

# Best Of 2010s: Surprise Of The Decade



IMG Credit: WWE

If you're reading this, odds are you're a bigger than average wrestling fan. We spend a lot of time talking about this stuff and you get to the point where you can guess quite a bit of what is about to happen on almost any given show. That being said, everyone gets something wrong every now and then and that's what we're looking at today. Some of these are outstanding and among the best ever, which is why they're on such a list.

## Honorable Mentions

AEW – I know they had a big fan base, but who in the world would have seen them getting this far this fast? I was surprised and keep being surprised by what they do. Maybe it can't last, but for now they're doing incredibly well.

Brock Lesnar Returns (2012) – Ok so it wasn't exactly shocking as there were a bunch of signs about him in the crowd, but it was hard to imagine it would actually happen. The reaction from the crowd makes this work so much better, but it was impossible to imagine what it would turn into.

Seth Rollins Cashes In Money In The Bank At Wrestlemania – Everyone talks about doing this, but Rollins actually did it.

If nothing else, it was surprising to see WWE come up with a way to get themselves out of a corner.

### THEY Are Here Again

This is one you might not remember but back in 2010, the big story in TNA was the rise of Immortal, which came together as part of a big conspiracy involving Hulk Hogan, Eric Bischoff and Jeff Hardy among others. After THEY arrived and everything was revealed at Bound For Glory, a few weeks later came an episode called THEY Are Here Again.

It turned out that F4, a subgroup of Immortal, turned on Immortal and had been hinting that they would for weeks. This COMPLETELY got me, to the point where I actually left my house and went for a walk around the block because I was so stunned. That's the kind of thing that doesn't happen to me very often but sweet goodness they got me on this one and it was a really fun feeling.

### Rock Returns – Raw – February 14, 2011

Much like the Lesnar deal, it's one of those things where you can imagine it happening but it's still a shock when it actually goes down. Rock had become a huge movie star (and would become a bigger one) and it was a major favor for him to come back to WWE. He doesn't need the place but wound up getting into one of the biggest feuds of the modern era and even winning the WWE Title again.

It came at a weird time for WWE but what mattered was that it actually happened. Rock is someone who was an actual game changer for WWE when he was just a wrestler so seeing him at this point in his career made it a much bigger deal than it ever could have been during his career. Hearing that music hit was special though, especially when Justin Bieber had been rumored.

### AJ Styles In WWE

One of the biggest regrets about TNA...well existing really is seeing how many of the people who had been loyal to it over the years not getting to spend the primes of their careers in WWE. AJ is near the top of that list and while he's great now as the still amazing veteran, it isn't the same as what it could have been when he was still the Phenomenal One. I was very pleased when he finally showed up in Orlando for the Royal Rumble and the execution was great.

Well it would have been great had they not had the camera on Roman Reigns because IT MUST BE ABOUT REIGNS. Styles would take a little time to find his footing but as usual, the natural talent a wrestler has will bring them up to the next level. That and one of the finest heads of hair that a wrestler has ever seen.

### The Streak...Is Over

I was in the SuperDome for this one and I actually couldn't speak. After the three count went down, I sat there in silence for a little while, while grown men were crying, with some people leaving and not coming back. This was one of those things that you never thought you would see, but there was something that keeps it from being all the way at the top of the list.

When you think about it, Lesnar beating Undertaker makes sense. By this point, Undertaker was wrestling once a year and was old and broken down. How believable is it that he could beat the Beast? The more I think about it, the more I can almost maybe kind of sort of be the slightest bit ok with it...and then I realize that the Streak is over and it bugs me again. It's a shocking moment, and rather sad at the same time.

That leaves the winner, with a familiar name.

### Brock Lesnar Conquers John Cena

You can guess a lot of things that are going to happen in wrestling. It wasn't shocking to see Brock Lesnar beat John Cena and win the WWE Championship, but not in the way that he did. Lesnar annihilated Cena, who got in a tiny handful of offense throughout the match as Lesnar suplexed him over and over again. At the end it was Lesnar standing over the fallen superhero and things changed in a hurry.

The moment that got me in this match was right at the beginning when Lesnar hit an F5 in ten seconds. It was a near fall, but I was shouting "NO WAY! NO WAY!" as I was watching the show. You don't get that kind of emotion these days and I kept waiting for Cena to make some kind of a comeback. That wasn't happening this time though and it was clear that something had changed in a big way.

