollar Man-esque persona is an extremely useful character trait because he's a millionaire (possibly billionaire) weirdo who is paying the greatest athletes in the world to wrestle for him. Obviously, this is just a storyline, but it's a convincing one – for months before Lucha Underground introduced a title belt the wrestlers in this promotion were literally wrestling

for briefcases full of money. When Cueto says he's assembling the greatest talent from across the world to wrestle without being held down by politics and bad writing teams, and then Ricochet (under a mask as ‘Prince Puma’) and the aforementioned Johnny Mundo have an undeniable barn burner – you believe that is the case.

The ability to effectively set up a [▶](#)

LUCHA UNDERGROUND



THE SET UP FOR LUCHA UNDERGROUND IS A STRANGE MIXTURE OF OLD AND NEW.

storyline premise and follow through with something promotions like TNA and WWE have struggled with for years that Lucha Underground has been able to pull off from the start. The reasons why it can do this are plentiful but mainly, they keep things simple: matches mean something, but the meaning never becomes convoluted. Lucha Underground are able to present

characters as being equals, but for different reasons; such a Big Ryck being huge but slow and Prince Puma being fast but small – so a match between the two will accentuate these points. The in-ring action is commented on by the encyclopedia-like Matt Striker and the much-better-than-expected Vampiro – they do not plug apps, they do not actively ignore the match to talk

about God-knows-what, they do not bury the wrestlers. They call the action, explain why matches are important and really get across why each character is noteworthy. WWE and TNA could learn a lot from these two; but considering WWE tossed Matt Striker aside, I'd say any lessons the former teacher could impart onto the WWE commentary team has been rejected.



This brings me to my next point about Lucha Underground: what they can do with the ingredients they are given is astounding. The roster has a big contingent of WWE (and to a lesser extent TNA) castaways – these are the guys who, for one reason or another, didn't light the WWE on fire. From what Lucha Underground has been able to do with guys like John Morrison, Ezekiel Jackson and Chavo Guerrero, I'd be more

inclined to believe that departures were more WWE creative dropping the ball on these talents than their own doing. Take Chavo Guerrero as an example – he started his Lucha Underground run with a loss to a masked luchadore called Blue Demon Jr. Lucha Underground has effortlessly framed this as being something that has broken Chavo – he's not a 'proud Mexican warrior' anymore, he's a guy that will backstab anyone

and connive his way to getting what he wants – and it's worked. He's a heel and he's made hitting someone with a chair significant again. Chavo Guerrero is now one of the most compelling wrestlers on television today, and it's thanks to his ability (which was never lacking) and Lucha Underground's ability to convey a story without getting caught up in a load of nonsense. >



DARIO CUETO... IS THE HISPANIC VINCE MCMAHON.

However, all of what I have described to this point has been window dressing. Without wrestling, Lucha Underground would be just a well-shot show about a rich guy and his roster of muscular men in masks. The matches themselves in Lucha Underground are mostly stellar. There are some less amazing bouts presented to get characters over, but on the whole Lucha Underground's in ring action seems like its dedicated to showing fans new things they haven't seen done in a ring before. In WWE, any time we see a masked wrestler like Sin Cara or Kalisto, there are whispers that this is the next Rey Mysterio, but in Lucha Underground that's an impossible claim to verify because there are simply so many 'next Rey Mysterios'. As it stands, Fénix and Prince Puma are the frontrunners in 'guys you really need to see to believe', but as I've said, it's not all about the high flyers – guys like

Blue Demon Jr, Cage and Mil Muertes are having great matches while rarely leaving their feet. And then there are stars like Pentagón Jr. and Drago and King Cuerno whose meticulously crafted personas can be seen not just in their outfits but also in the way they wrestle. As an example, King Cuerno is presented a master hunter – so his wrestling style reflects this – he's shown actively stalking his opponents and trying to outwit stronger or faster wrestlers. His bizarre pagan-esque antler-crown and pelt-cape introduce his character and his fighting style reinforces it. This all adds up to a thrilling conclusion – from all aspects, Lucha Underground is a meticulously crafted show, not just on the level of a TNA IMPACT or WWE RAW, but even compared to True Detective or Breaking Bad – the characters and story intertwine in a way that seems like an advancement of the product.

Prior to Lucha Underground, I'd have considered applying the standards of a television drama to a wrestling show to be actively destroying the product. There's an infamous scene in the documentary 'Beyond the Mat' where Vince McMahon balks at the idea of his life's work merely being seen as wrestling. "We make movies!" he smugly grins, as if to underline that wrestling, as a source of entertainment, can't be raised to the standards of television or movies without making the product into something else entirely. Lucha Underground has proven that you can do it both – you can improve the quality of the product immensely whilst maintaining what it's truly about: the wrestling. So why aren't you watching Lucha Underground? The main reason probably – it doesn't have a UK TV deal. And that's a real shame. ■



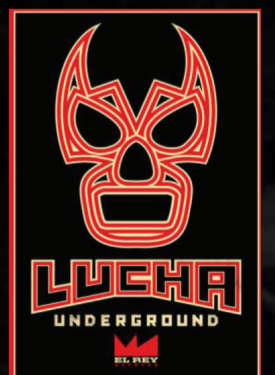
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BOBBY LASHLEY

WORDS: SHANE BAYLISS



WE SPOKE WITH THE TNA WORLD CHAMPION

BOBBY LASHLEY

Words: Shane Bayliss

Total Non-Stop Action Wrestling's Maximum Impact Tour 7 rolled into the UK, with stars such as Bobby Lashley, Kurt Angle, Matt Hardy and others putting their bodies on the line for the entertainment of the British fans. Prior to the tour hitting the road, we were lucky enough to catch up with, TNA World Champion Lashley and chatted all things TNA, MMA and a little bit of Bobby's former life at another certain wrestling promotion.

Is this your first time on the TNA tour in the UK?

Yes it is!

Are you looking forward to experiencing the TNA crowds in the UK?

Oh yeah, absolutely. We know that we do some really big numbers out here, and we have a great fan-base who I think are ready for us and we are ready to come down and do it.

There are a few British guys on the roster, and a few that have probably been out here on the TNA tour before. Have they told you what to expect?

Not quite, all I know from the few people that I did talk to is that it is going to be a really live crowd. Which is the best thing I could hear, because we go out there to perform. We are looking forward to it, if it's a good crowd then the show should be that much better.

Dixie has announced that

the first show in Glasgow will feature a Battle Royal to determine the number one contender for title which you will then defend in Manchester on Friday night, is that correct?

Yes, that's what is supposed to happen.

In your mind is there anyone you'd like to come out of that match and end up facing? You've had a recent rivalry with MVP and the Beat Down Crew, so anyone you'd like to be facing on Friday night?

No, not necessarily. I think anyone that comes out of the match, will be a worthy opponent. I'm ready for whoever comes out of it, I think that the way that things have been going >

BOBBY LASHLEY





“ I DON’T FEEL THE NEED TO SLOW DOWN. I NEED TO KEEP GOING. ”

whoever comes out of that is going to be a little bruised up and beaten up a little, but they’ll still be ready to fight Friday night.

Last time we saw you on TV in the UK you’d just had a Street Fight with MVP, is that a rivalry

you think is going to continue for a little while?

I have no idea, I hope it stays for a little bit and we can do something with it and it has some legs in it because it’s a very interesting thing going on. So if we can prolong that for a little bit, and build something out of it then I think we’ll get a really big pay-day out of it.

You are now on your second run with TNA, are there any matches or rivalries that stand out to you as your best?

I think all the matches with Bobby Roode have been incredible, everything we’ve been doing has been going great so I would put those at the top.

I was reading an article on the creative side of things within TNA and the amount of input that the roster get compared to the WWE. Do you have a lot of room from expression, and are your ideas welcomed in TNA. Is that the case? Do you have much freedom in creating and developing character?

I think we have a little bit, but at the end of the day if that’s not the direction they want to go in then those ideas aren’t necessarily going to fall on deaf ears but it isn’t going to be reciprocated as much as you might want. But they are always open to hear what we have to say, but if it isn’t in-line with what they’ve got going on they’ll let us know, but there is always a good open line of communication that start with. >



“WE AREN'T ALL ACTORS, WE ARE SPORTS PERFORMERS AND THAT'S WHAT HE [HEYMAN] UNDERSTOOD.”

You're current rivalry has just led to you turning from heel back to a face, as a performer do you prefer one or the other because arguably you can get a stronger fan reaction as a heel but obviously it is a negative reaction. Or do just aim to feed of the crowd either way?

I feed off the crowd either way, I think my style is that I fight so if I fight a good-guy then it is going to look a little heelish, and if I fight a bad-guy the crowds going to like you a little more. So to me it is either way, whatever works.

Moving outside of TNA, you have your MMA career. I'd be interested to hear your thoughts on CM Punk entering the MMA world, and how you think he'll do having personally experienced both?

I think he's going to do great, I think the guys going to go out there and show the world that he deserves to be there, I think he'll put in the work to be there and he's going to show everyone that it's his time.

Carrying on down the MMA route, you were schedule to fight in Bellator in February

which you've had to pull out of because of injury, is that something that is still on the cards and just a case of you having to recover?

Yeah, yeah we'll definitely have that fight sometime down the road. We just have to fix things with me, I'm not in too bad a shape. I'm already back in training, ready to look at booking the next fight.

There are a few wrestlers such as Brock Lesnar, who have done both wrestling and MMA, but focus on either one or the other. Whereas you seem to do both at the same time, does that make it more difficult? Wrestling has to take it out of you, and then you're going away and doing the MMA thing. Are you in a more difficult position than other fighters?

Yeah of course, it's easier for some people when they have one thing going on but I just don't have that liberty right now. I have to do what I have to do and make the best of it, and have been up until this point and I don't feel I need to slow down I need to keep going. I have plenty of time to train, and Dixie is really good in allowing me time to train and do what I need to do so I can keep doing it all right now.

