

WWF Invasion – Let It Begin

Invasion

Date: July 22, 2001

Location: Gund Arena, Cleveland, Ohio

Attendance: 17,964

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jim Ross

So this is easily the most requested show since I've stated doing the reviews so I might as well get it out of the way. This is the infamous INVASION of the WCW/ECW Alliance. Since I've already explained my thoughts on the Invasion as a whole in the Survivor Series 2001 review the talking about it here is going to be somewhat limited but I'm sure I'll have something to go on and on about in here somewhere.

The main event is the Inaugural Brawl, which is just a big ten man tag. Other than that the card is relatively boring other than Hardy vs. Van Dam for the Hardcore Title. Let's get to it.

The opening video is about Roosevelt and the Nazis and Japanese Army. ARE YOU SERIOUS? Ok, I know Vince likes things big, but this is ridiculous. The logo for the show is this weird hybrid of Shane and Vince's faces. It's kind of cool but more creepy.

Mike Awesome/Lance Storm vs. Edge and Christian

Hmm I wonder who is winning here. Edge and Christian's music cuts Storm off. That's rather amusing. I've always liked Storm so that has something to do with it. Edge is the reigning KOTR at the moment if that means anything to anyone. Christian and Awesome start us off. Storm vs. either of the faces could be most interesting. Edge gets down and Christian goes for a dive over the ropes. He slips though and nearly has a very bad fall.

Odd hearing WWF fans say YOU F'D UP. Awesome sans mullet is odd looking to put it mildly. Christian is getting beaten down for the most part here as you would expect. Why you would expect that I'm not sure but it sounded right in my head. Cole is really new at this whole commentary thing at this point and it shows badly. Edge gets the tag and takes out various heels. Edge rams Storm into Christian which would mean something in a few weeks/months.

The rollup only gets two though and we slow down for a bit. The crowd is hot here as they tend to be in Cleveland. Pretty decent tag match here. Awesome sets Edge for a powerbomb but Christian spears Awesome so that Edge falls on top for the pin. Nice ending.

Rating: B. Very good choice for an opener here as both teams were trying out there and it showed very well. Edge was getting hot around this time and it would have been a world title reign had a few things gone right. This was fun though and a great opener.

Vince is happy. Regal, in a collared WWF shirt and tights, says Austin is here. He gets Raven later. Well that's an odd combination if there has ever been one.

We recap the feud between the referees. Yeah it was bad. It results in this.

Earl Hebner vs. Nick Patrick

Of all people, Mick Foley is the referee here. Yeah I don't get it either but whatever. He's wearing a Marvel t-shirt so I can't complain at all. Nick comes out with an army of referees which is just funny looking. Earl does the same. It looks like the world's weakest gang. Oh and they're in refereeing gear.

Take a wild guess as to the quality of the work here. Do I need to offer commentary on this one? It's a glorified lumberjack match. Foley throws out the WCW referees. Earl hits

something resembling a spear for the win. Patrick gets in Foley's face and guess what happens. I think you know the drill.

Rating: N/A. I'm not grading two non-wrestlers like I would grade regular wrestlers.

We recap Debra getting abducted on Smackdown. Debra complains about it. She makes Stephanie look like a great actress. Taker's wife Sara isn't much better. She's attractive though.

We recap the APA vs. Palumbo and O'Haire. It's tag champions vs. tag champions. Basically the APA called for the WWF locker room to join forces to fight in the war. The WCW Champions jumped them at WWF New York.

APA vs. Sean O'Haire/Chuck Palumbo

No titles on the line here, despite them both being champions of some sort. Dang O'Haire had the look down to a science. So did Palumbo. We get a mention of Kevin Nash. He and DDP were the guys O'Haire and Palumbo beat. Teddy Long informs them they have seven minutes. Oddly enough Farroq was managed by Long back in the day.

Oddly enough this is a pretty back and forth match. Bradshaw busts out a DDT of all things. Never seen him use that I don't think. Farroq gets a standing switch. This is FREAKY. Oddly enough this is pretty back and forth with no one really dominating at all. The Clothesline From JBL ends it. This never got off the ground at all.

Rating: D. Just boring stuff here. You could clearly see there was very little thought put into the matches here. These two teams just were kind of there. It's not bad I guess, but this could have been on Superstars or something like that. Pretty weak.

Vince is with Jericho in the back and says Vince is the

difference between ECW/WCW and WWF. He's exactly right actually. Oh and Heyman sucks.

Stephanie hates Jericho. WOW her acting reaches new levels of suck. Heyman is sitting in the back and then goes off on Billy Kidman, saying he has to win this next match.

