

Best Of 2021 Awards Part 3 (Last Part)

We'll wrap it up with some sad parts of the year.

Worst Angle Of The Year

5. Karrion Cross Keeps Losing
4. Cody Rhodes vs. QT Marshall
3. Fiend/Alexa Bliss Exist
2. Nikki Ash
1. Lilly

I was going to go with Nikki, but then I thought of that doll. That stupid, rotten, horrible, no good doll, WHICH WINKED AT THE CAMERA AND THEN APPEARED IN A MIRROR. WWE went out of their way to destroy a lot of people and things for the sake of pushing the idea that Alexa Bliss had an evil doll. It was some bad horror movie come to life and I could not stand this stupid thing, which is somehow following us into 2022, because of course it is.

Angle Of The Year

5. CM Punk Is An Old Gunslinger
4. The Rise Of RKBro
3. Baron Corbin Is Broke And It's Hilarious
2. Hangman Page Wins AEW World Title
1. Whose Side is Paul Heyman On

WWE is pretty terrible these days but this is must see television. Paul Heyman is one of the greatest performers in wrestling history and the things he is doing in this story has been even better than I would have thought possible. Above all else, he made me want to see where the story was going next and it was nothing short of amazing to see every single week.

The story is still going in the new year and I really want to see where these things go next. Or just whatever Heyman is going to do.

Worst Match Of The Year

5. Charlotte vs. Nia Jax – Raw – August 30
4. Randy Orton vs. Bray Wyatt – Wrestlemania
3. Alexa Bliss vs. Eva Marie – Summerslam
2. Miz vs. Damian Priest – Wrestlemania Backlash
1. Kenny Omega vs. Jon Moxley – Revolution

This is one where your mileage may vary, but ultimately, this was a bunch of barbed wire violence before the lamest ending you could imagine. It was like some sparklers going off in place of an explosion. Ignoring the total disaster of the ending, you had the carnage for the sake of carnage, all because AEW wanted to recreate some angle from Japan, down to Eddie Kingston trying to cover Moxley and selling the....well nothing really. This was bad on all fronts and is still somehow even worse than I remember.

News Story Of The Year

5. NXT Gets Its Own Sequel
4. Ring Of Honor Hiatus
3. Huge Stars To AEW
2. Fans Return
1. WWE Releases

I don't know how it could be anything else, as WWE did not so much take the roster apart but completely gutted the thing. Over the last year and a half, WWE has literally released over a hundred wrestlers. That isn't just going to shake up the WWE, but also the wrestling world as a whole. In addition to weakening the WWE roster, it opened up the flood gates to all kinds of other promotions. Several wrestlers have since moved elsewhere, which has made some other companies that much more

interesting. This was a game changer, and the amazing part is it might not be done yet.

Feud Of The Year

5. Roman Reigns vs. Edge
4. Pinnacle vs. Inner Circle
3. Edge vs. Seth Rollins
2. Kenny Omega vs. Hangman Page
1. Roman Reigns vs. John Cena

This might have been short, but what mattered was how big this felt. That's the kind of thing you don't get to see very often, but Cena can make it work so well. Above all else, this felt like a feud that belonged in the main event of one of the biggest shows of the year. Then the match wound up working too, which shouldn't be a surprise. It wasn't long, but Reigns defeated Cena in a huge main event and it felt like a showdown.

Title Reign Of The Year

5. Bianca Belair – Smackdown Women's Title
4. Young Bucks – AEW Tag Team Titles
3. Bobby Lashley – WWE Championship
2. Kenny Omega – AEW World Title
1. Roman Reigns – Universal Title

The words "of the year" apply here, because Reigns was champion for the entire year. That is not something you get to see very often but it has been pretty incredible for a very long time now. Reigns comes off as the biggest star in all of wrestling and has been bringing people up just by association. This was an easy pick to make, because holding the title for a year is hard to fathom back in the day, let alone modern times.

Best Of 2021 Awards Part 2

Now we get to some big ones.

Surprise Of The Year

5. NXT Concedes Wednesday Night Wars
4. The Ending Of All Out
3. Bron Breakker Is Good
2. Hook Is Good
1. CM Punk Returns

This is the one that got me. Punk had been away from wrestling for seven and a half years, which might as well be an eternity in the business. You just do not see wrestlers leaving for this long and then coming back but Punk returned and with a bang. AEW let you know it was coming, but until the guitar riff hit in the United Center, I wasn't completely sure it was going to happen. Granted if it hadn't, the building was going to go up in smoke, but they did what they needed to do and it was incredible, to put it mildly. And now I want some ice cream.

Match Of The Year

5. Finn Balor vs. Pete Dunne – Takeover: Vengeance
4. Roman Reigns vs. Daniel Bryan – Smackdown, April 30
3. Thunder Rosa vs. Britt Baker – St. Patrick's Day Slam
2. Kenny Omega vs. Bryan Danielson – AEW Grand Slam
1. Ilja Dragunov vs. Walter – Takeover 36

The original match between these two were one of the best

things I have seen in wrestling in a long time and that was the case again here. These two beat the living daylights out of each other and it was everything I was hoping it would be. It was a physical struggle and felt like only one of them was going to be able to survive. Walter's incredible United Kingdom Title reign finally ends, and my goodness what a way to wrap it up.

Promo Of The Year

5. Chris Jericho Might Be Saying Goodbye – Dynamite, August 25
4. Edge vs. Miz – Raw – November 29
3. CM Punk vs. Eddie Kingston – Rampage – November 5
2. CM Punk's Return Speech – Rampage – August 20
1. CM Punk vs. MJF – Dynamite – November 24

In what was the year of Punk in the world of promos, this one topped everything else. I know the First Dance has the emotion, but this was the night where they took the gloves off and went at it. These guys were throwing bombs at each other, such as MJF being a less Famous Miz and MJF calling Punk out for always having an excuse for not being the big star. This is the one that had me taking in every word and I don't know if it is being topped for a long time.

