

Guilty As Charged 2001: ECW's Finale And Final Thoughts On The Company

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Date: January 7, 2001

Location: Hammerstein Ballroom, New York City, New York

Attendance: 2,500

Commentators: Joey Styles, Cyrus

It ends here. Or at least it should have since there was the WWE version which was good but not ECW and then there's the TNA version which will be bad but ECW. This is the final ECW PPV in the original incarnation of the Tribe of Extreme. The main event is more or less a ladder match with Sandman vs. Credible vs. Corino for the title. Other than that there's a semi-famous Dreamer vs. Anderson I Quit match which I've never seen. Let's get to it, even though this is all that's left to get to.

Oh and RVD isn't on the card here since he wasn't paid either.

We open with a long music video with no real purpose other than highlights of the previous few PPVs. Keep in mind there were no national TV shows and very limited syndicated channels and barely any touring. In a sense, the company was just going PPV to PPV for anything. The video is at three minutes already.

A little telling sign of ECW's problems: while the place looks full, notice the listed attendance. A full house is great, but not when it's less than 3,000 people to fill it. Joel does his usual stuff but gets dirtier than usual, although it's rather funny. He introduces Matthews and York who he is now managing.

Random note here: it wasn't known that the company was going

out of business. There was supposed to be another PPV in March but they canceled it in February and went out of business just after Wrestlemania. In other words, for about 10 days, ECW was in fact the second biggest wrestling company in the country due to WCW being out of business. Pay no attention to the fact that Heyman was working for WWF or that they hadn't had a show in about two months and let Heyman have his moment.

Anyway Da Baldies jump York and Matthews and beat up Gertner in the aisle. And here are Cyrus and Lynn with an evil referee while the Baldies continue the beatdown. Lynn hits York with a Cradle Piledriver and Cyrus gets the pin. That somehow was an opening match. Between Joel finishing his poem and the three count, which included a speech, the intro, the beatdown, an extension of the beatdown and the pin, five minutes passed, hence the short description and no official intro to a match.

Lynn says he's not a jobber to the stars anymore and he's the New F'N Show. He also lets us know that RVD isn't the biggest star. Lynn won't wrestle a non man event either.

Theme song. I still fail to see why we needed a few minutes out of every PPV for this.

Tag Titles: Hot Commodity vs. Danny Doring/Roadkill

The backs of the belts are purple. I wouldn't have bet on that one. Doring and Dinero start us off. Basically we're just waiting for the hot tag to Roadkill to have him clean house. And there he is, earlier than I expected, for the beatdown. Hart Attack (called the Lancaster Lariat of Lust) connects.

We go to the floor and Doring kind of botches a Poetry in Motion over the top rope. Hamrick interference gets two as this isn't much of a match. It's ok but it's going a bit too fast. Money hits the Crash Landing which would be his finisher in his brief run in WCW at the end of the company. Dinero hits a SWEET dropkick to put Roadkill on the floor.

It's back to waiting on the big hot tag to Roadkill which is basic and smart booking. I like the funny little names that are all based around sex for Doring. At least they're trying. He comes in and destroys everyone and the big double clothesline has Hot Commodity in trouble. Dinero's finisher is called the Jalapeno Popper. Seriously? Hamrick comes in but does nothing as the Buggy Back (wheelbarrow/legdrop combo) ends it.

Rating: D+. Nothing that special here but it was ok. The champions were in trouble a bit too long for my taste but it certainly wasn't horrible. This was just a gimme tag title defense for the champions which is fine. The match wasn't much, although that could be that I can't stand Hot Commodity.

The heels start a big beatdown and here's Nova for the save, leading to this.

Nova vs. Chris Hamrick

Sure why not. Nova is different here somehow apparently. He's leaner and very popular, so of course he's in a thrown together match early in the show against a guy that's no challenge to him. He goes for the leg for some reason and hooks a figure four. Well that didn't last as Elektra comes in to break it up.

