

The Pro-Wrestling Digest no.150

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Presented by: [RWplusB + The Update Collective](#)

THE PRO-WRESTLING DIGEST

THE CONTINENTAL CLASSIC, PEOPLE'S AWARDS, WRESTLE KINGDOM PREVIEW, PUNK IN WWE, COMPLETE JANUARY 2023, AJW CLASSICS, & MORE!!!



SPECIAL DIGEST REBOOT EDITION

Introduction

Welcome to the new magazine style format of The Pro-Wrestling Digest. Considering this is the 150th edition of the series, I was thinking about what I should do to mark the occasion. I think this reboot is the right choice. Moving forward, digest entries will be posted in this form. I will also post them in select parts on [The Update](#).

Keep an eye out for collected works in book/ebook formats later with more info to come, too.

I am hopeful to grow this into even more than it already is and I always appreciate anyone that takes time to check my work out and the work of our guests.

-R.Wood

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The Continental Classic in Review

Through the C2 Group Finals

It'd be an absolute lie for me to claim to hate tournaments. I am a diehard supporter of their usage in all sports, especially wrestling, so the thought of AEW running a G1 style series was more than enough for me to take note. Below is a look at the entire tournament up until the finals. A review of Worlds End, including the finals of the Classic, will appear in our next issue.

PARTICIPANTS

BLUE LEAGUE	GOLD LEAGUE
Andrade El Idolo	Jay Lethal
Bryan Danielson	Jay White
Brody King	Jon Moxley
Claudio Castagnoli	Mark Briscoe
Daniel Garcia	Rush
Eddie Kingston	Swerve Strickland

RULES

- Matches have a 20-minute time limit
- Wins get three points, draws get one, a loss gets zero
- No ringside assistance
- Point loss deductions for violations may occur
- Group finals held Dec. 27th on Dynamite: New Year's Smash
- Classic Finals held Dec. 30th at Worlds End.
- Winner becomes inaugural AEW Triple Crown Champion (ROH World, NJPW STRONG Openweight, AEW Continental Championships held together).

If you'd like to watch the tournament, consider using my PSC YouTube playlist to do so:

[HERE](#) for Blue League content

[HERE](#) for Gold League content

Or click [HERE](#) for an AEW Timelines upload featuring the full matches!



BLUE LEAGUE

Match Rating + Result Roundup

- Castagnoli b Garcia *** $\frac{1}{4}$
- King b Kingston ****
- King b Castagnoli *** $\frac{1}{2}$
- Idolo b Garcia *** $\frac{1}{2}$
- Danielson b Kingston **** $\frac{1}{4}$
- Danielson b Garcia *** $\frac{1}{2}$
- Kingston b Castagnoli *** $\frac{3}{4}$
- Idolo b Danielson ****
- Idolo b King *** $\frac{1}{2}$
- Castagnoli b Idolo *** $\frac{1}{2}$
- Kingston b Garcia *** $\frac{1}{2}$
- Danielson b King *** $\frac{3}{4}$
- Danielson d Castagnoli **** $\frac{1}{4}$
- Garcia b King *** $\frac{1}{2}$
- Kingston b Idolo *** $\frac{1}{2}$
- League Finals: Kingston b Danielson **** $\frac{1}{4}$

All ratings given by R. Wood

Thoughts

I think they should've launched this side with Claudio versus Kingston as a tone setter, but that's a minor quip. I enjoyed this league the most out of the two and I sincerely appreciated the stories that tied in as well as the ones that naturally spawned as the matches went on.

Idolo was a damn workhorse on his way out. Too bad Tony couldn't deliver with/for the dude. Oh well, it's clear at this point that he's never going to be where he wants to be on just about any card that he's going to want to be on.

The American Dragon proved once again, even on his way out the door, that he is the best fucking worker America has ever produced. He was the MVP of the entire C2, producing banger after fucking banger while his injury added naturally to the visual of it all.

King finally got something real to sink his teeth into and took advantage. Will he remain an afterthought on the bloated roster moving forward like the rest of HOB?

Claudio might not have reached the finals, (always the bridesmaid) but he was as awesome as always throughout. Since I first saw his work in CHIKARA and Ring of Honor, I've been waiting for the day that he's finally seen as a top guy. The TonyVerse has gotten us the closest at this high of a level and I am thankful for that.

Garcia jobbed his way into the hearts of the fans once more, making his single victory (over King in their last match of the series) feel more relevant. I thought Tony was smart enough to push the guy hard when he had so much natural steam behind him a while back. Instead, he was kept in the JAS to cool off and just kind of exists now. At least Super Dragon gave him a go, even if PWG is barely a thing these days.

Kingston was raw as fuck and made each contest he was involved in feel legit just by being half of it. In the end, Tony and crew even gave the nod to Eddie over Dragon, setting up the finals between him and his old bestie, Mox, at Worlds End. I approve heavily of that and actually was rooting hard for the dude to win it all. He's another dude that really has been stop/started a lot.

Note: Danielson versus Kingston's history runs back far, as many of you likely know, though the amount of actual content between the two is rather small. A tragedy, really. If you want to take a look at it, including content from ROH and CHIKARA, check out [THIS](#) RW+B PSC YouTube playlist. Their **Classic** content was excellent and their *classic* content is pretty damn good, too.

Adding the C2 to their weekly program was a wise choice that reminded fans why AEW is an alternative (when they want to be). I loved the tournament more often than not, especially the blue side, but also fear the follow up a bit. Will AEW fit into a better groove in 2024, fix some of the cracks, and reaffirm their identity, or will they instead falter and deal with more growing pains this year, too?

I'm thinking somewhere in the middle.



GOLD LEAGUE

Match Rating + Result Roundup

- Strickland b Lethal ***
- White b Rush *** $\frac{1}{4}$
- Moxley b Briscoe *** $\frac{3}{4}$
- Moxley b Lethal *** $\frac{1}{4}$
- Rush b Briscoe *** $\frac{1}{2}$
- Strickland b White *** $\frac{1}{2}$
- Moxley b Rush ****
- Strickland b Briscoe *** $\frac{3}{4}$
- White b Lethal *** $\frac{1}{2}$
- Rush b Lethal ***
- White b Briscoe *** $\frac{1}{4}$
- Moxley b Strickland *** $\frac{3}{4}$
- Strickland b Rush *** $\frac{1}{2}$
- Briscoe b Lethal *** $\frac{1}{4}$
- White b Moxley *** $\frac{3}{4}$
- League Finals: Moxley b Strickland, White *** $\frac{3}{4}$

All ratings given by R. Wood

Thoughts

The top dogs of the group were excellent and the weak links were serviceable. I feel the tournament could've had a better roster, especially on this side, but it's hard to deny the C2 already being a proven success in part due to the content produced by the Gold League.

Too bad we didn't get Rush versus Danielson.

Lethal was the weakest link of the entire tournament. Jay is a vet with a huge catalog of entertaining moments and quality contests. His output here was decent. Still, why the fuck would anyone include him when dudes like Fox, Keith Lee, Juice, the rest of House of Black, Meat Man Silver, Soup....I mean, I made my point. The only bright side is that he dropped every single match, at least. If the league NEEDED a fall guy, going with him wasn't terrible.

Jay White got nods left and right, until Swerve's flash finish, and ended up in the finals. I'm all in all the guy getting top of the card treatment, feeling that his work in New Japan after Omega left was fantastic.

Jon has been a damn workhorse for AEW since he arrived and was rewarded with a largely smooth ride through the ranks and right into the three-way finals for the league.

Mark Briscoe wasn't very effective from a kayfabe position, but he did well with what was given to him. Admittedly I do think there were better roster options, though. His inclusion actually felt like a weaker version of the Garcia stuff from the blue side.

Rush is one of the worst utilized guys AEW has, in my opinion. AEW tends to do start/stop booking at times and it cools down talent that are heating up. Rush can have a full wildfire behind him if given the chance yet he walked away here with only six points and is expected to have more inconsistency in 2024. Maybe placing him in Blue, trading King over to Gold, would've been better? Or is that just me really wanting Dragon/Rush again?

Strickland has always been a dude that's waiting for a real chance to shine. Tony is toying with the idea of doing just that lately and I'm all for it. He wasn't unblemished through the tournament, but was excellent in execution regardless. I was actually rooting for him on the final Dynamite of the year.

The league finals were great, though perhaps using a triple threat, no dq match after running such a rules-based group stage instead of an excellent singles bout was certainly a choice. Mox is Tony's Okada; a dude that he leans on anytime he feels he needs to lean on someone. The story of him and Kingston was built in, and the promo after King won was quality, but I can see how the league win for Jon could be seen as very unnecessary to most. White and Strickland were right there, after all.

What's next for the Gold Leaguers? I guess we'll see. I really did love this tournament, but my willingness to trust 2024 to be booked super well for many of the tournament entrants has been eroded a bit.

On that note...

What the fuck, Tony!?

A short open letter to Tony Khan

In the face of critiques, it seems the choice A had become a focus on profit margins. Huge gates, even inflated ones, nor bot shenanigans, which were more legit than fans are willing to admit, excuse missteps made by you and whomever you allow to hold some control backstage. AEW is meant to be the major promotion alternative stateside to the Titans, but the identity of the company always seems to be undergoing growing pains. The stop start pushes and major gaps in programs have hurt many on the roster, holding back people that could have been given rockets, instead.

WWE is growing in momentum under Triple H, too. Shitty timing, man. That there are serious rumors that Raw might move in and push AEW off of WBD right now is embarrassing man, even if it goes nowhere.

Furthermore, the visual displays we continue to get over and over again from weekly shows with fractional audiences is fucked, too. It should legit humiliate you, Tony. It certainly is a slap to fans that feel the need to defend your product every week on X and in the wastelands of Reddit. It's especially insulting to those that you employ that have to look out and perform in those conditions considering it's counter to the promise of what AEW is supposed to be. I mean, isn't it? Or was I wrong about All Elite Wrestling, because I thought this was supposed to be a place that showcases the amazing talents so well that they wouldn't ever need to unionize...

Let's earmark that last point for a future letter.

Tony, just book smaller venues to start fixing some of these problems. Eric is 100% right in his assessment and it's tragic that he figured that out before you. Do you not realize how many fucking stupid things that dude has been directly responsible for in this game? There are multiple places around this country that you can pack full for your weekly content until the demand returns in those larger places that you clearly love so much. To the point where you've oversaturated markets, in fact.

Using major locations solely for the big shows isn't a bad thing and it will help the tone of the shows.

I know at this point the argument will be made that AEW haters will just turn their ridicule to the shift to smaller venues, mocking the choice, but I am not trying to validate trolls with this letter. I'm only trying to point out sincere requests I have seen legit diehards type out frequently. I fear sometimes you can't take criticism very well and opt to presume it all must be the work of bots and enemies or whatever.

Ring of Honor is another major question mark right now.

Past owner, Cary Silkin, also wasn't wrong in his [recent](#) words on the current state of the promotion; can anyone deny it's (ROH) not gelling well, after all? Are fans that watch the show and claim it has a major disconnect feeling when viewed next to their special events wrong? One friend of mine says it feels like they're watching a paywall version of the dead AEW YouTube shows most weeks.

Ring of Honor was a name to be respected not that long ago. Even when Joe and Punk left, we always had the next stars to appreciate alongside vets that felt the need to be forever on the roster just to defend

it. Now it just exists as a secondary title belt governing body to AEW with a half-assed show that's not even on fucking television. Would those same vets still be loyal to this version like they used to?

And Jesus Christ, do I need to even talk about the Flair problem? Way to expose yourself as a huge fucking hypocrite, man.

