

WWE Confirms Mick Foley For WWE Hall of Fame

<http://www.wwe.com/classics/wwe-hall-of-fame/mick-foley-to-be-inducted-into-wwe-hall-of-fame-26083400>

He's my all time favorite wrestler and one of the guys that belongs in a WWE Hall of Fame no matter how you look at it. I'll likely talk more about this when Hall of Fame season pops up.

Congratulations to Mr. Foley, who is as nice a guy in person as he seems to be on TV.

Buggy Nova, aka Skyler Moon in NXT, Released As Well

I don't think she ever got onto NXT TV. She was considered a big signing for the Divas division but apparently that didn't pan out. She also went by Natalie in FCW/NXT.

More releases likely coming soon.

A Little More On Raw's Anniversary

As I said earlier, Raw turned 20 today. I can't let that go by with just a single sentence. This isn't going to be a full on article or anything but rather just a few thoughts on the show. When Raw debuted, it marked the death nail for Saturday Night's Main Event as there was no point to the show from then on. One of the things I think people don't remember about Raw is that for the first two years or so, the show SUCKED. There were rarely big matches, only a handful of title changes, and it was easily the B show to Superstars for a long time. 1993-1995 weren't good years for the WWF as they were trying to find a new identity with Hogan leaving (I don't think he appeared on Raw until 2002 unless I'm forgetting something which I likely am), and Raw wasn't the place where that would happen for a few years.

Obviously I don't think anyone guessed it would become what it is today, but it's still amazing to think how much things have changed since the show started in that hole called the Manhattan Center. Today you have Raw in arenas that hold 20,000 people, or about ten times what the Center could hold. It took them awhile to get out of those smaller places though. Raw didn't get to MSG until September of 1997. Those old shows still have a charm to them though, as it was still something so new and revolutionary (being live even semi-weekly was a big deal back then), even though the shows mostly sucked.

Those of you that haven't checked the earlier shows out, track a few down. They're a far cry from what you see today and resemble ROH TV, but they're still the foundation of what the WWF was back then, which makes them at least interesting to see. Raw has come a long way and has been anywhere from must see TV to "can we find a good test pattern instead of this

garbage?", but it's always been on, which says a lot. It's still worth seeing, just not at three hours every week.

Anyway, Happy Birthday Raw. I've never missed a single episode and I don't plan to anytime soon.

Trent Baretta Released, More Releases Expected In The Coming Days

I guess since Linda's campaign is over we can start cutting people. Trent is the first casualty and more are expected to come soon. I'm torn on this as I'm a fan of the guy but I can never remember how to spell his last name. I'll keep you updated on any further releases I hear about.

2013 WWE PPV Schedule Released

- Royal Rumble – 1/27/13 – Phoenix, AZ
- Elimination Chamber – 2/17/13 – New Orleans, LA
- WrestleMania – 4/7/13 – East Rutherford, NJ
- Extreme Rules – 5/19/13 – St. Louis, MO
- TBA – 6/16/13 – Chicago, IL
- Money In The Bank – 7/14/13 – Philadelphia, PA

- SummerSlam – 8/18/13 – Los Angeles, CA
- Night Of Champions – 9/15/13 – Detroit, MI
- Over The Limit – 10/6/13 – Buffalo, NY
- Hell In A Cell – 10/27/13 – Miami, FL
- Survivor Series – 11/24/13 – Boston, MA
- TLC – 12/15/13 – Houston, TX

Still 12 shows and only three weeks build for the Chamber, Over the Limit, HIAC and TLC. I'm not wild on those and Over the Limit still doesn't need to exist.

I Want To Talk A Little Bit About Stone Cold Steve Austin

I mentioned this in another post and I had planned on saying something short about it, but the more I thought about it the more I realized it deserved something big. I mentioned that Stone Cold Steve Austin was a near perfect character and today we're going to look at why that's the case. Austin is one of the few if not the only character ever to be both completely over the top while also being one of the most realistic. I'll explain what I mean by that in a bit so let's get to it.

First and foremost a clarification: I'm talking about Stone Cold, not Steve Austin in general. I'm talking about roughly the period from the day he started defying authority and ending at Wrestlemania X7 (with a few exceptions past that date). Before then his character barely existed and after that it changed for the worse, although he was always talented enough to get whatever he was doing. Austin is on the list of people you

hear about who could read the phone book and entertain an audience for hours.

The easiest way to sum up the Austin character in a nutshell is with a famous movie line. In the movie *Network*, one of the characters says "I'm as mad and I'm not going to take it anymore." That is Steve Austin in one sentence. Austin was tired of playing second fiddle to all of these older guys who were given better spots than him because they had been around longer. He felt that the spots should be based on how good you were, not when you started in the company.

This was perfectly illustrated at the 1996 King of the Ring which is commonly considered Austin's coming out party. In the finals, Austin beat Jake Roberts who was back in the WWF for "one more run" as a nostalgia character. Following the match, Austin cut his legendary Austin 3:16 promo, talking about how Roberts may be a legend, but he just got beat and there was nothing anyone could do to stop Austin's rise.

What followed was the feud that made Austin, as he fought the ultimate current legend, Bret Hart. While Bret beat Austin at the Survivor Series, Austin continued to torment Bret, cheating him out of the Royal Rumble and costing him the world title a few nights later on Raw. This all lead us to Wrestlemania and the I Quit match between the two of them where we saw some of the best storytelling ever.

The basic idea of the match was simple: Bret was as submission master but Austin would never say he gave up. At the end of the match (one of the

best ever and well worth seeing if you somehow haven't), Austin was bleeding terribly and finally passed out in the Sharpshooter to give the win to Bret. Now notice something very important here: Bret could not stop Austin. All he did was slow down what was coming and hope to survive it.

This brings me to my second point: Austin wasn't just a character. He was a revolution and a new way of thinking in wrestling. The reason for his mass popularity though was he captured the thoughts of the audience. Austin was the voice of the voiceless, in that people are always tired of being told that they have to wait their turn no matter how good they may be and are tired of putting up with corporate suits telling them to work within a system and other various excuses to avoid answering the complaints people had.

