

# Best Of 2019: Worst Match Of The Year



IMG Credit: WWE

This is the last entry in the series and we're going out with something I think you all can guess pretty easily. More often than not these things are going to stand out rather badly and that was no exception in 2019. Keep in mind that I'm not looking just at the quality of the match. Some of this is going to be based on the way the match was set up/the idea of the whole thing. Sometimes the match just being set up terribly is a lot worse than the match itself being bad, and that was the case this year.

Also note that I'm intentionally ignoring Undertaker vs. Goldberg. Yeah it was bad, but it was bad due to an injury, and I've never found it fair to blame a bad match on someone being hurt, especially as badly as Goldberg was knocked out.

## Ken Shamrock vs. Joey Ryan (Impact – November 5)

This is one where the match alone taking place is a bad idea. Impact is a promotion that does not have the best reputation in the world and their best move is to bring in Joey Ryan (an idea that is going to turn off a lot of people in the first place) and have him do his shtick on Ken Shamrock? As in the Shamrock who is something close to a legend willing to do something with your company?

It was a bad idea and made the company look like they were going for the fun route instead of trying to build something up. Ryan's status in Impact (and wrestling) is secured so why waste one of Shamrock's appearances on him? Just for the joke of having Shamrock take Ryan's big move? Yeah Shamrock won and everything, but it's the kind of match that shouldn't have happened in the first place.

### Becky Lynch/Seth Rollins vs. King Corbin/Lacey Evans (Extreme Rules)

The words to describe this match would be tone deaf. Seth Rollins went from winning the World Title from Brock Lesnar to being Becky Lynch's boyfriend by the summer. Clad in a "The Man's Man" shirt, Rollins was in a mixed Extreme Rules match (with tags because reasons) here for both titles against two opponents that no one wanted to see. I can't imagine a more colossal mixture of everything that could have gone wrong. It just needed one more thing on top of it though.

And then Brock Lesnar cashed in Money in the Bank to become Universal Champion again, because Brock Lesnar must be a World Champion in WWE. This was the culmination of a bunch of bad ideas and it left me never wanting to see anything else on from WWE for at least twenty one hours, because the show must go on. Even if the show comes after a terrible idea for a match.

### Shane McMahon vs. Roman Reigns – Super Showdown

This was part of the Summer of Shane, as fans kept sitting around waiting for SOMEONE to stop Shane. Somehow that was the case going into Super Showdown in Saudi Arabia with Shane facing Roman Reigns. There was no way they would do something like this right? I mean, it's Roman Reigns. This guy beat the Undertaker at Wrestlemania so he had to be able to beat Shane right?

Well of course not, as Shane kicked out of the Superman Punch,

blocked the spear, and pinned Reigns in the end (albeit with help from Drew McIntyre). The ending actually made me laugh, because it was clear that WWE was trolling us. That's all well and good for them, but is it really a good idea to be trolling the fans for about eight months, including on this show that was controversial enough in the first place? They certainly seemed to think so and that's why we were stuck here.

Those were all bad, but one had me actually ranting and raving at my screen as the match took place.

### Seth Rollins vs. The Fiend (Hell In A Cell)

It makes me mad just thinking about it again. I've seen a lot of wrestling from a lot of companies and I don't remember the last time someone came up with such a bad idea this side of Vince Russo. You have an actually interesting character in the Fiend and you put him inside your company's biggest showdown match (it's so big that the show is named after it) and...it's almost some weird performance art thing with the Fiend being down for about half of the match. That's bad enough, but then there's the ending.

It's a DQ (officially a referee stoppage, but it is my experience that a wrestler being told not to do something and then doing it, followed by a bell ringing is a DQ) inside the most dangerous match in wrestling. I won't go into my full rant again, but the amount of long term damage here is astounding. Why should I care about the Cell again? The whole premise of the match is thrown out the window, likely because WWE didn't think things far enough ahead. But hey, you can buy it again next year!

On the other side of things, yeah the Fiend recovered but the point is he shouldn't have had to recover from this because it shouldn't have happened. This is one of the only times I can remember when it felt like WWE took my money and laughed at me for it. That's not why I'm a wrestling fan and I should never

feel that way.

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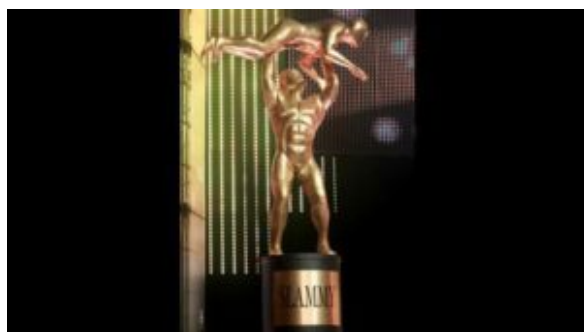
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## Best Of 2019: Worst Angle Of The Year



IMG Credit: WWE

We'll finish up with a pair of fun awards as the most interesting things about these are the worst of the year. You can often get a near unanimous answer to the best of things, but the worst side is a lot more divisive. The bad side of

things is just more interesting a lot of the time and it might bring back some things that you have forgotten about over the course of the year.