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## **Best Of 2010s: News Story Of**

# The Decade



IMG Credit: WWE

This is more of the big picture idea. Over the last ten years, there have been a lot of things that have changed the way wrestling works. Some of these are changes that will be felt for years to come and that is where things can get interesting. I always find this one more interesting than a lot of the other awards as it's something completely different than so many others.

## Honorable Mention

Everything That Went Wrong For Hulk Hogan – I know that we are literally decades past his time but anything that involves in to this degree is worthy of at least a mention.

Roman Reigns Health Issues – This might not have had the biggest long term implications, but any time that the World Champion announces that he has cancer, it's a big deal.

Ultimate Warrior's Death – I was in the arena for his final promo and drove home twelve hours the next day. That night I was ready to sleep for a few days, but then this news broke and I was in such shock that I was awake for hours. I'm still not sure how this happened and it's almost impossible to fathom.

## The WWE Goes Big (FOX TV Deal)

WWE has been the biggest wrestling promotion for a long time now and that means they are allowed to brag about a lot of things. However, one of the biggest things that they accomplished was managing to make it all the way up to network television, which really is something that deserves serious praise.

It's one thing to be the top of the wrestling world but it's another to be put into the top level of televised entertainment. WWE is on the same network as the NFL and various other major sporting events. That is the kind of thing that wrestling just does not do and WWE managed to do it. You can argue how well it is going or how much of a success it will be, but the fact that they got there is a new benchmark for wrestling and WWE can be very proud of it.

### WWE In Saudi Arabia

Yeah I know these things aren't all that popular but they are the reason WWE is going to be profitable for years to come no matter how many people are actually watching the regular shows. While all of the controversies around the shows do not help things very much, the money that WWE brings in from them is far too much for them to turn down and they aren't likely to go anywhere anytime soon.

The shows bring in so much money and they are allowing WWE to do all kinds of things that they weren't going to be able to do otherwise. This includes bringing back pyro and signing a bunch of people, which makes things a lot more interesting. I'm not entirely comfortable with the shows most of the time, but they are going to be a factor for a long time, like they or not.

### CM Punk Walks Out

This is one of those things where it was a big deal at the time and then it got bigger and bigger over time. For years to come, it became a question of whether or not Punk would ever

come back and, as far as in the ring goes, that has not been the case. I don't know if he ever will wrestle again or not, but the way he left was one of the biggest deals in wrestling for a long time to come.

The fallout from Punk leaving though may have been even bigger, with everything from the Art of Wrestling interview (and EVERYTHING that brought with it) to the ensuing lawsuit to the Backstage return and all of the waiting in between. It was a story that spiraled out of control and it still hasn't quite gotten back under control to this day. I'm not sure if it ever will and that's quite the ordeal.

### Daniel Bryan Retires And Then Unretires

From late 2013 until early 2014, no one was hotter than Daniel Bryan. He caught lightning in a bottle with the YES Movement and everything that came with it. Bryan had one of the greatest moments in the history of Wrestlemania with the Miracle On Bourbon Street, but then it all fell apart and just over a year later, he was out of the ring for good, with his retirement speech being one of the best ever.

But then he was eventually cleared, and no one believed it. After years of fighting to get back in the ring, Bryan managed to make it happen in one of the most unlikely comebacks of all time. The reason this is such a big deal is how many new doors it opens. Couple that with how much it reinforces the idea of Never Say Never and it is one of the stories that shows nothing in wrestling ever truly ends, and that's a good thing.

### Rise of NXT

Who would have seen this coming? Back in 2010, a new competition show called NXT debuted and it...was really not very good. The show replaced ECW and it was all downhill from there, with one bad idea after another and it went on for years. Eventually the show moved to WWE.com and Full Sail University, where names such as Michael McGillicutty and

Derrick Bateman were the top stars for a good while.

Over the next several years, NXT evolved into one of the most celebrated and incredible wrestling promotions in the world, regularly showcasing the stars of tomorrow and often stealing the show every time they run a major event. NXT is no longer on a hot streak as they are a full on success, with the end of 2019 seeing them rise up to the same level as Raw and Smackdown. That's a decades long story and one of the best that you could have seen.