Hamrick gets a nice rana off the top to take over. Nova Hulks Up and an enziguri takes Hamrick down. He gets a huge chant as Cyrus insists he's not fan friendly now. Elektra comes in again to annoy me so she gets kicked in the head by Nova. I like this new guy. Down goes the referee. Sure because in a company where there are no disqualifications we need a referee.

Chris Chetti, who Nova beat in a loser leaves ECW match, comes in and counts a pin on Nova. And here's Spike for no apparent reason. Lou E. Dangerously says he would never be a Dudley, which is the joke since he used to be Sign Guy Dudley. A big

brawl erupts and Nova hits a Swanton on Chetti and Kryptonite Krunch to end Hamrick because that was still going on.

Rating: D+. Decent match between two high fliers but the insanity just got annoying of course. I have no idea why Spike had any point there but whatever. Naturally Chetti and Nova would be supposed to feud again because having a Loser Leaves ECW match wasn't enough somehow. This was of course angle building with wrestling on the side. Not a fan of that at all.

Cornio says he's getting his belt back tonight, which Sandman stole.

CW Anderson vs. Tommy Dreamer

This is an I Quit match and is your standard veteran vs. young punk with something to prove feud. Dreamer is in a freaking Logan's Roadhouse shirt. Is he a waiter on the side since he's not getting paid? I'm not sure if I'm kidding there or not. We're on the floor immediately as Cyrus is irritating. Back in the ring and Dreamer has a Dragon Sleeper of all things.

Anderson goes to the arm which is likely hurt since it's Tommy Dreamer. Why should an I Quit match be a wrestling match? Cyrus wants it to be technical which is completely against the idea of the match but whatever. Dreamer goes violent with the ring bell hammer and busts Anderson open. Fairly sick drop toehold into the back of a chair busts Dreamer open.

CW works on the knee which doesn't really get him anywhere. Dreamer takes some very bad looking unprotected chair shots and busts out a ring of barbed wire. The towel boy from the last show comes in and helps Dreamer beat him up. And there's a metal sheet to the non-wrestler. Throw in a suplex and I'm sure he's perfectly fine right?

Spinebuster onto the wire, called razor wire here, and of course Anderson goes for the arm instead of the back which was just slammed into barbed wire. We switch back to the spine as

he goes through some chairs. Ok make that the neck as it's all Anderson here. It's table time but Anderson goes through it. They take part of it and Dreamer chokes him out for the victory.

Rating: C. Not bad but if this is supposed to be a classic in ECW I fail to see it. Also, nice job of elevating Anderson there by giving the win to the old man that still has never quit. I don't get this one really and while it was a good beatdown, the psychology was just not there at all as Anderson couldn't just pick a body part. It's ok but nothing great at all.

We now hit the WTF part of our show.

Francine is making jokes about a huge sandwich and Corino comes in. He says he's the world champion so she should screw him. She says no because of the lack of belt. He asks where Justin is and she says in the bathroom with Missy Hyatt. Naturally Corino doesn't buy it but after he leaves, out walks Justin with his pants unbuckled and is followed by Missy Hyatt in a towel. She says she's screwed him twice already today and to just let Justin screw Francine already. Missy leaves and Corino and Jack Victory are STUNNED. Victory wants some too because she used to manage him in Texas (true story) but she doesn't remember. She asks if she screwed him. This was completely pointless but absolutely hilarious.

Website ad/house show ad (including the final show 6 days after this)/ad for Living Dangerously which didn't happen.

FBI vs. Kid Kash/Super Crazy vs. Tajiri/Mikey Whipwreck

The winners are the #1 contenders. Tajiri in a hat is just funny for some reason. It always has been. Three people in at once here and it's elimination. Kash, Mikey and Mameluke start us off. Mikey's laugh is awesome. Kash botches the heck out of a springboard and faceplants to draw a huge chant against him.

