

The SmarK Retro Rant for Saturday Night's Main Event #1 - May 10, 1985

- Well, with the imminent return of everyone's favorite 80s retro wrestling program to the Saturday night schedule on NBC, I figured that it was only fitting to go back and take a look at the very first one, during the height of the Rock N Wrestling Connection.

- Taped from Nassau, NY

- Your hosts are Vince McMahon and Jesse Ventura.

- Opening match: The Iron Sheik, Nikolai Volkoff & George "The Animal" Steele v. Barry Windham, Mike Rotundo & Ricky Steamboat. Hard to remember a time when the Animal was a heel, actually. Sheik of course reminds us that Iran #1, Russia #1. But does he have economic data to back that up, and where could I find it? Windham & Rotundo using "Born in the USA", which was an ironic anthem from Springsteen about how lousy veterans were being treated, makes me think that people in the music department weren't actually listening to the music. Finally, for those of you who are too young to remember SNME in the first place, Rotundo went onto greater fame as IRS in the 90s. Anyway, onto the match, as Windham wins a slugfest with the Sheik to start and hiptosses him into the face corner. Rotundo and Steamboat trade off with shots off the top, and Rotundo drops an elbow for two. Steamboat comes in and falls victim to the abdominal stretch, but it's BONZO GONZO and the faces clean house. Back from a break with Sheik still getting clobbered, as Dragon hits him with a missile dropkick and high cross for two. Volkoff fights his way in and gets double-teamed into a Windham dropkick for two. Rotundo drops a leg for two. Rollup gets two. Backslide gets two. Back to Windham, who gets a melodramatic sunset flip for two. Steele comes in and the other heels immediately take off to the back, leaving him to get pinned by Windham in his confusion. (Windham/Rotundo/Steamboat d. Sheik/Volkoff/Steele, Windham rollup -- pin Steele, 6:50, **1/4) This had a few moments but was far too quick and the finish was out of nowhere. The heels return to turn on the confused Animal, but former manager Lou Albano consoles him and officially turns him face, where he would remain for the rest of his career. Just a quickie match to deliver a big midcard angle right out of the gate.

- Piper's Pit time, with guest Paul Orndorff. This was the fallout from Wrestlemania, making Orndorff's face turn. Oddly enough, he would turn heel again less than a year later for a program against Hulk Hogan and draw millions of dollars as a result. The trash-talking comes fast and furious here, leading to Orndorff telling Piper that he's been "drinking too much of his own bathwater!" OOOOOOH, you got SERVED, son! Orndorff should have just run down to ringside and high-fived everyone in the front row right then, and possibly joined the Def Comedy Jam afterwards. Note: I am being sarcastic. Anyways, the insult is so lame that Piper and Orton have no choice but to beat the crap out of him for wasting their time with it, resulting in Mr. T making the save.

- An interview with Hulk Hogan immediately afterwards reveals that in fact he trusts Mr. Wonderful with his life and completely forgives him. See, this is why I was cheering for Orndorff later on.

- WWF World title: Hulk Hogan v. Cowboy Bob Orton. Hogan and Mr. T rip off each others clothes to show how pumped they are, as George Michael and Elton John stop having sex backstage and go "Dude, that's pretty gay". Orton tries the sneak attack to start, but Hogan sees the reflection in his own bald spot and gives him a series of bodyslams. Orton gets advice from Piper, which through the magic of digital reconstruction, is finally revealed as follows: "Make sure to train Randy as a wrestler, wait until he's a big star, and then call me so we can leach off his talent for a few more bucks" Orton is so

distracted by this advice that he runs into the post, allowing Hogan to go after his "injured" arm. Orton comes back with a high knee and pounds on Hulk, and the dreaded atomic drop gets two. You notice that no one ever does the non-inverted version of the atomic drop anymore, unless it's someone like Eugene doing throwback matches? Kneedrop and elbows to the head leave Hogan down, but not for long. Hulk Up time, clothesline, elbow, but he only gets two. Hmm, that's a rather odd change from the formula. Orton catches him with an inverted atomic drop and sets up for the superplex to finish, but Hogan blocks and drops the leg instead. Piper runs in for the DQ. (Hogan d. Orton, DQ, 6:50, *1/2) Didn't really go anywhere, like most of the matches on these shows. The beatdown begins, but Orndorff saves, kicking off a friendship which I'm sure was destined to last until the end of time.

- Cyndi Lauper and Lou Albano deliver a double-team interview so stupid that I feel my brain melting just listening to it, setting up Lauper's "Good Enough" video from the Goonies' soundtrack. Rather ironic since it wasn't "good enough" to make it onto her album. It's the video with all the wrestlers in it dressed as pirates and stuff. I can't believe that Lauper is now a respected adult contemporary artist.

- WWF Women's title: Wendi Richter v. Fabulous Moolah. Moolah was a spry 102 at this point, while Richter was nearing the end of her title reign, although she didn't know it at the time. Again another case of the music department not understanding the music, as Richter uses "She Bop", Lauper's tribute to masturbation. Moolah, as befitting someone who was alive during the Crusades, produces a SCROLL from the WWF Head Office declaring that Lauper is banned from ringside. Moolah pushes Wendi down and hairtosses her a few times, but stalls forever and gets dropkicked out. Back in, Moolah dropkicks her for two. Richter does the "pull her off the ropes" spot a couple of times, and reverses a slam for the pin. (Richter d. Moolah, inside cradle -- pin, 3:14, 1/4*) Way too short and too crappy to mean anything.

- Junkyard Dog v. Pete Doherty. Ah, the Duke of Dorchester. Headbutts, headbutts, headbutts, powerslam, pin, goodnight. Usual squash match for those still watching at 1:30 in the morning. (JYD d. Doherty, powerslam -- pin, 3:07, DUD)

- And we close with a Mother's Day celebration, which Fabulous Moolah interrupts. I'd reveal her fate, but I'll just note that there's a giant cake on the table and leave you to figure it out.

The Inside Pulse:

This was the one that set the formula for the show and produced DRAMATIC increases in production values over their usual weekly TV, and it probably has some value for nostalgia purposes and the like. As a wrestling show, it's worthless, but then most of the SNME shows were. Recommended for nostalgia and not much else.

The SmarK Retro Rant for Saturday Night's Main Event #4 - January 1986

Well, to prepare for the return of SNME in March of 2006, reader Adam Nedeff sent me what can only be described as a SHITLOAD of shows unreviewed as of yet by myself. Sadly, the second and third SNMEs were pretty poor quality, video-wise, and weren't really reviewable, but the fourth one looked good and had a pretty good card, too, so that's where we'll start. Much more to come in the weeks ahead. In return, please feel free to check out his site, <http://www.gameshowutopia.net>, and boost his traffic.

- Taped from Tampa, FL.

- Your hosts are Vince McMahon, with Bobby Heenan and Jesse Ventura at various points.

- Roddy Piper, Bob Orton & Jesse Ventura v. Hillbilly Jim, Uncle Elmer and Cousin Luke. Jesse came out of retirement to put the hillbillies in their place, and then went right back into it again. Jesse gets to start with Elmer and is forced to sell some of the worst looking offense this side of Loch Ness. Oh, wait. Piper comes in and gets Luke, and some double-teaming makes Luke the inbred hick in peril. Luke takes a lot but never really sells, just popping up after every move before making a hot tag to Elmer. He's on Piper like glue, with a bearhug, and it's BONZO GONZO time as we take a break. Back with everyone still brawling and Piper headbutting Jim into the heel corner. Luke comes in and cleans house with his one move -- the double sledge -- but Orton hits him with the cast to set up the finish. (Piper/Orton/Ventura d. Hillbillies, Piper sleeper -- submission Luke, *)

- Meanwhile, at a local water park, JYD cuts a typically unintelligible promo and beats Jimmy Hart on a waterslide under dubious conditions, then Terry Funk cuts a crazed promo against Sports Illustrated, threatening to beat up their photographers unless he gets the cover after beating Hulk Hogan tonight. Ah, 80s WWF.

- WWF title: Hulk Hogan v. Terry Funk. Rare blue and red color scheme for Hulk tonight. Hogan gets the corner clothesline to start, and then dumps Funk with another one. Terry is in rare bumping form tonight, flailing like a ragdoll off everything. Back in and they do a subtle bit where Hogan steps on Funk's back during a criss-cross, which sends Terry running again. They slug it out in the corner and Funk bumps out again, but Hogan brings him back in with a backdrop suplex for two. Funk stomps him down, but goes up and gets crotched. Vince calls this "poetic justice," which shows he has about as much grasp of irony as Alanis does. Hogan gets the usual slam and elbows, but stops to go after Jimmy Hart, who hides under the ring. Vince makes this out as cowardice, but to paraphrase Jesse: He's 120 pounds and he's got Hogan and JYD chasing him, so can you blame the guy? Funk uses the distraction to choke Hogan down with the wrist tape. This sets up the piledriver, but it only gets two. Hulk Up, big boot, but Funk wisely takes a power. Hogan tries another suplex back in, but this time Jimmy hits Hogan with the branding iron and Funk falls on top for two. He thinks that he's won, however, and stops to go after the title belt, which allows Hogan to recover and hit a rare lariat (and a GOOD one, too) for the pin. (Hogan d. Funk, lariat -- pin, 8:21, **1/2) Nice change in the formula for Hulk here.

- Randy Savage v. George "The Animal" Steele. I almost typed "Intercontinental title" out of habit at the beginning there, but that didn't happen until a month after this. This was, if you can believe it, the first match between these two, at least according to the commentary. It was also the beginning of Steele's infatuation with Elizabeth. Steele tosses Savage right away and leers at Liz, which draws Savage's wrath. Fun fact: The best worker in the match is the referee, a young man you may have

heard of, named Dean Malenko. More running around until Steele goes for the turnbuckle and Savage mercifully finishes things quick with the flying axehandle. (Savage d. Steele, axehandle -- pin, 3:11, DUD) Not even a match, as such.

- "Peace Match": Corporal Kirschner v. Nikolai Volkoff. After listening to the Corporal's super-intense and whacked out pre-match promo, it becomes apparent why he was tapped to play Leatherface in Japan later on. Yikes, get this guy a role in a horror movie, stat. I mean, it's a freakin' WATER PARK, lighten up, dude. The idea here is that in the spirit of the Geneva Convention, they'll both play nice. Kirschner takes it to the mat to start, and a wristlock turns into a stalemate. Volkoff rolls him over with a bridge for two, but gets rolled up for two. Volkoff tries overpowering him, but gets taken down with a hammerlock for two. Small package gets two for Kirschner. Volkoff fails to break clean on the ropes, however, and then finishes with a kneedrop. Commie FUCKER. (Volkoff d. Kirschner, kneedrop -- pin, 4:22, *1/2) Despite being cleanly and decisively pinned, the Corporal still freaks out and attacks everyone. No "good sportsmanship" medal for you, dude.

- Magnificent Muraco & Mr. Fuji v. Ricky Steamboat & Junkyard Dog. Muraco's drunken pre-match promo and Fuji's followup about eating dogs is the kind of sloppy and stupid stuff that would never make it past editing these days. Muraco pounds JYD while Fuji attacks Steamboat outside. Fuji comes in and gets killed by the Dog, and Muraco gets slammed for two. Muraco looked his worst at this point, before a face turn and rehab brought him back to life again. The heels work JYD over in the corner, but Muraco misses a charge. Steamboat comes in and hits him with an enzuigiri, and a slingshot into Fuji, then gets a high cross for two. Fuji breaks that up, but is in way over his head and JYD finishes him. (Steamboat/Junkyard Dog d. Muraco/Fuji, JYD headbutt -- pin Fuji, 5:13, *1/2) Paint by numbers stuff all the way.

The Bottom Line:

Actually not a bad wrestling show at all, with Hillbillies doing the job and Funk trying his best to carry Hogan to something worthwhile, plus Kirschner cutting a freaky promo that's worth checking out to see if you can guess what drugs he was on at the time. Mildly recommended.

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The SmarK Retro Rant for Saturday Night's Main Event #5 - March 1986

- Man, I love these things, because I can bang one off while I'm waiting for CSI or whatever.
- Taped from Phoenix, AZ
- Your hosts are Vince & Jesse
- Opening "match": Mr. T v. Cowboy Bob Orton, boxing match. This would be setting up the Piper-T atrocity at Wrestlemania 2, which wasn't bad from a "parody of a boxing match" perspective, but had no place on a wrestling show. And this too is as silly as you'd expect, with Orton jumping T before the bell and cheating like nuts, while no actual contact is ever made with the gloves. T takes a thumb to the eye, to the usual delight of Jesse, and sells it with some Oscar-caliber acting. Oscar the Grouch, that is. Orton sucker punches him after the bell to end the first round, but gets cocky in the second round and gets knocked out of the ring for the countout at 5:02. Dumb, dumb, dumb. Bigass beatdown from the ambiguously gay duo of Piper and Orton sets up Wrestlemania 2 properly.
- King Kong Bundy v. Steve Gatorwolf. I'm not sure what a gatorwolf would be, but I don't want to meet one. Squish squash, goodbye. (Bundy d. Gatorwolf, Avalanche -- pin, 0:37, DUD) This was just to establish that Bundy is in the building.
- WWF Title: Hulk Hogan v. Magnificent Muraco. To really hammer home the point about Bundy, we cut to Mr. Fuji in the back with a melodramatic hot water bottle on his head, which means that Bobby Heenan is subbing for him as manager in this match. "Real American" debuts as Hulk's theme song here, as he also debuts a weird-looking yellow trunks/white kneepad variant. Did he save all his weird color schemes for this show or something? Muraco attacks to start and pounds him in the corner, so Hogan uses the Knives of Eternity on Muraco's back and follows with the corner clothesline. I like to slip in a Destroyer reference every now and then to keep people on their toes. Atomic drop puts Muraco on the floor and they brawl, but Muraco catches him coming in. They slug it out and Hogan gets two. He goes to the bearhug, an odd choice for a babyface, but Muraco breaks free and punts him in the ribs. Ah, I see Don's feeling a little more uppity tonight than usual. Kneedrop gets two. Muraco follows with the dreaded ASIATIC SPIKE~! and a kneelift. A headbutt just a bit north of south sets up another spike, from the middle rope. Hogan is dead! Call the undertaker! Well, AN undertaker, Mark Callaway was busy in high school at that point. Could this be the end of Hogan? No! Hulk Up Time, totally catching me by surprise because this would be the match where the heel would get the pin after hitting his finisher. Just to change things up, you see. Punch, punch, big boot, legdrop, DQ. (Hogan d. Muraco, Heenan run-in -- DQ, 6:50, *1/4) Typical Hogan stuff. However, things look up as King Kong Bundy joins in for a two-on-one beatdown and they break Hogan's ribs, setting up the cage match main event of Wrestlemania 2, which was lame and sucked, by the way. Time and hindsight make me think that they should have run with Hogan v. Piper as a major PPV main event when both were huge, but I don't think anyone foresaw Piper going Hollywood and succeeding.
- WWF Tag titles: Greg Valentine & Brutus Beefcake v. The British Bulldogs. The Bulldogs were in the midst of a months-long chase of the tag titles, having beaten the champs in a non-title match on TV the previous month. Dynamite Kid headbutts Valentine down for two and suplexes him for two. Beefcake comes in and he's as useless as ever, getting worked over at will by the Bulldogs. Davey's elevated armbar is particularly cool, as the Bulldogs were pulling out all the primo shit for network TV. Back to the Hammer, who gets press-slammed by Davey for two. Kid drops a knee in vicious fashion and a backdrop suplex and headbutt get two. Flying kneedrop and back to Davey Boy, who trades

forearms with Valentine and then dropkicks him into a small package for two. Kid works him over, but Valentine escapes with an atomic drop and Beefcake adds some stomps. We take a break and return with Beefer still getting bootfucked in the corner, as Davey gives him a missile dropkick for two. You just did not see stuff like this on TV in 1986, man. Back to Valentine for some double-teaming, and it's figure-four time. DK quickly drops a leg on his face to break that up, as he was just no-nonsense when it came to making the save. He quickly tags in for more beating on Valentine, but now the Hammer is all warmed up and takes it like a man, then comes back with a middle rope elbow. I just didn't appreciate Greg like I do now. He wasn't spectacular, but he carried goddamned ED FUCKING LESLIE to ***+ matches night after night, on his back, and had a real nuance and subtlety to his craft that I enjoy watching much more these days. Shoulderbreaker gets two. Beefcake uses his HHH-like assortment of knee-strikes and Greg drops the hammer on the Kid for two. Another figure-four is quickly blocked, so Greg goes up top and gets slammed off. Kid follows him up and hits a missile dropkick, Stampede style, and a clothesline gets two. Snap suplex gets two and it's BONZO GONZO. However, in the midst of royally whomping ass, Dynamite accidentally collides with Valentine, they knock heads, and the Hammer happens to fall on top for the surprise pin to retain. (Dream Team d. Bulldogs, Valentine headbutt -- pin Dynamite Kid, 9:27, ***1/4) I approve of that finish -- it gives you a clean pinfall without making the Bulldogs look weak, and I'm frankly shocked they haven't ripped it off lately. Anyway, the Bulldogs would get revenge and win the belts at Wrestlemania.

- Update from the hospital: Hogan is still orange. More later.

