

NXT – January 3, 2018: I Have An Eye For Talent

NXT

Date: January 3, 2018

Hosts: Kayla Braxton, Mike Rome

It's the first show of the year but as a special, we're looking at the Best Of 2017 in a double length episode. These are always fun to look at as there's nearly a guarantee that you've forgotten at least something that you'll see tonight. There's been a lot of good throughout the year for NXT so let's get to it.

As usual, even if the versions presented on the broadcast are clipped, I'll be posting the full review of each match.

Opening sequence.

We look at Bobby Roode defeating Shinsuke Nakamura for the NXT Title in January.

We look at the rematch from Takeover: Orlando with the full entrances, albeit with some different camera angles during the entrances. Roode retained and Nakamura got the big sendoff.

Video on Shinsuke Nakamura's NXT career from William Regal announcing his debut all the way to his farewell in April.

Video on Drew McIntyre coming to NXT.

From Takeover: San Antonio.

Tag Team Titles: DIY vs. Authors of Pain

Johnny Gargano and Tommaso Ciampa are defending and unfortunately the Authors take off their jackets, meaning the name tags go away. Razar takes Ciampa into the corner and shouts at him a lot, drawing a PSYCHO KILLER chant from the crowd. Gargano tries the spear through the ropes

and is casually swatted away. Everything breaks down and the champs just can't do anything with rights and lefts.

Some running knees work a bit better though and the monsters are knocked to the floor for a suicide dive and running knee from the apron. Back in and Akam casually slams Gargano over the top and the beating is on. It's off to an over the shoulder backbreaker until Johnny slips down into an enziguri....which has no effect whatsoever.

Gargano finally slips away and makes the hot tag off to Ciampa so house can be cleaned as well as possible. Some German suplexes take the Authors down and Paul Ellering is losing it on the floor. The referee tells Ciampa "six minutes left" as he chops away at Akam, who takes Ciampa's head off for two. The champs get two of their own off a double spear but Johnny gets knocked to the floor again, leaving Ciampa to get caught in a powerbomb/neckbreaker combination for two.

Johnny is back in to break up the Last Chapter and it's off to the double arm submission. Akam powers out of Johnny's crossface though and slams Gargano onto Tommaso to break the other hold. That's a really effective spot as the champs took their best shot and couldn't stop the raw power. They slug it out from their knees but the double strike is countered into the Authors' double powerbomb. The Last Chapter on Ciampa give us new champions at 14:27.

Rating: B. I'm kind of surprised here but at the same time not exactly. Coming in I didn't think this would happen but now that it has, it makes the most sense. That being said, I was very, very pleasantly surprised here as I was expecting a big drop off and got the best match the Authors have ever had. It's a good match though and that's all you could ask for out of these guys.

We look at Drew McIntyre winning the NXT Title at Takeover: Brooklyn. Again it's just a few minutes of highlights from a long match. Post match, the yet to be named Undisputed Era ran in and attacked McIntyre.

Video on the Undisputed Era, focusing on Adam Cole.

We look at the Undisputed Era stealing the Tag Team Titles two weeks ago.

Here are some of the tag teams to watch in 2018: the Undisputed Era, the Street Profits, Tino Sabbatelli and Riddick Moss, Heavy Machinery and TM61 (returning from injury in two weeks).

Video on Aleister Black vs. Velveteen Dream. I underrated the heck out of that match.

From Takeover: WarGames.

Aleister Black vs. Velveteen Dream

Black does his still awesome rising up entrance. Dream debuts some custom made tights with himself on one leg and Black on the other ala Rick Rude back in the day. The fans are rather pleased with Dream, even as he slaps Black in the face. They hit the mat to start with Black working on an armbar before grabbing something like an Octopus hold. Dream slips out and actually tries to turn it into a striking match, earning himself a trip to the floor.

That allows Black to backflip into his sitting pose, right in front of Dream. A hip swivel doesn't seem to get on Black's nerves, but he does look away a bit. Dream sits down as well as the fans chant SAY HIS NAME. Black crawls forward like Dream did a few weeks back, freaking Dream out for a change. Dream actually snaps his throat across the ropes to send Black outside, meaning it's time for more posing.

Back in and Dream gets two off a good looking superkick before we hit a reverse chinlock (Dream: "SAY IT! SAY IT!"). Black gets tied up in the ropes as the fans really want him to say it. Dream slaps him though and that's just not a good idea. Black speeds things up with some strikes and a springboard moonsault press for two (SWEET, according to the annoying fans).

