

Wrestlemania Count-Up – Wrestlemania XXI: The Modern Era Begins

Wrestlemania XXI

Date: April 3, 2005

Location: Staples Center, Los Angeles, California

Attendance: 20,193

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler, Michael Cole, Tazz

We're at the launch of a new era in WWE as Batista and Cena are ready to take over the company as the next generation of top stars. They're challenging HHH and JBL tonight in the respective title matches in what really are company altering matches. On top of that we've got Angle vs. HBK and the first MITB match, making this a PACKED show. The theme tonight is Wrestlemania Goes Hollywood which means we get some outstanding parody film trailers. Let's get to it.

Lillian Garcia (looking GREAT in a baby blue outfit which shows off her flat stomach) sings America the Beautiful.

The Wrestlemania 21 logo is revealed.

We get a montage of the trailers (HHH as Braveheart, John Cena/JBL from A Few Good Men, Undertaker as Dirty Harry, Eugene as Forrest Gump and many more. Look these up) set to Behind Those Eyes by 3 Doors Down.

We get the final trailer which is Gladiator with Steve Austin as Russell Crowe.

Rey Mysterio vs. Eddie Guerrero

They're tag team champions but fighting to see who is better here as Eddie is getting frustrated by Rey unintentionally showing him up. Rey is in a Mexican/American double flag themed outfit here instead of his usual superhero stuff. Rey immediately starts adjusting his mask which will be a recurring theme tonight. Eddie takes him to the mat with a headlock and

Rey is already messing with his mask.

An armdrag puts Mysterio down and Eddie grabs a test of strength grip. Back up and Rey tries a sunset flip, only to be catapulted out to the floor. Eddie slides out but Rey slides back in, only to miss a 619 to the floor. Back in and they grab another strength grip before Eddie flips Rey over. The referee counts and they bridge up at the exact same time in a cool visual.

Rey is backdropped but lands on his feet, only to have to adjust the mask again. Eddie is backdropped now and tweaks his knee in the process. Rey is knocked to the floor though and there's a plancha by Guerrero to take him out. Back in and Eddie cranks on the arms a bit before suplexing a mask fixing Mysterio down for two. Guerrero hooks a surfboard submission but has to let it go because his own shoulders were down.

Off to an STF on Rey which shifts into an armbar. Eddie tries a powerbomb but gets armdragged out to the floor instead. A BIG corkscrew dive to the floor keeps Eddie down as does a seated senton back inside. Back up and Eddie tries Three Amigos but gets rolled up for two instead. There's a backbreaker for two on Rey followed by Three Amigos but Guerrero tries a fourth and is sent into 619 position.

Eddie pops up and hits another backbreaker for two, causing his frustrations to start coming out. Three more Amigos set up the Frog Splash but Rey gets out at the last second. Naturally, Rey adjusts his mask. La Majistral gets two for Mysterio and there's the 619 to send Eddie sprawling across the ring. The West Coast Pop is countered into a powerbomb for two and Eddie isn't sure what to do. Instead of following up though, Eddie gets caught in a standing rana for the pin out of nowhere.

Rating: C+. This was a disappointment. At the end of the day, these two didn't live up to the expectations they had set, especially given their masterpieces back in WCW. They never got out of first or even second gear and that really brought things down. The match felt like they were trying to have a masterpiece and they collapsed under the weight. It was ok, but it could and should have been SO much more.

Eddie doesn't turn on Rey after the match. That would come later.

JBL and Orlando Jordan bump into HHH and Flair. JBL says that he's never lost the world title like HHH has and HHH is going to add another loss to his total tonight. A showdown is teased but everyone backs down.

Adam Sandler and Rob Schneider are here.

Edge vs. Chris Jericho vs. Shelton Benjamin vs. Chris Benoit vs. Christian vs. Kane

This is the first ever Money in the Bank ladder match and thankfully there are only six people instead of the eight that we usually get today. In a cool visual, Kane's fire engulfs a bunch of ladders on the stage before everyone else attacks him to start things off. Kane goes for the ladder but everyone jumps him to stop him from getting any weapons. Benjamin and Benoit hit a double suplex on the Big Bald and there's the opening bell.