Most Improved Of The Year

5. Tay Conti
4. W. Morrissey
3. Bobby Lashley
2. Britt Baker
1. Josh Alexander

I know Baker is the easy one here, but Alexander has a case not just for most improved but also the best wrestler of the year. Alexander was THE guy in Impact as the company got bigger and bigger. It was awesome watching him climb the ladder and I wanted to see what he could do when he finally

got his chance in the main event. Then he won the World Title in the main event of the biggest show of the year, which he had certainly earned. This was an easy one for me and you should watch more of Alexander's stuff.

Wrestler Of The Year

5. Roman Reigns
4. Serena Deeb
3. Josh Alexander
2. Jonathan Gresham
1. Daniel Bryan/Bryan Danielson

I don't think this is much of a surprise, as Danielson is about as complete of a worker as you will find in the world today. The guy can do just about anything asked of him and that never seems to change. His AEW run will get the most praise, but don't forget his first four months of the year where he had at least two classics, including the main event of Wrestlemania. Danielson is rapidly reaching that all time elite of the elite level and he was easily the best of the year.

Moment Of The Year

5. Hangman Page/Dark Order's Entrance For Ten Man Tag
4. Becky Lynch Returns
3. John Cena Returns
2. The Fans Are Back
1. CM Punk Returns

This is one of those moments that AEW built up to perfection by more or less guaranteeing that Punk would be at First Dance. Then the show started and here he was, with the music, the pose, the dive into the crowd and everything else. They turned this into an event and I don't think there is anything that AEW has done that tops this so far. Then there was the ice cream deal to make it even better. I loved this way more

than I would have expected and it was as close to perfect as it could have been.

Best Of 2021 Awards Part 1

Since I have a bad tendency to take forever to do these every year, I'm going to streamline the process a bit. This time, rather than doing individual posts for each award, instead I'll be posting three groups of six each, randomly chosen awards. Also, and again for the sake of sanity, I'll be listing some Honorable Mentions/Other Nominees but not going in-depth on anything but the winner. They should get the most attention for being the best/worst in each category, plus I take way more time than necessary to do something like this anyway. Let's get to it.

Worst Major Show Of The Year

5. Wrestlemania Backlash
4. Hard To Kill
3. Bound For Glory
2. Revolution
1. Survivor Series

This was the hardest award to do so far as 2021 has to be one of the best years ever for pay per view. I know WWE gets a bad reputation for their TV (and it is 100% earned in some cases), but they can put on a show when it comes to getting in the ring and saying go. That is the case with every other major promotion (or at least the ones I watch). When the lowest overall rating I could give a show all year is a C (or about a 6), you're in a really, really good place. None of these shows are by any means bad, so we'll call them the least good.

As for the pick, while I had Revolution rated lower overall (the exploding barbed wire match was not my thing and was never going to be), Survivor Series did not feel important whatsoever coming in and I did not want to watch it. The Battle For Brand Supremacy has become such a chore that even the very good wrestling couldn't overcome a lot of the problems. It wasn't a bad show, but it was a show that felt like a chore rather than something I would want to watch, and that's worse than having bad action.

Tag Team Of The Year

5. New Day
4. Lucha Bros
3. Briscoes
2. Usos
1. FTR

I grew up on 80s wrestling and that's what you get here. Between the Midnight Express theme song and the old school high waisted trunks, these guys feel like a modern version of Arn Anderson and Tully Blanchard. It's so much fun to watch a team that feels happy with being a tag team instead of two wrestlers who happen to be together. That's such a rare thing to see these days, at least at this level, and FTR does it so well.

One of the best things about the team is how well they stand out. AEW has a lot of people jumping and flipping and diving all over the place and going completely out of control. FTR feels like a team that has prepared and trained to take their opponents apart in a wrestling match rather than having an acrobatic display. The team feels different and the fact that they do it so well makes them the team of the year.

Major Show Of The Year

5. Double Or Nothing

4. Extreme Rules
3. Full Gear
2. Takeover: Vengeance
1. All Out

I wanted to put Vengeance at the top but the more I thought about it, the more remarkable All Out really is. In addition to the great action, it was the show where Adam Cole debuted for one of the biggest surprises of the year. That was the case for all of two minutes, because Bryan Danielson appeared after, giving us one of the biggest nights in AEW history. Throw in CM Punk's return to the ring for the first time in seven and a half years for a pretty great match with Darby Allin and Kenny Omega doing an Urkel impression and this wasn't going to be topped.

Non-Wrestler Of The Year

5. Dan Lambert
4. Scott D'Amore
3. Pat McAfee
2. Taz
1. Paul Heyman

I know it's a cliched answer, but Heyman somehow manages to improve on the greatness that he has already achieved. There is perhaps nothing more entertaining in wrestling than watching him go out on television and doing or saying whatever it is that needs to be said to make a story work. Heyman and Roman Reigns were a perfect combination for the entire year, with the Reigns/Heyman/Brock Lesnar story being a major highlight.

What makes Heyman work so well is that he feels different. Maybe that's because he seems to have more freedom with what he says and does, but he comes off as so much more genuine whenever he is out there. It makes his segments something that

you can enjoy while also moving the story forward. That has been the case with him for a long time and he did it again here.

Worst Wrestler of The Year

5. Jade Cargill
4. Madcap Moss
3. Eva Marie
2. Commander Azeez
1. Nia Jax

Yes she has been released and no she wasn't around for a large part of the year, but there were times this year where I was sitting there in awe over her continued employment. She was big, she was stiff, she hasn't had a good match in the better part of ever and she did not seem to think she was doing anything wrong. This is an easy one for me and it seems to be better that she has moved on to anything else.

Rookie/Newcomer Of The Year (Note that this can mean someone new to a show rather than a pure rookie. I also left Adam Cole and Bryan Danielson off as them coming to AEW as basically the same person didn't exactly feel new.)