X-Pac vs. Billy Kidman

It's champion vs. champion again. This is in the X-Factor era. Yeah no one cares AT ALL. Kidman's music was rather groovy. Pac is total heel here but he's the face because of the company he's in. Waltman should be good here though as he's always good against smaller guys. Scratch that about Waltman being the face. They still hate him. I've always liked Cleveland.

Apparently you don't want to be the first to lose. Dang I thought you always wanted to lose. What was I thinking? They got close to the WCW/NWO issue with the announcers being completely idiotic looking by saying one group was the crowd favorite when they were being booed out of the building. They pick it up a bit with some nice high impact stuff. Pac catches a diving Kidman coming off the top in an X-Factor.

That looked pretty stupid, but I'd think that's because it's the stupid X Factor. Bronco Buster is blocked with a boot to the balls. I love alliteration. That sets up the Shooting Star Press for the pin. According to Ross, the Bronco Buster is a high risk move.

Rating: C+. Not bad but not great at all. The most interesting thing here was the crowd. The match itself is ok but not bad. Pac was always at his best against small guys and he was far less annoying here. Nothing great but the SSP is always sweet.

DDP babbles about nothing.

Torrie and Stacy try to sound sexy and just fail. They like

the Hardys apparently.

William Regal vs. Raven

We get a brief history of Raven's career, minus Johnny Polo that is which might be his best gimmick. It's a slugfest to start which Regal is good at. He was very physical around this time and it always came off rather well. His feud with Jericho was a highlight of his career to me. All Regal so far. That forearm to the face that he uses for a cover is great. We get a slingshot as I wonder what the point of this was.

The fans think this is boring and I can't really say that I disagree. It's not bad, but this is as basic as you could imagine. They look like they're both rookies who know very few moves at this point. It's more or less all punches and clotheslines. They're crisp and such, but this just isn't that interesting. You know what it reminds me of? An old SNES wrestling game where you have like 5 moves and everyone has the same set no matter what their size is.

The boring chant is really loud now. You can tell there is no story here at all. Raven gets thrown to the floor and for zero explained reason, Taz runs out and hits a suplex on Regal to allow Raven to hit the DDT for the pin.

Rating: D-. Just like I said before, this was just boring. I have no idea what the point was here but this didn't come off well. It was just a wrestling match, but with this being a PPV, this wasn't acceptable for me.

Taker and Kane get a pep talk from Vince. Taker doesn't like Vince talking about his wife.

Billy Gunn/Albert/Big Show vs. Kanyou/Hugh Morrus/Shawn Stasiak

Again, what in the freaking heck is the thought process on this show? It makes no sense at all. This was made on Heat. Oh

and Albert is IC Champion here. He's still in X-Factor and the song is still awesome. Stasiak is using Mr. Perfect's gimmick, down to the music. It was idiotic. In a cool spot we get a triple press slam from the WWF guys. Gunn and Kanyon start us off. This was Billy Gunn push #2837G.

Kanyon does an odd combination from a Russian legsweep into a Stroke. Nicely done. We get the traditional melee and Albert hits a bicycle (Pump kick that Sheamus uses) kick to Shawn and by hits I mean misses Shawn completely but has it sold anyway. This is pretty much all Albert.

Fameasser hits on Morrus. For you newer fans, Morrus is more commonly known as Bill Demott. Stasiak hits a reverse DDT so Morrus can get the pin. This was a MESS. Show hits chokeslams all around post match. Show debuts the Alley-Oop which he should do more often as it looked pretty cool.

Rating: F+. Just horrid here and I have even less clue what the booking here was supposed to be. This was a weird choice to say the least and I guess it was to showcase the WWF guys but it came off like a bunch of jobbers beat them. Made no sense.

Shane talks to Booker and says the Alliance (not named that yet but close enough) is up 4-3 because of Chavo beating Scotty on Heat. That answered a LOT of questions actually as no one got how later in the Alliance said they had an extra win. I was at a friend's house watching this and we spent 40 minutes after the show trying to figure it out. We had lists of matches and charts etc going and NO ONE got it. Yeah I'm just killing time now.

Regal fires Tajiri up.

Taz vs. Tajiri

This was the ECW Title match at I think Heat Wave 99 and it was a glorified squash. Apparently Tajiri is popular for

staying in the WWF. Ok then. Hey they actually mentioned the Heat Wave match! Sweet I'm not insane. Taz hooks a bunch of suplexes and submissions, which makes me think instantly that Tajiri will win. In at least the last two matches and maybe more, the guy or guys that dominate early loses in the end.

Handspring elbow gets a BIG pop. Didn't see that one coming. We hit the floor for all of 5 seconds and I'm bored out of my mind. The Tarantula helps that a bit. Tajiri kicks the tar out of Taz for a LONG two. Those kicks are LOUD too. Just as it's getting good, the mist hits as does a kick for the pin.