Jericho hits Christian in the face with the first ladder and it's Jericho vs. Benjamin in the ring. The bulldog takes Shelton down but Jericho has to dropkick Edge and Benoit to the floor. A slingshot plancha takes Edge down again Christian dives on all three other Canadians before Shelton dives onto all four of them. Kane goes up top and takes out a bunch of guys as well before pulling out the first ladder.

Before Kane can climb though he has to knock down everyone else, only to have Jericho dropkick him down. Jericho gets the ladder and crushes various people with it before dropping the ladder onto Edge. Benoit grabs Jericho for a German suplex though to send him flying before Benoit tries to climb up. Kane makes a save but gets caught in the Crossface instead. Now there's a Crossface to Edge but Kane breaks it up with a ladder shot to Benoit's chest.

Kane follows that up by crushing Benoit's arm with the ladder, only to be speared by Edge. Edge and Christian stare at each other before crushing Kane between some ladders. Shelton takes both former partners down with a springboard clothesline before trying the Dragon Whip on Edge but kicking the ladder into Christian instead. Edge whips Shelton into the ladder but

the spear hits the ladder instead of Benjamin. A Stinger Splash against the ladder crushes Edge and it's time for a climb.

It's Jericho and Benjamin up on the ladder but here are Christian and Benoit on their own ladder. Edge climbs a third ladder before Christian hits a DDT onto Benoit's arm to pull him down to the mat. Jericho is knocked down as well and Shelton hits the T-Bone Exploder off the ladder to crush Edge yet again.

Now we have two ladders set up, one of which set up like a ramp to reach the standing ladder. Jericho climbs up but Benjamin runs up the ladder ramp and clotheslines Jericho off the top and out to the floor. Shelton climbs up but Christian hits him in the ribs with a ladder to put him down again. Christian's problem solver Tomko comes in now and sets up a ladder for his employer to send Christian to the top. Kane comes back in and fights both guys off before shoving Christian off the ladder off the ladder and out onto Tomko on the floor.

Jericho and Kane both go up and both crash down almost as fast. With one good arm, Benoit comes back in and tries to load up a ladder, but being the psycho that he is, he hits the Swan Dive on Kane instead of going for the case. Now Benoit goes up and rams his head into Kane to send him down (much scarier now than it used to be) but Edge hits Benoit in the bad arm with a chair and climbs up to become the first Mr. Money in the Bank.

Rating: B+. This was the spiritual successor to TLC and having it be every man for himself made it all the better. It worked very well with six men instead of the eight that it would become, making this one arguably the best overall. Very fun match and the spots were still crisp and fresh. Good stuff here.

Here's Eugene who is still almost kind of popular at this point. Eugene talks about the midget match from Wrestlemania 3 when the midgets attacked King Kong Bundy because he's so excited to be here. This brings out Muhammad Hassan and Daivari who don't like being mistreated by Americans because they're Arab Americans. Hassan makes fun of Eugene and goes on a rant about being left off of Wrestlemania.

He complains about Hollywood being phony before Daivari yells at Eugene

too Hassan decks a still injured Eugene and putting him in a camel clutch. We need a savior here and it's HULK HOGAN walking down that aisle! The arena, in a word, loses it. Daivari and Hassan jump him but it's a double noggin knocker for those meanies. Hogan punches Hassan down and chops away before booting him down. Hassan is sent flying and Daivari hits Hogan in the back with a chair. That has absolutely no effect and there's the big boot for Daivari's troubles. Hogan stands tall and it's time to pose. As in for nearly five minutes.

We recap Orton vs. Undertaker. Orton was on fire last year and won the world title before losing to HHH because Orton was on fire on the same show HHH was on. After moving on from the Game, Orton decided to go after the Streak because he's the Legend Killer. Orton made it clear that he was evil now by acquiring a girlfriend in Stacy Keibler so he could RK0 her. That's about it but do you need more?

