

Monday Night Raw – December 22, 1997: Russo Done Right

Monday Night Raw

Date: December 22, 1997

Location: Memorial Auditorium, Lowell, Massachusetts

Attendance: 2,403

Commentators: Jim Ross, Michael Cole, Kevin Kelly, Jim Cornette

It's the Christmas show and things are really starting to find their groove. The Royal Rumble is coming soon and it's getting clearer and clearer every week that Steve Austin is the next guy. However we still have Undertaker vs. Kane and Undertaker vs. Shawn to go, as well as Owen Hart running around. Let's get to it.

We open with a recap of the end of last week's show with the LOD being destroyed by D-Generation X and the New Age Outlaws.

Opening sequence.

The arena has a Christmas theme with wreaths and snow falling.

Here's D-Generation X with the guys in bathrobes. Shawn asks if all the little boys have been good this year. Before they get their presents though, HHH has a little bit of business to take care of. The Legion of Doom had a great fifteen year career taken down in a single night by D-Generation X. However, the New Age Outlaws want credit for what happened, but they would be best served by staying out of D-Generation X's business.

As for Owen Hart, HHH won the Rock, Paper, Scissors competition last week and now he gets Owen served to him on a silver platter. HHH tells Owen what he can suck on and now it's time for Shawn to address Undertaker. Back in the Cell, Shawn gave Undertaker the beating of his life and he's never going to lay down in a casket. Finally it's time for the present. D-Generation X disrobes to reveal Christmas boxers, which are lowered to reveal.....something censored by D-Generation X logos. I think I'm better

off not knowing here.

This brings out Slaughter, who points out that Shawn hasn't defended the European Title in sixty days so he can either defend it tonight or be stripped of the belt. Shawn is fine with that, so Slaughter makes Shawn vs. HHH for the title later tonight. They tease a quick argument but everything seems to be fine.

Thrasher vs. Henry Godwinn

On the way to the ring, Henry says the Outlaws owe he and Phineas a title shot. Thrasher crashes into him in the corner and hits a quick cross body for two, drawing in Phineas for the DQ in just over a minute.

The Godwinns lay out the Headbangers and beat them with leather straps.

We recap Dude Love vs. the Outlaws over the last two weeks.

Mankind says that when the Outlaws hurt Dude Love's ribs, they hurt his too. Since they've ruined his eggnog drinking for the year, it's better for him to give the Outlaws a beating than to receive one, starting tonight.

After last week's show, Santa Claus showed up to ask Sable if she had been naughty or nice. Instead he got a kid, who didn't think he was the real Santa. Incensed, Santa throws the kid out. Cue Steve Austin to ask if this is the real Santa either. If it's the real Santa, what did Austin want when he was six years old? Santa thinks it was a Barbie and tiddlywinks. That earns Santa a Stunner and the fans are WAY too excited. Cornette: "He cracked Kris' kringle!"

HHH and Shawn can be heard arguing behind closed doors.

The Rock vs. The Undertaker

Non-title. The Nation offers an early distraction and Rock gets in some right hands, only to charge into a boot in the corner. Another big boot gets two and it's time to crank on the wrist. Old School is loaded up but Paul Bearer comes out for a distraction, allowing Kama to crotch Undertaker for the save. This match might be a bit overbooked. Back from

a break with Rock stomping him down in the corner, followed by the Elbow for two.

Off to a nerve hold on Undertaker as the announcers are talking about what a big win this would be for Rocky. Again, it's not hard to tell a story on commentary. Undertaker's comeback is stopped with a low blow and it's back to the nerve hold. The second attempt at a comeback works a bit better with the chokeslam knocking Rocky silly. A tombstone plants Rock but here's Kane for the no contest.

Rating: C. These two never had the best chemistry but you could see the future of the Rock coming out here. Undertaker was still in his groove at this point and it was cool to see him selling so much for someone a few rungs beneath him. Good enough match, though the Kane ending was pretty obvious.

Bearer calls Undertaker a sham of a man who ran from Kane last week. Another mention of Undertaker's dead parents is enough to make Undertaker lunge for Bearer but Kane punches him back. Undertaker grabs Kane by the throat but lets go and gets beaten into the corner without putting up a fight.