### Lana/Bobby Lashley/Rusev

I'm starting with this one because I don't think it's as terrible as some. It's really bad and one of the worst things of the year, but it's hardly the all time terrible one that a lot of people would seem to think that it is. Yeah it's gone on forever, it shows little sign of slowing down and egads I'm terrified of what they're going to do with the finish, but it's not as bad as it seems.

Now all that being said, this is some wretched television with the soap opera drama that is designed for one small group of fans rather than what the masses might want to see. It's going on so slowly and it is almost hard to believe that we are still doing all of this stuff. Lana has gotten some good heel heat out of the whole thing, but let it end already because we are now in the fifth month of this story. How is that the best use of TV time?

### Usos Prank The Revival

I was there when this one started and my goodness it made me cringe. This was 1000% a Vince McMahon idea and you can imagine him sitting in the back laughing his head off over all of this nonsense. The idea is as simple as it sounds: the Usos decided to mock the Revival and did it week after week. This wasn't funny and it was a waste of two perfectly good teams, which is where it becomes a bigger problem.

WWE has all the talent they could want and this is what they do with them? The Usos are one of the best teams WWE has ever had and the Revival are an actually different kind of team but for some reason their best idea is to have them in something that would be on a bad Nickelodeon show. This was insulting to the fans and a huge waste of the talent involved. Is there any

wonder why the Revival wants out?

### Shane McMahon: Best In The World

This one speaks for itself. It was a story that just kept going and going no matter how many people were sick of seeing it continue. Shane was around every single week, often wrestling, won a title in the process, and then went on to win at Wrestlemania. This is all for the boss' son, who NEVER LOST ANYTHING. Shane went months without a singles loss and probably should have been #1 contender to the Smackdown World Title at various points.

What in the world was the positive of this? Yes Shane did get attention, but he drew an audience because he wasn't around very often. When you put him out there every single week, it's an old guy who looks like he ran a marathon on the surface of the sun after about thirty seconds and can't throw a punch to save his life. Shane is fine in doses, but we got the whole bottle this year.

### Roman Reigns' Attacker

WHAT WAS THIS??? In August, someone started attacking Roman Reigns and tried to take him out. Eventually it was revealed to be Erick Rowan was the attacker, eventually aligning with Daniel Bryan. Somewhere in there, this turned into a story involving a doppelganger (which went nowhere), a bunch of twists and lies, Buddy Murphy (which went nowhere) and eventually Luke Harper returning

AND NONE OF IT MATTERED! That's what the whole thing wound up meaning as Rowan started messing with something in a cage, Harper got released and Bryan is on fire as a face again. The problem is the story went spiraling out of control and I don't think anyone knew what was going on by the end. It nearly became entertaining in a way to see where it would go next because it didn't make sense and was such a mess by the end that it didn't even matter to anyone.

I was looking at the list of nominees and this one stood out hard.

### King Corbin Thinks Roman Reigns Is A Dog

The more I think about this, the less I can believe I actually watched it. Ignoring the whole boring Reigns vs. Corbin (again) feud, this was actually the focal point of the whole thing. Corbin even had a guy in a dog suit pretending to be Reigns and a major point was dog food (that part seems almost like an accidental gem in this mess). The feud is still going and managed to bring in Dolph Ziggler and Robert Roode for that big shot of charisma.

Much like the prank deal, this had Vince written all over it, because he thinks that Reigns beating up Corbin for TREATING HIM LIKE A DOG BECAUSE HIS NICKNAME IS THE BIG DOG is going to make Reigns the biggest hero in the company. It takes something special to make me hang my head and just want to hit things, but they did it every single time this story was on screen. And now it's going to keep going in the new year!

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# Best Of 2019: Non-Wrestler Of The Year



IMG Credit: WWE

I'm really not feeling this one as no one jumps off the page at me this year. Usually this is the Paul Heyman Award but Heyman hasn't really done much this year. The stuff that he has done has been fine, but I can't think of anything off the top of my head that he did exceptionally this year. Therefore, we have to look elsewhere this year and...well maybe someone can win by default.

## Tony Schiavone

I had a good portion of an Excalibur entry here but Schiavone has earned it more. Who in the world would have guessed that Schiavone would be so perfect at what he's doing in AEW? Schiavone was rarely anyone's favorite commentator during his heyday but he's been broadcasting in mainstream sports for decades so it's not like he's out of practice at calling something.

The big thing about Schiavone is he's right in the middle of the other two broadcasters. You have Excalibur, who is as over the top as they come with all of the move calls etc., and then



you have JR, who wants to know if the early bird special is open yet. Schiavone is the normal guy calling wrestling and showing that when he doesn't have some horrible producer in his ear, he's quite good at it and is worth having around. This is one of the biggest surprises of the year and as an old WCW fan, something I've enjoyed very much.

