

# Monday Night Raw House Show – July 21, 2018: The Dark Doesn't Sound So Bad

Never let it be said that a severe thunderstorm knocking out the power to my house for thirty hours will keep me out of a house show. There was a horrible storm in Lexington on Friday and nearly a fourth of the city was without power for over twenty four hours. As luck would have it, Raw was having a house show the next night and since the arena is ten minutes from my house, it was either go or sit in the dark.

The arena was mostly empty with the entire upper arena tarped off. It should be noted that Rupp Arena is huge, seating over 23,000 people. The weather and power outage had a lot to do with the attendance though, which has been strong during recent house shows in the arena. Granted, after this show, a lot of fans might not want to come back.

Before the show, we saw a good chunk of Rock vs. Brock Lesnar from Summerslam 2002.

I sat in the second set of seats off the floor with the entrance on my right for \$28.50. Not bad at all for a good seat, especially with three empty seats on my right and left.

Kurt Angle did his opening video talking about the great show they had for us tonight.

1. Raw Tag Team Titles: B Team b. Heath Slater/Rhyno – Rollup with a handful of tights to Rhyno. C-. About eight minutes.

This was fine for an opener with Slater and Axel having a dance off to start and then some arm work on the champs. It

went exactly as you would expect after that with the fans reminding the champs that Slater had kids and then being very happy when Rhyno came in. Everything broke down and Dallas shoved them together, followed by a rollup for the pin on Rhyno. This was fine for a house show opener with the fans being into Slater and Rhyno.

2. Mojo Rawley b. No Way Jose – Modified Alabama Slam. D+. About nine minutes.

It's always good to see the TV feuds making their way to house shows. Rawley has grown on me a lot in the last year but Jose isn't as much fun without the conga line. The interesting part here was Rawley being heavily booed in Rupp, stemming from his heel turn last year. This caused chants WE STILL HATE YOU and WE STILL REMEMBER. Rawley won with an Alabama Slam into a kind of Boss Man Slam for the pin.

3. Zack Ryder b. Mike Kanellis – Rough Ryder. D. About six minutes.

This is where the problem started for the show as the lack of star power was becoming really obvious. Ryder is someone who was a big deal several years back and Kanellis has never actually wrestled on Raw (his last non-Main Event TV match was in October). The match was Ryder doing his usual stuff and winning with the Rough Ryder.

Post match Kanellis bragged about being from a winning town in Boston and wasn't leaving without a win here. Bobby Lashley came out to easily the pop of the night so far and won in about a minute with a spinebuster.

4. Bayley/Ember Moon b. Alicia Fox/Liv Morgan – Bayley to Belly to Morgan. C-. 8:20.

You would expect Sasha in Moon's spot here but after the angle on Monday, they would have been walking a thin line. Fox in for Sarah Logan makes some sense as well as the show

was pretty close to her hometown. As was the case with everything tonight: this was nothing special and had no fire throughout. Bayley's entrance got a nice reaction but you could hear the lack of a reaction when Moon came out instead of Sasha.

5. Bobby Roode b. Elias – Glorious DDT. D. 6:26.

Before the match, Elias did a little song and said he wanted someone to sing with him. Roode came out and said he knew what he wanted to sing so they belted out a few minutes of Sweet Child of Mine. They had a standard TV match with Elias not doing anything memorable and Roode winning with the DDT. After the match Roode posed for a bit and a fan threw him a rose, which he seemed to appreciate.

Intermission.

6. Authors of Pain b. Tyler Breeze/Chad Gable – Last Chapter to Breeze. D. 5:25.

I was talking to some of the people in front of me (more on them in a minute) and one of them agreed that the was dying for some star power. I'm a fan of the Authors, but this wasn't what the show needed at this point. Gable and Breeze did what they could but were squashed as you would have expected.

7. Raw Women's Title: Alexa Bliss b. Nia Jax and Natalya. D+. 11:20.

Picture any triple threat you've ever seen with one person being sent outside and the other two fighting for the majority of the time. Now imagine that with Bliss, Jax and Natalya. In a bit of a surprise, Jax got the second loudest pop of the night. Bliss slapped Jax and then did the scream from Wrestlemania in the only memorable spot of the match. Jax hit a Samoan drop on Natalya but Bliss knocked her to the floor and stole the pin to retain.

8. Roman Reigns/Seth Rollins b. Dolph Ziggler/Drew McIntyre

– Curb Stomp to Zigler. B. 23:15.

Now THIS felt big and Rollins got a huge pop on the entrance. Reigns was mostly booed during his entrance but was cheered pretty regularly during the rest of the match. This was a long, drawn out match with a long heat segment on Rollins until the hot tag brought in Reigns to clean house. They had a very hot finish with several false finishes and Reigns breaking up the Claymore/Zig Zag combination. The fans were WAY into this and it was exactly what the show needed.

Rollins and Reigns signed autographs and talked to some fans to end the show, which almost every face wrestler did throughout the night.

Overall, this was one of the worst shows I've ever been to with almost no energy or star power. Aside from Lashley, until the main event, the biggest name we saw was....I guess either Roode or Bayley? That's not a good sign in eight matches before you get to the main event. Maybe they weren't putting out their top stars or their best effort due to such a small crowd, but I really wasn't impressed.