5. Hook
4. Rok-C
2. Rick Boogs
2. Doudrop
1. Bron Breakker

Like it could be anyone else. I know he hasn't been around long, but to show up as a totally raw rookie and be one of the best stars on all of NXT in literally a few months is more than good enough to be here. There are better stars out there, but Breakker comes off as about as much of a natural as you

can get, which is almost impossible to find in this day and age of wrestling.

Impact Wrestling – December 30, 2021 (Best Of 2021 Part 2): The Celebration Continues

Impact Wrestling

Date: December 30, 2021

Hosts: Josh Matthews, Scott D'Amore

It's the last show of the year and just like last week, that means it is time for the second half of the Best Of 2021. That could make for a good show, as Impact Wrestling knows how to pick and choose their best stuff. There should be some solid picks here, as was the case last week. We also have some more awards to hand out so let's get to it.

As usual, I'll be copying and pasting the full version of the matches rather than the clipped ones airing here.

Josh and Scott welcome us to the show.

We see the last few minutes of Moose retaining the World Title over Eddie Edwards in a Full Metal Mayhem match at Turning Point.

Kaleb With A K is doing a photo shoot for the Influence when the IInspiration interrupts. They insults each other's outfits and the IInspiration's own photographer comes in, leaving Kaleb With A K unhappy.

From Bound For Glory.

Knockouts Tag Team Titles: IInspiration vs. Decay

The debuting IInspiration is defending and Harley Cameron sings them to the ring. We get all of the signature IIconics poses and it's time for an official introduction. They say they are here to inspire up and strike the hands on hips pose....so yeah they're still the same team, minus some of the annoying voices. Rosemary (in orange) scares McKay into the corner to start so Rosemary sideslams Lee for two instead. Havok comes in to scream and hammer away, setting up the Upside Down from Rosemary. That's enough for Lee to grab a suplex and McKay grabs a quickly broken chinlock.

They take each other down by the hair and it's back to Havok to crush the IInspiration in the corner. Lee manages to send Havok outside though and it's McKay coming back in to take over. The bulldog onto McKay's knee gets two but Rosemary is back with a Scorpion Death Drop. Havok misses a legdrop though and gets sent into the post. That just makes her scream, so she gets sent in again, followed by another posting. Rosemary makes the save but gets sent into McKay's knee. A sitout powerbomb/neckbreaker combination is enough to give McKay the pin and the titles at 8:58.

Rating: C. The action wasn't great, but the IInspiration feels SO much bigger than any team that has held the titles since their return (save for maybe Fire N Flava). It isn't like Rosemary and Havok were some legendary team (with their 98 day reign ending here) so this is the right call. It isn't a case of Impact bringing in WWE rejects and putting them over, because this is a nice upgrade for the titles.

It's time for the Knockouts Tag Team of the Year Award with the following nominees:

Decay

IInspiration

Fire N Flava

Jordynne Grace/Rachael Ellering Influence

Grace and Ellering win, which is a little surprising but the Influence hasn't won anything, Fire N Flava are half gone and the Inspiration has been here about a month and a half.

Eddie Edwards, Rich Swann, Willie Mack, Heath and Rhino are ready for Violent By Design and the Good Brothers at Hard To Kill.

We look at the Top Ten Social Media Posts of the Year, with Christian Cage winning the World Title on the debut of AEW Rampage.

From Slammiversary.

Impact Wrestling World Title: Kenny Omega vs. Sami Callihan

Omega, with Don Callis, is defending and it is No DQ. Callis lists off Omega's greatness, including saying he is the King of the Deathmatch and better than Terry Funk. Callihan jumps Omega to start and hits the Cactus Special for an early two. As Callis joins commentary, Callihan sends in a bunch of chairs but Omega blocks a fork to the head. Omega's sunset flip is blocked and Callihan busts out a pizza cutter to slice Omega open.

Another rake across the head makes it even worse and a Death Valley Driver sends Omega outside. Callihan follows but gets caught with a trashcan to the head, allowing Omega to grab some weapons of his own. More shots put Callihan down and the moonsault with a trashcan onto the leg keeps him in trouble. The chair is wedged in the corner so Omega loads up....the One Winged Angel, which is countered into a rollup. The kickout sends Callihan head first into the chair though and he's busted open too.

Omega grabs a fork to stab the head, as well as the inside of

the mouth. They head outside with Callihan chopping the post, meaning Omega can load up the table. The Snapdragon off the apron is broken up, as is the piledriver from the apron. Instead, Callihan piledrives him through the table and throws in a piece of plywood. A trashcan to the head rocks Omega again and a side slam onto the top of the open can makes it worse.

Callihan sends him hard through the board in the corner for two and it's time for a chair wrapped in barbed wire (Callis: "Never would have happened when I ran this place!"). Omega manages a V Trigger though and another one gets two. A bunch of stuff is piled up in the middle of the ring and Omega hits a superplex through all of it. Another V Trigger sets up a failed One Winged Angel attempt and Callihan Tombstones him onto the barbed wire chair for two.

Omega rolls outside and throws salt in Callihan's eyes, causing Callihan to take the referee out. The blind Callihan gets belt shot and piledriven but there is no referee. Cue the Good Brothers but Eddie Edwards and Chris Sabin cut them off. Callihan hits a package piledriver for two so it's time for the bag of thumbtacks. Callis gets up for a distraction so Omega can throw tacks in Callihan's eyes. Another V Trigger connects, followed by another V Trigger with tacks on the knee. Omega puts the tacks in Callihan's mouth for another V Trigger and the One Winged Angel onto the tacks retains the title at 27:33.

Rating: B. I'm never sure what to give something like this but the violence was good, as it was supposed to be. The match didn't feel like the nearly half an hour it got, but the V Triggers and the easy kickoff off the Tombstone onto the chair were a bit much. I liked what we got and while there wasn't much drama, I'm not sure how much there could be in something like this.