### Zelina Vega

You kind of have to include Zelina here and while that seems to be the case as a near token inclusion, her partnership with Andrade has gotten better and better. They capped off the year with the United States Title win and that's the kind of thing that suggests Andrade is going to be one of the bigger stars in the company going forward. A lot of that is due to Vega and it has been awesome to see.

Vega really can do a lot of things, as she can talk incredibly well but she can also get physical if she needs to. That makes her a lot more valuable, and the kind of person that WWE will want to keep around for a long time to come. Vega is someone who can do all kinds of things and she does them all very well, as she has done everywhere she has gone in wrestling.

### HHH

This is one where the appearances are limited but the ones that were there were some of the best and most important around. HHH was a major force in the Battle For Brand Supremacy and it made the situation that much better. It helps when he's the NXT boss but also a major star in WWE history, which puts him in one of the most unique positions in all of wrestling.

Much like Vince McMahon in his heyday, there is something about having the official boss involved in a story that makes it that much better. Yeah HHH is a great character, but he's also the one who put NXT together in the way that it is presented. It feels so much more real every time he's out

there and that's the kind of thing you can always appreciate, because it doesn't come around often.

### Mauro Ranallo

Mauro is one of those people you almost have to include on every list because there has been something he said during the year that gets your attention. This one was no different, even if you ignore the fiasco around Survivor Series weekend. There is no one who calls wrestling with the level of energy that he does and while he can get annoying at times, he is also someone who is always going to make an impact.

It's almost a weird case with Mauro as he's one of the best in the world at what he does, but other than a well placed MAMA MIA, you don't often have anything that really stands out from him. It's much more of an overall feeling as Ranallo can be as energetic as you want him to be (and often way too energetic) but it's still fun to listen to him because you can tell he's all in on what he is doing.

That leaves us with...well several options really, but this one stands out above the rest in my eyes.

### Nigel McGuinness

I'm not sure if I can put my finger on it but there is something I absolutely love about listening to Nigel call a wrestling match. Maybe it's the accent or something but he sounds like he loves every second of what he does. There is a passion there and it shows every time he is calling anything. You can see how much he loves this and it makes the biggest difference in the world.

Nigel is someone who has the credentials to go with the voice and now he is getting the exposure on a higher level. He'll be able to do this as long as he wants to and that's a great thing for wrestling fans. You need someone with the in-ring experience to make commentary sound better and if they can

sound as happy as they are as Nigel, it makes things so much better. I know it might not be the most common pick, but Nigel wins this for me this year.

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## Best Of 2019: Rookie/Newcomer Of The Year



IMG Credit: WWE

This is one that causes some confusion every year so let's clarify things a bit. The idea here isn't someone who is brand

new to wrestling (though it could be), but rather someone who is starting on a new show/in a new promotion. Therefore someone being called up to NXT or showing up in a different place counts. AEW is a weird situation here as everyone is officially on a new promotion this year but I'll include them as well because you kind of have to.

### Darby Allin

We might as well get one of them out of the way first. AEW is a weird situation as they had a lot of stars at the start but needed to create some new ones. That was the case here and they have nailed it early on. I really like Allin as he actually feels different and his rather unimpressive physique is covered by his bizarre charisma and unique enough moveset. That and the Coffin Drop, which looks like it should kill him.

The best part about Allin is the gave him the draw against Cody. It wasn't some fluke rollup, but rather a near win which oddly meant more than a surprise victory. The match was good as well, and then they've followed up on it, which makes things that much better. Allin is someone that AEW has allowed to be something and that is a good sign for both their futures.

### Ilja Dragunov

Dragunov is what you mean when you talk about the "it factor". You can't help but watch him and that is because of those eyes. He looks completely insane and wrestles like he is on fire every time, making his matches hard to ignore. There is something to be said about someone whose main point of offense is ramming his head into you for a knockout and it even has an awesome name with Torpedo Moscow.

Dragunov is the kind of guy who is just getting started and he is the kind of person who could do a lot of things in NXT UK. At some point they are going to need someone to dethrone Walter and this very well could be the guy. We're a long way

away from that and the fact that it is someone who has not been around very long at all makes the future all the brighter.

### Rhea Ripley

This is a case where I'm so blown away by two different aspects. First of all, the change in look from what she was in the Mae Young Classic (the All American Girl, though the Australian version) to...whatever you call her now. Second is how she took to NXT like a fish to water. Yeah she won the NXT UK Women's Title and that was a nice moment, but that title is a far cry from the NXT Women's Title.

Then Ripley showed up in NXT, beat Shayna Baszler at Takeover and then won the NXT Women's Title in an outstanding match with a great moment. Ripley is someone who could be a major star for a long time because...well what's wrong with her? She has the look, the talent, the size and the talking. That's a near complete package and she has the title to go with it. That's not bad for someone as 23 year old, or anyone for that matter.

### Jurassic Express

Sometimes you need something completely goofy and that's what you had here. At the end of the day, Luchasaurus (the star of the team) says he is a 65 million year old dinosaur who happens to have a degree in Medieval Studies. In the words of Mr. Feeny from Boy Meets Worlds, that's just plain brilliant. Jungle Boy is as great of a counterpart as you can get and Marko Stunt is an awesome mascot.