What was a lot more fun though was talking to the guy in front of me. It turned out that he had been an indy wrestler (Scott Storm) for sixteen years and a multiple time NWA Southern Tag Team Champion (with pictures to prove it). I had a much better time listening to him tell stories and give a wrestler's perspective on what was going on instead of the actual show. Just a lame effort all around and a really bad show as a result.

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# **NXT House Show Live Report – June 14, 2018**

I took in the NXT house show last night in the Broadbent Arena in Louisville, Kentucky. The arena isn't the biggest in the world with a capacity of 6,600. It was cut in half for the sake of the show and the seats off the floor were mostly empty. The floor was full, but the arena still didn't look great and the lights were kept low all night. I'm not great at judging attendances but there couldn't have been more than a thousand people there at the very most.

Unfortunately there was a bad wreck on the interstate and traffic caused me to arrive twenty minutes after the show started as it took forty five minutes to drive about three miles. Therefore, I missed the opening two matches, which included:

1. War Raiders b. TM61
2. EC3 b. Fabian Aichner

I arrived just at the end of the EC3 match and could hear the bell on the way to my seat.

3. Kairi Sane/Candice LeRae b. Aliyah/Vanessa Borne – Insane Elbow to Aliyah. 11:44. C.

The crowd was very hot for this with LeRae getting a strong CANDICE WRESTLING chant but they got even hotter for Sane, who came off like a major star. If nothing else she has a great entrance with the pirate motif working very well. This was a longer match than I was expecting with a lengthy heat segment on LeRae. It was also very formula based with LeRae and Sane taking over to start until LeRae got beaten down for several minutes. The hot tag brought in Sane and LeRae cut Borne off, leaving Sane to win with the elbow. Aliyah is rather enjoyable as a heel but I was a fan of hers for a long time. Maybe it's the right move.

4. North American Title: Adam Cole b. Raul Mendoza – Last Shot. 11:52. B-.

This was probably the match of the night with Cole getting to show off a lot of what made him popular in the first place and Mendoza getting a little chance to shine. The bigger problem was Cole vs. the crowd, as they were cheering loudly for nearly every single thing that he did. Cole tried everything he could to get them to boo him, from not throwing his shirt to the crowd after seeing which side could make the most noise to running the ropes several times before stopping for a chinlock. The latter just earned him a HOLY S\*\*\* chant for a funny moment.

Mendoza got to show off as well here, and it's clear that he has some talent. There's always room for a high flier who can make a spirited comeback and that's what Mendoza got to do here. Of course Cole retained in the end with the Last Shot and the fans were very, very pleased, but Mendoza gave a more than respectable showing of himself and hopefully someone was paying attention.

5. Tag Team Titles: Undisputed Era b. Danny Burch/Oney Lorcan – High/Low to Lorcan. 13:30. C+.

It's always cool to see a dress rehearsal for an upcoming Takeover match and we got to see three of them in one

night. Lorcan and Burch were game challengers here and did what they could, but the match never kicked into the higher gear that you might expect it to. What we got was certainly fun though and the Era continues to look more and more like a polished team every time they're out there. All those years in Ring of Honor are paying off and it makes for a useful situation. Not a bad match, but I'd hope for more on Saturday.

There was actually a post match angle which wound up on WWE's YouTube channel:

Velveteen Dream got a quick promo on the video screen, saying that it didn't matter if you were a Louisville Cardinals or Kentucky Wildcats fan, you all sucked. While he wanted to fight Ricochet, he'll have to settle for beating someone else up tonight as Ricochet is being held out due to injury (not mentioned).

Twenty minute intermission. At the end a fan got to play the What Happens Next game and won a Raw: The First 25 Years book.

6. Velveteen Dream b. Kassius Ohno – Purple Rainmaker. 13:47. C.

Now this was a weird one, mainly for one place. First of all, the fans loved Dream, giving him one of the biggest reactions of the night. The match was about all you would expect, with Ohno hitting him really hard (and loud) and Dream doing all his shenanigans to try and play some mind games. The first odd moment was near the beginning, when it turned into a very random Hulk Hogan tribute match. Ohno knocked Dream down and did the hand to the ear to all four ropes but missed a legdrop. Dream hit one of his own, then dropped two elbows before raking Ohno's eyes with his boot in another Hogan trademark.

Ohno did hit a Hero's Welcome (a rolling cutter, which he shouted by name before hitting it) and did all of his other

usual stuff. He also banged up Dream's knee but Dream was perfectly fine enough to hit the elbow for the pin. That's exactly the kind of thing Ohno is great at: making someone else look good and then taking the loss which doesn't do him any real damage.

Post match Dream told everyone to buy the Network so they could see him do this again on Saturday. Ricochet came out and said that he wanted to see Dream take the spotlight, so let's see a flip. Dream played to the crowd a lot and loaded one up but Ricochet came in and scared him off. After being chased off, Dream said that Saturday will be a one star match and that one star was him. As he was leaving, Dream said if you wanted to see him do a flip, it would be 9.99. Ricochet said nothing was going to stop him from being in Kentucky and nothing would stop him from being in Chicago to punch Dream in the face.

7. Women's Title: Shayna Baszler b. Nikki Cross – Kirifuda Clutch. 9:21. C.

This was about one thing: Cross is a psycho who messes with Baszler's mind. There really is something to be said about how nuts she comes across as, which adds a lot of fun to her character. Baszler tried to use her skills and work her over but Cross kept going nuts and throwing Baszler off. In the end, Baszler got the Clutch for the knockout, but Cross didn't tap in a smart move. She's not the kind of person to tap out and they went with the more appropriate passing out, hopefully with a smile on her face at the time.