A quick Death Valley Driver gives Dream two so he tries a super version, only to get kicked down. Black knees him in the face for a close two, only to get caught in a Sister Abigail into a DDT for a delayed two. The Purple Rainmaker lands on a raised boot though, sending Dream into the ropes. Black kicks him in the face but walks into a superkick. That's enough for Black though and it's Black Mass for the pin at 14:41.

Rating: B+. Who knew Dream had that in him? This was all about the mind games at first but at the end of the day, you (mostly) knew it was going to be Black Mass wrapping this up. Black seems ready to become a huge deal around here and Dream...I'm not sure where he goes from here actually. Really good match though.

Post match Black takes the mic and says "enjoy infamy...Velveteen Dream." I'm not sure what to make of that. Sign of respect maybe?

Video on the build to Andrade Cien Almas vs. Drew McIntyre.

From November 17, the night before Takeover: WarGames.

NXT Title: Drew McIntyre vs. Adam Cole

Date: November 17, 2017

Location: Aztec Theater, San Antonio, Texas

Commentators: Mauro Ranallo, Percy Watson, Nigel McGuinness

Drew is defending, Cole has Bobby Fish and Kyle O'Reilly with him and Shawn Michaels is guest referee. McIntyre takes him down with almost no effort and Cole seems to need a fresh plan. Cole gets tossed off a headlock and bails to the floor as the stalling begins. Back in and a jawbreaker staggers Drew, allowing Fish to grab his foot. Fish and O'Reilly get on the apron so Shawn ejects them both.

That earns a SWEET CHIN MUSIC chant as reality sets in for Cole. One heck of a backdrop puts Cole down (well up and then down) and a poke to the eye has no effect on Drew. Shawn calls Drew off of Cole in the corner and McIntyre isn't exactly happy. Cole takes the knee out though and it's time for a break. Back with Cole getting powerbombed down and a super Celtic Cross getting two.

Cole is right back by kicking the knee out and hitting a Shining Wizard for two of his own. Sweet Chin Music (well you knew that was coming) is loaded up but Drew drops Cole with the Futureshock. Back up and Cole superkicks Shawn by mistake, meaning the Claymore gets a very delayed two. Cue Fish and O'Reilly to stomp Drew down for a bit but the comeback

bumps Shawn again. Shawn is up fast enough to superkick O'Reilly and it's a swinging Futureshock (cool) into the Claymore to retain the title at 15:12.

Rating: B. This was almost more about Shawn than anything else and that's just fine. Shawn was a special attraction in this one and really, he's more interesting than a house show title match. I'm sure Cole is going to be back in the title hunt eventually (around Brooklyn against Gargano would be a nice choice) and Drew should be on the main roster once he gets back from injury. There's nothing left for him to do in NXT and his size is way too much for the rest of the roster.

Quick look at Almas winning the title the next night, during which Drew suffered a bad arm injury.

Almas is ready to face Johnny Gargano, who he insulted after Gargano won the title shot last week.

We look back at Asuka's NXT career from her debut to vacating the title.

Package on the women's division, including looks at the Iconic Duo, Lacey Evans, Kairi Sane, Bianca Belair, Vanessa Bourne, Shayna Baszler and Nikki Cross.

Last week, Sane made it clear that she wants the title but got choked out by Baszler.

Baszler debuts next week.

Video on WarGames, which really was the carnage that it should have been. I know it wasn't quite the match that a lot of people were expecting but it was still a heck of a performance with some rather memorable spots. Let the WWE have its own version rather than a watered down version of the WCW style, which wouldn't work today anyway.

We look back at the injured Tommaso Ciampa explaining why he turned on Gargano at Takeover: Chicago. DIY was supposed to have a moment but Ciampa hurt his knee during a match. Fans started talking about Johnny wrestling on his own and that's not what Ciampa wanted, hence the betrayal. However, during the ladder match, Ciampa tore his ACL in the

match and would be out for the rest of the year.

Video on last week's fatal four way with Gargano becoming #1 contender, earning a shot at Takeover: Philadelphia.

Also set for Philadelphia: Adam Cole vs. Aleister Black. I'm not sure Black wins that one and that makes things more interesting.

Gargano talks about his rough 2017, which started at such a high but then came crashing down around him, including the DIY split and all the losses that followed. He always knew he could do it though and 2018 is going to be the best year of his life. It makes sense to give Gargano this kind of focus as there's no doubt that he's going to be one of the top stars in NXT in 2018, likely holding the title at some point. He had a rocky 2017 but the performances were always there.