Randy Orton vs. Undertaker

It's Wrestlemania so we get druids, chanting and torches for Undertaker's entrance. This is never not cool. We also get the Burn in My Light theme for Orton from back when Orton looked like a 24 year old and not like he was made out of orange shoe leather. Undertaker is just 12-0 at this point. Feeling out process to start until Orton scores a quick dropkick for two. A single right hand puts Orton down but a quick rollup out of the corner gets two for Randy.

Undertaker throws him into the corner and drops the leg on Orton on the apron for good measure. Old School drops Orton again but Undertaker misses a running boot in the corner, allowing Orton to dropkick him out to the floor. Back in and a clothesline puts Taker down again for two but a running DDT drops Orton for two for the tall guy. Undertaker follows up with some clotheslines in the corner before loading up the snake eyes/big boot combo. Orton blocks the coming boot with an uppercut but he stops to pose, allowing Undertaker to sit up.

They slug it out until Undertaker simply runs Orton over for two. Off to a dragon sleeper by Taker which clearly makes Orton tap but it doesn't count this early I guess. Orton twists around into a nice DDT for two

before we hit the chinlock. Taker fights up so it's a sleeper instead, only for Taker to counter again with a belly to back suplex. Back up and Orton powerslams Undertaker down for two but he makes the eternal mistake of punching Undertaker in the corner and gets caught in the Last Ride.

Orton escapes though and tries the RKO, only to be shoved off. He grazes the referee on the way to the ropes which apparently passes for a ref bump. The Last Ride is countered again and here's Randy's dad Bob with the cast (that's a VERY slow healing injury as it's at about 23 years now) to give Orton a VERY close two. In one of my favorite counters ever, Taker loads up the chokeslam but Orton counters in mid air into the RKO for two. Like any good lunthead, Orton loads up the Tombstone but gets countered into the real thing to make Taker 13-0.

Rating: C+. While not great, Orton was trying out there. The problem was that Orton had been crushed so badly by HHH that there was no reason to buy him as a threat here. I won't say didn't even have to break a sweat here but other than that RKO counter and MAYBE the cast shot, Undertaker was never in any danger or even extended trouble.

We recap Trish vs. Christy Hemme. Christy looked amazing in Playboy and Trish got jealous because she was Women's Champion but couldn't get any respect. Hemme, who wasn't a wrestler, challenged Trish to a title match. Lita was coaching Hemme to try to make this interesting but it never worked at all.

Women's Title: Christy Hemme vs. Trish Stratus

Trish immediately takes it to the floor and sends Christy knees first into the steps. Did I mention this is Christy's singles debut? Christy comes back with some kicks that look amateur at best. Stratus comes back with some chops in the corner but gets caught in a sunset flip for two. Trish hits a hard kick to Christy's ribs and shoves the injured Lita into the barricade. Christy fires off more kicks and hits a reverse Twist of Fate for two. Trish has enough of this and Chick Kicks Hemme down to retain.

Rating: F. This is where you can tell that the Playboy push was a terrible idea. At the end of the day, Hemme was a model, not a wrestler.

If they want to hire models, then either teach them for a long time or don't have them wrestle, because this kind of stuff is embarrassing. I'm not saying Hemme wasn't trying or anything like that, but she simply didn't have the talent to be here. Trish would hold the title until next Wrestlemania.

We recap Shawn s. Angle which I think is going to be better. They put each other out of the Rumble but Angle snapped because when he won a gold medal, everyone kept talking about how awesome Shawn Michaels was and now fifteen years later, Angle wants to get Shawn back for it. Shawn says Angle is great, but this is Wrestlemania and therefore Shawn's world.

Shawn Michaels vs. Kurt Angle

This was when Angle was the wrestling machine so this should be awesome. Kurt takes in the YOU SUCK chants because that's how awesome he is. I should mention the set as it has the Hollywood sign on one side and a movie marquee on the other side which says Now Playing and then the match, making it feel all the more special. They stare it down to start until Shawn slaps him in the face.