- Junkyard Dog v. Adrian Adonis. Oh, hey, great, a comedy match to wrap things up. Dog attacks to start and ties Adonis in the ropes, then slingshots him back in. Clothesline gets two. Adonis slugs back, but does a Flair Flip and hits the floor. Adonis stalls and works the count, so JYD drags both him and Jimmy Hart back into the ring, and then back out again they go. We take a break and return with the Dog slugging Adonis down for two. Headbutt misses, which allows Hart to tie Dog to the ropes and allows Adonis to do some dirty work. The ref pulls him off by the hair, which is dubious interpretation of the rules. Adonis shoves him away and gets a splash on Dog for two. Ref is bumped, but Adonis eats the megaphone instead. (JYD d. Adonis, megaphone -- pin, 6:13, 1/2*) It was what it was.

The Bottom Line:

Bulldogs v. Dream Team is pretty amazing stuff for the time and is well worth tracking down, Hogan-Muraco is so-so but ends with Hogan going to the hospital, so hurrah. Add those to your compilation tape, fast-forward the rest.

The SmarK Retro Rant for Saturday Night's Main Event #6 - May 1986

- Taped from Providence, RI

- Your hosts are Vince McMahon & Bobby Heenan

- Hulk Hogan & Junkyard Dog v. Hoss & Terry Funk. The faces have midget wrestler Haiti Kid in their corner, so the Funks counter by introducing future jobber Jimmy Jack Funk. I'd have gone with another midget myself. White tights and kneepads for Hulk here, just to hammer home who the good guys are, I guess. The faces clean house to start, with Hogan doing JYD's headbutting schtick, except that it's the glare off his bald spot that does the damage. Terry misses a blind charge as the match starts proper, and the heels regroup outside. Back in, Dog clotheslines him and Hoss (Dory Funk Jr.) comes in against Hulk. Funny spot as the Funks get confused on a criss-cross and Hogan boots them down. Elbowdrop gets two on Hoss. Dog comes back in with another clothesline for two. The Funks take over with a double-team in the corner, but Terry loses a slugfest. Hogan comes back in and cleans house, but Jimmy Hart attacks the midget with the branding iron. Tragic, as we get the sad image of a midget on a stretcher. Terry Funk, master of ruining the moment, then stomps on the guy on the way out while we take a break. Now THAT was funny. Back with Hoss throwing forearms on Hulk. Hogan gets dumped and Terry gives him a shot with the branding iron, and soon it's a donnybrook. Hogan backdrops Terry on the floor, leaving Hoss alone in the ring to take the big boot. Dog comes in and misses a charge, so it's back to a recovered Terry. He goes up and misses a diving headbutt, and t's over to Hogan, who quickly drops the leg to finish. (Hogan & JYD d. Funks, Hogan legdrop -- pin Terry, 10:20, *1/4) This was a really long comedy match and never found any direction.

- King Kong Bundy v. Uncle Elmer. Vince, as usual, is creepily enthused by hillbillies, although given his mental breakdown in the past year, that almost seems normal for him. In fact, given a choice between having RAW as his personal therapy session and listening to him howl about hillbillies, I'll take the latter. Tim White, pre-suicide, is the referee. A test of strength proves to be a stalemate, so Bundy hammers him down. Elmer slugs back and uses his only weapon -- his ass -- but misses a blind charge, and Bundy finishes. (Bundy d. Elmer, elbowdrop -- pin, 2:32, DUD) Elmer disappeared soon after.

- Paul Orndorff v. Adrian Adonis. Orndorff gets a series of slams to start, which sends Adrian running. Back in, Paul whips him over and out again. Back in, Orndorff gets an abdominal stretch, but goes after him in the corner and gets caught with a cheapshot. Adonis charges and gets dumped, however. Orndorff tosses Jimmy Hart at him like the proverbial lawndart, and we take a break. Back with Orndorff using an airplane spin of all things, but a chase of Jimmy Hart leaves him open to a megaphone attack. Adonis takes over with a flying kneedrop and an elbow for two. Suplex gets two. Flying splash hits knee, however, and Orndorff comes back with a running knee and more punishment for poor Jimmy. Dropkick sends Adonis into the post, but Mr. Wonderful is too aggressive and shoves the ref, drawing the DQ. (Adonis d. Orndorff, DQ, 9:24, **1/4) This would foreshadow Orndorff's summer heel turn on Hogan.

- Jake Roberts v. Ricky Steamboat. Jake was the hot new heel at the time, sporting a full-on mullet. 3" in the front and 12" in the back, Tino. Jake attacks before the bell and DDTs Ricky on the floor, and we have no match. Dragon meets snake, which is ironic considering Ricky's righteous indignation before the match about that sort of behavior ("I won't tolerate it!" was the exact quote, which exactly the kind of trash-talk that shows why he was never a heel in his career), and thus the summertime B-show headlining feud is born.

- WWF tag titles, 2/3 falls: The British Bulldogs v. Iron Sheik & Nikolai Volkoff. This begins the weird tradition of having tag title matches on SNME be 2/3 falls. Davey dodges a charging Russian (presumably by taking away his credit card) and rolls him up for two, but gets dropped on the top rope. Sheik gets a quick german suplex and camel clutch for the submission at 0:55. Ouch. We take a break and return with Davey getting worked over in the corner by Sheik. Abdominal stretch, but Davey hiptosses out of it. Volkoff stays on him with a clothesline, but Davey gets a sunset flip behind the ref's back. Sheik carries on with a side salto for two. Davey comes back with an atomic drop for two. Volkoff suplexes him for two. Back to the foreign corner for some cheating by the Sheik, and Volkoff gets a slam for two. Volkoff celebrates prematurely, however, and Smith rolls him up for the pin at 6:02. Vince McMahon's call of this has to be heard to be believed, as he's all "What an IDIOT!" and even Bobby Heenan is shocked at how mean-spirited Vince is being. I mean, seriously, talk about kicking a guy when he's down. Anyway, third fall, and Volkoff is hammering Davey again, as I wonder if Dynamite was injured yet again. Sheik adds the LOADED BOOT OF DOOM and applies a Bahrain Crab, but Davey makes the ropes. Volkoff gets a backbreaker and bearhug, but Davey breaks out and then powerslams a squirmy Sheik by sheer force of willpower for two. That's a neat spot because you don't often see the other guy fighting the move like that. The Kid has finally seen enough and tags himself in, but gets pounded in short order. Sheik gets the side salto and the camel clutch, but the Bulldogs play switcheroo and Davey rolls him up for the pin. Uh, they're wearing different color tights, how dumb was that referee? What an IDIOT. (Bulldogs v. Sheik & Volkoff, Davey rollup -- pin Sheik, 9:55, ***) Quite an entertaining little tag match to finish the show.

The Bottom Line:

The tag title match was a nice little bit of entertainment, the rest was worthless summer filler. Add the Bulldogs to a compilation and forget the rest.

The SmarK Retro Rant for Saturday Night's Main Event #7 - October 1986

- Taped from Cleveland, OH

- Your hosts are Vince McMahon & Jesse Ventura

- Fun fact: This was my first ever SNME, as I was 12 years old and determined to stay up until midnight to see if Paul Orndorff could beat Hulk Hogan.

- WWF title match: Hulk Hogan v. Paul Orndorff. Of course, this was the first in a series of MANY matches between them in 1986, triggered by Orndorff's famous heel turn in August 1986. Hogan no-sells Paul's punches and goes after the Brain, but gets dumped as a result. Back in, Hogan slugs away again and follows with a corner clothesline, but goes after Bobby "The Decoy" Heenan and gets clobbered. Orndorff drops a knee. Hogan then sells it so dramatically that he rolls out of the ring and into the timekeeper. Orndorff chokes him down and follows with a running knee to keep him on the floor. Back in, Orndorff drops another knee and slugs Hogan down for two. Suplex gets two. Hogan pops up with a running knee, but Heenan grabs his ankle. This time Orndorff misses his ambush and lands on the floor, and we take a break as Heenan gets sent to the back. Back with Orndorff blindsiding Hulk after a chase. Elbowdrop gets two. Short-arm clothesline sets up the PILEDRIIVER OF DEATH, but Hogan backdrops out of it and it's Hulk Up time. Punch, punch, punch, elbow, and then Hulk shows his poetic side, hitting a short-arm clothesline of his own. Sadly, before he can demonstrate the shitty way to do a piledriver, Adrian Adonis runs in. (Hogan d. Orndorff, Adonis run-in -- DQ, 10:41, **) Newly turned Roddy Piper makes the save, still selling the leg that was injured by Adonis. Usual Hogan-Orndorff match here.

- Ricky Steamboat v. Jake Roberts. Round two. They trade wristlocks and Dragon chops the shit out of Roberts and gets two. Steamboat goes to the arm, but Roberts escapes, so Dragon faceplants him for two. They do a chase and Jake walks into another armdrag. He escapes and then misses a blind charge, and Dragon catapults him into the corner. Steamboat goes up and hits knee, however. Gutbuster gets two for Jake. He goes to work on the ribs and follows with the short-arm clothesline for two. Jake chokes him down and gets the kneelift for two. Steamer comes back, but an inverted atomic drop ends that. Dragon keeps coming and a crucifix ends it. (Steamboat d. Roberts, crucifix -- pin, 6:13, **1/4) This was cut off WAAAAY too short, just as it was getting good.

- The Iron Sheik v. Rowdy Roddy Piper. With Piper's leg presumably too bad to continue wrestling tonight, Pedro Morales is inserted as a replacement, but Piper makes a miraculous return from the dressing room and sends him packing. Slick makes his SNME debut as Sheik's new manager. Piper breaks his crutch over the Sheik, but goes for Slick and gets kicked in the bad leg. Sheik goes for a suplex, but Piper reverses for the pin. (Piper d. Sheik, rollup -- pin, 0:42, DUD)

- WWF tag titles: The British Bulldogs v. The Dream Team. Another 2/3 falls match. Hammer gets pinballed by the Bulldogs to start, but pounds the Kid in the corner. Beefcake comes in with a suplex, but Davey comes in and works the arm. Beefcake reverses him down and brings him to the heel corner, where Hammer comes off the top with a forearm and gets two. Beefcake stomps him down for two. Quick tag to the Kid, however, and he chops Valentine down, but eats an atomic drop. Shoulderbreaker gets two. Forearm gets two. Back to Beefer, who pounds the Kid down for two. They collide and Valentine takes advantage with the figure-four, and Dynamite submits at 4:52. We take a break and return with Valentine trying another figure-four on DK, but Kid kicks out. Draeam Team double-teams the leg, and another double-team gets two for Beefcake. Backbreaker gets two. Back to

the Hammer, who tries a middle-rope elbow, but misses. Hot tag Davey Boy, and he headbutts Valentine down and follows with a delayed suplex for two. Powerslam sets up a crazy Bulldog double-team, with Davey putting Beefcake in a fireman's carry, and then Dynamite jumping off the top rope, onto Beefcake on Davey's shoulders, and using that momentum to hit a diving headbutt onto Valentine. Needless to say, that ties things up at 9:26. Third fall sees Valentine going for the now-injured knee of Dynamite, but the Kid snap suplexes him and then misses a headbutt. Hammer pounds him down for two, and draws Smith in for some double-teaming behind the ref's back, which gets two. Back to the leg, but Kid makes the hot tag. Beefcake cuts that off and backdrops Davey Boy for two. Clothesline gets two. Headbutt down low gets two. Davey comes back with a sunset flip for two. Hammer necksnaps him and comes in with kneedrops, and a delayed suplex gets two. Beefcake gets the high knee for two. It's BONZO GONZO and Davey pulls out a Perfectplex of all things, and that finishes. (Bulldogs d. Dream Team, Davey Boy Smith fisherman's suplex -- pin Brutus Beefcake, 15:19, ***3/4) Probably the best SNME match ever up until that point. Seriously, find it and check it out if you can.

- Kamala v. Leaping Lanny Poffo. Uh, yeah. (Kamala d. Poffo, splash -- pin, 1:35, DUD)

The Bottom Line:

Hogan v. Orndorff on free TV for the first time? Crazy interviews from Roddy Piper? The debut of Slick? Bulldogs and Dream Team tearing shit up? Get all this!

The SmarK Retro Rant for Saturday Night's Main Event #8 - November 1986

- I'm actually done up to #12 now, but only in written format, and hopefully I'll get them transcribed by the end of the century.

- Taped from Los Angeles, CA

- Your hosts are Vince McMahon & Jesse Ventura.

- Intercontinental title: Randy Savage v. Jake Roberts. This was a weird choice for a match, as both Savage and Roberts were very much scumbag heels at this point, and cult favorites with the wrestling-savvy junior high school crowd that I hung around with when I was 12. Typical discourse about this match: "Did you know that Randy Savage fought Jake Roberts before?" "No way!" "Yeah, it was on Saturday Night's Main Event." "No way!" For those who couldn't stay up until midnight, SNME was a mythical home for unheard of matches like this one, stuff you just didn't see on TV. Jake cuts a GREAT heel promo before the match as well, basically threatening to take Savage's title because he's that much more evil. Liz polishing the belt in the blue-screen promo for Savage is another great touch. So they trade wristlocks and hairpulls to start, and the unapologetic cheating on display is glorious, as they both ham it up and the crowd loves it. Savage freaks out over Damian and bails, so Jake brings him in and grabs a headlock, and they cheat like crazy again until Savage runs away to avoid a DDT. Back in, Jake tries it again, but Macho hammers him into the corner and then buries a knee in his face to block a charge. That gets two. Faceplant gets two. Straight kick to the head gets two. Kneedrop gets two. Jake fights back, so Savage drops an elbow gets two. Savage chokes him down for two, as Hebner gets a workout tonight. Axehandle gets two. Savage is just throwing EVERYTHING at him tonight. Jake slugs back, but gets tied up in the ropes, which would become a signature spot for him as a face. We take a break, and return with Savage preening on the apron, which allows Jake to catch him with a kneelift. Savage blocks another DDT, but Jake short-arms him for two, clearly playing the babyface for the biased crowd now. Front suplex (aka Arn Anderson's gourdbuster, as if that helps anyone born after 1984 anyway) gets two for Jake. Jake fires away with his punches, but puts his head down and gets caught. Savage gets caught with another DDT attempt, however, and barely blocks that, and they brawl outside. Jake gets the snake, but Savage sends him into the post. I'd bet on the post every time, too. Randy drops the double axehandle from the top to the floor, and back in the ring for another one, which gets two. Again, but Jake catches him with a punch coming down, and it looks to be DDT time. Savage dumps him and it's a brawl, but they both lose their temper and shove the ref, because they're bad people, and it's a wash. (Savage DDQ Roberts, 9:25, ***1/4) How did THIS one escape the near-legendary status that a lot of mediocre SNME matches like Hogan-Bossman attained? This was CRAZY shit for 1986, with tons of near-falls and mindgames and stuff. Jake turned face soon after.

- Meanwhile, Slick sells Hercules Hernandez to Bobby Heenan, but only for cash, because he doesn't trust the Brain. That's pretty funny. Ironically, two years later Hercules would be sold by Bobby to Ted Dibiase, but take it a lot harder.

- WWF title: Hulk Hogan v. Hercules. So joining the Heenan family pays immediate dividends for Herc, as he gets to be the latest victim for Hogan in Bobby's neverending war against him. Test of strength to start, a Hogan favorite. Hulk quickly wins that one, so Herc dumps him in the corner and pounds away. Hulk comes back with a corner clothesline and high knee, and a chase of Heenan leads to the big boot. Bobby's dive over the top rope is a thing of beauty. He gets hangtime, man. Elbow misses, however, and Herc starts working the back, and Hogan does his overselling. This leads to a

bearhug and backbreaker. Torture rack, but Herc releases prematurely (HEY-OH!), and then wastes time arguing the point, and then orders for pizza, and you know I don't even NEED to type up the rest of the review, right, because we can all say it together now? (Hogan d. Hercules, legdrop -- pin, 6:18, 1/2*) Very pedestrian, as Hercules didn't get what I would consider "good" until a few years later.

- Rowdy Roddy Piper v. Bob Orton. This is a very touching blowoff match, actually, as Orton escaped a bad relationship, as submissive femme to Piper's dominant butch, and then got into a more healthy partnership with Don Muraco, who is a much more laid back guy. As with any relationship, they had to iron out the kinks (which manager do they go with? Who gets the cheque at dinner? What color are the curtains?) but it was nice to see Bob happy for once. Slugfest to start, and Piper bulldogs him. He adds some biting and whips Orton into the corner, setting up the Stoooge Eyepoke. Kneelift gets two. Orton take over and gets a gutbuster for two. Elbow gets two. Piper shoves him into Jimmy Hart, however, and that's it. (Piper d. Orton, schoolboy -- pin, 3:44, *) The video package done to "You're a Friend of Mine" was longer and more emotionally satisfying, although the finish might explain why Orton & Muraco opted for Mr. Fuji as a manager instead of Jimmy Hart.

- The Hart Foundation v. The Killer Bees. Bret eats a high knee from Brunzell to start, and Blair comes in and works the arm. Double reverse rollup spot is ruined by a drop-in promo from the Bees and Mean Gene doing a goofy comedy routine. Anvil comes in, allowing Bret to give Jumping Jim a cheapshot from the apron. Demolition Decapitation gets two. Neidhart gets a standing dropkick, and Bret slugs away. We get some quality cheating in the heel corner out of that. Bret gets a backbreaker, but misses the elbow. We take a break and return with Brunzell slingshotting into the ring for two. Anvil cuts off a potential tag, but Brunzell backslides Bret for two. Dropkick and it's a false tag to Blair. The Bees regroup outside and put the masks on, which allows Blair to make the comeback. Jesse is suspicious of them. Sleeper on Neidhart, but Bret clobbers Blair from behind. It's another switch out of that, however, and Brunzell rolls up Bret for the pin. (Bees d. Harts, Brunzell rollup -- pin Bret Hart, 8:37, **1/2) Fun match, and although the Harts lost this #1 contender match, they would win the belts a little later.