8. Aleister Black b. Lars Sullivan via DQ when Sullivan shoved the referee. 13:20. C+.

Black was in more of a traditional face mode here as he wasted no time in throwing all of his strikes at Sullivan. This included a few kicks to knock Sullivan to the floor but a moonsault got caught in midair. Sullivan worked on the leg to take away the kicks but the Freak Accident was



countered into a DDT. He beat on Black some more but couldn't put him away, eventually grabbing a chair instead, leading to shoving the referee down for the DQ. I'd assume an actual finish in Chicago, but this was energetic while it lasted and they worked well enough together. Black kicked the chair into his face post match to end the night. Overall, this was your run of the mill NXT house show. It wasn't great and for the most part, none of the matches really jumped off the page at me. However, it did a good job of making me want to see Takeover on Saturday and really that's what these shows are for: to get you to want to see the bigger events. Most of the big names were there and if Ricochet had been healthy, I would have gotten to see four of the five matches on Saturday's card. I had a good time and counting parking, the whole night was only \$30. It was a fun time and if you like NXT, you'll have a good time going to one of the shows.

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## **Smackdown House Show – April 1, 2018: The Rusev Bunny**

I took in the Smackdown house show last night in Lexington, Kentucky. This was one of the last stops on the Road to Wrestlemania (which was mentioned over and over throughout the night of course, including on the t-shirt). It wasn't exactly a huge show and the advertised main event (at least in some places) didn't go through in the end, though a little something started to make up for the changed match. Let's get to it.

The show was scheduled to start at 7pm and started almost exactly on time, as is almost always the case with house shows. The arena was far from full, but to be fair Rupp Arena is the biggest basketball arena in the country and can hold over 25,000 people. Not terrible for Easter Sunday night.

Before the show, the fans chose to watch clips of Ultimate Warrior vs. Randy Savage from Wrestlemania VII. Not surprising as Savage used to live in Lexington.

Daniel Bryan welcomed us to the show via a video which never said where the show was taking place.

It was announced that the four way main event with AJ Styles defending the Smackdown World Title against Baron Corbin, Sami Zayn and Kevin Owens would be a singles match with only Corbin getting a shot. This was announced on the Rupp Arena email I received about the show so it wasn't a huge shock.

1. New Day b. Rusev Day – Midnight Hour to English (14:27, B-)

There was a giant inflatable Booty0's box next to the ramp during New Day's entrance. New Day came out with Easter eggs but English said that Rusev was the Rusev Day Bunny. Rusev Day stole the eggs and poured the candy on the mat before the match, much to Big E.'s horror. Also, New Day threw pancakes to the crowd and those things went FLYING, with a kid about four seats to my right catching one. They're real pancakes too.

This was actually a lot of fun with Woods and English having a hot start. The fans were WAY into New Day's antics and it was comedy for a good while. Big E. was gyrating more than usual, including one spot where English took a bow but looked up to see the gyrating hips. After Woods took a long beating, Big E. came in off the hot tag and cleaned house until the Midnight Hour ended English. The

match felt longer than it was, albeit in a good way. Very solid opener.

2. Shinsuke Nakamura b. Dolph Ziggler – Kinshasa (16:20, B-)

This is the third time I've seen this match live in a year (plus a tag match with the two of them involved) so I was more than a little bored this time around. It was exactly the same match they've had time after time with Ziggler doing all of his usual stuff but getting Kinshasaed for the pin. Not terrible, but I've seen it so many times that I really don't care anymore. Also, kind of early in the show for Nakamura. After the match, Charles Robinson fireman's carried a groggy Ziggler to the stage, where Ziggler superkicked an Easter Bunny pinata.

3. Tag Team Titles: Usos b. Shelton Benjamin/Chad Gable – Double superkick to Gable (8:22, C)

This was short and to the point, but the main thing here was the Usos being CRAZY over. They easily got one of the best face pops of the night and it was nice to see them getting the recognition. These guys have reinvented themselves and they had a completely watchable match here. Nothing great, but it was fine for what it was.

4. US Title: Randy Orton b. Jinder Mahal and Bobby Roode – RK0 to Mahal (13:54, C)

If this is any indication of what's coming at Wrestlemania, we're in for a nacho break match. This was really uninspired stuff and everything you would expect it to be. Mahal was really lame in his offense but the fans couldn't stand him. At least they were into Roode's pose. The interesting part here was the fans chanting HAPPY BIRTHDAY at Orton, who seemed to smile a little bit at the recognition. This was exactly what you would expect from these three, which isn't a good sign.

## Intermission

5. Tye Dillinger vs. Mojo Rawley went to a no contest when Sami Zayn and Kevin Owens interfered (7:55, D)

As intermission was winding down, we got a countdown from thirty seconds and Dillinger's entrance started at ten in a nice surprise. This only existed for the run-in finish and that's fine. The fans HATED Rawley though, mainly because he turned heel in the same arena. This earned him chants of MOJO SUCKS, YOU STILL SUCK and WE REMEMBER. Owens and Zayn ran in after an uninspired match, saying they were giving the fans what they paid to see, unlike Daniel Bryan and Shane McMahon. Security took them out and that was that.