Onto the user generated questions, so these are questions that have come in through our website and twitter.

What is the TNA locker room like compared to the locker room in the WWE?

We have a very collegiate locker room right now, we are all working together we all have a common goal of making things better, and making the crowds just as enormous as possible. Since we just moved to Destination America





in the US, we are just looking for Destination America to piggy back with us in order to blow this thing out of the water and think right now with everyone on the same page we'll see some successes coming up this year.

Someone would like to know what your experience in Ohio Valley Wrestling was like, when you were wrestling under the name Blaster Lashley?

OVW, it was great! It was an opportunity to learn, and being but in a camp like where you can just learn full time is a blessing in itself?

Paul Heyman was famously sent down to OVW in a creative capacity, did you spend any time under Paul at all?

Heyman when he was writing for my last run in WWE, that's where I really learnt a lot and we became really good friends. We spent a lot of time together, and we were able to sit down and talk and just get to know each other and it was just easy to write for me because he took that time to figure out who I was, and that was the one thing that I took from him. We aren't all actors, we are sports performers and that's what he understood. He said "I'm not going to write a character and have you perform, I'm going to figure out who you are and do it the other way round." So you walk into the role of being you, so that was a cool thing I learnt from him.

Carrying on down the Heyman route, someone on our forum was interested to know what your thoughts on the original plans for the December to Dismember PPV Elimination Chamber were, as it is rumoured that they were changed

quite late in the date?

I have no idea, I heard all kind of rumours after and people were bitching and complaining, I stay away from the politics. I don't read dirt sheets, I just do what I supposed to do. They came to me and told me what they wanted my involvement in the match to be and that's all I went by.

During a promo with John Cena you called him "Mr Hype-Man" was that a scripted comment, or was it ad-libbed moment?

We didn't have any script leading up to that, I don't think I've ever been handed a script so it was just when you are having an argument you say different things, and at the time that's what I believed.

TNA seem to have quite an open policy in terms of wrestlers doing independent shows, with Bobby Roode even putting the title on the line at one of Tommy Dreamer's House of Hardcore shows. Do you have any plans for independent shows or anything like that? Or are you fully focused on TNA?

No, I've done a lot of independents. I've got one in Qatar in a couple of months, I'll look at the time and if I have it open then I'll always consider it, and if I don't have the time then of course I won't do it. So I just play it by ear, but I do take booking when they are available.

Qatar sounds quite interesting, it doesn't seem to be the most wrestling centric country. is it quite a big in Qatar?

It's pretty big, and they put together some great shows and they get a

“I THINK ALL MY MATCHES WITH BOBBY ROODE HAVE BEEN INCREDIBLE”

lot of people coming to them. I like Qatar, and they guy that runs the promotion is a really good guy so I'm always open to work when he calls me. ■

BONUS! SPEED ROUND

What's the worse thing you've ever put in your mouth?

There was this dish over in Thailand that I had, which was like cold squid in some brown gravy. It was horrible!

If you could have a super-power, what would it be?

Invisibility.

What would you name your auto-biography?

You won't believe this!

If you could only ever wrestle in one venue for the rest of your career, what would it be?

Staples Centre

And finally, what was your first car?

Honda Prelude

LINUS REPORT: NXT TAKEOVER: RIVAL

Alan Boon shares his indepth thoughts on NXT Takeover: Rival

Hey, it's NXT Takeover: Rival! It's a sort of pay-per-view that you don't have to pay per view!

I was so stoked for this show that I not only got back up out of my bed at 12.30 to watch the pre-show on the WWE Network, I also listened to Triple H's conference call with the wrestling press from the day before. It's fair to say that I loves me some NXT.

And that's because they never disappoint. I made a terrible mistake the other week by watching Raw live, but never for a minute did I think I'd regret getting up for this in the middle of the night. That's a quality seal right there.

Anyway, the show started with Hideo Itami making his entrance for his match with Tyler Breeze, which had been set up by an angle on WWE.com after NXT went off the air last week.

Itami knocked Breeze out of the number one contenders' tournament at the quarter-final stage, and Breeze had said that he was watching the rest of the tournament with interest. When Itami was defeated in the semi-finals by Finn Balor, that made Breeze angry, and he attacked Itami. And so it's on.

Breeze came to the ring with a furry

selfie-stick, enabling him to get a really good look at himself on his 'phone. A crazed "fan" jumped the guardrail to shower him in kisses before being dragged off by security. Gold.

So, they had a match. And, lo, it was a good match. For all the plaudits the ex-indy stars like Zayn, Owens, Neville & Balor receive, Breeze can keep pace with them, but often gets lost in the shuffle.

Itami kicked Breeze a lot, and Breeze worked on Itami's knee to counter those kicks. Such a basic story, and basic worked here. Itami teased the GTS again but got the win with his running kick and continued to look good.

BALOR LOOKED THE BEST HE HAS SINCE COMING TO NXT

Backstage, they showed William Regal sternly standing over a seated Kevin Owens as the referee for the title match was talking to Owens. Owens was just looking at his 'phone.

Hey, it's Bull Dempsey! He's a bit doughy! He's fighting Baron Corbin, in a No DQ Match because reasons. I think most people would rather their feud have ended two weeks ago, when Corbin dispatched Dempsey in the quarter-finals of the tournament, but we can't always get what we want. Corbin came to the ring wearing his new t-shirt. I mean, the new one that you & I can buy, rather than one he just bought himself. This meant he was not wearing his swank denim cut-off. Booooooooooooo!

There were two funny moments in this match, one deliberate and one accidental. The accidental one came when Bull clotheslined Corbin over the top rope and was meant to have the inertia of the move carry him over, too, but it didn't and instead he just kind of blobbed his way over, landing way after Corbin. The deliberate one was when the crowd were chanting for tables and Bull looked under the ring, didn't find any, and shrugged. Heh.

Corbin got the win when Dempsey grabbed a chair but fell victim to the End of Days. Hopefully that's it for these guys because as surprisingly un-bad as this match was, I think Dempsey needs a new start. Corbin marches on!

Backstage, Regal and the referee

Seth Rollins was the first NXT champion beating Jinder Mahal in a tournament final.



are talking to Sami Zayn, who is attentive and happy. Night and day. So good.

The Lucha Dragons came to the ring for their NXT Tag Title re-match with Wesley Blake & Buddy Murphy, who will be forever known in my house as the Dubstep Cowboys.

The Cowboys had scored an upset win over the Dragons two weeks ago, and – as fighting champions – agreed to a re-match tonight.

You know the best thing about Blake & Murphy, other than their dubstep intro? It's that you could drop them into any era of wrestling, from the 1970s to today, and they'd fit right in. That's my kind of tag team.

This was sloppy early on, and Murphy got the pin with a top rope frog splash after Blake hit a running suplex on Sin Cara.

The feed was hacked at this point by whoever is coming next week. Clue: it's Solomon Crowe.

They did sit-down interviews with Adrian Neville and Finn Balor, to hype their clash in the final of the number one contenders' tournament. This was good.

Hey, it's Adrian Neville! He's first in the ring for the final match-up, and receives quite the welcome from the NXT faithful. But nothing compared to Finn Balor, for whom the crowd LOSE THEIR SHIT. Balor is wearing a modified version of the bodypaint he wore at the last Takeover show, and you can already buy the t-shirt at WWE.com.

So then they had a really bad match. Haha, fuck off, as if you'd believe that! They were excellent – Neville as good as I've seen him

CHARLOTTE MUST BE OFF TO THE MAIN ROSTER SOON

against anyone other than Sami Zayn, and Balor looked the best he has since coming to NXT.

They did a ton of stuff, and it was 99% crisp and cool, particularly the spot where Adrian Neville, looking for some respite on the outside, got dropkicked off a chair through the guardrail.

Balor got nearfalls with a double foot stomp and a powerslam DDT, and Neville almost got the pin himself with a corkscrew moonsault from the second rope.

The finish came when Neville went up for the Red Arrow and Balor got his knees up. After a cradle for a nearfall, Balor dropkicked Neville into the turnbuckles and hit the double foot stomp for the 1-2-3.

After the match, Balor offered his hand and Neville shook it. HONOUR!

They showed a video emphasising Charlotte's dominance as NXT Women's Champion. Sasha Banks said she knew how to beat Charlotte. Becky Lynch said she would do what it took to wear the gold. And Bayley said she had to be out for herself because everyone else was. Another great video.

Hey, it's the NXT Women's Championship Fatal Four-Way! It's Charlotte versus Sasha Banks versus Becky Lynch versus Bayley! ➤

TOP 3 NXT PROSPECTS



SAMI ZAYN

Sami Zayn has the ability to take hold of the NXT crowd and deliver emotional and high-octane matches over and over. He has superb in-ring ability and the move-set that has been built up and perfected over the years. Unrivalled crowd connectivity allows him to be a crowd favourite, and someone that the NXT Universe can get behind. His in-ring storytelling is fantastic and the ability to deliver consistently in the ring gives Sami Zayn the top spot.



FINN BALOR

Finn Balor has the best entrance in WWE. Fact. Not only does he have a unique entrance, but he backs it up with his brilliant in-ring ability. He has the 'IT' factor which only a very few have had prior to his appearance in the WWE. This excitement and interest surrounding **Balor** at the moment secures the second spot in our Top 3.



KEVIN OWENS

The current NXT Champion beats **Adrian Neville** to the number three spot for two reasons. Firstly, he is the current NXT Champion, which he recently won when he beat **Sami Zyan** (our number 1 prospect!). The second reason for him achieving the number three spot is that he has made an immediate impact in NXT, and is a fresh, believable heel which the NXT roster needed. Not only that, he is an excellent brawler which compliments many of the top NXT stars when they face off against **Owens**.