I don't know if you're just overpacked with responsibilities or something or if you've perhaps given some of the reins over to someone who's completely botching, but you were seen as a dude with a finger on the pulse by a large chunk of fans until very recently. Congrats to your Jags, which as I write this are 8-6 and tied for first in their division, but the fans of your wrestling products aren't to be taken advantage of to this degree, man. Rampage is still basically Thunder, Collision feels like second Dynamite since Punk left, ROH only exists to exist, and the Battle of the Belts specials are a huge fucking snore.

There are dozens of shows people can watch every week, man. You have to make your shit must-see. You should've already learned that you have to work harder than Vince or Triple H to make this work. You can't just rest. You can't just placate, ignore, or coast. The grind must be grindy. I mean, this is fucking Digimon World 2 levels of grind.

I should add now that I do appreciate the AEW Effect. It creates better contracts for talent looking to split. It made WWE a better product. Tons of dudes are employed, are now getting paid regularly, and are actually desirable to WWE just because Tony signed them up. Dudes that even Trips would've ignored otherwise. It's (the AEW Effect) done a lot of good and I will always give praise to the positive things that AEW (and you, Tony) have brought to the world of wrestling. Hell, check out the section earlier in this issue for a pretty favorable review summary of the Continental Classic tournament.

In short, I plug the company far more often than I bury it.

Still, we cannot allow ourselves to be so biased and blind as to ignore legit concerns and issues just because of the good. That wouldn't help anyone.

Basically, Tony...do better.

-R.Wood



“I'm not here to make friends, I'm here to make money.”

Punk's return to WWE, so far... (making the Kliq proud?)

▶ FULL SEGMENT - CM Punk comes face-to-face with Rollins in brand decision: Raw, Dec. 11, 2023

Many fans will easily recall Punk's remarks about WWE during his time in an AEW ring. Opinions on his conduct and tenure under Tony Khan vary, and we've all extensively discussed and debated those perspectives ad nauseam, surely. So, let's instead shift our focus to what the Straightedge Superstar has achieved upon revisiting a place he once adamantly vowed never to return.

Check out a PSC YouTube playlist covering the material [HERE](#).

It started at Survivor Series in Chicago; the night Hell froze over. Saving his return for a spot near the end of the event, in front of a hometown crowd, was the exact right time and place to do this and the pop was sincerely electric. Regardless of whatever was to follow (as well as your thoughts on the dude), this was a big moment!

The following night, Punk was given a sub-10 spot to close Raw due to other content earlier on the card going over because WWE is going to WWE. While I have no proof, I would consider it possible that this was an intentional act. By whom? No idea, but the roster is and was very mixed on his return and nerfing his mic time would be a good way to remind him that his diva

shit needs to end. The words he did speak felt as if they lacked heart, but the dude phoning shit in is about what I think we all expect.

Hell, I feel that the only words he said that were legit at all where the ones that closed the promo:

“I’m not here to make friends, I’m here to make money.”

On the same episode, during a recorded chat between Pearce and Rollins, the GM stated his intentions to sign Punk to Raw. Seth responded, making it clear that he didn’t think much of Punk.

On SmackDown, themed as a Tribute to the Troops special, Punk immediately referenced the time cut from him on Raw but he made it clear that he had plenty of time to ramble this time around. He would then tease which show he was going to focus on.

We’re supposed to pretend that the brand split actually matters, right?

He then name dropped Reigns and called out how rare the champ’s appearances are. He gave a shout out to the cousins, for good measure, and tied himself to Roman through their Heyman ties. He then questioned if he and Orton would work well together in 2024. What about a partnership with LA Knight? Hell, what about a program with KO?

The AEW backstage drama being loosely referenced alongside KO’s name, especially with the dude’s friendship to The Elite, was perhaps the most noteworthy thing here. He closed this by pissing on Seth’s name and his choir and loosely referencing Cody for added fun.

Backstage, Cody welcomed him back with a handshake and both of their Rumble dreams were teased. He’d later officially enter the Rumble, though that was obvious and expected so no one should consider that news.

The following week, back on Raw, Punk came out to make his decision. Was he going to sign with Raw, SD, or...NXT? He first apologized to fans for walking out ten years ago then made his choice public.

CM Punk is a Raw superstar (and he wants AEW’s TV spot)! His logic? Minimally existent and worthless to talk about, let alone analyze.

Start up Seth's choir, because his choice brought out Rollins for a moment between the two. Seth took offense to Punk's claim that WWE was home. CM Punk had abandoned it, tried to tear it down, and Seth is here to defend HIS home against Punk.

There was a lot of weight behind Seth's words and honestly I am all in for the program.

Seth claims to hate Punk. He wants to be the one that slams the door on him when he fucks up again. Kayfabe or not, this is exactly the right way to start the return of Punk. The only dude that might have been a parallel in quality of choice was Owens, but Seth truly was the correct option here. Can Seth get Punk on his level or will the elder vet do what we all are thinking he's going to do?

A little later in the month, Punk worked his first match in a WWE ring in...well, we've been over that. They chose to make a statement, [running his return in MSG to a huge crowd](#) instead of on TV or on a special event.

"You've still got it," chants of all fucking things, rang out during his contest with Dom. He'd eventually get the nod. Note that the link in the sentence two back is from an unofficial source, using fancam footage, and that it might not last forever. A bit of roughness was present from Dom in their contest; perhaps unintentionally, perhaps not.

It's been nearly ten years since the day the straightedge messiah left. While I feel his appearances thus far have felt lacking in true substance, I'm still interested in seeing how this all plays out. Seth is the right guy to kick the experiment off and is our best chance as fans to get some legit fire out of the dude. Will he just ride it safe, will he find a passion in him and make this worthwhile for everyone involved, or will he fuck up big and get sent packing once again?

He's ball-less right now, so it's more likely in my mind that it'll sadly be the first option. I guess we'll see.



Wrestle Kingdom 18 Preview

On January 4th, the wrestling world is rewarded each year with an excellent show that sets the tone for the year ahead. This has been true for nearly twenty years now and New Japan's Mania level event looks like yet another great show this time around.

Matches	Notes
Sanada(c) vs Tetsuya Naito	IWGP World Heavyweight Championship
Bryan Danielson vs Kazuchika Okada	AEW versus New Japan
Will Ospreay vs Jon Moxley vs David Finlay	IWGP Global Heavyweight Decision Match
Zack Sabre Jr.(c) vs Hiroshi Tanahashi	NJPW World TV Championship
Bishamon(iwgp) vs GoD(strong)	Winner Takes All IWGP + STRONG Tag Titles
Bullet Club War Dogs(c) vs Catch22	IWGP Jr HW Tag Championships
Hiromu Takahashi(c) vs El Desperado	IWGP Junior Heavyweight Championship
SHINGO(c) vs Tama Tonga	NEVER Openweight Championship
Umino, Kaito vs House of Torture	Betrayal + NOAH participation
Yota Tsuji vs Yuya Uemura	Promotional Positioning
New Japan Ranbo Battle Royal	Final 4 will compete for KOPW 2024 Championship at New Year Dash

Okada might be leaving, which is the biggest rumor going around right now. The fact that TNA looks like a legit possibility for a landing spot is insane considering the history there, but modern TNA is no joke and 2024 looks to be the year that they make that clear. They also are promoting a big name being signed, though I think something happened there that we don't know yet.

I don't expect that to be his destination, though. To be honest, I don't see the dude leaving at all. His dick choice to try to push for the main event spot was funny (but petty) af, either way.

To be fair, Okada's match with The American Dragon is likely going to be MOTN, regardless of card placement.

The actual main event sees G1 winner, Naito, facing former LIJ bud, Sanada, for the top prize of the company. The champ defeated another former partner, EVIL, in a lumberjack match in October to add nicely to the storyline. Expect something in the 4 star range and a pocket of unhappy fans regardless of the result.

The US Heavyweight belt became the UK Heavyweight belt, then Finlay acted like a douche because he wanted to prove he's a legit BizCliz leader and he destroyed the belt plates. Now, David will face Mox and Ospreay in a three way match where the winner becomes the first Global Heavyweight Champ. This is the biggest test of David's career and just another fun outing for his opponents. Who New Japan wants to crown as the first holder of the prize will be interesting, but the match itself has some real promise especially if David can indeed show up! Will his brother getting signed by WWE motivate him?

Sabre's run with the Television Championship was one of the most underrated reigns of 2023 and he is looking to start 2024 with a big win over Tanahashi. Promotions tend to change things up at the start of the new year, so I am actually hoping for a title change here and Sabre moving on to taking the World strap by the end of the year. This should be great at the very worst. That Tana was just made president is hopefully a long-term positive, too. The big question is if he's the type to strap himself up right after getting power or if he's the type to avoid that at all costs...

Speaking of, the past president was tossed out because he wasn't gelling well with folks like Okada and had lost a lot of his peers' respect for his *efforts*. Farewell!

Hirumu and Despy's Junior title contest should be a decent addition to the Kingdom junior bouts lineage. I'm expecting a retention but flip a coin. It'll be solid, regardless, and is one built off the back of a long stretch of quality matches between the two.

The two tag title matches, both in the heavyweight and junior divisions, should be fairly decent in all but I honestly don't think folks will remember them much a year later. That's alright though because good-great contests are more than enough for the situation and their sole goal is to keep a flow moving and to avoid dragging down the card.

Lower on the card, Ren Narita's betrayal on Shota still stings and vengeance is apparently due. Kaito is in from NOAH again, backing up Umino's efforts to take down Narita (and House of Torture) a peg or two.

Note that House of Torture will take on the pair, and four others, in a big 12-man elimination match on NOAH's New Year show two days earlier if you're wanting a preview match. That event is actually kind a good preview for Kingdom in general.

Yota and Yuji is all about promotion positioning. Yuji is being experimented on and they're seeing what they actually have in him. Yota is coming back and they might have something big in mind for him., too Whomever wins should be pretty relevant for the company this year and might even wear singles gold for a stretch during the period.

My money is on Yuji.

Sadly, the SHINGO match might be the weak link or it might be a sleeper hit. Only time will tell. A title change here, just like with the two tags, the junior defense, and the TV defense are very possible.

This might end up being one of the weakest Kingdom shows in years, but there's a guaranteed MOTYC, another that has that potential, and a handful of promising contests filling out the rest. Don't expect the show to win over any new fans, but it should do enough to please longtimers nicely enough.

[Watch Wrestle Kingdom 18 LIVE on NJPW World on January 4th at 1:30 am EST.](#)



January 2024 Major Events Calendar

Note that there are hundreds of companies and the likeliness that I've overlooked something each time I put these together is very...likely. That said, here is a list of ten major events of note for the first month of 2024 that you might be interested in.

1. **WWE Raw: Day 1 Special Edition Episode** on Jan. 1st and will feature Seth defending the World Heavyweight Championship against McIntyre!

Predictions: Seth wins, rumors of Drew being unhappy pop up again, and we get a very good match.

2. **Pro Wrestling NOAH The New Year** on Jan. 2nd stars Marufuji facing Kota Ibushi in a dream match main event, a huge 12-man elimination match with some New Japan involvement (there's a lot of NJPW involvement throughout the card itself in general), Kenoh against big man Soya for the GHC Heavyweight belt, and a lot more!

Predictions: Kota wins and makes another appearance or so for the company in 2024. Kenoh retains. Some minor belts do change hands and New Japan is made to look strong throughout.

3. **WWE NXT New Year's Evil Special Edition Episode** on Jan. 2nd with Ilja defending the top prize of NXT against Trick Williams in Orlando and the LWO

will be in action against the newest version of Catch Point!