### AEW

This one snuck in at the end and it wouldn't surprise me to see it be at the top of the list ten years from now. Impact Wrestling and Ring of Honor were around for the last ten years as well but neither came close to WWE at any point. AEW has come out swinging and while they are far from taking over anything, they have shown that WWE may be mortal in the eyes of the wrestling fans. That is the definition of a game changer and the question now is how far they can go.

What matters here is how much everything could change. We are now in a world where WWE is not the be all end all of major wrestling companies in the United States. That is something that could shake up wrestling in a way we have not seen in twenty years. I'm not sure where it is going to go and that is a very nice feeling I haven't had in a long time.

### The Women's Revolution

You can't call this a storyline or an angle because it has become a new way of life. The women's division went from nothing, with women's matches being lucky to get seven minutes even on pay per view, to main eventing Wrestlemania. That is one of those things where you would never believe it to be a possibility and then it happened. It was an exciting time and while you might not be a fan of what you're seeing, it's a genuinely major deal and something that is very cool to see.



What makes this so important is that it didn't seem possible. The women's division was little more than a way to kill some time and throw out some eye candy. The wrestlers had no personalities, no stories, and were mainly there to promote Total Divas. There were some steps forward here and there, but it wasn't until 2015 (and thanks to NXT) that they were taken seriously. The genie can't be put back into the bottle and that's pretty newsworthy.

And now, for something that we have taken for granted for a long time now.

### WWE Network

I've called this the greatest thing to ever happen to wrestling fans and I stick by that statement. Do you remember what it was like trying to find old wrestling before the Network came into play? You either had to tape it, know a place to find it illegally, or search YouTube for clips before WWE found out about it. Now, every Raw or Smackdown, pay per view, and material from all around the wrestling world is available at your fingertips for a cheap price.

The days of needing to pay \$50 for a pay per view are gone and that is not changing back. You can watch Wrestlemania, NXT, Slamboree 1994 or an episode of Texas Championship Wrestling at the click of a button and do it completely legally. The wrestling world has been opened up in a way that has never been done before and it is the best thing to ever happen to wrestling fans.

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## Best Of 2010s: Spot Of The Decade



IMG Credit: WWE

There are things that everyone remembers and that is the case for a reason. Some of these are as memorable as you can get and they are going to be that way for a very long time. This is a time where the top of the list is quite good, though there might not be the biggest list of choices. That's because the best ones are just that awesome, which is the case here.

### Honorable Mention

Dance Off – WrestleCon SuperShow Ten Man Tag – YouTube it. YouTube the whole match actually.

Kurt Angle's Moonsault Off The Cage – Lockdown 2010

Kurt Angle is not a well man. There is something wrong in his

head that makes him do some crazy things and this was one of them. He was in the middle of a war with Mr. Anderson (in a near classic cage match) and went on top of the cage in a repeat of his famous spot against Chris Benoit. This one actually connected (albeit mainly on Anderson's face) and Angle went on to win the thing.

The biggest thing I can take out of this is that Angle is insane. I know that sounds a little over the top but are you really convinced otherwise? Angle is out there on a lot of things and this is just another example, though sweet goodness if that wasn't a memorable move and one of the best matches TNA has ever had. Check that one out in full, but you'll remember this part best.

### Shane McMahon's Cell Dive – Wrestlemania XXXII

I was in the stadium for this one and I almost couldn't watch it. Maybe it's my fear of heights but sweet goodness this wasn't something I wanted to see happen. It was actually scary, though once you see the crash pad and hear Cole shout "FOR THE LOVE OF MANKIND" it wasn't quite as bad. They weren't quite recreating a classic, but there's something special when you can feel your heart in your throat for a second.

There's something special about seeing Shane do something this insane and nearly destroying himself in the process. He knows how to get that kind of a reaction from the fans and a lot of that is due to how much the fans care about him. This was an incredible dive and while we found out that it was a bit safer later on, the moment before he dove was as terrified as I can remember being at a wrestling show, and that has to mean something.

### Ricochet Tells Velveteen Dream To Show Him – NXT – May 30, 2018

Sometimes in wrestling, there are moments where all you can do is just look in awe because you don't know what just happened.

Those are the moments where you know what you're watching is special and that is the case a lot of the time when Ricochet is in the ring. There's something about him that you can't take your eyes off of and that was the case with the coolest thing he's ever done.