WORDS: ADAM KINGHORN

Bayley came out first, with her wacky inflatable wavy arm men. The little girl that is always at NXT shows was in the front row, wearing Bayley's new "I'm A Hugger" shirt. Seeing that girl makes me excited for when I can take my little girl to the wrestling shows.

Becky and Sasha came out next, leaving the champ to come in last. They stood in the four corners of the ring, a Mexican stand-off (plus one).

Well, this was awesome. These four had a tag match a few weeks ago and it was not good. But they've been working this match around the house shows for a few weeks and it showed, because this was almost perfect. Such a contrast to the "Divas" on the main roster.

And you know why that is? Because NXT books its women as women, not as an advert for a reality show on E! Fuck Total Divas.

They worked a great four-way style, with multiple woman spots interchanged with times when two women were out on the floor, leaving a straight-forward tussle in the ring. They key to that working – and to any match which goes out of the ring – is that people can only watch one thing at a time. Learn that lesson, independent wrestlers! Sermon over.

Bayley almost got the win with a Bayley-to-Belly from the top rope on Becky Lynch, but Sasha Banks broke it up. Banks then locked on the Bank(s) Statement, and wore down Charlotte, who was reaching for the ropes. Sensing the champion was weakening, Banks rolled into a crucifix for the win and is your new NXT Women's Champion!

After the match, Charlotte offered a handshake to Banks, who reticently

accepted. Charlotte then pulled her in for an awkward hug, which Banks initially accepted but then pulled out of. This had all the hallmarks of a farewell to Charlotte, who must be off to the main roster soon: she's going out on top and leaves a healthy women's division behind.

Hey, it's main event time! They

NXT BOOKS WOMEN AS WOMEN, NOT AS AN ADVERT FOR REALITY TV

showed the video package from last week's show again and it's even better the second time around because you notice little details about the photos they showed of these two friends in their younger years.

Kevin Owens came to the ring to cheers that Roman Reigns would be envious of. He's a heel, but he's an awesome heel, and he's heeling it up for the right reasons – to feed his wife and kids.

Sami Zayn came out much more reserved than usual. No dancing for Sami tonight. Sami was wearing his new t-shirt, which is swank but would look better in black. While Sami was making his entrance, Owens stayed in his corner, staring straight ahead. All business.

They started out slow, with Owens stalling on the outside. Zayn got angry and brought him back in, risking a DQ with punches on the ropes. Owens came back with some HUGE clotheslines and a whip into the

turnbuckles that sent Zayn ten feet up in the air on impact.

From this point on, Owens was just picking Zayn apart. Bodyslams, gutbusters, sentons, and a nice line in chinlocks, all designed to wear the champion down.

Zayn came back with a couple of clotheslines and sent him to the outside with a third. Back in the ring, Zayn got a nearfall with a Blue Thunder Bomb but then ran into a superkick and got cannonballed in the corner for a nearfall for Owens.

Owens hit a shoulder-breaker and then went for the pop-up powerbomb, but Zayn hit back with a dropkick and a suplex for a two-count. They trade moves and Owens hit a 450 splash from the top rope but Zayn got his knees up. It looked to do more damage to Zayn's knees than to Owens's considerable bulk.

Zayn can barely walk but hit an Exploder Suplex. He looked to follow up with the Helluva Kick but Owens had gone outside. He tried to powerbomb Zayn on the apron but Zayn grabbed the ropes and hit an Arabian moonsault onto the ramp, hitting his head on landing.

Back in the ring, he sold the effects of that headshot, as the announcers speculated – without actually saying the word – that he might have a concussion. Zayn started a Helluva Kick run but got disoriented. He tried again and ran into a pop-up powerbomb for a nearfall.

Owens then hit Zayn in the head a lot. A trainer came out to check on Zayn but Owens hit a pop-up powerbomb. And then another. Zayn kicked out of a loose cover and the trainers came into the ring to check on Zayn. Owens

NXT's alumni include all of The Sheild, Bray Wyatt, Rusev and Cesaro.



PHOTO: ANTON JACKSON



Kevin Owens

AN INCREDIBLE BATTLE BETWEEN TWO MEN AT THE TOP OF THEIR GAMES

hit two more powerbombs and the referee jumped in to stop a fifth, and called for the bell. Your winner, by referee stoppage, and NEW NXT CHAMPION... Kevin Owens!

Man, this ruled. I have some slight reservations about the finish, notably the involvement of the trainers, but I realise that's how it's done in MMA and I can let it slide. And maybe this might have been the time for Owens to use the package piledriver? But those are minor, minor complaints stacked up against an INCREDIBLE battle between two men at the top of their game.

This was a *very good* show. Once again, NXT knocked it out of the park when it came to a big show, and if Charlotte (and maybe Sami Zayn) do disappear up to the main roster, there's tons of talent left behind to ensure that continues for a long, long time.

In that conference call that I listened to because I'm a huge geek, Triple H said that he dreamed of NXT becoming like WCW used to be, a genuine competitor to the main roster, and for talent to switch between the two. He may just do it, the crazy bastard. ■

THE
STEVE
AUSTIN
SHOW
UNLEASHED!

PODCASTONE



TOP 5 AUSTIN PODCAST-ISMS!

1

"MAKING MONEY UP IN THIS BITCH/MUG"

2

"SWIG OF WATER/BEER FOR THE WORKING MAN"

3

"I'M ABOUT READY TO GET MY SWELL ON"

4

"CAUSE THEY KEEP SENDING YA THOSE GIMMICKS IN THE MAIL THEY CALL BILLS"

5

"OPENING UP TWO CANS PSST PSST OF AUDIO WHOOP ASS FOR YOU"

COMPILED BY MICHAEL DICKINSON

A LOOK BACK AT THE 1ST MONDAY NIGHT RAW

Lee Hazell looks back at the first episode of Monday Night Raw

Welcome to the first edition in a series where we look at the first episodes of professional wrestling's most iconic Television Brands. Our first entry is considered to be the foundation upon which modern televised wrestling was built. This is the first episode of Monday Night Raw.

The first thing you'll notice about going back to the inaugural episode of Monday Night Raw, January 11th 1993, is its relatively humble beginnings. The Manhattan Centre is the kind of ball room sized venue that you would associate more with mid-sized companies like ECW or Ring of Honour. Recently the Manhattan Centre was host to TNA's Lockdown PPV. It's also a merciful forty-five minutes long compared to the three

THE FIRST THING YOU'LL NOTICE ABOUT THE INAUGURAL EPISODE ARE ITS HUMBLE BEGINNINGS.

hour bloated monstrosity we have to slog through today.

The opening shot of the Empire State Building leads to a skit where Bobby Heenan is trying to get into the building despite being replaced by Rob Bartlett. It's a bit that runs through the episode, involving him disguising himself as a woman or a rabbi. Its harmless fun and could have been a lot worse if it wasn't for Heenan's gameness and charisma as a comedic actor.

My initial reaction to him being replaced by comedian Rob Bartlett wasn't one of immediate outrage. In fact, once the three announcers for Raw were revealed I saw three people with distinct personalities and individual looks. It's certainly better than the cavalcade of cookie cutter clunks all clad in the same light grey suits WWE is threatening to make the future of the announce team. The men on his right are Vince McMahon and Randy Savage, the credentials for whom are not up for question. McMahon especially, is one of the all-time great announcers. The problems start when the other two start speaking. Bartlett produces nothing more than a series of one liners and all of them are riff's on the same joke. Savage is the same despite being more bearable. His Jewish roots have given him access to a bevy of old-school jokes which he hands out with an easy charm and a true performer's

IF WE WERE IN THE 90'S RUSEV WOULD HAVE HEADLINED WRESTLEMANIA BY NOW.

delivery. When the wrestler is funnier than the hired comedian you're not surprised that he doesn't make it to May.

The true outrage comes during the Shawn Michaels match when Bartlett decides to call the match entirely in the voice of Mike Tyson. Perhaps the production team were terrified the audience wouldn't be entertained by good wrestling. Once the average American wrestling viewer is exposed to the mere sight of two good athletes putting on an honest contest they quickly change the channel to Jerry Springer or God knows what.

It's made even worse by the circumstances surrounding Tyson at the time of broadcast. He was in jail for rape. It gets worse. Not only is Bartlett making some off colour homophobic jokes at the expense of the American prison system, but Randy Savage decides to



make his opinions known on the outcome of the trial. He describes a stonewall rape conviction of an eighteen year old girl, backed up by concrete evidence, as a “raw deal.” While sitting next to Stephanie McMahon’s father. Let your mind wander where it may on that one. There’s also an advertised cage match between Woody Allen and Mia Farrow I could have done without.

It makes me incensed that the one left outside the arena is Bobby “The Brain” Heenan, a legend in wrestling commentary, replaced by a comedian with no professional ties to the business. But let this be a lesson to anyone allowing their nostalgia to cloud their views of the modern WWE product. WWE pushing mainstream stars while leaving genuine wrestling talent out in the cold is no new development.

For that matter, there are many trends in WWE that people view as new but are as old as Raw itself, and this program is the proof. There were bizarre promotional video packages and mid match commercial breaks even in 1993. The wrestling itself is certainly of its era too. They’ve still not shaken the formula of having the majority of matches be squash matches. Yokozuna vs Koko B. Ware, the Steiner’s vs the Executioners, Undertaker vs Damien Demento, all of the latter competitors in each of these matches didn’t have a minute of offence

MCMAHON IS ONE OF THE ALL- TIME GREAT ANNOUNCERS

between them. That’s three matches out of four. That’s one thing for modern wrestling, as much as we complain about burials they don’t occur anywhere near as frequently.