We look at Jonah debuting and laying out Josh Alexander.

From Impact, December 2.

Jonah vs. Jay Vidal

Jonah runs him over, tosses him around, and finishes with the top rope splash at 1:49. That splash still looks incredible as the impact is perfect.

From Slammiversary.

X-Division Title: Chris Bey vs. Ace Austin vs. Josh Alexander vs. Trey Miguel vs. Petey Williams vs. Rohit Raju

Alexander is defending in Ultimate X, with commentary saying that wrestling skill has little importance here. It's a big brawl to start (as it should be) with Bey going for the belt early and getting caught just as fast. Alexander is left alone so Austin comes back in and gets German suplexed. Raju goes up top and jumps for the belt, only to crash down. Bey comes in and hits a big running flip dive back to the floor. Williams follows with the slingshot hurricanrana and Miguel hits some kind of a running DDT.

Raju and Austin go up at the same time until Austin gets shoved down onto the pile for the huge moonsault crash. That leaves Raju to bust out a grappling hook and climbs up, taking WAY longer than it would have had he just gone as usual. Williams makes the save, sending Striker into a more complicated than necessary metaphor about Williams being the foundation of the division. After Williams clears Raju out, here is Bey to take Williams down as well. Bey and Miguel wind up going for the belt at the same time, though Miguel is a lot further away.

An attempt at a hurricanrana doesn't quite work so Miguel kind of spears Bey down instead to drop everyone. A Tower of Doom is loaded up but they have to stop to prevent Raju from pulling the title down with a hook. Everyone else is down so Raju grabs a chair and tries the hook again, only to get

dropkicked down by Miguel. Williams comes back in for a Sharpshooter on Miguel, with Raju adding a Crossface for the tap. That means nothing so Alexander goes up, only to get caught hanging upside down with the belt behind him.

Therefore, Bey is fed up to him for an ankle lock as Alexander is still hanging from the X. It makes no sense but DANG that is an awesome visual. At the same time, Bey chokes Austin, who headlocks Williams, who still has Miguel in the Sharpshooter. Raju lets go and chairs Alexander down to get everyone a needed breather. Austin goes up and tries for the belt but slips a bit, allowing Bey to dive off the top with a cutter to put them both down again. Williams is back up with the Canadian Destroyer on Raju and a running version drops Miguel.

That lets Williams go up but Bey Bey get son Alexander's shoulder to cut him off...and gets planed with another Canadian Destroyer. Well that worked. Alexander isn't having any of this Destroyer stuff and gives Williams the C4 to knock him silly. Raju breaks up Alexander and Miguel's slugout, meaning it's a Downward Spiral to plant Miguel off of Alexander's shoulders. That lets Raju go up but Miguel makes the save and takes him down.

Alexander superplexes Miguel down though, meaning he and Bey can go up at the same time. They wind up hanging upside and pull the belt down at the same time, only to have Austin springboard in and...completely crash without grabbing the title. The distraction lets Alexander knock Bey down and retain at 15:46.

Rating: B+. Yeah this was pretty awesome with everyone trying something and a bunch of insane spots. The match isn't supposed to have much of a story or flow to it and that's perfectly fine. This is the company's version of the ladder match and they nailed it here, though I have no idea who takes the title from Alexander at this point. Whoever does is going to let him move up to the main event scene though, as there is

nothing left for him to do.

Video on W. Morrissey.

Here are the nominees for Men's Wrestler of the Year:

Kenny Omega

Christian Cage

Moose

Josh Alexander

Rich Swann

Josh Alexander wins, as he kind of had to.

We see the last few minutes of Rich Swann beating Moose to retain the World Title at Sacrifice.

Here are the nominees for the Men's Match of the Year:

Kenny Omega vs. Rich Swann (Rebellion)

Kenny Omega vs. Sami Callihan (Slammiversary)

Moose vs. Rich Swann (Sacrifice)

Christian Cage vs. Josh Alexander (Bound For Glory)

Ultimate X (Slammiversary)

Josh Alexander vs. TJP (BTI/Impact – June 3)

The winner comes later.

Mercedes Martinez doesn't like Deonna Purrazzo speaking her name so the challenge is on.

The hosts talk about the knockouts division.

The Men's Match of the Year: Josh Alexander vs. TJP. Again, kind of the clear favorite/winner based on how much it was hyped at the time.

Before The Impact: X-Division Title: Josh Alexander vs. TJP

Alexander is defending in a sixty minute Iron Man match. Fallah Bahh is here to sweep the steps for TJP and Petey

Williams is here with Alexander. They go with the grappling to start with Alexander being shoved down in a hurry. A test of strength goes to Alexander but he can't break TJP's bridge. Instead TJP flips him over but gets caught in a bodyscissors. With that broken up they go back to a standoff until Alexander grabs a headlock of his own. That's reversed into a headlock takeover until they jump up to another standoff.

Alexander goes to a crank on the ankle, which he pulls into a bow and arrow hold. TJP flips out again and it's another standoff as they have a lot of time to use here. This time TJP takes him down by the ankle, setting off an exchange of mat holds. TJP pulls on the leg but Alexander grabs a chinlock for the break. That's reversed into a hammerlock with TJP flipping over him to stay on the arm. Alexander gets his own armbar with TJP not being able to flip out of it so easily this time. He finally manages to send Alexander outside and a Bahh distraction lets TJP hit the slingshot dropkick (and a good looking one at that).

Back in and TJP starts in on the ribs, including a belly to back suplex for two. Alexander dragon screw legwhips him down but TJP slams the leg into the mat to put Alexander in more trouble. A headlock on the mat has Alexander in more trouble but gets reversed into a headscissors. TJP tries to spin out but gets reversed into something like a short piledriver.