The fans do the whole pizza/Sal E ate it deal which gets old fast. Crazy vs. Tajiri starts up and the value of the show instantly rises. Kash misses another big dive and it's breaking down very fast. Yeah forget that whole three in the ring at once. Crazy does a big dive and of course Kash out does him. Make no mistake about him: the guy could fly with the best of them.

Crazy goes for another dive and completely misses in a painful looking spot. Sal kills Kash with a splash to take out him and Crazy. And so of course it's these two teams again because we haven't seen this match enough. Mikey drops DiBiase punches which makes me smile. Mamaluke gets freaking destroyed and both he and his partner are put in the Tree of Woe.

Naturally they take over in about 9 seconds because they can. Double Powerbomb off the top to Mikey to more or less end him. And of course that gets two also. Mikey gets the hot tag and is of course fine just afterwards. The lack of selling in this match is painful. Chairs are involved and are of course nothing special. Double suplexes end it. Well at least it's over.

Rating: D+. This was just a tag team triple threat. There was no real point to it and while it wasn't horrible, there just wasn't anything at all to talk about in it, which is clearly why I wrote four paragraphs on it. It just wasn't an interesting match in the slightest and it never got off the ground. The title match would have been good too which is a shame they had to go out of business.

Same ads as early.

Sandman says he's the most likely to win. How did he get into the world title picture without winning anything for like a year?

Simon Diamond/Swinger vs. Balls Mahoney/Chilly Willy

What kind of a name is Swinger? In WCW he was Johnny Swinger and here he's just Swinger. That never made sense. Swinger talks about not getting any from Dawn Marie while Simon has, so he's gone out and gotten Jasmine St. Clair. She and Blue Boy come out and apparently Blue Boy is his new manager. Oh look: another pointless midcard faction. After about a minute of brawling, Rhino comes in and gores everyone including the women. Well there's five minutes filled. Jasmine takes a piledriver off the middle rope.

Again with the ads!

Rhino says he's just begun.

ECW World Title: Steve Corino vs. Sandman vs. Justin Credible

So the main event is starting an hour and forty minutes into the show? THESE guys are going to go an hour? Why do I not think this is possible in the slightest? This is a ladder match but it's billed as ladders, tables, chairs and canes. Where does that sound familiar from? Sandman's entrance is three minutes so far as Joey actually talks about psychology regarding the entrance. That actually makes sense. Apparently it's like icing a kicker. Makes sense.

The match starts after we spend five minutes on his intro. We start with brawling as Cyrus says Justin will unload on them like he did on Missy. It's a spotfest and not a particularly good one. Sandman goes for the belt a few times to no avail. He goes through a table and I guess the fans are impressed.

Sandman beats up everyone and goes up the ladder. Justin is ready to make the save but the ladder breaks. Well what else did you expect? Sandman goes through a table again in a spot that made me think I had rewound the tape by mistake. Tombstone to Corino and Francine hits a rana on Sandman for no apparent reason. BIG ladder is brought in by Sandman.

Corino and Justin go up and just like KOTR 99 the belt goes

up. Just like KOTR 99, it was never explained as far as I know. Corino and Justin go through a table and Sandman goes up to win the belt. Yeah that's it as the main event is over at three minutes past ten.

Rating: D+. Spotfest, but not a very good one. Sandman going through table after table was rather annoying and repetitive. This wasn't horrible but it feels completely anti-climactic. Sandman is champion again and is a more believable choice than either of them but at the same time he's the old guy that hasn't meant anything in forever. I'm not wild on this at all.

Corino shakes Justin's hand and here come...Da Baldies? They fight Justin and Corino to the back which has Joey shocked, as the two singles guys are fighting together.

And here's Rhyno who gores Sandman. He wants to know why he's the TV Champion when there is no TV in this company. He wants the world title and wants his shot RIGHT NOW. The announcers say he's not very brave. Yeah he's so brave to jump a guy he's destroyed every time they've fought. Rhyno threatens to kill his family if he doesn't get a match. Sandman says ring the bell.