Here are the categories for NXT's End of the Year Awards

Takeover of the Year

Match of the Year

Tag Team of the Year

Breakout Star of the Year

Male Competitor of the Year

Female Competitor of the Year

Future Star of NXT

Rivalry of the Year

Overall Competitor of the Year

We get a long profile on Ember Moon, which started with her growing up in Texas watching wrestling with her grandfather. She went to train with Booker T. but got shot down in her first WWE tryout. WWE told her she didn't have the Diva look (read as: she's not a blonde model more than likely) but Norman Smiley say something in her. She stuck with Booker's

Reality of Wrestling promotion and developed a following, eventually earning herself a job after a second tryout.

Moon debuted with her crazy entrance and the Eclipse and was off to the races. Eventually she lost to Asuka though and it crippled some of her confidence, only to win the vacant title a few months later. Moon talks about knowing she can do it and being ready for anything to end the show. I remember watching an episode of the Reality of Wrestling show and thinking she was the standout star of the show. It turned out that she had already been signed by the time I saw it so maybe I have an eye for talent.

Overall Rating: B-. Normally I never know what to do for a Best Of show but this actually had some effort put in, which is a nice touch. They covered a lot here and I can appreciate the extra time being spent on something like this instead of just throwing a bunch of matches out there to fill in time. They even managed to add in extra stuff for next week and hype the Takeover because that's what NXT knows how to do.

The exclusive match was fun and made the show feel special, but I really liked the profile on Moon. We really don't know much about her and if there's one thing WWE knows how to nail, it's introducing you to a character and making them feel important. That's what I got out of Moon and that's what WWE needed to do more than anything else with her. Good show here, and the new year should be off to a hot start.

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Impact Wrestling – December 28, 2017 (Best of 2017 Part 2): Get Your Priorities Straight

Impact Wrestling

Date: December 28, 2017

Host: Josh Matthews

It's the second half of the Best of 2017 show and that means a lot more copying and pasting. There are several options that they could choose to air here but the Bound For Glory main event has already been announced. Next week is the show that really matters though so let's get to it.

We open with a quick video from Slammiversary.

Speaking of Slammiversary.

Impact Wrestling Knockouts Title/Global Force Wrestling Women's Title: Rosemary vs. Sienna

Unification match and Gail Kim is at ringside. Rosemary has an army of freaks with her. Rosemary goes right after her and here are Laurel Van Ness and KM for the nearly immediate distraction. Sienna gets thrown out onto them and orders them to the back, leaving us one on one again.

Back in and Sienna hammers away before grabbing a chinlock. Rosemary gets sent hard into the barricade, only to fight out of a Tree of Woe for a German superplex. That doesn't do much actually as the Red Wedding is broken up and Sienna gets two off the Silencer. The second Red Wedding attempt connects but here's Van Ness to pull out the ref. Allie comes in for the save but the distraction lets Sienna get in a belt shot for two. The mist is blocked and Sienna rubs it in Rosemary's eyes, setting up a

guillotine to make Rosemary tap at 10:03.

Rating: C-. I'm still not sure why these two are fighting or why I should care about the GFW Women's Title but that's the case for the entire "promotion" pretty much since its inception. The match was a good brawl but the overbooking really dragged things down. This story has been going on for months now and it doesn't seem anywhere close to being finished, even though there's not much left for them to fight over.

From Slammiversary again. This was joined in progress but here's the full thing.

Jeremy Borash/Joseph Park vs. Josh Matthews/Scott Steiner

No DQ and D'Angelo Dinero joins commentary. Josh starts with Park and flips around a bit, followed by a kick to the head. A crossbody doesn't work so it's off to Steiner, who looks to be about 50lbs (of muscle) lighter than he was in his regular career. He's also wearing a shirt, which he would never do given that his character was built around a great physique. Again, there was NO ONE ELSE on the active roster that could play this role?

Borash hands it right back to Park...and they run to the back for a pre-taped segment. Park and Borash grab a fire extinguisher while Steiner and Matthews are in a golf cart. A car with a random fan (I think he was in one of the Final Deletion segments) shows up so Matthews and Steiner steal that to give chase, but they can't catch an announcer and an out of shape lawyer on foot.

They finally get out of the car (which had cameras inside) and chase after them with Matthews being backdropped into a pool while Steiner throws Park through a wall. With a camera under the water, the Jaws theme starts playing and Shark Boy shows up to bite Matthews. Steiner leaves Park and here's Father James Mitchell (Abyss' old manager) to say happy anniversary.