Angle takes it to the mat and rides Shawn to frustrate him. Shawn gets to a rope and gives Kurt a look like "o.....k then time for a new plan." Michaels grabs a headlock takeover to slow things down but the fans are behind Kurt. Kurt fights up but can't escape the hold without using the ropes. Nice storytelling there with Shawn gladly going to the ropes but Angle going to them out of frustration.

Off to a short arm scissors by Shawn for a bit but Angle uses raw power to lift Shawn up into the air. However, since Shawn had that move used on him back in 1992 by British Bulldog, he knows how to roll through into a sunset flip for two. See, THAT is how you play to older fans with some awesome psychology. Back to the headlock as Angle is getting frustrated by Michaels dominating the mat.

Angle takes it into the corner to brawl with Shawn but Shawn ties him up instead. This is also a callback to Wrestlemania XII where Shawn used the exact same strategy on Bret. Angle grabs a quick ankle lock but Shawn rolls through and a Cactus Clothesline puts them both on the floor. Angle

loads up the announce table but opts to pick up Shawn in the Angle Slam and ram Shawn back first into the post to take over again.

Back in and Angle gets two off a suplex before putting on a body vice with a chinlock. The fans are split here but Shawn fights up with some chops to take over. Kurt will have none of that though and suplexes Shawn down to stop the comeback bid. Another belly to belly gets two and it's off to a chinlock with a knee in Shawn's back. Michaels gets up again and they slug it out with Angle taking Shawn down with a hard clothesline.

Shawn blocks a superplex attempt but Kurt rolls away from the top rope elbow. There go Angle's straps but Shawn counters the Angle Slam and backdrops Kurt to the floor. Shawn goes up and half dives/half falls onto Angle with a cross body. As they get back in, Angle tries his German suplex off the apron but Shawn kicks him low like a good former villain. With Angle on the announce table, Shawn hits a gorgeous springboard spinning cross body to send Angle onto the floor as the table doesn't break.

Both guys make it in on different sides of the ring at nine. Angle is bleeding from the mouth. They slug it out again with Shawn taking over. There's the forearm and nip-up as Shawn's back is perfectly fine all of a sudden. Now the big elbow hits but the superkick is countered into the ankle lock but Shawn FINALLY makes the rope. The Angle Slam is rolled through but Angle counters into the ankle lock but Shawn counters into a rollup for two. Another superkick is caught and there's the Angle Slam for two.

To show how angry Kurt is, he puts his straps up just so he can take them down all over again. In a scary spot, Angle tries the moonsault but Shawn doesn't roll away far enough, sending Angle's face into Shawn's side. Shawn goes up again but Angle runs up the corner for the belly to belly off the top. Somehow that only gets two and Angle yells at Shawn, talking about how Michaels' days are done. Shawn shoves him back and superkicks Angle down but he can't follow up.

The cover eventually gets two and Shawn isn't sure what to do now. He slowly stands up but Angle grabs the ankle lock again. Shawn tries to

kick Angle off but Kurt won't let go. They're in the middle of the ring with Shawn writhing in pain. Angle puts on the grapevine and Shawn is all but dead. He hangs on for as long as he can before FINALLY tapping out to give Angle the win.

Rating: A+. Angle and Shawn at Wrestlemania having a masterpiece. Who would have ever seen that coming? The match was excellent all around and the match never stopped being great. They would have another masterpiece at Summerslam which again shouldn't surprise anyone. Great match here and definitely worth seeing if you haven't before.

Shawn gets the big ovation post match.

We get the Basic Instinct trailer which is Stacy Keibler flashing Jericho, Benoit and Christian while implying she and Trish are lesbians.

Moolah and Mae Young are here.

It's time for Piper's Pit with newly inducted Hall of Famer Roddy Piper. Apparently his guest is Steve Austin but it takes Piper forever to get to the entrance. Piper is pretty much rambling here as is his custom most of the time. Oh wait Piper says that he's the toughest guy around here rather than Austin. Here's the Rattlesnake for his annual cameo. They slap each other as this is supposed to be some epic encounter I think. Piper gets annoyed at the WHAT chants but gets into the concept pretty quickly.