- Koko B. Ware v. Nikolai Volkoff. Debut for Koko on SNME here. Volkoff pounds away in the corner to start, but Koko slugs back. Weird monkey flip and two dropkicks get two. Volkoff drops him on the top rope, but misses a kneedrop, and Koko gets a missile dropkick for two. Volkoff comes back with a backbreaker, but picks him up at one in a stupid decision, and it's the old manager collision rollup finish that I hate so much. (Koko b. Ware d. Nikolai Volkoff, rollup -- pin, 2:19, 1/2*) Two of the exact same finish in the same show is too many.

- "The Rebel" Dick Slater v. Magnificent Muraco. Mr. Fuji singing bluegrass is an image that I didn't need. If you don't remember grizzled veteran Dick Slater coming in as a peppy southern babyface, in a company based in New York, then you probably understand why just by my explaining it. Muraco pounds on him in the corner, into a fireman's carry, but Slater rolls him up for two. Slater comes back with elbows, elbows and more elbows, but stops to yell at Fuji, presumably about something elbow-related, and gets tripped as a result. That's KARMA, bitch. You don't fuck with the Fuji Vice. (Muraco d. Slater, clothesline -- pin, 2:02, 1/4*) Good bye to Slater after this humiliating job in a 2-minute match.

The Pulse:

More of a curiosity than a memorable show, the Roberts-Savage match is a rarity worth saving (was it even on the new Jake DVD?) and the Harts-Bees match is one of a million of them, most of which

were better than this one. The rest is throwaway junk.

The SmarK Retro Rant for Saturday Night's Main Event #9 - January 1987

- Taped from Hartford, CT.

- Your hosts are Vince McMahon & Jesse Ventura.

- Opening match, WWF title: Hulk Hogan v. Paul Orndorff. I've seen this a million times, so I'll just grab the review from a previous Coliseum Video rant. By this point, Orndorff had lost to Hogan so many times that they needed to give it a rest for about 6 months anyway. This is from SNME, and it has a rather famous finish. Paul attacks right away, and whips him with the belt, but can't get out the door. Boogie-Woogie Elbows and again he can't get out. Paul keeps dropping elbows and climbs, but Hogan grabs the hair to stop him, leading Jesse Ventura into one of his funniest lines ever: "Hogan would not be the champion if Mr. Wonderful was bald!" Back in the cage, Hogan chokes him out with the headband and climbs, but Orndorff pulls him down. More choking. They fight for the door, and Hogan comes back. Hogan slugs him down, but Danny Davis locks the door. Vince is aghast. Jesse has a more reasoned perspective on it: "Well, what do you want, the door left open all the time?" Orndorff goes low and drops an elbow, and both guys crawl for the cage and ram each other into it. Both guys climb opposite sides of the cage and exit at the same time. Joey Marella says Hogan wins, Davis says Orndorff wins, and I think that since Davis is still alive his opinion should count. Sadly, the match MUST CONTINUE. So back in we go, and Orndorff drops an elbow from the top. He keeps on him with kneedrops, a short-arm clothesline and a fistdrop, but it's Hulk up time. Hogan unleashes some chops and sends Paul to the cage a few times, drawing blood. Legdrop and after the requisite beating up of the helpless manager, Hogan exits, stage left, to win at 12:44. Pretty good for a WWF cage match, and the simultaneous exit finish was definitely the talk around the water fountain the next day in school, at least at my school. They go over the replays afterwards, where Jesse insists that Orndorff won because "Hogan's knees were bent and Orndorff's were straight", which I don't get at all. (Hogan d. Orndorff, escape from cage, **1/2)

- Intercontinental title: Randy Savage v. George Steele. Steele clobbers him from behind and chokes him down, then gets a couple of slams. George waves for someone to come out of the back, which allows Savage to take over. Savage quickly goes up, but Ricky Steamboat returns from the dead, or at least his throat injury, and Savage freaks out. Steele dumps him and then kidnaps Elizabeth, and we take a break. Lots of stalling as Animal is gone, and Steamboat chases Savage around the ring until George returns from taking a piss or whatever he was doing. He gives Savage some turnbuckle stuffing, but gets shoved into the exposed steel. Normally that would end things, but this is the long-form tonight. Savage chokes him out, so Steele bites him in retaliation. Savage tries a sleeper, so Steele bites his arm. Steele then produces his nebulous foreign object, and shoves the ref, so Savage clocks him with the bell to FINALLY finish. (Savage d. Steele, bell -- pin, 8:07, DUD) This was all running around and choking and stalling and shit. But it set up the big showdown between Steamboat and Savage, so huzzah.

- Junkyard Dog v. Harley Race. Speaking of WM3 setup matches, here's another. Race had just recently been crowned King, which is arrogant for normal people but actually kind of modest for wrestlers. Just look at HHH. Race punches Dog down for two and adds a high knee. Kneedrop gets two. Dog reverses him into the post and headbutts him down, but Race comes back with a belly-to-belly and falling headbutt. This is of course ill-advised, because black people have hard heads in the world of wrestling. Race ends up on the floor, and Dog steals the crown and robe, which is pretty silly. He also stops to beat up Bobby Heenan, which never leads to good things, and indeed Race hits him with an elbow off the top and they double-team JYD for the DQ. WEAK. (Dog d. Race, DQ, 3:56,

1/4*) Too short to be worth much.

- Adrian Adonis v. Roddy Piper. This show seems very familiar. Piper hiptosses him and ties him in the ropes, then whips him into the corner. He goes to work on the arm, but Adonis gets a cheapshot. Piper slugs him down and they tumble out, where Adrian sprays perfume in his eyes for the countout win. (Adonis d. Piper, countout, 3:43, *) Never really got going, and again it was just a setup for WM3.

- Blackjack Mulligan v. Jimmy Jack Funk. This was the start of Mulligan's short WWF tenure. Total squash, nuff said. (Mulligan d. Funk, back elbow -- pin, 2:26, 1/4*) He was in and gone before anyone noticed.

The Pulse: Hogan v. Orndorff is legendary and will be included on the upcoming Hogan 4-disc DVD set, so the rest is superfluous and worthless as a result.

A Saturday Night's Main Event Compilation Rant - Part Four

- Taped from Detroit, MI, March 1987.

- Your hosts are Vince & Jesse.

- Intercontinental title match: Randy Savage v. George Steele. Tonight's stipulation du jour: Not only is the title on the line, but the lovely Elizabeth as well. You know, given all of McMahon's leering comments towards Liz over the years, I have to wonder if Linda actually watched these shows. I mean, sure we know NOW exactly how much of a perverted, dirty old man the Mr. McMahon persona has become, but it's really kinda creepy watching these tapes from 1987 where a supposedly babyface announcer is drooling over Elizabeth like some sicko in the park on a Sunday. Anyway, Savage attacks the Animal on the floor, which prompts Steamboat to come out and prevent any more such shenanigans. They brawl, and Savage gets jumped by Steele as he gets into the ring again. Steele battering-rams him into the turnbuckles and darnit if they don't look good enough to eat, so he does. Savage uses Steele's moment of indiscretion to nail him with a high knee from behind, then gets the flying axehandle and chokes him down. Steele chokes back and gets one up on the dirty trick barometer by blocking a clothesline with a bite to the arm. Another turnbuckle meets its tragic end in Steele's mouth, and he's just so darn happy about that situation that he stops and goes to visit Elizabeth, presumably to share some of it with her. Savage, obviously concerned about what turnbuckle stuffing will do to Liz's svelt figure, jumps Steele from behind and beats the crap out of him, then rolls in to win by countout at 4:31. Ballet, this ain't. 0 for 1.

- 20 Man Battle Royale: I won't bother naming the participants, but there's 20 of them and Hogan & Andre are in there along with some JTTS cannon fodder for the most part. The storyline is of course that Hogan & Andre have been avoiding each other leading to Wrestlemania III, and here they are stuck together by fate in the same match with only 18 other guys seperating them and destiny. All the Heenan heels swarm Hogan to start, but he comes back by promptly getting rid of Honky Tonk Man. Andre, obviously in a bad mood, jettisons fellow heel Sika. Next up for him: Haku and then Lanny Poffo, who blades himself on the way down to sell the force of Andre's headbutt. It actually gets out of control and he leaves huge pools of blood on the mats and gets stretchered out. Ron Bass & Butch Reed put aside cultural differences for the good of mankind, namely double-teaming Hulk Hogan, but obviously God is against them because Hogan tosses Bass soon after. Andre, meanwhile, gets rid of fellow Machine Blackjack Mulligan. Hogan stands up for the forces of capitalism and dumps Nikolai Volkoff. McCarthy would be proud. Andre gives B. Brian Blair a free ticket to the floor. Hercules & Orndorff again work Hogan over in the name of the Heenan family, but he escapes, and walks into Andre. The battle royale draws to a hushed stop, like the Queen Mother cutting a nasty fart at a coronation ceremony. Hogan breaks the awkward moment by throwing Orndorff out, but he was just a pawn in the complex chess game that is the squared circle, as Andre declares "Checkmate, chum!" and headbutts Hogan out of the match. The crowd is shocked and appalled. Andre gets back into the swing of things, getting rid of Jim Brunzell, but that gives everyone else left the chance to jump him and force him out of the ring by sheer numbers, leaving Ax as the sole member of the former Machines to be standing in the ring. Sadly, his revelry is broken by Hillbilly Jim sending him to meet the floor. Smash (Randy "Moondog Spot" Culley, not Barry "Repo Man" Darsow) quickly avenges the loss of his partner by dumping Jim out himself. Koko B. Ware dropkicks Reed out shortly after, leaving our final four as Koko, Smash, Billy Jack Haynes and Hercules. Hercules stomps Koko into Silly Putty and tosses him without breaking any significant sort of perspiration that I know of. Smash & Hercules double-team Haynes, but some inopportune miscommunication allows Hayes to backdrop Smash out. Heenan distracts Haynes, who goes after him like a moron, and Hercules eliminates him for the win at

10:53. If my play by play made it seem interesting or exciting in the least, I apologize, for that was not my intention. 0 for 2.

- Jake Roberts v. King Kong Bundy. Jake works the arm to start, but gets clobbered. Jake uses his speed (er, running ability...) to keep away from Bundy, and then comes in for a headlock. Bundy tosses him into the ropes, but Jake avoids contact again. Jake tries kicking at the leg, so Bundy gets sick of him and wants a test of strength. Why Jake would agree to this is beyond me, but he does. And he loses in about 3 seconds, as you'd expect. Bundy pounds away and goes for a facelock, but Jake kneelifts him and fires away with rights. Heenan steals the snake as we take a break, and return with Jake getting it back. Bundy attacks, however, and puts him down with a clothesline and two shoulderblocks. Blind charge misses, however, and Jake comes back. Clothesline, but the ref gets in Jake's way and gets a knee to the gut as a result. Bundy wins by DQ at 5:46. As thrilling to watch as to type. 0 for 3.

- WWF tag team title match: The Hart Foundation v. Danny Spivey & Tito Santana. Tito is subbing for the departed Mike Rotundo, and this is the Harts' "first title defense", which used to mean something in the days before guys won belts in dark matches. Spivey bodypresses Anvil for two. He gets clotheslined, but atomic drops him into a tag to Bret Hart. The faces double-team Bret and Tito slams him. Spivey comes in and gets two, but the Harts cheat and beat on him in the corner. Bret's backbreaker sets up Neidhart's slingshot splash in for two. Spivey fights back, but gets double-teamed again. Bret drops an elbow for two. False tag to Tito, but heel miscommunication allows the real tag. Tito hits the Flying Jalapeno on both Harts, but he chooses to go for the figure-four for some reason. This allows Danny Davis to sneak in, nail him with the megaphone, and put Bret on top for the pin at 5:20. Thankfully, despite booking stutter-steps like this, the Hart Foundation would go on to become one of the most dominant teams of the decade. This match sucked, though. 0 for 4.

- Ricky Steamboat v. The Iron Sheik. Steamboat draws the death slot this time, lucky him. Sheik attacks to start, as Savage joins us on commentary. Sheik tosses the Dragon, but he comes back in and suplexes him for two. Chops and a hiptoss, and Steamboat hits the chinlock. They brawl out, and Sheik suplexes him in for two, as my tape runs out. Well, luckily for you I saw this show in 1987 and Steamboat goes on to win about a minute later. 0 for 5.

The Bottom Line: This was not one of the better Main Events, to say the least. It was basically the "Hype the shit out of Wrestlemania III" show, and since that PPV did something like a 10.0 buyrate, I guess it worked.

- Taped from South Bend, IN.

- Your hosts are Vince & Jesse.

- Jake Roberts v. Kamala. The pre-match interview establishes that, in fact, Kamala is deathly afraid of snakes. Jake clears the ring with the snake, but gets jumped by Kamala. He overpowers Roberts and grabs a bearhug. Jake steps on his toes to break the hold - a truly innovative strategy - and keeps doing it to keep him off guard. Kamala knocks him over and chokes away. That goes on for a while. Jake fights back, but gets headbutted. Jake goes after Kim Chee and lets Kamala chase him, and then catches him with a kneelift coming into the ring. Fuji distracts the referee, however, allowing Kim Chee to get sweet, sweet revenge and nail Roberts. Kamala finishes with the **BIG FAT SPLASH OF DEATH** at 4:20. Boring match, but afterwards Kim Chee unmaskes to reveal Honky Tonk Man, engaging in a bit of subterfuge. A beatdown results. Good angle to save the segment. 1 for 1.

- Lumberjack match: Randy Savage v. George Steele. This is billed as the end of the feud, and I believe it was. The usual cast of characters from the time are your lumberjacks. Steamboat uses pantomime to explain the rules of the match to George, while Savage cuts an awesome, high-strung, pissed-off promo backstage. "VENGEANCE IS MINE, YEAH!" Gotta love heel Savage in his prime. Hercules and Steamboat nearly get into a brawl right away, setting up their match later on. Steele pays Liz some attention, so Savage snaps and attacks, but Steele chases him out into the heel side of the ringside area, where they gently coax him back in. Savage then tries bailing to the babyface side and gets tossed back in. Steele bites at him, but gets elbowed. Steele keeps hammering away, but Savage sends him into the turnbuckles to take over. He works him over in the corner, but Steele fights back. Savage goes up with the flying axehandle and tosses George to the wolves, where the heels beat him down. Jim Duggan comes to the rescue, but gets tossed by the referees for his troubles. Back from a break, George is choking Savage out and munching on turnbuckle stuffing. Savage sells the gruesome **FOAM OF DOOM**, but kicks away. He gets a suplex and kneedrop and tosses Steele again, but gets dumped out himself in turn. Suddenly, a huge brawl erupts after Steamboat attacks Savage, and Danny Davis sneaks in to nail Steele with the ringbell. Savage finishes with the big elbow at 6:38. A giant battle royale erupts and Jake gets revenge on the real Kim Chee by covering him with the snake. 1 for 2.

- Bobby Heenan and Andre review footage of the False Three Count from Wrestlemania III, which would eventually lead to them getting a rematch in Feb. 88.

- WWF Tag title match, 2/3 falls: The Hart Foundation v. The British Bulldogs. I remember being quite stoked for this one back in the day. Bret starts with Davey Boy and they do a cool Stampedeish wristlock sequence. Davey works the arm, but Bret kips up and reverses to a headlock. Davey monkeyflips out of it and gets a crucifix for two. Bret uses the knee to turn the tide and Anvil hairtosses Davey to make him face in peril. The Harts cheat like nuts and work him over in the corner. Bret gets a backbreaker for two. Bret gets a legdrop, but misses a charge and Smith gets the hot tag to Dynamite. He hairtosses Bret and hits a nasty stiff clothesline for two. Snap suplex gets two. Falling headbutt, but all hell breaks loose and it's **BONZO GONZO**. Finally the ref disqualifies the Harts for double-teaming at 4:46. Second fall begins as Dynamite gets pounded in the heel corner. Demolition Decapitation gets two. The Kid fights out, but Bret prevents the tag by holding onto the leg. Smith chases him around the ring while Anvil uses the opportunity to choke Dynamite out. His nose is just gushing blood - I'm sure Vince was just thrilled to see that. Bret ties him in the ropes, but misses a dive at him and it's hot tag Davey Boy. He dropkicks Neidhart and a clothesline gets two. Suplex gets two. Anvil cheapshots him, but the Harts have that old heel miscommunication problem and Smith presses Dynamite onto Neidhart for the win in two straight falls at 9:14. The place just comes completely unglued, thinking that there's

been a title change, but Jesse has the last laugh as he gleefully points out that titles can't change when there's a DQ in one of the falls. Two years later, that rule would be ignored and buried when the Brainbusters won the tag titles from Demolition with one fall being a DQ. Really good match. 2 for 3.

- Hogan offers his side of the WM3 controversy.

- Intercontinental title match: Ricky Steamboat v. Hercules. Savage is watching in the back, because he wants Steamboat to win so he can take the title himself. Herc and Dragon slug it out, and Herc wins. Ricky dropkicks him and chops away, and he bails. Steamboat chases him and gets an atomic drop, and back in we go. Hercules cheapshots him to take over. He kicks away, and a clothesline and elbowdrop get two as Savage cheers on Steamboat in the back. Steamboat fights back, but Hercules goes low. Steamboat sends him to the turnbuckles and gets a neckbreaker to come back. Hercules goes to the eyes again, and hooks the FULL-NELSON OF AGONY, so Savage takes action and runs in, pulling Hercules into the ropes to break the hold. We go to commercial and return with Herc coming off the top and missing. Elbow misses. Charge misses. Man, he ain't very godlike tonight. Steamboat makes the comeback, working on the ribs. Herc chokes him out with the chain for the DQ at 6:14. Now, the interesting part, as Savage is standing around at ringside watching Hercules beat on Steamboat forever, and the crowd is READY to just cheer their heads off if he makes the save. But he doesn't, which pisses them off more. Finally, Hercules leaves and Savage goes in to check on Steamboat, and AGAIN the fans are just waiting for the face turn...but Savage suddenly bolts to the top and drops a big elbow to crush that hope. I think this may have been where the WWF realized the potential they had in a babyface Savage. Match was duller than dishwasher, though. 2 for 4.