6. Charlotte/Naomi/Becky Lynch b. Riott Squad vs. Lana/Carmella/Natalya – Figure Eight to Morgan (10:28, C-)

They threw all of the women into one match and that's a little annoying. I was expecting two matches but throwing them all into one didn't let anyone stand out, save for one person. Becky Lynch came off as the biggest star in this match by a mile and a half with only Charlotte being on the same planet. She has the energy, the look and the work to be the top woman in the company and they're crazy if they don't go with it. Everything broke down and Charlotte made Morgan tap. This felt like a house show match, which isn't a great thing to say. The camera doesn't do Lana or Carmella justice.

7. AJ Styles b. Baron Corbin – Phenomenal Forearm (12:56, C+)

Styles worked the leg throughout and nearly got a submission off the Calf Crusher. There isn't much to talk about here, save for a wicked Deep Six from Corbin. The main thing that stood out to me was how big Corbin seemed. I know he's bigger than most of the roster but he was TOWERING over Styles here. Nothing much to this one as it was just a house show main event.

Overall, nothing worth seeing but for \$27.50, I can't really complain that much. The wrestling was fine and considering it was the Sunday before Wrestlemania, you can't expect them to be going full speed. I had a good time and the wrestling was watchable so all in all, not a bad night whatsoever.

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## Went to the Raw House Show Last Night

I took in the Raw house show last night at Rupp Arena in Lexington, Kentucky. The featured attraction this time around was John Cena, who was making a rare house show appearance. However, this wasn't mentioned on TV commercials until the week of the show, despite the announcement being made on WWE.com over three weeks ago. The crowd was solid enough for a Sunday house show but I have to think advertising Cena as a major attraction would have helped.

The show was scheduled to start at 7pm and actually kicked off a minute or so early. It was a fairly strong turnout with the upper deck completely tarped off but that's standard for a place the size

of Rupp Arena. It should be noted that Rupp Arena is the largest arena in the United States built for basketball with over 23,000 seats. Therefore, even a crowd that is only half full would be a solid showing elsewhere.

### **1. Apollo Crews/Heath Slater/Rhyno b. Curt Hawkins/Anderson and Gallows (5:50) C-.**

This was exactly the opener you would have wanted with the faces being incredibly popular and everyone going nuts for Slater and Rhyno. Crews is a fine face with the athleticism and Titus makes for a solid manager who knows how to fire up a crowd. You don't come off as professional as he does and not have some kind of use, even if it's just a spot as a manager. The best note of this was Anderson beating Slater up and shouting that he has kids too. Rhyno hit a spinebuster on Hawkins for the pin.

### **2. Goldust b. R-Truth (1:18)**

This was another good choice to fire the crowd up but the ending was really sudden. Truth beat the heck out of Goldust for about a minute but charged into a boot and got rolled up for the pin with feet on the ropes. After it was over, Truth promised to get back at Goldust. Nothing to see here but Truth's song fired up the crowd.

### **3. Akira Tozawa b. Brian Kendrick (8:26) B-.**

This might have been the match of the night, which isn't really saying much on a show like this. Tozawa got the crowd going again (notice a pattern here) with the shouting and there was a great near fall off a kick to Kendrick's head. Tozawa won with the top rope backsplash after escaping the Captain's Hook. No Titus here, despite Tozawa signing with Titus Worldwide. The problem here continues to be very simple though: no one cares about the cruiserweights and there's no real way around it.

### **4. Finn Balor b. Elias Samson (8:39) C.**

I've said this before and I'll say it again: I have no idea why Finn Balor's isn't World Champion like, now. The guy is an absolute star and comes off exactly as such with the fans eating up everything he does. He has a good look, his matches are solid and his entrance is outstanding. Throw in the Demon King when the time is right and he's pure money. This was longer than it needed to be with Samson in control for the most part. Balor made the comeback you would expect

him to make and finished with the Coup de Grace.

#### **5. Dean Ambrose/Seth Rollins b. Miztourage (14:45) B-.**

I love lackeys. They can help extend both a feud and a character so much just by having people there to fight instead of doing the same match over and over again. That was the case here as Curtis Axel and Bo Dallas said Miz was too busy for a town like Lexington and they were representing him instead. Axel got in a great line: "I'm not saying Kentucky sucks. I'm saying LEXINGTON, Kentucky sucks."

The place went coconuts for Rollins when he was the surprise (Kind of?) partner for Ambrose. I still think he could easily be the next Jeff Hardy and the reaction he received here only reinforce that theory. This was a longer match than you would expect and went about as you would have guessed. The Miztourage are fine heels and can go in the ring, making me all the sadder that Axel was wasted for so many years. Ambrose won with Dirty Deeds to Dallas in an energetic match.

Intermission. Two kids got to play the What Happens Next game and thankfully they didn't go with the Vince dying clip. After the kids got it right, they received a program, a WWE Top Ten book, the Best of the 2000s DVD, a shirt, every autographed poster for sale, and probably something else that I'm forgetting. Not bad at all for a single night.

#### **6. Mickie James/Dana Brooke b. Alexa Bliss/Nia Jax (6:55) D+.**

And then the crowd died when they realized Bayley and Sasha Banks weren't here. I'm a bigger Brooke fan than most but sweet goodness people did not care about these two against the top heels. The match wasn't even very good either with the lone highlight (aside from Alexa of course) being Bliss not being able to whip Jax into the corner for a splash and just giving up. Mickie kicked Bliss in the face for the surprising pin.