ECW World Title: Sandman vs. Rhyno

Gore gets two, the fans chant RVD, Sandman gets pile driven through a table, Sandman kicks out, piledriver on a broken table, Rhyno is champion after like a minute.

Cyrus comes out and says Rhyno is the unified champion, meaning the TV Title is officially dead. He issues the open challenge and NOW RVD comes out to answer. Joey is shocked that RVD wants the world title. Good thing Rob was in his gear and stretched just in case there was an open challenge.

ECW World Title: Rob Van Dam vs. Rhyno

And never mind as here's Jerry Lynn for a Dusty Finish and the

fans aren't exactly thrilled.

Jerry Lynn vs. Rob Van Dam

So here's your last 20 minutes or so of the show. The fans are glad to see Van Dam as I guess this was supposed to set up RVD vs. Rhyno. Lynn is in shorts which is a weird sight. The TICKED OFF RVD has time to talk to the fans of course. We stall a lot as Joey gives us the pride crap. No contact is made for about two minutes as we have to kill some time since it couldn't be spent wrestling.

They fight on the floor and RVD's mouth is busted a bit. WAY too much stalling here. Van Dam does his normal stuff on the floor as it's very clear they're just trying to fill time at this point. This is really just a match and not a great one. The psychology in the third one made it far more interesting but here it's just you take over then I take over. Some fans yell something about a bald guy or other and are cheered when he gets thrown out.

I know I'm not saying much here but there isn't much to say. Since there's no angle here or title on the line there's no feeling to this match at all and it's really hurting it. Also it doesn't help at all that Lynn is a horrible heel. He had his most successful few months of his career so he wants to change all that. Sure why not.

Lynn gets a DDT on a chair for two as this is just dragging. Five Star doesn't hit and Lynn gets two. And here's Joel Gertner to beat up Cyrus for general purposes I guess. Van Daminator gets no cover as I wonder why you would EVER hold up a chair in an RVD match. It's just so stupid. Gertner helps set up the Van Terminator to kill Lynn dead and end it. And that's the final ECW match in the history of the original PPV era.

Rating: C-. Just not interesting at all. It's an ok match as most of them were, but I still find this to be a completely

overrated series. This is by far and away the weakest they've ever done and just never became interesting. It's not a bad match, but it's way too long and had no real point other than being the wrestling match on the last half hour of the show. I just couldn't get into it at all.

Credible and Lynn are the New Impact Players. That's how the show ends. Oh and with Francine blowing her line.

Overall Rating: D. I'm going through the card here and without looking at the ratings, the best I can give a match is the I Quit match which was just ok. There just was nothing at all here to warrant paying a dime, or in this case \$21.95, to see. This just wasn't an interesting show at all. Sandman, the one guy of the three the fans accept as a main event player, wins the title and then Rhyno, a guy that had trouble with Spike last month is here to steal it?

I thought the point of a monster was to be a MONSTER and not have to steal a title. RVD vs. Rhyno should have been at least six months earlier but I guess it was supposed to be the Living Dangerously match. This show just didn't have anything good going for it and it showed badly. Bad way to go out, but the one silver lining was that they had some new stuff planned it seemed, including RVD going for the world title. Shame that's only two years too late to give the company another breath of air. Oh and the show ended at 10:35, yet the Simon/Swinger match clocked in at 48 seconds.

So now we come to the hard part and probably the feature attraction here: the final thoughts on ECW. Now it's no secret that I was never a fan of the original ECW. I thought the company was way overhyped and just straight up not very good. ECW was in fact one of the most influential companies in the world with some very innovative stuff. Then it stopped being innovative. Everyone was cursing, everyone had hot women, everyone used weapons, everyone had the more adult angles. They also got talent from ECW and Heyman just never came back.

If you look back at the ECW PPV guys and the reactions they were getting, it became increasingly clear that the midcard was the most popular section of the show. This is where one of the big ECW talking points comes into play: the TV Title and the World Title were sometimes on equal footing. That does not work. Even in a company today like WWE where there is enough talent to have two full rosters and they're still crowded, people don't like more than one champion. The other thing to consider is that to the masses, the TV Title was known as the belt worn by guys like Ultimo Dragon, Yuji Nagata, Alex Wright and Prince Iaukea.