- Mean Gene introduces us to Hacksaw Jim Duggan, who's at ringside with a "ticket" that looks like one of those cheap ones you get at the carnival, and he's going to prevent Volkoff from singing tonight.

- The Can-Am Connection v. Iron Sheik & Nikolai Volkoff. And indeed, as advertised, Nikolai pays tribute to his homeland and Duggan storms in and takes care of business, because America is the land of the free and no commies should be able to sing their anthem. Jesse points out the inherent hypocrisy there, bless his heart. Can-Ams double-team Sheik, but he nails Zenk with his curly boot and gets a side salto for two. Vertical suplex gets two. Volkoff stomps away and they work Zenk over. Belly to belly gets two for Sheik. He goes to the abdominal stretch, but Zenk hiptosses out. Sheik tosses him, and Martel for good measure, and they pound on Zenk right in front of Duggan. Duggan has had enough, and goes after Volkoff long enough for a distracted Sheik to get rolled up by Martel for the pin at 4:45. Nothing here. 2 for 5.

- The usual gabbing wraps things up.

The Bottom Line: Bulldogs/Harts is quite entertaining, although not even up to the standards of a RAW main event these days, the rest is the usual post-WM doldrums. Take a pass.

The SmarK Retro Rant for Saturday Night's Main Event #12 - October 1987

- Taped from Hershey, PA

- Your hosts are Vince McMahon & Bobby Heenan.

- Intercontinental title: Honky Tonk Man v. Randy Savage. This is pretty big, marking Savage's official face turn after a few weeks of indeterminate tweenerdom, not to mention the start of perhaps the biggest angle in the history of the promotion. Conventional wisdom was Savage destroying Honky and winning the title. Long lockup to start and Honky pounds on him after a cheapshot, but Savage necksnaps him. Kneedrop and elbow out of the corner follow, and Savage goes after Jimmy Hart and gets caught. Honky tries to take over, but Savage elbows him down and slugs away. Honky comes back with a fistdrop and keepings wasting time with Liz, so Savage drops an axehandle on him and rolls him up for two. Backdrop suplex gets two, but Hart keeps breaking it up. Double axehandle gets two, and Savage drags Hart into the ring to get rid of him. Honky tries a sunset flip, but gets clobbered, and the Hart Foundation join us and tend to Jimmy on the floor. We take a break as they help him to the dressing room. Back with Savage whomping on Honky again, but he misses a charge. Odd spot Savage takes him down with a double-leg for two and the ref is confused about whether to count or not. I'll leave it as an exercise to the reader to guess if he does or not. Honky pounds him in the corner and goes for the fistdrop again, but misses. Savage comes back and chokes him out in the corner. Elbow gets two. Suplex gets two. Honky dumps him, allowing the Harts to do some damage, and HTM drops an elbow for two. Savage reverses Shake Rattle N Roll, however, and drops the big elbow, but there's like 18 people at ringside so you can guess what happens next. (Savage v. Honky Tonk, DQ, 12:11, ***) Probably Honky's best match ever up until that point, although he would later have what I can only term shockingly good chemistry with Brutus Beefcake. Savage was in a killer groove at this point. So things continue, as Honky tries to play Jeff Jarrett with his guitar, but Liz puts herself in the way. So Honky **SHOVES HER DOWN**, and to say this was a shocking angle for the WWF in 1987 would be an understatement. Liz was an untouchable up until that point, literally, as her character appeal was centered around guys leering at her (or the paranoid Savage thinking they were) and then getting bootfucked by her jealous boyfriend as a result. Actually having her get physically involved in an angle was huge, and when she ran to the back for the first time, the group of teenagers I was watching with went nuts. A beatdown follows, with Honky finishing his guitar shot, before Liz returns with the Orange Goblin in the flesh to chase off the bad people. By the time the inevitable handshake occurs, you can almost see the roof exploding off the arena and the dollar signs in Vince's eyes.

- WWF title: Hulk Hogan v. Sika. I don't have my handy Samoan Family Relations chart with me, but I believe Sika begat Rikishi, the Tonga Kid, and one of the guys from 3 Minute Warning. However, as I have often said, Samoan family trees are about as easy to follow as Back to the Future II, so I'm probably wrong. Sika pounds away to start and Fuji chokes Hulk out and adds a shot with the cane. Hogan comes back with a clothesline to send him out of the ring, then adds a big boot and elbows. However, he goes after Kim Chee, and gets nailed from behind. They brawl and Sika meets ringpost. The ref tries to get Fuji's cane away from Hulk, and we take a break. Back with Hogan trying a splash (!?) and hitting knee. Sika stomps him down and chokes away, and it's time for Hogan's epileptic selling as Sika applies a nervehold to the pecs. C'mon, he's squeezing the dude's boob, how can you take that seriously as a submission hold? It's the **PURPLE NURPLE OF DEATH**. Hulk of course fights back, because that's what he does, but Sika gets a bunch of headbutts for two. When that's the best you've got to set up the big finish, you've got no business main eventing. Hulk up, yada yada yada. (Hogan d. Sika, yada yada yada, 7:51, 1/2*)

- Paul Orndorff v. King Kong Bundy. Back to the babyface side for Mr. Wonderful, which was pretty ill-advised, since it destroyed his career and all. More career advice: Don't hire a guy named Humperdink as a manager and expect to be treated like a badass. Orndorff slugs away to start, but gets pounded down. Much choking follows. Orndorff gets a sunset flip for two, but gets elbowed down again. Big fat elbowdrop misses and Paul comes back with an elbow off the top, and a fistdrop for two. Dropkick gets two. Andre the Giant joins us at ringside to advise Bundy (wouldn't that require being intelligible?) and we take a break. Back with a slugfest, won by Bundy, for two. Orndorff slugs back and drops elbows, but misses a third one. It's that third one that'll get you every time. ALWAYS STOP AT TWO. Bundy drops a knee for two, and we hit the chinlock. Paul fights up and dodges the Avalanche, but Andre grabs him by the pants and Bundy hits another one. That's one mean wedgie. (Bundy d. Orndorff, Avalanche -- pin, 7:36, *1/4) Paul would turn heel AGAIN before quitting later that year.

- WWF tag titles: The Hart Foundation v. The Young Stallions. The Harts, I believe, debut the newer, shinier versions of the tag titles that would last for an amazing 15 years in that state before the switch to "WWE" would kill them off. Roma works on Neidhart's arm to start, but Powers gets slammed. Bret comes in and Powers sunset flips him for two. Bret comes back with a knee and a backbreaker, and the champs work Powers over in the corner. Bret drops the elbow and chokes away, and Anvil drops him on the top rope. An anticlimactic hot tag to Roma follows, as this was clearly an extended squash, and it's BONZO GONZO. Powers gets his lame powerslam on Bret to make us think "Oh, this could be a tremendous upset" and then the Harts are like "Uh, no" as they finish things instead. (Hart Foundation d. Young Stallions, Hart Attack -- pin, 4:31, *1/2) As noted, a big squash. Sadly, the greatness of the Hart's title reign would be cut short by Strike Force a month after this.

- We finish with the CHEESY video for "Piledriver", and MAN does that song not hold up. Five seasons of American Idol now reveal that Koko B. Ware is a pretty shitty singer, as he's mostly out of tune, and the construction worker theme is just...creepy.

The Pulse:

The Megapowers angle is of course insanely historic and great, and the match is pretty good, too. The rest is a major fast forward bonanza, however, so you're taking your chances with this one. Plus I think the Savage-Honky rematch on the Main Event in 88 was better.

The SmarK Retro Rant for Saturday Night's Main Event #13 - November 1987

- Taped from Seattle, WA, as evidenced by Brian Bosworth sitting ringside and making a jackass of himself.

- Your hosts are Vince McMahon & Jesse Ventura.

- George "The Animal" Steele v. Danny Davis. Davis's heel stock was quickly falling, which is too bad, because if he had anything in the ring to back up his great character, he could have been something pretty big in the midcard. Steele does some biting and choking to start, and Davis wisely runs away. Davis loses a slugfest. Several times. Steele even slips in a drop toehold, and we get another chase. Davis hits him with a foreign object, however, and we get some tiresome and repetitive Jerry Lawler schtick out of that in the corner. Steele finally puts him in the flying hammerlock to get rid of him, and Davis kicks the ref to escape. (Steele d. Davis, DQ, 3:52, DUD) Total nothing match.

- Randy Savage v. Bret Hart. This was Bret's coming-out party as a potential single, as Vince basically challenged him to show him that he could work the leg and be a featured guy. So he did. Savage attacks Bret on the floor and sends him into the post, because he's PISSED about the whole "Liz getting shoved" thing. Into the ring, he pounds away in the corner, but misses a charge and Bret stomps him. Bret drops an elbow, but puts his head down and gets elbowed to the apron. Savage tries to drag him in, then slingshots him into the railing instead, a later signature Bret spot. Jimmy & Anvil stall for time with Savage, so Randy gets rid of them and goes after Bret with a flying axehandle to the floor, but he meets megaphone on the way down. Back in, Bret knees him down and drops a leg. Savage gets hung in the Tree of Woe and stomped, and Bret follows with a piledriver for two. He misses a charge and hits post, and Savage sends him into the other post for good measure. Savage goes up and gets the flying axehandle for two. Bret comes back with the backbreaker, but misses the second rope elbow. Savage necksnaps him for two, and normally this would mark the finish of an SNME match, but this time Savage charges and gets backdropped to the floor, twisting his ankle in the process. Liz desperately pulls Savage's boot off as we take a break, thus relieving the swelling. The image of Savage in his sock would become iconic of this match later on and proved a memorable hook. Savage hops back into the ring, unable to use the bad foot, and Bret immediately takes him down and goes after the ankle. He wraps it around the post and drops a knee on it, but gets kicked into the post. Savage hops up again and necksnaps him for two. Bret goes back to the foot again, getting a half-crab, but Savage makes the ropes. He crawls to the apron, but Bret slams him in, and Savage quickly reverses for the pin. (Savage d. Hart, rollup -- pin, 11:58, ***3/4) This match basically laid out the later formula for PPV main events, and in fact the heat segment on the leg was relatively short compared to what we would be used to seeing later on. I think it was actually too short for ****, even by 1987's standards, but Savage's selling was impeccable and it was a memorable match for good reason.

- WWF title: Hulk Hogan v. King Kong Bundy. It's BUNDYMANIA running wild in Seattle. The crowd is throwing a LOT of garbage into the ring, a rarity for the relatively well-behaved crowds attracted by the 80s WWF. Shoving match and Hulk grabs a headlock, but Bundy overpowers him. Hulk takes him down for two, but tries a slam and Bundy falls on top of him for two. Choking follows. He misses a splash, however, and Hulk fights back with the clothesline and elbows for two. Hulk slugs away but puts his head down, and gets clobbered. We hit the chinlock. Hulk fights out and gets the big boot, but Andre trips him up and the bell rings. BUT WAIT. In fact, the ref is only tossing him out, and we restart after a break. Back with Bundy pounding on Hulk in the corner, but Hulk gets the corner clothesline and rams him into all four corners. High knee, but Hulk misses an elbow, and

Bundy pounds him down for two. Bundy, amateur chiropractor by night, walks on Hulk's back and gives him a massage in the form of a bearhug. Hulk escapes, but runs into an elbow, and it's Avalanche season. Sadly, it's also Hulk Up Season, so Bundy gets the hell out of there. They brawl on the floor, and Bobby sneakily grabs hold of Hulk's leg. (Bundy d. Hogan, COR, 10:21, **1/2) Surprisingly good power match, actually.

- Hercules v. Bam Bam Bigelow. They trade power to start, getting nowhere in either case, so Herc throws knees, but misses a charge. He fights on and clotheslines Bammer out, then pounds him on the apron. Bigelow snapmares Hercules to the floor and they brawl outside. (Hercules DCOR Bigelow, 3:04, 1/4*) Well, that certainly went nowhere. But (babyface) didn't come all the way to (city) for (screwjob)! If (heel) has the (synonym for bravery), he'll get into the ring RIGHT NOW!

- Hercules v. Bam Bam Bigelow. Take two, as Bam Bam's mad libs were enough to convince him during the break. They try the power stuff again to no effect, and Bigelow knocks him down for some ground and pound. Dropkick misses and Herc drops an elbow, and a knee. He stalls too long, however, and when he goes up, he lands in a press slam. Slingshot splash ends it. (Bigelow d. Hercules, splash -- pin, 2:36, 1/4*) That wasn't much better.

The Pulse:

Certainly get the Hart-Savage match (searching YouTube is a good start), and maybe Hogan-Bundy if you're a completist, but the rest is a definite pass.

- Taped from Landover, MD

- Your hosts are Vince & Jesse.

- WWF tag title match, 2/3 falls: Strike Force v. The Bolsheviks. Oddly enough, both teams here were formed on the heels of one member of a more well-known team being fired - in this case, Tom Zenk and Iron Sheik were fired and replaced with Tito Santana & Boris Zhukov, respectively. Tito starts off with Boris and uses speed to keep him off-guard. They work on the arm in tandem and Tito rolls up Volkoff for two. Small package gets two. Bolsheviks hammer on Martel, but Tito comes in with a bodypress for two. Bolsheviks double-team for two. Much choking is evident. Zuhkov gets a backdrop suplex for two as Jesse praises the technical acumen of the Russians. Boris hits the chinlock, but Santana makes the tag to Martel, who gets a hiptoss, backdrop, and quickly finishes the first fall via the Boston Crab at 4:26. Second fall: Santana dumps Volkoff and Strike Force double-teams Boris into another Crab. It's a donnybrook, and Martel gets dropped on the top rope by Volkoff. Side salto gets two. Backbreaker gets two. Boris works the back, as does Volkoff. Double-elbow gets two. Martel gets a sunset flip for two, and everyone tags. Santana gets the hot tag and it's BONZO GONZO. Flying Jalapeno gets two. The heels miscommunicate and Tito gets the pin on Boris at 7:56 for two straight falls. Longish but passable. 1 for 1.

- Jake Roberts v. Samoan Sika. In the human Escher painting that is the samoan family tree, I believe Sika is the father of the guys currently working in OVW as the Island Boyz, and is Rikishi's uncle. But god knows I'm probably wrong because I have about as much luck with samoan relations as I do trying to remember anything from high school calculus. I think my life would be much easier if they all started wearing nametags listing immediate family. Jake works the arm to start and dodges a clothesline. He keeps punching, but gets backdropped. Fuji gets a cheapshot in, and Sika takes over. He goes to that old samoan standby, the VULCAN NERVE PINCH OF DOOM, and that lasts a while. Jake slugs back, but Mr. Fuji trips him up. Sika charges, but Jake dodges and rolls him up for the weak pin at 3:30. Fuji takes the DDT afterwards, but it fails to dislodge his hat. I'm tempted to give a point just for that, but it wouldn't be fair to those who have worked for their points. 1 for 2.

- WWF title match: Hulk Hogan v. King Kong Bundy. This is a rematch from a show that I desperately hoped was in the pile (but wasn't), as Bundy beat Hogan on a countout on the November '87 SNME. On the undercard of that show, Bret Hart & Randy Savage did a 15:00 wrestling clinic and THAT'S the match I've been looking for. Andre the Giant is acting as Bundy's manager tonight. Hogan overpowers Bundy to start and runs him into the turnbuckles. Bundy bails and confers with Andre. Back in, Hogan gets a clothesline, Bundy bails again. Back in, Hogan slugs away and works the arm. Bundy actually reverses to his own armbar, albeit via a hairpull, but it's still sort of like something resembling wrestling. An elbow puts Hogan down, and Bundy keeps on the arm. Hulk responds with a mini-version of the hulking up, and slams Bundy with ease, but hurts his arm. Psychology? HERE??? Bundy slams him back, but misses an elbowdrop. Hogan comes back and the poor ref gets creamed by Bundy in the corner and he's legally dead. Hogan slugs away as a replacement joins us. Bundy bails as the dead ref gets stretchered out, and we take a commercial break. We return with Bundy pounding away. Clothesline and kneedrop get two. He dumps Hogan and won't let him back in. Finally, he chokes away and splashes Hogan for two, then hits the chinlock. Two Avalanches and a big splash...get two. Hulk up, you know the rest at 12:04. Andre sneaks in (as much as Andre could sneak anywhere) and kicks the shit out of Hogan during the posedown. He chokes him down for a good five minutes and a brigade of midcarders storm out to pull him off and save Hogan. Spoilsports. Match was looking to be okay at the beginning, but turned into standard issue Hogan. 1 for 3.

- Koko B. Ware v. Greg Valentine. Oooo, we're into the REALLY high-quality portion of the show, I see. The last half-hour of SNME was generally like, well, the last half-hour of SNL. Koko overpowers him, but gets hotshotted, and Greg drops an elbow for two. Valentine tries to work the leg, but doesn't get anywhere. He stomps Koko down and gets an axehandle for two, however. We hit the chinlock and Koko gets dumped like Vince Russo from a job. Back in, clothesline gets two. Brutus Beefcake joins us at ringside, allowing Koko a pair of cradles for two. Backslide gets two. Valentine bails to regroup as the ref sends Beefcake back. Back from a break as Hammer chops away. Backdrop and elbow get two as even Jesse and Vince are commenting on how little offense Koko is getting here. Valentine goes up, but gets slammed off and Koko comes back with his token jobber offense before Valentine catches a kneebreaker and finishes with the figure-four at 7:28. Pretty much a glorified (and boring) squash. 1 for 4.