#### **7. Sheamus/Cesaro b. Hardy Boyz (12:32) C+.**

The Hardys got the pop of the night but unfortunately the match was about the same thing these teams have been doing for months now. Jeff had his facepaint back and Matt was doing the DELETE pose fairly often. The match was perfectly watchable and the crowd was WAY into everything the Hardys were doing all match long. Sheamus snapped Matt's throat across the top rope so Cesaro could grab a

small package to retain the titles.

### **8. John Cena b. Bray Wyatt (14:08) C.**

Much like the previous match, this was exactly what you would expect from these two. Cena got a great reaction and easily the second biggest of the night. Above all else though, I couldn't get over how sad it is that Bray has gone from an awesome cult leader to a homeless guy who swings a lantern around. He's completely lacking direction and it's been sad to watch for a good while now. The ref got bumped so there was no one to see Bray tap to the STF. A low blow gave Wyatt two (with the kids losing their minds on the kickout), followed by an AA for the pin.

A Smackdown Live taping was announced for November, though I had originally heard of this as a Raw. They put tickets on sale for one night so I picked up a similar seat for the exact same price as the house show. You would think the TV aspect and a more important show would raise prices/mean the house show should have been lower but not so much. There were probably 100 people in line to buy tickets but if there are four months before the show, the low pre-sale isn't a surprise.

Overall it was a fun night with a VERY hot crowd. The faces mostly won and it was more than entertaining enough. Two tickets in the lower arena (sixth row in the first set of seats off the floor) were \$75 total so it was hardly expensive as another nice perk. Good show and a lot of fun, which to be fair was helped by it being five minutes from my house.

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# Took in the NXT House Show Tonight

I took in the NXT house show tonight in Highland Heights, Kentucky (basically Cincinnati) at the BB&T Arena on the campus of Northern Kentucky University. NXT was at this same arena about nine months ago and they're already back, though after how things went tonight, I don't know if there's going to be a third show.

In short, the place was EMPTY. I showed up at about 7:00 for a 7:30 show and there were only a few hundred people in the arena (which isn't even very big in the first place). After grabbing some food from the fastest concession stand I've ever seen and looking at one of the lamest merchandise stands I've ever seen (two titles, a poster of the people appearing on the show and a handful of shirts), I went into the arena and found out that I was sitting next to someone in the corner.

Since there were a few hundred empty seats closer, I sat in one of those, only to have an usher come up and say I could have a third row floor seat for free if I wanted. Even with the ushers giving away dozens of floor seats, there was still an empty seat next to me and three empty seats in what would have been the sixth row. There were a few more people in the stands later in the show but it was still really bad looking.

During the opening matches there was a video feed of the entrances on the Titantron but it had a slight delay, which was really jarring. Then they just stopped doing it and had regular entrance videos.

1. No Way Jose b. Wesley Blake via DQ at 4:23. This was a really oddly booked match with Jose dancing and doing the standard comedy stuff, only to have Blake choke him with his vest. I have no idea why they did it this was as Jose beat him up after the match and hit his pop up right hand finisher anyway. I know Blake is going to be facing McIntyre on TV next week but they can't have him lose a match

like this on a house show? Odd way to open a show but Jose has a future opening house shows for years. He might not work as a regular act and while that's a problem, he definitely has a place.

2. Sonya Deville b. Lacey Evans at 8:18. This was WAY better than their squash match the previous night on TV. They beat the heck out of each other and Evans was rocking the former Marine gimmick and looked rather fetching doing so. I'll let you figure out what I mean on that one. Deville hit a Shining Wizard for the pin. Also of note, Lacey's daughter might have been in the front row. Either that or Deville had a very long running joke about yelling at a girl and calling her Lacey's daughter.

DIY did a quick promo, talking about how they would beat Sanity later and then lead a parade down the Ohio River. They did almost the same thing at a show in Louisville where Gargano said they would ride horses to Indiana. Ciampa: "HORSES???" Anyway this was fine and I have no idea why it was the only one all night.

3. Drew McIntyre b. Patrick Clark at 8:45. McIntyre has more star power than anyone in NXT save for maybe Bobby Roode. He's big, he's in great shape, he wrestles like a veteran and he's a former Intercontinental Champion. There's something about him that makes you think he's a bigger deal than anyone else around and that's a very good thing. Can someone give me one good reason why he's not on Takeover?

4. Aleister Black b. Oney Lorcan at 3:20. I was looking forward to this one and it was over way too fast. Much like the women earlier, these two beat the heck out of each other and the chops were some of the loudest I can ever remember hearing. Black's entrance is still awesome and that Black Mass looks like it could stop a bull.

5. Asuka b. Nikki Cross and Ruby Riot at 9:54 to retain the Women's Title. This was a preview for Saturday's title match and there was one very odd detail: they used the old Women's Title belt. I know they'll use the new one on Saturday but why in the world not use it here?

Anyway, this was your standard "two in, one out" formula with everyone getting a chance to fight each other. One cool spot saw Asuka come in with a missile dropkick to Cross and land in a splash on Riot for two (I believe that's how it went but it might have been Riot coming off the top.). We had some near falls until Asuka kicked

Cross in the head to retain. Asuka definitely came off like a face here, complete with throwing her shirt to the crowd and offering one heck of a gorgeous smile.