The similarity between these matches mean there isn’t much to discuss. But they do bring back certain memories. Yokozuna reminds us that it wasn’t a good idea to try and gel sumo with professional wrestling. He has no manoeuvrability. He literally just stands there as Koko leaps at him and bounces off. This goes on for four minutes. He wins by tiring Koko out. It’s a hell of a first match to start your flagship program with. This, I don’t miss. The kind of match where one wrestler is only there to sell the others near superhuman strength. It makes me sad Rusev wasn’t wrestling in 1993. He’s got ten times the athleticism Yokozuna has. If we were in the 90’s he’d have headlined WrestleMania by now.

The Steiner match reminds us of just how good a wrestler Scott Steiner was until he started making his body look like a pile of rubble. He can actually move here. The Undertaker match reminds us that, while his 1993 flexibility leaves much to be desired, his character was second to none. The way he and Bearer dominate the screen with the dedication to their roles is awe inspiring. All this even despite Bartlett’s terrible jokes that constantly attempt to undermine the mood these two legends are painstakingly creating. At one point he refers to the urn as a martini shaker and says Taker needs his gloves because of “Dish Pan Hands”. God, this guy got old quick. But the best match of the night was the bout for the Intercontinental Championship, held by Shawn Michaels and sought by Max Moon. This is only going to have one outcome sure, but at least both men are selling it like it is a

THE BEST MATCH OF THE NIGHT WAS THE BOUT FOR THE INTERCONTINENTAL CHAMPIONSHIP

real competition, not just a showcase for Michael’s strength.

But I think the biggest difference between now and then is that McMahon and company hadn’t quite got the hang of the live weekly broadcast yet. Sure they can handle the big PPV no problem, but the smaller scale stuff was a little fiddlier. There are late fades and early cuts, stopping announcers short ,and graphics that look like they were developed for the PSONe. Worst of all was the communication between the ringside crew and the production truck. Razor Ramone was clearly never told that they were running a VT on his recent attack on Owen Hart, so he just keeps talking over the tape; and at one point Bartlett is in mid-sentence and the truck just cuts to commercial. Say what you will about Raw in 2015, their production values have crack precision.

It’s actually surprising – and reassuring – to see that, for all the complaints people make about the current WWE product, many of those same problems existed in a period more fondly remembered by fans. It also had problems that they thankfully got over. But the first Raw was clearly a program with teething issues, and it was still growing into what would become the cornerstone show of the modern wrestling era, with everything good and bad that came from it. ■

THE CURIOUS CASE OF BRAY WYATT



As we start heading towards WrestleMania 31, much talk is being dedicated to what appears to be **Bray Wyatt's** highest profile match to date - an encounter with the **Undertaker**, on the show he's most associated with. In recent weeks we've seen a better protection of Bray than we have in quite a while. But as this push begins, it begs for an examination of his run thus far, and the problems he's encountered. Those who ignore history, after all....



PHOTOS: ANTON JACKSON

BRAY WYATT



T

here are issues with the Wyatt persona. The individual himself has a fantastic ability to deliver interviews, and

the character lends itself to potentially staggering creativity, and possibly some never-before-seen angles that could captivate the audience and generate genuine emotion in an otherwise sterile landscape.

Except none of that ever happens. It's a character designed to be deep, but exists in a superficial world where nothing matters. No match result has any gravitas, and no diabolical act connects with the audience. And that's a problem.

Take, for example, the John Cena feud from last year, a tremendous effort in creating the illusion that Wyatt was on the cusp from a popularity standpoint. But despite the high-profile nature of the rivalry, there was so little meat to the feud itself, no real story that meant anything, and nothing tangible to be invested in. The wins and losses didn't carry any weight for either of them. As a result, the second Cena was pulled away, Bray immediately began to flounder, and his reactions became less and less

IF THEY GET IT RIGHT WITH BRAY, HE COULD BE A GENUINE MONEY MAKER FOR YEARS TO COME

impressive. Love it or hate it, match outcomes aside, it's clear what the fans were responding to in hindsight - while Bray was the beneficiary, Cena was the facilitator.

The recent Dean Ambrose feud was also especially telling. Here you had Ambrose, as popular as he was at the time, in a potentially great feud with Wyatt, two of the best talkers in the company paired off. The promos and matches should have really taken the audience on a wild ride, and yet somehow, it didn't. It felt like filler, and actually cooled Ambrose off significantly. Again, the backbone of the story was vague and clouded, even after the tangible starting point of Wyatt costing Dean his shot at redemption against Seth Rollins, we still had that moment downplayed and a meaningless family history story, which nobody could buy into, took the forefront. During this feud, and even since then, Bray's stock

hasn't really risen that much, and you have to ask why.

It comes down to the nature of the character. These type of personalities, the rooted in pure evil, "rare-breed" types, are reliant on being constantly fed to stay relevant. They're involved, and involving. A unique presence that we happen to be witnessing at this particular place in time that is always a step ahead of the game. Raven in ECW. Heel Jake in the WWF. This character exists and thrives because of the situations he finds himself in, that he himself creates. You have to cater to them for them to succeed, it's fundamental wrestling booking.

The problem with Bray Wyatt is that this character, as interesting as it could potentially be...doesn't actually do anything. What diabolical or dangerous act, that actually had implications longer

Bray has very familiar family - Not Rowan and Harper, but Bo Dallas! In real life Dallas and Wyatt are brothers.



BRAY HIMSELF HAS A FANTASTIC ABILITY TO DELIVER IN INTERVIEWS AND HIS CHARACTER LENDS HIMSELF TO POTENTIALLY STAGGERING CREATIVITY.

than a week, has he ever committed? Think back to classic heat-getting angles gone by. The Midnight Express tar and feather Magnum TA. Bill Watts buried under the Russian flag. Freebirds blinding JYD. Chris Jericho punches Shawn Michaels' wife.

In fact, Chris Jericho in 2008 and 2009 is a great comparison to illustrate the weakness in the Wyatt character. Here was a guy who was completely justified for his actions in his own mind, and

Did anybody want to see the so-called "Eater Of Worlds" get beat because he had a child sing in a creepy voice to John Cena? Did anybody care to see Wyatt go down because he "injured" Dean Ambrose's throat, when Dean didn't miss a single TV show? As good a talker as he is, the fans have now seen through the verbal jiu-jitsu. All talk, no real danger. You can't expect people to take him seriously when he's threatening rape and murder, but he's really just pickpocketing with a wink and a smile.

about. But they need to tap into that, and be leery of falling back on the superficial hocus-pocus that only has a short-term impact.

Get darker. Stop singing. To hell with audience participation. If you want him to be evil and cast him as the Devil, then they need to go full bore and stop wading through muddied waters on what the reaction to him is supposed to be. Trying to walk the line creates like or dislike, not love or hate. And they need to make people hate him.

WHAT DIABOLICAL OR DANGEROUS ACT, THAT HAS HAD IMPLICATIONS FOR MORE THAN A WEEK, HAS BRAY EVER COMMITTED?

he did what he did for a reason he always clearly explained. Like Bray, he had great verbal skills, but he was always dislikeable, and most of all, he committed heinous acts that were easily understandable, and made you want to see the babyface get his revenge.

That has to change. Being paired with the Undertaker is no small role, and if they get their heads together and Taker is around for the build-up, there is, as always with this character, the potential for some great stuff, and a chance for Bray to talk about somebody and something that people truly give a shit

If they get it right with Bray, he could be a genuine moneymaker for years to come. They fumbled the ball in 2014, and if he's getting the Undertaker, 2015 could be a year of recovery. But they can't keep going as they have been, or he'll be exactly what this character isn't designed to be, and that's "just another guy".

And that's the definition of failure for Bray Wyatt. ■

LIVE! TONIGHT! SOLD OUT! LUCHA BRITANNIA REVIEWED

A look at London's Lucha Britannia show.

As Lucha Britannia champion Freddie Mercurio arced backwards, performing his trademark moonsault press from the top turnbuckle, time seemed to slow, his descent measured in seconds rather than fractions of them. Once he hit his target, east end bover boy Fug, everything snapped back and the crowd exploded. Their hero had overcome enormous odds once more to leave the Resistance Gallery with the prized title belt.

That a resurrected rock idol is the face of a promotion that is so heavily populated by the undead – voodoo witch doctor Santeria leads an Army Of Darkness, which includes the Necrosi, Zombie Janey, and el Cardinal – is somehow fitting, although el Mercurio is no pasty-faced cadaver. A healthy glow warms his face as he engages the crowd in a sing-a-long, drawing power from their day-ohs.

It's a glow that is shared by Lucha Britannia itself, packing over two-hundred thrillseekers into the tiny railway arch in London's Bethnal Green that houses the Gallery, also home to various club and cabaret nights. And it's cabaret that Lucha Britannia hangs its hat on, a wrestling show peppered with burlesque,



PHOTOS: JAMIE MCFARLANE

comedy, and – on its February show – a hula hoop artiste.

Lucha Britannia exploded into life in 2006, the brainchild of Garry Vanderhorne, who is still very much in the driving seat today. He has surrounded himself with a crazy cast of characters, and the overall feel of the show is that it is organic and democratic. In a wonderful example of synchronicity, I finished reading Bob Calhoun's *Beer, Blood & Cornmeal: Seven Years Of Incredibly Strange Wrestling* the night before, and Lucha Britannia feels very much like the trailblazing Californian promotion of the late 1990s.

The host for the evening's entertainment,

face awash with panstick, is Benjamin Louche, and if he looks a little like Pee-Wee Herman it's definitely the Pee-Wee from that cinema that time. He keeps the evening skipping along, introducing the luchadores and loosely commentating on the matches, alongside cockney geezer Tony Two-Tops, and aided by the ring girls, Mamzelle Maz & Viva Ruin, glamazons in fitted corsets and stockings & suspenders.