- Blah blah blah, usual filler crap to wrap things up.

The Bottom Line: Strike Force v. Bolsheviks may have been a point, but it's hardly anything I'd bother going out of my way to see. Throw this one on the scrap heap.

- Live from Nashville, TN - March 12/ 88

- Your hosts are Vince & Jesse.

- We of course discuss the Hogan/Andre/evil referees controversy first. Funny story about that situation: I was watching some of those old Superstars shows from Feb / 88, and they did an angle whereby every time Jesse Ventura would start to talk about the Main Event, Vince would have the truck bleep out his entire diatribe, by order of Jack Tunney. 13 years ago, I of course had no clue why they were doing that, but now I realize that obviously those shows were from the taping cycle BEFORE the Main Event was shot, but aired AFTER it showed on NBC. And since Vince was like Howard Hughes with all the paranoia about anyone possibly leaking the Mystery Finish, he obviously didn't want to tell Jesse anything in advance and thus came up with the censorship angle to hedge his bets.

- Brutus Beefcake v. Greg Valentine. Beefcake overpowers Valentine, but gets slugged down. Beefer comes back with the high knee and a slam, however. Big boot and Hammer is reeling. Beefcake gets a pair of atomic drops and an elbow, and rolls up Valentine for two. Weirdest moment ever: Vince has been commenting the whole match on Beefcake's bizarre tights (you know, the ones with the big split down the side of the legs) and when Beefcake does the rollover pin attempt, the camera is aimed squarely at his crotch, and an uncomfortable Jesse quips "Well, that's more of Beefcake than we really needed to see." Vince immediately jumps all over Jesse for even noticing, and they spent the rest of the show slinging gay innuendos at each other, making for some very awkward commentary. Anyway, Beefcake hammers away, but Valentine cheapshots him and drops an elbow. He goes up with another one, and drops the hammer for two. Figure-four, but they're in the ropes. Greg, however, keeps on the knee until Brutus bails, drawing Honky Tonk Man out of the dressing room. Honky mocks Beefcake until Valentine tosses him back in. Valentine pounds away with elbows and goes for the figure-four, after going to work extensively on the knee in Flairish fashion. Figure-four attempt is blocked by Beefcake with a handful of tights. Again, but Beefcake kicks him away. He comes back and fires back on Valentine, and gets an elbow. Sleeper in the center of the ring, but Greg barely makes the ropes and they tumble out. Jimmy Hart taunts Beefcake into releasing the move and chasing him, which allows Valentine to jump him on the way in and hit a backdrop suplex for the pin at 9:48. But WAIT! In fact, Beefcake lifted his shoulder at two, and he's the winner. I've always hated that finish, but Beefcake worked his ass off here and it was a ***1/4 match as a result. 1 for 1.

- Hulk Hogan v. "King" Harley Race. This a rather famous match for two reasons, which will be explained when we get there. The storyline here is that Hogan is right pissed off because of the Andre situation and ain't taking no shit tonight. Here's a neat touch of continuity from the generally sloppy production crew: Hogan does one of those cheesy pre-match promos with Mean Gene backstage and rips his shirt during the course of it. When he comes out for the match immediately after, the shirt is still ripped. Why is this neat? Because those promos are generally done either WAY before or WAY after in post-production, usually before. So someone actually remembered that Hogan needed a torn shirt. For the evil flipside of this, check out The Main Event, where Hogan cuts a "backstage promo" wearing the 86-88 version of the WWF title belt, and when he "heads off to the ring" 5 seconds later the belt mysteriously metamorphizes into the now-classic WWF title belt! Anyway, Hogan no-sells a pre-bell attack, but Race gets a pair of headbutts. Hogan no-sells that, too, and just unloads on him. Hogan gets a pair of clotheslines, and then hits another one that sends Race over the top, where he hits a ringside table gut-first on the edge. That innocent-looking blow to Race's gut would actually result in a career-ending injury. Hogan posts Race, but gets jumped by him soon after. Race tries a piledriver on the floor, but can't pull it off. Hogan atomic drops him and posts him again. They head back in, where Hogan chops away and chokes Race out with his wrist tape (!). Man, this match is so much like a

prototype of Hollywood Hogan that it's scary. Clothesline with the tape and Hogan keeps slugging away. Hogan stops to choke Heenan, allowing Race to nail him and get a kneedrop. Belly to belly sets up another kneedrop and a piledriver. Race dumps him and puts him on that same ringside table, but misses a dive off the apron and goes through the table himself. And that, my friends, is the first recorded table spot in North American wrestling. There seems to be some debate over exactly which table spot injured Race in this match, but I think the first one did more specific damage - this one was the usual "Fall down, break table" type with the weight distributed evenly over the surface. It certainly couldn't have HELPED the internal injury, however. Back in, Race hammers away and goes up for a diving headbutt, which gets two. Hulk up, yada yada legdrop at 7:24. Again, everyone busts ass and it's one of Hulk's better TV matches that I've ever seen. I'd call it about ***1/2 given the timeframe and innovative stuff here. 2 for 2.

- Ted Dibiase v. Randy Savage. Yes, Vince actually gave away the main event to Wrestlemania 4 two weeks before the show, so it's not a new thing. Savage goes out to abuse Virgil, and Dibiase attacks. Back in, Ted hammers away and chokes him down. Elbow and Dibiase pounds away in the corner. Elbow off the middle leads to more choking. Savage reverses a whip and elbows him back, then a high knee sends Dibiase dramatically flying out. Back in, double axehandle and Dibiase begs off. Clothesline gets two for Savage, however. Savage gets a hotshot and another elbow, and Dibiase now bails. Savage calmly invites him back in as they play mindgames with each other. Savage loses that battle, however, turning his back and getting jumped. Dibiase drops a pair of fists and chops away. A charge hits foot, and Savage gets an elbowdrop for two. Kneedrop misses, so Dibiase tries a spinning toehold to work the knee. Savage kicks off and Dibiase bails, but it was purposely done, as he then pulls Savage out of the ring and brawls with him. Virgil smokes Savage from behind to turn the tide. The ref tosses Virgil as we take a break and return with Dibiase getting a double axehandle and elbow for two. He hits the chinlock and uses the hair to keep Savage down. Savage elbows out and suddenly hits a clothesline out of nowhere. Backdrop, but Dibiase cheapshots him and the ref is bumped. Savage tosses Dibiase and follows with an axehandle, but Andre just CLOBBERS him. Man, DUMB DUMB DUMB move to follow Dibiase out to where the Giant was. Liz wisely runs back to get the cavalry as Andre just absolutely lays a shitkicking on Savage until the ref revives and counts him out at 11:42. Heel beatdown follows, you-know-who makes the save to set up the finish of WM4. Total PPV quality match with psychology and a story and everything, hovering around **** and blowing the Wrestlemania main event out of the water. 3 for 3.

- The Killer Bees v. The Islanders. This is actually a bit of videotape magic, as this match is 2/3 falls but only the first fall was shown. Brunzell slams Tama to start, for two. Bees double-team him, and a Blair rollup gets two. Brunzell works the arm, but misses a dropkick. Tama gets a suplex for two, and Haku dropkicks him for two. Tama pounds away, but gets atomic dropped. Haku gets back in, and he and Brunzell clothesline each other. Hot tag to Blair, who sends Haku out and slams both guys. Rollup on Tama gets two, but he's left wide open for a Haku superkick and Tama gets the pin at 3:38. Standard tag action. 4 for 4.

- One Man Gang v. Ken Patera. This is the designated "final 30 minutes squash" for the evening. Gang attacks to start and chokes him with his own Olympic pants. Patera fights back and gets a bearhug. Gang rakes the eyes to break, but Patera tries a full-nelson. Well, points for effort, I guess. Patera keeps pounding, but Gang trips coming off the ropes and falls on top for the pin at 3:07. I assume that ending was screwed up or rushed somehow, but it was so ridiculous and out of place that I can't give the match a point as a result. 4 for 5. The shattered ringside table appears to be whole and intact again, thus showing what order the matches were taped in.

The Bottom Line: Man, that first hour was one of the best televised shows that the WWF has ever done. The rest was the usual filler, but definitely check out Hogan-Race and Savage-Dibiase if you've never seen them.

- Taped from Springfield, Maine.
- Your hosts are Vince & Jesse.
- Hacksaw Jim Duggan v. Hercules. Who the hell thought of THIS matchup? Herc pounds away, but gets clotheslined. He bails and talks things over with Andre. Duggan gets an atomic drop and Hercules bails again. Back in, Duggan gets a backdrip, but misses a kneedrop and Herc jumps on the knee. Duggan fights back, but misses a charge and Hercules chokes him out. Duggan comes back, but gets tossed. Back in, Herc stomps away, so Duggan grabs his 2x4 and clears the ring. We return from break as Herc goes to the eyes and grabs a bearhug. That oughta pick up the pace. Not. Kneelift and more choking follow. Duggan comes back and hits the three-point stance, but everyone runs in for a DQ at 7:22. God, they gave it 7 minutes for THAT finish? Warrior saves to give us the Dream Team for the 90s: Duggan & Warrior. There's not enough stars in the sky and negatives to put in front of them for that teaming. 0 for 1.
- Dangerous Danny Davis v. Brutus Beefcake. It's the Pat Patterson Alliterative Nickname Nightmare match. Brutus tosses Danny around and gets a hiptoss. Davis comes back with some token jobber offense, but gets caught with the sleeper and goes to lullaby-land at 3:02. Total squash. 0 for 2.
- WWF title match: Randy Savage v. One Man Gang. Gang overpowers Savage, but Randy does some sticking and moving. Bodypress gets two as he muscled Gang down by sheer force of will. A bodypress off the top gets a more convincing two. Stungun gets two. Gang nails him in the corner to end all that fast-paced offense, however, and gets down to the business of slowing things down with some good old fashioned choking. Quite a lot of it, as well as that other big fat guy standby, pounding on the back while yelling. Elbowdrop gets two, but a charge misses and Savage elbows him right back. He dumps Gang and drops the double axehandle, but presses his luck by coming off the top again inside and gets caught on the way down. Gang goes up, but misses the 747, while Slick puts the moves on Elizabeth. Savage takes offense, so Slick takes a swing with the cane, nails his own man by mistake, and Savage drops the elbow for the pin at 5:56 to retain. They should have done that match at Wrestlemania 4. 1 for 3, for Savage's offense.
- Demolition v. The British Bulldogs. This is non-title. Smash & Smith start off, and Smash kicks some ass. Dynamite sneaks in with a clothesline, but Smash blocks a rollup and tags in Ax. He gets double-teamed by the Bulldogs, but a well-timed cheapshot turns the tide. Smash gets a backbreaker on Dynamite for two. Bearhug, but the Kid fights free. Ax keeps pounding him, but Smash misses a charge. Hot tag Smith, and he dumps Ax. Dynamite comes in, but Smash tosses him. The dog chases Fuji to the back as we go to a break. We return with a brawl and the Bulldogs quickly getting DQ'd at 4:46. Hot match, stupid finish. 2 for 4. The canned heat was ludicrously overbearing here as they constantly tried to drown out the cheers for Demolition.
- Ted Dibiase v. Don Muraco. Dibiase attacks to start and pounds away, but gets backdropped. He bails and buys some time. Back in, Muraco overpowers him and gets a clothesline. Powerslam gets two. Dibiase takes over with a clothesline for two. Suplex gets two. Side salto gets two. Muraco catches him with his head down and gets an elbow and standing powerslam for two. Dibiase sucker-punches him, however, and gets the pin at 4:10 as the referee "accidentally" fails to notice Muraco's foot on the ropes. Vince makes allegations about the ref's honesty. Good little match while it lasted, though. 3 for 5.
- Rick Rude v. Koko B. Ware. Koko slugs away to start, and loses badly. Rude poses and gets

dropkicked, which only further serves to piss him off. He pounds away on Koko's back, and the goes up for the fistdrop. He gets a rare dropkick, but tries again and misses. Koko comes back but quickly hotshots himself and the Rude Awakening puts him away at 3:37. You can't spell sasquatch without "squash". 3 for 6.

- Vince wraps things up.

The Bottom Line: Quite the decent little episode here. A .500 average is about all you can ask for these things anyway.

The SmarK Retro Rant for Saturday Night's Main Event #17 - October 1988

- Taped from Baltimore, MD

- Your hosts are Vince McMahon & Jesse Ventura

- Jake Roberts v. Rick Rude. This was the big blowoff for the B-show main event feud, triggered by Rude hitting on Jake's wife Cheryl. These days the big twist in the storyline would be Cheryl leaving Jake for Rude, but in those days it was merely Rude losing his pants on national TV. Different times, I guess. Funny bit of commentating between Vince and Jesse, as Vince puts down Jesse's outfit and Jesse retorts that Vince wouldn't know anything about Wall Street anyway. Well, not THEN, certainly. Cheryl and her 80s cougar hair are at ringside to inspire Jake. Lockup to start and they slug it out, and Jake starts working the arm with a long wristlock. Rude bails to escape the DDT. Back in, Rude counters the short-arm with his own to take over, pounding away in the corner. He stops to hit on Jake's wife, however, alternating between beating on Jake and posing at Cheryl. Jake finally clotheslines him and slugs him down, and allows Cheryl to slap him. Jesse calls for a DQ, but the ref tosses her instead, and we take a break. We return as they brawl outside, and Jake gets posted. Back in, he makes the comeback with a backdrop, but Rude blocks the DDT and drops an elbow. To the top for a fistdrop, and that gets two. Jake does a slick dodge of a backdrop, kick wham DDT, but Heenan runs in for the DQ. (Roberts d. Rude, DQ, 7:37, **1/2) Going pretty good before the lame finish. Andre the Giant comes out to attack, but we learn his secret shame -- fear of snakes. Sadly, they go all the way with the angle, as Andre has a "heart attack" out of fright, thus kicking off the low point of his career up until then.

- WWF tag titles: Demolition v. The Hart Foundation. The Harts had just turned face, and Demolition was practically there. Still, Jimmy Hart is joining Fuji in the heel corner tonight to further the Harts-Rougeaus feud. Ax and Neidhart slug it out to start, but Anvil gets tripped in the corner and pounded. The Harts return the favor on Smash and Bret dropkicks him into an elbowdrop for two. Smash sends him into the corner, and Ax comes in to choke him out. That goes pretty well for the champs. Smash smashes and goes to the chinlock. Double-team smashing in the corner, but Bret smashes back. OK, enough of that. Hot tag Anvil and he cleans house. Powerslam gets two. It's BONZO GONZO and the Demos collide, but there's a million managers and sneaking a megaphone in is pretty easy in the chaos. (Demolition d. Hart Foundation, Smash megaphone -- pin Neidhart, 5:56, **) This was more about hammering home the Hart v. Harts feud than anything else.

- Hulk Hogan v. King Haku. Hulk has Liz with him tonight. No wonder Savage was insanely jealous. Haku attacks during the ref's inspection and pounds away in the corner. Hulk quickly slugs him down, however, and unleashes the Knives of Eternity. He drops the elbows and chops him down, but stops to chase the Brain and gets caught with a choke by Haku. The Vulcan Nerve Pinch of Doom follows, and the superkick puts Hulk on the floor. Haku tries to follow with a chop of the apron, but Hulk pulls Heenan in the ring and then steals Haku's crown. What a poor sport. Heenan heads to the back and we take a break. Back with Hogan slugging away, but he runs into a clothesline. Haku stomps him down and suplexes him for two. You know the rest. (Hogan d. Haku, legdrop -- pin, 6:20, *)

- Ken Patera v. Dino Bravo. Without even seeing the match, I shall use my powers to predict that Patera misses a blind charge and gets pinned after the sideslam. Let's see. Patera slugs away to start and backdrops him, so Bravo bails. Back in, Bravo pounds him in the corner, but Bravo escapes the full nelson. It's no Masterlock. Blind charge misses, and the sideslam finishes. SPOOKY. Or just repetitive booking. (Bravo d. Patera, sideslam -- pin, 3:03, 1/2*)

- Big Bossman v. Jim Powers. Bossman's SNME debut as a big star, and Powers is a jobber. You do the math. (Bossman d. Powers, Bossman slam -- pin, 2:30, DUD)

The Pulse:

Not much here.

The SmarK Retro Rant for Saturday Night's Main Event #19 - January 1989

- #18 wasn't on the list of stuff, which means that I've done it somewhere before. It didn't sound familiar to me -- Ultimate Warrior v. Super Ninja? -- but at this point my fans know better than I do what I've covered and what I haven't anyway. Again, if you're enjoying these SNME rants, check out www.gamshowutopia.net, because it needs the traffic and stuff.

- I'd also like to note before we begin that today, Feb. 25, marks my first wedding anniversary, although I can only hope to achieve the kind of long-term wedded bliss of Britney and K-Fed.

- Taped from Tampa, FL.

- Your hosts are Vine McMahon and Jesse Ventura.