Rating: D+. This got really good for like 30 seconds. Other than that though it just wasn't interesting at all. Again, I don't get the point in these 5-6 minute matches with zero point to them at all. Could have been a lot worse though.

Jeff and Matt talk about Jeff's match with Van Dam. Van Dam pops up and cracks the HECK out of Matt with a chair. That sounded great.

Hardcore Holly is at WWF New York and gets on a plant for wearing a WCW shirt.

Hardcore Title: Rob Van Dam vs. Jeff Hardy

Why all the TNA on TNA violence? RVD's outfit is tiger print of all things tonight. He looks like Tony the Tiger in spandex. This should be fun. Hardy isn't a huge deal yet but he's in the midcard. Van Dam is WAY over. Crowd is red hot for this as it was more or less the second featured match on the card. Hardy goes for his run the rail spot and Van Dam makes the stop by jumping up on it to stop him. Nice.

Into the crowd now. This is totally sloppy and totally a mess but since it's a hardcore match, it's working rather well actually. The crowd is helping it a lot also. Van Dam takes a bow which is a very nice touch. With Van Dam on the apron, Hardy slingshots over the ropes into a powerbomb to the floor.

Sweet looking spot and it's ladder time. This had to happen. In another sick spot, Hardy is on the top of the ladder, and I mean the big one, and is pushed off and crashes to the floor.

This was what gave us the "How do you learn to fall off a 20ft ladder" soundbyte. In another, say it with me, sick spot, Van Dam is crouched but jumps into the air for a Van Daminator that looked GREAT. It knocked Hardy through the hole into the stage to the floor. We've reached the part where it's just them beating the living crap out of each other and the fan are flat out eating it up.

The belt is in the ring as Hardy gets a nice German Suplex. Jeff is bleeding a bit. Swanton misses. With Jeff down, Van Dam puts the belt on Hardy's chest and hits the 5 Star for the pin. Fun match.

Rating: B+. This is a great example of a match where you have to consider what was going on out there. This wasn't meant to be a mat clinic or anything. This was about high impact, high intensity over the top spots and that's what the fans got. This was fun and the crowd loved it. Great match.

Angle is annoyed for some reason. He says he'll destroy tonight.

We actually have a video package about the bra and panties tag match. Seriously? Short version: Trish and Lita hate each other because of them trying to steal the Hardys from each other. Torrie and Stacy do the same thing. Yeah let's just get to it. See, the thing they never could get around was that Torrie and Stacy had no talent other than looking good. Trish and Lita at least could fight.

Torrie Wilson/Stacy Keibler vs. Lita/Trish Stratus

Mick Foley appoints himself guest referee here again. This was smart if nothing else as it gave a person people actually care about to the match. Torrie and Stacy have weird entrance

music. Lita was a legit big deal at the time and was the biggest women's star more or less since Sable and Sunny. Seriously do you want commentary here? Trish was getting better every day at this point but still wasn't that good yet.

Stacy gets her top ripped off. Lita has the same done. Trish vs. Torrie now and Trish loses her shirt somewhere. There goes all of Torrie's clothes. Stacy gets her pants ripped off to end it. Mick picks up the clothes after the match which is funny.

Rating: N/A. Not a wrestling match, so there you go.

Stephanie gives the pep talk. That's amusing. Heyman takes over which is a major upgrade.

Austin is acting like himself.

We recap this, which started with Shane buying WCW. They finally switched the roles as a face had WCW and a heel had WWF. Then one night Vince said he was tired of this so he said let's have a match. The five guys he picked were ECW guys, you get the rest. Dreamer and Van Dam debuted that night. Austin had been an idiot since he turned heel so he started being the old Austin again.

More or less he kept saying he wouldn't be his old self until he said he'd do it. No big moment of clarity or anything. He just changed his mind. Yeah there wasn't much of a story other than they don't like each other, but did there need to be? Oh and DDP stalked Taker's wife. Stephanie being revealed as the ECW owner is one of my favorite moments ever. Oh and Freddie freaking Blassie showed up for a pep talk.

Inaugural Brawl: Team WWF vs. Team WCW/ECW

WWF – Steve Austin, Kurt Angle, Chris Jericho, Kane, Undertaker

WCW/ECW – Booker T, Diamond Dallas Page, Rhyno, Dudley Boys

All three Alliance bosses get entrances. Now Vince gets an entrance. It's been over 12 minutes since the last match ended and we're not even to the wrestlers' entrances yet. So yeah for you trivia buffs, this is the other non-ECW PPV that the Dudley Boys main evented. Kane and Taker were still kind of tag partners at this point but not really. So apparently Taker and Kane are balanced out by the Dudley Boyz? Ok then.