The three matches that conspired to make the first half of the show couldn't have been more different, although equally delightful. The show started with a Lucha Chaos match, a scramble by any other name, with nine luchadores vying for the winning pinfall. Included



in their number were a Zulu prince, a monkey, an out-and-proud twink, three zombies, and Neo Britannico – a new incarnation of the previously unmasked Dark Britannico, now free from Santeria's control. That Neo Britannico is portrayed by Will Ospreay, who only five days before took on New Japan's IWGP champion AJ Styles, speaks volumes about the attraction of Lucha Britannia to wrestlers as well as fans.

Next up came a wedding. Yes, a wedding. On the previous show, Grandpa Bakewell, the elder statesman of tweed-masked Yorkshiremen, the Fabulous Bakewells, had proposed to his mail-order Thai bride, Lily Snatch-Dragon. Snatch-Dragon, a burlesque performer when she's not playing desperate-for-a-passport schemers, did a song and striptease routine as part of her vows, but the wedding was interrupted by irritating minor royal Reginald Windsor and his lacky, Payaso Pesadilla, the nightmare clown. Windsor claimed to have Lily's immigration papers and an impromptu tag match between the Bakewells and the villains, with the winner getting the papers, was made. The Bakewells, on a losing streak of several thousand matches, lost once more and Lily was packed back off to Thailand in a shopping bag.

The girls were up next, with Zombie Janey Britannico and venomous frog La Rana Venenoso taking on reformed demoness Diabla Rosa and her partner Astronomica. Evil once again triumphed, to send the show into the interval on a down note that only several tequilas and cervezas could cure. The crowd certainly tried that, anyway, and it seemed to work.

After the break, the nasty La Piraña and his silver lizard pal Lagarto del Plata fought a pair of unfrozen Vikings, Los Nórdicos. The Norsemen conquered their



THE RING FILLED WITH THE SHOW'S BABYFACES, ALL SMILES AND CONGRATULATIONS FOR THE FLAMBOYANT FRONTMAN WHOSE FLIPS, FOREARMS AND FACELOCKS HAD FLUMMOXED HIS FOES.

slippery foes, even if el Nórdico Fuego did lose one of his horns to Piraña's teeth and el Nórdico Helado's considerable booty came close to wiping out some of the fans at ringside. The crowd were then treated to a display of hula-hoop magic by the sparkly silver Dunja Kuhn, before the main event – the Lucha Britannia title bout – a three-way between Freddie Mercurio, Fug, and Santeria.

And this is where we came in, the hipster referee counting the one-two-three to signal that Mercurio had retained his precious title. The ring filled with the show's babyfaces, all smiles and congratulations for the flamboyant

frontman whose flips, forearms and facelocks had flummoxed his foes. Neo Britannico – his redemption story opening the show – was right in the middle, having helped get rid of Santeria. The crowd sang along with their hero again, with the age-old maxim of "send them home happy" never more truly adhered to.

Lucha Britannia may not be for everyone. But it is for everyone who likes fun. Their next show is on March 20th, again at the Resistance Gallery, and there's a cavalcade of oddities awaiting you there. You have nothing to lose except your lucha virginity... ■

£9.99

IS THE WWE NETWORK WORTH IT?

A

fter all the delays, the WWE Network has finally arrived on these shores and in the end it was even early!

However, British and Irish fans will pay £9.99 and €12.99 respectively, which works out as £3.44/€4.45 per month more than our Americans counterparts are paying. This means that if you already have an American Network account through some form of geo-blocking, you might want to hold on to it for now!

But is the Network worth the cash?

I would argue that it definitely is, because despite what Michael Cole would have you believe, there is a lot more to the WWE Network than simply getting the monthly pay-per-views included in the price (although this is undoubtedly a boon when you consider the Royal Rumble is £19.95 on Sky Box Office). But not only do you get the latest Dean Ambrose PPV loss for £9.99, you also get pretty much every WWE and WCW PPV ever as well.

Personally, I've been going through the 1997 In Your House shows and re-

watching WWE's transition from their awful mid-nineties product into what became the Attitude Era. If you were too young at the time, or you just want to relive one of the most historic periods in WWE history, then you can do so with ease. It's definitely fun to remember that even as Bret Hart was forming his new version of the Hart Foundation and Stone Cold Steve Austin had was starting to take off, that Honky Tonk Man and Rockabilly were still on the scene!

Away from '97 WWE, you can decide for yourself just when exactly did WCW start going off the rails; or go back and watch their '89 – early '90s period when they were putting on really good shows (classic matches with Flair, Steamboat and Sting; the Dangerous Alliance; and

The Great Muta appearing on various cards); as well the whole Monday Night Wars period itself. And on top of the WWE / WCW PPVs, there are also the WWE and WCW network TV specials: the Saturday Night's Main Event shows for WWE and Clash of the Champions for NWA/WCW. Many of the classic WWE angles took place on the SNME cards, as they built up to their big shows in the pre-Monday Night Raw days. Meanwhile the Clash shows featured some classic NWA Title matches, back in the Jim Crockett Promotions days and again when WCW took off starting in summer 1996.

Rounding off the best bits of the historical video library, there's lots of '80s and early '90s WWE content, including classic WWE arena shows under the WWE Old School banner; Tuesday Night Titans and Prime Time Wrestling. And away from WWE, there's World Class from Texas; featuring some configuration of the Von Erichs and The Fabulous Freebirds on almost every show; although unfortunately these episodes of WCCW TV aren't always in order. Well worth a watch though, especially for episode 54, which features the famous Cage Match between Ric Flair vs Kerry Von Erich for the NWA Title. There's also the entire ECW PPV library and episodes

**NXT IS PRO
WRESTLING
DONE
STAGGERINGLY
WELL**



of Hardcore TV, which are fun to go back and watch now with the benefit of hindsight, and see what things truly were groundbreaking and those that weren't so much!

The WWE Network is much more than historical shows, there's also some interesting first run content.

Legend's House is a reality show WWE made a few years back, with the hope of selling it to a traditional TV distributor,

YOU CAN DECIDE FOR YOURSELF JUST WHEN WCW STARTED GOING OFF THE RAILS.

but kept a hold of it for the WWE Network when there was no interest in at the time. It has to be seen to be believed, and features the likes of Roddy Piper, Gene Okerlund, Hillbilly Jim, and Jimmy Hart sharing a house and having to complete daft challenges. It made me laugh anyway, but the show as a whole is as ridiculous as it sounds.

Moving on to more serious minded content, there are two nostalgia based documentaries: WWE Rivalries and The Monday Night War. Rivalries uses archive talking-head footage pasted together with original voiceovers, looking at classic wrestling rivalries. So far; Austin vs McMahon, Flair vs Rhodes, Hogan vs Piper, Triple H vs Michaels and Edge & Christian vs The Hardy Boyz

have all been featured. There are no great new revelations in any of these documentaries, but they're a good way to fill an hour, if you are a fan of any of the featured talents (which given those names, would surely cover all wrestling fans). The Monday Night War is all about the titular ratings battle between Raw and Nitro that took place between 1996 and 2001. It features all the usual WWE revisionist history when it comes to WCW, and the series seems to have been produced so that the episodes can all be watched out of order and in standalone viewings. This means that in order to provide context to each episode's main narrative thread, a lot of the same information is repeated in every single episode. This gets old very fast, but if – like me – you grew up during this period of wrestling history, it's hard to not get extremely nostalgic over the content within.

There are another couple of mentionable shows for your consideration. WWE Countdown is what the name suggests—countdowns. Each episode is a "Top 10" list of things such as the best entrances, finishers, infamous gimmicks, ladder matches, factions etc. Legends of Wrestling was a roundtable discussion series, where the titular legends would discuss topics put to them by hosts, Jim Ross and Gene Okerlund (Ross is often a panelist when he isn't chairing proceedings). These shows were produced for the old "Classics on Demand" subscription channel WWE used to have and features some fascinating stories from the likes of Mick Foley, Michael Hayes, Roddy Piper, Ric Flair and Nick Bockwinkel.

In the "Beyond the Ring" section of the interface, there's also a host of WWE's DVD/Blu Ray superstar profiles from over the last few years, which have been

increasing in quality year-on-year. The latest Steve Austin, Mick Foley, Shawn Michaels, Edge and Chris Jericho are all good watches, while the CM Punk and Paul Heyman documentaries are simply outstanding.

Last but not least, in this general overview of what's on the Network, is quite possibly the jewel in its crown—NXT.

If you don't have Sky Sports and haven't seen NXT before, and are wondering about subscribing to the WWE Network, then it is definitely worth getting solely for what is arguably the best hour of weekly televised wrestling. With independent stand-outs like Sami Zayn, Kevin Owens, Adrian Neville, Hideo Itami, and Finn Balor all now appearing under the WWE banner – along with WWE's next wave of in-house stars, The Vaudevillians, Enzo Amore and Big Cass, Tyler Breeze, Baron Corbin; and an extremely talented and well-presented women's division – NXT is pro-wrestling done staggeringly well. Simple and easy to follow storylines that centre around personal rivalries and wrestlers fighting for championship belts, with the odd bit of comedy relief thrown in. Refreshingly different compared to the dross that is often served up in the other weekly WWE programming!

Don't get me wrong, not everything's a winner. I'm fairly certain that no one is signing up to get old episodes of Total Divas – apart from Jerry Lawler, that is – or the insanely bad Slam City cartoons, but I hope I've done enough to convince you that it's worth that infamous 9.99! ■



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WWE FASTLANE REVIEW

Hey, it's WWE Fast Lane! I don't really know what it is!

The PPV opened with a video package highlighting the twin main events: Daniel Bryan versus Roman Reigns for a shot at Brock Lesnar at Wrestlemania, and Rusev versus John Cena for the United States title.