What helps make the Express work is AEW has embraced them. They're just some people who are there and doing their thing, which happens to be a little bizarre. It's a situation where they are having fun and that makes things all the better. I like watching them and Luchasaurus is the kind of guy who could get a rocket push in the blink of an eye. Throw in

Jungle Boy with his rather nice mini story with Jericho and there is some awesome talent there, and they're starting to execute.

But then, there's the complete package and someone who looks like they could be on the top of WWE in a heartbeat.

### Ricochet

How in the world has this guy been on Raw for less than a year? I know Ricochet has been wrestling for a long time now but this was his first chance on the major stage. He won the United States Title from AJ Styles and has been near the main event for a long time now. Ricochet impresses me more and more every time he's out there and he shows off something new every few matches. Not many wrestlers can do that and almost no one can do it at his level.

I could see how some people might think it's a little unfair for someone with his resume and history, but look at how far he is going on every different stage. That's the sign of talent and Ricochet has done it as well as anyone else in all of wrestling this year. Ricochet could be in the main event at any given show and feel like he belongs there, which is something that is only there for the special ones.

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# Best Of 2019: Group/Tag Team Of The Year



IMG Credit: WWE

This is a category that has gone up and down over the years but this one might be a resurgence. There have been a lot of stables in the last few years and 2019 had one of the better crops. Then there were some rather strong tag teams and that is something a lot of fans can get behind. It's quite the mix this year and that makes things more interesting.

## Young Bucks

I don't remember the last team (or wrestler for that matter) that had me more confused than the Young Bucks. There are times where I'm convinced that they're brilliant and times where I never need to see either of them again. That's quite the range, but I can understand that they know how to get people cheering and invested into their matches.

It's safe to say that AEW and the Elite in particular had a big year, but the Young Bucks are (arguably) the most well known out of the entire team. They have been featured all over the place with one big match after another and most of them have been incredibly entertaining, if not high quality at

times. These guys deserve some praise and when they're doing things a certain way, they're hard to beat.

### Imperium

Sometimes you need a team to look big, imposing and downright scary. These four have the matching tracksuits to make that work and it's a matter of time before they're a bigger deal. The moment that makes me appreciate Imperium the most was one where they weren't even there. At one point, Adam Cole said the Undisputed Era was the most dominant force in WWE. I would have given quite a bit to see Imperium come out, just to see Cole panic.

That's what makes Imperium work: they're intimidating with Walter seeming to be the kind of guy who could hang with (and beat) anyone in all of WWE. The rest of the team looks awesome too and I could go for seeing them on the main roster (at least in NXT as the four of them on Raw or Smackdown would be a mess). These guys are great and Walter is the big piece in the middle that makes it all work.

### Grizzled Young Veterans

We'll stay over in NXT UK for the time being with these two, as Zack Gibson is one of the best heat magnets I've seen in years (if not longer). The fans just cannot stand him and it's a joy to watch him drive everyone crazy and have them ready to go for his throat. You don't see that kind of heat anymore and it's just incredible to see every single time they're out there.

Oh and then they're a heck of a team in the ring as well, which is one of the most important parts of any team. They were the first NXT UK Tag Team Champions and beating Moustache Mountain in NXT UK is the kind of thing that goes near the top of anyone's resume. I had a great time watching these two do everything they did and just hearing Gibson rile up a crowd is one of the best things going today.



## Inner Circle

AEW has been on fire in their rookie year and these guys are one of the biggest parts. Chris Jericho has taken it to a level that no one his age should be coming close to and the rest of the team has been great as well. With the former LAX as the awesome tag team, silent Jake Hager as the heavy and Sammy Guevara with the most punchable face in wrestling, this time is outstanding.

I don't know how long the Inner Circle is going to be around but they're an outstanding first major story for AEW. The performances have been the best thing about AEW so far and I enjoy seeing whatever these guys are doing. Their chemistry is crazy strong and with Jericho at the helm, they already have built in credibility. Just keep these guys coming for a long time.

## Lucha Bros

There have been a lot of great things about AEW but their tag division is one of the strongest in any company in a very long time. Out of all the teams around though, the Lucha Bros are as good as they get. I've been watching these guys for years across a few promotions and I have yet to get tired of them. They've been great in every promotion they've been in and that's what great talent will get you.

What makes them that much better than anyone else is you could put them out there either as a team or on their own and it is gold every single time. Pentagon was the hottest thing in the indies for a time and Fenix might be the better of the two. If these two aren't some of the top stars in wrestling for the next ten years, it's not because of anything they did wrong. They're that good and everyone seems to know it.

## New Day

At some point the award might have to be partially named after

them. These guys just stay popular no matter what they do and manage to get it over through sheer dedication (I still don't know why pancakes are funny but dang they've ran with those things). This team shouldn't have lasted six weeks and we're coming up on six years. That's an elite level and they just keep going.