Velveteen Dream was saying that he could do anything Ricochet could, so Ricochet got a running start, flipped over the top rope and landed on his feet in front of Dream. It takes a lot to impress Dream and he was STUNNED, giving us an additional moment to make this so special. Ricochet wrestles like a superhero and that's what we got here, with one of the coolest things I can remember seeing in a long time.

### Randy Orton RKOs Evan Bourne Out Of The Air – Raw – July 12, 2010

As luck would have it, I was in the arena for this one too and sweet goodness I don't know what I saw. It was one of those moments that was as perfectly timed as you could have had, almost to the level of Shawn superkicking Shelton. Evan Bourne ran down to jump Orton after a match and tried the shooting star press, only to have Orton catch him out of the air with an RKO.

The timing, the impact, the selling from Bourne (a huge part) came together to make Orton look like a killer. This is one of those things where you see it happen and still can't believe what you saw because there should be no way someone can time this so well. It was absolutely perfect and something where you don't believe it could happen until you see it, and then you still don't believe it because THAT'S NOT NORMAL.

I think it's safe to say I watch a lot of wrestling so it takes something to have me jump to my feet. This did it.

### Undertaker Kicks Out – Wrestlemania XXVIII

The Streak is something that will never be replicated. How can

you tell? Given that you all know exactly what I mean when I say the Streak and probably started a highlight reel in your head, there is no way anything can ever match it. That's why it was a scary prospect when it felt like it was in danger, and I have never believed it was over more than I did inside the Cell.

After pushing him a little too far, guest referee Shawn Michaels superkicked Undertaker into a Pedigree from HHH, sending Cole into shouts of "STREAK'S OVER! STREAK'S OVER!" I believed it, the fans believed it, the commentators believed it...and it wasn't over. Undertaker kicked out again because for one night of the year, he's immortal.

This is greatest near fall I've ever seen and it came in a match that would have headlined almost any other Wrestlemania. This was the match of the night and had more than one of the best moments of the year (Undertaker stepping on the sledgehammer is great too), plus the spot of the decade.

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# Best Of 2010s: Non-Wrestler Of The Decade



IMG Credit: WWE

Ok this one isn't going to be the biggest surprise. There isn't much of a way around it but that's the way these things go sometimes. Even though there are so many names in wrestling, there are some of them who are just better at some aspects than others. That isn't always inside the ring, which is what we're looking at today.

## Honorable Mention

Vickie Guerrero: I know she wasn't around long in the decade and could be annoying, but for someone who was hired as little more than a favor to her deceased husband, Vickie ran with her chance and deserves a mention.

## Stephanie McMahon

I don't like her, you probably don't like her, she can be one of the most annoying people in all of wrestling, but she can also be REALLY good at what she does. Stephanie comes off as one of the most evil people in WWE and while a lot of people aren't fans of hers (you might say that is true of me, at least a little bit), she knows exactly how to play her role and get the most out of it.

Stephanie is perfect in her role as the stuck up, untouchable

owner of the company and can give one of the most condescending promos in wrestling today. She's awesome at what she does and it makes the times where she gets what's coming to her all that much better. Much like a lot of other fans, I want to see someone finally get one up on her. That's good storytelling and while it isn't exactly executed right, she can do it very, very well.

### Dario Cueto

Roddy Piper had a great line that summed up the problem of being a wrestler breaking into mainstream entertainment: "When I was wrestling they said I was acting but when I was acting, they said I was just a wrestler." That's a rather insightful line and it's why Lucha Underground made a brilliant move when they signed a regular actor to play the company's boss.

Lucha Underground became a cult hit and Cueto was one of the biggest reasons why. He nailed every aspect of what he did at a level that was only beaten (maybe) by Vince McMahon himself and that is some elite company. There was such great joy in his eyes as he would do something horrible to set up his latest evil idea and his catchphrases worked very well. I loved watching this guy because he was so good at it, though he ruins the same role for almost anyone else because no one else can do it like him.

### William Regal

This was the only person I considered for the top spot other than the winner. Regal is an outstanding example of someone who knows how to get things done in a hurry. Maybe it is just due to how well things are written in NXT, but seeing how fast he gets things done is a treat to watch. Regal has all of the respect in the world and it has paid off in spades here.