SIX-MAN TAG

Dolph Ziggler was the first man out, and he made his way to the ring, where he was soon joined by his BFFs, Ryback and Erick Rowan.

The Big Show, Kane, and Seth Rollins came out, and we got ourselves a six-man tag match!

So this wasn't great. The two best workers in the match - Ziggler and Rollins - were largely kept out of the action, giving us a mostly plodding affair between two men resting on their

former glories, and two others having to compensate for two men resting on their former glories.

Wrestling oracle Dave Meltzer had suggested before the show that the purpose of this match was to position Seth Rollins strongly going into Wrestlemania, and if that was the intention - and you can never be sure of the accuracy of tittle-tattle - it was a colossal failure.

Rollins's part in the match was to run away when under pressure, and hit his finisher on all three men when the match was done and dusted - Kane got the pin on Ziggler after the Big Show hit him with the knockout punch - and they couldn't offer any resistance.

After the match, the crowd loudly chanted for Randy Orton, and - wouldn't you know it? - Randy Orton's music hit. He came down to the ring and cleared the heels out, giving RKOs to Noble and Mercury.

Orton grabbed Rollins, who put him out in November with a kurb stomp through the announcers' table, but the Big Show pulled Rollins out of the ring, and the Money In The Bank winner ran for his life. He didn't stop running until he was out of the building. Positioned. Strongly.

Backstage, Dusty Rhodes and Goldust had a talk about Goldust's match with his brother. Dusty told him that he was broken up about this, and said no-one had to get hurt. Goldust said that he had to hurt Cody so bad that he never thought of putting the facepaint on again. Dusty told him that he was broken up about this, and said no-one had to get hurt. Again. Goldust left for his match.

RHODES BROS

Hey, it's Stardust! His ears must be burning! He came down to the ring in new gear, chest exposed, for his match with his brother. Goldust came out, and the



PHOTO: ANTON JACKSON



THE TWO BEST WORKERS WERE LARGELY KEPT OUT OF THE ACTION.

crowd chanted, “Cody! Cody!”, much to Stardust’s annoyance.

This started out great. It was a believable contest between one man who didn’t really want to fight, and another so far gone that the fight was just another thing in his life.

Stardust got on top, and taunted his dad, watching backstage on a monitor, asking him, “who’s your favourite?” He got cocky, though, and Goldust rolled him up for the win. Kinda.

The referee didn’t seem sure that this was the finish, made worse by Stardust kicking out immediately after the three-count that really wasn’t a three-count. The referee called for the bell, anyway, and everyone looked confused.

Goldust offered his hand to his brother, who blew it off and stormed to the back...

The announcers talked about the Seth Rollins-Jon Stewart online feud from this past week. I hope we see Stewart on Raw soon.

Backstage, Goldust was talking to his father about winning the match but trying not to hurt Cody. Well, Dusty did ask him twice. Stardust interrupted, and threw Goldust into a flight case. Dusty told for Cody to stop, but Stardust told Dusty that he’d killed Cody when he (Dusty) sent “this bag of bones”, Goldust, to carry around. He said he’s not living in the shadows anymore, and will surpass Dusty, and stormed off.

TAG TITLES

Back in the arena, the Usos came down to the ring for their tag-team title match with Tyson Kidd and Cesaro. Jimmy and Tyson both brought their wives to work

THERE’S TALK OF REIMAGINING THE WOMEN’S DIVISION. IT CAN’T COME QUICK ENOUGH.

again. Unprofessional.

So they had a match, and it was a bit chaotic. There’s a fine line between fast and untidy, and it fell on the latter side, with too much being tried too quickly, and not all of it coming off.

Tyson Kidd pinned Jimmy Uso with a swinging fisherman’s buster to win the titles for his team, and he, Cesaro, and Natalya celebrated on their way to the back.

STING SHOWS

Hey, it’s Triple H! And it’s obviously “casual Sunday” at the WWE offices, because the Chief Operating Officer is wearing jeans, a t-shirt, and a leather jacket!

He came down to the ring and cut a great talky, building up his imminent encounter with Sting. There was a long pause, and no sign of the Stinger, but then a crowd cawed, and Sting’s video played, and he walked slowly down to the ring, carrying his trademarked baseball bat.

They faced off and Triple H told him that he gets it. He gets that Sting backed the wrong horse in the WWE-WCW fight, and that he was a loyal soldier who went down with the ship. But Triple H said that guys like himself made the ship go down >

FASTLANE

in the first place, and that was his legacy - destroying the legacy of people like Sting.

Triple H offered Sting a deal. He said that if Sting left him alone he would give him his legacy back, through the WWE Network, DVDs, and merchandise. He said he'd even put him in the Hall of Fame.

Triple H took off his jacket and faced Sting again. He told him that they could do that, or they could do it the hard way, and threatened to erase him from existence. That's code for send him back to TNA, right?

Triple H said he thought that Sting had already made up his mind, and moved to attack him, but Sting cut him off, and sent him out of the ring.

Outside, Triple H reached under the ring for his sledgehammer, and got back in the ring to attack Sting. Sting pulled his baseball bat, and thrust it under Triple H's chin. He held him there and pointed at the WrestleMania sign. Twice. So Triple H got the message.

As Sting left the ring, Triple H tried to attack him but Sting cut him off and left

THE CROWD CHANTED LOUDLY FOR RANDY ORTON AND WOULDN'T YOU KNOW IT? RANDY ORTON'S MUSIC HIT.



STING POINTED AT THE WRESTLEMANIA SIGN. TWICE. SO TRIPLE H GOT THE MESSAGE

him lying with a Scorpion Death Drop. They'll get it on at Wrestlemania...

This was great. One of the best things the main shows have done in a long time. It was NXT-good, that's how great it was.

Backstage, Daniel Bryan was shown warming up for his match with Roman Reigns.

Back in the arena, Paige came down to the ring for her WWE Divas title match with Nikki Bella. At the Royal Rumble, Nikki Bella was wearing green and did a Misawa elbow. Tonight she was wearing orange, so could we expect a Kobashi Burning Hammer? Maybe she's going to run through the All-Japan roster like a Tokyo ring-rat? Anyway, they had a match, and it was not a good match. It was a bad match. That the same company can produce this and the last segment is baffling. Nikki won with a roll-up. There's talk of a re-imagining of the women's division in the near-future. It can't come quick enough.

The announcers told us that Triple H versus Sting had been officially made for

Wrestlemania. I am oddly excited by this.

IC TITLE

Hey, it's Dean Ambrose! He came down to the ring for his Intercontinental title match with Bad News Barrett - a match which was not legitimately made.

They showed the scenes on Raw where Ambrose forced Barrett to sign the contract for the match. Barrett's "this ain't legal" doesn't get any less funny.

They had a decent match, although I was slightly distracted by Barrett's slenderness. Put some weight on, man!

Ambrose was on top after the half-way mark, and Barrett decided he'd had enough. He repeatedly tried to leave the



ring, and Ambrose kept dragging him back in.

Ambrose stomped him in the corner repeatedly - because that was probably the only way he could keep the champion from running away - and the referee called for the bell for a DQ finish. Yeah, they went there.

On the last NXT special, Kevin Owens won their title by kicking too much ass. On this show, Dean Ambrose got DQ'd for kicking too much ass. The crowd - and any sane person - did not like this finish. That's because it's a shitty finish. It would be a shitty finish on Raw, let alone a PPV. Shitty, shitty finish.

Backstage, Roman Reigns was shown warming up for his match with Daniel Bryan.

Back in the arena, a Gregorian chant was heard, and the Undertaker's old druids appeared. The Undertaker's dong (heh heh) rang out, and the druids walked a coffin to the ring. The crowd lost their shit.

The druids brought the coffin to ringside, opened it, and BRAY WYATT sat up. The crowd were disappointed. But that's okay, because Wyatt went on to cut a great talky, mentioning The Undertaker by name for the first time, and said, "at Wrestlemania, I will claim the soul of The Undertaker."

He lay back down, and they played his video sting, and they cut to the pre-show panel of Backstage Renee, Byron Saxton, Booker T, and Corey Graves, who discussed what they'd just seen.

US TITLE

Hey, it's Rusev! He's the United States champion but is getting introduced

before the contender! That sucks!

He came down to the ring looking like he meant business, and was soon joined by John Cena, the challenger for his title. Eden Stiles made amends for the earlier faux pas by introducing the men while they were in the ring, champion first. I'll take that.

They brawled and grappled early on, with Rusev getting the upper hand initially. The crowd broke into a chant of "Jerry! Jerry!", in honour of the King of Memphis, Jerry Lawler. Rusev OWNED them by staring and muttering angrily.

They traded back and forth, with Cena hitting his usual You Can't See Me comeback in the middle, before Rusev got some near falls. Cena managed to lock on an STF, which Rusev broke out of, with a sore neck for his troubles.

Rusev then started working on Cena's back, to prepare him for the Accolade, but Cena got the STF on again, and made sure everyone knew it was coming by broadcasting his intention loudly across the arena. He then told Rusev to grab the ropes, and he did, breaking the hold. Cena talks too much.

Rusev charged into an AA but escaped before Cena could hit it, only to be hit with another for a near fall. Cena went up to the top rope but Rusev cut him off and locked on the Accolade. Cena almost broke the hold but Rusev locked it back on. He almost broke it again, but Rusev again re-applied it. Finally, he powered to his feet and broke the hold.

Lana got in the ring, holding the title belt, and the referee rushed over to intercept her. Rusev took this opportunity to kick Cena square in the balls, and then hit a side kick and locked on the Accolade. Cena passed out and the referee called for the bell. Rusev retained the US title!

After the match, Rusev posed over a fallen Cena, and under the Russian flag. Lawler noted that Cena had what it takes to beat Rusev, but not Lana, too. I'd note that a kick in the balls isn't much of a leveller, really. Medical geeks helped Cena out of the ring and then he staggered under his own power to the back. Sad John Cena.