Then there was that whole KOFI WINS deal for their crowning achievement. The team has been ready for the big moment and that is what they finally hit this year. That moment is going to stand the test of time and even though it was Kofi winning, it felt like a team effort. Oh and if that's not enough: they won two more Tag Team Titles, bringing their total up to seven, which is a great year on its own. How they keep going is beyond me, but you know they're just going to.

There is one team above them all though and that is....what's a word something with no doubt?

### Undisputed Era

This is a scary combination: they're good, they know they're good and now they're showing they're good. The Undisputed Era is as talented in the ring as anyone can get and now the talking/character stuff is getting even better. Cole can talk with anyone, Fish is fine, Strong has gotten better than I ever would have believed after watching him in Ring of Honor and O'Reilly is the best guitarist in wrestling since Man Mountain Rock.

One of the biggest stories in NXT this year was the Undisputed Era's prophecy of holding all the gold and that's exactly what they did. I don't think I really appreciated just how great these guys were but the more I watch them, the more incredible they look. I could watch them all day and it's going to be a big deal when they finally lose. That's the sign of a well done story, and the team just keeps getting better. This was their year, and you have to wonder how long that is going to

be the case.

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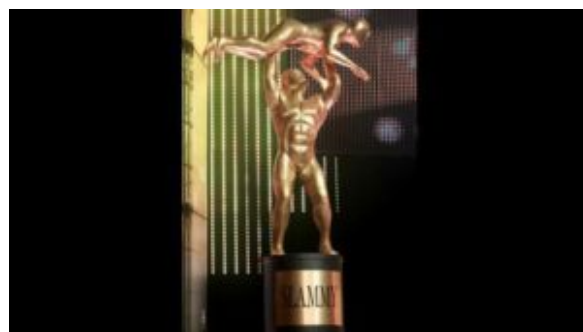
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## Best Of 2019: Moment Of The Year



IMG Credit: WWE

These are the things that you remember the most. Wrestling is all about the moments and those can take place either in the ring or elsewhere, because a lot of the time it is something in a segment rather than a match. When you get a good one of

these you can feel it though, and you know how big of a deal it really is.

### Jon Moxley Debuts In AEW

This is a special one because it showed you that things were serious. AEW was something that had just gotten started and this was their first actual show after the company was named. That makes things special and they needed a big moment to make it seem like things were really going to be different. This was their Hall Jumps The Barricade moment and it felt like it was something that mattered in a big way.

Above all else, it was how soon after Moxley left. Moxley did a brilliant thing by waiting his contract out and eliminating the ninety day no compete clause. That changed everything and it was a special feeling. AEW had arrived as a big deal and while they had a lot to go, it was a great moment to end an awesome show.

### Finn Balor Returns To NXT

As soon as it was announced that AEW and NXT would be airing head to head, you knew the war was coming. AEW made its first move by having their show on at the same time so it was NXT's chance to retaliate. They have a lot of advantages over AEW and one of them is the amount of wrestlers that they have to throw out there. That's what they did on the first night of head to head.

Balor is a hybrid of a main roster star with some titles to his credit and an NXT legend with the longest NXT Title reign in history. That made him a special option and it made it clear that WWE was taking this whole thing seriously. NXT could have all of the wrestlers that they want with the resources that WWE has and that makes everything all the more interesting against AEW. It had to start somewhere though and Balor kicked it off.

## Roman Reigns Is Cancer Free

I wasn't sure if I should have included this one but this is something worth celebrating. Reigns announcing that he had to step away was horrible and the kind of thing that goes way beyond the realm of wrestling. Then he got to come out and announce that he was back, which put a smile on everyone's faces. You don't get a feeling like that every day and Reigns got to do it in a special way.

This was a moment where it didn't matter what you thought about Reigns. It was something different and the kind of thing that was a lot more important than Reigns being pushed or being popular or anything like that. Reigns is a person and this was about him being healthy, which is a lot bigger than whatever he does between the bells. I smiled big when he made his announcement and it was a special moment.

## Dynamite Debuts

They actually did it. This is the kind of moment that was big both in the short term and long term because we have no idea where this is going to go. For the first time in about twenty years, we had a major wrestling company running a weekly television show on a top level network. That was a dream not very long ago and now it is actually happening.

It's the kind of thing that you do not ever see in wrestling and it is something that is going to change everything about the industry. Fans have been waiting for this for a very long time now and after a few months, AEW has blown any reasonable expectations out of the water. I'm looking forward to see where things go because this is the kind of thing that could make a lot of the problems over the last few decades go away. It started with that one show though and that's the thing people should remember.

## Johnny Gargano Wins The NXT Title

I've long since said that NXT is all about the journey instead of the final destination but this was a mixture of both. Gargano was very similar to Sami Zayn or Bayley in that the fans had been with him every step of the way because he was so easy to support. Gargano is one of those guys who anyone can get behind because he's the everyman. We've seen him go up and down over the years and then it was finally time for him to cross the finish line.

That's what happened at Takeover: New York in the biggest NXT show of the year. Gargano finally, after all of the setbacks, defeated Adam Cole to become the new NXT Champion. It was the kind of thing where you felt like you had wanted to see him finally get there and that's exactly what they did. It was a great moment with a great match to go with it, so well done.