In September of 1997 (don't worry we'll come back to the summer months later), Monday Night Raw was broadcast from Madison Square Garden for the first time. Around this time, Austin had been injured in a match with Owen Hart and might not be able to wrestle again because of it. Vince had told Austin to work within the system, to which Austin responded with the first of many Stunners to the boss. In a word, the building erupted. As I said before, it was the audience channeling themselves into Austin and getting to do something they had always wanted to do but never could do in real life.

What followed over the next three and a half years was a path of destruction by the rebel Austin. He did everything from fill Corvettes with cement to blowing up buses to pretending to shoot Vince in the head to spraying down the Corporation with beer and everything in between. The entire time though, Austin was rebelling. This is another of the keys to

why Austin was a perfect character: he DID things rather than merely be labeled as something.

In a word, Austin was a rebel. That's the single word definition of what his character was. Now, can you imagine if he had come in with the name "The Rebel"? Dick Slater had that exact same name back in the late 80s, and remarkably almost no one remembers it. He came out in a Confederate flag vest and that's about it. We were simply told what his gimmick and character were, as opposed to being SHOWN what the character was.

There's an old saying which is a cliché, but in this case it's the absolute truth: actions speak louder than words. That's one of the reasons Austin's character worked: we got to see him doing all this stuff. This is true with any wrestling character. Look at the gimmicks like Duke Droese, Henry Godwinn and T.L. Hopper. We were told immediately what these guys were and that was about the extent of their character development.

Now look at someone like Razor Ramon, who debuted with a series of vignettes of him in Miami being a jerk. Those promos told us everything we needed to know about Ramon and all we were told directly was that Ramon was "the bad guy." Again, it's about seeing these people do things rather than being told about them. Austin is the epitome of this because the actions he took were huge.

Jumping back to the summer of 1997, we'll get into another reason why Austin worked so well: he was allowed to be seasoned. Today one of the

major problems is pushing people to the main event before they're ready. A legitimate case could have been made that Austin was ready for the world title after losing to Hart at Wrestlemania, but instead he was given another year of feuding with first the Hart Foundation and then a brief run against the Nation of Domination before entering the world title scene.

Now while Austin won his feud with the Nation, defeating Rock for the Intercontinental Title to end things at D-X In Your House in December, he didn't have the same kind of luck against the Harts. In his war with the Hart Foundation, Austin regularly lost. He lost to Bret at Survivor Series, he lost to Bret at Final Four, he lost to Bret at Wrestlemania, he beat Bret by DQ at Revenge of the Taker, the Foundation cost Austin the title at Cold Day In Hell, and Austin's team lost at Canadian Stampede. Austin completely lost the Border War, but he wasn't on Bret's level yet.

This is something I can't emphasize enough: Austin lost. A lot. People often forget that Austin was a SIX TIME WWF Champion. That's a lot of times to win and lose a world title. When you look back at it, he didn't hold the belt long other than one reign. His first reign lasted about three months, his second reign lasted one day less than the first, his third and fourth reigns were under two months each, and his sixth reign was less than two months. Only his fifth reign, the one in 2001 when he won the title from the Rock, lasted a good amount of time and it wasn't even six months long.

Let's look at how Austin lost the title each time. The first time was a first blood match to a masked man. The question my friends and I asked back then was "how can he make a guy bleed when he can't get to his

face?" Austin couldn't do it. The second time was in a glorified handicap match against Kane and Undertaker. Again, these odds seemed impossible and Austin failed. The third loss was against Undertaker with both Vince and Shane McMahon as guest referees and Shane fast counted him.

In other words, when the odds were stacked to the roof against Austin, he usually lost. Think about that and think of how rare it is. There was no Superman comeback. Austin didn't beat four guys on his own. Austin didn't come up with some cute way to keep the belt. He lost and that was it. Here's the secret the WWE seems to forget today: you can win a title back. Of the five times Austin regained the title after losing it, three of them were less than six weeks after he lost it in the first place.

This is what I was referring to when I said Austin was both over the top as well as realistic. Rather than making a superhuman comeback, he would lose. At the end of the day, it would have been REALLY hard for fans to buy Austin beating both Kane and Undertaker in the same match. If nothing else, it's bad for business because why should I believe Kane or Undertaker could beat him one on one if they couldn't do it together? Also, it doesn't hurt Austin to lose in a situation like that because it's not like he missed a layup or something. He lost to the most dominant pairing in company history. It was a much smarter decision to have Austin go down and get the title back later.

This brings us to the final reason why the Stone Cold character worked so well: he was really entertaining. I mentioned this earlier but Austin is one of the few wrestlers where he could make eating a sandwich entertaining. Austin could do anything from drinking beer to singing Jimmy Crack Corn to Stunning people to shouting WHAT over and over again to singing the Rick Roll song (Youtube that one. It's hysterical.) to

telling funny stories and people would be entertained. Look at him now as after his wrestling career is over he's enjoying a decent career as a B-movie action star.

The other side of Austin's entertainment value is his ability in the ring. People often forget how excellent of a pure wrestler Austin was. Think about some of the matches he had with Bret, Rock, Foley, Benoit, Angle, Jericho, HHH and I could go on. With Austin, his work on the microphone is so good that it's constantly overshadowing his work in the ring. To give you an idea of how good he was, according to Meltzer, Austin has two five star matches, the same total as Bret Hart and Shawn Michaels.

Overall, Stone Cold Steve Austin was one of the best characters of all time because he was both realistic and over the top as well as incredibly entertaining. He connected with an audience that wanted to express themselves but couldn't as well as never going so far overboard that he was unrealistic in the ring. On top of that, he was an excellent in ring wrestler that had one of the best collections of matches that anyone has ever had. Austin might be as close to a perfect character as there has ever been.

Thought of the Day: The Worst Feud I've Ever Seen

Given the news that broke earlier in the week this popped into my mind. Those of you who regularly read my stuff might already know this. The worst feud I've ever seen was Matt

Morgan vs. Elijah Burke (D'Angelo Dinero) down in OVW. They feuded for months over the OVW Title with Morgan finally taking it from Burke to end things. This NEVER became interesting whatsoever and the matches were consistently terribly dull. I have no idea what the point of this feud was and it kept me from ever caring about Burke again.