- Hair v. Hair match: Brutus Beefcake v. Outlaw Ron Bass. The backstory is the usual for wrestling -- Bass costs Beefcake his shot at the title, Brutus is pissed and wants revenge in C-show midcard matches around the country. I can't believe Beefcake's low-grade blading required a big red X on it, unless it was to cover up the fact that there was no blood. I've seen Lex Luger go deeper than that. Boss opts for the sneak attack, but loses his whip and runs away. He's helpless without his giant phallic symbol, you see. Beefcake quickly gets a high knee and Bass bails, so Beefcake won't let him back into the ring. Back in, Beefcake slugs him down and pounds away on the mat. Bass comes back with an inverted atomic drop and a gutbuster, and now it's Beefcake on the floor. Back in, Bass elbows him in the gut and adds a running boot. He keeps working over Beefcake's abs, and he's just lucky it's not Rick Rude or all this psychology would be for NOTHING. Piledriver gets nothing, as Beefcake is in the ropes. Stun gun gets two. Lariat gets two. Bass thinks it's over, but of course it's not, and in fact he walks into the sleeper and goes nightie-night. (Beefcake d. Bass, sleeper -- submission, 7:40, *1/2) Basic kick and punch TV match, with some interesting stuff with Bass working over the midsection for no real reason. Bass showed up for the Royal Rumble with his 'do and then vanished off the face of the earth.

- Hulk Hogan v. Akeem. Hogan is borrowing Liz AGAIN tonight. No wonder Savage got all jealous. Randy, however, is watching via a TV in the back with Mean Gene. Akeem misses a charge to start and Hulk slugs away, then he stops to go after Bossman and Slick. Back in, he tries to slam the African Dream, but gets pounded down. Hogan runs into an assortment of turnbuckles, but tries a wristlock and gets taken down. That wrestling stuff always comes back to bite you on the ass. He comes back with more punches, having learned his lesson about wrestling, and sends the Towers into each other. OMG, he's like a one man gang! Akeem kills the ref and the beatdown is on. Then begins the funniest portion of the match, as Savage is watching backstage with Gene and they have a conversation which I'm paraphrasing and embellishing below:

Mean Gene: My god, they're killing him! (Akeem and Bossman hit Hogan with a series of splashes and stomps the crap out of him.)

Savage: I'm gonna see how this plays out first.

Mean Gene: They're literally ripping his head off and shitting down his throat! (Indeed, Bossman has dropped his pants and is defecating on the headless corpse of Hogan, something you didn't often see on network TV at the time)

Savage: I have every confidence in him, Mean Gene. GO HULKSTER!

That's why I was cheering for Savage at Wrestlemania V. And in fact, Savage proves to be RIGHT, as

Hogan comes back from all that after the break and the match continues. Hulk takes Akeem down with the dreaded POPEYE PUNCH OF DOOM. Big boot, bodyslam, and the inevitable DQ. (Hogan d. Akeem, DQ, 7:00, 1/2*) This went nowhere but the point was to set up The Main Event #2, with the Megapowers EXPLODING, and that it did. Sadly, Savage's gay buccaneer look was just too far ahead of its time, as there wasn't yet a porno version of Pirates of the Caribbean for him to star in. However, if they did decide to make Butt Pirates of the Caribbean today, Randy could haul it out of the closet and be ready.

- Intercontinental title: Ultimate Warrior v. Honky Tonk Man. This feud pretty much peaked with their first match. Stupid "fact" du jour -- three different announcers tout the idea that Honky would be the first person to regain the IC title, which is ludicrous considering there had just recently been a Coliseum video released detailing how Pedro Morales, Don Muraco and Tito Santana had all done just that. Anyway, Warrior tosses Honky around like the proverbial sack of potatoes to start, but misses a charge and Honky uses the megaphone to beat him down. This shows the fundamental problem with the "feud" -- Honky was so out of Warrior's league that he couldn't even go on OFFENSE without something extreme like that. He stomps away in the corner and dodges an elbow, but Warrior no-sells and clotheslines him down. Splash hits knee and Honky gets two. Funny spot as Honky tries a clothesline, and Warrior won't even sell the minimal amount needed to MOVE, and Honky just bounces off him awkwardly. Warrior then finishes with a shoulder tackle. (Warrior d. Honky Tonk, shoulderblock -- pin, 4:49, 1/4*) Both guys were just phoning it in, and that pretty much ended Honky's run as any kind of singles threat.

- Terry Taylor v. Tito Santana. Speaking of people who weren't a singles threat, this was the big angle where Red Rooster turned face. Yay. Lockup in the corner to start, and they criss-cross into a Tito dropkick for two. Tito tries a splash and hits knee, allowing Taylor to take over. Jawbreaker and choking follow. Sunset flip is blocked and Tito comes back. Backdrop and spinning toehold, but Taylor pushes him off. Heenan pulls his guy out and slaps him around, and we take a break. Back with Terry getting a kneedrop for two. Tito cradles for two. Backslide gets two. Blind charge hits boot and Taylor gets a piledriver for two. Stun gun sets up a scorpion death lock, but Tito comes back and dumps him with a clothesline. Heenan, fed up with Taylor, throws him back in and Tito rolls him up for the pin. (Santana d. Taylor, rollup -- pin, 7:44, *1/2) Really long and dull, as Heenan's abuse of Taylor was the focus and ruined the match. Taylor officially turns on him afterwards, setting up the epic Rooster v. Brawler feud, and as it turned out he should have stayed with Bobby.

- Koko B. Ware v. Mr. Perfect. This was before the vignettes, before the longer tights, and definitely before the steroids and managers. Koko hiptosses him out of the ring to start, but Perfect comes back with chops. He grabs a headlock, but gets armdragged. Perfect gives him a cheapshot and pounds him in the corner, and a dropkick puts Koko on the floor. Koko comes back and misses a charge, and the hot new move promised, The Perfectplex, puts him away perfectly. (Perfect d. Koko, Perfectplex -- pin, 3:07, *) Just a squash.

The Pulse:

I gotta say, this one made me want to see The Main Event #2 now, and good thing because it's next on the list. Not really a memorable show otherwise.

The SmarK Retro Rant for Saturday Night's Main Event #20 - March 1989

- Taped from Hershey, PA.

- Your hosts are Vince McMahon & Jesse Ventura.

- Ravishing Rick Rude v. Brutus Beefcake. My god, the mullets! So many mullets! Long lockup to start and they slug it out, which Beefcake wins to set up a backdrop. Quick sleeper by Beefcake, but Rude breaks. Beefcake tries the corner punches, but gets atomic dropped and Rude knees him in the gut. Suplex gets two. We hit the chinlock, as Andre joins us for no discernible reason other than to give Jake Roberts an excuse to be there as well. Beefcake comes back with an atomic drop, but runs into a knee. Rude tosses him and Andre beats the crap out of him, which as predicted draws out the Snake, and it's a wash. (Beefcake NC Rude, 5:41, *) Really disappointing, as both guys were in the midst of big pushes and I was expecting a lot more out of this than a setup for the lame Roberts-Andre match.

- Hulk Hogan v. Bad News Brown. Once again, I would like to stress that Bad News was so far ahead of his time, with 90s attitude and UFC street cred, that it's a shame he wasn't born 20 years later. He could have been like Samoa Joe or something. Bad News attacks to start and pounds on Hulk, then chokes him down. He misses elbows, however, and Hulk slugs him out of the ring. Hulk slingshots him back in and elbows him down, setting up the elbowdrops and a big boot. Bad News no-sells a shot to the turnbuckle, however, and takes over. He runs into a boot and gets dumped and Hogan keeps coming as they brawl on the floor, but Brown finally sends him into the post to go on offense for good. They fight over a chair and Hogan wins that battle, so a frustrated Brown heads to the back as we take a break. He returns with a snow shovel of some sort, but Hogan gets rid of it and hammers away in the ring. Brown catches him with a clothesline and works him over. Hogan takes a breather outside, where he gets run into the post again. Back in, Brown gets the leg sweep for two. He stops and cuts a promo mid-match on Hogan, telling him outright that it's time for the Ghetto Blaster, and if that doesn't count as the most blatant telegraphing of a move ever, I don't know what does. Needless to say, Hogan dodges the enzuigiri and the rest is academic. (Hogan d. Brown, legdrop -- pin, 10:00, **1/2) Brown being a jerk and Hogan acting all fired up to prepare for Savage was a good combination, and the result was a good brawl and lots of fun. It should be noted that Elizabeth was with Hogan here, thus proving Savage's suspicions correct.

- Ted Dibiase v. The Blue Blazer. Dibiase clotheslines Blazer off the backflip into the ring and elbows him down. Elbowdrops follow, but the Blazer cradles for two. Backslide gets two. Dibiase clotheslines him, however, and gets the middle-rope elbow. Suplex and backdrop, but Blazer lands on his feet and dropkicks him out of the ring. He follows with a rather nasty tope, and Dibiase hits the post afterwards. Back in, Blazer gets a high cross for two. Backdrop a pair of dropkicks have Dibiase reeling, but a crossbody attempt is reversed to a powerslam for the pin. (Dibiase d. Blazer, powerslam -- pin, 3:55, **) A very energetic, but short, TV match.

- The Rockers v. The Brainbusters. This is pretty famous, as both teams were making their network TV debut and decided to blow the roof off the place. Donnybrook to start and Tully rolls up Marty, but Shawn breaks it up and Rockers clean house. Arn goes up and gets slammed off by Shawn, who follows with a Boston crab. Tully breaks it up and it's BONZO GONZO already, and the Busters bail. Shawn suplexes Tully back in and slugs away in the corner, then hiptosses him into a flying headscissors. Arn comes in and gets taken down, but boots Shawn in the gut. Bobby pulls down the top rope for good measure, getting himself thrown out of the match in the process. We take a break

and return with Marty slugging it out with Tully and sending him into the corner, but Arn makes the classic blind tag and clobbers Jannetty from behind. The Busters take over, but Marty gets a sunset flip for two. Arn tosses him to end that rally, but Marty keeps coming with a another one for two. Marty slugs it out with Tully and they do a great pinfall reversal sequence with the bridges into the backslide, but Marty ends up in the heel corner again. Arn gets the BADASS spinebuster for two, but misses the pump splash. Hot tag Shawn Michaels, who rams the Busters into each other. They come back with a double-team on Shawn for two, but everyone brawls outside for the countout. (Rockers DCOR Brainbusters, 8:36, *****) This was a monster tag match by TV standards, probably the best one ever on SNME and featuring tons of innovative stuff that hadn't been done in the WWF before, like the NWA-ish pinfall reversal sequence that was right out of a Flair match. They were shooting for the full monty here, and given another 7-10 minutes and a finish, likely would have gotten it.

- Red Rooster v. Brooklyn Brawler. And from that to this. (Rooster d. Brawler, small package -- pin, 1:03, DUD)

The Pulse:

Rockers v. Brainbusters is a no-brainer (nyuk nyuk), but Hogan-Bad News is also very much worth a look, making this one of the best SNMEs in the whole series.

The SmarK Retro Rant for Saturday Night's Main Event #21 - May 1989

- Taped from Des Moines, IA

- Your hosts are Vince McMahon & Jesse Ventura.

- Intercontinental title: Rick Rude v. Hacksaw Jim Duggan. So it's the fallout from Wrestlemania show, as Rude is now the IC champion is Duggan is the King, although the second one didn't come from WM. Sadly, Duggan proved to be a mere transitional monarch. Of course, the inherent irony of a "King" waving the American flag probably would have struck him dead soon after anyway, so it's probably for the best. Long lockup to start and Rude pounds him, but Duggan blocks a sunset flip. Rude hits the floor and Duggan suplexes him back in for two. Duggan adds a series of clotheslines and a kneedrop for two. Bad camera angle on the kneedrop, as you can see the six inches of space between the knee and Rude's chest. Duggan charges and hits knee in the corner, and Rude goes up with a fistdrop. Too much gyrating allows Duggan to come back with an atomic drop, however, complete with comedy sell from Rude. Piledriver gets two. Haku, meanwhile, tries to steal the crown back, and we take a break. Back with Rude on the attack again, as he dropkicks Duggan and gets a series of elbows, for two. We hit the chinlock and Duggan fights out, but runs into a knee. Rude goes up for another fistdrop. Funny moment as he slides through to the camera at ringside and makes kissy faces, and Vince gets all worked up with disgust. So mark your calendars, we've found something that actually offends him. However, the antics allow Duggan to come back again and hit the three-point stance clothesline, and Rude elegantly bumps out of the ring and doesn't rush getting back in. (Duggan d. Rude, COR, 7:14, **) Weird finish, but Rude was feeling it tonight and got something pretty fun out of Duggan.

- Jim Neidhart v. Randy Savage. According to the pre-match promos, if Savage wants a title shot at Hogan, he'll have to go through Neidhart! I know I'd be losing sleep over that one. These many SNMEs in a row have given me renewed appreciation of Savage's body of work in the 80s. Sherri immediately interferes during the lockup, but Neidhart blocks a sunset flip for two. Bearhug follows, but Savage escapes quickly and knees him into the corner. Choking follows, from both Savage and his manager. Savage goes up with a double axehandle for two, but can't slam him. Anvil fights back with a slingshot shoulderblock and gets another three of them for a two count. A standing dropkick (0.5 Watts) puts Savage on the floor, and Anvil follows him out and dropkicks him again. What a sadist. Back in, powerslam gets two, and Savage gets tied in the ropes. Neidhart, being a moron, charges and misses, and Savage puts him out of his misery with the flying axehandle and big elbow. (Savage d. Neidhart, flying elbow -- pin, 5:56, *1/2) Randy was, shall we say, more generous with the offense given than you'd expect.

- WWF title, cage match: Hulk Hogan v. Big Bossman. Before the match, we are introduced to Tony "Zeus" Lister at ringside, who we are supposed to buy as a legitimate wrestler just because he plays one in a Hulk Hogan movie. By that logic, David Arquette should be a former World champion. Uh, bad example. Anyway, to say that 1989 was a misguided year at the top of the promotion would be a gross understatement, so we'll leave it at that. So Hogan gets laid out by the cross-eyed freak before the match, giving Bossman the initial advantage. Bossman chokes him out to start and headbutts him down, but Hogan comes back with a clothesline. Big boot out of the corner and Hulk starts climbing, but Bossman slugs him down again. Big splash follows and he goes back to the door, but Hulk grabs his ankle and fights back. Bossman spinebuster and he climbs, getting over and out of the cage...but Hulk reaches through the cage and grabs him by the throat to stop him from dropping the two feet required to win the title. And then, in the spot that elevated this match to a weirdly legendary status,

Hogan pulls him up to the top of the cage and superplexes him back in. I think that the crowd was grasping for a "Holy Shit!" type chant, but just weren't brave enough to go for it. Both guys are, understandably, dead, and the ref comes in to check their arms. I have to stop and wonder if the world would be a better or worse place if paramedics checked on the condition of patients like that. Does it take medical training to know that if the arm drops three times, the guy is out? Anyway, Hogan recovers first and crawls for the door, but Bossman grabs him. Bossman clotheslines him and Slick sends a chain in for some choking by Bossman. You'd have to think that the handcuffs would have made for a better strategic move. Both guys ram each other into the cage, which I'm sure violates SOME law of physics, and Hogan gets the chain to make his comeback. Sportsmanship, n., def: Conduct and attitude considered as befitting participants in sports, especially fair play, courtesy, striving spirit, and grace in losing. Just saying. Bossman eats cage, then the legdrop, and Hogan actually proves to be the smarter one, as he steals the handcuffs from Slick, cuffs Bossman to the top rope, and walks out. (Hogan d. Bossman, escape from cage, 10:00, ***) Not a classic or anything, but quite good for a Hogan cage match.

- WWF tag titles: Demolition v. The Brainbusters. Smash starts with Tully and intimidates him out of the ring, then catches a bearhug on the way back in. The Busters try double-teaming, but Smash holds them off alone and Ax comes in. He pounds on Arn and they work him over in the corner. Cheapshot from Tully puts Smash into the heel corner, but he no-sells a suplex from Arn and slams him. It's BONZO GONZO and the Busters regroup. Tully pounds Ax to no effect, but catches him with a knee, which Ax no-sells. Tully takes more punishment in the champs' corner, as he bails and gets pressed back into the ring by Smash. Ax promptly dumps him again, and the Busters regroup as we take a break. Back with Ax hammering on Tully and going to a neck vice. Smash chokes him out, but turns his back on AA and that's never a good idea. To quote Champ Kind, WHAMMY, and Smash is your face in peril. Tully comes in with a kneedrop to the knee and AA follows with the spinebuster for two. Tully taunts Ax for a bit and they double-team Smash on the ropes, and Arn drops the knee for two. More frustration for Ax as the Busters work Smash over on the floor, and back in for a slugfest with Arn. Smash wins that, but Tully brilliantly fucks with Ax and yanks him off the apron before he can get the tag. Finally the Demos have had ENOUGH, and Ax charges in illegally and bowls over the ref, and that's a DQ. (Brainbusters d. Demolition, DQ, 9:14, ***) This was really good before the non-finish, but it did effectively set up a 2/3 falls rematch at the next SNME.

- Jimmy Snuka v. Boris Zhukov. Yeah, whatever. (Snuka d. Zhukov, superfly splash -- pin, 1:09, DUD)

The Pulse:

Holy cow, this was a really good show, with an unheard-of pair of *** matches and a pretty decent Rude-Duggan match.

The SmarK Retro Rant for Saturday Night's Main Event #22 - July 1989

- Taped from Worcester, MA

- Your hosts are Vince McMahon & Jesse Ventura

- WWF title: Hulk Hogan v. Honky Tonk Man. Not exactly a promising opener. Honky tries using the guitar to start, but Hulk evades that pretty easily and drags Jimmy into the ring. Honky then gets the crap kicked out of him and clotheslined, and Hulk hits an atomic drop and follows with an elbow in the corner. Jimmy gets involved again and the result is the dreaded DOUBLE NOGGIN KNOCKER OF DOOM. Finally, Jimmy manages to pull a Jeff Jarrett on Hogan from behind and Honky takes over. Honky works the back and tries a camel clutch, but just ask Iron Sheik how effective that move is against Hogan. Collision, but Honky's hair protects him from damage, and he recovers with Shake Rattle N Roll. Is this the end for Hogan? I'll give you one hint. (Hogan d. Honky Tonk, legdrop -- pin, 6:14, *) This was a rarity for a Hogan match, as he easily dispatched his challenger without the usual extended heat segment and barely broke a sweat in doing so.