TJP is fine enough to try a Muta Lock but gets reversed into a chinlock into an abdominal stretch. With the holds not working, Alexander rolls some German suplexes but gets pulled into a Kimura. That's reversed into an ankle lock (on TJP's other ankle) to send TJP to the ropes with 45:00 to go.

Alexander is busted open just a bit as he hits a belly to back suplex for two. A cannonball down onto the leg sets up some twisting around the rope to keep TJP in trouble. The chinlock eats up some more of the clock but TJP fights up to send him into the corner. Now the facewashes work but Alexander takes

him down into a cradle for the first fall at 19:52.

We get a thirty second rest period before and the canned noise cranks up. TJP takes him down into a chinlock into a cravate, which is reversed into a chinlock with a knee in TJP's back. A backbreaker drops TJP again and Alexander sends him outside in a heap. Just to show off, Alexander picks him up and walks up the steps to drop TJP inside. A surfboard in the ropes (that's a new one) makes TJP scream until Alexander lets go.

Back in and Alexander goes up, with TJP catching him in a top rope superplex. TJP tries to roll it into another suplex but they crash over the top to the floor instead. The brawl on the apron sees TJP dropped down onto the apron as we hit halftime. Alexander drives TJP through the ropes with a running crossbody for another crash. Back in and TJP lifts him up for another backbreaker but TJP is right back with something like an Indian Deathlock. That's broken up as well and Alexander hits a very delayed (as in about a minute) vertical suplex.

With TJP down, it's off to another double arm crank. That's broken up so TJP tries to power him down for a cover. With that not working, TJP tries a Sharpshooter but switches over to a Muta Lock instead. That doesn't last long but Alexander is back up with a German suplex to put them both down. TJP unloads in the corner but charges into a hot shot onto the buckle.

We have twenty minutes left and it's time to crank on TJP's ankle again. That's broken up with an enziguri, followed by a toss to send TJP shoulder first into the post. With TJP still in the ropes, Alexander grabs a half crab while sitting on the top. The chinlock goes on until TJP sends him chest first into the corner. The Black Widow goes on until TJP turns it over into a cradle for two with fifteen minutes left. A tornado DDT sends Alexander outside and there's a slingshot dive to put him down again.

Alexander is right back up with a suplex onto the apron (egads) and TJP is mostly done. That's a bit too much for Alexander so he takes him to the stage and loads up a piledriver. Cue Chris Sabin and Trey Miguel to say that's too far but the distraction inadvertently allows TJP to hit a Tombstone powerslam (basically Riddle's Bro Derek). A bunch of the roster comes out to watch as Alexander stumbles down the ramp and rolls in to beat the clock with 10:00 left.

TJP hits a running knee in the corner but the Mamba Splash takes too long and only hits mat. Alexander can't follow up either though and gets tied in the Tree of Woe so TJP can hit him in the face quite a few times. A sliding dropkick connects as we have eight minutes left and Impact officially begins. TJP hits a springboard shot to the face for two but a double clothesline puts both of them down. Alexander tries the double underhook but gets reversed into a Falcon Arrow for two more.

We have five minutes left as TJP hits a running boot in the corner. TJP does it again but this time it is countered into the ankle lock. That's countered into the Detonation Kick for two and the Mamba Splash connects for another near fall, as these kickouts are getting to be a bit much. Another Detonation Kick is countered into the ankle lock with three minutes left. TJP reverses into the kneebar, which he turns into something like a reverse Figure Four with two minutes left.

Alexander picks the ankle to retain and puts on the grapevine with 45 seconds left. TJP nearly taps but gets up and bridges back to tie it up with 2 seconds left and time expires. Therefore, we go to sudden death so both guys pull themselves up in the corner during the rest period. They slug it out until Alexander hits a Regal Roll to set up a moonsault for two. The powerbomb onto the knee gets two more so it's the double underhook piledriver to FINALLY finish TJP at 63:36.

Rating: B. This was very good and the sixty minutes flew by,

which is pretty hard to do. They didn't waste a lot of time here, making this almost all action throughout. It helps that they have some awesome chemistry together and both came out looking great. Alexander is turning into a star around here and I'm really curious to see what happens with him. Heck of a match here that is actually worth the watch.

Josh and Scott thank the fans and wrap it up.

Hold on though as the Undead Bridesmaids announce that Su Yung is needing more souls...because she is pregnant.

Overall Rating: B+. What else is there to say here? This was a really fun show with everything ranging from very good to completely watchable. It's really hard to screw up something like this and they made it work very well throughout. Impact is doing a lot of things right at the moment, to the point where they have me invested in Zack Ryder vs. Big Cass in a World Title match. Keep this up and the company might actually stay good for a long time to come.

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Impact Wrestling – December 23, 2021 (Best Of 2021 Part 1): They Have A Lot To Pick From

Impact Wrestling

Date: December 23, 2021

Hosts: Josh Matthews, Scott D'Amore

We've reached a holiday weekend and that means it is time for a special show. In other words, Impact is putting the brakes on the build to Hard To Kill and showcasing the Best of 2021 instead, which should make for a good night. The company has been doing well this year and they have some solid stuff to pick from, so let's get to it.

Of note: if a match is included, I'll posting the full version rather than a clipped version.

Opening sequence.

From Hard To Kill.

Kenny Omega/Good Brothers vs. Rich Swann/Moose/Chris Sabin

Don Callis is here too and handles Omega's entrance (which Striker says is a moment fans will be telling their children about). Omega has a Bullet Club shirt (the Halloween edition for some reason) on, because we need to know New Japan history to understand the AEW World Champion's reference in Impact Wrestling. Anderson drives Sabin into the corner to start and a shot to the face has Sabin in some trouble. An armdrag gets him right back out though and we have a standoff.

Moose and Gallows get in for the big man showdown with Moose knocking him around. Omega comes in, with Striker making both a hockey reference and saying that the Bullet Club reunion on Dynamite reminded us why we all love wrestling. It's off to Anderson vs. Swann in a hurry with the latter snapping off a headscissors. Gallows and Omega are knocked to the floor and it's a double dropkick to Anderson.