On This Day: January 11, 1993 – Monday Night Raw: Raw Debuts

Monday Night Raw

Date: January 11, 1993

Location: Manhattan Center, Manhattan, New York

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Rob Bartlett, Randy Savage

Well since it's the anniversary of this, why not do it? Raw more or less ended SNME which I'll do that last original episode soon enough, as in about an hour from now. This is the show that completely revolutionized wrestling as it was the first show to be aired weekly on prime time cable. The production values were WAY up also as the lighting and the effects were stuff that was unheard of. We're gearing up for the 93 Rumble which kind of sucked but whatever. Let's get to it.

Sean Mooney who I didn't think had a job at this point welcomes us to the show and keeps Heenan from coming in. This would become a running joke on the first few shows until Monsoon threw him out of the company. The arena looks small but cool. Rob Bartlett was a comedian from the Don Imus show

and he is easily the worst announcer of all time but to be fair, I've read some comments from him since and he completely admits that he was awful, so at least he's not delusional.

Koko B. Ware vs. Yokozuna

Koko comes out to what would become Owen's music which makes sense as they were partners around this time. I wonder what's going to happen here. They swear on the air which might be a first. The tag line was uncooked, uncut and uncensored. I never got the uncooked part. How is that appealing? Bartlett just makes fat jokes about Yoko which makes sense. Vince is about as excited as humanly possible to be here. Bartlett makes jokes implying that Koko is Gary Coleman which is kind of funny but just out of place here. After Koko gets in no offense for about 4 minutes, the Banzai Drop ends this.

Rating: N/A. It was a glorified squash which is fine. I'm not sure how good this was for the first match in history but that's fine I guess. This was just to push Yoko so that certainly accomplished its job. A lot of the earlier shows were almost all squashes so get used to it.

Ad for the Rumble.

We get a prerecorded interview from Heenan who talks about Perfect being scared of Narcissus, who was more commonly known as Luger. Heenan is WAY too excited about Luger.

Steiner Brothers vs. Executioners

The Executioners are masked jobbers as if it matters. That goofy clown as Vince calls him is at ringside and gets too much attention. Apparently his name is Doink. As for the match, are you really expecting anything other than total destruction? Apparently Mitch Ferhat, a former Buffalo Bill, is coming to the WWF. He never got there. The Steiner Bulldog ends it.

Rating: N/A. It was more or less the same thing as we got a match earlier, but with two guys instead of one. This is fine as it establishes two dominant forces for new fans which is a good idea.

A woman says that she's Bartlett's aunt. Naturally it's Heenan in drag. This simply does not get old.

Razor Ramon comes out for a "special" interview. He's fighting Bret for the title at the Rumble in case you didn't know. It's exactly what you would expect it to be as it's just Ramon talking about Bret and how he'll win the title and we see a clip of him beating up Owen on Superstars, which is why Owen isn't here tonight.

Ad for Headlock on Hunger, which was a charity thing they were doing at the time to feed hungry people in Somalia.

Tatanka likes the Headlock on Hunger.

Intercontinental Title: Max Moon vs. Shawn Michaels

Max Moon may or may not have been Konnan. Shawn is just getting used to being a midcard deal so don't expect much here. I don't think it's him here as it might be Paul Diamond, who was one of the Orient Express. We get more and more New York jokes from Bartlett that only a handful of people would get. He was great on a morning talk show but WAY off on a wrestling show.

They get the three un line here twice in one match as they try so hard to get that over as a tagline before they realized it sucked. Bartlett, in something that blows my mind, does an impression of Mike Tyson calling into the show from prison. This goes on over two minutes. Make that three. THEY'RE STILL DOING IT.

Seriously they did this for half of the match. Is this supposed to be funny or something? Am I supposed to be amused?

After what felt like forever, Shawn hits the kick and that stupid suplex that he was using as his finisher at the time for the pin.

Rating: C+. It was an average match, but it had the DUMBEST commentary in recorded history. The match gets bonus points for being ok with those voices going though so there we are.

Ad for WWF Mania, a Saturday morning show.

Gene does the control center for the Rumble, which more or less is him talking about the major matches and we get promos from some of the guys in said matches, in this case Shawn and Marty. This is short but it was very effective at summarizing the entire show into a 3 minute video. Well done. We run down some people in the Rumble and get comments from Perfect. Ok now this needs to end as it's about five minutes now. This was the first winner gets a title shot and it's at 4pm. That's just odd.

We have an Amish man trying to get inside. Guess who it is. He asks if anyone knows how to get onto the roof. I feel like I'm watching a Trix Cereal commercial. Also, WHERE DOES HE GET THESE COSTUMES???

Kamala exists and that's about it.

Damien Demento vs. Undertaker

Who else would you get to main event the first show? Bartlett makes fun of Taker and I'm already tired of him. Demento is the guy that freaked out on youtube recently and freaked out about modern wrestling. He's annoying and this is his career highlight. We go over the matches for next week and that's about all that happens in this match. The Tombstone ends this quickly.

Rating: N/A. It's like 3 minutes long and it's more or less a squash. That's not that interesting.

Doink sprays Crush with water to end the show.

Overall Rating: D+. This started off ok but it felt like there was no flow to it at all. It just wasn't that good of a show as far as establishing people like it was supposed to do. This show definitely assumed that most people were long time fans of the show and that's not a good idea to do on a brand new main show.

Still though, this is one of those shows everyone should see at least once as it truly did completely revolutionize wrestling. Definitely take a look at it if you never have before or just to compare it to modern wrestling and see how much things have changed.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews

Royal Rumble Count-Up: 2013 Redo – 1997: Why Austin Was A Near Perfect Character

Royal Rumble 1997

Date: January 19, 1997

Location: Alamodome, San Antonio, Texas

Attendance: 60,525

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler, Vince McMahon

A good deal has changed since last year as we have Sid as world champion, defending his title against Shawn. Michaels had been champion for most of 96 before getting burned out badly and losing the title at the Survivor Series. On top of that though, WCW is MASSACRING the WWF right now with

the NWO completely dominating the wrestling world. I believe this is the second biggest non-Wrestlemania PPV crowd ever for the company. Let's get to it.

The opening video is about Shawn of course. Expect to hear that name a lot tonight.

Intercontinental Title: Goldust vs. HHH

HHH is defending and the idea here is pretty simple: HHH hit on Marlena and Goldie is standing up for her. He has Mr. Hughes as a bodyguard here which didn't last long at all. This was also just after Goldust said he wasn't gay, which got them out of some hot water with some gay rights groups. You know, because it's ok to hate someone as long as you don't hate them for being gay. HHH still has the Ode to Joy song here which is an awesome theme song.

Goldie takes him down in the aisle before the bell rings and the beating is on. We get a bell as HHH is dropped throat first onto the barricade. Goldust pounds away in the corner but HHH comes out with an atomic drop to counter. Helmsley's offense lasts about eight seconds as Goldust catapults him to the floor. Goldie drops the steps on his back which isn't a DQ for no apparent reason.

A guillotine slows Goldust down and apparently two fans who have sat in the Alamodome for weeks for the show have been thrown out. Gee, I wonder if Super Shawn can help them out. An uppercut gets two on HHH and Goldust laughs a lot before being knocked to the floor. HHH goes up top (!) and dives down onto Goldust to send him into the barricade. The jumping knee misses Goldust though and HHH hits the steel to change momentum again.

Back in and Goldust works on the knee rather slowly. HHH counters a leg lock with a kick to the face but he's quickly caught in the Figure Four. Goldust hits a clothesline on the floor and rubs himself a bit. There's a knee crusher onto the steps as somehow it's STILL not a DQ. They head back in and Goldust misses a cross body to send him out to the floor. HHH goes for the wooden director's chair...and let's go to Todd Petingil for an interview with some country singer.

HHH hits the jumping knee for two but hurts his own leg in the process. Goldust lariats him down but gets crotched on the top for his efforts. After shoving HHH off, Goldust misses a top rope elbow and the title is thrown in. HHH kisses Marlena but gets blasted by the belt for two. A Hughes distraction is enough for HHH to hit the Pedigree to retain.

Rating: C-. This was too long in this spot in front of a crowd this size. It ran over sixteen minutes, which is way too long for two guys that didn't mean much to most of the fans. This era wasn't kind to the midcard guys, as they weren't ready for spots like this but they were the only options the company had. It took a good while to get over that hump, but once it did, they never looked back.

Bret whines about being a marked man tonight. You could feel the heel turn coming and it was going to be glorious.

Mankind, another newcomer, is ready for the Rumble but he wants to hurt people instead of go to Wrestlemania.

Faarooq vs. Ahmed Johnson

The idea here is a basic revenge match, but Ahmed was out with an injury for so long that the heat is gone. Naturally this would keep going for about seven months because why not? This was during the original Nation period, when actors were hired to make the Nation look larger. That's a brilliant idea actually. Johnson charges the ring and the beating is on quickly.

Ahmed pounds away in the corner until the referee calls him off. We head to the floor for a few seconds with Faarooq just trying to survive the opening part of the match. Things finally slow down a bit but it's just so Ahmed can get a belt and whip Faarooq a bit. We head to the floor again and both guys are rammed into the steps. Faarooq slams him onto a chair and Johnson's kidney injuries flare up again.

Back in and Johnson has his back worked over and Faarooq hooks a camel clutch. Johnson comes back with an electric chair drop but can't follow up on it. Faarooq goes up but jumps into a powerslam. Johnson returns the favor and jumps into a spinebuster as his back is falling apart very

quickly. Faarooq runs his mouth too long though and there's another spinebuster by Ahmed, but the Nation comes in for the DQ.

Rating: D+. Not terrible here but the crowd continues to be dead. The idea here was supposed to be revenge but that only takes you so far when the incident that started the whole thing happened months ago. This wasn't a great power match either, making this kind of a hard one to get into. Ahmed was pretty awesome before his injuries though.

Post match Ahmed chases off the Nation and powerbombs a member through the announce table.

Terry Funk says he'll win the Rumble because he's from Texas and born to Rumble.

Faarooq yells at the Nation actors for bailing on him. He says this is just beginning.

Undertaker vs. Vader

This is a feud that went on for a few months because they were a good pairing for each other. Taker avoids a charge to start and pounds away on the big man. Scratch that, make it on the shorter and wider man. Vader comes back with his standing body attack and a second one to take Undertaker down. It doesn't keep him down of course so Vader hits the floor. Taker jumps off the apron with an ax handle and they brawl slowly. Vader literally has his hands on his hips while Taker uppercuts him.

Vader hits a Stunner on the apron to snap Taker on the rope before heading back in. A Fameasser of all things puts Vader down as does a slam. The followup legdrop gets two (BROTHER!) but Vader crotches him to counter Old School. Vader hits Taker low so let's go talk to a fan in the audience. Seriously. We hear about her saving up her money and following Shawn Michaels everywhere she goes. Your PPV dollars at work people!

Vader clotheslines Taker down twice, one of which being from the middle rope for two. We hit the nerve hold but Taker fights up with his rapid fire punches. A belly to back suplex puts Vader down but Taker's elbow misses. The masked man goes up but dives into a powerslam ala Starrcade

92 vs. Sting, but it doesn't even get a cover here. Vader powerbombs Taker down for two and the Dead Man sits up.

There's the big jumping clothesline and this time Old School hits, but here comes Paul Bearer. Taker chokeslams Vader down but spots Bearer instead of following up. Paul is thrown into the ring and punched a lot before Taker clotheslines Vader to the floor. Taker tries a kind of Poetry in Motion dive against the railing but Bearer makes the save, pulling Vader away. Bearer blasts Taker with the Urn, allowing Vader to hit the Vader Bomb for the pin.

Rating: D+. Not terrible here but again it ran too long. This was about setting up Bearer as Vader's new manager which didn't last long unless I'm completely forgetting something. Taker looked ok here, but his power stuff looks a lot better on smaller guys as he can't throw Vader around all that well. Still though, not horrible.

Taker is all ticked off and beats up the referee as a result. He yells at Vince too but we can't hear most of what he's saying.

Austin says he isn't talking to anyone until he wins the Rumble.

British Bulldog says he's going to win the Rumble because he's bizarre. Ok then.

Hector Garza/Perro Aguayo/El Canek vs. Jerry Estrada/Heavy Metal/Fuerza Guerrera

Take six guys, throw them in the ring for ten minutes to pop the crowd. I just hope I can remember which is which. Metal vs. Garza to start. Ok so Metal is in the yellow and black tights. Got it. They speed things up to stat before quickly hitting the mat. Off to Aguayo vs. Estrada who is in the white tassels. Perro chops Jerry down and backdrops him out to the floor.

Off to Canek vs. Guerrera who are the two masked guys. That makes things a lot easier to keep track of if nothing else. Canek hits a quick cross body out of the corner as the crowd continues to be dead here. Guerrera goes up but misses a Swanton, allowing Canek to hit a top rope cross body

for two. Off to Metal vs. Garza again as things are STILL slow. That goes nowhere so here's Canek vs. Estrada. Canek throws him around for a bit before it's time for Guerrera to beat up Aguayo.

Aguayo armdrags Guerrera down and sends him to the floor for a bit. It should be noted that Perro is 51 years old so seeing him running and trying to dive is rather odd to see. Canek works on Metal's leg, followed by a slingshot splash onto it by Garza. Heavy Metal gets an opening but won't tag, so instead he ducks a bad looking kick from Canek as they stagger around a bit more.

Everything breaks down as even Vince sounds bored. Let me repeat that. VINCE MCMAHON sounds bored by a match. Garza finally does something interesting by hitting his corkscrew plancha on Estrada. The double stomp on Metal gets the pin for Aguayo and the crowd pops for the pin, likely because it's finally over.

Rating: D. Think about it like this: in this match, four guys were either in their 40s or a year away from it. When you've got Juventud Guerrera and Chris Jericho and Rey Mysterio in the lucha matches in WCW blowing the roof off the place, it's REALLY hard to get into something like this. Terribly dull match as they were mainly just looking old out there.

The attendance is announced and no one really cares.

Royal Rumble

There are 90 seconds intervals here which isn't long enough but at least it's not terrible like two years earlier. Finkel takes FOREVER to get through the entrances. Crush of the Nation of Domination is #1 and Ahmed Johnson is #2. Crush gets to jump Ahmed as he comes in and the beating is on quickly. Ahmed comes back with a clothesline and they brawl on the mat (read as roll around) for a bit. Fake Razor Ramon (bad parody that went nowhere and is remembered as being awful) is #3 as apparently the clock is messing up. Thankfully Razor is thrown out in about fifteen seconds.

Crush is thrown to the apron but Ahmed sees Faarooq in the aisle. He eliminates himself and chases after Faarooq in a stupid bit. Phineas Godwinn is #4 as the clock speeds WAY up so we don't have to look at

people standing around. They have a really dull power brawl that goes nowhere and no one cares about at all. Austin is #5 and this HAS TO pick things up a bit. Phineas jumps him as soon as he gets in before Austin and Crush double team him. A clothesline misses Phineas though and Crush is dumped.

Austin dumps Phineas as well and is alone in the ring to face Bart Gunn at #6. Bart gets in some offense but is gone in about thirty seconds. Austin sits on the ropes until Jake Roberts is #7. The music sounds really different in the big stadium setting. Jake pounds away and works on the arm a bit and hits the short clothesline, but Austin backdrops him out to counter the DDT.

British Bulldog is #8 and immediately takes Austin down. This is part of the Border War which is coming very soon and just like Jake, Smith dominates early on. There's a slightly different version of the powerslam and Austin is in big trouble. Pierroth from AAA (Mexican company which has supplied all of the luchadores tonight) is #9 and goes right after Bulldog. Apparently he's a big time heel so people don't cheer. I'm sure it has nothing to do with the hour and a half of boring wrestling right?

The Sultan (Rikishi) is #10 as the ring is finally getting a crowd going in there. Sultan and Pierroth fight on the ropes as Austin is sent to the apron. Pierroth tries to slam Sultan like an idiot as the match continues to be dull. Mil Mascaras, Mexican legend, is #11. He FINALLY gets a reaction as he beats up on Sultan a bit. Sultan belly to bellies him down and we get some of the legendary no selling from Mascaras. HHH is #12 and there goes Sultan via Bulldog.

We've got Austin, Bulldog, Pierroth, HHH and Mascaras in the ring now. Austin hits a middle rope elbow on HHH as Owen Hart (tag team champions with Bulldog at this point) is #13. Austin has to fight both of them off and Bulldog goes out due to an accidental shot from Owen. They were having big problems around this point and it would take the Hart Foundation forming to mend the issues. Goldust is #14 and goes right for Austin instead of HHH, the guy he hates.

Mascaras gets Owen to the apron but can't get him out. Everyone gangs up

on Goldust for no apparent reason and Cibernetico is #15. He goes right for Mascaras and beats the tar out of him. HHH stays on the apron as Marc Mero is #16. Cibernetico is out before Mero gets into the ring and Mascaras puts Pierroth out, before diving off the top to the floor to eliminate himself. Goldust clotheslines HHH out and we've got Mero, Austin, Owen and Goldust in the ring at the moment.

Latin Lover, another luchador, is #17. Things are still dull here but at least they're moving a bit faster. Goldust is eliminated by Owen and Faarooq is #18. He almost immediately puts Lover out and gets in a BIG slugout with Austin. Unfortunately it doesn't last long as Johnson runs in with a 2x4 to knock Faarooq out. Austin dumps Owen and Mero, leaving himself alone in the ring. Savio Vega, an old rival of Austin, is #19 and doesn't even make it thirty seconds, although he does hit a good spinwheel kick while he's in there.

Jesse James (Road Dogg) is #20 and he does quite a bit better than Vega, making it a full 45 seconds before Austin puts him out. Austin is all like GET ME ANOTHER ONE and tells the crowd what they can do to themselves. The clock runs out, and BRET HART walks through that curtain at #21. The look on Austin's face is absolutely amazing as he is TERRIFIED.

However, there's something very important that happens next. Austin is scared for a minute, but then gets in the middle of the ring and says BRING IT ON. He's been out there a long time now and is ready to go still, facing his arch rival who is totally fresh. Austin doesn't back down, he doesn't run, he doesn't cheat. That's because Austin was a different kind of heel than you see today. Instead of running or finding a way out, he fought with his fists and took a beating like a man. Today it's all about the cowardly heels and that drives me crazy. Once in awhile is fine but give us somebody with a backbone once in awhile.

They go right at it with Bret getting the better of a tired Austin. He hits a quick atomic drop and a clothesline before stomping away in the corner. There's the Sharpshooter but we need a #22, so here's commentator Jerry Lawler. In a hilarious bit, Jerry says "It takes a King...", then he gets in, gets punched twice by Bret for an elimination, and comes back to

commentary and says "to know a King."

Bret stays on Austin and hits a backbreaker as Fake Diesel (you know him better as Kane) is #23. The good thing here is that Kane actually looks like Diesel from about ten feet away and is nearly identical from behind. Razor looked like a bad Halloween costume. Diesel goes after Hart before slowing down to let Austin do the work. Terry Funk is #24 to give us a very strong lineup in there at the moment. Funk is sent to the apron but Hart makes a save, earning him a punch to the ribs from Terry.

Rocky Maivia is #25 to give us perhaps the best five man lineup ever in the Rumble at any given time. That's not an exaggeration either. Rocky hooks up with Austin and Diesel but gets kicked in his face for the efforts. The lineup stays strong with Mankind at #26. He immediately throws Funk to the apron as everyone pairs off. Hart gets suplexed by Austin as Rock and Diesel fight in the corner.

There's a sleeper by Hart to Austin, which makes you wonder why you would EVER put yourself in that position against Austin? A jawbreaker breaks the hold as Flash Funk (2 Cold Scorpio) is #27. Not quite on the level of everyone else but he's a personal favorite. Terry piledrives Mankind into the ground before Flash dives on Diesel and Terry. Vader is #28 to give us another power guy and he goes right for Bret.

Vader pounds Flash down so Austin goes right after the big man. That would be Vader in case you're confused. In a funny bit, Lawler keeps implying he's never been in the match. Henry Godwinn is #29 to drop the talent level a good bit. The ring is filling up now. Rocky gets sent to the apron and Undertaker is #30. The star studded final group: Austin, Bret, Fake Diesel, Terry Funk, Rocky, Mankind, Flash Funk, Vader, Henry Godwinn, Undertaker. That's REALLY good and I can't think of any Rumble coming closer to perfect than that.

Taker goes right after Vader but stops to punch Mankind too. There's a chokeslam for Austin and one for Vader as well. Taker pounds on Diesel in a sign of what is to come later in the year. Vader throws Flash out as Godwinn hammers on Taker. Funk almost puts Hart out but Austin makes the save for no apparent reason. Godwinn pounds on Taker some more, so Taker

easily throws him out by the throat.

The final eight: Rock, Austin, Hart, Kane, Undertaker, Terry Funk, Mankind, Vader. How is THAT for a talent pool? Taker throws Austin to the apron before Mankind puts the Claw on Rocky to eliminate him. He was just a rookie at this point so being in there this late was a big accomplishment for him. Mankind and Funk beat on each other because that's what they love to do. They fight to the apron and Mankind gets Funk out.

Taker sends Mankind out a second later to get us down to five. Vader beats on Taker as Austin does the same to Diesel. Bret throws Austin out to a HUGE pop but the referees were breaking up a fight between Mankind and Funk. Austin slides back in, dumps Vader and Taker, then dumps Bret who just eliminated Diesel, and Austin wins the Rumble!

Rating: B-. This took awhile to get going, but once Bret's music hit, it's REALLY good. The problem is that's 2/3 of the way into the match and the stuff before that is just terrible. It's a who's who of jobbers and no names which isn't interesting at all. This was the night Austin was launched into superstardom and he did it with a bigger catapult than almost anyone else ever. Amazing last twenty five minutes, but the first twenty five or so are absolutely dreadful.

Bret goes nuts on the announcers post match, shouting conspiracy and injustice. Oh I need to get to 1997 Raw. It's AMAZING when it gets rolling.

We recap Shawn vs. Sid. Sid won the title at Survivor Series and this is the rematch. Sid was on a legit roll at this point, having pinned Shawn and Bret in back to back matches. Shawn is bordering on a massive heel turn here but Sid isn't quite ready to be a face, which likely has a lot to do with Taker being moved to the main event. Sid has been tormenting the son of Shawn's mentor Jose Lothario to set this up.

Shawn has the flu and looks horrible in his pre match promo. Not much to say here either. This would wind up being Lothario's last match in Shawn's corner.

WWF World Title: Shawn Michaels vs. Sycho Sid

Shawn gets by far and away the pop of the night as the hometown boy. I love Sid's name in lights pyro entrance. Shawn is shoved down to start until Sid pounds away. Michaels comes back with a cross body and rams Sid's head into the mat, drawing the longest reaction of the night. Sid heads to the floor for a breather and lays on the mats. Shawn goes after him and is about to be gorilla pressed but he rakes Sid's eyes to escape.

Back in and Shawn jumps into a powerslam followed by a camel clutch. Sid drops down onto the back and Shawn is in trouble. Shawn avoids the second drop down but Sid comes right back, sending Shawn into the corner for the Flair Flip. Back to the chinlock followed by a clothesline for two. Off to a bearhug which eats up several minutes. Shawn's parents are concerned. Shawn breaks the hold with an atomic drop but the hold goes right back on. A legdrop gets two for Sid and the champ isn't getting frustrated at all.