This goes on WAY too long as Piper says that he's the real rebel instead of Austin. Austin makes fun of the way Piper looks and asks if he's supposed to be scared or intimidated. Piper says they're failing to communicate and here's Carlito of all people. Piper thinks Carlito looks like Alfalfa and insults are traded. Carlito has his own apple spat in his face by Roddy so Piper is beaten down. Austin beats up Carlito, beer is consumed and Austin Stuns both guys. This went on WAY too long and was more awkward than anything else.

We get the Taxi Driver trailer which is most of the roster trying to do "You talking to me?" with very mixed results. Batista does a Who's On First bit as he asks for his line and the script guy keeps saying "You

talking to me?" constantly frustrating Big Dave. Good stuff.

Akebono vs. Big Show

Time for our "celebrity" match of the year. Akebono, a grand sumo champion, is going to face Big Show in a sumo match. There's a circle in the ring (that's kind of overkill) and you have to knock the other guy out of it or off his feet to win. Show of course is in the sumo thong because what else would you expect from him?

The big idea here is that Akebono is outweighed for the first time ever. They spend way too long setting this up before the whole match lasts like a minute with Akebono throwing Show out of the circle. Seriously, that's it. Total waste of time here. Yes, a legit sumo grand champion beat a guy with no idea what he was doing.

We recap Cena vs. JBL which is a culture clash. The idea is simple: Cena is the new young guy who is popular with the fans while JBL is old, rich and reserved. JBL has held the title forever and someone has to stop him eventually. Cena has been at war with JBL and his Cabinet as well so it's basically 4-1 tonight. JBL has spent months insulting Cena's life and family because Cena can't touch him without losing his title shot. JBL couldn't touch him either or he would lose the title, so Cena spraypainted a lot of JBL's stuff.

Smackdown World Title: John Cena vs. John Bradshaw Layfield

JBL gets a police escort for his limo as JBL dollars fall from the sky. Surprisingly enough the champ sends Orlando Jordan and the Bashams to the back before the match. This is one of the rare instances where "My Time Is Now" is very appropriate. It's a feeling out process to start but Cena runs into a boot in the corner. The champion starts pounding away in the corner and there's the fallaway slam for good measure.

JBL chokes away on the ropes as this is in very slow mode to start. They slug it out for a bit but Cena charges into a spinebuster to put him down again. A neckbreaker gets two for the champion and a big clothesline gets two on Cena. JBL puts on a sleeper but Cena counters into a belly to back suplex to put both guys down. A double clothesline puts both guys down

and we head to the floor for a neckbreaker by the champion.

Back in and JBL puts Cena down with a superplex for a delayed two as the crowd is mostly dead. Layfield goes up but dives into a powerslam for no cover. Cena comes back with his usual stuff including the Shuffle. Cena pumps up his shoes and after ducking the Clothesline, the FU (now called the AA) gives Cena his first of many world titles.

Rating: D. This was a REALLY dull match as JBL was freaking terrible in the ring at this point. He was so slow and lethargic and the match never worked at all. The ending sucked too as JBL didn't even hit his finisher before taking the FU for the pin. Their rematch at Judgment Day was WAY better as it was a total brawl which suited JBL to perfection.

We do the Hall of Fame stuff. The class is introduced and Orndorff is far more impressed with Miss Jackie than anything else. The class this year is Volkoff, Iron Sheik, Orndorff, Bob Orton, Jimmy Hart, Piper and Hogan. Guess who gets the biggest reaction by far.

Wrestlemania 22 is in Chicago.

We recap the main event. HHH was world champion for the better part of ever in Evolution but Batista was becoming the big star. In January Batista won the Royal Rumble and got to pick HHH or JBL to challenge at Wrestlemania. Batista overheard HHH and Flair calling Batista stupid and HHH's days were numbered.