What makes Regal work is you know he is the law in NXT. He has been in charge for years now and unless he gets a promotion, there is no reason to have him leave. Regal is like the father

who can bring good news, but when you push him too far, there is no stopping him no matter who you are. The best example of this you'll find was at the United Kingdom Title Tournament in 2017 when Pete Dunne tried to make a name for himself by jumping the other competitors in between matches. Regal stormed out and stared Dunne down, sending Dunne running away. That's power, and Regal has it in spade.

But yeah, who are we kidding?

### Paul Heyman

This very well may be the biggest layup of both sets of awards. Heyman is not perfect by any means and has some failures to his name, but when he is on his game, there is no one better at what they do. His work with CM Punk was outstanding and another good example of why wrestlers wanted to be labeled as a Paul Heyman Guy. It's quite the honor and Heyman has earned the accolade.

Oh yeah and then there's the whole "he works with Brock Lesnar" deal. I don't remember the last pairing that was better because Heyman never stops talking but who is going to go after him when he's hiding behind Brock Lesnar? These promos are always well done and worthy of at least some praise, to the point where even though they are getting repetitive, they are still excellent. Heyman belongs at the top of this list and it was a pretty easy pick.

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## Best Of 2010s: Promo Of The Decade



IMG Credit: WWE

So here's the thing: ten years is a long time and there are a lot of nominees in every category. Therefore, for the sake of time, I'm going to limit these to five entries each, though I'll be including some honorable mentions as leaving a lot of them out would be unfair. Those will receive some brief mentions, but the main list will only be five each. Let's start with one that might surprise you.

Let's talk about this. I know wrestling is supposed to be about the stuff in between the bells but how much of that matters if you don't have a reason to care about these people? The best way to make that be the case is to have the wrestlers talk about things, and that can be the case in some very big moments. I know you might know what is going to be on top of this list, but there are some options to look through first.

## Honorable Mention

1. Roman Reigns – It’s My Yard Now – Raw, April 4, 2017

Just listen to the crowd. They do not stop.

2. Mark Henry Fakes Retirement – Raw, June 17, 2013

They got me with this one and Henry even wore the suit again at his Hall of Fame induction.

3. John Cena vs. Roman Reigns – Raw, August 28, 2017

Cena obliterated Reigns here, with one great line after another (“I can do this better part time than you can do it full time.” “It’s called a promo. You’re going to need to learn to do one if you want to do this.”) and Reigns just had NOTHING to say back. This would be higher if it hadn’t cut Reigns’ legs off, though he wound up being fine.

4. AJ Lee/Ronda Rousey Destroy Nikki Bella – Raw, November 24, 2014/October 15, 2018

“Talent isn’t sexually transmitted.”

“The only door you ever knocked down was the door to John Cena’s bedroom.”

Those are two of the best insults I’ve ever heard and they were straight shots to Nikki Bella’s chin.

CM Punk’s Pipebomb – Raw, June 27, 2011

Yeah this isn’t my #1. I know it’s going to be at the top of a lot of lists but there are others that I liked better over the last ten years, or at least ones that I thought were better at what they did. That being said, this is the famous one that made CM Punk for the rest of his career and turned him into THE guy that everyone wanted to see for the rest of time. I mean...can you blame them?

If there is one thing that inside fans love more than anything else, it is thinking they are seeing something from behind the scenes. That was exactly what they were going for here and it worked better than anyone could have expected. Couple that with an incredible match at Money in the Bank as John Cena had a new archrival and this was a complete masterpiece. Just stop calling every other angry promo a pipebomb though. It's not quite the same thing.

### John Cena Responds To The Rock – Raw, February 21, 2011

So back on February 14, 2011, the Rock returned in one of the biggest surprises ever and cut a 20+ minute promo, ripping on just about everything going on in the modern wrestling world but mainly focusing on John Cena, who Rock didn't seem to like. I don't think anyone knew where everything was going to go from there, but there was something that had to be done first.

The following week, Cena responded to the Rock in the old school Dr. of Thuganomics style, rapping one insult after another to Rock. For my money, this was a far better promo than Rock's, as Cena was funnier and did more than say Cena looked like he was wearing Fruity Pebbles. The last line ("You tell these people that you love them. I'm here every week to show it.") was as perfect of a summary as you could get and it was game on. What mattered here was Cena showed he could hang with Rock on the mic, which was the ultimate praise for anyone in wrestling.