Moose adds a standing moonsault, with Striker saying that Moose now is the sport, a few seconds after talking about how amazing it was that the two World Champions are in a match together. Sabin gets taken into the corner so the villains can take over, including Omega hitting a backbreaker for two. Striker asks Brown if Omega is the best in the world and Brown seems to think so. There is NO MENTION AT ALL of the Impact Wrestling WORLD CHAMPION, who is in this same match, in case you needed an illustration of why Impact's benefit from this Omega deal is rather limited.

Anderson grabs a chinlock on Sabin but the comeback sets up a double clothesline, allowing the tag to Omega and Swann (thankfully with Striker bringing Swann's name in for the best wrestler in the world discussion). Everything breaks down and some assisted DDTs send the Brothers outside. Swann dives onto Omega but the frog splash is blocked back inside. Anderson adds a slam (with Sabin flipping him off), allowing Striker to talk about wrestling being a universal language.

The Kitaro Crusher gets two and a triple splash gets two on Swann. Back up and Swann manages a Pele to Omega and the hot tag brings in Moose. House is cleaned and the Omega BANG is mocked, setting up a triple boot to Omega in the corner. The discus lariat gets two on Omega (Striker: "HISTORY MADE TONIGHT!") and now it's Sabin in trouble in the corner for a change. Omega hits a Doctor Bomb for two on Sabin, who is right back up with a missile dropkick to Anderson.

Omega is up with the V Trigger to Swann but Moose catches him

on top with a super Spanish Fly. Everyone is down again until Omega gets over for the hot tag to Gallows. The Boot of Doom gets two on Sabin with Swann making the save. Swann and Omega get the double tag for the big slugout with Omega getting the better of it. The other four fight outside until Moose pulls Omega off the top and into an electric chair.

Something close to a Doomsday Device gets two on Omega, with Callis teasing the save. Striker: "Some people think Callis has betrayed Impact Wrestling." I actually had to sigh at how stupid that was so we'll move on to Omega hitting the V Trigger on Swann. Some kicks put Omega down and the 450 gets two. The Magic Killer plants Swann and Moose has to make the save. Another V Trigger hits Moose and another V Trigger hits Swann, setting up the One Winged Angel for the pin at 20:26.

Rating: B. The wrestling itself was good, as expected, but it's rather difficult to care about Impact when their World Champion is being presented as someone lucky enough to have Kenny Omega knee him in the face. Commentary here was a big love letter to AEW, which is being treated as the greatest thing ever as it reaches down to the unwashed masses of Impact. That may be true from a business standpoint, but why in the world is IMPACT acting like that is the case? It's a good match and I think you know where this is heading, but could we act like Swann is close to Omega's level? For five minutes maybe?

Chris Sabin gives Jordynne Grace advice on the Ultimate X match: develop upper body strength. This results in 30+ minutes of pullups with Sabin losing track of the count. Grace doesn't mind.

We look at some debuts/returns over the course of the year.

From Rebellion.

Tag Team Titles: FinJuice vs. Good Brothers

The Brothers are challenging with Doc Gallows looking rather Jesse Venturaish during their entrances. Finlay takes Anderson down to start and Robinson gets dropped onto him for two as the champs take over early. Anderson shrugs off the arm cranking and it's off to Gallows for the rights and lefts in the corner. A double bulldog gets two on Gallows but he's back up to power Finlay into the corner.

Gallows hits a kick to the head for two and we hit the chinlock. Some hammer elbows keep Finlay down until Gallows puts him on the middle rope. That's fine with Finlay, who scores with the middle elbow to the jaw. The hot tag brings in Robinson to clean house, including a backsplash to Gallows. A dive to the floor takes Gallows down again and the jabs put Anderson down as well.

Everything breaks down, with Striker talking about FinJuice being influenced by the Hart Foundation, Demolition and...the Smoking Gunns? Gallows is knocked to the floor so FinJuice can load up a Doomsday Device, only to have Gallows break it up. The belly to back suplex/neckbreaker combination gets two on Robinson but Finlay is back in to break up the Magic Killer. A small package Anderson to retain at 10:32.

Rating: C+. And with that, we have proof of which team is the most Japan of all time. I'm rather surprised at the lack of a title change but it wouldn't surprise me to see the Young Bucks being brought in to become the bestest tag team ever in the history of ever. Good enough match, but hearing all of the Japan references and having FinJuice leave for a month didn't help my interest.

It's time for our first award with Tag Team of the Year. The nominees are:

Good Brothers

FinJuice

Violent By Design

Bullet Club

Rich Swann/Willie Mack

The winners are....the Good Brothers, which they kind of hard to be given their dominance of the Tag Team Titles.

From Rebellion.

Impact Wrestling World Title/AEW World Title: Rich Swann vs. Kenny Omega

Title for title, Eddie Edwards, Willie Mack and Tony Khan are here, Mauro Ranallo is on commentary, there is a referee from each company and Don Callis does an amazing over the top introduction for Omega, listing off every legend he can think of, all of whom are beneath Omega. Swann gets knocked down to the floor in a hurry but is right back with a dropkick to the floor. There's the big flip dive to take Omega down again but he is right back with a belly to back suplex onto the apron.

They head back outside with Swann loading up the handspring cutter onto the apron but loses momentum and lance on his head instead. Back in and a buckle bomb rocks Swann again, meaning it's time to work on Swann's back injury. Various shots to the back, including some rather big knees, keep Swann in trouble. The Kitaro Crusher is avoided though and Swann kicks him in the head. Ax handles to the back are shrugged off and it's a hurricanrana to drop Omega again.