Oh and this is just a ten man tag. No special rules or anything like that. And pay no attention to the fact that both Taker and Kane (albeit as a jobber) used to work for WCW. Rhyno makes it the third ECW guy in a row. Talk about a push that died after this. Next is Jericho, who is about as opposite of Rhyno after this show as you could ask of anyone. Stephanie and Jericho was one of the funniest feuds I can ever remember.

Booker is US and World Champion at this time but he would hand the US Title to Kanyon soon after this. This just feels entirely thrown together. Sting is mentioned on a WWF PPV for likely the only time ever. Stephanie dancing to Booker's music is just hilarious. Angle gets a HUGE pop despite going the wrong way down the ramp.

The level he reached about two months from now was insane. DDP is apparently the biggest deal in the Alliance. Dang did they ever jump the gun here. The 9 mentioned start fighting in the aisle and we have Austin. Notice a certain one sidedness here?

Austin and Rhyno start us off. Austin hits a superplex off the top. Sweet goodness. Jericho gets a NICE pop for the tag. Booker, the only one of the WCW/ECW guys to get a legit push in WWF comes in. Angle gets another great pop. This was after the peak the company had a few months earlier, but it was still a huge deal. This evolves into your standard big time tag match with various people beating on each other with no one really controlling for a ton of time.

DDP hits a Stunner on the top rope on Taker to finally get something resembling control. Austin works on a wristlock on Booker. There's something you don't see everyday. We've been at this for about ten minutes now and there hasn't been any long term control. There isn't much to say here either though as it's exactly what you would expect it to be. Heyman is awesome at being completely evil when he has to be.

Angle is in some trouble here and the Spinarooni hits. Page hits a spinning powerbomb on Angle which is one of my favorite moves. So after nearly 20 minutes we get to the traditional face in peril sequence of the match. We go old school with Austin getting the tag but the referee didn't see it. I love things like that. Diamond Cutter on Angle and it gets NO reaction. Cole of course calls it a neck breaker while Ross, 10 seconds after it, says the name right.

And here is the brawl that you knew was coming. Rhyno hits the Gore on Booker and Taker finally gets his hands on DDP again. Chokeslam to Page. Booker and Austin fight on the floor while the WCW referee gets a Last Ride. Taker and DDP go into the crowd while Austin's knee is messed up after going into the steps. Kane is fighting both Dudleys.

That's how you can tell Taker is a bigger deal than Kane: when Taker did that, they got their own match. It's table time. Kane hits a chokeslam through the announce table on D-Von. He got him UP there too. Rhyno and Bubba put Kane through the Spanish Announce Table. Good to see a tradition still alive. Jericho puts Rhyno through the table the Dudleyz set up. Booker and Angle are the only guys still conscious. Oh and Bubba also.

The referee is still looking at Austin's knee. Yes I'm listing a lot of play by play but you have to here so you know what's going on. Angle fights off Booker and Bubba with an ankle lock and the Angle Slam, back when it was a good finisher, respectively. And there goes the referee. Cue the finish.

Vince grabs the WWF Title and throws it to Angle. Shane gets it though and down goes Vince.

It's Booker vs. Angle now. Angle hits his pair of finishers on him, Austin throws the referee in, kicks Angle in the head, Stunner, pin, WCW/ECW wins. Austin turned heel again, shocking JR despite him having done the same thing TWO AND A HALF MONTHS EARLIER. Austin and the three Alliance leaders have beers to end the show.

Rating: B. This did something I didn't think it did: it made the far weaker WCW/ECW team look legit. This was all about making WWF look like they were in danger and it did that. WWF never had the advantage in the whole match until the very end. WCW/ECW controlled this as they should have.

Austin turning heel had to be done given the totally rushed nature of this angle but that's neither here nor there. The match wasn't terrible either, so I'd say this was a success. Not a classic or anything, but a success.

Overall Rating: B-. Now think about this for a minute. Yes, most of the matches completely sucked. Actually all but like 3 did. However, this was based around the main event. I don't recall any other matches other than the hardcore title one being advertised. Oh and Bra/Panties. Other than that, this show wasn't up to a high quality in the ring because it didn't need to be.

This was about two things: the main event, and making WCW/ECW look like a threat. Once the PPV ended, no one cared who won the matches or who was even in them. All that mattered was the Alliance won the night and the main event in particular. This definitely isn't a show you would want to watch for the show itself, but the main thing here is that the huge angle got rolling.

Now to be fair, the angle bombed about as ten times as much as anyone on the planet could have asked it to, but no one knew

that at the time. This should have been an angle that went on for at least a year or two, not five months. Anyway, if this was any other show, it would be a C- at best. However, this was a historical show, and as a stand alone show I thought it was successful. On a long term basis though, bad. Like, really bad. Other than for historical issues though, I wouldn't sit through it.