### Daniel Bryan's Retirement Speech – Raw, February 8, 2016

The statement that you will hear about a lot of successful characters is that they are themselves with the volume turned way up. Daniel Bryan was no different, as he made the fans care about him in a way that almost no one has ever done. That made it even harder when he had to step away from the ring due to a bunch of injuries. Things wound up being better, but it

was as emotional of a speech as you're going to get.

Bryan stood in the ring and talked about being grateful to the fans for everything that they had given him over the years and how much he loved being in the ring. It was Brian Danielson talking to the fans and you could feel everything he was feeling. He was off to be a family man for the first time ever and that took away something he loved so much. The emotion was there and everyone felt for him, making it one of the best wrestling speeches of all time.

And now I'm going to cheat and go with a tie for #1 with the listing going chronologically.

### John Cena's Promo On The Rock – Raw, February 20, 2012

Wrestling promos are a weird art form. Most of the time they are monologues with a wrestler having to make you want to see their match coming up in days, weeks or even months. That's not easy to do as they have to paint a picture with nothing more than words. Some people are masters and Cena was on full display this time around.

With less than six weeks to go before the biggest match of the generation, Cena got in the ring and talked right to the camera about how he did not like the Rock, did not respect him and wanted to fight for everyone who wanted to be a professional wrestler. This was a different in philosophy of life and Cena laid out every the two sides of everything. His line of "I'm here, I'll always be here, you're going to have to kill me to beat me" told you everything you needed to know about their match and you believed every word Cena said. I love this one and still watch it from time to time because it actually gives me chills.

And so does this one.

### The Miz vs. Daniel Bryan – Talking Smack, August 23, 2016

There are very few wrestlers as controversial as the Miz, as some people love him while others say he is everything wrong with wrestling. I'm in the former camp and this was his masterpiece. During the Smackdown wrap up show, retired General Manager Daniel Bryan told Miz, his longtime rival, that Miz wrestled like a coward and was the stereotypical WWE wrestler.

That was too much for Miz, who cut the promo of his life, venting out every frustration he had on all of the fans who said that he didn't belong in WWE and calling out Bryan for saying he would be back in the ring and then retiring. Bryan tried to say he wasn't allowed to come back so Miz told him to quit, which caused Bryan to walk off the set. Miz, with tears in his eyes, wasn't done and kept going, talking about how he made the Intercontinental Title the most important title on Smackdown because this was his show and he was never leaving. If you don't see something in this, I don't know what to tell you.

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# Best Of 2019: Worst Match Of The Year



IMG Credit: WWE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



feel that way.

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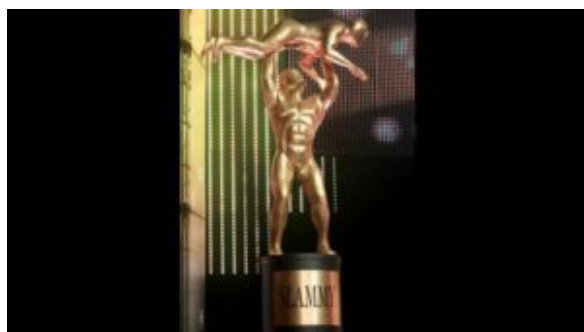
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## Best Of 2019: Worst Angle Of The Year



IMG Credit: WWE

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

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

### Lana/Bobby Lashley/Rusev

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

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

### Usos Prank The Revival

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

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

wonder why the Revival wants out?

### Shane McMahon: Best In The World

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

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

### Roman Reigns' Attacker

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

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

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

### King Corbin Thinks Roman Reigns Is A Dog

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

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

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# Best Of 2019: Non-Wrestler Of The Year



IMG Credit: WWE

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

## Tony Schiavone

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

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

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

### Zelina Vega

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

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

### HHH

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

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

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

### Mauro Ranallo

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

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

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

### Nigel McGuinness

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

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

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

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



IMG Credit: WWE

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



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

### Darby Allin

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

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

### Ilja Dragunov

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

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

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

### Rhea Ripley

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

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

### Jurassic Express

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

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

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

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

### Ricochet

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

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

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



IMG Credit: WWE

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

## Young Bucks

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

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

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

### Imperium

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

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

### Grizzled Young Veterans

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

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

## Inner Circle

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

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

## Lucha Bros

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

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

## New Day

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

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

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

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

### Undisputed Era

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

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

be the case.

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