Back inside (and after an unnecessary cameo from celebrity chef Robert Irvine) and Matthews misses a Swanton. Josh spears him down but here's Steiner for the save. Matthews grabs a hug which is called a Steiner

Recliner, only to have Shark Boy come in for the failed save attempt. Now Steiner puts on the Recliner and we've got Abyss to get rid of Scott without much effort. The Black Hole Slam onto the tacks crushes Josh and Borash adds a top rope splash to give Abyss the pin at 10:50.

Rating: C. That was as good as it was going to be and the Shark Boy thing made me chuckle a bit. You knew Abyss was going to be in there at some point and there's nothing wrong with that as it was the only way they could really go. Steiner could have been any heel here though and that's not a good thing. Again, it looks like the company has no faith in its roster, which is a very bad sign. The wrestling wasn't the point here of course, but I'm more worried about it continuing until we have a singles match at Bound For Glory. Just let it be over as I don't think anyone really cared much for this in the first place. Please let it end.

From August 24, we see the final five entrants in Gauntlet for the Gold. The match ran over fifty five minutes but we only see about five minutes.

Videos on the international partnerships, including long videos on Eddie Edwards as the GHC World Champion and Johnny Impact as the triple champion of AAA.

Video on Taya Valkyrie.

From September 14, joined in progress again.

X-Division Title: Sonjay Dutt vs. Trevor Lee

Dutt is defending and this is falls count anywhere. Lee gets two on the floor off a baseball slide but Dutt sends him into the barricade for a breather. They head inside for the first time with Lee kicking him in the face, only to get dropped again. Dutt throws in a chair but Lee throws it right back out.

They hit kicks to the head at the same time for a double knockdown. Why there's no count when Dutt's leg is over Lee isn't clear, but I'd guess it's because that's not in the script and the referee doesn't know any better. Dutt's tornado DDT plants Lee but a superplex plants Dutt just as fast. They head outside again with Lee throwing a chair at his head

before fighting into the crowd.

We take a break (of course we do) and come back with the fight heading into the back. Caleb Konley jumps Dutt, because falls count anywhere now means No DQ. A trashcan to the head gives Lee two but heel miscommunication lets him get a breather. Dutt is busted open and it's time to hit Lee in the head with a trashcan lid. A tornado DDT off the wall is countered with a crotching onto a barricade and Lee rolls him up (with tights) for the pin and the title at 13:57.

Rating: C+. It never ceases to amaze me how much they've sucked the soul out of this division. This was a fast paced match and I couldn't bring myself to care about it no matter how hard I tried. It's just not interesting no matter how hard they try (and the wrestlers are trying) and so much of that is due to how worthless the X-Division is now. They're treated like an afterthought and have been for years now. Why would I care if the company doesn't?

From Bound For Glory.

Tag Team Titles: OVE vs. LAX

LAX is defending and this is a street fight. There's no Homicide, suggesting that he was the one down in the back. Santana and Ortiz dive onto the champs to start in a hurry. The brawl splits in two with Jake kicking a trashcan wrapped around Ortiz as Dave and Santana fight in the crowd. Ortiz fights back and grabs a running Liger Bomb off the ramp through a table to basically kill Jake.

Santana climbs the scaffolding as the fans chant about how they can't see anything. A big splash from near the roof crushes Dave through a table and thankfully they're both alive. Back at ringside, Jake fights off a table and pelts a chair at Ortiz's head to save himself. Some chairs are set up in the ring and it's Jake superplexing Ortiz through them, banging up his own back pretty badly in the process.

Santana is back inside and the Street Sweeper onto a pile of chairs plants Jake, only to have Dave come back in for the save. Four strikes to the face give us a quadruple knockdown with LAX getting the better of it.

Some ladders and tables are set up at ringside but here's Callihan to throw powder in Konnan's face. He throws Ortiz onto a ladder and piledrives Santana through a table, giving OVE a double pin to retain at 10:21.

Rating: B-. Fun brawl, though they didn't exactly hide the ending. It also doesn't help that OVE was losing a fair fight when Sami came in. That should be a heel turn and given how this company goes, it really wouldn't surprise me in the slightest. Good match though, with the violence being the focus, as it should have been.

Video on Gail Kim. Now you knew they were getting this in there somewhere.

From November 16. As in we're skipping the title win, because that might put some focus on ANYONE other than Gail.