Predictions: This brand seems to be in a constant shift, so I have no idea who's getting the nod and I don't pay close enough attention to really get the vibe. I do know that Trick has been more inconsistently booked than Ilja, so perhaps they keep the latter strapped. Instead, my prediction is that NXT will beat AEW in ratings at some point in 2024, head to head, and a few times indirectly.

4. **AJPW New Years Giant Series** runs the biggest show of the set on the 3rd and will include Nakajima defending the GHC Heavyweight Title against a Regal's fucking kid. NXT/AJPW Forbidden door!?

Predictions: Getting in bed with WWE usually doesn't end well for companies. All Japan is making big moves lately, shifting away from their more traditional stylings, but I still have doubt that Regal's kid is going to become Triple Crown Champion. I see the value, though. Hunter sends Regal's kid of all fucking people over to Japan and has him win THE Triple Crown. It's petty as fuck, but the feud between AEW and WWE is certainly at that level and Dempsey is a decent worker.

[▶ NXT Stars Axiom vs Charlie Dempsey \[FULL MATCH\] Reality of Wrestling](#)

5. **NJPW Wrestle Kingdom 18** on Jan. 4th includes Danielson vs Okada, Sanada vs Naito for the World Heavyweight Title, and MORE! Of all the New Japan shows scheduled for January, prioritize this one or watch the January output of the AXS show.

Predictions: Dragon and Okada is a MOTYC, Sanada wins, Ospreay wins and defends against Okada stateside after the later decides to stay home, lots of down the card title changes occur, and the show is great (though a bit below Kingdom standards from past years).

6. **STARDOM Ittenyon** is in Tokyo on the 4th and Syuri wants Mayu Iwatani's IWGP Women's Championship.

Predictions: Mayu and Syuri provide for the second MOTYC of the day on a card that might end up being show of the month (even over Kingdom).

7. **WWE SmackDown: New Year's Revolution Special Edition Episode** on Jan. 5th will see Styles vs Orton vs Knight, in a number one contender match to face Roman at the Rumble!

Predictions: We get a four-way at the Rumble after a shit finish?

8. **NJPW Battle in the Valley** on Jan. 13th. As of time this was written, the only match being teased is Ospreay versus Okada.

Predictions: Ospreay drops it to Okada and Okada defends it in TNA, AEW, RevPro, and maybe CMLL. The show delivers big and ensures STRONG continues to be an underrated gem of a show in its new format.

9. **TNA Hard to Kill** on the 13th is the return of TNA and Shelley defending the top prize against Moose in the main event, Trinity versus Grace for the Knockouts belt, Sabin defending the X-Division strap against Kushida and Vikingo, a women's Ultimate X match, and more!

Predictions: Do they start the new era with Moose at the top? I'd prefer Shelley retain, but I do know they will certainly be looking to make statements on this day and title changes galore might be the choice they go with to do it. Hopefully this is the start of a real new era.

10. **WWE Royal Rumble** on the 27th Roman will defend and the two Rumble matches will set us on the road to Wrestlemania! Will Cody or Punk get the nod? Someone else?

Predictions: Sasha returns and wins the women's Rumble, AJ Lee appears, Jade debuts. Roman retains in a four-way, pinning Styles in the finish. Becky beats Rhea. Cody wins the men's rumble side and moves to SD to resume his story with Reigns. Big E returns. Seth beats Punk in a title match OR eliminates him in the Rumble to set up a title match between the two at Mania.

Feel free to send any photos, reviews, or general thoughts on these shows and others to 315-330-6840 or to rwplusb@gmail.com to be featured in future editions. We're also seeking guest writers and more. Inquire at the same spots. Furthermore, plans for a fantasy style game are in the works for those that are interested.



The Updated RW+B Pro-Wrestling TV Guide

With so much content coming out every week, it can be hard to pick something to actually watch. To be fair, many fans haven't managed well in the digital age and/or are overwhelmed to the point where they never actually branch out...despite an interest in doing so. I am hopeful that this will be useful in assisting someone and will make things easier for them.

Sundays

Head to AAA's YouTube channel on Sunday nights if you're interested in an hour+ of insane lucha libre. Konnan has done his best to fuck up an easy thing, but with names like Vikingo, Psycho Clown, and more on the roster you're still going to get some fun shit along the way.

Reality of Wrestling, Booker's promotion based out of Texas, runs on YouTube most Sunday nights, too.

Feel free to take the day off unless something major is set to air on one of these or it's a PPV night.

Mondays

Monday Night **Raw** is, of course, considered the top wrestling program each Monday evening even if it feels like a chore most weeks. For the time being, you can find it on USA at 8pm Eastern. For all others, check your local listings. Just consider that common sense moving

forward. Your best choice is likely to just wait until Hulu uploads their condensed version around 5am the next day. The show is far better when trimmed down.

Tuesdays

Check out my personal favorite weekly wrestling program with STARDOM's digest show, **We are STARDOM!!** on their YouTube channel every Tuesday morning around 9:30.

NWA **Powerrr** episodes air, of course, at 6:05 pm Eastern on YouTube for those that really have a hard on for this company. I don't get it, but to each their own.

If that's your cup of tea, you might also like Rocky Mountain Pro's **Charged** show which runs on YouTube at 8pm each week. Many people like their writing style and it might be something you enjoy, too.

Also at 8, you can go to USA for **NXT** and see if they've managed to recapture that old lightning. They haven't, but it's not terrible and might be your best bet each Tuesday for those seeking in-ring quality.

If you only have time for one thing today, outside of the superior Hulu version of Raw, than check out the STARDOM show.

Wednesdays

AEW **Dynamite** is on TBS, for now, every Wed. at 8pm. Most consider it the most consistent weekly wrestling program. At this point, you either love 'em or hate 'em, though, so you do you but it's an easy recommendation for me!

You can also find **Dragon Gate Battle Library** each Wednesday morning on the Gaora YouTube channel if you are in the mood for classic DG.

Thursdays

Start early at 7pm on HonorClub, if you've convinced yourself to actually pay for it, with **Ring of Honor**. If you haven't paid for it, you can check out OVW Live on Fite.tv and see what Snow's been doing.

Next, move along with the rebirth of TNA **Impact**, airing on AXS at 8pm. If you just cannot get over the idea that tNa SuCKs or whatever, there's Atomic Legacy's **Revolt** show running most

Thursdays at the same time over on Fite.tv. You also can watch Court continue to underdeliver with MLW **Fusion** most weeks on YouTube.

When that's done, check out the **NJPW on AXS** program at 10pm. The month of January will start with three weeks of WK coverage that promises to make for an excellent television experience.

New Japan adds episodes of **STRONG** to their YouTube on Thursdays. I'm writing this near the end of December and they're covering tapings from Resurgence right now, which was held at the end of May. That might matter to some people.

I suggest TNA then NJPW on AXS, with ROH and Strong being considered if you somehow have the time and interest.

Oh, and **AJPW Battle Library** episodes run on Gaora's YT in the morning time if you need a cherry.

Fridays

Start with **SmackDown** on Fox at 8pm Eastern to see if Roman actually showed up, then go to TNT at 10pm for AEW **Rampage** if you're in the mood to check out Tony's most phoned in weekly program.

If you really, really love WWE and insist on watching everything they put out, know that **NXT Level Up** airs at the same time as Rampage on the Peacock app.

CMLL **Super Viernes** and other special events air behind a paywall on Boletia on Friday nights and it tends to be the best Friday show these days. Check air times in advance as Mexico does DST differently. The oldest promotion in the world also adds nice highlight reels of big matches over the weekend after on their YT channel, if you miss it live.

If you don't want to pay for CMLL's show, prioritize SD and consider Rampage if you see something of interest on the card.

Saturdays

WOW episodes air early on their YouTube channel (around 10 am) if you are in the mood for a quick, women's promotion with a quirky show.

You can also find one of the best weekly shows on Gaora's YouTube channel most Saturday mornings in the form of Dragongate **Cutting Edge Battle!!**, which tends to absolutely rock the half-hour wrestling show format.

AEW **Collision** is still in a weird growing phase following the Punk drama, but this is your best bet for a good time watching a weekly wrestling show on a Saturday. Check it out on TNT at 8pm.

Rixe out of France has been adding new episodes on Saturdays once a month. I'm not sure which days or times, but some of the past episodes have been very well received and it can always be fun checking out growing feds that actually care enough to try to make themselves semi-visible.

Make Collision and DG your priority on Saturdays and everything else secondary.

TOP SHELF ONLY

Gun to my head, picking only one show for each day, here are my choices:

S- AAA on YouTube (or just catch up on other things)

M- Raw on USA (strongly consider Hulu version, though)

T- We are STARDOM!! On YouTube (a must-watch, right after you're done with Raw on Hulu)

W- Dynamite on TBS (the best weekly show?)

R- NJPW on AXS (strongly consider TNA as well)

F- SmackDown on Fox (strongly consider CMLL if you're willing to pay)

S- Collision on TNT (a fun show that's sometimes a great show)

We are seeking writers interested in reviewing shows and events. Shoot a message to 315-330-6840 or an email to rwplusb@gmail.com if you're interested.

Red's Wrestling Time Capsule



[AJW Classics Episode 1 Review](#)

1. AJW Junior Title: Tatenoc vs Hiromi
The champ was beaten down for a period before a quick spark and an iffy 3 count saw the champ retain. Meh. The belt design rocks, though. ³/₄
2. Monster Ripper vs Mimi
David versus Goliath stuff with casual interference. The monster was just too much, though, and David just couldn't get it done this time. Good stuff! ***
3. WWWA Tag Titles: Devil, Tarantula(c) vs Dynamite Girls
Hot start, in-crowd fighting, and only a bit of jankiness. This was more complete than the ones that preceded it and a load of fun. The finish itself was entertainment defined. ³/₄
4. WWWA World Title, Hair vs Mask Apuesta: Jaguar(t,h) vs La Galactica(m)
Galactica put her mask on the line, but her second was there to ensure there was no actual risk. It was an overbooked chaotic circus act to a degree, but entertaining as hell. Similar to a lot of AAA TripleMania apuestas in many ways. Jaguar was a damn star, even in defeat, and pillared this to success. Great stuff overall. ³/₄

The first episode of AJW Classics climbed as it went and was an hour of legit fun. Well worth checking out and a nice way to start our journey through the program. The weakest match was quick and painless and many might enjoy it more than I did. Honestly, this was just a really easy recommendation.

Overall episode rating: 75%



[Dragon Gate Battle Library Episode 1 Review](#)

1. Open the Dream Gate Title: Mochizuki(c) vs Ryo

This showcased how ageless DG seems to be at times as it felt very much like it could've happened this year. Mochizuki was an excellent foe for Ryo. One that the latter simply wasn't ready for. A good pace and layout with the finishing stretch pushing it into legit great territory. ***³/₄

The first DGBL lands well. This is one of the first matches from the company post-Toryumon that diehard fans tend to recommend and they showed clips of another well regarded contest during the pre-match build. It serves nicely to showcase the era and the quality this company has always strived for so, yeah...check it out.

Overall episode rating: 75%



[AJPW Battle Library Episode 1 Review](#)

1. Junior Tag Battle of Glory 2014 Final: Evolution vs Ultimo Dragon, Kanemaru
Ultimo tried his best to put away Sato, but eventually it was the constant wave of technical offense from Aoki alongside his ability to overcome a stretch of big shots from the opposition that would give Evolution the victory. This was an example of the basics done very well and was a legit great contest. *** $\frac{3}{4}$

I wasn't sure about diving into this GAORA series because the period of All Japan that is largely covered by it is typically one of the weaker stretches for the promotion. I remember finding some gems during the period, though, and was hopeful it'd be a fun show to check out. It was. Give this one a look if you have the time and the interest.

