

Best Of 2018: Angle Of The Year



IMG Credit: WWE

It's the beginning of a new year and that means it's time for one thing: me to take way too long to put up my Best Of 2018 awards. This year the plan is to put up two a day for the next ten days (or less if I change my mind about some of the categories). Note that the options here are based on what I've seen, so if I left off something the likelihood is that I didn't see it or didn't see enough of it to have a strong opinion (read as: most New Japan/indy stuff). As usual, I'll list off the runners up in no particular order and then the winner. Hopefully these are a bit better than my previous efforts so let's get to it.

Now this is something that is always interesting because they're the things that make wrestling go round. Without the storylines that make things work, the wrestling is just a bunch of people having matches for the sake of action. A story doesn't have to be big, but without a good one the shows don't work all that well. The big stories were kind of lacking in 2018, but there were some awesome options.

She's The Man

We'll start with the hottest thing in the company at the moment: the rise of Becky Lynch. This isn't something that WWE seemed to have planned but it wound up being one of the best things to happen to the company in a

very long time. The fans have gotten behind her and all roads seem to lead to a major match, if not the main event, of Wrestlemania 35. If that's the case, it won't only be historic, but it could also be a huge deal just as a regular story.

Above all else, Lynch has been nailing the character work. She's channeled this entire idea that she's the best to perfection and it comes off like she believes every word. You don't get that in wrestling often enough and she's doing it as well as anyone I've ever seen. She's not the next Austin (because there can't be another Austin) or the next Punk (because there can't be another Punk). Instead she's being herself, and it's working very well.

Full Circle

Anyone who has followed me for any reasonable amount of time knows that I'm a Miz fan. He's one of the best villains WWE has had in a long time and the fact that they keep coming back to him should tell you all you need to know about how great he really is. His lifelong nemesis is Daniel Bryan, both due to their history and the two of them being polar opposites. It was the dream match we never got due to Bryan's injuries....but those are long gone.

The two of them picked their feud up again and had a really good match at Summerslam, but it didn't quite feel complete. The next step, in a story we'll be revisiting later, saw Bryan turn heel with Miz almost drooling at the idea of Bryan admitting that he was right all along. It was the teacher becoming the teacher all over again and Miz sold it to perfection. Bryan's heel turn has been awesome, but his stuff with Miz was as good as it got.

The Gall Of That Man

Back in October, Roman Reigns was forced to vacate the Universal Title due to his Leukemia returning. It was as emotional and real of a moment as you'll see in WWE, but the night wasn't over yet. Later that same

evening, Dean Ambrose and Seth Rollins won the Raw Tag Team Titles in honor of their Shield mate. We still weren't done though as Ambrose turned on Rollins to end the Shield and become the biggest heel on the roster.

I loved this, because it's the kind of thing WWE doesn't do very often. This was taking a real life story and turning it into something. The turn had been teased for over a month and this was finally the time to pull the trigger. It put incredible heat on Ambrose and it couldn't have been done much better. The follow up didn't work, but my goodness it was an amazing moment when they actually went with something like this. It was great, but it should have been incredible.

Whodunit

Aleister Black was injured at a house show and had to go on the shelf. Since NXT knows what they're doing, they turned it into a several months long whodunit mystery, as the question became who actually attacked Black. Everyone was a suspect and in the end, Johnny Gargano was revealed as the attacker as he gave in to evil to try and stop Tommaso Ciampa.

What made this story so great is that it fell into NXT's lap and they ran with the thing. Not only did you get the reveal, some great promos and Black vs. Gargano, but you also got the excellent Ciampa vs. Velveteen Dream match as Dream accused Ciampa of being behind everything. That's the kind of storytelling you don't get every day and NXT made the most of a bad situation.

When I started writing this, Whodunit was the runaway winner. Then I realized it was only part of the real Angle of the Year.

Welcome To The Dark Side

In a name you're going to hear a lot in these things this year, Johnny Gargano's heel turn/descent into evil was second to none. What started as an incredible year with Gargano doing everything imaginable other than winning the NXT Title turned into a nightmare as Gargano became obsessed with ending Tommaso Ciampa's reign of evil. That evil consumed Gargano, who took out his aggression on Aleister Black in a horrible assault,

which saw Gargano become everything he hated in the name of stopping Ciampa.

This is the story of the year because it has a beginning, middle and ending. Gargano turning was foreshadowed when he couldn't tell William Regal he didn't do it and, as usual in NXT, the fun part was watching everything play out from there. This story isn't over yet, but the ride they've taken us on so far has been magical. Gargano has gone from the light to the darkness, and now the question is whether it destroys him or if he comes out the other side. That's great storytelling, and it's the best of the year.

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