I think you know what this is.

### Kofi Wins

This is a similar situation to Gargano winning, but at the same time it was its own thing. Gargano had been chasing glory for years while Kofi had never actually had a one on one match for the WWE Championship. That all changed at Wrestlemania 35 and Kofi won the title in a great match at the biggest show of the year. If not for the women's triple threat, this should have been the big closing match and I don't think anyone would have complained.

What made this work though was the celebration. The rest of the New Day was right there to celebrate with Kofi, as they should have been. They unveiled the classic championship design and presented it to Kofi, along with Kofi's son and the new t-shirt showing Kofi as champion. This one brought a lot of tears to a lot of eyes and it was the kind of thing that felt special because it was special. You can't create that and as is always the case with something like this, you'll remember it for a long time to come.

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## Best Of 2019: Major Show Of The Year



IMG Credit: WWE

Believe it or not, there is something other than Takeover on here. This is what everything builds towards as the weekly television shows are designed to set up the big show, usually on Saturdays and Sundays. I know the weekly shows are basically terrible, but the big shows have actually been rather good. Or maybe that's just NXT and Takeover.

## Survivor Series

We'll start with one that might be more of a sympathetic vote because I was in the house for the event. This show was built around the idea of a three way battle between Raw, Smackdown and NXT and that created one of the best and most interesting dynamics that we could have had. The whole thing was a smash hit and that's more than you could ask for.

Then there was the show itself and it was quite the night of action. Save for a not great main event, you had one of the most entertaining shows I can remember in a long time, with NXT shocking the world by winning the Battle For Brand Supremacy and turning into the third brand instead of the developmental show for a first time. The wrestling was great, the build was better and the execution was awesome. What more can you ask for?

## Takeover: Toronto

This is kind of a weird one as the show is kind of forgotten because of everything that took place before and after. The most memorable match on the show is the main event blowoff between Johnny Gargano and Adam Cole, but the rest of the show was outstanding as well and it made for one of the best shows of the year.

As usual with NXT, it was the complete structure that made the whole thing work. There were five matches on the card and the worst was completely watchable. The main event is what people remember though, with the 2/3 falls match running nearly an hour. It's a great show up and down and another good example of an NXT show that was a blast to watch and of high quality at the same time, because that's what NXT does.

## Takeover: WarGames

I was in the house for this one too and what a special feeling it was. What mattered here was the team battle situation and



that made you feel something different. The two WarGames matches meant we had two reasons for William Regal to come in and shout WARGAMES so it was already a good day. There was other stuff on the show as well, but come on. Like anything else on the show really mattered here.

The main event was an absolute war though, with the big ending legitimately having me scared to look as Adam Cole was upside down above the top of the cage. This felt like a special event and having WarGames in there made it even better. I loved the show and there was nothing bad on it, which always tends to be the case. In other words, it was Takeover, again.

### Double Or Nothing

This one is a different kind of major show as there was barely anything to set it up. AEW was still more of a concept than a company at this point so the expectations were both high and also almost non-existent at the same time. Then they went out there and had an incredible show with some great action and drama, plus the big surprise at the end of the show.

I know the big reason people are going to remember this show was the Moxley debut at the end and...well yeah it makes sense. That was one of the most important things to happen to AEW so far as they now had a big deal that they could point to with Moxley jumping over rather quickly after leaving WWE. Add in the Dustin vs. Cody blood bath, Omega vs. Jericho and the Lucha Bros vs. Young Bucks and it was a great show with a big surprise at the end.

That's going to be hard to top. This one did it pretty easily.

### Takeover: New York

Every now and then you see a show that makes you remember why NXT has its reputation. This was NXT on the biggest stage in the biggest city under the brightest light and they hit it so far out of the park that you couldn't even see the ball

anymore. This was the show of the year and one of the best of all time with nothing below great and a show that left you wanting more when it was over.

I can't praise this show enough and it's up there with the other legendary NXT shows (most of which seem to take place over Wrestlemania weekend). Gargano finally winning the title was a special moment and I can't even comprehend how high the show is if it's Gargano vs. Ciampa as planned. This is an all timer and it's one of the best NXT shows ever, which is as high as the praise gets.

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# **Best Of 2019: Angle Of The Year**



IMG Credit: WWE

This is another one that depends on how you look at it. Sometimes an angle can be short term or long term, but what matters is how effective the whole thing is. There were some good options in 2019 and they can open some doors to some big stuff down the line. But what was the best one of the year?

### Daniel Bryan Is Captain Planet

There is something special about a wrestler who gets to be themselves in the ring and that is exactly what we had here. Bryan is known for his environmental causes and that's what he got to do in the middle of the ring with some of the best promos that were a combination of a way to get great heat and a message that had some value outside of wrestling.

This led to one of the more bizarre partnerships in recent years as Bryan teamed with Erick Rowan in a weird intellectual pairing, though they certainly had some success. I was hoping to see more of them but unfortunately the team's split ended Bryan's environmentalist run, which had some serious potential with Bryan knowing how to say every single thing to drive the fans crazier and crazier.