Gail comes out for her speech and Allie comes out as an invited guest. Kim talks about wanting to wrestle eighteen years ago and finding a wrestling school so she could do just that. We get the required YOU DESERVE IT chants, even though no one deserves as much praise as Gail gets around here. She thanks the women who helped pave the way to get her here (Trish Stratus, Lita, Molly Holly, Awesome Kong) and she's at peace with her decision.

She's vacating the title and can't wait to see where things go from here. No interruption, nothing for anyone else and just Gail. I'm so glad she got this one last moment to add to her collection of other moments. There's no denying that Gail is great but this company seems to think she's Austin and Rock combined. Did I miss it when she became the biggest star the company has ever had?

Video on Moose/Stephan Bonnar vs. American Top Team.

Video on Johnny Impact vs. Eli Drake.

And we'll close it out at Bound For Glory. Joined in progress again, but at least we got to talk about Gail Kim and TripleMania.

Impact Wrestling World Title: Eli Drake vs. Johnny Impact

Drake is defending and has Chris Adonis in his corner. Impact avoids a pre-bell jumping and starts fast with a clothesline. The champ bails to the floor so Johnny is right on him with a slingshot dive. A running flip kick off the apron has Drake in more trouble and a backdrop makes things even worse. Johnny adds a sliding German suplex as Josh says this is the first real test for Drake as champion. Keep in mind that Impact already had a title shot, making Josh sound dumber than usual.

Adonis gets in a cheap shot though and Drake takes over with an elbow off the apron. Drake keeps him outside and throws him into the barricade before choking with a boot. Back in and Drake gets two off a powerslam, followed by some elbow drops. They head outside again with Johnny kicking him in the face, knocking the champ into the post. Johnny's leg hits post though and Drake takes it back inside.

That's fine with Impact, who kicks him down and tries a moonsault, only to get elbowed for his efforts. A belly to back superplex drops Drake and another moonsault gets two. The standing shooting star gets the same as that leg seems just fine after hitting the post. Countdown to Impact misses as we're just waiting on the ref bump/Alberto. Johnny kicks him in the head and goes up again, only to have Adonis offer a distraction.

This time it's Drake running the corner for a superplex and another near fall. They head up at the same time this time around with Johnny scoring with a super Spanish Fly. That's not enough either so Adonis throws Drake the belt. Johnny takes it away though and takes Adonis down, followed by Countdown to Impact for two. The Gravy Train is countered into a Shining Wizard but Drake sends him shoulder first into the post.

They head up again (fourth time) but Johnny kicks him down, setting up Starship Pain for two as Alberto pulls the referee out. That's not a DQ for no logical reason so Johnny dives over the top at Alberto, hitting the referee by mistake. Alberto hits Drake with the belt before breaking a chair over Johnny's head (Who needs PG?). Drake is pulled onto Johnny to retain the title at 19:49.

Rating: B-. Well Alberto looks like a big deal, Johnny looks like a choker and Drake and the title are now somewhere in the top seven or

eight most important things in this company. This sets up Johnny vs. Alberto, but we have no one to challenge for the title. I mean, assuming we don't get a triple threat out of this, which would be one of the least interesting things they could do. Alberto is clearly the focus of the promotion whether you like it or not, but he should be better now that he's away from the horrible LAX feud. The match was good, but it was a long exercise in waiting for Alberto.

Josh wraps things up.

Overall Rating: D+. All this show did was show me how messed up Impact's priorities really are. To recap: we can fit in the entire Gail Kim retirement ceremony and most of a match featuring Shark Boy and Scott Steiner, but we need to clip the main event of the biggest show of the year. Oh and make sure to have that big, long package on the main event of AAA's biggest show of the year because of course. The lack of ANY kind of hype for next week's huge show (a graphic or quick announcement wouldn't have been hard) didn't help either, making this the mess that I was expecting the Best of TNA to be.

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Appeared on the Universal Chatter Podcast

With two fellow staffers from Wrestlingrumors.net, we break down this year's Best of Awards and debate Jinder Mahal. Check out the show, which has a funny host and a few decent verbal jabs from the guests.

<https://www.facebook.com/wrestlingrumors/videos/1562209503855700/>

Also I'll be starting the 2017 Awards on January 2. This year will be MUCH better run than last year and I'll have them wrapped up way faster this time around. And on an unrelated note, yes I'll be doing Wrestle Kingdom, which hopefully will be up the day of the show.