A super hurricanrana gets one on Omega and he goes up again. This time Swann follows but has to backdrop his way out of a superbomb (with Omega almost landing on his head). The Phoenix splash gives Swann two but Omega is back with the Dr. Willy Bomb. The V Trigger looks to set up the One Winged Angel, with Swann escaping in a hurry. Another V Trigger connects in the corner, followed by another into the snapdragon. Another snapdragon connects but Swann is back up with the handspring cutter.

Swann tries it again but Omega pulls the Impact referee into it instead. Omega grabs a chair, which the AEW referee takes away. Swann hits the handspring cutter into la majistral for one, with Omega reversing into a cradle of his own for two. Another V Trigger misses and a spinning Michinoku Driver gets two on Omega. The Phoenix splash misses and it's a V Trigger into an electric chair dropped into a German suplex for two more (ok that was cool).

Omega hits a Jay Driller for another near fall so, after some trash talk to Eddie Edwards, it's another V Trigger. Swann gets fired up and manages a suplex for a breather but the Phoenix splash misses. Another V Trigger sets up the One Winged Angel to give Omega the pin and the title at 22:57.

Rating: B+. It's a very good match, even with the ending that you knew was coming. Omega was always winning the title so he can do the belt collector deal, though I could have gone with at least trying for a little more drama. This match was built up as "Swann can't beat Omega so watch Omega win the title" and that's exactly what happened. They had some good action and tried, but this was all about getting to the ending that you knew was coming. That being said, points for not going too insane with everyone out there, even including the completely unnecessary ref bump.

We rapid fire the rest of the World Title history for the rest of the year.

Deonna Purrazzo and Matthew Rehwoldt aren't happy with the Texas Death Match against Mickie James at Hard To Kill. Purrazzo is ready anyway.

Time for another award with Knockouts Match of the Year:

Deonna Purrazzo vs. Mickie James – Bound For Glory

Deonna Purrazzo vs. Thunder Rosa

Deonna Purrazzo vs. Masha Slamovich – Knockouts Knockdown

Mercedes Martinez vs. Tasha Steelz – Knockouts Knockdown

Tasha Steelz vs. Jordynne Grace – Before The Impact – May 13
Fire N Flava vs. Havok and Nevaeh – Hard To Kill

And here's the winner, from Bound For Glory:

Knockouts Title: Mickie James vs. Deonna Purrazzo

Mickie is challenging and is in full on cowgirl gear here, while Purrazzo appears to be some kind of royalty. Purrazzo gets knocked outside before the bell and Mickie hits the Thesz press off the apron to hammer away. They fight up the ramp as Striker lists off various legends in women's wrestling history. Purrazzo takes it back to the floor and kicks Mickie in the face to put her down at ringside.

Back inside and we get the opening bell with Mickie getting stomped down in the corner to keep her in trouble. A lot of stomping puts Mickie on the floor but she scores with an elbow to the face back inside. Something like a powerbomb gets Purrazzo out of trouble though and Mickie is right back down. They trade crossbodies and it's a double knockdown as a few fans think this is awesome.

Mickie gets the better of a slugout and hits something like a Regal Cutter. The top rope Thesz press gives Mickie two, followed by the MickieDT for the same, with Purrazzo getting in the ropes for the save. Purrazzo sends her into the corner and grabs the Fujiwara armbar, sending Mickie into the ropes this time.

The Queen's Gambit gives Purrazzo two and she isn't happy with the kickout. Purrazzo goes outside for a chair, allowing Mickie to go back up. The top rope Thesz press hits the referee by mistake, so Mickie gets in a chair shot of her own for two. Purrazzo catches Mickie on top with the Fujiwara armbar but Mickie slips out again. This time it's the tornado DDT to plant Purrazzo for the pin and the title at 13:18.

Rating: B. This was about the big moment in the end but it

helps that they also had a heck of a match. Mickie can still go in the ring and works well with anyone, which works even better if she is in the ring with someone as good as Purrazzo. I'm not sure how long James will hold the title, but it was cool to see her win here, as she certainly still has it.

Trey Miguel goes to find out what he is doing at Hard To Kill so Gail Kim gives him an X-Division Title defense against Steve Maclin. That's just what he wanted.

A Russian woman is coming.

We go back to the end of last week's Impact:

It's time for a contract signing between W. Morrissey, Matt Cardona (with Chelsea Green) and Moose. Cardona is about to sign but Morrissey takes the contract away and says he's ready for Hard To Kill right now. Morrissey signs and leaves so Cardona promises that he has never been more ready. Cardona signs as well, leaving Moose to ask if Cardona really wants to do this. That makes Cardona think Moose is scared but Moose asks again. Cardona says sign it, which Moose does, though he still can't believe that Green stays with someone so average.

Moose asks if she'll stay with Midcardona after he leaves, or if she leaves like the w**** that she is. That's enough for Cardona to jump the table, which he is promptly put through. Moose goes to leave but comes back and shoves Green down to get to Cardona again. The chair is wrapped around Cardona's head but Green grabs another chair away. That's enough for Cardona to get up...and accidentally chair her straight in the head. Panic ensues to end the show. The angle was fine on paper, but there's no need for a chair shot to the head like that. It didn't feel like a big moment as much as "we're really doing that?" and that's not good.

Matt Cardona talks about everything being in his way and how this is his one chance after a long career. You're not getting the Woo Woo Woo guy, but just him.

From Rebellion.

X-Division Title: TJP vs. Ace Austin vs. Josh Alexander

Austin, with Madman Fulton, is defending. Alexander and TJP go after the champ to start with Austin kicking Alexander in the head. TJP gets taken down so Alexander goes for the ankle lock on Austin. That's broken up so Alexander gets caught in TJP's Octopus hold. With that not lasting long either, TJP sends them both outside where Austin bails out of a Lionsault. Striker goes into a speech about how Ace Austin isn't in the new Micro Brawler series while TJP is, which will have Austin wondering why a kid is playing with TJP and not him. Brown: "Actually Austin is in the series too." And we move on.