Intermission with trivia and What Happens Next. This is a game where a kid is shown a clip and has to pick what happened next from four choices. Here's the thing: not only was it the same clip from the last show I went to in the same building (which apparently was the same one they had used at other shows on the tour) but it was Vince being blown up in his exploding limo.

Just in case that's not clear: the ONLY clip that they can pick from their ENTIRE VIDEO LIBRARY is a man apparently being killed in a firey explosion. You can't pick, I don't know, ANYTHING ELSE? The kid got a program, a card with the roster on it and a signed picture of Bobby Roode. At least the prize was good.

6. DIY vs. Sanity (Young and Wolfe) went to a no contest at 4:24. This looked to be the first longer match of the night but it was called off after Ciampa came off the apron with a running knee and seemed to hurt himself on the landing. He crashed all of ten feet in front of me and almost immediately got up and hopped to the back. Someone said he was busted open but I didn't see it. This seemed like a legit injury as there was no reason to end the match so quickly with the show already seeming to fly by.

Post match Eric Young issued an open challenge for anyone to come out and fight Killian Dain.

7. Killian Dain b. Kassius Ohno at 12:00. This was about what you would expect from Dain as he powered Ohno down and used a bunch of chinlocks. Ohno fought back with some strikes and the pump kicks, plus a Diamond Dust of all things. Dain was busted open off a shot to the face (not bad) but finished him with the Ulster Plantation.

Post match Sanity beat Ohno down but No Way Jose came out for the same. The fans were into Ohno, especially his theme music.

8. Hideo Itami/Roderick Strong b. Bobby Roode/Andrade Cien Almas at 20:52. Let me put it very simply: Roode is an absolute star and he knows exactly what he's doing out there. From his timing during the entrances (turning around to show off the GLORIOUS written on the back at the right times) to the pose to everything else, it turned into the biggest face pop of the night by a long stretch.

Anyway, this was about what you would have expected as the good guys controlled to start and threw in a lot of mocking Roode's poses. At the same time, Roode was doing everything he could on the apron, including telling Almas to "come on amigo". During Almas' time in the ring, a fan shouted that Roode loved six sides and you could see Bobby covering up a laugh. Eventually Strong got beaten down but avoided a charge and made the hot tag to Itami. Everything broke down and Itami hit a GTS on Almas for the pin.

Itami went to the back almost immediately but Strong went around the ring high fiving fans (including me) and taking some quick photos, which I always find cool. The announcers gave us a quick thank you to end the night.

Overall it was a fun night and about what you would expect from an NXT house show. Counting Ticketmaster fees a mid level seat cost \$40 and floor seats were \$75, not counting any fees that would be included. A bit pricey but it's the kind of arena where there isn't a bad seat in the house. Go and check one of these out if you've never seen one before as you're guaranteed some fun reactions and a good presentation.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up the NXT: The Full Sail Years Volumes I and II, now in PAPERBACK. Check out the information here:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2017/03/24/kbs-history-of-nxt-volumes-1-and-2-now-available-in-paperback/>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>

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# NXT House Show – January 13, 2017: Shaking Hands with Champions

I took in the NXT house show last night at the Broadbent Arena in Louisville, Kentucky. The arena holds 6,600 people but part of it was tarped off and the entire back section of the bleacher seats weren't sold. The floor seats however were completely full and gave the show a good feeling as the area around the ring was packed. Let's get to it.

After a regular opening video and the Star Spangled Banner, the ring announcer started an NXT chant and we were ready to go.

## **1. Gran Metalik b. Noam Dar – Metalik Driver (8:30)**

This was pretty standard stuff with Dar working the arm and the leg at various times. The fans chanted WHERE'S ALICIA over and over during the match. Metalik did some flips and kicks before hitting the namesake driver for the pin. Pretty standard opener. C.

## **2. Ember Moon b. Mandy Rose – Eclipse (9:03)**

The fans booed Rose's entrance until she actually came out and then it was mainly gasping. I've seen a lot of wrestling in my day and the only female wrestler near her level is Maria Kanellis. Basically imagine Eva Marie if she could actually wrestle a competent match. Rose did the standard DON'T HIT ME IN THE FACE bit and took over for a bit before a bunch of strikes and the Eclipse wrapped it up. That finisher looked great in person too. D+.

DIY did a quick promo talking about Sanity and about how Ciampa used to live in Louisville. When they win tonight they're going to get some horses and celebrate all night long. Gargano: "HORSES???"

## **3. Authors of Pain b. Heavy Machinery – Final Chapter (7:28)**

A fan got to do the intro in a cute bit. Heavy Machinery is Tucker Knight/Otis Dozovic and they're some good sized guys. This was your standard power match with Otis getting to show off a bit. It was nothing out of the ordinary but I had a good time with it as I can go for four big guys hitting each other really hard. C.

#### **4. Elias Samson b. Oney Lorcan – Swinging neckbreaker (7:45)**

Samson did his song about wanting to hit all of us in the face. Lorcan grabbed the mic and asked if any of us wanted to see him beat Samson all over Louisville. There wasn't much to this and it was probably the worst match of the night. Samson stopped in the middle to sing a song so Lorcan grabbed the guitar and threatened to break it. When the referee took it away, Samson got in the neckbreaker for the pin. D.