- Jimmy Snuka v. Greg Valentine. Ronnie Garvin is the special referee. Hammer attacks and chokes away, but gets chopped down by Snuka. Snuka goes up and hits knee, and Hammer takes over. Elbows get two and he dumps Snuka, and Valentine keeps beating him on the apron. This builds high tension with Ronnie Garvin, who is all "Hey, stop that, you meanie" This leads to a shoving match, and amidst all the gravitas, Snuka finishes with a high cross. (Snuka d. Valentine, bodypress -- pin, 3:12, *) Garvin v. Valentine wasn't exactly setting the promotion on fire at that point.

- Brutus Beefcake v. Randy Savage. This was leading up to Summerslam, a PPV audacious enough to expect us to pay to see Zeus wrestle. This one seems to be begging for a non-finish. Savage attacks and gets nowhere, and Beefcake uses his coat to choke him out. That gets two, but he quickly runs into a boot and Savage pounds him with rights. Beefcake comes back with a bodypress for two, but goes after Sherri. He ducks a sleeper from Savage and gets the high knee for two, but Savage uses a well-timed cheapshot, then misses a charge. Beefcake hits another knee to dump him. Man, rough night for the Macho Man. They brawl outside and Sherri distracts Beefcake long enough for Savage to blindside him with the double-axehandle to the floor. Savage and Sherri trade off cheapshots on Brutus, and Sherri distracts the ref while Beefcake gets a fluke rollup for two. Backslide gets two. Savage is all "enough of that" and chokes him down again, as does Sherri. To the top for the axehandle, but Beefcake nails him coming down and makes the comeback. Savage blocks the sleeper, but hits Sherri by mistake. Beefer misses a charge, but so does Savage, and he ends up on the floor. With Savage in trouble, he sends Sherri to the back in a funny callback to the Megapowers, and we take a break. Back with Savage missing a kneedrop, but managing to drop Beefcake on the top rope for two. Beefcake gets a sunset flip for two, however, and tries to finish with the sleeper, but Zeus the Human Sucking Machine wanders in to wreck a perfectly good match. (Beefcake d. Savage, DQ, 9:45, ***1/4) Good, fast-paced, hard-hitting match between two guys on a roll at that point.

- WWF tag title, 2/3 falls: Demolition v. The Brainbusters. You may recall the Demos getting DQ'd at the last SNME. Or maybe not. Ax starts with Tully, who quickly bails, but gets tossed back in by Smash. The Demos pinball Tully in the corner, and then Ax fights off both Busters. They brawl outside and it's chaos in the ring, so the Busters regroup. Back in, it's Smash v. Arn, and Arn headbutts him in the gut, but Smash catches a stomp and AA is in a bad place. He gets axed and smashed in the corner, and Tully has about as much luck. Arn keeps slugging, a horrible idea if there ever was one, and finally Tully goes with cheating and has more success. Go with what you know. AA spinebuster

gets two. Ax breaks up a double-team, allowing Smash to stun-gun Tully for the pin at 4:57.

Second fall and Smash is choking Arn in the corner, and Ax chops him down. Smash pounds away and goes to a neckvice on Arn, and Ax dumps him on the top rope, and stays on the neck. Arn escapes and brings in Tully for some choking, and a catapult under the bottom rope. He whips Ax into Arn's knee and cheating abounds, as they cheapshot him like nuts. Arn goes to a rear chinlock and switches off with Tully, but Ax makes the hot tag to Smash. Slams for both and it's BONZO GONZO, but Demolition won't obey the ref, so he calls for the DQ at 9:46. And now Andre joins us.

Third fall and Ax elbows Tully down and Smash tosses him. Back in, Ax elbows him down again, but Tully rams Ax into Arn's head, never worried about sacrificing a partner for the greater bad. Arn and Ax then collide in the corner, in a signature AA spot, but Arn tags Tully while Ax tags Smash. Smash clotheslines Tully in the corner, but Tully reverses a suplex and it's chaos again. Tully hits Smash with a chair, and history is made. (Brainbusters d. Demolition, Anderson chair -- pin Smash, 13:26, ***1/4) This was historic for quite a few reasons, as it was the one and only title change on the NBC version of Saturday Night's Main Event and marked the first time that a team had won the NWA and WWF versions of the tag titles. It also marked Bobby Heenan's first tag team champions.

The Pulse:

Weak start, but the Beefcake-Savage and Brainbusters-Demolition matches were a strong finish to the show, making this one of the better SNMEs I've seen.

The SmarK Retro Rant for Saturday Night's Main Event #23 - October 1989

- Taped from Cincinnati, OH.

- Your hosts are Vince McMahon & Jesse Ventura

- "Macho King" Randy Savage v. Jimmy Snuka. So Sherri gets into the Hall of Fame but Randy Savage doesn't? That's fucked up, dude. Extra props to Lanny Poffo in the pre-match video showing the coronation of Macho King, as he rhymes "ravage" with "Savage". You think Kanye West can pull that off? Savage blindsides Snuka to start, but gets chopped down. Snuka sends him out with an atomic drop, and back in Sherri trips him up and Savage takes over. Kneedrop gets two. Savage tosses him and follows with the double axehandle, and Sherri gets her damage in as well. Back in, it's two for Macho. A knee to the back sends Snuka to the corner, but he hulks up. Clothesline out of the corner sets up the Tree of Woe, but Sherri gives Randy her purse, and a handful of tights later it's all over. (Savage d. Snuka, rollup -- pin, 5:35, *) Snuka was useless here, much as he was for his entire comeback run.

- WWF title: Hulk Hogan v. Ted Dibiase. Zeus is lurking at ringside, much like herpes lurks where you least expect it or want it. Hulk wins a slugfest to start, but Zeus trips him up and slugs away. Hulk fires back, but keeps going after Zeus, allowing Dibiase to get a clothesline. Jake Roberts comes out to threaten Zeus, which gets Dibiase all flustered and allows Hulk to roll him up for two. Dibiase misses his elbow. And now Virgil gets into the act, stealing the snake and thus removing Roberts. We take a break and return with Dibiase getting a clothesline for two. Suplex gets two. Middle rope elbow gets two. We hit the chinlock, but Hulk fights out and they clothesline each other. Like an idiot, Hulk runs right into Zeus' direction and gets clobbered. Dibiase goes up and a weird-looking flying kneedrop, but it's Hulk Up Time. Zeus comes in for what seems like the sure DQ, but Hulk cradles Dibiase instead. (Hogan d. Dibiase, small package -- pin, 7:40, **) Too much extracurricular junk.

- Rowdy Roddy Piper v. Haku. Piper was basically brought out of Hollywood retirement by Rick Rude, and this begins his quest to beat all the Heenan family members. Slugfest is won by Piper and he dumps Haku, following him out for more punishment. Piper goes after the Brain, but gets caught by Haku. Back elbow is sold in typical goofy Piper fashion, and a shoulderbreaker gets two. Legdrop and Haku goes up, but a diving headbutt misses and Piper comes back with a faceplant. Belly to belly finishes. (Piper d. Haku, suplex -- pin, 3:00, *) Very short.

- Tito Santana v. Rick Martel. This was basically a commercial for the Survivor Series, as Martel has Honky Tonk Man and the Twin Towers with him, while Santana sports the imposing team of Red Rooster, Brutus Beefcake and Dusty Rhodes. Martel attacks and gets dumped as a result, and they brawl on the floor. Back in, Martel hammers away, but Tito gets a sunset flip for two. He chokes Martel out and goes to an armbar, and a crossbody gets two. Martel leverages Tito into the corner and takes over. Tito gets hung in the Tree of Woe and stomped, but blocks a backdrop and fights back. Backdrop and flying forearm look to finish early, but it's a huge schmoz and we take a break. Back with Martel slugging away, but Tito hiptosses him and then gets dumped. Back in, Martel goes to work on the back and hits the chinlock. They fight for a backslide and Tito wins, for two. Martel comes back and chokes him down, setting up the Crab. Tito quickly makes the ropes and reverses for two. Martel takes him down with a backbreaker and goes up, but Tito shakes him down, then rams him into the turnbuckle a number of times that can only be summed up as excessive. Figure-four, but it's another schmoz, and we're running low on time so it's just a DQ instead of an ad break. (Santana NC Martel, 8:35, ***1/4) I was really digging the intensity and hatred before the easy-out finish.

- The Fabulous Rougeau Brothers v. The Sheepwackers. Oh no, now I've got that song in my head again. Brawl to start and the Rougeaus bail, and Jimmy Hart loses his pants. It's always fun and games until someone loses their pants. The match starts, such as it is, as the Rougeaus double-team Butch and Jacques elbows him down. Hot tag quickly follows, however, and the Wackers quickly finish. (Bushwhackers d. Rougeaus, Butch stomachbreaker -- pin Jacques, 3:18, 1/2*) Just a quickie comedy match.

The Pulse:

Not much here, although Santana v. Martel is surprisingly worth a look.

The SmarK Retro Rant for Saturday Night's Main Event #24 - November 1989

- Taped from Topeka, KS

- Your hosts are Vince McMahon and Jesse Ventura

- Intercontinental title: Ultimate Warrior v. Andre the Giant. Andre starts choking and that goes on for a while, and Warrior bails. Back in, Warrior uses Andre's own tights to choke him out. TASTE THE IRONY! But back out he goes again, as this car wreck picks up momentum, threatening to take out the whole freeway. Andre surfboards him, which looks not painful in the least, but Warrior clotheslines the giant out of the ring, and we take a break. Back with Andre fighting back from the floor, with what else, choking. Warrior bearhugs him in a silly spot, but Andre headbutts out. Warrior responds with an ugly charge to the corner that misses and Andre gets his own bearhug to really ramp up the excitement. Warrior makes the comeback, clotheslining Andre into the ropes, but he runs into a boot, and Bobby Heenan runs in for the merciful DQ finish. (Warrior d. Andre, DQ, 7:50, -**) Real ugly, probably the worst match ever on SNME, as it was booked to go too long (ie, over 30 seconds) and they were tripping over each other.

- WWF title: Hulk Hogan v. "The Genius" Lanny Poffo. Genius's pre-match promo is actually quite refreshingly laid-back compared to the yelling and screaming most guys do. I still think he was a really underappreciated guy in a lot of ways. Hogan powers him out of the ring, but he gracefully returns and Hogan applauds it. Hogan slams him, however, and Genius is forced to use his amazing intellect to evade the big boot. He stops to write out a formula on one of his scrolls, which apparently spells doom for Hulk. How can you not love this match? They fight over a lockup and Genius gets a cheapshot, thus annoying Hulk. So Genius prances and minces while Hulk waits him out, until he's ready to charge out with a lariat that nearly rips his head off. Tremendous. Corner elbow and atomic drop follow, and a backdrop suplex sets up the elbowedrops. Hogan hammers away while Mr. Perfect joins us at ringside and disrespects the belt by spitting gum on it. Hogan chases him, but runs into the post. Back in, it's a Genius moonsault for two. Hulk Up Time, and Poffo's reaction is classic, as he quickly eats the big boot after nearly shitting his pants in terror. So they trade backrakes as Genius desperately alters the game plan, and then Poffo takes a great bump as Hogan tosses him to the floor. He makes the mistake of chasing him out, however, and after tossing his victim back into the ring, Perfect clocks Hogan with the belt and the most famous upset in SNME history is complete. (The Genius d. Hulk Hogan, COR, 8:35, **) Not a great wrestling match or anything, but for comedy value and entertainment it was tremendous.

- Big Bossman v. Dusty Rhodes. Bossman attacks and gets repelled, but catches Dusty from behind. Slick chokes away, which angers a vocal fan at ringside. Dusty eats post and Bossman pounds him back in the ring and starts working on the arm. He knees Dusty down and stays on the arm, then elbows him down. He misses a charge, however, allowing Big Dust to slug him down. Bossman chokes him on the ropes, however, and then makes the mistake of stalling, which allows the cheap rollup finish. (Rhodes d. Bossman, rollup -- pin, 4:39, *) The annoying fan at ringside joins Dusty for some dancing in the ring, and would later be known as Sapphire.

- Red Rooster v. Mr. Perfect. By this point, Rooster was little more than a jobber, and would be back in WCW by the beginning of 1990. Perfect slugs away to start, but gets taken down. They work on the mat and Perfect goes to the ropes, then suplexes him. Necksnap, but Rooster sunset flips him for two. Perfect gives him some quality trash-talk in the corner and they slug it out, and Rooster bulldogs him. Backdrop gets two. Perfect has had enough of that, and you know what comes next. (Perfect d.

Rooster, Perfectplex -- pin, 4:14, *1/2)

- The Rockers v. The Brainbusters, 2/3 Falls. I totally forgot about this match. This was Tully's last televised match before a failed drug test forced him into premature retirement. The storyline is welded onto the match with a blowtorch, as they insert a pre-match promo where the Busters are arguing with Bobby Heenan to establish that they're done with the promotion. Those magic production gremlins strike again, as the pre-match promo sees Tully Blanchard wearing black tights, then heading out to the ring, at which point his tights magically turn red. Speaking of failed drug tests, Marty headlocks Tully to start and armbars him, as a frustrated Blanchard can't keep him down. Marty stays on the arm, but gets suckered into the heel corner, and narrowly escapes. Sunset flip out of nowhere gets the pin on Tully at 1:40.

Bobby Heenan flips out, and the Rockers get a double rollup for two. Bobby walks out on his team as Arn slugs it out with Shawn, who then gets a rana on Tully and the Rockers clean house. Rockers double-team Arn, who brings Tully in. Marty slugs away and Shawn gets a kneelift for two. Finally, clotheslines Shawn on the top rope to block a headscissors, and Tully gets the pin at 5:00.

Third fall and Shawn is hurt, so naturally Tully is all over it. Arn gets the spinebuster for two, and they do the knucklelock spot. Arn turns it into a catapult, however, and Tully comes in with a flying knee and tosses Shawn. He comes back with a high cross for two, but Arn cuts off the ring. Arn and Shawn collide, and it's hot tag Marty. The Busters double-team him and it's BONZO GONZO, as the Busters set up the spike piledriver. Shawn, however, comes back in with a high cross on Arn to end the WWF careers of Tully Blanchard and Arn Anderson. (Rockers d. Brainbusters, Shawn pin Arn, 9:02, **1/2) Not stellar or anything.

- And then another famous moment to finish, as an enraged Perfect smashes the WWF championship belt with a hammer to set up his winter program with Hogan. This would become even more famous when the belt returned some 9 years later, taped up and re-dubbed the Hardcore title.

The Pulse:

Oh come on, Genius v. Hogan and Perfect smashing up the title belt with a hammer? How can you lose?

Saturday Night's Main Event (Jan 23 / 90)

- Taped from the UTC arena in Chattanooga, Tennessee.
- Your hosts are Vince McMahon & Jesse Ventura.
- Opening match: "Macho King" Randy Savage v. Jim Duggan. This is the same match that I reviewed in one of my Coliseum rants a few weeks back, so I won't bore you with the details here, but suffice it to say it's the usual SNME opener, with lots of meaningless action and running around that doesn't really lead anywhere. Savage takes a few nice bumps but the wrestling is nonexistent. Duggan gets some near falls but Sherri keeps interfering to prevent the win. Duggan goes for the kill with the CLOTHESLINES OF DEATH but Sherri runs in to prevent the pin again. Repeat a couple of more times. The canned heat is painfully obvious. The LOADED PURSE OF DOOM gives Savage a two count, then Duggan makes the super-idiot comeback. More CLOTHESLINES OF DEATH and Duggan goes for the THREE POINT STANCE OF ALL-ENCOMPASSING DOOM, but Savage gets knocked out of the ring and they do the "manager hooks the leg on the suplex attempt" cheap-o ending for the Savage pin. Bad match. 1/2*
- Curt Hennig & The Genius (The Ambiguously Gay Duo) have some poetry for Hulk and the Warrior.
- Flashback: The Orange Goblin and the Face-Painted Moron have an epic confrontation at the 1990 Royal Rumble. In all fairness, I was marking out so hard that my head nearly exploded when it originally happened, but it's not so great to watch today.
- Goblin and Moron have some words for Hennig & Poffo. Warrior is his usual incoherent self, yelling something about chemical reactions at 150 words per minute. I guess the drugs were kicking in at that point.
- Curt Hennig & The Genius v. Hulk Hogan & The Ultimate Warrior. The Egomaniacs have separate entrances, of course. Hogan cleans house on both guys with a hiptoss (!) and some slams. Warrior manhandles them next. Watching this from a "smart" perspective, it is SO obvious that Hennig and Poffo are doing all the work and it increases my respect of them that much more. Hogan wallops on Perfect (with requisite overselling to the nth degree) until Hennig manages to nail Hogan with Poffo's scroll to gain the advantage. Hogan won't sell any kind of significant offense for Hennig, forcing him to rely on punching and kicking after bumping all over the ring for Hogan. Hennig gets the Perfectplex, but breaks it at two and allows Poffo the chance to pin Hogan. Poffo tries a MOONSAULT (!) but Hogan gets the knees up, and hot tags Warrior. Warrior with the press slam and Hogan tags himself in when Warrior comes off the ropes for the splash, and legdrops Poffo for the pin. Hennig and Poffo attack right after the win, and Hogan accidentally nails Warrior in the melee. Warrior and Hogan do the big staredown, which led to Wrestlemania VI. * for Perfect's bumps.
- Flashback: Jake Roberts steals the Million dollar belt.
- Jake Roberts and Greg Valentine do generic hype interviews.
- Jake Roberts v. Greg Valentine. Punch, punch, punch, punch, punch, punch, punch, elbow, punch, punch, punch, punch, punch, kneelift, punch, punch, punch, punch, punch, short arm clothesline, but Roberts can't hit the DDT. Valentine goes for the figure four (with Jimmy Hart conveniently standing on the apron) but Jake pushes Greg into Hart, and DDT's him, and Dibiase runs in for the DQ.