Overall episode rating: 70%



[Wrestle-1 Archive Episode 1 Review](#)

1. Fans bring the weapons hardcore: Ikemen Jiro vs Seigo Tachibana

Years before WWE didn't know what to do with him, Jiro was showing it up in Japan in a way most puro acts aren't willing to attempt at all. Make no mistake, W1 had a lot of WWE influence in their bloodstream, but they made it work more often than not. This time? Yeah, it worked. Just two of W1's biggest having a fun gimmick match. No complaints there! ***½

I used to look forward to watching Wrestle-1's digest series on YouTube almost every week, right up until the company folded. A lot of shows that I've loved have been canceled and promotions I enjoyed shuttered, but W1 closing up shop was one that hit me. A bulk of what makes up the first Time Capsule section is from the Gaora YT channel and I thank them for bringing back W1 in a way that might bring them new eyes. This first episode served well to show what the company was all about. For that if nothing else, make time for this episode. There are far worse ways to spend half an hour.

Overall episode rating: 70%



THE PRO-WRESTLING PLAYLIST ENTRY #4

Cage of Death WarGames

Eddie Kingston, Jack Evans, BLK Jeez, Ruckus vs SeXXXy Eddy, Nate Webb, Chri\$ Ca\$h, JC Bailey

Every month, look forward to another addition to [The Pro-Wrestling Playlist](#); an ever growing collection of content worth watching (for one reason or another). For this entry, we're heading back 20-years for a look at one of Combat Zone Wrestling's best ever. My own ties to the company aside, I am sincerely thrilled to take a look at this classic and to hopefully expose others to it, too.

I'm technically breaking my rule of official channel vids only, but this has been up for two years and rules are shit. So, if you want to see a fucking car crash, rocky as it can be for large portions, than this is for you. It's absolute carnage for over 30-minutes with sick spot after sick spot and it makes for a highly entertaining time traveling experience.

Check out my podcast episode featuring Maven Bentley [HERE](#).

Red's Rating: ***¾



Raw: The Absolute Best of 2023 on Hulu Review

Best of editions of shows are just filler content, but they can still be entertaining in delivery. For Christmas day, Raw was one such episode. The execution? Not too bad. Note that this review used the Hulu edition. The USA edition also included Gunther and Gable's Intercontinental Championship match.

The Miz kicks things off, acts like The Miz, and introduces the episode ahead. We then cut to the hosts, Rosenberg and Redmond. The episode then consisted of interviews and highlights alongside large chunks of highly regarded content they had produced throughout the year.

WWE World Heavyweight Title, Crowning Tournament Final: Seth Rollins b AJ Styles

User Rating: 7.53 Red's Rating: ***3/4 WON Rating: ****1/4

From 05/27/23

AJ was a workhorse vet, existing in this role specifically to ensure Seth's victory went over well. This was a great, hard-worked contest that served as WWE's answer to the Roman problem. Since, Rollins has been a good champ for Raw and continues to be the legit top dog for the brand.

[WWE SmackDown Women's Title: Rhea Ripley b Charlotte Flair\(c\)](#)

User Rating: 9.04 Red's Rating: ****1/2 WON Rating: ****3/4

From 04/01/23

Rhea's rise to this moment was certainly entertaining and Flair more than held up her end of the deal. The two really put in for a Mania worthy match that showcased exactly what the women's roster stands for right now. One of the best women's matches of 2023!

San Juan Street Fight: Bad Bunny b Damian Priest

User Rating: 8.55 Red's Rating: *** $\frac{1}{4}$ WON Rating: **** $\frac{1}{2}$

From 05/06/23

This was more circus act than I typically can get behind, but it was fun shit either way and was a huge success, too. Celebrity involvement in wrestling has really gotten better as time has gone on and I'm just as surprised as anyone. Props to Bad Bunny!

Cody Rhodes b Brock Lesnar

User Rating: 6.87 Red's Rating: *** $\frac{3}{4}$ WON Rating: **** $\frac{1}{2}$

From 08/05/23

Great shit with the ref being pretty lenient. Not only was this a strong outing, but the show of respect after from The Beast Incarnate was a nice cherry. Simple stuff done well!

Steel Cage: Becky Lynch b Trish Stratus

User Rating: 8.26 Red's Rating: *** $\frac{1}{2}$ WON Rating: ****

From 09/02/23

The Man has continued to be a pillar of the modern WWE product. Here, she overcame a vet AND a rising star's attempts to stop her, in a very good match. I think it's worth a look and others liked it more than myself. Now's the time to check it out if you're interested and missed it previously.

[WarGames: Rhodes, Jey, Zayn, Rollins, Orton b McIntyre, Judgement Day](#)

User Rating: 8.24 Red's Rating: **** $\frac{1}{4}$ WON Rating: **** $\frac{3}{4}$

From 11/25/23

Drew and Jey's issues. The Judgement Day being dicks. Orton's big return. The match quality alone was fantastic and they used the stipulation nicely, but the other stuff solidified this was a must-see WarGames entry. Punk returning after in no way should dwarf this major performance from all involved!

Episode Rating: 80%

If you're okay with the format and have any interest in the matches aired, for your first time watching them, the second, or more, then this is a no-brainer.

SmackDown: The Absolute Best of 2023 on Hulu Review

You know the drill now! This time, we're looking at a Best of from a few days later on the blue brand to see how their current roster stars did in 2023.

Solo Sikoa b John Cena

User Rating: 5.22 Red's Rating: **½ WON Rating: ***½

From 11/04/23

Cena came back so he could make Solo look like an even bigger threat and so he could show us he really doesn't want to just shave his hair off for some weird reason. The big Samoan would eventually get the win after several thumb shots to the jugular.

[WWE Unified Tag Team Titles: KO, Zayn b The Usos\(c\)](#)

User Rating: 9.14 Red's Rating: ****½ WON Rating: *****

From 04/01/23

The Usos putting the SD and Raw Tag Team Championships on the line in the main event slot of night one of WrestleMania against Kevin Owens and Sami Zayn. 2023 was weird, people! I loved it, though, and feel they delivered big, adding another top shelf outing to the Bloodline soap opera catalog. One of the best tag matches of the year and a truly must-see performance!

WWE United States Title: Logan Paul b Rey Mysterio(c)

User Rating: 6.81 Red's Rating: **¼ WON Rating: ***½

From 11/04/23

The selected celeb match of the episode also showcased the brand's current US Champ. I'm not big on the dude and didn't care much for the match, either. Meh stuff with a shit finish.

[WWE Undisputed Universal Title: Roman Reigns\(c\) b Cody Rhodes](#)

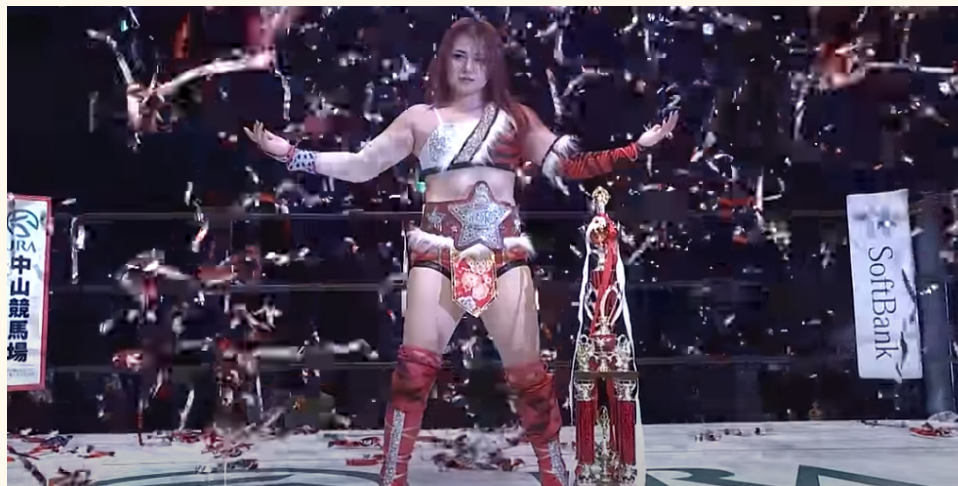
User Rating: 7.55 Red's Rating: **** WON Rating: ****½

From 04/01/23

This one is a bit controversial because everyone just KNEW that Cody was winning here. Instead, they cut his legs off and released out a lot of steam he had so that they could continue the Roman reign. Was it the right choice in retrospect? Honestly, I'm fine with it. I'm not super invested in the programs of WWE right now, I enjoy The Bloodline more often than not, and Roman makes WWE a lot of cash in his top dog role. Oh, and the *story* memes and such have been fun. Not for everyone, but I found it to be fantastic content.

Episode Rating: 70%

The Raw episode was far superior. Just spend the time you'd spend on this SD watching the full matches from Mania again (or for the first time). Click links for the full matches.



STARDOM DREAM QUEENDOM 2023 SELECT REVIEW

After some technical issues that WWNLive fans should have a lot of related memories of, STARDOM uploaded their end of the year gem to YouTube for free for a few days. I didn't have time for the full event, but in appreciation of perhaps the best promotion of the year, and the choice to upload this as an apology, I wanted to give them a little plug in the first magazine edition of the Digest. Here's a short review of the last four matches of the show.

Goddesses of STARDOM Titles: AphroditE(c) b Oedo Tai's Momo, Toura

User Rating: 6.76 Red's Rating: ***½

While the execution was lacking a bit, and while the contest admittedly failed to deliver on my expectations overall, I still thought that was enjoyable enough and keeping Saya and Utami strapped heading into 2024 was honestly the right choice. Very good, perhaps even borderline great if not for the botched count. STARDOM is going to be testing out a lot of things next year, but this is a more than serviceable enough use for AphroditE in the meantime.

NJPW STRONG Women's Title: Giulia(c) TKO Megan Bayne

User Rating: 8.07 Red's Rating: ***¾

David versus Goliath style content with Giulia picking up a nice win over Bayne before she splits in a few months. Great stuff overall that some will certainly like more than others. Excellent for WWE fans wanting a look at one of their newer stars, AEW fans wanting more Bayne before she becomes a bigger deal stateside, or joshi fans seeking this trope. Adora challenged for the belt after via recorded video appearing on screen.

Wonder of STARDOM Title: Saori Anou b MIRAI(c)

User Rating: 8.27 Red's Rating: ****

Following their Gold Rush draw, Saori and MIRAI went for it again and they put in for a fantastic title defense once more! Saori overcame her opponent this time, becoming the first freelancer to do so since Toni Storm's interesting victory a few years back. This reign is going to be fun af!

World of STARDOM Title, Vacancy Fill: Maika b Suzu Suzuki

User Rating: 8.57 Red's Rating: ****

The Goddesses and World belts were vacated when Tam was injured, tragically, but that allowed for an opening and it was going to be either Maika or Suzu to fill it. Before you check this one out, which you certainly should do, you need to watch their GP classic from a few months ago. Do so with [THIS](#) episode of We are STARDOM!!. [HERE](#) is a brawl between the two to build it up for you a bit more. There was a bit of roughness, that arguably added to the tension, and the entire thing was especially must-see if you consider yourself interested in this product. If not, still consider it.

A wrestling promotion making the best of an injury related world title vacancy by strapping up a worker that's *not ready for it* because it's what the fans want? What a strange idea... Too bad other companies won't try that!

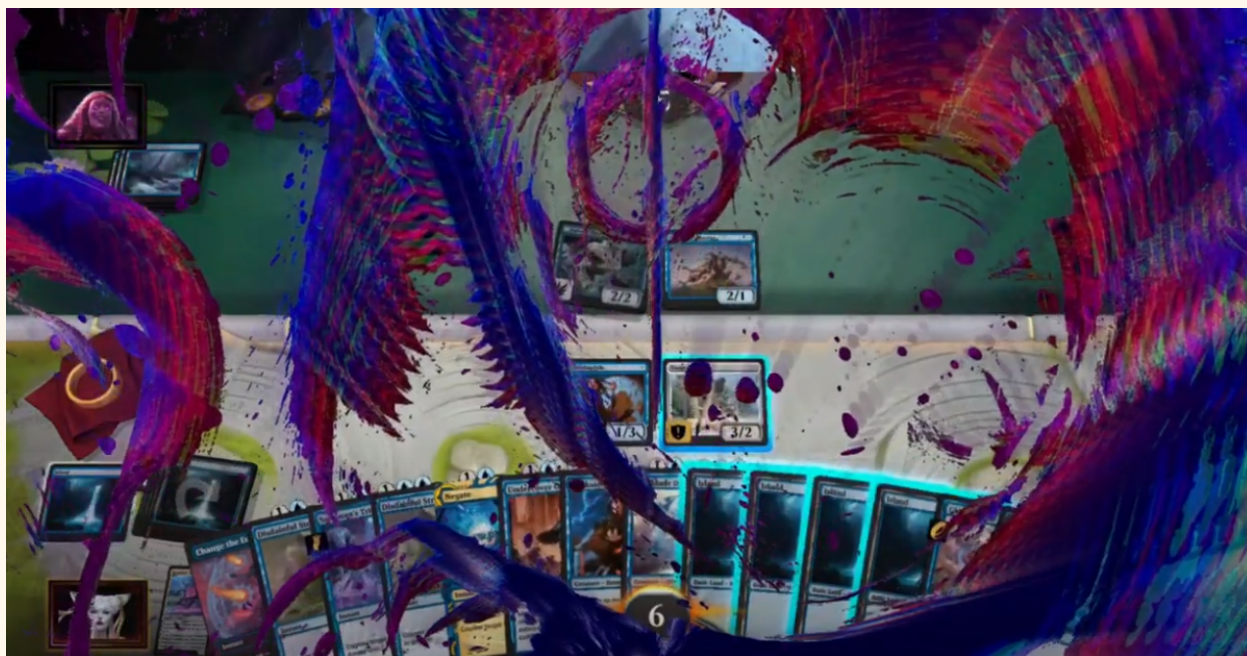
STARDOM closed 2023 with a feel good moment. They know Giulia might be leaving for WWE in a few months, they had made some questionable choices that've left bad tastes in a lot of mouths, and there's been some injuries fucking up stories and momentum. I'm not certain what they have in store for 2024, but I'm pretty hopeful and you honestly should be, too.

Don't continue to sleep on perhaps the best wrestling promotion in the world right now.



^ CHECK OUT THE SHOW FOR SEVERAL SHOTS LIKE THIS ONE! ^

MAIN EVENT MAGIC SEASON TWO



A brand new season coming early 2024!

- [CHECK OUT SEASON ONE HERE](#) -

Special events, championship matches, weird, demonic possession arcs, and a cult of some sort that really likes the color blue...this show has it all!

MESSAGE 315-330-6840 or RWplusB@gmail.com if you're interested in joining the roster!

The Update presents **The People's Champions Awards 2023**

With the death of Grappl, Cagematch is the only source remaining that does well in collecting a large portion of the wrestling fanbase's thoughts. That I am aware of, at least. Please, feel free to correct me if I'm wrong, though. As a result of my current belief, we will be using them (cagematch) as the main asset for the People's Champions section moving forward, including this awards piece right here!

MAJOR AWARDS

Best Match of 2023

[Kenny Omega vs Will Ospreay, NIPW 01/04/23](#)

User Rating: 9.76 Red's Rating: ***** WON Rating: *****¹/₄

Honorable mention: [Mascara Dorada vs Rocky Romero, CMLL 12/15/23](#)

Best Men's Wrestler of 2023

Most Matches in Top 100: Will Ospreay (12 matches)

Honorable Mention: Jon Moxley (8 matches)

Best Women's Wrestler of 2023

Most Matches in Top 100: Miyu Yamashita (5 matches)

Honorable Mention: Shoko Nakajima (4 matches)

Best Tag Team of 2023

Most Matches in Top 100: Blackpool Combat Club (4 matches)

Honorable Mention: FTR (2 matches)

Worst Match of 2023

Bray Wyatt vs LA Knight, Pitch Black

User Rating: 2.05 WON Rating: ³/₄*

PROMOTION AWARDS

Best Promotion of 2023

Most Events in Top 100: All Elite Wrestling (26 events)

Honorable mention: World Wrestling Entertainment (25 events)

Best Special Event of 2023

STARDOM All-Star Grand Queendom

User Rating: 9.41

Honorable Mention: ROH Jay Briscoe Tribute and Celebration of Life

Best Episode of 2023

WWE SmackDown Episode 1253

User Rating: 9.45

Honorable Mention: AEW Collision Episode 27 (Winter is Coming Night Three)

Best TV Program of 2023

Most Rated in Top 100: AEW Dynamite (15 episodes)

Honorable Mention: WWE Raw (9 episodes)

Worst Special Event of 2023

Circle 6 Queer Punk Outlaws

Worst Episode of 2023

WWE Raw Episode 1558

Introducing: The Neon Circuit Clash, Season 1

An Ongoing Series by Hiroshi Misawa Debuting Next Month

The Neon Circuit Clash is a new ongoing written drama series that will be included in the rest of 2023's Digest entries. The story is set in a dystopian future where prisoners are used as performers for the rich and the shady scene of pro-wrestling has evolved into one of the planet's most popular spectacles!

Read along as The Spider, Tentacle Junior, Demonic Ace, and more do everything they can to succeed and survive on the Neon Circuit!

Hiroshi Misawa has written multiple books that are all available on Amazon. Check them out [HERE](#).



Part One Next Month!

PW Complete: January, 2023

📺 Kenny Omega vs Will Ospreay | Wrestle Kingdom 17 | Highlights

Remember January 2023? We're talking about a time when Dark and Elevation still ran on YouTube and Sami was getting set up as Roman's monster of the week canon fodder. In wrestling time it was ten years ago so it's fair if you don't remember much. Either way, welcome to the new Complete section that will be a standalone piece as well as a new part of the Digest moving forward. Each installment is a detailed look at what was going on in professional wrestling roughly a year in the past. It should serve as a good, collective year-book each twelve editions and will hopefully be seen as a pillar of the magazine.

RED'S BEST OF JANUARY 2023

Just my MOTYC's (4.5*+) from the month of January 2023. Each is worth a look!

1. Vikingo vs Taurus vs Bandido ****½ (PWG Bola Night One)
2. Princess of Princess Title: Miyu(c) vs Yuka ****½ (TJPW Tokyo '23)
3. NWA World Historic WW Title: Volador Jr(c) vs Romero ****½ (CMLL Super Viernes)
4. BOLA Finals: Bailey vs Takeshita ****½ (PWG BOLA Night Two)
5. GHC Heavyweight Title: Kaito(c) vs Kenoh ****½ (NOAH New Year)
6. IWPG World HW Title: White(c) vs Okada ****½ (NJPW WK17 Tokyo Dome)
7. IWGP US HW Title: Ospreay(c) vs Omega ***** (NJPW WK17 Tokyo Dome)

Men's Wrestler of the Month: Kazuchika Okada

Women's Wrestler of the Month: Yuka Sakazaki

Team/Unit of the Month: LIJ

MVP of the Month: Roman Reigns

Special Event of the Month: Wrestle Kingdom 17: Tokyo Dome

Tournament of the Month: CMLL Rey del Aire VIP Torneo Cibernetico

TV Program of the Month: AEW Dynamite

Promotion of the Month: New Japan Pro Wrestling

Pro-Wrestling Complete: 2023 Year Book (from the pages of RW+B's The Pro-Wrestling Digest) will be for sale on Amazon and more when completed via RW+B pub. and will be sold in physical and digital formats.

The TonyVerse: AEW + ROH

▶ Who left LA with the AEW World Trios Championship? | AEW Dynamite, 1/11/23

Joe and Darby were engaged in their feud for the TNT belt. Bryan was pumping out bangers ahead of his title shot with MJF. Death Triangle and The Elite were closing out their series. Page and Mox's blood, along with Jon himself I suppose, were going at it, for good measure. AEW during the month honestly was pretty dang fun. The four Dynamite episodes of the month were all very well received. It was honestly the best weekly show of the month. Rampage and the two YouTube shows also existed.

Battle of the Belts V landed decently, though continued the trend of these special episodes feeling pointless in their existence.

[Mark Briscoe versus Jay Lethal pulled a lot of heartstrings.](#)

The following day, [Ring of Honor's Jay Briscoe Tribute and Celebration of Life](#) event ran for free on YouTube and it felt like one of the most must-see things in the wrestling world of the year. This would be the last show under the ROH name before the brand would bring back a weekly show. Claudio defended the World Championship of Ring of Honor three times during the period, landing W's against Woods, Daniels (on the tribute show), and Blake Christian.

In the women's scene, Athena was doing her thing with the Ring of Honor belt and Hayter was winning folks over with AEW's. While I think Tony has failed to ever truly deliver on the potential he has with his women's rosters, it's also hard to deny the quality of champions. Oh, and female Goldberg had the TBS belt still at the time, too.

In all, January wasn't too bad a month for fans of the product with the good far outweighing the bad.

Check out the top ten matches of the month from AEW's television output on the following playlist: [AEW Spark: January 2023 TV Top Ten!](#)

The low point? The worst rated thing from the month, using cagematch, was [THIS](#) match from Dark with Pillman and Anderson beating Kiss and Jeeves.

AEW/ROH Show of the Month: Jay Briscoe Tribute and Celebration of Life

AEW/ROH Match of the Month: Escalera de la Muerte

AEW/ROH Wrestler of the Month: Bryan Danielson

World Wrestling Entertainment

📺 The Bloodline is rocked when Zayn strikes Reigns with a chair at Royal Rumble: Raw, Jan. 30, 2023

Vince returned, Steph left. WWE was riding high but the return of Mr. Evil did leave a bad taste in a lot of mouths in January. Hard to blame them. The two biggest shows of their output for the month was the latest Royal Rumble as well as the Raw is XXX special edition episode. NXT held New Year's Evil early in the month, as well.

On the developmental brand, Bron was still tragically in the middle of his run as the top dog. Fyre and Dawn were engaged in a decent rivalry which included their Extreme Resolution battle. The best match from NXT was arguably a tag team contest that saw Axiom and Crews defeat Hayes and Trick. Bate beat Axiom the following week in a good one as well if you want one more taste from the brand.

Cody won the men's Rumble, Rhea the women's, and Roman put down KO in a title match main event. Sami eventually turning against Reigns when the Tribal Chief wouldn't chill was perfect soap opera TV.

Cody took down Finn on the last Raw of the month, too. Meanwhile, Becky continued to have problems with Bayley and her crew. The midcard divisions were sources of solid entertainment in general.

I covered the month [HERE](#) pretty well on a past edition of the digest for those wanting more details. The entry includes loads of embedded videos, as an added bonus.

You can watch the best of WWE's televised output here: [WWE PrimeTime 2: Best of TV January 2023](#).

The low point? The pitch [black match](#) got that nod. Remember that? I hope not! It was the worst rated thing of the month that I could find, in general.

WWE Show of the Month: Royal Rumble

WWE Match of the Month: Roman vs Owens

WWE Wrestler of the Month: Reigns

New Japan Pro Wrestling

▶ WRESTLE KINGDOM 17 in TOKYO DOME HIGHLIGHT | NJPW, 1/4/23

New Japan Pro Wrestling

In Japan, The King of Sports ran two WrestleKingdom shows, one a cross-over event with NOAH, and had some decent New Year Dash/New Beginning filler show content tacked on for good measure. It's honestly hard to complain about that.

Check out the first playlist in the newest PSC ongoing, focused specifically on January's NJPW catalog, here: [Super No Vacancy 1: New Japan January 2023](#).

The Tokyo Dome show had several noteworthy matches, including a few truly top shelf encounters:

- Catch 22 successfully defended the Junior div. tag straps against Lio Rush and YOH of CHAOS. *** $\frac{3}{4}$
- KAIRI beat Tam to keep a belt that New Japan clearly doesn't care about. This, even with 2023-form KAIRI, could've been one of the best matches on the card. Instead, it was a sub-six exhibition. A shame, but the girls did their best with the time and still made it work. After, Mone appeared to make her intentions clear. The crowd largely had no idea who she was. *** $\frac{1}{4}$
- Bishamon beat FTR to take the heavyweight division tag straps. Plans with Dax and Cash are always changing, folks. Not a terrible use of a duo like Bread and Tacos and I dug the way the two teams gelled. Borderline great. *** $\frac{1}{2}$
- The Tech-Wizard became the first New Japan World Television Champion, winning the crowning tournament and defeating Ren Narita to do so. More on that a bit in the *Kings and Queens of Television* section below. *** $\frac{3}{4}$
- Anderson worked his last New Japan match, dropping the NEVER Openweight Championship to Tama Tonga along the way. It was a touch below ten minutes and was one of the weakest things on the show from a quality standpoint, but I do appreciate Tama getting a bit of love here regardless of the shit attached and there was some fun history ties for BizCliz fans. ** $\frac{1}{2}$
- Muto's final NJPW match saw him team with Tanahashi and Shota to face Naito, SANADA, and BUSHI. Don't watch it for the quality, but instead for the historical nature of it. More on this one in a future edition. NR *Cagematch Rating*: 5.80
- Hiromu won the Junior belt off of Ishimori in a four-way also featuring Despy and Wato. Fantastic stuff and one of the best ones on the card. ****
- Kenny won the US Heavyweight Championship in a perfect battle with Ospreay to start what promises to be one of the best trilogies of all time. *****
- Okada won the World Heavyweight belt from White as the latter was nearing the end of his New Japan run. If you need someone to pick up the weight, Okada is always the right choice. **** $\frac{1}{2}$



Kingdom events tend to be some of the best shows of the year, always starting us off on the right note for the next rotation around the sun. I'm thankful for that, to be honest.

Los Ingobernables de Japon went to have a press conference after the show, but Kongo showed up to set up a faction best of five series later in the month.

The big news from New Year Dash!! was:

- Suzuki saving Ren from House of Torture. He would start to get his ass kicked for it. Despy then ran out to assist. Narita, Minoru, and Desperado shared a moment after. They'd get the name Strong Style after. NR *Cagematch Rating*: 4.75
- Later, Sabre grabbed his young boy Kosei Fujita and added him to TMDK.
- SHINGO beat Great-O-Khan, SHO, and Toru Yano to become KOPW 2023. The Dragon having a good time is never a bad thing, folks. NR *Cagematch Rating*: 6.17
- Omega and Okada as a fun team, beating Henare and Cobb in a well received throwaway main event. NR *Cagematch Rating*: 7.28

It was simply a fun show that really showed New Japan's energy and general vibe at the time. Good shit!

Want to see LIJ buying Kongo merch and getting it autographed? [Of course you do.](#) That's just good shit! That Nakajima mark might be worth something someday, Tetsuya...

The second Kingdom event, built on NOAH x NJPW, was pretty damn fun at times. Here's a look at some of the major matches:

- Tanahashi teamed up with Sugiura, Toru Yano, and Bread to face Bullet Club's KENTA, Phantasma, and Gedo along with Marufuji in a weird atomico that existed to exist. NR *Cagematch Rating*: 5.47

- Kaito and Inamura took on Okada and Togi. It ended in a no contest and had one of the hottest moments in wrestling this year. It started with a kick and the fire was lit. Watching Kaito go on excursion just a few years ago and his path since has been one of my favorite things in the game over the years. *NR Cagematch Rating: 8.37*
- The Kongo versus LIJ series saw Tadasuke beat BUSHI *Cagematch Rating: 6.34*, Hiromu defeat Ohara *Cagematch Rating: 7.17*, Soya topple SANADA *Cagematch Rating: 6.69*, SHINGO get the nod over Nakajima, and Naito close it out with a W against Kenoh. The last two matches in particular were worth checking out and the former was one of the best things from January in general.

-SHINGO b Nakajima in a battle that went about how I expected. That's a very good thing, for the record. ****¹/₄

-Naito b Kenoh. A sarcastic affair with an obvious outcome. Great entertainment. They could've done better. ***³/₄

LIJ: 3 KONGO: 2

New Japan is King, after all. Call them for rematches when NOAH starts selling more tickets. After the main, Muto requested Naito to be his final opponent.

The New Beginning content from January closed out the month:

- SHINGO retained the KOPW2023, mma-rules battle, with O-Khan. *NR Cagematch Rating: 5.23*
- Umino, aka Diet Tanahashi, got a big main event moment at the expense of SANADA. *NR Cagematch Rating: 6.36*
- Umino and Naito would then have beef.
- Tanahashi, speaking of, continued to have beef with KENTA.
- Ospreay and Taichi had beef.
- Hiromu and YOH had beef.
- Okada and SHINGO had beef.

NJPW of America

Stateside, as New Japan continues trying to figure out how to grow outside of Japan, STRONG aired their final episodes of 2022 content. These came from the Nemesis set of tapings specifically and featured some fun content. While none of it was must-see from a standalone prospect, I did enjoy the MCMG title defense from the penultimate edition and the last episode itself was entertaining enough I suppose.

The latter is actually the first full STRONG installment that I've seen in a while, actually.

Blake Christian defeated KEITA in an alright opener, Mistico made an appearance and defeated Misterioso in the good, though formulaic midcard, and Rosser padded his reign with a victory over Pretty Peter Avalon to close us out. Avalon would talk some shit ahead of their contest and they also aired clips of Rosser besting Kratos and Peter's challenge to build it up.

While not a single thing just mentioned even really hit recommendation levels, let alone the must-see realm, it was still an inoffensive hour of pro-wrestling television. In many ways, it's an especially easy recommendation to fans of what Ring of Honor was putting out for a few years there, before Tony grabbed it up. It feels a bit like that, or like a better version of CWFH style shows with some NJPW attitude.

It's better than wasting time on an episode of Billy Corgan's dumpster fire, at the very least.

Seriously, fuck that show.

Check out the Nemesis episodes of STRONG here: [NJPW STRONG: Nemesis](#).

Every time I check it out it feels like they are close to having something truly worth checking out regularly. I hear the episodes after these get better. It's NJPW and Rocky is a major part of it so I have faith they can get it right if given the chance. Here's some shit that happened on these episodes, though:

- STRONG Tag Titles: MCMG(c) b Roppongi Vice. It was a pretty good defense that might go under the radar of a lot of fans. ***½
- Blake b KEITA in a throwaway opener that was alright but forgettable. **½
- Mistico b Misterioso in a formulaic, but good lucha battle. ***
- STRONG Openweight Title: Rosser(c) b Avalon in a match that was fine. To be blunt, Rosser just isn't great and Peter is just alright. Not a great combo. **½
- Episode 126 overall rating: 70%

If you want to know what the worst thing the Kings put out was, according to Cagematch, Gedo and Ishimori against Jado and Wato. No thanks!

New Japan Show of the Month: Wrestle Kingdom 17: Tokyo Dome

New Japan Match of the Month: Omega vs Ospreay

New Japan Wrestler of the Month: Okada

Lucha Libre

CMLL was a lot of fun in January. The Sin Salida show, which tends to admittedly not be very important to me (lucha cage matches are...iffy at best more often than not) was actually decent. The Rey del Aire VIP edition of Super Viernes (their Friday flagship) was pretty damn fun as were most of those episodes in general. Templario vs Soberano, Mistico vs Stuka, and Hechicero vs Euforia were all fun as well. The real highlight, though? Rocky Romero and his beef with Volador Jr. Basically everything involved in that program was worth a look.

Also, Dalys and Negro Casas split from CMLL during this month, ending a 40+ year run with the oldest promotion in the world. They ran to Konnan's circus act instead because lucha politics are insane.

- Lightning: Marcela vs Faby ****
- Apuesta, Mask vs Mask Cage Match *** $\frac{1}{4}$
- Templario vs Soberano Jr **** $\frac{1}{4}$
- Euforia vs Hechicero *** $\frac{1}{2}$
- Averno, Mistico vs Voldoor Jr, Romero *** $\frac{3}{4}$
- NWA World Historic WW Title: Volador Jr(c) vs Romero **** $\frac{1}{2}$
- Mistico vs Stuka Jr ****
- Rey del Aire VIP Torneo Cibernetico ****

AAA ran Queretaro. Cartwheel and Komander was worth a look. *** $\frac{3}{4}$

The rest was skippable, though the main event did see Negro Casas and Dalys show up in Psycho Clown masks if that's something you want to see. [Lucha Blog](#) has a good summary if you really want more, but know that AAA in general has really jumped the shark of late as Konnan's plug clearly has been giving him some iffy shit of late and CMLL is the place to go if you want the good shit.



Big Lucha, a Mexico fed that feels a bit like PROGRESS, held a show called Black Paradise. A six-man "[Golden Ticket](#)" ladder match was the right amount of balls-to-the-wall insane if that's the type of thing you're in the mood for. Wonka would approve! ****

Check out the best lucha libre of the month here: [LuchaMax Uno: Best Lucha Libre of January 2023](#).

Lucha Libre Show of the Month: [Super Viernes 01/13](#)

Lucha Libre Match of the Month: Volador Jr. vs Romero

Luchador of the Month: Rocky Romero



STARDOM

The Triangle Derby made up the majority of STARDOM's output for the month though a 2022 Award show in Takadanobaba landed well as a B-show event. We are STARDOM!! did pretty well to cover the month in two episodes if you'd like a quick way to go through it.

Episode 164

- Triangle Derby Match: Rebel X Enemy's Ram, Yukihi, and Ozaki defeated the Donna del Mondo trio of Giulia, Mai, and Thelka. NR *Cagematch Rating: 6.90*
- Saya retained the Wonder of STARDOM Championship, defeating Ami Sourei in a filler defense. NR *Cagematch Rating: 7.08*

This one is a mid-range episode, but even the weaker episodes of the show tend to be quick, fun watches.

Episode 165

- Nanae beat Waka at New Blood 7. NR *Cagematch Rating: 6.75*
- STARS' Hanan and Lida lost to the God's Eye duo of MIRAI and Inaba in a New Blood Tag Title Tournament decider first round match from the same show. NR *Cagematch Rating: 7.17*
- The Giulia Gauntlet gave us what we all want...a shit load of Giulia! ***½
- Future of STARDOM Title stayed in Ami's hands as she'd defeat Mai Sakurai. NR *Cagematch Rating: 5.27*

Youth was the main thing on display on this one, but we also got a fun bit of time with Giulia for good measure. An episode showcasing the future and present?

A 12-hour special presentation, including the roster playing a bunch of games and having fun ran on the 1st of the month. You can find the videos, along with the We are STARDOM!! episodes and other awesome joshi content here: [Super No Vacancy 2: Joshi January 2023](#)

The Wrestle Kingdom match covered earlier in the NJPW section also occurred. Read my comments there. I was not super happy with the time given, but appreciated the effort and Mone's debut appearance (even if the fans didn't know who she was).

STARDOM Show of the Month: STARDOM Award 2022 in Takadanobaba

STARDOM Match of the Month: Giulia Gauntlet

STARDOM Wrestler of the Month: Giulia

The Rest of United States Wrestling

Other US Majors

MLW ran their last episode from the Super Series tapings to start the month off (video embedded above). The overall event was marketed as a crossover event with AAA and Dragongate. They also had a few episodes from the Fightland set, too. A deal was announced with Reelz that didn't last very long. I do not blame a single soul for not wanting to work with Court, but I do judge them a bit for making the mistake of saying yes initially.

Notable results include:

- Fatu b Mack on episode 161 NR
- Lince b Skywalker to win the MLW Middleweight belt on 162 NR
- Fatu b Dragongate's Ben-K on 163 NR *Cagematch Rating: 6.92*
- YAMATO b Skywalker to retain the Dream Gate belt, from DG Kobe, on 164 NR *Cagematch Rating: 8.60*
- Taya b Adora to retain the MLW Featherweight strap on 164, too NR

The Super Series episode is decent. The rest of the contests listed directly above were all different degrees of entertaining, too. If you are interested in MLW, I will say that their January catalog landed better than usual. A major problem with the company has always been a failure at delivering on promises. Often, matches will be announced that sound awesome on paper. They rarely materialize the same way. MLW's taping style doesn't help, but the atmosphere to half-ass is a bigger cause if I am being honest.

If you're interested, feel free to check out the following RW+B PSC release for the complete Fightland Fusion set: [MLW Fusion: Fightland](#).

Impact! was pretty solid this month. Each episode of their weekly show had some good stuff and their early in the month Hard to Kill special landed pretty well for good measure.

Hard to Kill results of note:

- Trey retained the X-Division belt successfully in a match versus Taurus on the preshow. NR *Cagematch Rating: 6.90*
- Alexander defeated Bully Ray in a Full Metal Mayhem match. NR *Cagematch Rating: 7.46*
- MCMG remained tag champs, defeating Heath and Rhino, ABC, and Major Players in an elimination rules four-way. ***¹/₄
- Hendry is still Digital Media champ, besting Moose in a contest that was far more entertaining than it should've been. NR *Cagematch Rating: 6.09*
- Masha became #1 contender for the Knockouts belt, beating Deonna, Killer Kelly, and Wilde in yet another 4-way. NR *Cagematch Rating: 6.00*
- Maclin put away Swann in an Atlanta street fight. NR *Cagematch Rating: 6.46*
- Edwards beat Gresham. ***³/₄
- James won a title versus career apuesta to become Knockouts Champ, beating Grace in one of the more popular women's matches of the year. ***¹/₂

The Pit Fight between Speedball and King was the highlight of their televised output of the month.

Red's Rating: ****

Rich Swann would win a Golden Six-Shooter elimination rules match that also included Callihan, Sabin, Edwards, Moose, and Rhino to end the month.

Check out the Impact! nonstop action focused on January 2023 here: [IMPACT! nonstop action: Hard to Kill + Best of January 2023](#).

US Independents

Pro Wrestling Guerrilla revived the BOLA tournament. I reviewed the tournament [HERE](#). Night two includes Jericho and his Appreciation Society in the annual clusterfuck tag spot and the set ended with Speedball beating Takeshita in the finals. While the energy of old PWG is dead, it's hard to deny the quality of the latest BOLA and [I strongly recommend the shows](#) if you can afford them.



Garden State Pro Wrestling ran Duality on the 15th. If you're interested in checking out the non-PWG US indie scene this year, this is one of the higher rated shows of the sort on Cagematch. Check it out [HERE](#).

Adam Priest and Anthony Henry's no-rope, no disqualification match from the [ACTION Championship](#) is also worth considering if you can find it. NR *Cagematch Rating: 8.05*

Prestige's Vendetta show featured two hits, as well. Up first, DDT's [MAO took on Blackwood](#) in the semi-main. NR *Cagematch Rating: 7.35*

The show also had [Athena defending the Ring of Honor Women's Championship against TJPW ace, Miyu](#) to close it out. I'm certain that anyone that frequents this site will likely want to make time for that one. Just note that the finish is a bit fucked. ***¾

Warrior had Navarro defend the brand's top prize against Buddy Matthews on a show this month, too. Just click [HERE](#) if you want to jump right into the action or rewind to see the content they released it with. NR *Cagematch Rating: 6.88*

The gig also had Vikingo defending the Mega Championship in the main event against Flamita and Rey Horus, but the company doesn't have it posted anywhere on YT and no one else has done it, either. Well, outside of [THIS](#) fancam video bit. NR

Masha Slamovich won the GCW Do or Die Rumble. NR *Cagematch Rating: 6.18*

Last up, you might care about Richards and Artemis' DEFY [match](#). Some people still really like Davey, right? NR

CyberFight: Wrestle Universe

▶ GREAT MUTA FINAL "BYE-BYE" Official Trailer

In **NOAH**, the Muto retirement tour was in full effect. With that and the New Japan steam, covered above in the NJPW section, this was a pretty damn good month for the company. If only they hadn't fucked up so badly with that Suzuki-gun stuff years ago they wouldn't have had to spend so much time trying to get back fans.

The biggest moments of the month for NOAH include:

- KENTA and Marufuji challenged, unsuccessfully, for the brand's tag belts held, at the time, by Bread and the Killing Machine. ****¾*
- Eita and Ogawa won the Junior Tag belts from Kzy and Yo-Hey. NR *Cagematch Rating: 6.56*
- Kaito successfully retained the GHC Heavyweight belt against Kenoh. *****½*
- WWE allowed Shinsuke to work against Great Muta! Nakamura would get the nod. ****½*
- Jake Lee debuted, splitting from All Japan and joining the GLG unit.

Muta Bye-Bye Show Review

- Kongo's Ohara and Hi69 beat Kotoge, Yoshioka ***½*
- Jungle, Saori defeated Yikihi, Sumire ****½*
- Thatcher put away Mochizuki ****½*
- Alejandro, Junta, and Yasutaka beat Eita, NOSAWA, and Ogawa by DQ ***¾*
- GLG's Lee, Greene, and Morris defeated Inaba, Inamura, and Masa *****
- Sakuraba beat Hideki Suzuki in a GHC Martial Arts Rules match by ref's decision ***½*
- AMAKUSA teamed with Ninja Mack and the legendary Ultimo Dragon, with Sonny Onoo, beat Dante Leon, YO-HEY, and Kzy. ****¼*
- Kaito, Hijo del Wagner Jr, Kojima, Sugiura defeated Kongo's Kenoh, Soya, Nakajima, and Masakatsu ****½*
- Muta's retirement tour continued with the death of The Great Muta gimmick. He teamed with Darby and Sting to defeat Hakushi, Marufuji, and AKIRA. Hakushi and the man of the hour had perhaps the best exchanges. ****½*
- Event overall rating: 75%

Over to **DDT NOW!** At Hatsuyume:

- Daisuke and Doi was over the top and still went to a time-limit draw in their Universal Title Contender match; setting up a three-way for the belt. NR *Cagematch Rating: 5.80*
- Shunma and MAO won the KO-D Tag Titles in a vacancy fill match against Brookes and Masahiro. NR *Cagematch Rating: 7.47*
- Pokotan gave out gifts but they weren't appreciated.
- Samuray del Sol appeared and said "lucha" a lot.

Other results of note from January include:

- Hino would win the KO-D Openweight Championship from Higuchi at Sweet Dreams in a match of 220 Chops! It was a match made for folks that enjoy the color red (and not likely in the way you immediately would think of when you read those words). Fantastic stuff to start a new reign! ****
- Yukio Naya and HARISHIMA both challenged after; they were scheduled for a contender's match.
- Takeshita and Ueno went to a 10-minute time-limit draw. NR *Cagematch Rating*: 6.38
- Doi winning the three-way, taking the Universal Championship off of Ueno in the process before Samuray could. NR *Cagematch Rating*: 7.61
- Shunma, Toi, and Onita won a current blast bat aerial time bomb death match thing. NR *Cagematch Rating*: 6.44

In **TJPW**, Miyu failed versus Yuka to take the Princess of Princess Championship. This was one of my favorite women's matches of the year and was well worth the time. ****½

Also, from the show:

- Mizuki won a delayed battle royal to earn a future shot at the Princess belt. NR *Cagematch Rating*: 7.49
- Miu retained the International belt, defeating Trish Adora. NR *Cagematch Rating*: 6.89
- Heidi Howitzer and Max the Impaler won the Princess Tag belts from Arai and Akai. NR *Cagematch Rating*: 6.33

The Futari Wa Princess Max Heart Tournament ran through everything but the finals, across three events, with 121000000 and Kyoraku Kyomei winning their semi-final battles.



Beyond the Origins, Into the Future

The Princess of the Decade Tournament contest being a 5-minute time limit, 2-count rule match set series was the sole focus of the event. Paper, rock, scissors was to be used for tie-breakers early on in the tournament. The semi-finals and finals were set to restart with 1-count rules instead. They used a ChocoPro, mat only style here. This was a 10th anniversary special event, for the record.

The tournament went by quick, with the format giving for a few fun surprise outcomes to boot. Rika would win the finals, going over Shoko.

Wanna see a sweet [highlight reel](#)? TJPW is too fucking fun!

Take a look at this playlist if you want to check out some of the CyberFight Wrestle Universe catalog from the month: [Super No Vacancy 3: CyberFight January 2023](#).

If you want more, **Ganbare** is getting a lot of attention from a small base of fans online this year. You can check out their shit from the month here: [Super No Vacancy 4: Ganbare Pro January 2023 Collection](#).

- Mizuki Watase beat Tyson Maeguchi by referee's decision to keep the Spirit of Ganbare World Openweight Title at [Adrenaline](#). If you have to pick one match from the fed to watch from the month, it'd be that one. ****
- At [Transporter](#), later in the month, there was a tag match with Watase and Tyson teaming up to defeat Ohka and Toba (one wears boxing gloves, the other dresses like he's Jimmy Wang's brother) that is also worth considering if you like what you see in the first pull from the company. If you want hard-hitting puro, this shit is pretty entertaining. For context, this one specifically is seen through a corner-cam angle and ends with a skull crushing forearm smash. What's not to like? ***½

The Rest of Japan

Puroresu

Dragongate Cutting Edge Battle!! episode 166 was the first of two episodes of the show covering January content:

- Big Boss Shimizu defeated Nagano. NR *Cagematch Rating: 7.06*
- [Losing Unit Disbands, Ten-Man Elimination: Z-BRATS vs HIGH-END](#) ***½

[Episode 167:](#)

- Shun Skywalker retained the Open the Dream Gate Championship, defeating Yuki Yoshioka. ****¼

Big Japan had some fire, as usual. You can usually safely bet on them having at least one good thing every month.

- Yuji Okabayashi and Kamitani [ran it back](#) with the former retaining the Strong Heavyweight belt on the 2nd. NR *Cagematch Rating: 7.29*
- Kamitani would retain the Death Heavyweight Championship later in the month against Ito at Death Match King Death. NR
- They also added a blood needle death match to the show if that's your cup of tea. NR

All Japan Pro Wrestling is always a place where some great stuff can be found, no matter the decade. For the month of January, there were three main pulls of note.

- Kento and Takuya Normura won the All Japan World Tag Team Titles from KONO and Suwama in the weakest of the three. *** $\frac{3}{4}$
- Kento would successfully retain the Triple Crown against Nomura the next day. You can always count on Ace Miyahara. **** $\frac{1}{4}$
- Kento and Nomura would drop the tag belts later in the month to Naoya and Yuma. It was a fantastic tag battle that really reminded me of the classic tag team matches this company hosted a few decades ago. ****



Red's Rating: ****

One of my favorite championship reigns of recent history was El Lindaman's fun run with the G-Rex belt. Japanese promotions tend to start fresh at the start of a new year and did so here. The champ ran back a defense against his fellow former DG roster-mate, Ishida, and dropped the strap as a result. Check out that match [HERE](#). The ref kind of sucks in it but it's still one of the best contests of the loaded month. That link is time stamped from Ver. 5. **GLEAT** shows tend to be a blast in general so feel free to just watch the whole damn show if you feel like it. Have a smoke, hit play, and have a good time.

For fans looking for more death match content, **FREEDOMS** had a few interesting matches and results:

- Takeda beat Jun Kasai in a ten-min. self-board death match. It's the one embedded above. NR *Cagematch Rating: 7.33*

- [Mammoth and Takashi Sasaki won the King of FREEDOM World Tag Titles from Soul Meat.](#) NR

[Baka Gaijin + Friends Vol. 2 happened. for those of you that can't get enough of that dude.](#)

Joshi

- Maki Iwata and Ryo Mizunami went to a time limit draw. The video is embedded above. NR
- ASUKA successfully defended the Sendai Girls World Title against Maki Iwata. NR *Cagematch Rating: 7.27*
- [Hikaru Shida retained the Regina Di WAVE Title against Risa Sera.](#) It was two of the best in joshi having fun. There was even a segment with suitcases being used for a while. What's not to like?

GATOH/ChocoPro

- [Mei beat Obihiro on ChocoPro 282.](#) NR *Cagematch Rating: 7.78*
- [Anarko and Mei beat Chie and Shin Suzuki at 284.](#) NR *Cagematch Rating: 7.60*
- [Mei beat Alexis Lee and CDK and Shavam beat Tang and The Horrors at 287 in Singapore.](#) *Cagematch Rating: 7.11, NR*
- [Episode 288 celebrated Masa's 40th Birthday and was well received.](#)

Europe

PROGRESS still exists, to the surprise of most wrestling fans that had figured they had just died off after bowing down to Satan. January 2023 they ran Chapter 148, which saw the return of Thunderbastard. Riho won that one to earn a title shot. Lio Rush beat Danny Black, Lana Austin successfully defended the company's women's title against Session Moth Martina, Sunshine Machine did the same (though with the tag belts) against Lykos Gym, and the main saw Spike turn away Gene Munny to remain PROGRESS World Champ.

Meanwhile, in **wXw**, there were a few shows and matches of note.

At Dead End:

- Tischer beat Laurance in a well received contest. NR
- Metehan beat Gunns to qualify for 16 Carat Gold. NR *Cagematch Rating: 7.00*
- Levaniel retained the Unified World Title, beating Archer in 11. NR
- Jurn beat Heisenberg in an unsanctioned rules match. NR

At Back to the Roots:

- Laurance won the Shotgun title off of Maggot. NR
- Levaniel retained again, this time against Tischer. NR
- Frenchadors winning, with Tihanyi, against Amboss in a six-man Cage Battle match. NR

EVE 100 happened. Did anyone know? Not many people. Why? Because EVE sucks at promoting. Not as bad as SHIMMER, but still. Laura Di Matteo won the company tag belts alongside Rayne Leverkusen then won the main event "Multiverse Rumble" match. That's something, at least.

Canada

Kamille defended the NWA World Women's Championship against Ava Lawless in [Big Vision Wrestling](#). NR

In Winnipeg's [WPW at Cold Out](#), Masha failed to take the small fed's women's strap in a well received battle with Jody Threat. NR

Two days later, Threat would take down Taylor Wilde in **SMASH**. Impact aired it as a [digital exclusive](#). All three are likely to go under the radar, but fans of women's wrestling honestly should consider adding one or more of them to their pull lists. NR

Rest of the World

SETUP out of Thailand ran an episode on YouTube during the month. That might be something you'd care about. Maybe? [HERE](#), if you are open to it.

CNL out of Chile added new installments to their Webserie show, too. Two episodes, in fact. [Season 4 Episode One](#). [Season 4 Episode Two](#).

Retirements

European women's wrestler Jinny, best known for her work in PROGRESS (2x champ), RevPro (1x champ), and on NXT UK (they didn't have the guts!), hung up her boots due to injuries. She more recently married Gunther, for those that might be interested in knowing such things.

[I'll remember her content with Laura the most.](#)

Deaths

- **Bronce/Black Warrior, January 10th QEPD**
Less than a year after the death of his son, Warrior Jr., at the age of 24, Black Warrior passed away at the age of 54. He had just celebrated his birthday 3 days prior. It sounds as if an injury he had suffered had gotten bad enough to require surgery. He then battled infection until it eventually overtook him. One of the art's true kings of the tope, Black Warrior is probably best remembered for his Aniversario 73 work, where he dropped his mask in the main event apuesta against Mistico. He was also part of [THIS](#) epic torneo cibernetico, which remains one of the best CMLL matches of all time. Just a reminder, but CMLL is the oldest active promotion in the world.
- **Jay Briscoe, January 17th RIP**
One half of The Briscoe Brothers, Jay was admittedly always known as the better of the two. During his amazing run as a pro-wrestler, Jay was a 2x Ring of Honor World Champion, and held tag and multiman belts with Mark (and others) in ROH (13x plus 1 six-man reign!!!), CZW (2x), GCW (3x), Impact, New Japan (3x), and once in NOAH. His work as part of the FTR/Briscoe trilogy will always serve as a high-quality cap to his sadly short career, but the amount of hits he busted out before his early passing is worth mountains of praise in general. [HERE](#) is a playlist I found on YouTube full of full match videos with the legend.

Considering I was almost killed in a car accident on Thanksgiving a few years back, this one hit especially hard on me.

WORLD CHAMPION POWER RANKINGS

Men's Wrestling

1. WWE Champion: Roman Reigns
2. AEW World Champion: MJF
3. IWGP World Heavyweight Champion: Sanada
4. WWE World Heavyweight Champion: Seth Rollins
5. Triple Crown Champion: Katsuhiko Nakajima
6. World Historic Welterweight Champion: Mascara Dorada
7. Impact World Champion: Alex Shelley
8. GHC Heavyweight Champion: Kenoh
9. KO-D Openweight Champion: Yuki Ueno
10. NXT Champion: Ilja Dragonuv

Women's Wrestling

1. Princess of Princess Champion: Miyu Yamashita
2. Wonder of STARDOM Champion: MIRAI
3. NJPW STRONG Women's Champion: Giulia
4. AEW Women's World Champion: Toni Storm
5. WWE Women's Champion: IYO SKY
6. IWGP Women's Champion: Mayu Iwatani
7. WWE World Women's Champion: Rhea Ripley
8. ROH Women's World Champion: Athena
9. Beyond the Sea Champion: Saree
10. Knockouts Champion: Trinity

Tag Team Wrestling

1. BJW Tag Champions: Astronauts
2. WWE Unified Tag Champions: Judgement Day
3. IWGP Tag Champions: Bishamon
4. AEW World Tag Champions: Big Bill, Ricky Starks
5. Impact World Tag Champions: ABC

Past, relevant Digest entries

[Digest 70](#) NOAH + AJPW, first week of Jan.

[Digest 71](#) CMLL Sin Salida, Vince is back!

[Digest 76](#) Jan. week 1 TV content, BOLA results, Marvel lucha libre

[Digest 77](#) AEW Battle of the Belts V

[Digest 78](#) Vince is back and Steph is gone!

[Digest 82](#) Jan. week 2 TV content

[Digest 89](#) Jan. week 3 TV content, Impact Hard to Kill

[Digest 91](#) More TV

[Digest 92](#) AEW TV

[Digest 98](#) Pro-Wrestling TV idea, with AJPW, DDT, TJPW and more!

When I was making this list, I found that I had made two 98th editions of The Digest.



Pro Wrestling Playlists
 Red's Pro-Wrestling Digest #98: Closing January 2023 Part 1: Pro-Wrestling TV Episode 1 Review (AJPW, DDT, TJPW)

Match Ratings: ED: D Openweight Title: Kazusada Higuchi vs Yui Hino NK Princess of Princess Title: Yuka Sakazaki vs...

■ 1/30/2023



Oh So DDramaTic
 Red's Pro-Wrestling Digest #98: Looking at DDT Judgement with oh so DDramaTic episode 3

We're back for another digest, this time focused specifically on a recent, oh so DDramaTic episode that showcased DD...

■ 1/16/2023

To fix this, blended the two together in the only way that I could without causing me to go insane. I won't be elaborating further also to save my sanity. Go with it.

[Digest 99](#) PWG BOLA

[Digest 100](#) Jay Briscoe Tribute show

[Digest 147](#) WWE in January

Playlist Series Collection Roundup

[AEW Spark: January 2023 TV Top Ten!](#)

[AEW Spark: Continental Classic- Blue League](#)

[AEW Spark: Continental Classic- Gold League](#)

[WWE PrimeTime 2: Best of TV January 2023](#)

[IMPACT! nonstop action: Hard to Kill + Best of January 2023](#)

[NJPW STRONG: Nemesis Episodes](#)

[MLW Fusion: Fightland Episodes](#)

[ICERIBBON Digest Collection January 2023](#)

[Super No Vacancy 1: New Japan January 2023](#)

[Super No Vacancy 2: Joshi January 2023](#)

[Super No Vacancy 3: CyberFight January 2023](#)

[Super No Vacancy 4: Ganbare Pro January 2023 Collection](#)

[Super No Vacancy 5: Rest of Japan, January 2023](#)

[LuchaMax Uno: Best Lucha Libre of January 2023](#)

[RW+B Rivals Series: The King of Bums vs The American Dragon](#)

About The Collective

Red Wood, main creator of RW+B as a brand, is head of The Collective.

I'm a father, a filmmaker, musician, writer, and major wrestling lover, and I'm raging with communist thoughts. I served as a campaign manager, after being promoted from digital media manager, for a Texas Congressional candidate. I'm not very good with filters, but try to be as non offensive as possible. I'm failing miserably at it regardless of intent. I love coffee so much that I just drank a shot of pure concentrated black coffee that's meant to be mixed evenly with water right before writing this. And I loved it but also my heart is racing. I write because it's a good release for me and I sincerely appreciate anyone that reads my work. Have critiques? Let me know. Think I suck? That's fine, I probably do. I still appreciate you taking time to check my shit out.

Steve Stone, a retired pro wrestler, is a hardworking dad that still loves the sport that fucked his body up

It takes a lot of backbone to step into the US indie circuit back when Stone did it, and there are numerous stories that likely should stay back in that era. Steve might have less of a filter than I do and less of a goal to be inoffensive. He's still a dude I appreciate, because not only did he work that era, but he gave his damn body to the art that is professional wrestling and still loves the damn industry. His view on the art is one of my favorites because it comes from a form of experience few ever have. Fuck the IWC, what does Stone think!?

Expect a section featuring Stone in future editions.

Hiroshi Misawa writes weird fucking books online and is a complete recluse.

Entertainment means all. Books that read like popcorn flicks or try hard, but not always effectively, at examining major aspects of the human experience. It'll be a ride, no matter what happens. I'm pretty sure he's actually just an AI.

Thank you for reading. Issue 151 will be out next month. Be kind to yourself and others and have an awesome month! This is the first time I've personally worked on a magazine in years. No excuses for typos or mistakes though. Call me/us out on them. Notice a fuck up? Let us know. rwplusb@gmail.com.