Raw World Title: Batista vs. HHH

Since this is HHH, he gets the big entrance with Motorhead before Batista comes out, meaning Batista gets a much weaker entrance. Little things like that are why people can't stand the guy. The singer for Motorhead BUTCHERS the song, but then again it isn't likely one he sings that often. Oh and HHH rises through the stage with the band and gets to pose with them before Batista just walks out. For a big old school fan like HHH, it's pretty interesting that he comes out first like that, no? Batista also doesn't have pyro yet so he looks like he's having a seizure on the stage. No I Walk Alone yet either.

They lock up to start with HHH shoving him against the ropes. The locking up continues with Batista not being able to shove HHH down like a power guy should be doing. A shoulder block puts HHH down but HHH gets to run Batista over this time. You know, so it's clear that HHH is every bit as strong. A Pedigree is countered and Batista powerslams the champion down. Big Dave hits some shots to the face in the corner followed by a backdrop. Dang they're really cranking this up now.

HHH hits the jumping knee to the face to send Batista back to the floor. Yet again, Batista can't get anything going at all. Batista gets distracted by Flair and is sent into the steps by the champ. Back in and HHH drops an elbow on Batista's back to keep control as this has been mostly one sided so far. Flair gets in some choking and HHH drops more elbows on the back. A suplex puts Batista down for two as this is already going slowly. Flair chokes away even more before HHH guillotines Batista out to the floor.

We get the "deliberate pace" line from JR which means "dear freaking goodness DO SOMETHING ALREADY!". Batista hits some right hands to wake the crowd up a bit but there's the HHH spinebuster to make sure HHH doesn't look bad at all. The Pedigree is countered with a backdrop but there's the facebuster to stop Batista again. We're eleven minutes into this match and it's ALL HHH so far. The Game goes up but jumps into a clothesline followed by a side slam for two.

The fans don't get fired up of course though and they have no reason to. Batista's offense has been stopped cold every time and there it is again as he charges into a boot in the corner. Batista throws him to the floor but YET AGAIN HHH stops him by sending him into the steps. The Pedigree on the steps is countered into a catapult into the post to bust the champion open. Back in and Batista pounds on the cut before clotheslining him in the corner.

The pace is still REALLY slow again because Heaven forbid we get an exciting main event. They head to the floor again where Batista lays out Flair as the referee disarms HHH with a chair. The referee goes down so here's Flair for interference. HHH gets in a belt shot for two and the fans FINALLY wake up a bit. The spinebuster puts HHH down but the

momentum is broken up AGAIN with a low blow. The Pedigree is blocked though and it's something that we would call White Noise and Batista Bomb to give Batista the title.

Rating: C-. Oh dear. This wasn't about Batista winning the title but rather about HHH losing it. Instead of looking dominant, Batista looked like a guy who survived against HHH, which is one of the last things you want to do to make a new star. Just WAY too much HHH on offense here and it brought the match way down, especially for a match that was supposed to be Batista's coming out party.

Batista celebrates to end the show.

Overall Rating: B-. There's some really lame stuff here but the historical significance of the main events more than make up for their lackluster in ring material. The MITB match and Angle vs. Shawn are more than worth seeing and Orton vs. Undertaker isn't bad. Most of the matches here fall under not bad and the show is a letdown as a result. Still though, it's good stuff, but it could have been legendary.

Ratings Comparison

Rey Mysterio vs. Eddie Guerrero

Original: B-

Redo: C+

Edge vs. Chris Jericho vs. Shelton Benjamin vs. Chris Benoit vs. Christian vs. Kane

Original: A

Redo: B+

Undertaker vs. Randy Orton

Original: B-

Redo: C+

Trish Stratus vs. Christy Hemme

Original: F+

Redo: F

Kurt Angle vs. Shawn Michaels

Original: A+

Redo: A+

Akebono vs. Big Show

Original: F

Redo: N/A

John Bradshaw Layfield vs. John Cena

Original: D

Redo: D

HHH vs. Batista

Original: C-

Redo: C-

Overall Rating

Original: C+

Redo: B-

Just about everything was a step lower this time.

Here's the original review if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/03/29/history-of-wrestlemania-wrestlemania-21-best-ad-campaign-ever/>

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book of on the History of Clash of the Champions at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

And check out my Amazon author page with wrestling books for under \$4 at: