

2017 Awards: Worst Wrestler of the Year

What a group of nominees to pick from.

Now this one almost completely depends on your definition of bad. There are some people who don't belong in a ring no matter what they do and there are some people who just don't ever change and serve very little purpose other than being a warm body. At the same time, there are people who I just don't like who will be on here as well. It'll be a mix of all three as this is really hard to define.

Before we get into this, I'm going to leave Shane McMahon off because I consider him to be someone who wrestles on occasion rather than a wrestler.

We'll start with Tamina, who has been around forever and yet still has almost no reason to be there. Considering she debuted at the same time as the Usos, you really would expect her to have gotten at least somewhat better now. Her Superfly Splash isn't terrible but there's a gaping hole of charisma whenever she's in the ring and I often forget she's out there.

Sticking with the women there's Lana, who is managing to set new standards for bad wrestling. At the end of the day though, I really can't blame her for this one. She's been wrestling less than two years now and hasn't even had 75 matches yet with her first singles match coming about thirteen months ago. I have no idea what WWE was expecting when they threw her in the ring other than hoping people would swoon over her in the outfits (fair enough) but it's not fair to put her out there like that. Just let her be a full time manager or go train for a LONG time before getting back in the ring because this isn't fair.

I wouldn't feel right without including the Young Bucks in

here. Yes they're athletic freaks and can be entertaining a lot of the time, but the superkick parties and almost never selling enough and the lack of any form of psychology to most of their matches puts them near the top. Though they did block me on Twitter so I must be doing something right.

A name that you'll probably see on a lot of these lists is Jinder Mahal and while I couldn't stand him for most of the year, there's a huge difference between someone who is boring, repetitive and in way over his head than someone who is worthless. There's value in Mahal, but he was being put in a spot he wasn't ready for. Those are two different things and I'm not going to fault Mahal for the bad booking. I'll fault him for being a boring promo and a repetitive wrestler though, which is quite bad on its own at such a high level.

Now someone on the other end of the spectrum is Dolph Ziggler, who is more than capable of having a good match but hasn't changed his style in what feels like years. His meta stuff with the entrances isn't doing anything for me and I really could go with him being away for a very long time, hopefully to recharge his batteries and change things up a bit as his style got old a long, long time ago.

That brings us to the winner and, in what shouldn't be a surprise, I'm going with Enzo Amore. I've made no secret of the fact that I can't stand him more than once for a variety of reasons, including he doesn't change anything. It's been the same "how you doin" promo and never shutting up, while almost never actually wrestling. When he does it's not any good and we're stuck with Enzo as champion while 205 Live dies because he gets so much attention. It's a bad way to run things and the division has died even more with him on top. Get him out of here already so the division can actually have a chance.

New Column: I Like It From Raw

A look back at a great moment from every year of Raw, including some you might not have thought of in a good while.

<https://wrestlingrumors.net/kbs-review-like-raw/>

NXT – January 10, 2018: This Doesn't Feel Right

NXT

Date: January 10, 2018

Location: Center Stage Theater, Atlanta, Georgia

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Nigel McGuinness, Percy Watson

We're on some hallowed ground tonight as NXT heads to the former home of WCW Saturday Night. The next three shows will be all about setting up Takeover: Philadelphia, which means we need some more matches announced. A good chunk of the card is already set but NXT somehow manages to make the shows building to the big show entertaining as well. Let's get to it.

The Undisputed Era is ready to start their year of dominance by taking out Sanity once and for all tonight. Adam Cole is ready to start becoming the next NXT Champion. Simple and to the point here with something that you would expect them to say. Just ignore the whole "the beginning of the era of undisputed" making O'Reilly sound like Yoda.

Opening sequence.

The ring is turned to the side here, meaning wrestlers come to a corner when they come down the aisle. It's an awesome visual and feels different, which is where NXT excels.

Shayna Baszler vs. Dakota Kai

This is both of their NXT in-ring debuts. Before the match we see a clip of Baszler randomly attacking Performance Center trainees for fun because that's the kind of villain she is. Baszler drives her into the corner to start and takes Kai down into an armbar. A stomp bends Kai's arm at a NASTY angle and that's a referee stoppage at 1:23. Total squash and Baszler looked awesome here.

Post match Baszler stays on her until Ember Moon makes the save.

The Authors of Pain are ready to take care of the Street Profits. Since when can the Authors speak English?

General Manager William Regal talks to Baszler, saying that's not going to get her a title shot. Baszler: "We done here?"

Kassius Ohno vs. Raul Mendoza

They even shake hands to start in a really old school move. Ohno grabs some rollups for a few early near falls but Mendoza is too fast. Mendoza hurricanranas him into a side roll but gets his head elbowed off without too much effort. An inverted Gory Special has Mendoza in more trouble until he reverses into a victory roll.

Back up and Ohno charges into a forearm in the corner, followed by a springboard spinning armdrag to drop Kassius again. Mendoza is showing off some very nice high flying here, which is exactly what he should be doing in a match like this. Ohno shrugs him off though and the High Tension Elbow Strike (running jumping elbow to the back of the head) ends Mendoza at 4:26.

Rating: C. This is the kind of thing that both guys needed. Ohno isn't exactly a star in NXT but he's great for a role like this: making people look good and using his experience to put together some better matches. Mendoza on the other hand is a rather good high flier and can showcase

himself well around here. Mentioning that he's been in so many matches against top quality talent shows that they're likely to give him a win soon, which could lead somewhere for him.

Zelina Vega held a mini press conference saying she and Andrade Cien Almas aren't worried about Johnny Gargano after beating him twice. That's a fairy tale and Almas is reality. Vega is amazing at this condescending heel stuff and she's made Almas that much better.

Johnny Gargano is thrilled to be #1 contender but here's Velveteen Dream to interrupt. Dream wants a thank you for allowing Gargano to get his spot in the competition because Dream would have won it with ease. Gargano needs to thank him because Dream deserves his spot.

The Street Profits loudly come into Regal's office and think they deserve a Tag Team Title shot. Regal seems to agree so next week it's the Street Profits vs. the Authors of Pain in a #1 contenders match. More loudness ensues and Regal smiles.

Lio Rush vs. Lars Sullivan

This could hurt a lot. Rush dodges to start and even slaps Lars in the face. A kick to the jaw staggers Sullivan for a bit but he pulls Rush into the ropes to take over. Rush gets whipped hard into the corner but Lars misses a charge. That's about it for Rush though as one heck of a clothesline turns him inside out, followed by the Freak Accident for the pin at 1:54.

Post match Sullivan talks about destroying everyone until he ran into a different kind of force. That was Killian Dain and Sullivan wants to see him again. For now though, Rush takes a super Freak Accident to really hammer home the punishment.

The Undisputed Era has attacked Sanity in the back. The Era says that's it for the title shot.

Here's the Undisputed Era in the arena for a chat. Cole thinks they're missing something and Kyle asks where Sanity is. Maybe they forgot about their title shot tonight. Cole says they kicked the chaos out of Sanity

but here's a livid Nikki Cross trying to get at the Era. Referees hold her back but so Regal comes out to cut the Era off again. The boss says the titles are on the line tonight and here's Roderick Strong to say he'll fight right now. Strong offers to go find a partner but someone interrupts to say he'll do it.

Tag Team Titles: Undisputed Era vs. Roderick Strong/Aleister Black

The teams are at different corners than the usual WWE formula with the champs on the left side closer to the hard camera. I don't remember the last time I've seen the corners changed in WWE. Fish and O'Reilly are defending and get cleared to the floor, sending us to a break before the bell.

Back with the bell ringing and Black kicking away at both champs. A knee to Kyle's head gets two and Strong adds a dive to the floor. Back in and Black's Oklahoma roll gets two on Kyle, followed by an armbar to keep him in trouble. Strong comes in for a chinlock as the champs are still looking for their first offense. Fish finally takes Black's knee out and we take a break.

Back with Kyle holding the knee and Fish adding a slingshot hilo for two. An exploder suplex gives Fish two but Black kicks O'Reilly away. There's the double tag to bring in Strong and Fish as everything breaks down. The champs' Ax and Smash is broken up with a jumping knee to the face and everyone is down. Cue Cole to go after Black, who stalks him into the crowd. Back inside, the champs go High/Low to retain at 11:50.

Rating: C+. This didn't feel like the standard NXT main event but maybe they're saving the Sanity match for another time. It was entertaining for what it was though and thankfully NXT is smart enough to not put the titles on a thrown together team like you would see so often on the main shows. Fine main event, but it felt more like a big time house show.

Post match Black comes in for the brawl but gets taken out. An AA onto an open chair knocks Black cold. The Era poses but here's Regal to talk about Philadelphia's extreme history. At Takeover: Philadelphia, Cole vs. Black will be an Extreme Rules match. Cole and Regal stare each other down to end the show.

Overall Rating: C+. This show felt a little off from the norm for NXT but it still did everything it needed to do. The big story here was the arrival of Baszler (nailed it) and some more matches being teased for Takeover. NXT can fill in the gaps over the next few weeks and that's where they shine. Good enough show, but it didn't feel like it had the same flow that most of their episode do.

Results

Shayna Baszler b. Dakota Kai via referee stoppage

Kassius Ohno b. Raul Mendoza – High Tension Elbow Strike

Lars Sullivan b. Lio Rush – Freak Accident

Undisputed Era b. Roderick Strong/Aleister Black – High/Low to Strong

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Monday Night Raw – August 11,

2003: This Show Cascades To and Fro And Is Still Bad

Monday Night Raw

Date: August 11, 2003

Location: Mark of the Quad, Moline, Illinois

Commentators: Jonathan Coachman, Jerry Lawler

The slow crawl towards Summerslam continues and now we have an Elimination Chamber match for the Raw main event. Why anyone would want that is beyond me, but we also have Shane McMahon as the big hero of the show, fighting off the evil monster known as Kane. Other than that though, the show is looking pretty rough. Let's get to it.

On a side note, the show is now officially airing on SpikeTV instead of TNN.

Opening sequence.

Some pyro goes off signaling the network now being called SpikeTV. It's a better name and at least they don't waste any time on it.

Here's Eric Bischoff to brag about beating Shane last week, even having Lillian Garcia announce him as the winner again. After looking at a clip of the ending, Eric sucks up to the McMahon Family, calling Linda a "big breasted mature woman". The only member he doesn't respect is Shane, who is only here because of his last name. Shane is the Frank Sinatra Jr. of WWE (I'm hoping that's a topical joke because otherwise it's really just bad).

Instead here's the perfectly fine looking (save for a limp) JR to interrupt and mock Bischoff for throwing his weight around. He understands how important Kane is to this company though, which is why he's only going to sue Bischoff. Eric immediately fires Coach from his commentary spot so JR can have his spot back but here's Austin with a clipboard to interrupt.

After shaking JR's hand, Austin says he has a contract drawn up to help settle some differences. Austin whispers something to JR and then gets to the point: JR won't sue if Bischoff has a match tonight. Bischoff turns down a match with Shane so JR tells him to call a lawyer. That's enough to convince Eric to sign....a contract to face Kane tonight. Read the contract buddy.

So yeah, after watching last week's show focusing on Bischoff wrestling, the next week's show is the exact same thing. Let me guess: Lawler is going to be elated over this all night long. Also, Kane unmasked on June 23, took out Rob Van Dam, lit JR on fire, tombstoned Linda, and this is going to be his first actual match. After all that work building him up, they haven't actually done anything with him aside from using him as a chess piece in a story involving Bischoff.

The problem right now is between Austin, Bischoff, JR, Kane, Shane and Van Dam, I'm not sure what the big story is. In theory it's Kane vs. Shane down the line, but first we have to get through Kane vs. Van Dam. Rob would have been a good first victim a few weeks back, but that never even started.

Then there's the Bischoff part, which doesn't really have an interesting payoff other than Shane beating him up. Kane has been a monster for over a month now and we're STILL waiting on him to have anything to do in the ring. Oh but Kevin Nash, who was feuding with Test for a little while, is getting a World Title match. Makes perfect sense.

Stacy Keibler/Scott Steiner vs. Rico/Miss Jackie

....what? If this is the option that made it to TV, what in the world was considered too bad to make it onto the show? Jackie watches Rico as he gets in ala Scott watching Stacy. Rico poses to start so Steiner forearm him in the head, followed by the spinning belly to belly. The pushup elbow gets two and it's off to Jackie for the....showdown? Actually Stacy has to come in and egads this could be a nightmare.

They trade slaps until it's the pinfall reversal sequence for exactly the reason you would expect. Stacy gets two off a spinning kick to the face but Rico knees her in the back. A double clothesline puts both of them

down but here's Test to jump Steiner. Rico snaps Stacy's throat over the top, leaving Jackie to drop a leg for the pin.

Rating: F. Well of course it was to set up more Steiner vs. Test. Rico and Jackie were somehow the better option here with Stacy not being anything resembling a wrestler and Jackie looking at least somewhat improved from last year (hard not to be but indeed better). The problem here of course is still Steiner vs. Test, which has been going on for over three months now and hasn't yet begun to be anything interesting. It needs to be dropped and both of them need to move on (perhaps to the unemployment line), though I'm kind of scared to know what could replace them.

Post match Test says this needs to end and wants to fight Steiner next week with Stacy on the line again. Stacy accepts in a hurry.

Flair doesn't want to face Goldberg tonight because he's out there all alone due to Evolution being barred from ringside. HHH basically ignores the whole thing and talks about the Elimination Chamber. Orton promises that he'll retain because it's the two of them against four guys.

Kane arrives in the police van.

Dudley Boyz vs. La Resistance

Non-title. Brawl to start until Dupree hits D-Von with the American flag for the DQ in about thirty seconds.

Post match the American flag is broken and La Resistance drinks French wine.

Goldust comes up to Molly Holly (such a random pairing) in the back to say she likes gold too. Therefore, he has someone he'd like her to meet. Someone who is truly NOT boring. This brings in Lance Storm in Goldust paint and wig. Storm pulls out cue card, complete with the Tourette's Syndrome jokes. Molly leaves and Storm says this isn't working. Not to worry Goldust says, because they have sausages and midgets waiting on them. That's the second or third midgets joke in a week.

Shawn Michaels and Kevin Nash get in a not very heated argument over who

is winning the title. Goldberg comes in and sets them straight but the two of them make threats. It's cute when Nash and Michaels pretend they're anything more than filler in that match.

Here's Intercontinental Champion Christian for a chat. That's not an error as Christian, who comes out to Booker T.'s entrance, won the title from Booker last night at a house show. Somehow that would be Booker's only title reign. You really would expect him to pick up the title again at some point but it was just the one time. As for tonight, Christian has found the perfect opponent for his first title defense, especially since we're now on SpikeTV.

Intercontinental Title: Christian vs. Spike Dudley

Spike is challenging in case you're a bit slow. Christian drops him ribs first across the top rope, followed by a gutbuster to continue the squashification. We hit an abdominal stretch with Christian having to lean down because Spike is so short. The hold is broken without much drama and Spike comes back with a bulldog for two. The running headbutt to the ribs gets two and a top rope double stomp gets the same, this time with Christian needing the ropes to escape. Back up and an Unprettier plants Spike for the pin to retain.

Rating: D+. For a match based around the challenger's first name and nothing else, this could have been a lot worse. Spike can have a good enough match, even if there's no doubt that he's losing every single one of them. Christian getting the title back at a house show is still kind of odd but maybe Booker really was hurt. Or they just wanted to throw in a surprise, which works quite well in the right way, especially if it might help drive up house show attendance.

Bischoff tries to suck up to Kane and offers to lay down for him. Kane says they're doing this his way. Again, this is the best followup they have for Kane's huge push over the last few weeks.

JR replaces Coach on commentary.

Eric Bischoff vs. Kane

Bischoff lays down and JR is aghast. So now the announcers don't see what happens in the back? Kane grabs the chokeslam and JR is thrilled but Bischoff is sat back down and Kane walks out for the countout.

Post "match", Kane asks the fans if they want to see him destroy Bischoff. That seems to be what they want, but Kane is tired of doing what everyone else wants. Cue Rob Van Dam to go after Kane...and dive onto the barricade instead. Rob sends him into a chair but the Five Star only hits chair. Kane chairs him down and laughs. Well so much for Van Dam, but now we get to wait a few more weeks before he gets squashed at Summerslam.

Gail Kim says she turned on Trish because no one talked to her when she was champion and she wanted some attention. Fair enough actually.

Women's Title: Trish Stratus vs. Gail Kim vs. Molly Holly

Molly is defending. Trish goes to fight Gail on the floor, followed by a Chick Kick to Molly. A Thesz press drops Gail but Molly pulls Trish face first into the apron. The villains double suplex Trish as JR is sounding just like his old self, despite being on commentary against doctors' orders. Trish gets tied in the Tree of Woe with Molly telling Gail to hit her, only to have Molly ax handle her down and get the pin to retain in a clever finish.

Flair is worried about facing Goldberg with no one helping him tonight. HHH has been talking to Bischoff though and Orton is guest referee. Wouldn't that likely mean the match, and therefore the beating, is going to go on longer?

Earlier today a little old lady was trying to get across a busy street when Rosey showed up to help her. He explains his name to her and gets hit in the ribs with a grocery bag. Hurricane comes in to say no good deed goes unpunished.

Austin comes in to toast Bischoff's victory and has a little fine print for him: the winner of Kane vs. Bischoff will face Shane McMahon at some point in the future. That might seem a little convenient, but Austin was in a win/win situation. Shane wanted to fight either guy and Austin would

have gotten a good attraction either way. That's actually logical, even if it seems that they're stretching quite a bit to get to the ending they want.

Hurricane vs. Rodney Mack

Still no Theodore Long. Rodney shoulders him in the ribs to start and cuts off a charge with a powerslam. Mack dared to mock the Hurricane pose before slapping on a bearhug. Hurricane fights up with a crossbody but can't hit a chokeslam. Instead he goes with a high crossbody to put Mack away.

Rating: D. So much for Mack, but that was the case after the Goldberg feud anyway. Hurricane is a character who can work very well in certain circumstances and he can wrestle a very solid match, but there's only so much you can do in a situation like this one. I actually like the team with Rosey, though it's not something that would have much of a shelf life.

Post match Mack beats Hurricane down until Rosey makes the save. This seems to confuse Hurricane, but to be fair it's probably confusing to have a 400lb Samoan in a home made superhero costume save you.

Video on the Elimination Chamber.

It's time for the Highlight Reel. Chris Jericho wants to set the record straight about his hair vs. hair match with Kevin Nash. The rules are very simple: when he beats Nash, Kevin has to shave his head. If Jericho somehow loses though, he'll shave every bit of hair off his face (meaning eyebrows only) because there's no way anyone is touching these gorgeous locks. Jericho: "Watch how it cascades around my face as I flick it to and fro."

Cue Nash with a metal briefcase to talk about how Jericho needs a makeover. Nash asks "Kerwin in the back" to put up some images on the Titantron. Jericho: "ONLY I CAN DO THAT!" Instead we put the clip on the Jeritron 5000, which is a shot of Jericho with his hair changing to various FUNNY styles. Jericho says Nash is funny but what's going to be funny is eliminating Nash from the Chamber. Then he'll take the title and

put it back around his gorgeous waist.

Nash pulls out some electric clippers and wants an answer on hair vs. hair. Wasn't that already accepted? After threats of beating him up and cutting his hair right now, Jericho agrees to the match for next week. Nash fights off a cheap shot and hits a side slam before pulling out some gardening sheers. Jericho tries to hide underneath the ring but comes out with a fire extinguisher to blind Nash and bail. I believe Nash had to get his hair cut for a movie so this wasn't the biggest mystery in the world. At the same time it does add a personal issue to the Chamber and gives the fans a big match to look forward to on Raw.

Summerslam rundown.

Ric Flair vs. Goldberg

Anything goes with Randy Orton as guest referee. Orton slips some brass knuckles to Flair before Goldberg comes out. Flair wastes no time in hitting Goldberg in the jaw for a fast two and a belly to back suplex gets the same. Goldberg is right back up with a gorilla press for the customary extra slow count. A clothesline gets the same, because Goldberg is so well known for going for multiple covers off run of the mill offense.

Goldberg yells at Orton and gets chaired in the back for no effect. Instead it's a shot to the knee to set up the Figure Four with Orton stomping on Goldberg as he makes the rope. Flair lets go for no apparent reason and stays on the knee but Goldberg spears them both down. Cue Shawn Michaels to superkick Orton, allowing Goldberg to Jackhammer Flair. Shawn grabs Orton's hand and slaps the mat three times for the pin.

Rating: D. So Goldberg can beat Flair and Orton up at the same time. That's some good information to know and I'm glad it took them two weeks to establish that fact. Goldberg could have speared Flair down and pinned him clean but why do what works with Goldberg when you can just throw everything together and take away what made Goldberg work in the first place?

Overall Rating: D-. Well it did get better from the Steiner match on but

that's about as much as I can say about this one. The wrestling was a disaster as the big story continues to be the adventures of the battling bosses who can't actually fight, plus waiting on Kane vs. Shane, which isn't that thrilling in the first place. Then there's the Elimination Chamber, which has thrown most of the card into a tailspin. I'm not exactly looking forward to Summerslam at this point and the next few weeks aren't likely to make things much better.

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2017 Awards: Match of the Year

This is a big one.

Well yeah, of course it's a big one, because the actual wrestling is a big part of the wrestling business. One of the most common debates is what was the best match and that's what we're looking at here. Some of these might not be your cup of milk (tea was never my cup of tea) but there's some outstanding stuff to pick from this year.

Note that there's a chance I left a nominee off because I just didn't see it, which is going to be the case with some New Japan matches.

We'll start at the beginning of the year with a match that is certainly going to be discussed somewhere in here with Kenny Omega vs. Kazuchika Okada from Wrestle Kingdom XI. This was the very early clubhouse leader and the subject of some of the most discussion of the ridiculous star rating from Meltzer. The match itself is very good, though it could have been shortened a bit as it does drag. Still though, it's more than worthy of a mention.

Another noteworthy match is WarGames from Takeover: WarGames. I know a lot of fans were worried about this one and while the match wasn't what WCW used to put on, it was still as brutal and violent of a match as WWE was going to offer these days. It was a lot of fun with everyone beating the heck out of each other, including some brutal spots and even some blood. I had a blast with it and it was an incredible spectacle.

At the same show is a match that I underrated pretty badly, despite saying it was quite good. Velveteen Dream shocked the heck out of a lot of people by having an awesome match with Aleister Black after an even better build up. The story was really entertaining and seeing Black kick Dream's head off and then FINALLY give Dream what he wanted by saying his name was the best thing that could have happened. Both guys looked awesome and Dream got a huge elevation. What more can you ask for?

Well how about a big gimmick match? That was the case in the blowoff for the Usos and the New Day inside the Cell. These guys beat the heck out of each other and it was quite the spectacle. This was the match that made the Usos the undisputed top team in WWE in a move a long time in the making. It's very cool to see them get a major match like this and they stole the show in the process.

Speaking of four men in a match, we have the main event from Summerslam with Brock Lesnar vs. Braun Strowman vs. Roman Reigns vs. Samoa Joe. There's no other way to put this: these guys beat the heck out of each other and showed why they come off like bigger stars than almost anyone else in the process at the same time. This was about hitting each other really, really hard until only one person was left standing and it was exactly what people wanted to see.

Next up we have the other clubhouse leader from January with AJ Styles vs. John Cena. I watched this back a few weeks ago and not only does it hold up, but it has some outstanding drama and a huge moment with Cena tying Flair's record. It's great stuff, but there's other stuff that surpassed it later in the year.

That leaves us with the winner and it was the year of the British. Tyler Bate and Pete Dunne had one of the best trilogies in WWE history (easily) and their second match was the best of them all. Taking place at Takeover: Chicago, the match with Dunne taking the title from Bate was one of the most exciting matches I've seen in years with the two young guys leaving everything in the ring with an absolutely crazy Chicago crowd. It was the match of the year and nothing else was really in its world for me.

Royal Rumble Count-Up – 1999: The Bad One

Royal Rumble 1999

Date: January 24, 1999

Location: Arrowhead Pond, Anaheim, California

Attendance: 14,816

Commentators: Jerry Lawler, Michael Cole

What did I ever do to you people? I try to give you all a variety of stuff and somehow I always wind up with freaking Russo. Isn't me freaking out over 2000 WCW enough for your bloody thirsty evildoers? Anyway, it's Austin vs. McMahon at #1 and #2, along with Rock being borderline criminal against Mankind in an I Quit match. Let's get to it.

The opening video makes no secret of the fact that this is all about Austin vs. McMahon. The World Title match isn't even mentioned.

Of note: the theme song here would become Vince's theme for pretty much ever.

Road Dogg vs. Big Boss Man

Road Dogg is Hardcore Champion after beating Boss Man (half of the Tag Team Champions and part of the Corporation) to win the title. Therefore the solution: let them have a regular singles match. Ah the powers of Russo. Even Cole is trying to figure out why the Corporation wouldn't want a chance to get a title. Boss Man is still one of the only people I've ever seen who stands on the bottom rope for his pre-match posing.

Dogg gets shoved down to start and we get an early hair pulling complaint. I hope he files the proper paperwork for that. Or he could just punch Boss Man in the face instead. Boss Man misses a charge in the corner and gets crotched as Lawler tries to explain why this isn't a title match. I'll give him points for trying but it really makes no sense. Boss Man gets more aggressive but is told this isn't a hardcore match.

The distraction lets Dogg crotch Boss Man against the post but he punches and kicks Dogg down with ease. They're clearly trying really hard to have a regular match but neither guy seems to know how to do it. We hit a bearhug from....well from the person you would expect to use a bearhug in this match. Dogg actually raises the roof to get the crowd on his side but gets dropped with a knee to the ribs.

The referee checking on Dogg allows Boss Man to unhook the turnbuckle pad and we're just waiting on it to come back and cost him. Boss Man wins another slugout but gets caught in a sleeper. That goes nowhere so Dogg has to slam him off the top and it's slugout the fourth. A flying forearm and the shaky knee get two for Dogg but he walks into the Boss Man Slam for the fast pin.

Rating: D. So their big idea was to have one of their most popular acts wrestle a style out of his element against an opponent not capable of wrestling that style and then lose. I've said it before but it deserves repeating: Vince Russo is really not that bright when it comes to putting together shows.

We recap Billy Gunn vs. Ken Shamrock. Gunn had, ahem, exposed himself to to Shamrock's sister Ryan. Ken went psycho (again) and set this up with his Intercontinental Title on the line.

Intercontinental Title: Ken Shamrock vs. Billy Gunn

Gunn is challenging but has a bad ankle coming in. Shamrock is the part of the Corporation and the other half of the Tag Team Champions. It's actually Gunn being the aggressor to start by choking Ken down while Lawler is in full on heel mode here, completely supporting Shamrock for wanting to destroy Billy. A clothesline and delayed vertical get two for Gunn but he misses a charge and goes shoulder first into the post.

Shamrock slowly kicks away until he ducks his head and gets caught in a Fameasser for two. So what exactly is Gunn's finisher then, as that was treated like a nothing move. Gunn misses a charge and falls out to the floor so Ken can send him hands first into the post. I say first falsely implying that any other part of his body hit the post as well.

Shamrock takes some time to jaw with the fans, allowing Billy to come back with something like a Stroke off the apron and onto the announcers' table. Well at least that looked good. Back in and Ken starts going after the ankle nearly ten minutes into the match. We get some very slow kicks to the ankle as Cole can't remember Gunn ever submitting. Uh, right. Anyway, Shamrock pulls him down by the hair and gets two off a fisherman's suplex.

The referee gets bumped and a double clothesline puts Gunn and Shamrock down as well. Cue Val Venis, who had recent issues with Shamrock, to take the champion down with a DDT. Gunn makes his comeback as there are fans in towels doing Val's gyrations in the crowd. Billy hurts his ankle again coming off the top and the ankle lock retains Ken's title.

Rating: D+. Off the top of my head, I can't remember a less necessary run in. It didn't change anything and they could have done the exact same finish without Venis coming out there. On top of that, the fans are actually pretty quiet. Believe it or not, there isn't a lot of interest in thirty five minutes of a thrown together nothing team beating one of the most popular teams of all time in back to back matches.

Shane McMahon tries to fire up his dad for tonight.

European Title: X-Pac vs. Gangrel

X-Pac is defending of course. Feeling out process to start, which isn't the smartest move in the world for a match that isn't likely to go more than six minutes. X-Pac quickly takes him down and drops a leg for two. It's already time for the rapid fire kicks in the corner but the Bronco Buster only hits corner. Gangrel is smart enough to follow up with a belly to belly for two and we hit a quick chinlock.

That goes nowhere so Gangrel throws him into the air and into a big crash, only to miss a top rope....we'll say elbow. X-Pac starts his comeback with a pair of spinwheel kicks because he's a man of limited awesome. The champ tries a high cross body but Gangrel rolls through for a three but the referee says two anyway.

Lawler actually has a good explanation by saying the first count was for X-Pac's cover and the other two were for Gangrel. That's not what happened but it's as logical of an explanation as they were going to find. Back up and Gangrel tries to throw X-Pac into the air, only to get pulled down into the X Factor to retain the title.

Rating: C-. Actually not bad here with Gangrel being a totally serviceable worker most of the time. That being said, there's almost no story here as the announcers didn't have any reason for these two to be

fighting. At least the fans finally had something to cheer for a change though as it's been a lot of energy killing losses so far.

DX says they're a family but tonight it's every man (and woman according to Chyna) for themselves.

Here's Shane McMahon to introduce Luna Vachon, who he says is winning the Women's Title due to Sable having a bad back. Sable comes out and says ring the bell. I have no idea what connection Shane has to this feud and the announcers didn't seem to bother explaining the story.

Women's Title: Luna Vachon vs. Sable

Sable is defending and this is a strap match. Luna bails to the floor to start but gets pulled face first into the post. Back in and Sable chokes away as Shane calls Luna hot. Sable can only get two buckles though until Luna pulls her down. That earns Sable a whipping and some kicks in the corner, only to have Luna hit a quick backbreaker.

Luna starts dragging her around to three buckles with Sable slapping them as they go. Of course Luna doesn't notice because wrestling logic is screwy. Sable flips over Luna and goes for the fourth buckle but Shane gets on the apron for a distraction, which somehow doesn't count as a break in the momentum. Not that it matters as Sable's insane fan jumps the barricade and decks Luna, allowing Sable to hit the fourth buckle and retain the title.

Rating: F+. I really can't stand these gimmick matches getting less than five minutes but they're a Russo staple. The problem here is there's no real reason to have all these stories going on, along with no time to build up any drama and advance the story of the match. In other words, it's too little material in too little time and it drags the whole thing down.

The Corporation debates over who gets to eliminate Austin and win the \$100,000 bounty Vince has put on his head tonight.

We recap Mankind vs. the Rock. Mankind won the title on January 4 and Rock wanted a rematch. He offered various stipulations to Mankind before

saying he quit trying. That was enough to get Mankind to agree because he knew he would never quit. Therefore it's time for an I Quit match for the title. Mankind summed it up very simply with a question to Rock: "How does it feel to be in a match you can't win and I can't lose?"

A fired up Rock guarantees to win because he's just that awesome. Watching Beyond the Mat has kind of ruined this for me as it showed Mankind standing about two feet away while Rock was talking here.

WWF World Title: The Rock vs. Mankind

Mankind is defending and this is an I Quit match. Also of note, Mankind had to face Mabel (Viscera) on Sunday Night Heat, resulting in a bad rib injury. Rock gets pounded into the corner to start and Mankind hits his running knee to the head. Some right hands won't make Rock quit yet though so Mankind hits him with the microphone. They head outside with Mankind going knees first into the steps in one of his trademark bumps. Is there any shock that he can barely walk around today?

Rock goes over to do commentary so Mankind blasts him in the head with a chair, only to draw another no. The Mandible Claw knocks Rock mostly out but he won't quit. Mankind tries to take him into the crowd but charges into a belly to belly right back over the barricade for a big crash. Back to ringside with Rock loading up a Rock Bottom through the Spanish announce table but it quickly breaks under their weight. Since it wasn't really worse for either guy, Mankind is right back up and sending Rock into the post.

The fight goes up the aisle with Rock shrugging off right hands and DDTing the champ on the floor. For some reason Rock thinks it's smart to bring in a ladder but a hard shot still won't make Mankind quit. Rock climbs the ladder next to the technical area and Mankind follows him up to a little catwalk. A low blow stops Mankind and Rock rams him off the stand and onto the equipment, causing an explosion and the loss of the arena lights.

The match basically stops as Shane comes out but Rock says there's not going to be a doctor because Mankind is going to quit. Mankind can barely move so Rock drags him back to the ring as this is now a much slower

pace. With nothing else working, Rock handcuffs Mankind behind his back and it's about to get ugly.

Some right hands and rams into the buckle have Mankind bleeding but he kicks Rock low to get a breather. Another low blow has Rock in trouble (and the receding hairline doesn't do him much good either) but of course he won't quit. A clothesline puts Mankind down and now it's time to get scary.

Rock puts a chair over Mankind's face for a People's elbow but he still won't quit. Now we get the infamous part of the match as Rock hits him a ridiculous eleven straight times in the head with Mankind not being able to defend himself in the slightest. Even Lawler says that's enough after two shots. Mankind is completely out as Rock puts the mic to his mouth and a recording of Mankind's voice from weeks ago says he quits to give Rock the title back.

Rating: B-. That ending is too much to take and is almost more brutal than the Cell match against Undertaker. The beating just kept going and going with Mankind looking weaker and weaker every time. Apparently Rock hit him about three times as much as he was supposed to and Foley's family was terrified (justly so) over what they saw. The rest of the match is good enough but the ending is one of the scariest things you'll ever see in wrestling, or anywhere for that matter.

We recap Austin vs. Vince which just happens to be taking place in the Royal Rumble. There's no secret about the fact that this is all about those two and to be fair that's the only thing anyone wanted to see. Austin is #1 and Vince is #2, meaning we're going to see them for at least ninety seconds. Vince has also put a \$100,000 bounty on Austin's head, in case you didn't have enough stories going on yet.

Also earlier tonight, Austin crushed some cars with his monster truck and then beat up the Stooges in the arena. I'm not sure what that adds to anything but it's a thing that happened. As usual, such is life in Russo's WWF.

Royal Rumble

Austin is in at #1 and Vince is in at #2 and the intervals are ninety seconds. Fink takes FOREVER to do the full rules and Lawler is telling him to shut up. Fair point too as he's explaining what does and does not constitute eliminations. Of note here, we get the debut of Vince's chiseled physique which was a real shock as no one had ever seen his arms before. Austin pounds away to start (shocking I know) but opts not to throw Vince out as Golga (Earthquake in a mask as part of the Oddities, which is one of the most bizarre character changes I've ever seen) is in at #3.

Golga goes after Austin but gets dumped in fifteen seconds. Vince bails under the ropes and goes into the crowd to give us a chase scene. They fight into the concourse as Droz is #4 and this is where the match starts to fall apart. If Austin and Vince are going to fight through the back, why have Golga get eliminated when you could do Golga vs. Droz? It's not much (save for a battle of really strange names) but at the moment, the fans in the arena are paying to see Droz stand around doing absolutely nothing.

This is even more proof that Russo is a good idea man but has no idea how to run an actual show. It's not even a complicated concept: you need to give the fans something to watch. I know there are more people on the other side of the camera but you can't forget the people who paid money to come see you. It's poor planning and shows a severe lack of thinking, which is Russo in part of a nutshell.

Speaking of Russo, we see Austin getting beaten down by the Corporation until the camera cuts off. That means we cut back to Droz who is....standing there. Yeah this is really what you're paying to see: a guy standing in the ring doing nothing. Edge comes in at #5 to give us something but the fans are now dead because they've lost Austin and Vince (neither of whom were eliminated) but they're stuck with two uninteresting guys that have no chance of winning.

After nothing of note, here's Gillberg (with full Goldberg entrance) at #6 to keep this stupid. Gillberg is out in just a few seconds as we cut to Austin unconscious in the ladies room. Steve Blackman is in at #7 as Austin is stretchered out. The clock is flying by now as they need to get

some action going to revive the crowd. Dan Severn is in at #8 as the lack of star power is already making this horrible.

We see Austin going into the ambulance, which to be fair is more interesting than four nothings (remember that Edge wasn't a big thing for a long time to come) wasting time in the ring. Tiger Ali Singh, one of the biggest misfires you'll ever seen, is in at #9. Blue Meanie is in at #10 and we're somehow a third of the way through this.

After Austin and Vince, the biggest name in the match so far has been....geez I guess Droz. What this match needed was a midcard act to clean out the deadwood (Shamrock perhaps) until some popular act (maybe the Outlaws) came in to balance him out. Put Shamrock in at about #8 and the Outlaws in at about #13 and #16 respectfully, then pick up the pace again later on. But no, let's have this huge bunch of nothing in the ring to kill the crowd until we get back to Austin vs. Vince at the end because Heaven forbid Russo come up with anything besides one idea.

There's no one at #11 but we cut to the back (again) to see Mabel destroying Mosh and taking his spot. Blackman and Severn are quickly put out with Singh following them a few seconds later. Road Dogg is in at #12 to FINALLY give the fans someone they care about. Meanie is dumped as well, leaving us Edge, Mabel and Road Dogg in the ring.

Edge is eliminated a few seconds later but there go the lights because we haven't had an angle in a few seconds. It's the Ministry of Darkness (is there a reason Undertaker isn't on this card?) to eliminate Mabel and here's Undertaker to hypnotize him, leading to Mabel becoming Viscera. Therefore, we have ANOTHER lull as Dogg is all alone.

Gangrel is in at #13 and doesn't last thirty seconds, giving us the third lull of the first half of the match. Add that to the fact that save for Austin and McMahon who haven't been seen in twenty minutes, the first eleven entrants are already gone, making the first third of the match completely worthless. Kurrgan is in at #14 and beats on the Dogg until Al Snow is in at #15, only to be eliminated in less than a minute.

Goldust is in at #16 to interrupt Dogg vs. Kurrgan II. Dogg knocks both of them down and gets the fans breathing again with a SUCK IT. Here's

Godfather at #17 as it occurs to me that three of these people will be Intercontinental Champion in less than three months. They go from boring everyone here to having a title in that span of time. Again, only Russo.

Kane is in at #18 to FINALLY give us someone who might have a prayer of a chance at winning this thing. He clears the ring in thirty seconds but here are people from the mental institution to reclaim Kane, who eliminates himself and runs through the crowd. So yeah, we now have NO ONE IN THE RING, meaning that when Shamrock comes in at #19, he has nothing to do but stand around as we wait for an opponent. Oh wait Vince comes back to do commentary as we're just sitting around.

As we wait, allow me to point out that save for the first two, the first eighteen entrants have all been eliminated, making nearly two thirds of the match completely worthless. Billy Gunn comes in at #20, wearing one boot. Heaven forbid we get anything going through as Shamrock takes him down with a kick to the bad ankle. Gunn throws him into the corner for a break but Ken goes after the ankle again.

Test is in at #21 but let's cut to Mabel being put in a hearse. As luck would have it, an ambulance pulls in with Austin driving, because he was able to wake up, commandeer the ambulance, and drive back here in the span of half an hour. We FINALLY go back to the ring where Gunn low blows both guys. Big Boss Man is in at #22 to line up the Corporation members for Austin, who comes down and chases Vince off. Shamrock is quickly dumped and Vince is back on commentary.

It's HHH at #23 as you can see the star power starting up because we couldn't have them in there earlier in the match because of whatever reasons. People start taking worthless shots at Austin, who blasts Gunn with a hard clothesline. Val Venis is in at #24 and Austin dumps Gunn, giving us Vince, Austin, Test, Venis, Boss Man and HHH. X-Pac is in at #25 as Lawler wants to know why no one is going after Austin. Fair point, but the answer would be "because the script says they shouldn't."

X-Pac kicks Austin in the face and it's Mark Henry at #26 to a far bigger reaction than you would expect. Jeff Jarrett is in at #27 as there's just nothing going on between these entrants. The stupidity continues as X-Pac

is the only one going after Austin and it's likely not even due to the money. D'Lo Brown is #28, still feeling guilty for making Terri Runnels suffer a miscarriage. Austin easily dumps Test and Boss Man gets rid of X-Pac a few seconds later.

Henry clotheslines HHH and Jarrett goes after Austin, prompting Vince to praise him in something that sounds bizarre today. HHH gets rid of Jarrett and it's Owen Hart taking his place at #29. Owen and Brown double team Austin until HHH makes the save, presumably to get all the money for himself. Austin slips to the floor and throws water at Vince. Chyna is the first woman in the history of the Rumble at #30 and immediately dumps Henry. That earns her an elimination from Austin and we're down to Austin, Vince, HHH, Venis, Brown, Boss Man and Owen.

We get Austin vs. HHH in a fall preview but HHH has to eliminate Venis. Austin uses the distraction to Stun HHH and toss him, leaving us with four in the ring. Brown misses a dropkick on Austin (why are these two fighting in the final five of the Royal Rumble?) and everything slows down AGAIN. Owen enziguris Austin but gets backdropped out. Boss Man punches Austin down and D'Lo hits the Low Down, only to have Boss Man throw him out.

A Stunner is enough to get rid of Boss Man and we're down to Austin vs. Vince. Well of course we are. They fight on the floor (read as Austin beats him up even more) before Vince hits a quick low blow instead. That earns him a Stunner but Rock comes out for a distraction, allowing Vince to dump Austin and win the Rumble.

Rating: F. Do I even need to explain this one? You had Austin, possibly at the peak of his popularity, and even he couldn't get anything out of the fans. It's further proof that you can't just treat your fans like garbage the entire night and then expect them to pop for your one idea.

On top of that, these shows continue to not be able to hold up. Can you imagine if this happened today? No one would buy Vince as keeping the title shot because there was no way that could happen. This result was designed to get people to watch Raw the next night to see how Austin was going to get out of this one. That's fine at the time, but it really

doesn't hold up on a second viewing in the slightest.

It really is amazing when you consider that Russo somehow put together the worst Royal Rumble ever, followed by maybe the worst Wrestlemania of all time just two months later. Why in the world would someone think that he should be given even more power and authority? This was one of the biggest disasters I've ever seen and it's almost painful to sit through all over again.

Shane and the Stooges come out to celebrate, meaning it's time for beers. This goes on for a bit until a two minute highlight package takes us out.

Overall Rating: F+. Let's recap here. On a six match card, you had two face wins with X-Pac and Gangrel. In other words, the face wins came in the most meaningless matches on the card. As I said in the redos of some WCW pay per views, you have to give the fans something to cheer for. This was one of the worst major shows I can remember in a long time and it's almost all because of Russo not knowing how to write a wrestling show. This is one of those rare shows with almost nothing positive going on and it's really amazing that they actually put this on and expected people to be entertained.

Ratings Comparison

Big Boss Man vs. Road Dogg

Original: C-

2013 Redo: C-

2016 Redo: D

Ken Shamrock vs. Billy Gunn

Original: D+

2013 Redo: C+

2016 Redo: D+

X-Pac vs. Gangrel

Original: B-

2013 Redo: C+

2016 Redo: C-

Sable vs. Luna Vachon

Original: F

2013 Redo: D

2016 Redo: F+

The Rock vs. Mankind

Original: B

2013 Redo: B

2016 Redo: B-

Royal Rumble

Original: F

2013 Redo: F

2016 Redo: F

Overall Rating

Original: D-

2013 Redo: D

2016 Redo: F+

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/01/18/royal-rumble-count-up-1999-please-make-it-stop/>

And the original redo:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2013/01/12/royal-rumble-count-up-2013-redo-1999-disturbing-to-watch-for-multiple-reasons/>

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up the Monday Nitro and Thunder Reviews Volume VI: July – December 1999 in e-book or paperback. Check out the information here:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2017/11/22/new-book-kbs-monday-nitro-and-thunder-reviews-volume-vi/>

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Monday Night Raw – January 8, 2018: THEY'RE NOT EVEN PAYING ATTENTION!

Monday Night Raw

Date: January 8, 2018

Location: FedEx Forum, Memphis, Tennessee

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Booker T.

The big story this week is the return of the Miz, but at the same time we need to have someone to challenge Roman Reigns for the Intercontinental Title now that Samoa Joe has been vanquished. I think you might be getting where I'm hinting: Finn Balor with the Club challenges Reigns for the title. I've heard of less interesting ideas. Let's get to it.

The opening recap looks back at Reigns defeating Samoa Joe last week. I'm still not sure if that's the right call.

Opening sequence.

Here's Reigns for the opening chat. Reigns is surprised that Joe came in so unprepared last week because Roman was fighting for his brother Dean Ambrose. If you mess with one member of the Shield, you mess with all of them. Cue Jason Jordan of all people to say that he feels like something special. After ignoring the YOU BOTH SUCK chants, Jordan implies that he's part of the Shield now and even does the fist.

This brings out Seth Rollins to say Jordan's timing is horrible. It's made clear that he's not part of the Shield but Jordan says they can fight anyone. Jordan thinks they're pretty good despite not being the Shield, but Reigns and Rollins aren't convinced. Neither are Finn Balor and the Club, who interrupt next. They talk about their history together, which started way before Jordan even knew who his daddy was.

Then they came here and did their own thing, all with success. The thing is, they all knew they would come together to take over. They get in the ring with Balor saying this is the year of Balor Club. Jordan laughs them off and says he'd rather be in the Champions' Club. Gallows calls him a NERD so Jordan goes after him, only to quickly be calmed down. Kurt Angle comes out to make the six man main event. Jordan as the misfit works very well here, but I'm not sure where it goes. Balor vs. Reigns could be some good stuff too, especially if it makes me look smart.

Little Mix is doing the Royal Rumble theme song. That would be an all girl band that my fifteen year old cousin loves. Are they that out of band ideas?

Bayley/Sasha Banks vs. Mandy Rose/Sonya Deville

Mickie James, now official for the Rumble, and Paige are at ringside. Bayley and Mandy get things going with Mandy pulling her down by the hair. Back up and Bayley shoves her out to the floor as the announcers talk about the Rumble (fair enough in this case). We take a break and come back with Sasha hitting the running double knees for two on Mandy.

Sonya offers a distraction though and a good looking jumping knee drops Banks. A comeback is cut off by some hard, rapid right hands to the ribs in one of the first instances of Sonya looking like an MMA fighter for a change. A double clothesline gives Sasha a breather but Mandy breaks up another hot tag attempt. Everything breaks down and the Bank Statement makes Mandy tap at 10:57.

Rating: C-. Pretty standard women's match here and that's all it needed to be. They're keeping Paige looking strong, which is the most important thing they can do at the moment. Mandy and Sonya are just going to be cannon fodder in the Rumble anyway so having Bayley and Sasha get a win over them helps people who need the help and doesn't harm people who wouldn't be hurt anyway.

We look back at the ending of last week's show with Brock Lesnar and Kane brawling.

We look at Cedric Alexander and Goldust teaming up last week.

Goldust is dressed like Mickey from Rocky and gives Cedric one of Mickey's speeches. Cedric says he has it because he's fired up enough to win the title tonight. Goldust says the one thing standing in Cedric's way is Cedric himself. The voice makes Goldust cough before he says tonight is all about Cedric.

Earlier today, Goldust was doing a time lapse video of putting on his makeup when he found out that Alicia Fox will be his partner for the Mixed Match Challenge.

Matt Hardy vs. Curt Hawkins

Before the match, Matt officially enters the Rumble. Matt has his full on Broken entrance, complete with a theme song talking about being Broken. Hawkins tries an armbar but Matt bites his way to freedom. A snap German suplex into the corner has Hawkins in trouble and a missed middle rope crossbody makes things even worse for him. The Side Effect into the Twist of Fate is enough to end Hawkins at 1:55. Matt looked different enough to make the character feel different, which is a good sign for his future.

Post match Bray Wyatt appears behind Matt and a laugh off ensues. Nothing physical goes down.

Here's Elias with something to sing. The fans boo his guitar playing but Elias says it was good. He's got a song about Memphis and Elvis but the fans don't seem too thrilled with him. Elias: "What's wrong with Elvis???". He doesn't care about Elvis though because there's a star on the way who is taking over the entertainment biz. Elias: "Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the Miz." Nice rhyme there.

The Miz, with the Miztourage, is back and ready to brag about his recent accomplishment. The fans welcome him back (along with his much taller hair) but Miz wants to thank the Miztourage for holding things up while he was gone. Dallas says Miz makes every day Mizmas and Dallas thinks having him back feels like winning the Mizzies every single day. Bo even has a present for Miz: a framed photo of Miz himself. Dallas: "It's going to be hard to get to sleep without that tonight." Miz: "...what?"

Axel has his own present: the suit jacket that he's wearing! Dallas offers his watch and Axel tries his shoes but Miz tells them both to sit down. Miz brags about his 2017 and promises to make it even bigger this year. We see a clip of Shield TripleBombing Miz through a table to put him on the shelf two months ago, which of course requires revenge.

Miz says the champion makes the title and daddy is home. In 2018, he's celebrating the birth of his daughter and become the greatest Intercontinental Champion of all time. He's back for the title and you can believe that. This was the most serious Miz has been on the main roster in a long time and it feels like he's been elevated a bit, which is long overdue.

Balor Club tries to talk strategy for tonight but Anderson and Gallows would rather make Japan references. They agree to make 2018 the year of Balor Club.

Cruiserweight Title: Enzo Amore vs. Cedric Alexander

Enzo is defending. Before the match, Enzo talks about missing last week's show but being taken care of by Nia Jax. Last week he was in the hospital

and watched the show, which included the Zo Train facing Cedric and Goldust. Then Enzo got it: they were teaming so Cedric can get close to gold, because he's not winning the title.

Cedric drops him with a single right hand, followed by a kick to the head to really drop Enzo. We see Nia Jax watching in the back as Enzo is pulled away from the ropes to keep Enzo in trouble. Enzo knocks him off the top in a heap though and Cedric is holding his back as we take a break.

Back with Enzo grabbing a chinlock but getting dropkicked out of the air for his efforts. Cedric fights back with some clotheslines followed by the Neuralizer. Another kick sets up a big flip dive but Enzo comes up screaming about his ankle. He's busted open too as the trainer comes over to check on him but that's a countout at 8:50.

Rating: D+. He better have a broken ankle at this point as it would get the title off of him. It's good to have the title match over and Cedric is likely to get a rematch, but they desperately need something fresh in this division. There's only so much you can do with waiting on another title match for so long but at the same time you can't have Enzo actually wrestle that often because there's nothing he can do in the ring.

Post break Enzo is in the trainer's room when Nia comes to check on him.

Angle is on the phone with some legendary female wrestler about a spot in the Rumble but has to go when the Bar comes in. They want their rematch for the titles and aren't happy with the six man tag main event. Sheamus claims favoritism but Angle makes the title match at the Rumble. That's cool with them and Angle gives them a match against some surprise competition tonight. The two of them leave and Miz comes in to brag about his upcoming reality series along with Maryse. Miz wants his rematch for the Intercontinental Title at the 25th anniversary of Raw. Angle thinks it's a good idea and the match is set.

Earlier today, Miz found out that Asuka will be his partner for the Mixed Match Challenge.

Alexa Bliss comes in to see Asuka and threatens her with Nia Jax. It's as

short as it sounds.

The Bar vs. Titus Worldwide

Sheamus knocks Titus around to start before it's off to Crews for a dropkick on Cesaro. The standing moonsault gets two but Apollo is sent outside, seeming to bang up his knee in the process. Back in and Sheamus grabs a wristlock as Dana Brooke plays cheerleader. Crews gets over for the tag and the beatdown continues as everything breaks down. Apollo dodges a Brogue Kick by moonsaulting onto Cesaro, allowing Titus to roll Sheamus up for the pin at 5:30.

Rating: D. Uh, sure? I'm glad to see Crews getting a win for once but this feels like a way to have Sheamus and Cesaro come back and crush them in a rematch as we get closer to the Rumble. The match was nothing to see as it was all about the surprise, which certainly worked, though I'm not exactly ready to put Titus Worldwide in the title hunt.

Here are Paul Heyman and Brock Lesnar to talk about old school. The thing is, this is a progressive industry where you need fresh ways to present the ideas to the audience and the general public. They've gotten away from the old school way of promoting a Universal Title match (oh come on), which was all about finding a challenger who could possibly pin or tap out a champion.

Now the Universal Title is marketed as how could Brock survive this time. Even Lesnar thinks it sucks. At the Rumble, it's Brock vs. monster #1 and monster #2 but the only cliffhanger is who Lesnar will pin. Heyman knows no one can beat this man and that's all that matters. Lesnar goes up the ramp but here's Kane for the fight.

They fight into the back where Braun Strowman shows up and runs them both over. Brock is thrown into a wall where a big case falls on him. Strowman throws another case onto Kane (that is some scary power) before pulling out...a grappling hook? He attaches it to a big old piece of the set and pulls it down onto both guys for a huge crash, sending Heyman and everyone else behind him into fits of screams. That was quite the set piece and my goodness it should have killed them both. Worry not though, as I'm sure Lesnar will be just fine to lose to Reigns in New Orleans.

I know that's harped on but it's the problem with the entire Universal Title picture. Why should I even possibly buy that Strowman, who Lesnar has already beaten, or Kane (because HA) is going to take the title at the Rumble? Even if they do, there's no way they're defending it at Wrestlemania because that's Reigns' spot and everyone knows it. I know it sounds lame but that's what goes through my head every time I see anything related to the title.

Post break, Brock was taken out on a stretcher while Kane was allowed to walk away on his own. Well limp away but you get the idea. Lesnar didn't want to go to the hospital but went anyway.

Samoa Joe vs. Rhyno

Joe starts fast with an enziguri in the corner and a headbutt cuts off Rhyno's comeback. More right hands give Rhyno a breather until an STO cuts him off. A running big boot into the backsplash gives Joe two, followed by the Koquina Clutch to make Rhyno tap at 2:44. Short and to the point with Joe looking dominant, as he should.

Post match Joe says he's taken years off of Reigns' career and the cracks are starting to show. When everything comes crashing down, he'll be there to pick up the pieces. As for now though, he's entering the Royal Rumble. Joe is ready for everyone, including John Cena, which is a name that he'll never forget.

Alexa sucks up to Nia again, this time saying that Enzo might be holding her back. Nia says Enzo motivates her to be a champion so she's entering the Royal Rumble. She's Alexa's favorite to win but thinks Nia should take Asuka out first. Nia doesn't buy it but Alexa stays on the "Asuka is talking about you" train. Nia: "CAN IT BLISS!"

Alexa whispers something that Asuka said in Nia's ear and Nia can't believe Asuka said that...because Asuka doesn't speak English and Bliss doesn't speak Japanese. If you ignore the times that Asuka has spoken English, there's nothing wrong with this segment. Like, EARLIER TONIGHT WHEN SHE TALKED TO MIZ ABOUT THE MIXED MATCH CHALLENGE FOR EXAMPLE!!!

Announced for the 25th anniversary show: Steve Austin! Ric Flair! The

Undertaker! Shawn Michaels! THE BELLA TWINS!

Asuka comes out for a match but Nia shows up and lays her out.

Royal Rumble card rundown.

Asuka vs. Nia is set for next week.

Balor Club vs. Roman Reigns/Seth Rollins/Jason Jordan

Balor and Rollins start things off with Balor scoring off an early double stomp. It's off to Anderson in a hurry but Reigns tags himself in so house can be cleaned in a hurry, including a double shoulder to Balor. Back from a break with Reigns working over Balor until a Sling Blade cuts him off. Gallows and Anderson take over in the corner with Luke grabbing a chinlock. Anderson drops a knee and puts on a chinlock of his own.

Back up and Reigns gets in a clothesline to drop Anderson but Gallows won't give up the hot tag. The third chinlock goes on but Reigns no sells a big boot and scores with a Superman Punch. The hot tag brings in Rollins for the Blockbuster, followed by a Sling Blade on Anderson. Gallows breaks up the Wind-Up knee and Anderson's spinebuster gets two.

Rollins makes the tag to Reigns but Jordan distracts the referee by mistake so Rollins stays legal. A Magic Killer plants Rollins so Reigns goes outside to fight two on one. Jordan tries to help Rollins up, allowing Balor to hit the shotgun dropkick. The Coup de Grace gives Balor the pin at 15:28.

Rating: C-. The chinlockery hurt this a lot but I'm not sure anyone was expecting this to be any more than another wedge between Jordan and company, which is all it needed to be. That team isn't going to hold together that much longer and it makes sense to have them split up just in time for the Rumble.

Post match Miz and the Miztourage come in to attack Rollins, Jordan and Reigns. Roman takes a Skull Crushing Finale and the TripleBomb to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. This was a storytelling show and, aside from the part

where they couldn't remember the clip they aired earlier in the night where Asuka spoke English, they accomplished that goal. They're getting stuff set up for both the big anniversary show (which could be a blast) and the Rumble (which should be a blast). The wrestling tonight wasn't the point but that's often the case around this time of year. Not a great show but one that did its job, which is often more important.

Results

Bayley/Sasha Banks b. Mandy Rose/Sonya Deville – Bank Statement to Rose

Matt Hardy b. Curt Hawkins – Twist of Fate

Cedric Alexander b. Enzo Amore via countout

Titus Worldwide b. The Bar – Rollup to Sheamus

Samoa Joe b. Rhyno – Koquina Clutch

Balor Club b. Roman Reigns/Jason Jordan/Seth Rollins – Coup de Grace to Rollins

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2017 Awards: Worst Match of the Year

It's the Rated RK-No Special.

This is one of the awards that often shows you how bad things can get. There's a fine line between a match that isn't very good and one of the worst of the year. That's the case this time around as well, meaning I won't be including matches that aren't very good because I'm looking for something far worse than that. These are the worst of the worst for one reason or another.

Before we get into the regular nominees, I'm intentionally leaving out Goldberg vs. Kevin Owens from Fastlane. It was 20 seconds long and it's kind of hard to make a match really be that bad in so short a time. The match was stupid booking instead of a bad match, which are two very different things.

We'll start with the ladies as Alexa Bliss and Bayley which had one of the most career destroying fallouts that you'll ever see. Bayley still hasn't recovered from this and there's a good chance that she never will. The whole story was about Bayley channeling her inner extreme and then she just got the heck beaten out of her in the actual match. Terrible idea and a really bad match, which is quite the horrible concept.

Next up is House of Horrors from Payback, which wasn't even the worse Orton vs. Bray Wyatt match of the year. This was basically a segment in a house (which wasn't horror), an hour off, and then a brawl in the ring with interference giving Bray the win. Wyatt gets nothing out of winning because it's non-title and then the Brand Split screwed everything up anyway. Easily a horrible match, but it would get worse for these two.

Let's spread the venom a little more with the men's Survivor

Series match. I don't remember the last time I saw a match and wondered what the heck they were thinking more than this. It was COMPLETELY overbooked, the big stars they brought in didn't mean much, and it wound up being about HHH vs. Kurt Angle. Oh and that whole Braun Strowman attacks HHH thing? Still waiting on a followup. This was a straight up disaster and one of the biggest missed opportunities in a long time.

It's time to get to Battleground and one of its two horrible matches of the night. First up is the flag match between John Cena and Rusev, which was as much pandering to the show's name as I had seen on anything other than the Royal Rumble. This was long, it was never in doubt, and it was flat out terrible, along with having a rather heavy handed set up in the first place. Cena is better than this, but he seems to have forgotten how to do so.

And now, in a rarity, I present you with a tie for the worst match of the year. In no particular order, we have Randy Orton vs. Bray Wyatt at Wrestlemania XXXIII and Randy Orton vs. Jinder Mahal in the Punjabi Prison match at Battleground. Both of these are horrible for reasons that I can't quite differentiate, meaning I can't put one beneath the other.

We'll start at Wrestlemania, which not only felt like a nothing title change but also featured Bray's main event run (which was long overdue in the first place) having its legs cut out from under him (and he's showing no signs of recovering), title reign for Orton that is as transitional as you can get, and A BUNCH OF FREAKING BUGS BEING DISPLAYED ON THE MAT FOR NO APPARENT REASON! I get the idea of Wyatt trying to get in Orton's head, but it didn't even work. Orton just shrugged it off, hit the RKO, and won the title. What was the point of this?

Speaking of that, what in the world was the point in having the Punjabi Prison match go that long? It felt like they could have chopped a good fifteen minutes (it was less than thirty

altogether) from the thing and told the same story: Orton dominates, the Singh Brothers interfere, Mahal gets beaten up some more, the Brothers interfere, Great Khali makes a one off appearance and Mahal retains. It was long, it was terrible, and Mahal retained the title.

But was it as bad as Orton vs. Wyatt in Orlando? Well...

I don't know, because I'm not thinking about these things again and you shouldn't either. Go watch some old Divas matches which were at least so bad they were funny. These were so bad that they belong in a woodchipper somewhere. The bad stuff was REALLY bad this year and I can't imagine things actually being worse this year.

Royal Rumble Count-Up – 1998: You Can't Stop Destiny

Royal Rumble 1998

Date: January 18, 1998

Location: San Jose Arena, San Jose, California

Attendance: 18,542

Commentators: Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

It's the year of Austin and for once, the WWF is looking good going forward as the debcale that was the main event of Starrcade has caused WCW to hit a brick wall. The main event tonight is Shawn defending the title against Taker because he didn't want to face Owen Hart, the most logical opponent. Also there's the Rumble, which is obvious of a winner as there's been in years, but in this case that's ok. Let's get to it.

The opening video is about the two main matches as you would expect. The rest of the card doesn't mean much anyway.

Mike Tyson is in a skybox.

Vader vs. The Artist Formerly Known As Goldust

This is during Goldie's midlife crisis/PAY ATTENTION TO ME phase. These two had a great match at Clash of the Champions so maybe this won't suck. Goldust jumps him as Jerry is glad the gold one is in men's clothing again. Vader shrugs off the shots to the back and chases Goldust to the floor. Vader rams him into Luna as we hear about Austin not being here yet. Goldust is sent into the steps as Vader keeps control.

Back in and Luna trips Vader up, finally allowing Goldie to get in a clothesline. Another clothesline puts him down and Goldust works on the leg a bit. Goldie drops a middle rope elbow to the ribs and we head back to the floor. Vader is sent into the steps so Luna can choke him a bit before we head back in. Goldust pounds away again but stops to kiss Vader. I may not be a pro wrestler, but I know better than to kiss a guy called the Rocky Mountain Monster.

Vader kills him with a clothesline and suplexes Goldust down before getting two off a splash. Vader loads up the Vader Bomb but a low blow stops him cold. Another clothesline puts Goldie down again and Vader sits on his chest. He loads up the Bomb again and despite Luna jumping in his back, Vader drops it anyway and crushes Goldust for the pin.

Rating: D. The place popped for the ending which did look cool, but other than that this was a messed up match. Goldust in this gimmick didn't really work because at the end of the day, he's still boring old Dustin Rhodes working the same standard style. It's not horrible but it's not a good choice to have on a PPV.

Austin gets here and tells Cole to park his truck. Southern Justice (the heel Godwinns) follow him, presumably to jump him.

Max Mini/Mosaic/Nova vs. Battalion/El Torito/Tarantula

Minis here with Sunny as the referee. Max Mini (more famous as Mascarita Sagrada) is by far the most famous of these guys as he's about 4 and a half feet tall but can move around very quickly. Nova and Tarantula start things off with Tarantula (on the heel team) being way bigger. Nova takes him down with some headscissors before it's quickly off to Battalion (military themed guy) vs. Max. Max armdrags him to the floor which brings in Torito, meaning we're in lucha rules (meaning sending someone to the floor means another member of your team can come in without an actual tag).

Torito can actually get his head over the top rope, meaning he's just under the size of Rey Mysterio. Mosaic comes in and gets caught in a gorilla press and a release flapjack. A second flapjack attempt is caught in a wrist drag to send Torito to the floor and it's off to Tarantula. That goes nowhere so here's Battalion again. The fast tags continue as here's Nova vs. Torito already.

They both hit the floor so Mosaic speeds things up against Battalion again. Mosaic spins him around again a few times before it's back to Mini vs. Tarantula. Max gets caught in a spinebuster but goes up top almost immediately for a delayed rana. Max sends him to the floor and Tarantula backs off. Back in and Torito hits a Mafia kick to the back of Max's head and a chop puts him down again.

For no apparent reason Sunny picks Max up so he can dropkick the villains. I can only assume Sunny is there to give the fans anything to care about. Mosaic and Battalion go to the floor as does Torito so Max can hit his big dive. The others dive on them as well and it's a big pile on the floor. Back in Max rolls up Torito for the pin.

Rating: C. I'm going with a C because I have no idea what else to go with. I don't know who these people are, I have no idea why I should care, and I might have seen these guys twice other than this (aside from Max). These matches are really hard to get into because there's nothing to them. Much like a lot of the luchador matches in WCW had the same issue: why should I care about these people?

The Nation goes to attack Austin but only find an Austin foam finger.

The McMahons are in Tyson's sky box.

We recap Shamrock vs. Rock. Shamrock has charged through the Nation to get this shot at the unofficial leader of the team. Mark Henry joined the Nation to save Rock from Shamrock less than a week ago.

The Nation argues over which of them will win the Rumble. Rock says the fans of course want to know what he thinks of Clinton and Paula Jones, so he tells the President not to lie down with dogs or you might get fleas. This joke would be done way better over the next few weeks.

Intercontinental Title: The Rock vs. Ken Shamrock

Rock is defending of course. Feeling out process to start with Rocky trying to get a cheap shot in the corner. Both guys shove the other into the corner and Shamrock blocks a shot to the face before hitting one of his own. They run the ropes a bit until Shamrock kicks him in the chest and knocks the champion out to the floor. Back in and Rock pounds away a bit before hitting a corner clothesline. Ken comes back with some clotheslines of his own but the standing clothesline is countered into a hot shot for two.

They're trying to get out of first gear here but it's really not working that well. The champ pounds on him in the corner and but gets caught in a fisherman's suplex for two. Back to the floor with Shamrock going into the steps and then back into the ring. The spinning DDT gets two for Rock and it's off to the chinlock. Rock tries the spinning DDT again but gets caught in a northern lights suplex for two instead.

Shamrock pounds away some more and gets two off a powerslam. The Nation comes out and sneaks Rocky some knuckles which go upside Ken's head for two. Rock hides said knuckles in Shamrock's trunks, just before getting belly to bellied for the pin and the title. Keep that in mind of course.

Rating: D+. Rock would get better, but at the end of the day this didn't work that well. It was mainly punching with both guys trying to throw in a move here or there. This feud never quite worked as well as they were shooting for I don't think and with Rocky holding the title forever, it didn't do Shamrock much good either.

Post match the referee finds the knuckles and reverses the decision. The referee is beaten up very badly for his efforts.

A Coliseum Video Exclusive from “moments later” show a clean and dry Shamrock in jeans attacking the Rock.

Los Boricuas attack someone that they think is Austin but find one of the Disciples of Apocalypse. Brawling ensues.

We recap the LOD vs. the Outlaws, which is old school vs. new with the Outlaws defending the titles. The Outlaws put a big old beating on the LOD and tonight is their return.

Tag Titles: New Age Outlaws vs. Legion of Doom

The Outlaws make fun of the 49ers who lost in the NFC Title game recently to the Packers. The LOD says that Animal’s back is fine and they’re putting the Outlaws on ice tonight. The Outlaws jump the challengers which goes badly in a hurry, as Animal powerbombs the Dogg. The champions try to walk out but get thrown back in so we can start with Hawk (who had one mohawk shaved off earlier in this feud) vs. Roadie.

Off to Animal as Road Dogg’s mouth is bleeding. The pounding continues so here’s Hawk for his one wrestling move in the neckbreaker. Gunn gets the tag and Hawk hits a freaking Lou Thesz Press of all things so he can pound away some more. Animal powerslams both Outlaws down and it’s off to a reverse chinlock on Gunn. Hawk comes in for his second surprise move of the match in an STF.

That goes nowhere so it’s back to Animal, who is tripped up by Roadie. They head outside where Animal is sent into the steps to finally switch the momentum. Hawk gets double teamed in the ring but clotheslines both

Outlaws down (Animal is still legal) but charges into the post. Dogg finds some handcuffs and attaches Hawk to the post, making it a handicap match. Animal makes a comeback with a double clothesline, but Dogg hits him with a chair for the DQ.

Rating: D. So with an injury AND his partner tied up on the floor, Animal STILL couldn't lay down for a pin? Seriously? This match sucked and would have been just slightly better on Raw with less time. The LOD was nothing at this point while the Outlaws were finally starting to turn some heads. Until this point though, they were two jobbers with the titles who kept escaping with them. Brighter days were coming.

The Outlaws destroy Animal until Hawk snaps the handcuffs to make the save.

Some fan wins the Austin truck.

We recap the build up to the Rumble. Basically, everyone knows Austin is going to win and EVERYONE else in the Rumble is trying to stop him but not one has been able to slow him down at all. The only difference here: the fans were eating this stuff up with a spoon.

Royal Rumble

Cactus Jack is #1 and Chainsaw Charlie (Terry Funk) is #2. The intervals are supposed to be two minutes again this year but they would wind up being closer to 90 seconds. Terry brings his chainsaw into the ring so Cactus throws in a bunch of chairs. The referee finally gets the saw out and they pound on each other with chairs. Cactus hits Funk in the head with one, then hands the chair to Funk so he can return the favor. These two aren't exactly normal if you didn't catch that.

Tom Brandi is #3 and lasts about ten seconds. Terry punches Jack down but can't piledrive him on a chair. Cactus suplexes him through two chairs but can't put him out. Rock is #4 and both hardcore guys are down. Rock pounds on Terry in the corner but Cactus blasts him with a trashcan and the double beating begins. Cactus puts the can over Rock's head and they

pound away on him, knocking him through through ropes and out to the floor. Funk hits Cactus low as Mosh is #5.

Mosh and Funk pair off as do the other two guys. Funk (the announcers are calling him that too) tries a moonsault but it winds up being more of a headbutt than a splash. Phineas Godwinn is #6 and helps Rock beat up Mosh. Not much happens for a bit until 8-Ball of the DOA is #7. Jack misses a charge and Funk backdrops him out to empty the ring out a bit. Apparently someone who might have been Ken Shamrock has attacked Austin.

Funk barely hangs onto the rope to avoid elimination until Blackjack Bradshaw (yes that Bradshaw) is #8 and looking as muscular as you'll ever see him look. We talk about Mike Tyson while things slow down a bit until Owen Hart is #9. Jeff Jarrett, the NWA North American Champion at the time in a strange invasion angle, attacks Owen on his way in. Yeah this is what Owen gets for not bolting to WCW after the Montreal Screwjob. Yes I know he was under contract but you know Vince couldn't hold him to it in that situation. Hart can't get in the ring yet.

Steve Blackman is #10 and he has a hairy chest. 8-Ball piledrives Funk as there are way too many guys in the ring right now. Since people seem content to just tease eliminations on the ropes, no one is eliminated until D'Lo Brown is #11. Rock DESTROYS Blackman in the corner before getting in a fight with his Nation teammate D'Lo. Kurrgan, still a psycho monster at this point, is #12.

Thankfully he gets rid of some people like Mosh and....that's about it for now. Dang it clear the ring out a little bit already. You're a monster Kurrgan. Go destroy some villager. Marc Mero is #13, giving us a pop for Sable. Mero pounds away on Blackman in the corner but Kurrgan dumps Steve. Bradshaw pounds on Kurrgan as Rock teases not stomping his teammate before kicking away.

Ken Shamrock is #14 and he immediately kicks Kurrgan down. A big gang takes out Kurrgan as Rock hits the People's Elbow (not yet named) on Funk. Thrasher is #15, giving us Funk, Rock, Phineas, 8-Ball, Bradshaw, Owen (not in the ring), Brown, Mero, Shamrock and Thrasher, or as they're collectively known, WAY TOO MANY PEOPLE. Still nothing happens and

Mankind is #16, confusing the announcers and immediately punching Funk out.

Shamrock finally gets his hands on the Rock as Mero asks Sable for praise. Goldust is #17 in a silver bodysuit with a thong painted on. A minute or so later he puts out Mankind but there are still way too many people out there. Jeff Jarrett is #18 and Owen runs in to beat him down. A spinwheel kick puts Jeff down, followed by Owen skinning the cat and dumping Jeff. Honky Tonk Man is #19 as HHH (on crutches) and Chyna come to the ring. Rock dumps Shamrock to complete Ken's humiliation tonight.

HHH gets on the apron and cracks Owen with his crutch to knock Hart out as well. Ahmed Johnson is #20, looking as bored as I can remember a wrestler looking in a long time. WAY too many people in the ring again. Mark Henry of the Nation is #21 and JR says Henry is "handling the big Johnson." There's no #22 which was supposed to be Skull, but he was jumped earlier remember.

Johnson is dumped out and he still doesn't look like he cares. He would be gone next month anyway. Phineas is out after a ridiculous 28 minutes. On top of being in too long, he accidentally kicks a referee in the head on the way down, giving him a legit concussion. Kama Mustafa is #23 to give the Nation four members at the moment. We're just waiting for Austin at this point.

FINALLY the glass shatters at #24 and the roof goes off the place. Austin comes in through the crowd because he's got ten people waiting on him as he comes in. There go Mero and 8-Ball and things slow down AGAIN, because we need at least ten people in the match at all times for some reason. Henry Godwinn is #25 and nothing happens. Savio Vega is #26, but since we STILL don't have enough people in the ring at the moment, he brings in the other three Boricuas to beat on Austin.

Thankfully Austin beats them out quickly but doesn't eliminate anyone. Faarooq is #27 to give us the entire Nation in the ring. He goes right for the other Nation members though as his face turn continues. Not that anyone cares mind you but he is indeed turning. Austin and Rock tumble through the ropes through the floor to brawl a bit because that's what

those two guys do.

Dude Love is #28 to complete the running joke of the match. He immediately puts out Bradshaw as Goldust is on the floor but not eliminated. You can't see most of the mat because of how many people are in the ring at the moment. Austin pounds on Rock even more with Rock falling to the floor again. Chainz of D0A is #29 as Faarooq puts Brown out. More brawling ensues until Vader completes the field at #30. This gives us a final group of....hang on I need a breath first....Rock, Thrasher, Goldust, Honky Tonk Man, Mark Henry, Kama, Austin, Henry Godwinn, Vega, Faarooq, Dude Love, Chainz and Vader, or THIRTEEN PEOPLE.

Vader immediately pounds on Goldust and dumps Honky a few seconds later. Austin dumps Thrasher after an insanely too long 28 minutes. Austin puts out Kama to finally clear the ring out a bit. There goes Vega at Austin's hands as well before Goldust dumps Vader. Godwinn goes out as well before Faarooq puts out Henry. We're down to Rock, Austin, Love and Faarooq as Chainz was put out by Austin off camera.

The Nation members are thrown together and Rock gets hit by Sweet Shin Music and the double arm DDT. Austin hits Dude low and Faarooq throws Love out. Rock puts out Faarooq to give us Austin vs. Rock. They slug it out and Rock is thrown to the apron. Austin is fine with Stunning him and throwing him out to go on to Wrestlemania where he would claim his destiny.

Rating: D+. Austin was awesome as he always was in 1998, but the rest of this match pretty much sucked. As I said over and over, there were way too many people in there for the most part. Also you had WAY too many people getting time they didn't deserve. I mean did anyone need to see Phineas, 8-Ball, Bradshaw, D'Lo Brown and Thrasher all getting over 28 minutes? Not much to see here other than Austin and Foley's funny bit.

Tyson celebrates "Cole Stone" Steve Austin winning the Rumble.

We recap Shawn vs. Undertaker. Basically they feuded extensively in the fall but then after Montreal, Shawn didn't want to face Owen for a fear of him trying to legit hurt him. Therefore they rehashed Undertaker vs. Shawn for the title here in a casket match. Most of the video here is

about the first Cell match, which is still amazing stuff. Oh and one more thing: DX (still just three people at this point) attacked Taker on Raw but Kane had saved his brother, uniting with him for the first time ever. That was six days ago, and remember that a certain Vince Russo is booking.

WWF World Title: Undertaker vs. Shawn Michaels

Like I said, Shawn is defending and this is a casket match. Taker throwing the lights back on makes Shawn jump out of the ring. It's a brawl to start and Taker immediately grabs Shawn by the throat. Shawn punches his way out of it but jumps into another choke by Taker. An attempt at putting Michaels in the casket doesn't work, but a backdrop that put Michaels out of action for four and a half years by slamming his spine onto the casket does work.

Shawn slowly gets up and is kicked into the casket but he immediately bounces out. We head back in with Taker missing an elbow but hitting Old School. Shawn gets whipped into the corner for the Flair Flip to the floor, which is probably the last move he needed to do at this point. Back in and Shawn dives into a powerslam but Taker still can't slam the lid shut. Shawn comes out throwing powder and manages to get a breather. Taker is sent knees first into the steps and Shawn smashes the challenger's back with the steps.

A piledriver on the steps actually works for Shawn but he's got a broken back and can't follow up. HHH whacks Taker with the crutch (where is Owen if he's so angry?) as Shawn stays in full control. Back in and a jumping back elbow puts Taker down but he fights out of the casket. Shawn neckbreakers Taker before putting on a sleeper which is eventually countered into a Saito Suplex.

The forearm from Shawn sets up the nipup which sets up the top rope elbow. He must be either high as a kite on painkillers or on a huge adrenaline rush to be able to have a match like this at this point. The superkick knocks Taker out cold but Shawn is Shawn and stops for a crotch chop. Taker grabs him by the balls and we head back inside for the beating Shawn deserves. Another Flair Flip sets up the big boot, but

Taker misses a clothesline and lands in the casket.

Shawn drops an elbow into the casket, closing the lid on both guys. Cool spot actually. Shawn crawls out but in a semi famous shot, Taker pulls him back into the casket, closing it with both guys inside again. Back in and Undertaker hits one of the biggest chokeslams he's ever hit followed by a JUMPING TOMBSTONE into the casket. The Outlaws and the Boricuas run in as we reenact Royal Rumble 1994, but here comes Kane to save the day. By save the day, naturally I mean turn on Undertaker and shut him in the casket to keep the title on Shawn and end the match.

Rating: B. Considering Shawn's back was literally broken in half during the match, this is a pretty awesome fight. When Taker gets ticked off and wants to hurt somebody, he can lay a beating out like few others in the world. Shawn struggling through a match in this condition is nothing short of great, and the fact that he survived Wrestlemania like this as well is perhaps the greatest physical accomplishment of all time.

Post match Kane nails the casket shut and hacks at it with an ax. He pours gasoline inside and LIGHTS IT ON FIRE to end the show. Taker of course would disappear from the casket once it was opened up.

Overall Rating: D. Good main event aside, this was a REALLY dull show overall. 1998 would wind up being an awesome year, but this wasn't the best start to it in the world. We saw a lot of the relics of the bad times here, but Austin was coming and there was absolutely nothing WCW could do to stop him. This wasn't a good show at all, but it was a necessary evil to get us to the glory days.

Ratings Comparison

Vader vs. The Artist Formerly Known As Goldust

Original: B-

Redo: D

Max Mini/Mosaic/Nova vs. Battalion/El Torito/Tarantula

Original: B-

Redo: C

The Rock vs. Ken Shamrock

Original: C+

Redo: D+

Legion of Doom vs. New Age Outlaws

Original: D+

Redo: D

Royal Rumble

Original: D+

Redo: D

Shawn Michaels vs. Undertaker

Original: B

Redo: B

Overall Rating

Original: C-

Redo: D

...what in the world was I on back then?

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

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/01/18/royal-rumble-count-up-1998-austin-isnt-a-lock-to-win-please-believe-us/>

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up the Monday Nitro and Thunder Reviews Volume VI: July – December 1999 in e-book or paperback. Check out the information here:

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Royal Rumble Count-Up – 1997: Austin x1

Royal Rumble 1997

Date: January 19, 1997

Location: Alamodome, San Antonio, Texas

Attendance: 60,235

Commentators: Vince McMahon, Jim Ross, Jerry Lawler

I'm scared to think how many of those tickets were freebies. This is the annual requested redo and I'm not sure what to expect going into it. Well I am as I've seen the show multiple times but it's been awhile. The main event is of course Shawn Michaels vs. Sid II because we need the big hometown moment. Those actually existed back in 1997. Let's get to it.

As you might expect, the opening video is all about Shawn because it's 1997. The title win at Wrestlemania was nice at all but his defining moment came at Survivor Series when he showed compassion for Jose Lothario instead of trying to retain the title. Well to be fair that would be defining as it meant Shawn actually lost a title match instead of vacating the title so maybe they're on to something.

The announcers preview the show and Lawler is VERY excited about the main

event.

Intercontinental Title: Goldust vs. Hunter Hearst Helmsley

This is one of my least favorite matches ever. Helmsley is defending against a freshly face Goldust. Basically everyone thought Goldust was gay but he confirmed that he wasn't, which sent HHH after Marlena for some reason. Mr. Hughes makes his debut as HHH's short lived bodyguard/butler which is code for bodyguard/Chyna is on the way.

Goldust jumps him in the aisle and hammers away in the corner until a quick atomic drop gets us to even. A catapult sends HHH outside as the crowd is really, really quiet here. I'm not sure if it's the place being huge or the fans being bored but it's not working so far. Goldust sends him into the steps, causing JR to suggest we might get a DQ. I mean, we probably won't this early but points for doing your job.

They keep using the steps with HHH bouncing off them and now Lawler thinks it should be a DQ. Vince talks about some fans who had been trying to talk to Shawn for weeks being thrown out of the building. That's one of those things that doesn't really hold up over time as they just gloss over it and expect us to know what he's talking about. It makes sense at the time but there are probably better things to talk about during a title match on pay per view.

HHH actually comes off the top with an ax handle but a running knee hits the barricade. As JR asks about a DQ again, Goldust starts in on the knee like a good challenger should. We hit a Figure Four as this is already dragging horribly. The knee goes into the steps again as the announcers are wondering why the referee is letting so much go. Back in and Goldust misses a crossbody (called a high risk by JR) to send him outside as HHH takes over again.

The referee FINALLY does something by taking away the director's chair before HHH can swing it (Lawler: "Why didn't you do something about those stairs earlier?") and they head back in. The match is so boring that we actually cut over to an interview with a country singer in the audience. That's getting up there on the all time boredom scale and the dead crowd seems to agree.

HHH misses the kneedrop and hurts his leg again in the process but he's still able to roll away from a Macho Elbow. Hughes, likely as bored as the rest of us, throws in the title but HHH would rather kiss Marlena. That earns him a belt shot to the head, only to have Hughes pull HHH out at two. Of course that's not a DQ so Goldust goes after Hughes, setting up the Pedigree for the pin to retain the title.

Rating: F+. Oh yeah this is still bad and still one of the worst matches I can ever remember to open the show. It's too long, too boring and completely uninteresting. This really needed to have about seven minutes chopped off and far less using the steps. I dread this match every time I watch the show and that hasn't changed a bit.

Bret Hart is used to being the marked man in a match so the Royal Rumble will be no different.

Mankind talks about the Rumble being a chance to hurt a lot of people that he doesn't like as well as some that he does. It's going to be a very nice day.

Faarooq vs. Ahmed Johnson

Faarooq injured Johnson back in 1996 and it's finally time for the grudge match in a feud that felt like it went on for the better part of forever. There are at least ten members of the Nation of Domination here, including a few actors who exist for the sole purpose of making the group bigger. As you might expect, Ahmed erupts to start and beats Faarooq down in the corner before sending him into the post. Where's the OUTRAGE from the announcers over this blatant breaking of the rules?

A shot to the kidneys slows Johnson down and Faarooq calls for a belt, earning himself a clothesline in the process though. The brawl heads outside for a bit with neither being able to keep control all that long as you would expect in a brawl like this. A chair to the back keeps Ahmed in trouble and Faarooq opts to just kick him in the kidneys for good measure.

It's off to the very logical reverse chinlock but Faarooq does the very stupid posing, allowing an electric chair to put him down. Faarooq comes

right back with a spinebuster though, which JR calls a physical catch instead of a fair catch. Uh, right Jim. Ahmed pops up again and hits one of his own, meaning it's time for the Nation to come in for the lame DQ.

Rating: D. Still not great but WAY better than the first, at least partially because it's half the length of the opener. Johnson vs. Faarooq needed to be some big wild brawl, or maybe Johnson finding some partners to help him fight off the team. Like say the Legion of Doom in Chicago in a street fight. But for some reason the feud just kept going after that, which is probably why this feud isn't the most fondly remembered.

Post match the Nation bails for some reason, leaving Ahmed to Pearl River Plunge one of them through a table.

Terry Funk thinks he can win because we're in Texas. Nah, just one of those per show dude. Besides, Goldust is from Austin and look at what he got. Or don't look actually as it's too horrible for words. Or reviews for that matter.

Faarooq says he'll take care of Ahmed in the Rumble because Johnson is an "Uncle Tom".

Vader vs. Undertaker

There's not much of a story here save for some back and forth attacks. We get the big long Undertaker entrance and as usual it looks amazing in the big stadium. They slug it out to start with Undertaker doing the sit up off a clothesline. The standing splash gets the exact same reaction and Vader is looking a bit worried.

The fight heads outside with Undertaker getting the better of it but Vader drops him ribs first across the top rope to take over again. Undertaker gets in a slam followed by a legdrop, which JR says is like no one has ever done. I'm sure that's certainly not meant as a jab at anyone in particular second cousin twice removed.

Old School is broken up which JR says means Vader had it well scouted. Or Vader was smart enough to do ANYTHING when Undertaker was off balance and distracted? And now, let's go INTERVIEW A FAN WHO SAVED UP TO COME TO THE

SHOW. Lawler rips on Pettengill for wasting our time like that (amen brother) while Vader was pounding Undertaker about the head and shoulders (the body parts, not the shampoo).

We hit the lame nerve hold for a bit until Undertaker suplexes his way to freedom, leaving both guys down. Vader is up first and goes to the middle rope, only to dive into a powerslam. That would be a lot more impressive if Ahmed hadn't done the EXACT SAME THING, even from the same corner, to Faarooq in the previous match.

Vader's powerbomb gets two but Old School drops him again....and here's Paul Bearer. Undertaker gets in a chokeslam but makes the mistake of going after Paul. Vader tries for a save and avoids a dive off the steps, sending Undertaker ribs first into the barricade. Bearer adds an urn shot and it's the Vader Bomb to put Undertaker away.

Rating: C-. I'm a fan of Undertaker slugging away at a monster so this was more entertaining than it probably should have been. Vader was in something close to a free fall after losing to Shawn at Summerslam so this was more of a comeback win than anything else. Undertaker vs. Bearer would continue for a very long time.

Vader leaves with Bearer and Undertaker beats up a referee.

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

British Bulldog is going to win because he's bizarre. Yes, bizarre.

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

This is a AAA match because the company was willing to try ANYTHING to get people interested, including these guys that 99% of fans have never heard of before. I'll do my best to have any idea who these people are and what's going on here but bear with me. Estrada and Heavy Metal (who Vince thinks is Estrada) start things off do a technical sequence to start before it's off to the ancient looking Aguayo vs. the very feathery looking Estrada.

The crowd is just GONE for this one as Canek's middle rope crossbody gets

on Guerrera. Fuerza misses a top rope crane kick Swanton (that's an odd one) so Canek gets an easy two. Heavy Metal does a Tajiri handspring but stumbles through the elbow to drop Garza. Things speed up a bit but they still seem a few steps off to keep this from getting, you know, good.

We hit a stalemate and that means it's time to shake hands and bring in Estrada and Canek. They start running the ropes but WAIT! Time for more tags. Metal avoids a Figure Four and we get down to a bit of a traditional tag formula with the focus on Metal's leg. Guerrera tries to make a save but dropkicks Metal by mistake and everything breaks down. Garza gets in his corkscrew plancha and Aguayo's top rope double stomp to the arm (meant to be ribs) finally ends Metal.

Rating: D. I'll give them points for trying something different here but this didn't work for me. The wrestling wasn't great here and I really have no idea who these people are. It was a nice try at something new and when you're in the depths that the company was in at this point it's worth the shot but this was a big miss.

Attendance announcement.

Royal Rumble

Ninety second intervals here and it's Crush in at #1 and Ahmed in at #2. JR says Ahmed has a minute and a half to do whatever he wants to Crush. So Crush is stuck with his arms behind his back and isn't allowed to fight back? They fight to the mat and the clock messes up so it's Fake Razor Ramon in at #3, earning one heck of a booing. Thankfully Ahmed gets rid of the clown in about ten seconds but Faarooq shows up in the aisle, meaning Ahmed eliminates himself to go after him.

Thankfully (I think?) Phineas Godwinn is in at #4 to give us something to watch. It's as thrilling of a brawl as you can imagine as Vince keeps talking about the clock issues, which means there's no clock to be seen. Austin is in at #5 to wake the crowd up a bit and a middle rope clothesline is enough to allow Phineas to get rid of Crush. A Stunner gets rid of Phineas and it's Bart Gunn in at #6. That lasts all of twenty six seconds before Austin is all alone again.

Jake Roberts is in at #7 and throws the snake bag in for a bonus. The DDT is loaded up but a backdrop gets rid of Jake, who is replaced by British Bulldog at #8. This goes a bit better with Bulldog pounding Austin down until Pierroth (AAA guy) is in at #9. The luchador gets double teamed until Bulldog wises up and turns on Austin. Sultan, whose music sounds like Pierroth's, is in at #10 as they're flying through this so far.

Bulldog puts Austin on the apron but gets poked in the eye for his efforts. We've got a clock now and the fans are into it again, which is a really good sign for the match. Mil Mascaras is in at #11 and you know he's going to get his stuff in. HHH is in at #12 as there's really not much going on in between these entrances. Bulldog gets rid of Sultan to clear the ring out a bit though it doesn't do much to keep the crowd going. The middle rope middle finger elbow hits HHH and Owen Hart is in at #13.

Without much going on, Owen "accidentally" eliminates Bulldog, who really isn't happy with his partner as a result. Goldust is in at #14 and everyone gangs up on him for some reason. Cibernetico (also from AAA) is in at #15 and is tossed almost as quickly, along with Pierroth. Marc Mero is in at #16 as Mascaras dives on Cibernetico to eliminate himself in the process (which I'm sure was a COMPLETE mistake), followed by Goldust tossing HHH. That leaves us with Hart, Austin, Mero and Goldust who are joined by Latin Lover at #17.

Lover gets in some basic stuff before Faarooq comes in at #18 to eliminate him. Cue Ahmed again for a 2x4 shot to Faarooq to get rid of him as well. Austin dumps Mero and Hart, leaving himself alone in the ring. Savio Vega, Austin's old rival, is in at #19 and scores with a spinwheel kick. That's about it though as Austin clotheslines him out to be alone again. Jesse James is next and while he lasts a bit longer than Vega, it's still not even a minute before Austin gets rid of him. Austin sits on the middle rope....and it's BRET HART at #21, giving Austin one of the best OH DANG looks in wrestling history.

The key to him though: he sees Bret coming, shakes his head, and tells Bret to bring it on before starting the slug out. Notice that: he didn't back down and came out swinging because that's how Austin rolled. It

wouldn't fit Austin to panic and try to beg or something. Man against man, Austin thought he could beat anyone on the planet no matter what circumstances he was up against. That's good storytelling and a big part of what made him a star.

Lawler is in at #22 and starts the "it takes a king" line before leaving. Two right hands later and he's back on the floor four seconds later to finish the catchphrase. Vince: "Do you know you were just in the ring?" JR mentions that Bret said he should just be the WWF Champion coming into the show, which is a great example of how his heel turn took off.

Fake Diesel (as played by the future Kane) is in at #23 and at least he looks close enough to pass for a Nash look-a-like. From behind or at a distance, you could actually make a mistake. Fake Razor on the other hand wasn't even close and that's why he was booed while Diesel is greeted with general indifference. A few power moves keep everyone down until it's Terry Funk in at #24. It says a lot when Kane is by far and away the fourth most successful wrestler in a match.

Rocky Maivia is in at #25 to make Kane even less important and of course he goes right after Austin for the sake of future issues. The slow pace continues until Mankind is in at #26, giving us Mankind, Austin, Rocky, Funk, Diesel and Hart. If there has ever been a better collection of talent at one point in the Rumble, I've yet to see it. Just DANG what a lineup here.

Flash Funk is in at #27 and Lawler wants the Funkettes. Bret piledrives the heck out of Austin and Flash dives off the top to take out Diesel and Terry. Vader is in at #28 as I start to miss people wrestling earlier in the show and still being in the Royal Rumble. For some reason Flash makes the mistake of going after him, only to get pummeled down in a hurry. Henry Godwinn is in at #29 to bring the talent WAY down in a hurry.

The big Henry actually clotheslines Vader down as JR compares Lawler's entrant to Bushwhacker Luke's 1991 entrance. Oh come on. Lawler lasted TWICE as long as Luke. Undertaker completes the field at #30, giving us a final group of Undertaker, Austin, Hart, Terry Funk, Flash Funk, Diesel, Maivia, Vader, Godwinn and Mankind. Undertaker immediately punches Vader

down before chokeslamming a few people.

The still unknown brothers have a bit of a fight as Vince calls Undertaker the favorite. Vader throws Flash out and we have Henry vs. Undertaker for a rather off brawl. Rocky almost has Bret out until Vader makes the save for no apparent reason. Austin and Funk chop each other half to death and probably have a blast doing so.

Undertaker throws Henry out and my jaw drops at the talent left in there. The final eight either already are or will be in the Hall of Fame one day. That's INSANE and will likely never be even approached again. Mankind tosses Rocky and then pummels Terry before suplexing him out to the floor. Undertaker gets rid of Mankind, who is happy to brawl to the back with Funk. Bret dumps Austin for the pop of the night but the referees are busy breaking up the brawl, allowing Austin to come back in and eliminate Vader and Undertaker. Bret gets rid of Diesel, only to have Austin throw him out for the win in a great bit of cheating.

Rating: D+. And the good here is almost ALL Austin as the rest of the match was barely even worth talking about. There wasn't much in the way of storytelling to be seen here as there wasn't really a big winner teased until the very end. The lack of talent up until the end and time to go with the build towards the end didn't do a lot of good as the match doesn't even really start until Bret comes in two thirds of the way there. It's certainly not the worst Rumble but it's really not good either.

Bret has another tirade and while he has a point, he handles it like a baby.

We recap Shawn vs. Sid. Back at Survivor Series, Sid attacked Shawn's manager with a camera to cost Shawn the title. Sid has been on a rampage since but now we're in Shawn's hometown for the big rematch.

Shawn says he's sick with the flu (a-huh) but he's ready to fight with 70,000 people (or closer to 50,000 depending on who you ask) behind him.

WWF World Title: Shawn Michaels vs. Sid

Sid is defending of course. Shawn stares him down to start and is quickly shoved across the ring without too much effort. A kick to the chest puts Sid on the floor but he comes right back in and grabs a camel clutch. That goes nowhere (other than around for a long time) so Sid tries a chinlock, followed by one heck of a clothesline.

Some hard whips across the ring set up a bearhug because Sid needs to keep things slow. The bearhug stays on so long that Sid actually LAYS DOWN ON THE MAT WITH IT. A legdrop gets two and it's already back to the reverse chinlock. Thankfully this one doesn't last as long and Shawn comes back with a slam. Really a slam? After all that back work?

The forearm into the flying elbow connects but Sid goes outside to yell at Jose and his son. We get a ref bump so the chokeslam only gets two as a second ref comes in. Sid knocks the second referee down so Shawn hits him with the camera for two. The superkick gives Shawn the title back.

Rating: D+. As I said in the original review, this could have been much worse. I mean, not much worse but it could have been worse. Shawn winning the title back was the most obvious thing in the world and it's ok to have him win here, especially in his hometown. It's not exactly a good match but then again Sid isn't exactly a good opponent. What is nice is seeing a hometown guy win a big match for a change and the fact that it derailed Shawn's heel turn is....well actually it kind of sucks but he wouldn't have the title long anyway.

A ridiculously long celebration ends the show.

Overall Rating: D. Why is this show so fondly remembered? The wrestling is pretty lame (though there are worse options) and the Rumble itself isn't much to be remembered outside of Austin starting his rise to the top of the promotion. It's not the worst Royal Rumble of all time but I don't remember getting into the show a single time all night, save for that look from Austin when Bret came out. Just not a very good show but it's from a bad time for the company.

Ratings Comparison

HHH vs. Goldust

Original: C-

2013 Redo: C-

2017 Redo: F+

Ahmed Johnson vs. Faarooq

Original: D+

2013 Redo: D+

2017 Redo: D

Vader vs. Undertaker

Original: C+

2013 Redo: D+

2017 Redo: C-

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

Original: F

2013 Redo: D

2017 Redo: D

Royal Rumble

Original: C+

2013 Redo: B-

2017 Redo: D+

Shawn Michaels vs. Sycho Sid

Original: C+

2013 Redo: C+

2017 Redo: D+

Overall Rating

Original: C+

2013 Redo: D

2017 Redo: D

Now that's more like it. The two main events just aren't that good but I have NO idea what I was thinking on the opener. That match is a disaster and I can't stand it less and less every time I see 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/>

And the 2013 redo:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2013/01/11/royal-rumble-count-up-2013-redo-1997-why-austin-was-a-near-perfect-character/>

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up the Monday Nitro and Thunder Reviews Volume VI: July – December 1999 in e-book or paperback. Check out the information here:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2017/11/22/new-book-kbs-monday-nitro-and-thunder-reviews-volume-vi/>

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