We recap the first hour.

Hour #2 begins.

European Title: HHH vs. Shawn Michaels

Shawn is defending but Owen Hart runs in and nails HHH during the entrances. Slaughter comes out to break it up and Shawn claims conspiracy. Back from a break and, in what is becoming WAY too common of a custom, we replay exactly what we just saw. The match will take place later.

The New Age Outlaws search for Mankind in the bowels of the building but beat up someone who just happened to be down there.

Marc Mero vs. Scott Taylor

Before the match, Mero tells Sable to come out here in her special

outfit, which is a full body reindeer costume. Cornette is livid as Sable doesn't want to come to the ring. The reindeer's nose lights up and Mero throws her out. After the opening bell, Sable takes off the reindeer head and Mero is already distracted. Taylor fires off some chops and sends Marc face first into the mat. A rollup gets two for Scott and that flipping double kick to the back gets the same, only to have Mero grab the TKO for the fast pin.

Mero hits Taylor low post match and loads up another TKO, only to have Brandi come in for the save. Sable takes off the reindeer gear to reveal a rather fetching Mrs. Clause outfit.

HHH says he has everything to gain tonight.

Kurrgan vs. 8-Ball

8-Ball goes after the knee to start but his right hands in the corner have almost no effect. Jackyl keeps talking on a live mic at ringside and the distraction lets Kurrgan get in a cheap shot. Back in and some clotheslines put Kurrgan on his knee but Jackyl grabs his foot. Kurrgan's sideslam is enough for the pin.

Recon and Sniper come in to triple team 8-Bull but Skull makes the save with a 2x4.

The Outlaws still can't find Mankind.

Ken Shamrock vs. D'Lo Brown

Shamrock gets right to the point by taking Brown to the mat by the leg. A fireman's carry and a headlock takeover have D'Lo in even more trouble as the announcers give us one of the first discussions of the Royal Rumble. The belly to belly sets up the ankle lock to make Brown give up.

The Nation is ready to go after Shamrock but the Rock calls them off. Now, Rock knows that his fans want to know how he feels about the Gulf Crisis. Well maybe he'll get into that another day, because now he wants to call the UFC a bunch of has been's. Rock is in a giving mood tonight though and offers Shamrock an Intercontinental Title shot at the Royal Rumble.

Shawn says he's fixing D-Generation X tonight.

The Outlaws find Mankind, who beats the tar out of them as he sings The Christmas Song. Eventually they get him into a walk-in freezer and lock him inside.

Here are Goldust and Luna in with Goldust as a Christmas tree and Luna in a silver two piece swimsuit. Not quite the traditional look, with Cornette describing it as what happened when the nuclear power plant was installed near the North Pole. Goldust reads A Visit From St. Nicholas (the real name of the poem most commonly known as The Night Before Christmas) in a very stereotypical high pitched voice. The real Santa comes out to give candy to the fans before he knocks the coal out of Goldust. As you might expect, it's Vader. Cornette: "I thought it was a jolly fat man in a red suit, and it was!"

European Title: HHH vs. Shawn Michaels

Shawn is defending, meaning nothing has really changed in the last hour. There's no contact for the first minute before they lock up. HHH shoves him down, runs the ropes for about fifteen seconds, and covers Shawn for the pin after no action.

HHH celebrates like he just won the WWF World Title to end the show. Shawn starts to cry and says he's never been so emotionally and physically drained after a match. HHH channels Rocky Balboa and says "YO SARGE, I DID IT!" Slaughter laughs and says, without a microphone, that HHH is defending against Owen Hart last week. D-Generation X has no idea to end the show.

Overall Rating: B. This is what Russo is capable of when he has someone to funnel his ideas into a watchable show. There are still some kinks that need ironing out but the show is still coherent enough and the stories were all advanced tonight. If you cut stuff like the Henry vs. Thrasher match and probably Kurrigan's squash and added that time onto some of the matches, you would have one heck of a show here. Still though, the year is closing out on a hot streak, which is a really nice surprise.

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