### The Fiend

Yeah I'm getting tired of talking about him in these things too but it was that big of a deal this year. The Fiend is something that you don't see every year or even a lot longer than that as it was something that fits Bray Wyatt so well. Much like Bryan's environmental stuff, there is a lot of Wyatt

being put into the dual character and it makes things work that much better.

I know the Fiend seems like something as simple as good and evil, but there is more to it than that. Consider how much everyone who has faced the Fiend has changed (from heel turns to changes in appearance) and how Wyatt can be heard shouting as Fiend attacks in an attempt to control him. That is another level of development and part of what made this year so special.

### Seth Rollins Is The Beastslayer

As intricate as the Fiend was, this one is a lot more basic: Brock Lesnar can't beat Seth Rollins. That was the case at Wrestlemania and then Rollins did it again at Summerslam, both times for the Universal Title. It's something that no one has been able to do to Lesnar in a long time and Rollins made it work (ignore how bad things went after the title changes).

What makes this better is it was built up over the years. Lesnar has always had trouble with smaller, faster opponents and Rollins served as the final boss of the concept. He was able to go in and take Lesnar out with a combination of speed, heart, and a bunch of low blows. It might not have been something that worked long term, but how can you argue with beating Lesnar twice in a year?

And now, say it with me.

### Kofimania

Much like the Fiend, I'm not sure what else there is to say about this one but it earned every bit of the praise it has received. Kofi was built up for years as a solid hand who didn't belong in the main event scene. The problem though was he never got a chance, and as soon as that was pointed out, the fans suddenly wanted to see Kofi pull off the miracle that was over ten years in the making.

But then they did exactly what the fans wanted and it made things work to perfection. Suddenly Kofi was not only in the main event but coming close to becoming WWE Champion. After a long stretch of trying to get the WWE Championship title shot at Wrestlemania, Kofi wound up on the biggest stage of them all and kicked Daniel Bryan's head off to win the title. The moment was great, but it was the journey that got us there that made everything work. Tie in the amazingly emotional celebration and this wasn't being topped.

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## **Best Of 2019: News Story Of The Year**



IMG Credit: WWE

This is one of the more interesting categories as it's about the bigger things. Instead of what goes on in the ring, we're looking at the big, overarching stories and seeing which one went the most. These are the things that could last a lot longer than just this year and that makes them a good bit more interesting.

### Women Main Event Wrestlemania

This is in the category of "never say never". Five years ago, the women's division was a complete and utter joke. WWE didn't care about it, they made no secret about how little it meant and nothing about that was going to change. Then, everything changed. The Women's Revolution shook it all up and it was off to the races. Since then it was one milestone and first time ever deal after another, but there was one goal that they always focused on: main eventing Wrestlemania. A lot of people, myself included, laughed it off and with pretty good reason.

And then it actually happened, with Becky Lynch vs. Ronda Rousey vs. Charlotte headlining Wrestlemania XXXV. It's one of those things where you would never believe it was possible until it actually happened and that's what made it so impressive. The match quality wasn't important and really, it wasn't all that great of a match. What mattered was they did it, which was almost impossible to believe. Pretty cool though, right?

### Resurrection Of The NWA

If the previous one was never say never, this is one where I would have said never. The NWA has been a huge punchline in wrestling for the better part of thirty years now, even though they have always been around. The company was bought by Billy Corgan in what was seen as a move that meant nothing, though now things have turned around to the point where I'm still not sure I believe it.

While it mainly took place in the latter half of the year, the NWA's turnaround has been a sight to behold. Their Powerrr series has turned into something worth seeing every week with a rather different take on the weekly wrestling series, plus some fresh faces and known veterans. I'm not sure what to expect from the in the future but the fact that they have a future is amazing.

### CM Punk Is Back

Back in 2014, CM Punk walked out on WWE and never seemed to be coming back again. It turned into a huge mess with fans chanting CM PUNK throughout show after show and...yeah he was still gone. After a pretty miserable run in UFC (because of course Punk could do that), it was back to waiting around because we didn't know what was going to happen next.

Then came FOX, which brought in a fortune, including introducing a new series called WWE Backstage. Early on in the show's run, Punk came out as a surprise and was added to the lineup of analysts and contributors. This means Punk being mentioned on Raw and Smackdown, which seemed like an impossibility just a few weeks earlier. We'll see if he gets back in the ring one day, but this feels like the end of a long journey, even though there might be some more stops to come.

### Everyone Wants To Leave WWE

For the last twentyish years, no one in wrestling has come close to WWE. They have been the undisputed king of the

wrestling world for a long time now and several wrestlers wanted to come there. However, things have changed a little bit in 2019 as suddenly a lot of wrestlers wanted out. Above all else, Dean Ambrose left and signed with AEW, but he also gave several interviews, including one where he talked about how bad the creative process was in WWE. As it turns out, he wasn't the only unhappy person around.