#### **5. Women's Title: Asuka b. Peyton Royce – Asuka Lock (9:15)**

Billie Kay was out with Royce. This was better than expected with Billie getting in a distraction so Peyton could take over. The Aussies are getting better at their offense and looking more like bullies. Asuka Hulked Up, took out Billie and Asuka Locked Peyton to retain. C+.

Intermission.

#### **6. Tag Team Titles: DIY b. Sanity (Alexander Wolfe/Killian Dain) (12:38)**

This was the match of the night so far with DIY the champs doing a bit of comedy with the monster Dain (formerly Big Damo). Sanity tried to interfere and Nikki Cross was ejected. Dain powerbombed Ciampa onto Wolfe's raised knees for a near fall but the knee/superkick combo finished Wolfe to retain. B-.

Eric Young yelled at the rest of Sanity and issued an open challenge.

#### **7. Eric Young b. Patrick Clark**

While this was an open challenge, Clark was already listed as facing Young on the official poster. No one knew who Clark was when he came out but the match wound up being fine. Clark wasn't the most interesting in the world though and it held the match back a lot. Sanity came out for interference and Young won with the wheelbarrow neckbreaker. Clark was beaten down post match and no one came out for the save. C+.

#### **8. Shinsuke Nakamura/Roderick Strong b. Samoa Joe/Bobby Roode (18:34)**

Definitely the match of the night and Nakamura's pop was probably stronger than any other two combined. The fans didn't seem to know

who Strong was and Roode got one heck of a pop of his own. This was your standard main event tag with everyone getting their stuff in. Roode vs. Nakamura was entertaining with Roode doing basic stuff and then getting freaked out when Nakamura would do his flashy stuff. Nakamura finished Joe with the Kinshasa and posed a lot to end the show. B+.

The special part came after the show. I had parked around back and walked out where I saw a bus. Putting two and two together, I went over and saw the entire roster come out of the arena. I got a handshake from Gargano, Ciampa and Nakamura, all of whom were taking pictures with kids. They all came off as incredibly nice and polite before getting on the bus. Heavy Machinery was talking to fans on the other side of the crowd. Most of the wrestlers waved with Roode completely ignoring us (as he should have done) and Joe doing his hand pose and sporting a big ice pack on his knee.

Overall it was a fun night despite having a pretty toned down card. The ticket was only \$22 with floor seats going for \$75, meaning it was far from an expensive night. I had a good time and meeting the champions was a major highlight. Check out the NXT house shows if you can as it's a lot of fun for a cheap price.

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## **NXT House Show – July 15, 2016**

The wife and I took in the NXT house show in Highland Heights, Kentucky (ten minutes from downtown Cincinnati) on Friday night. I had wanted to go to one of these things for a long time and was almost more excited to see this than I was for Takeover: Dallas.

The arena held roughly 10,000 people but it was cut in half and the upper deck was tarped off, leaving only a few thousand seats. The place was just over half full as the floor seats were full but only the back section (as in facing the screen) was anywhere near full. We were on the first row of our section (maybe three feet above the

floor) with our tickets running about \$33 each so it's not like they were overly expensive.

Before the show we saw some WWE Top Ten videos and the fans were allowed to pick a classic NXT match with options of:

Seth Rollins vs. Jinder Mahal

Sami Zayn vs. Neville

Sasha Banks vs. Bayley

The latter won by a landslide though it was only a highlight package, which really did make sense as you don't want to get the crowd that fired up before the actual show starts.

No Way Jose vs. Hugo Knox

Knox is a very muscular British wrestler, meaning the fans were chanting various British swear words at him. Jose is a lot of fun live and a perfect choice to open the show. He did all of his baseball slide, including running around the ring and touching all of the buckles into a dropkick. A legdrop of all things put Knox away at 8:12 for a really fun opener that did everything it was supposed to. Knox was nothing great but he would be fine as a Chris Masters type midcarder.

Angelo Dawkins vs. Andrade Cien Almas

Dawkins is from Cincinnati, earning himself his only reaction ever. This was the exact same problem that Almas had in the Dillinger matches: putting him in a match where there was no way he was going to be the most over guy and it really dragged things down. Almas really isn't the most exciting guy in the world though he played a subtle heel here, as was his only option. Dawkins won with a Sky High at 5:26 and they hugged after. This was nothing but the fans reacted to Dawkins for being the hometown guy.

Bayley vs. Billie Kay

This was a change in the card (which was shown on an old school wrestling poster which seems to be a normal thing for NXT house shows and were selling very well) as it was originally going to be Bayley/Asuka vs. Kay/Alexa Bliss. Billie did her closest thing to sexy in NXT stuff to start but Bayley laughed at her and stole some of her gear. Billie begged her not to so Bayley relented, only to point out to the crowd that Billie actually lost to Dana Brooke.



This started off as a comedy match with Bayley promising to hug her and then ambushing the referee with the hug instead. The match was your standard Bayley stuff with her having fun against the less talented Billie to start, getting beaten down and having her ribs worked over for a bit and then hitting the Bayley to Belly for the pin at 10:22. The fans LOVED Bayley and she received the pop of the night, save for maybe one name later. She's a total superstar down there though and I'm really scared that they're going to ruin her on the big shows.

#### Finn Balor vs. Bobby Roode

Roode's music is really awesome and one of the better songs they've done in a good while. Before the match, Roode called all of us fat out of shape losers and said he was going to be the new star of NXT. Even with all this stuff and insulting fans ala Ric Flair, the fans just would not hate him. Balor on the other hand was as revered as you would expect and we got a strong SEE YOU TUESDAY chant to start things off.

This was actually a pretty short match with Balor never being in any real danger. The Sling Blade and Coup de Grace finished Roode in about seven minutes and Balor took a bow before leaving. It's really clear that he's going and it's cool to see him getting a nice sendoff on the house show circuit after a great TV match.

Intermission.

Before we got back to the matches, the female host (who shared hosting duties with Tom Phillips for a very good pairing all night long) had a fan answer a question for a prize. The idea here was pretty simple: we saw a clip of something in WWE history and were given choices of what happened next. The clip was Vince walking down the hallway and getting into his car on Vince McMahon Appreciation Night and the next scene was him being blown up. One problem here: THE KID WAS EIGHT YEARS OLD!

As soon as the clip started you could hear the crowd gasping and almost panicking because an eight year old, as in someone who wasn't alive when this aired, was playing a game involving attempted murder. Oh and to make matters even better, the fourth option was "The Undertaker takes Vince McMahon to" a very dark and scary place as the host put it, thankfully censoring the actual option.

So yes, since the WWE has NO OTHER CLIPS OF ANYTHING, an eight year

old played a game involving seeing Vince McMahon blown up with the other option being Undertaker taking Vince to a place that had to be censored. This was so out of place and really felt like no one actually thought about it, which isn't something you expect from NXT, or anyone with a brain for that matter.

#### Hideo Itami vs. Beautiful Blonde Blake

This is Blake's new gimmick but there's really nothing different about him. If he hadn't been introduced under the new name, no one would have really noticed a difference. Blake also had a generic Titantron video with his name spinning around over a blue background, which is the same thing Dawkins and Knox had. They're not much but it's better than nothing. Itami got a pretty standard WELCOME BACK chant and is basically the same as when he left.

The match was comedy to start with Blake heading outside because he didn't like all the kicks and strikes. That didn't last long though as he called himself Black Belt Blake and tried to throw some kicks with a fairly obvious result. The fans got on Blake for his tasseled boots, saying that Bayley wanted her boots back. We also got a MURPHY'S BETTER/CENA SUCKS chant for a bit of a chuckle. Itami came back with his bunch of kicks and won with the shotgun kick at 10:07. This was longer than necessary and Itami still doesn't show much fire.

#### Women's Title: Asuka vs. Alexa Bliss

Alexa had her hair pulled back here for a new look. This was actually one of the best matches of the night as Bliss has gotten way better in recent months and actually had a good match here. Asuka showed some personality here by dancing a lot when Bliss tried to get too fancy. The Asuka Lock retained the title at 12:14. This might have been the second best match of the night.

#### NXT Title: Samoa Joe vs. Shinsuke Nakamura

I'll give you two guesses who got the bigger pop than Bayley. Before the match Joe said he hated being here in Highland Heights and didn't like NXT having to lie about being in Cincinnati because that town sucks too. This wasn't going to be a title shot though because Nakamura beating Balor wasn't enough to earn himself a title shot. As he was talking, the Revival ran in for the beatdown but American Alpha came out for the save. Nakamura wanted to make it a six man against Joe and.....Nakamura to Jordan: "What their names?"

## Revival/Samoa Joe vs. Shinsuke Nakamura/American Alpha

This was exactly what you would expect with the good guys doing a big, fast paced cleaning of the ring to start with suplexes and strikes to set up a big pose for one of the loudest reactions of the night. Gable played Ricky Morton for a bit before Jordan did the same, setting up the hot tag to Nakamura. Everything broke down and Nakamura pinned Dash with Kinshasa at 14:00. This was a lot of fun but the crowd was starting to get a bit burned out. The winners all did Nakamura's pose by the ropes to end the show.

Overall this was a very fun night with NXT knowing exactly how to give the fans a fun night. The faces won every match and you got to see every big name (Austin Aries being the biggest name missing and he's hardly a main eventer) on the roster. With cheap tickets and not a bad seat in the house, this was definitely worth going to and really well organized for a much more fun feeling than a lot of WWE house shows. Check them out if they're ever near you, in case you actually need that advice.

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and pick up my new book, KB's WWE Grab Bag at Amazon for just \$3.99 at:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01IH70904>

And check out my Amazon author page with cheap wrestling books at:

<http://www.amazon.com/Thomas-Hall/e/B00E6282W6>

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## **Hideo Itami Returns At House Show**

<http://411mania.com/wrestling/hideo-itami-returns-from-injury-at-nxt-house-show/>

Good for him, though it's going to take some time before he gets his rhythm back and he wasn't exactly lighting up the world before he left.

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## **Samoa Joe Wins NXT Title At House Show**

<http://www.wwe.com/shows/wwenxt/article/samoa-joe-wins-nxt-championship>

I did find it interesting that they mentioned the title match on last night's show but this is a big surprise. If nothing else it frees Balor up to do other things. Like debut at Payback.

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## **Seth Rollins Possibly Injured**

<http://www.wrestlingrumors.net/seth-rollins-possibly-injured/44556/>

It's a leg/knee and he was helped to the back. There's no word on how serious it is but it's always noteworthy.