We hit the reverse chinlock again but Shawn fights up with right hands. He slams Sid down and hits the forearm to set up the nip-up. The top rope elbow hits but Shawn is knocked to the floor before the superkick can hit. Shawn gets powerbombed on the floor so Sid grabs both Lotharios. That goes nowhere so Shawn pounds away even more. Dang he popped up fast after that powerbomb.

The referee gets bumped and there's the chokeslam for two from a second referee. Sid shoves the second referee down and Shawn hits Sid with the camera, which is what Sid did to win the title in the first place. That only gets two though (Lawler: "WOO HOO!") but Sweet Chin Music gives Shawn the title back.

Rating: C+. Not a great match or anything but it did exactly what it was supposed to do. There was zero chance Shawn was losing here and there's nothing wrong with that at all. He got by far and away the biggest reactions all night long and it's as basic of a story as you could ask for. Decent match, especially considering how sick Shawn was. Sid did really well here too, doing exactly what he was supposed to but making it look good.

Shawn celebrates for a LONG time to end the show.

Overall Rating: D. This show has a solid last forty minutes, but it's a three hour show, not an hour long show. The year of 1997 was about as bad as it could have gotten for WWF from a business standpoint, but the future was bright. The main thing I want to focus on here though is Austin, as today you would see him get the world title at Mania 13, whereas here they let him simmer for a year. That's smart business, because while he would have been a successful champion, he wouldn't have been the juggernaut that he became. Anyway this show was bad, but it does have some bright spots.

Ratings Comparison

HHH vs. Goldust

Original: C-

Redo: C-

Ahmed Johnson vs. Farrooq

Original: D+

Redo: D+

Vader vs. Undertaker

Original: C+

Redo: D+

Hector Garza/Perro Aguayo/El Canek vs. Jerry Estrada/Heavy Metal/Fuerza Guerrera

Original: F

Redo: D

Royal Rumble

Original: C+

Redo: B-

Shawn Michaels vs. Sycho Sid

Original: C+

Redo: C+

Overall Rating

Original: C+

Redo: D

That overall rating surprised me. How could I go that high after nearly the same grades leading up to it?

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/01/17/royal-rumble-count-up-1997-bret-hart-uh-make-that-austin/>

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Impact Wrestling – January 10, 2013: My Head Just Exploded

Impact Wrestling

Date: January 10, 2013

Location: Impact Zone, Orlando, Florida

Commentators: Todd Keneley, Tazz, Mike Tenay

It's both the go home show for Genesis and the return of Gut Check, although in a tweaked format. This time it's going to be TWO guys

fighting for a contract, although there's no word on whether or not a win guarantees a contract. Other than that we're getting ready for Genesis, which isn't exactly a show I'm thrilled about watching. Let's get to it.

After the opening recap, here are Sting, Joe and Angle to the ring. Sting says it's good to be back and on Sunday he's coming for Doc. As for tonight, he's here with some friends like the big black bat, Shooter and Killer. He invites the bikers to come get some and Joe says the same. Kurt gets a HUGE chant and says that he wants to know where Mr. Anderson stands.

Here's Anderson who says that these guys were nowhere to be seen months ago when Aces and 8's beat him down. After that Sting had a new partner (he's talking about the BFG match) and now they're questioning why he would turn his back on TNA. Angle says you're either with us or we're going to fight. Anderson gets in the ring and says he doesn't have to answer to Angle and the fight is on.

One of the Gut Check guys is Jay Bradley, who odds are you don't remember from WWECW as Ryan Braddock.

Brooke Hogan gets a phone call from Mark, which is Bully Ray's first name.

X-Division #1 Contenders Tournament Semi-Finals: Zema Ion vs. Kenny King

The winner of this faces Christian York at Genesis with the winner getting a title shot at Van Dam later in the night. King sends him to the floor but misses a dive, followed immediately by Ion sliding back in and hitting a flip dive of his own. Back in and King gets two off a spinwheel kick as we talk about the new PPV system. Ion guillotines King on the top rope and gets two off a DDT. King tries the Royal Flush but gets taken down instead. Ion loads up a 450 but misses, and by misses I mean hits King as King rolls away. King pops up and hits the Royal Flush to advance to Genesis at 3:05.

Rating: C. Take two guys, put them in the ring and have them fly around the ring all over the place. Nothing special here but King looks much better than Ion. Then again I've seen festering blisters that don't look

as bad as Ion. Also wasn't King a heel until a few weeks ago? He certainly didn't act like one here.

King says he'll win on Sunday.

Robbie E tries to get Tessmacher into a mixed tag later but she wants to tag with Robbie T. Tessmacher to E: "You disgust me!" E: "Why does every girl say that to me???"

Joseph Park is back and is ready to be a wrestler. He then walks into a door and can't get inside.

Tara/Jesse Godderz vs. Robbie T/Miss Tessmacher

If nothing else, we get a clip of the Bro Off and Robbie E's hilarious face. Jesse tries to jump Rob from behind because he's an idiot and earns a slam. Off to the girls with Tessmacher taking over and hitting an X Factor out of the corner. There's a Stinkface because that's what you get on a wrestling show. T LAUNCHES Jesse into the corner and hits a BIG old powerbomb for the pin at 1:46.

T and Tessmacher dance post match and Robbie E LOSES IT. They kiss and E is about to have a heart attack. WHY DID IT TAKE THIS LONG FOR THEM TO BE THIS FUNNY???

Brian Cage talks about Gut Check.

Gut Check: Brian Cage vs. Jay Bradley

They're both rookies and next week only one of them gets a contract. I have no idea which is which here. I know Bradley is from OVW but I'm not familiar with Cage. Bradley takes over with a slam and loads up his clothesline finisher but gets dropkicked to the apron instead. Cage gets on the middle rope to suplex Bradley back inside and gets two off a spinning top rope elbow. Bradley pops back up and hits his running clothesline (the Boomstick) for the pin at 3:23.

Rating: C. This was fine but at the end of the day, this doesn't really address the main problems with Gut Check: we never see these guys again, they're still just guys in trunks fighting, and they all have the same

story. Bradley was fine and will get the contract and no one will care, because we haven't been given a reason to care.