Over the rest of the year, a ton of people tried to get out of their WWE deals, with some of them managing to succeed. Some of the people who wanted out included the Kanellises, Luke Harper, Sin Cara and the Revival, with a handful of them no longer in WWE. It's going to be interesting to see how many more people leave, but it's fascinating to see the castle start to crumble a little bit.

Speaking of which...

### AEW

Like it could be anything else. This is the definition of a game changer as AEW is now the first promotion to legitimately challenge WWE (or challenge them as much as you possibly can) and give the wrestlers another high level place to go. Seeing them as an option has changed the game in wrestling, along with giving wrestling fans a mainstream wrestling promotion.

The company has only been around for a few months now but things are looking like they could go on for a very, very long time. That's the kind of things that wrestling fans have been wanting to see for a very long time now and hopefully we can see some changes from WWE as a result. This is a brand new world and it's going to be really interesting to see where things go from here.

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## Best Of 2019: Surprise Of The Year



IMG Credit: WWE

As wrestling fans, we like to think that we know everything that is going to happen in the sport. It's a nice sentiment but at the same time, it really isn't all that accurate. A lot of the time we're just guessing about what we think might happen and then get surprised when it does. Those surprises are some of the best parts though and that's what we're looking at here.

Kofi Wins

We'll get one of the biggest out of the way first because it was such an awesome moment. I don't think I'm breaking any new ground when I say how many people loved this. It was the kind of thing that you only see once every few years and it was one of the best moments that WWE has put together in a long time. The build was great, the match was great...and then they actually did it.

In the weeks building up to Wrestlemania, there was a glimmer of hope that WWE could actually pull the trigger on this but it was hard to believe that they would really go through with it. That's what made the moment so special: they actually did it, which made the pop that much louder. It's a great moment and I wish I was there for it, as this one felt special.

### Firefly Fun House

You're probably sick of hearing about this one but sweet goodness it was incredible stuff. This one isn't so much about one individual edition but more about what the whole thing wound up being. It started back in April and by the end of the summer, it was the hottest thing in WWE and saw Bray Wyatt becoming something new and interesting. Then he wound up winning the World Title and not dropping it almost immediately. Who even knew that was possible?

What worked so well about this was how WWE actually tried something new. They ran with it for a change instead of having it die off almost immediately and that's a great thing to see. I can't shake the feeling that this is all setting up another Roman Reigns coronation at Wrestlemania, but at least we had something great over the course of 2019 to show us that this kind of stuff can still be done.

### Bayley Turns Heel

Are they allowed to do that? I mean,...as the introduction says, it's BAYLEY. How in the world do you turn her heel? I know her heel run hasn't exactly gone well due to the haircut,

being stuck with Sasha Banks (again) and the general mess that is the Smackdown women's division, but they got us with a great moment of shock when the heel turn actually went down.

The moment that made this was slashing the Bayley Buddies. It's the symbolism of the whole thing and that's why it worked. Bayley was one of the most innocent and fun characters you could have and she literally destroyed a big part of what made her who she was. It was great stuff and that's the kind of thing she needed. Now she needs better execution, but you can't expect WWE to be able to do something like that.

### Dakota Kai Turns Heel

You can't really separate these two as they're rather similar in a lot of way, though Kai's might have been a bit better. What mattered here was they set up a perfectly logical reason for Kai to turn but then they actually did it. That's the case a lot of the time with some big heel turn: you can have the setup done all the time but it's the big step of actually going through with it. They did it here and Kai sold it to perfection.

The reason that it clicked for me was how aggressive Kai was. She DESTROYED Tegan Nox at Takeover and it was a really well done turn, even if you probably knew what was coming in the first place. The turn worked very well and Kai sold it to perfection, which is all you can ask for in something like this. What makes it a little better than Bayley's though is how much better the aftermath has gone. That says a lot as Kai's hasn't been anything outstanding, but it's better than Bayley's.

### Finn Balor Returns To NXT

I thought about putting NXT going to USA but the idea of WWE putting something on TV is hardly new. What is new is WWE actually putting in this kind of effort for NXT. Balor is someone who has main roster credibility but is an absolute NXT

legend. That makes him all the more valuable to the new NXT because they're going to need some star power to go up against Dynamite.

Again though, it's a case of them actually doing it. We've talked about big stars moving down to NXT for a long time now and this time it really happened. Balor is someone who fits perfectly in there and has been a hit since his return. Above all else though it gives you the question of who else might be showing up, which makes you want to keep watching. That's kind of the point, and it worked.

But then, they did this.

### NXT Wins At Survivor Series

I was there in person for this one and I'm still not sure I believed it happened. I know WWE loves this whole Brand Supremacy thing and it really doesn't mean much in the long run, but this was the symbolic moment that WWE had to pull at some point. Whether WWE wants to admit it or not, NXT is now equal to the main roster shows, but they went a step beyond that and actually gave NXT the win.

I would have put money on Smackdown winning the whole thing as it is the biggest show of the week due to the FOX contract. You could see them getting the win or maybe Raw just because of their history. But NXT? They really did that? I couldn't believe it when I saw it and I'm still not sure it really happened two months later. It was a great moment and genuinely got me, so well done on the Surprise of the Year.

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