

I Want To Talk A Little Bit About Advertising WWE Matches (The Mad Men Table Of Contents)

Over the last few years wrestling television has changed from a show of squashes to what you see today with the stories being advanced every week for two or three hours a night. However there are a few changes in how the shows could be presented from week to week that could help things a lot. Today we're going to look at how WWE screws up the advertising of their show and how easily this could be fixed. Let's get to it.

This was originally going to be part of another I Want To Talk A Little Bit About but it evolved into its own. I could get used to this.

The other day I was reading and at the start of the book there was a table of contents. It's a basic idea and tells you what you're going to get in the book you're reading. Last night's Raw (August 5, 2013) was a pretty stacked show, with John Cena, Randy Orton, Daniel Bryan, CM Punk, Rob Van Dam and Shield in action. Of all those guys, two were announced early in the show. The other six were announced as being in action over an hour into the broadcast.

Now jump with me back to 1987. The main WWF show was Superstars of Wrestling and it always had the same intro: Vince and company telling us the wrestlers we would be seeing on the card. It might not include their opponents (as more often than not they would be in a squash match) but you would see who was wrestling that day and you knew inside the first 40 seconds of the show. In other words, it was like you had a table of

contents that was telling you what you were going to see on the show that night.

This brings us to today's shows where you often hear only one or two matches at the start of the show. You can probably guess that certain people will be on the show, but it's really a guessing game. In other words, you have to judge the book by its cover instead of actually knowing what you're going to be getting that night. Now, this is a bad idea and let's take a look at a few reasons why.

First and foremost, if you know what you're getting later, there's a good chance the fans of those people are going to stick around. Suppose you're a Randy Orton fan. If you're watching Raw and hear that he's going to be in a match against anyone that night, odds are you're going to stick around. Many fans would stick around no matter who it's against, but on occasion it's going to be against someone that people aren't going to be interested in.

This brings us to the second point of advertising the matches: pick what you mention. For instance, last night we had Rob Van Dam facing the World Heavyweight Champion Alberto Del Rio. That's a very popular former world champion in a rematch with a world champion that people would like to see. In other words, it's a match worth mentioning at the top of the show. On the other hand, a few weeks back we had CM Punk vs. Darren Young. The way to advertise that: "CM Punk will be in action later tonight."

Going back to Raw from last night, the main event was a six man tag between Shield and Daniel Bryan/Randy Orton/John Cena. The match was announced at roughly 9:15 and the opening bell was about an hour and forty five minutes later. That's a big match but it's only getting 105

minutes of time to build. This move causes another set of problems which can be rectified in just a few easy steps.

We'll start with the most obvious problem: it's not enough time to get the word out. If you weren't watching in a span of less than two hours, you had no idea the match was happening by the end of the show and you'll miss the match. These are three world champion caliber guys fighting the top three man team in years with potential world title implications. Daniel Bryan also happens to be the hottest act in the world right now and Cena is his opponent at the second biggest show of the year where Orton might cash in his shot at the title. And this gets less than two hours of build.

Here's the simple solution: announce the match for next week's show. It's a simple solution: you give it seven days to build up to the match instead of half a show and people have a chance to hear about it and anticipate it. Think about Wrestlemania 28. The main event had over a year to build up and it made a fortune. It's a simple principle: give it more time and people will be more interested.

Now what can you do in this week? You can use that social media that WWE is head over heels for to talk about the match. Have Bryan, Cena and Orton cut promos and put them on the App and have Shield respond to give the match another reason (sidebar: why did Shield come down in the first place? It was never explained, likely due to not having enough time) to happen. Have Orton Tweet about possibly cashing in the briefcase on Cena if he's vulnerable. Which is more interesting? Hearing Orton tease a cash-in or hearing a 15 year old from Ogallala, Nebraska talk about how much he's looking forward to something.

Think of the whole thing in practical terms. If you go to a restaurant to

buy some food for the night, it's not all in plain brown bags. It's on a menu which tells you exactly what you're getting. You don't buy some mystery bag and hope you get something good in it. You look at what's presented and pick something if you think it looks good. The same idea is true of wrestling: if you like what's offered to you that night, you'll stick around for the show and stay until you get what you agreed to stick around for.

It also solves another problem: what was going to fill in the rest of the card? This is one of those things that gets on my nerves with general manager characters. Suppose Orton, Bryan or Shield hadn't come out during that segment? What was Maddox supposed to be filling in the rest of his show with? You book that main event in advance and the show is much more logical, as you have a match for the show coming in and aren't booking things on the fly.

Booking things in advance also keeps the card from changing around all the time. Instead of mentioning something and then never following up on the idea later on because there's no bridge to the next week, you already have a match set up in advance and can build the show around that. If nothing else it could help prevent continuity errors like something being brought up one week and never mentioned or followed up on the next.

Finally, there's another out for the WWE by advertising the matches in advance. If a majority of the matches are announced in advance and someone sticks around because they want to see something but doesn't like it, they only have themselves to blame. You knew what you were offered, you agreed to stick around, potentially for hours on end, and you wanted to see a match. If it turns out the match sucks, you can't blame WWE for it as it was your idea. It's better than having someone wait up and then say "I waited two hours for THAT? Screw this company."

Overall, WWE has a lot of good stuff to offer its fans but it goes about telling them those matches exist very badly. Whether it's giving them just over an hour and a half's notice that a match is coming or not letting the match build itself up at all or offering WWE the Mystery Meat of the Day card and hoping you like what you get, there are distinct problems with the way the shows are advertised. Fix these things up and the shows would easily attract a bigger audience.