The pre-show panel discussed what had just happened, and they showed a video package of what had led to the main event. Talking of which...

MAIN EVENT

Hey, it's our main event! It's Roman Reigns versus Daniel Bryan, and the winner goes to WrestleMania 31 to fight Brock Lesnar for the WWE Heavyweight title!

Roman Reigns came down to the ring first, coming through the crowd like it's still a cool thing to do in 2015, to a mixed reception. Daniel Bryan came out to a better response, but nowhere near what he'd been getting before they started this farrago.

They had a match. And it was a Good Match. Probably the best I've seen Reigns have in singles competition. It had form and told a story and that's what you want from a main event on a wrestling show, right? Actually, that's what I want from every match on a wrestling show, but I know better than to set myself up for disappointment.

The story of the match was mostly Bryan out-wrestling Reigns, but Reigns powering out of his moves. Reigns also made good use of the barriers on the outside, which is a bit rum if you ask me. Bryan went after the ouchy bit on Reigns's side, where he had his hernia operation, and the referee had to step in to ask a winded

THE BEST I'VE SEEN REIGNS IN A SINGLES COMPETITION.

Reigns if he was okay to continue. He was.

Bryan continued to make the pace, hitting a huge top-rope back suplex, and locking on the Yes! Lock, but Reigns made it to the ropes to break the hold. Reigns rolled outside and Bryan hit two tope suicidas, and then tried for a third but Reigns caught him, and threw him to the floor. Reigns tried to spear Bryan into the ring post, but he moved and Reigns crashed into the ring steps. Both men lay on the outside and barely made the ten count as JBL teased a count-out finish.

Reigns hit a spear but Bryan kicked out. He readied another but Bryan countered and hit some kicks to set up the Running Knee, which Reigns kicked out of. Bryan did not like that and stared at the WrestleMania sign, forlornly.

Bryan went back on the attack with Yes! Kicks, but Reigns blocked him. Bryan turned the block into an armbar, and then into the Yes! Lock again, which Reigns escaped and began pounding Bryan in the face with forearms. Someone – and I don't think it's Reigns – has been watching New Japan tapes. Bryan played possum but suddenly locked on an armbar. Reigns powered him up and dropped him down, and both men lay on the mat, spent.

Bryan came back with more kicks, and led the crowd in "Yes!" chants, and

readied for another Running Knee, but Reigns hit a spear out of nowhere for the win.

At this point the broadcast appeared to have technical difficulties, because the voices of the announcers grew louder, and Reigns's music and the crowd faded away to almost nothing. I can only think that they had issues with the sound mixing but completely non-boo-related reasons.

The sound returned after a little while, and some people were booing, although most seemed to be leaving the arena. Roman Reigns is your winner, and he'll go on to face Brock Lesnar – possibly the most over babyface in the company right now – at Wrestlemania. I wish him all the best.

This was a bad show. Until the last two matches - and if you discount the angles featuring Triple H & Sting, and Bray Wyatt – it was an Awful Show. The in-ring work of the last two matches saved it from that fate, but it won't go down as any kind of classic that will be talked about in years to come.

The decision to resume the Roman Reigns push may lead to a simpler main event at Wrestlemania, but it's still so abundantly clear that he's not ready for it. Hey, nobody said booking was easy, right? ■

PHOTO: MIGUEL DISCART



PLAYLIST



NIGEL MCGUINNESS

FORMER TNA STAR DESMOND WOLFE AND ROH WORLD CHAMP SHARES HIS GUEST PLAYLIST

- Oh What a Day by Jodie
- If You Were English – Oddslane
- Almost Beautiful – Rachel Austin
- Stop All The Clocks Song – Nemo Shaw
- Why Does It Always Rain On Me – Travis
- Soundtrack from Band of Brothers
- Maggie by Colin Hay
- Glasgow Love Song – Craig Armstrong
- Life and Death – Paul Cardell
- Hurt – Johnny Cash
- The Next Life – Suede
- In My Life – The Beatles
- Imagine – John Lennon
- Paradise City – Guns N' Roses
- November Rain – Guns N' Roses



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WRESTLEMANIA

PREVIEW + PREDICTIONS

It's only a month away until **The Showcase of the Immortals, The Grandest Stage of them All, The Granddaddy of 'em all, you get the idea...** Anyway, the most important and exciting night of the year for any wrestling fan is almost upon us. Only a few of matches are officially cemented in place, (at the time of writing of this piece anyway). The 'reigning, defending, undisputed WWE World Heavyweight Champion, B-b-b-rrrock Lesnar is taking on the Royal Rumble victor Roman Reigns in a make or break match for the former Shield muscle. WCW legend Sting is taking on Triple H in what is going to be a potential show stealing spectacle, it would have definitely been the show stealer five or so years ago but I guess we can't complain too much. Finally, the inaugural Andre the Giant Battle Royal was held last year at WrestleMania 30, which allowed all the mid-carders in creative limbo to get time on the card. They will get time on the card again this year as we are being treated to another Andre the Giant Battle Royal, hopefully the victor can keep the trophy longer than Cesaro did last year which was smashed within five minutes of being presented to the Swiss Superman/Yodelling Extrodinare. I'm going to run down the potential match card for this year, a few of these matches are almost certs, some aren't as the 'Road to Wrestlemania' can take some twists and turns, especially with WWE Creative driving the car.

WWE TAG TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

TAG TITLES

The new champions, 'The Masters of the WWE Universe', (I don't know if this name is actually still used, but it's brilliant) **CESARO & TYSON KIDD** are two of the best in-ring technicians in the WWE today. They are slowly building up their team's personality and are obviously a hit with the IWC (Internet Wrestling Community). If it is going to be a standard tag team match, their obvious opponents would be the-hard-working-but-pretty-dull Usos. However, this would be a simple re-match from Fastlane, (and we aren't going to have too many of them, are we!) so as it is Wrestlemania, WWE could introduce other teams into FRAY, with options including **THE ROAD WARRIORS**, sorry, **THE ASCENSION** I mean, the newly reformed **PRIME TIME PLAYERS, THE NEW DAY** and even in desperation, **LOS MATADORES**. Although a fatal-four-way tag match would be quite exciting and it would allow opportunity for bigger spots, and maybe give a space to use NXT talent in the match, I think that this will be a bog-standard re-match between **CESARO & KIDD** and **THE USOS**.

MATCH PREDICTION: CESARO & KIDD VS THE USOS | WINNERS: THE USOS

ANDRE THE GIANT MEMORIAL BATTLE ROYAL

BATTLE ROYALE

Ah, the lower card Superstars, there you are! I do like the concept of the Battle Royal, it is a fun way to give time to some of the superstars which we do not get to see on TV regularly and also allows for some nostalgia by introducing some old timers in here. It's pretty difficult to predict this as there are only three superstars that are certain at the moment, **THE MIZ, RYBACK** and Mr Perfects son, forgot his name. The scenario which could get the biggest pop possible out of this would be to have **MIZDOW** eliminate the **MIZ** last to win the trophy. Although this will probably result in the Trophy being smashed again, this time by the **MIZ**. It allows the WWE to finally execute the break up between these two without using up a match on the card and HOPEFULLY sky-rocket **MIZ(SAN)DOW'S** career which he deserves, and give **MIZ** the injection of heat from the crowd that he needs.

WINNER: DAMIEN SANDOW (FORMERLY MIZDOW)



JOHN CENA VS RUSEV

US TITLE

If **JOHN CENA** defeated **RUSEV** at Fastlane, then this would have been a foregone conclusion. However, the fact that the Bulgarian Brute beat SuperCena casts some doubt on the result of this match-up. **CENA** very rarely loses two big matches in a row, and having Rusev lose for the first time at Wrestlemania would basically destroy all the build up of his undefeated streak over the past year. **RUSEV** has to win this, he is the younger superstar and WWE have the best chance they have had in years for a fresh destructive Heel with longevity. If John Cena puts **RUSEV** over at Wrestlemania, it could be the decline of **CENA** main-eventing PPV's as we know it. **CENA** has been at the top of the game for over a decade now, and perhaps it is time for him to slip into the mid-card, although he will always be 'SuperCena' he could help elevate both the mid-card titles and the superstars around him, because he will always have the popularity and respect that he has secured over the years which would give victories over him that added bite for the younger crop.

WINNER: RUSEV



AMBROSE VS BARRETT

IC TITLE

BNB and **THE LUNATIC FRINGE** are two of the best brawlers in not only the WWE but wrestling as a whole. A street fight would be a perfect match-up for the two, and it would also replicate the storyline between the two thus far. **AMBROSE** stealing the title from **BNB** and stating that he would fight for it anywhere, from the ring to the parking lot. A street fight is always a good spectacle, and it would ignite the fans for the main card. The two young superstars compliment each others styles, and to add weapons and backstage fighting to the mix would result in a fantastic climax to their programme for the title. **AMBROSE** should win this and have a strong championship run as he vowed to bring the title back to what it used to be when it was around the waists of now Hall of Fame inductees.

It's recently been announced that Barrett will be defending his title in a ladder match. We still expect Ambrose to be involved and take home the title.