You can make the case all you want that the titles were equal and that the matches for the TV Title were better. That very well may be true, but it doesn't matter what reality is. What matters is how your audience perceives it. Take for example John Cena. Anyone with eyes can see that Cena is a talented wrestler and has far more than 5 moves. However, the people think he's overrated and that's all that matters. RVD vs. Lynn for the TV Title might be the best match on the card, but it's not for the World Title. Fans are familiar with the idea of the World Champion being the important guy.

This transitions into my next point: Rob Van Dam and the Heavyweight Title. Now I've long since argued that the company was in trouble the day Shane Douglas got hurt. Shane was world champion and him dropping the belt to Taz was about as much of a given as you could ask for. The problem is that when Shane got hurt, Taz was the hottest thing in the company. Shane gets hurt for like 3 months and doesn't drop the title until January, six months after his injury. The problem was that Taz had to just sit around for six months waiting on the shoulder to heal and people didn't care when he won the belt.

This sets off a domino effect as Taz now has an 8 month reign and no one cares by this point and he has no one to fight. Van Dam is getting more and more popular so the belt goes on Mike Awesome for about seven months and then after a few short

reigns (as in two in less than ten days) it goes to Justin Credible. Wait...what? Credible had a career win total of nothing important and yet he's the world champion? This was the problem for the rest of the company's run of nearly two years: the champions had never done jack.

The final three champions for all intents and purposes were Credible, Lynn and Corino. The problem is these three had a combined one important win: Lynn beat RVD when he had a bunch of ring rust and there was no title on the line. The problem was the Andre the Giant syndrome: as long as RVD was around and they didn't beat him, the fans didn't accept these guys as the world champion. This is what I'm getting at with the RVD issues the whole time. He had well received matches with Jerry Lynn for the TV Title. Why couldn't they be for the world title? To the average and casual fans, he's the midcard champion. That doesn't sell a lot of new PPVs.

This is one of my final (I think) points: the impromptu matches and insane PPVs. These are fine once in awhile, but the thought that pops into my head is something I read in the Death of WCW book, so please note this is not my original idea but it fits ECW perfectly. Imagine if say McDonalds sold one thing: the mystery meal. You don't know what's in it but just that it's edible food. It could be fish, chicken, hamburger etc. You know it's one, but not specifically. How many people do you think would eat there? ECW PPVs were the same (to a degree): you were going to get wrestling, but you didn't know what it was going to be.

Having random matches is fine once in awhile, but eventually you have to stand by what you're offering and live or die by it. Having RVD vs. Lynn on this show doesn't mean anything because even if it's the second coming of Steamboat vs. Flair it doesn't add a single buy because the only people that would see it have already bought the show. Now if you advertise that RVD, the most popular guy in the company, is going to be there then you might sell some more shows and make more money. See

what I'm getting at here? It's ok once in awhile but not all the time.

All that being said, there were some good things about ECW. Their tag wrestling was solid and their midcard would have made even WCW drool at times. Super Crazy vs. Tajiri was great for instance. Some of the tag matches were awesome and the women were very hot. There was some solid in ring work too and the brawls were decent at times. It would have been nice to mix things up a bit with more wrestling and less brawling, but I get the idea I guess.

Overall the company was never going to be a giant. It simply wasn't in the cards and that's all there is to it. However, if they hadn't stretched things way too far and tried to be the third national company, there's a chance they could be around today. As a regional company with lower salaries, they definitely could have been around at least to a certain degree.

ECW was a company that tried very hard, but at the end of the day it just didn't have enough to survive. It most certainly meant something to wrestling though and paved the way for the indy companies like CHIKARA and ROH today. It was a good idea and successful to a degree, but without changing, it was doomed to die, which it did.

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