Anderson yells at Aces and 8's telling them to get serious. The girls are thrown out. The bikers go to a meeting and yell at Knox for losing his mask.

Joseph Park is in the ring and is glad to be back from camp. He asks Hulk to come out and here's the big bald himself. Hulk says he's got important things to deal with right now and Park needs more time than just a few weeks in camp. Park wants one of the Aces and 8's so Hulk gives him any match he wants to shut him up.

Park leaves so here's Brooke to pop up on screen and say she's coming to the ring right now....thanks for the warning I guess?

Post break here's Brooke to whine about being ignored. She has an important question and it's going to determine their relationship for a long time. The question is will he reinstate Mark and Hulk says no. Well that was quick.

Aries and Roode talk about how awesome their shirts are and argue about what to wear to the ring. An argument over who is better and deserves to be the champion follows. If I heard Aries right, he calls them a wet dream team. Now they argue over who gets to go to the ring first. Funny stuff here.

Video on the guys in the triple threat on Sunday.

Bobby Roode/Austin Aries vs. Jeff Hardy/James Storm

So again, the bikers and their matches on Sunday of Sting vs. Doc and Park vs. likely Knox takes precedent over the world title. Roode and Hardy start things off with both guys getting in some quick shots, leading to a stalemate. Off to Aries via an aggressive tag so he can show off some lighter trunks. Aries takes Hardy to the mat and rides him around to show off a bit. Hardy comes back with a headscissors and the good guys double team their villains for a bit. Aries gets hung upside down from the ropes by his feet before arguing with Roode for not pulling

him down.

We take a break and come back with Roode charging into an elbow in the corner. Hardy goes up to dive onto the floor onto Roode but gets shaken down and crotched. Aries tags himself in by slapping Roode hard on the back before going after Jeff's leg. Back to Roode who gets caught in a sunset flip for a delayed two due to the referee arguing with Aries. Back to Austin who takes turns with Roode in trying to one up the other. Roode suplexes Hardy down for no cover and drops a knee for the same.

Roode goes up but jumps into a boot, which combined with a mule kick by Jeff brings in Storm off the hot tag. Storm cleans house to big reactions from the crowd. An Alabama Slam puts Aries down as does a neckbreaker to Roode. Closing Time (Codebreaker) sends Aries to the floor but Daniels and Kaz run in to distract Storm and prevent the Last Call. Hardy hits a Twisting Stunner on Roode but Aries blasts Jeff in the back with the belt for the DQ at 13:38.

Rating: C+. This was perfectly fine for what it was supposed to be: a basic main event style tag match to set up a triple threat as well as a singles match on Sunday. The idea of two challengers being in an argument over the title on Sunday and allowing Hardy to overcome the odds to retain is a good idea.

Roode and Aries fight over the belt post match.

Brooke tells Mark not to come here tonight but asks him to come pick her up. Ok then.

The tag champs attack Morgan and Ryan inside a trailer. Still don't care about this.

We run down the Genesis card. There's a Knockouts gauntlet match for a title shot at a date to be determined. Park gets to fight D-Von on Sunday presumably meaning that Knox doesn't have a match on Sunday.

Hardy monologues about Sunday.

Mr. Anderson vs. Kurt Angle

Anderson comes out from the regular entrance and to his own music. He does his entrance as usual and I can't say I missed it that much. Well I could but I would be lying. Anderson bails to the floor to hide and Angle tells him to get in here for a fight. Anderson stalls some more and here's Knox with the hammer to beat Angle down. No match. Brisco and Bischoff and Joe run out for the save.

Angle gets taken out on a stretcher. I'm guessing he needs time off.

Sting comes out and wants Knox RIGHT NOW. Well after a break that is of course.

Post break and it's bat vs. hammer in what I think is going to be a match in a bit. Yep we get a bell after Knox gets hit with a bat.

Sting vs. Mike Knox

Hit with a bat? Why would that stop someone? Knox pounds Sting down to start as the fans chant for Sting. We head to the floor with Sting sending Knox into the steps a few times which still isn't a DQ. Sting puts him against the barricade and ACTUALLY HITS THE SPLASH. That might be the second time I've ever seen him hit that. Back in and the Deathlock is countered but Sting no sells Knox's offense. The Splash sets up the Death Drop for the pin at 3:24.

Rating: D. I'm seriously laughing at this match. Knox, the newest member of the team, is already losing his matches just like a good member of the team. They've completely lost the chances of making people take them seriously at this point, which defeats the purpose of a monster heel stable in the first place. Nothing to see here at all.

Post match Sting hits Knox in the hand with a hammer but D-Von pops up with possession of Brooke. He promises to make this their year and here's Ray with his chain for the save. Brooke gets away from Aces and 8's after being in their grip for all of 18 seconds. Hogan comes out with his arms crossed and glares.

Post break Hogan blames Ray for all these problems and says Ray isn't the man for his daughter. Ray goes into his "I love this business" schtick

and that he didn't think he could love anything more than wrestling...until he met Brooke. She was apologizing for Hogan being a jerk. Hulk drops his mic and Ray keeps talking about how fast this is happening. He says screw this and puts Brooke between the two of them. Bully says he cares about Brooke a lot and gets on his knee to propose to her. She says yes and Ray wants it to happen next week on Impact. Sure why not.

Overall Rating: C+. This show wasn't bad but it certainly wasn't good either. It had it's moments of comedy, but unfortunately only half of them were meant to be funny. Aces and 8's are rapidly approaching unintentional comedy area which may be entertaining, but certainly not in the way TNA was shooting for. The world title stuff was good and nothing on the show was horrible, but it didn't do much for making me want to see Genesis.

Results

Kenny King b. Zema Ion – Royal Flush

Robbie T/Miss Tessmacher b. Tara/Jesse Godderz – Powerbomb to Godderz

Jay Bradley b. Brian King – Boomstick

Jeff Hardy/James Storm b. Bobby Roode/Austin Aries via DQ when Aries hit Hardy with a belt

Sting b. Mike Knox – Scorpion Death Drop

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