WINNER: DEAN AMBROSE

NIKKI BELLA VS PAIGE VS AJ LEE

DIVAS TITLE

With all the ridiculously talented women in NXT, and the likes of **PAIGE**, and the soon-returning **AJ LEE**, it is frustrating for actual wrestling fans to see the awful **BELLA TWINS** continue to hold onto the main, and only championship available to the Diva's on the main roster. WWE Creative have a wealth of talent to pass the title onto, but they continue to leave it around the waist of the annoying Twins who are constantly carried by their more talented colleagues in the ring. Hopefully, the predicted triple threat match above will come to fruition which allows Nikki to avoid the majority of the action and therefore allow the Diva's title to be won by either **PAIGE**, or the returning **AJ LEE**

WINNER: AJ LEE

WRESTLEMANIA



ORTON VS ROLLINS

AUTHORITY SHOWDOWN

The WWE have actually done this well so far. I know what your thinking, but let me explain. **ORTON** returned at Fastlane to a big pop from the crowd, everyone was expecting **ORTON** to become a crowd favourite face after he attacked the Authority. However the next night, he reconciled with the Authority in a 'business' meeting, which somewhat confused fans. This allows **ORTON'S** transition from heel to baby-face to be a surprise when he eventually turns his back on The Authority and strikes (like a Viper) which will be one huge climax to an intelligent storyline. I wouldn't be surprised if WWE leave **ORTON'S** turn to the final Raw before WrestleMania to heighten the speculation and surprise. Fans will be waiting, and left waiting until the final moment, and if Creative get it right, then it will accumulate to a memorable moment in Raw history and ultimately an intense fight at WrestleMania.

WINNER: SETH ROLLINS (WITH HELP FROM J&J SECURITY)



BRYAN VS ZIGGLER/SHEAMUS

SHOW STEALER?

DANIEL BRYAN vs **DOLPH ZIGGLER**, in wrestling terms, would steal the show. There is no question about that. The two have and numerous jokes with each other via Twitter to engage in a match at WM. The WWE Universe wants it. The IWC wants it. I want it. But unfortunately, WWE Creative probably won't go with the idea due to the fact that it isn't logical in the long term. They do however, have a returning Irish Fighter via the name of **SHEAMUS**. **SHEAMUS** is at his best when he is a heel, which has sparked the rumours for a rematch between the two after the infamous 18-second World Heavyweight Title match at WrestleMania 28, which arguably sparked **BRYAN'S** popularity to the hight that it is today. A programme with Sheamus would allow ample time for Bryan to be out of the title picture so that it feels fresh when he gets involved with the chase again later in the year.

WINNER: DANIEL BRYAN (THERE WOULD BE A RIOT IF NOT!)



GOLDUST VS STARDUST - CAREER VS GIMMICK MATCH

If the rumours are true, then The Bizarre one, **GOLDUST** is preparing to wind down his in-ring career and become a behind screen producer/agent. What better way to do this than a good old 'career on the line match' against his brother Stardust. It is a storyline that is already written for WWE creative, **GOLDUST** puts his career on the line in order to try and get his brother back from 'the 5th dimension' which is where **STARDUST** is apparently from. If **GOLDUST** loses, hes gone. If **STARDUST** loses, then he no longer paints his face and hisses any more, sounds like a deal right? Furthermore, adding onto **STARDUST'S** recent backstage interview, he had a go at some of the older veterans of the WWE. This could be a good way to give Stardust a **RANDY ORTON** 'legend-killer' style role in the WWE, he could go on a role defeating and ending the careers of some of the over-the-hill superstars, (**BIG SLOW** please!) which could cement his place as the obscure heel within the locker room.

WINNER: STARDUST



TRIPLE H V STING

**WWE
VS
WCW**

In what is one of the most exciting and intriguing battles on the card, two legends from two promotions collide in what, used to be a match only possible via a video game.

Granted, **STING**, and even **TRIPLE H** are older than what would have been preferred for this bout, it still holds an unrivalled interest from all wrestling fans. It is difficult to say what shape Sting is in, and how long the match will last, but hopefully, by using all their experience and talent they can create a well-paced story heavy match-up for the ages. I cannot see **THE STINGER** losing this as it wouldn't be plausible, also, look out for an outstanding entrance from both superstars.

WINNER: STING



UNDERTAKER VS WYATT

**DEADMAN
VS
CRAZYMAN**

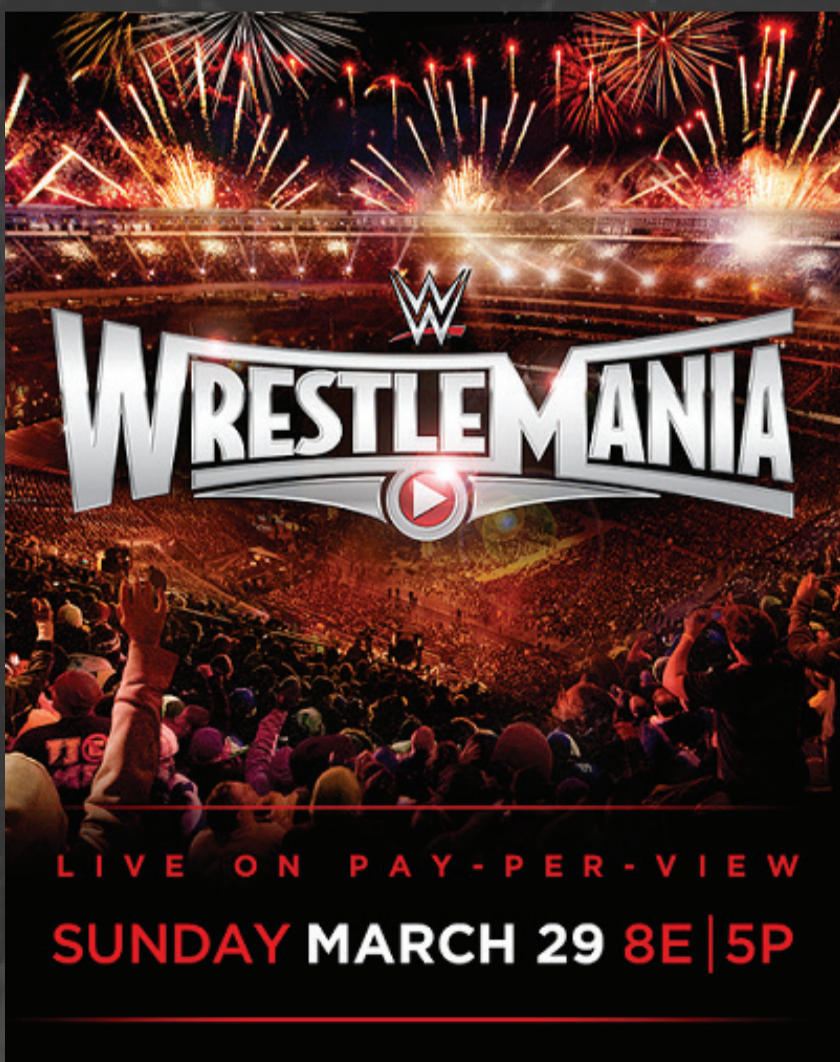
There is no secret that **WYATT** is going after **UNDERTAKER** at Wrestlemania. It would have been an obvious torch passing to have **WYATT** defeat the streak, but we all know how that

ended! Anyway, **WYATT** gets his chance at **TAKER** this year, all that is needed now to CEMENT the match is for **TAKER** to complete his usual Raw return by muttering 'I accept' or some spiel like that. WWE wouldn't go down the Wyatt vs Taker route without knowing that **THE UNDERTAKER** is 100% ready to compete. With getting rushed to hospital after his defeat last year, everyone would have understood if Taker wanted a year away from the 'Mania scene, but this match looks a dead-on. (See what I did there). There isn't much that people can say or write about when discussing **UNDERTAKER'S** next match at WrestleMania because after all these years, the whole world knows that the match will deliver, but, for the first time in history the result can be discussed as it is no longer a foregone conclusion. Having **WYATT** win, wouldn't quite be the streak-defeating victory that **BROCK LESNAR** owns, but it would give **WYATT** the biggest win of his entire career, so early on in his career. It could even allow Wyatt to replicate a **TAKER** like aura, even more than he already has. Wyatt is a hungry, young, popular talented superstar, which I believe Taker will put over at The Granddaddy of them all!

WINNER: BRAY WYATT - EMPHATICALLY.

We're ranking all 30 WrestleMania's 30-1. Head over to STEELCHAIR.CO.UK to read and join in the discussion.

Tweet us your opinions at [@STEELCHAIRMAG](https://twitter.com/STEELCHAIRMAG) and we'll RT the best ones.





WWE WORLD HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP BROCK LESNAR VS ROMAN REIGNS

WORLD TITLE

The most dominant champion in recent memory **BROCK LESNAR** faces **ROMAN REIGNS** in what should be a hard hitting, suplex heavy affair. A make or break match for Reigns, who got an unfair reception when he won the controversial Royal Rumble this year. Since their inception, the three superstars from **THE SHIELD** have always been destined for the top, **AMBROSE'S** time has yet to come, but **REIGNS** and **ROLLINS** time seems to be now. The match will ebb and flow, go back and forth in what seems to be **LESNAR'S** hardest fought (singles) title defence. HOWEVER, there is a huge cloud of rumour over **LESNAR** at the moment. His contract runs out after WrestleMania and multiple sources have stated he wants to go back to the Octagon at UFC and fight again. If this is true, then the title needs to change hands at the Levi's Stadium on March 29th, and if this happens there are two possibilities; **REIGNS** beats Lesnar to win the title, or, Rollins cashes in that absolutely battered suitcase containing the Money in the Bank contract on the winner. I cannot see Lesnar losing, but I can see him losing the title via a cash-in which seems to be the only viable way to remove the title from him at the minute.

Whatever happens, lets just hope its not another **LESNAR vs GOLDBERG**.

WINNER: LESNAR WINS, ROLLINS CASHES IN TO CLAIM THE TITLE.

Over the upcoming weeks, the WrestleMania Card will be completed and all the predictions and guessing games can stop and all the Wrestling fans can sit down and enjoy the Biggest Night of the Year. It will be fun to see how close this card is, obviously there are more matches here than there is time for, which is cheating from me, but I'm not bothered, if 70% of these matches happen then I will be a happy man. But we are watching the WWE, so anything can happen!



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