With Alexander on the floor, Ace loads up the (special edition) playing card on TJP's hand but the referee takes it away. Alexander comes back in and captures Austin's arm for something close to a German suplex as Striker talks about how we don't need two referees. Everyone is back in and Austin monkey flips TJP into Alexander's powerbomb but kicks Alexander in the ribs, allowing TJP to snap off a hurricanrana instead.

TJP is back up with a running boot to Austin in the corner, setting up a superplex/Russian legsweep combination to put everyone down at the same time. Back up and Alexander goes for the ankle lock on Austin but gets pulled into TJP's kneebar. That's fine with Alexander, who grabs an ankle lock on Austin at the same time.

Everyone escapes as I try to get my head around the odds of holds like that only happening in TJP matches. With that broken up again, we get another triple submission with the same result. The Fold is broken up so Alexander hits Divine Intervention on TJP with Austin making the save. Alexander locks Austin's ankle but TJP comes in with the Mamba splash. Fulton breaks up the cover, leaving Alexander to hit Divine

Intervention to pin Austin at 11:11.

Rating: B. That's all this should have been and it worked out well. Above all else, they didn't stop with the action and that is how they set the match up over the last few weeks. I like Alexander winning the title as he has needed to show that he can do something without Ethan Page. Now he can go and have one good match after another with just about anyone so I'm certainly pleased with the result. Now hopefully they can come close to living up to this level.

The Good Brothers and Violent By Design are ready for their hardcore war at Hard To Kill.

From Countdown To Glory.

Pre-Show: Digital Media Title: Jordynne Grace vs. Madison Rayne vs. John Skyler vs. Chelsea Green vs. Crazy Steve vs. Fallah Bahh

One fall to a finish for the inaugural title, which will be defended on online shows, kind of like a modern TV Title (that's a good thing). Rayne is replacing Tenille Dashwood for reasons that are not clear. Before the bell, we get a countdown clock, showing about 7:40 to go before Bound For Glory, just in case you thought this match might get some substantial time.

Skyler poses in the middle of the ring to start and is promptly beaten down by everyone else. Bahh clears the ring save for Grace, who actually drops him with a running shoulder. A running Vader Bomb gives Grace two but Skyler runs her over. Green knocks Skyler off the top (to a strong reaction), followed by Rayne tornado DDTing Steve. A double stomp crushes Rayne to give Green two but Grace loads her up in a MuscleBuster.

While still holding Green on her shoulder, Grace clotheslines Rayne and then plants Green for two. Grace piles up a bunch of

people in the corner, but Bahh throws her in as well for the big running splash. Skyler catches Steve with a super Regal Roll with Green making the save this time. That's enough for Grace, who picks Skyler up for the Grace Driver for the pin and the title at 5:02.

Rating: D+. This was kind of a mess and they didn't get much time, which is always a problem in a match like this one. You can only get so far with so many people in the match at the same time, but at least they went with an interesting winner. That being said, the whole point of this was to have people in the ring to warm up the crowd and that went well enough, though it wasn't exactly quality.

The final award of the week is Knockout of the year, with the nominees being:

Deonna Purrazzo

Mickie James

Mercedes Martinez

Jordynne Grace

Tasha Steelz

The winner is Purrazzo, who isn't surprised, as she shouldn't be since she ran circles around everyone else.

From Bound For Glory to wrap it up.

Impact Wrestling World Title: Christian Cage vs. Josh Alexander

Alexander is challenging. Feeling out process to start and they lock up to shove each other around. Christian takes him to the mat and grabs a headlock as Striker talks about drums. Alexander catches him up top and gets in a big shove to the floor as things get a bit more physical. Back in and Christian has to backdrop his way out of a double underhook and they're right back on the floor.

Alexander gets sent into the barricade and it's right back inside where Christian grinds him down again. This time Alexander comes up with a wristlock, only to get sent into the corner for two. Christian strikes away in the corner but Alexander flips it around and hits him in the face. A release German suplex into the corner rocks Christian hard (that looked painful) and a running big boot puts him down again.

Christian punches his way out of a powerbomb attempt but Alexander drops him down for two more. It's too early for the ankle lock though as Christian kicks the leg out and puts on a choke. Alexander backflips his way to freedom and the middle rope knee to the back of the head gets two. Christian is back up with a tornado DDT (Striker: "Geez.") but Alexander pulls him down into a Crossface.

We keep up the Canadian violence with a Sharpshooter but Christian makes the rope in a hurry. Alexander misses a moonsault and gets speared down for two, meaning it's a double breather. The Killswitch is broken up so Christian snaps the back of Alexander's neck over the top rope. The frog splash gives Christian two but he misses a charge into the post and gets caught in the ankle lock. Alexander cranks away to keep Christian in the middle and then gets really clever by stepping onto Christian's hand to hold him in place. That's too much for Christian, who taps out to make Alexander champion at 18:57.

Rating: B+. They had an awesome match here with a great story throughout, as Christian was doing his best but got reeled in by Alexander. The ending was about Christian getting trapped by a submission machine as Alexander was just the better man. Alexander also knew what Christian would be trying because he has watched Christian for so many years. This was a heck of a main event and felt like a true passing of the torch, which is exactly what it should have been.

Alexander's family gets in the ring to celebrate with him...and

here's Moose to cash in.

Impact Wrestling World Title: Moose vs. Josh Alexander

Moose is challenging and hits the spear for the pin and the title at 7 seconds, because Money in the Bank is the greatest idea in the world and must be copied as often as possible.

Overall Rating: A-. This was a good example of what a "Best Of" show should have been. They went through their options for the year and picked out some rather awesome stuff for two hours. Impact had a pretty awesome selection at times and it's nice to see them celebrate it. They have come such a long way and now it seems they might be able to go a little further next year. Keep that stuff up and improve the other stuff that might not be so strong. Very good show here, though it helps when you can pick the gems.

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