

Went to the Raw House Show Last Night

I took in the Raw house show last night at Rupp Arena in Lexington, Kentucky. The featured attraction this time around was John Cena, who was making a rare house show appearance. However, this wasn't mentioned on TV commercials until the week of the show, despite the announcement being made on WWE.com over three weeks ago. The crowd was solid enough for a Sunday house show but I have to think advertising Cena as a major attraction would have helped.

The show was scheduled to start at 7pm and actually kicked off a minute or so early. It was a fairly strong turnout with the upper deck completely tarped off but that's standard for a place the size of Rupp Arena. It should be noted that Rupp Arena is the largest arena in the United States built for basketball with over 23,000 seats. Therefore, even a crowd that is only half full would be a solid showing elsewhere.

1. Apollo Crews/Heath Slater/Rhyno b. Curt Hawkins/Anderson and Gallows (5:50) C-.

This was exactly the opener you would have wanted with the faces being incredibly popular and everyone going nuts for Slater and Rhyno. Crews is a fine face with the athleticism and Titus makes for a solid manager who knows how to fire up a crowd. You don't come off as professional as he does and not have some kind of use, even if it's just a spot as a manager. The best note of this was Anderson beating Slater up and shouting that he has kids too. Rhyno hit a spinebuster on Hawkins for the pin.

2. Goldust b. R-Truth (1:18)

This was another good choice to fire the crowd up but the ending was really sudden. Truth beat the heck out of Goldust for about a minute but charged into a boot and got rolled up for the pin with feet on the ropes. After it was over, Truth promised to get back at Goldust. Nothing to see here but Truth's song fired up the crowd.

3. Akira Tozawa b. Brian Kendrick (8:26) B-.

This might have been the match of the night, which isn't really saying much on a show like this. Tozawa got the crowd going again (notice a pattern here) with the shouting and there was a great near fall off a kick to Kendrick's head. Tozawa won with the top rope backplash after escaping the Captain's Hook. No Titus here, despite Tozawa signing with Titus Worldwide. The problem here continues to be very simple though: no one cares about the cruiserweights and there's no real way around it.

4. Finn Balor b. Elias Samson (8:39) C.

I've said this before and I'll say it again: I have no idea why Finn Balor's isn't World Champion like, now. The guy is an absolute star and comes off exactly as such with the fans eating up everything he does. He has a good look, his matches are solid and his entrance is outstanding. Throw in the Demon King when the time is right and he's pure money. This was longer than it needed to be with Samson in control for the most part. Balor made the comeback you would expect him to make and finished with the Coup de Grace.

5. Dean Ambrose/Seth Rollins b. Miztourage (14:45) B-.

I love lackeys. They can help extend both a feud and a character so much just by having people there to fight instead of doing the same match over and over again. That was the case here as Curtis Axel and Bo Dallas said Miz was too busy for a town like Lexington and they were representing him instead. Axel got in a great line: "I'm not saying Kentucky sucks. I'm saying LEXINGTON, Kentucky sucks."

The place went coconuts for Rollins when he was the surprise (Kind of?) partner for Ambrose. I still think he could easily be the next Jeff Hardy and the reaction he received here only reinforces that theory. This was a longer match than you would expect and went about as you would have guessed. The Miztourage are fine heels and can go in the ring, making me all the sadder that Axel was wasted for so many years. Ambrose won with Dirty Deeds to Dallas in an energetic match.

Intermission. Two kids got to play the What Happens Next game and

thankfully they didn't go with the Vince dying clip. After the kids got it right, they received a program, a WWE Top Ten book, the Best of the 2000s DVD, a shirt, every autographed poster for sale, and probably something else that I'm forgetting. Not bad at all for a single night.

6. Mickie James/Dana Brooke b. Alexa Bliss/Nia Jax (6:55) D+.

And then the crowd died when they realized Bayley and Sasha Banks weren't here. I'm a bigger Brooke fan than most but sweet goodness people did not care about these two against the top heels. The match wasn't even very good either with the lone highlight (aside from Alexa of course) being Bliss not being able to whip Jax into the corner for a splash and just giving up. Mickie kicked Bliss in the face for the surprising pin.

7. Sheamus/Cesaro b. Hardy Boyz (12:32) C+.

The Hardys got the pop of the night but unfortunately the match was about the same thing these teams have been doing for months now. Jeff had his facepaint back and Matt was doing the DELETE pose fairly often. The match was perfectly watchable and the crowd was WAY into everything the Hardys were doing all match long. Sheamus snapped Matt's throat across the top rope so Cesaro could grab a small package to retain the titles.

8. John Cena b. Bray Wyatt (14:08) C.

Much like the previous match, this was exactly what you would expect from these two. Cena got a great reaction and easily the second biggest of the night. Above all else though, I couldn't get over how sad it is that Bray has gone from an awesome cult leader to a homeless guy who swings a lantern around. He's completely lacking direction and it's been sad to watch for a good while now. The ref got bumped so there was no one to see Bray tap to the STF. A low blow gave Wyatt two (with the kids losing their minds on the kickout), followed by an AA for the pin.

A Smackdown Live taping was announced for November, though I had originally heard of this as a Raw. They put tickets on sale for one night so I picked up a similar seat for the exact same price as the house show. You would think the TV aspect and a more important show would raise prices/mean the house show should have been lower but not so much. There

were probably 100 people in line to buy tickets but if there are four months before the show, the low pre-sale isn't a surprise.

Overall it was a fun night with a VERY hot crowd. The faces mostly won and it was more than entertaining enough. Two tickets in the lower arena (sixth row in the first set of seats off the floor) were \$75 total so it was hardly expensive as another nice perk. Good show and a lot of fun, which to be fair was helped by it being five minutes from my house.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up the Histories of Saturday Night's Main Event and Clash of the Champions, now in PAPERBACK. Check out the information here:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2017/05/19/history-of-saturday-nights-main-event-and-clash-of-the-champions-now-in-paperback-plus-price-drops/>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>