Nobody's trying here, but it did set up the Dibiase v. Roberts match at WM6 nicely. 1/4*

- Ravishing Rick Rude v. Dusty Rhodes. AAAH, THE SPLOTCH! MY EYES! Punching and restholds until Heenan starts yelling at Sapphire, leading to everyone getting sent back to the dressing room. We come back from the commercial with Rude applying move #193 (ARM-bar) as Sapphire has snuck back to ringside by buying a ticket. Rude jaws with her as Rhodes makes the comeback, and they end up fighting down the aisle for the double-countout. Yay. DUD This was utterly pointless because neither guy was involved with anything at the time.

- Dino Bravo v. Ronnie Garvin. Earthquake is at ringside, so you can guess how this one ends. They exchange some rights and Garvin rolls out of the ring and gets beat up by Quake. Back in and Bravo with a side salto for a two count. Garvin makes the comeback with his useless offense but he makes the mistake of going after Jimmy Hart. This guy beat Ric Flair cleanly? Garvin begins the GARVIN STOMP OF DEATH! but Earthquake distracts him. Garvin to the top rope for a bodypress, but Bravo rolls through for the pin. Two minutes if that. * Earthquake does the big squasheroo to Garvin (YES!) with two Earthquake splashes, leading to a Garvin stretcher job.

- Randy Savage hypes the upcoming match against Hogan in prime time, which Mike Tyson was supposed to referee. But everyone's plans got screwed up when Tyson lost to Buster Douglas, and he took over as the referee and did a horrible job.

- Hogan offers a rebuttal. I like his heel interviews better, sadly enough.

- Vince and Jesse wrap things up as we review the Hogan-Warrior confrontation from earlier in the night.

The Bottom Line #1: A pretty subpar effort aside from a hot angle with Hogan and Warrior.

Saturday Night's Main Event (April 28 / 90)

- Taped from Austin, Texas.
- Your hosts are Vince McMahon & Jesse Ventura.
- Okay, this is the fallout show after Wrestlemania VI, as Warrior is now the World champion and Hogan is reduced to a secondary role. Thus begins the end for the glory years of the WWF.
- Curt Hennig offers his opening thoughts, wearing yellow tights. When he emerges for the first match, they've magically become orange. Pre-taping or miracle, you decide.
- Opening match: Curt Hennig v. Hulk Hogan. The usual as Hogan dominates with the punches and the body slams, all of which are hideously oversold by Hennig. This is pretty much move-for-move the same as the tag match from the first SNME in this rant, and my thoughts will be confirmed if Hennig tags Hulk with the scroll to gain the advantage. Yup, Hogan chases Hennig outside the ring and gets clobbered with the steel scroll. We come back from commercial with Perfect doing the usual spots and stalling. Hennig with the Perfectplex but it only gets two. Comeback, three punches, big boot and legdrop and that's it. This was, as they say, good enough for government work, and it was a better match without Warrior weighing it down like in the tag match. ** Hogan goes over clean but Hennig would go on to bigger and better things over the next year.
- Rick Martel does a western themed ad for Arrogance.
- Earthquake v. Hillbilly Jim. What is with Vince and redneck wrestlers? Canned heat is in full effect as Hillbilly starts off quickly. Jimmy Hart distracts Jim and it's elbow and **FATTEST BUTT SPLASH IN THE HISTORY OF OUR SPORT** for the pin. Lasted a bit over a minute. DUD Earthquake does the world a great service and flattens Hillbilly Jim with about five elbowedrops and two butt splashes.
- Another Arrogance spot.
- The Rockers v. The Hart Foundation. YES! YES! YES! Awesome opening sequence that is ruined for me by my roommate telling a disgusting bar story. Rockers double-team Bret, but Anvil takes out Shawn with power. The Harts take over with their patented knee-to-the-back from Bret on the apron. Is it me, or is Bret hitting Shawn really stiffly? The Harts get several two counts on Shawn, and then Demolition wanders down to have a look at the action. Bret is yelling at the Demos and Shawn dropkicks him right into them as we go to commercial. We're back as Bret continues to lay an ass-whipping on Shawn. Hot tag to Marty, who cleans house for a bit and brings Shawn back in. Anvil nails him with a shoulderblock and Shawn does a triple somersault. Hennig must have taught him or something. Shawn goes over the top and gets beat up by Demolition, triggering a three-way brawl. Now see, if they knew what a three-way dance was in 1990 this would have been a killer match at Summerslam. Still, a great match ruined by a bonehead ending. ***3/4
- Earthquake gives an environmentally friendly interview.
- Bobby Heenan lists the good points of Texas. Oh, and the cow dung, can't forget that.
- Warrior says...something. I think.

- WWF Title match: The Ultimate Warrior v. Haku (gesundheit). I should point out that Warrior needs canned heat here whereas Hogan needed none. Further, the lights are *gone* past the first few rows, which means that everyone past the floor seats has left and they had to darken the arena to cover it up. That is an unspeakably bad sign for the Warrior's popularity (or lack thereof). Haku takes control with whatever but Warrior makes the comeback to canned cheers with the usual clotheslines, shoulderblock and splash. Totally underwhelming. 1/4*

- Another Arrogance spot, this time on a tennis court. The spiel could be used by Val Venis today! Picture this: "Hello, ladies! You know ladies, when the Big Valbowski plays at Wimbledon, heh heh, he's always the NUMBER ONE SEED. (Pause for screams of ladies) And the Big Valbowski is always one SHOT, right into the royal box!" Hmm, Jim Cornette said that the statute of limitations on stealing angles is 7 years, so Val could use that one if he wanted. Rick is retired anyway.

- Big Bossman v. Akeem. This is the last match so it should be quick and painless. The arena has brightened considerably, so either the people came back or this was taped earlier in the evening. Jesse takes shots at dirty politicians, foreshadowing his own political career. Akeem dominates quickly with punches and butt splashes in the corner, then hits the big splash for two. Bossman backdrops him over the top rope and then slingshots him in. Nice spot. Cross corner whip and Bossman splash, but Dibiase and Virgil run in for the DQ. Not terrible or anything. * The Million dollar beatdown ensues. This is the first and only time you'll see a black guy beating on a cop with a nightstick. Go fig.

- Warrior offers more thoughts, ostensibly taped after his match, although he's still wearing the belt, he's not sweating, and his makeup is in perfect condition. Plus his hair isn't messed up. I bet they taped the first interview, sprayed some water on him, and then taped the followup interview.

The Bottom Line: Not a bad show overall, with a great tag match and a better-than-usual Hogan match. Considering that these shows were usually the bottom of the wrestling quality barrel, that's not bad.

Netcop BONUS Retro Rant: WWF Main Event #1 (Feb. 1988)

“Three years is a very long time.” - Andre the Giant, on Piper’s Pit prior to Wrestlemania III.

- Live from Indianapolis, IN.
- Your hosts are Vince & Jesse.
- Hogan training video starts us off. He’s pumped, brother!
- Opening match, Intercontinental title: The Honky Tonk Man v. Randy Savage. There’s a big ugly backstage political story behind this that I’ll get into later. HTM hits on Liz and Savage chases to start. Savage mops up with him, but Jimmy Hart’s interference (and megaphone) quickly gives Honky the advantage. He keeps stopping to swivel his hips at Liz, however, between stomps. He drops three elbows on Savage, but stops to hit on Liz again, and Savage makes the comeback. Double axehandle gets two, and Hart gets involved again. Savage puts Honky in a sleeper, but stops to save Elizabeth again, and fights with Honky on the floor. Honky hits the post, and Savage beats the count at 8:04. Cheap ending. Typical SNME match, too. ½* Savage fights off a post-match beatdown afterwards.
- Review of WM3 and the Andre situation for the casual fans.
- WWF World title: Hulk Hogan v. Andre the Giant. This could be quite possibly the most important single moment in the modern era, just because of all the historical significance and precedence it set, and all the things that followed from it. This was the debut of the new WWF title belt that had been promised prior to Wrestlemania III, but never showed up for whatever reason. It’s of course the familiar design that was just retired last year when Steve Austin won the thing. Hogan does his posing before the match starts. Hogan cleans house on the seconds, then starts punching Andre. This goes on FOREVER, as Andre just keeps absorbing blows from Hogan and won’t go down. Hogan tries going to the top finally, but gets slammed off and suddenly starts selling a back injury like he was just in a career-ending car accident. Andre chokes a lot. He works a bodyslam in, then does a Hogan big boot and falls over in the process. Only quick camera work prevents him from looking like a total idiot. More choking. Still more. Choking, you say? Have some more. Hogan comes back and goes aerial, hitting a clothesline from the second rope and the STINKY WART-INFESTED NASTY GIANT-KILLING LEGDROP OF DEATH, but Virgil is distracting our referee. Hogan stops to argue the point, but Andre lumbers up and grabs him from behind, hitting a half-assed suplex/hiptoss thing and getting a one-count...which is extended into three because the ref keeps counting despite Hogan lifting his shoulder. The crowd is in SHOCK, as Hogan’s four-year title reign has come to an end under suspicious circumstances. HULK SCREWED HULK! Mean Gene pops into the ring for a word with Andre, who barely has the celebratory speech out of his mouth before he hands the title over to Ted Dibiase, becoming the shortest reigning champion in the WWF to date. The weirdness continues, as a SECOND Hebner comes out of the dressing room to argue with the first one. One of course was Dave Hebner, senior WWF referee, and the other was his twin brother Earl, current senior WWF referee. Earl eventually punks out Dave, which is good enough proof of Evil Intentions for Hogan, so he tosses Earl like a shotput into the arms of Dibiase (sending him about 15 feet into the aisleway in the process) and that’s that. ½*

- Backstage, he delivers that classic whining interview where he demands to know “how much money [did they spend] on the plastic surgery” while nearly breaking into tears. I was busy crying my own tears – tears of joy at Hogan’s ego-ridden title reign finally coming to an end. A Strike Force-Hart Foundation tag title match was also here, but it was cut off about 10 seconds in as the show ran out of time.

The Bottom Line: I recently found out an interesting story behind the whole Savage-HTM thing, because at the time I thought that Savage was a lock to kill Honky and get the title.

Turns out he was.

But, wrestling being the nasty, political world it is, Honky threatened to take the title and jump to the NWA very shortly before the show aired, thus messing everyone up. So in order to keep everyone happy, Honky was kept as the IC champion, and Savage was given a bigger reward: The win in the WWF title tournament at Wrestlemania IV, which had previously been promised to someone else...Ted Dibiase. This would have presumably built to a Savage-Dibiase match at the first Summerslam for the title, but things changed and Savage got a longer title reign than originally expected. It also worked out better in the end because the Megapowers thing had better symmetry with Savage winning at WM4 and losing at WM5 the next year.

Life is weird, no?

The SmarK Retro Rant for The Main Event #2 - February 1989

- Live and in prime time from Milwaukee, WI.

- Your hosts are Vince McMahon & Jesse Ventura.

- The Megapowers v. The Twin Towers. Here's a huge unintentionally prescient comment from the pre-match promo: Mean Gene, describing the various antics of Akeem and Bossman against Hogan and Savage, calls it a "terrorist attack" by the Twin Towers. Ouch. Well, at least Hulk didn't use a metaphor about the power of Hulkamania flying a plane into Bossman to bring him down. So anyway, the Towers had been alternating attacks on the MegaPowers in the weeks leading up to this, and the result was Randy Savage getting increasingly internalized and paranoid about Hogan's intentions towards his woman and his title. The reason why this worked is that it fit perfectly with everyone's character -- Savage was a well-known paranoid sociopath to begin with, and Hogan is an asshole. Needless to say, this whole angle was money in the bank and really freshened up the smiling babyface character Savage was shoe-horned into at that point. So we start with Hogan and Bossman, and Hogan cleans house right away. The heels regroup outside and Bossman tries it again, but gets nowhere again. He bails, and Savage adds a humiliating shot from behind to rub it in. Akeem's turn, and Hogan has it under control, so Savage comes in with an axehandle and slugs away in the corner. Hogan does the same sequence, but gets caught by the heels and clotheslined. Bossman adds a piledriver and Akeem pounds the back. Hogan dumps Bossman, however, and they brawl on the floor, but Bossman gets a spinebuster back in the ring for two. Akeem pounds away, but heel miscommunication allows Savage to come in. Savage gets a high cross on Akeem for two, but a cheapshot from Slick puts the heels back on offense. Akeem tosses Savage, and then does it again when Liz is in the way, and you can basically see the heel turn right before your eyes. Thus begins the gravitas of the situation, as Savage tries to win the match alone while Hogan tends to the fallen Elizabeth and abandons his partner. Again, this is why I was cheering for Randy at Wrestlemania V. The Towers commence beating the shit out of the Macho Man while Hogan carries her to the back like he was King Kong or something, but it's a hell of a visual, I'll give 'em that. Still, way to support your team, jackass. We follow Hulk all the way back to the first aid station (where James Andrews was likely standing by telling her to tape it up and work through it) and get some Daytime Emmy award-winning acting from Hulk and take a break. The commercials are cut out of this one, but I'm guessing whatever Burger King commercial followed had better acting. Back with Savage getting pounded to within an inch of his life, but never mind that, because Hogan is still ACTING. And Liz awakes from her dramatic coma, perhaps from the smell of cancerous skin caused by years of over-tanning on Hogan, and thus Hulk decides the time is right to generously return to the match, nearly 5:00 (plus commercials) after leaving Savage twisting in the wind with a pair of 400-pound guys. Jerk. So finally we get back to the ring, as the Towers get a double-team backbreaker on Savage, but he evades them and hits Bossman with an axehandle. Hogan gets up on the apron, but Savage is clearly snubbing him and trying to win the damn match by himself. Hogan keeps whining, being the gloryhound that he is, so Savage gives him a well-deserved bitchslap and walks out. This would seem to be a perfect way to have Hogan do a job, but if you think that, then you haven't been watching Hogan for very long. (Hogan & Savage d. Bossman & Akeem, Hogan legdrop -- pin Akeem, 19:39, **) Match quality is hard to judge because a lot of match was in the background of the Hogan drama class, but it was just there to make people want to buy Wrestlemania, and damned it if didn't do that.

- Backstage, Savage cuts the heel promo of his life, accusing Hogan of lusting after his woman and lusting after his title, going nuts with an all-time great paranoid rant against him unmatched by anything short of the rap album he made a few years back. Hogan protests, so Savage hits him in the

face with the belt and then tosses Liz around like a ragdoll in an awesome moment. God, Super Heel Randy Savage escaping Wrestlemania with a DQ loss and then rampaging over the WWF until the broken and injured Hogan returned to win at Summerslam could have financed the company for 15 years after. It's a total shame that they turned Savage into such a joke by pairing him with Sherri, because this was his defining moment.

- Ted Dibiase v. Hercules. With the Megapower Explosion eating up the first 45 minutes of the one hour show, this was pretty much an afterthought. Basically Hercules is pissed because Bobby Heenan sold him into slavery, something which I think we can all relate to. Herc attacks and dumps Dibiase, then goes after Virgil. He slingshots Dibiase back in and gorilla slams him, but Dibiase yanks him out of the ring. Dibiase takes over with a pair of fistdrops for two. Middle rope elbow gets two. Herc comes back with a suplex, but runs into a boot, and Dibiase gets two. Herc rams him into the turnbuckle a bunch of times and powerslams him, but misses a charge. Virgil wraps the chain around the turnbuckle, but Dibiase takes it instead. Hercules gets two off that. Into the chain again to set up the torture rack, but Virgil trips him up and Dibiase gets the lame rollup. (Dibiase d. Hercules, rollup -- pin, 7:07, *1/2) Weak finish to protect "third Megapower" Hercules (no, seriously), but it's fucking Hercules, who cares?

The Pulse:

Less of a wrestling show than an hour-long angle and commercial for Wrestlemania V, it certainly accomplished the goal it set out to achieve, and somehow made me hate Hogan all the more. Sadly, the blowoff match gave me no happiness.

The Main Event (Feb. 23 / 90)

- Hogan and Savage offer their pre-match rants before the opening.
- Live from Detroit, Michigan
- Your hosts are Vince McMahon and Jesse Ventura.
- Opening match, WWF title: Hulk Hogan v. Randy Savage. Savage was rumored to be going over here and drop the title to Warrior at WM6, but good sense prevailed. If you've seen one Hogan-Savage match minus the decent wrestling, suspense, heat, and ratings, then you've seen this one. Hogan destroys Savage with the usual range of punches and bodyslams but Sherri's interference allows Savage to take control. Outside referee Buster Douglas tosses Sherri as a result. We take a commercial and when we come back Savage gets a two count from a clothesline and tosses Hogan, hitting the axehandle on the floor. He tries the same thing again but Douglas gets in the way. Savage hits the slam and goes for the big elbow but of course Hogan no-sells. Gee, never seen that before. Big boot and Savage bails and they fight outside for a bit. Hebner gets bumped and Hogan hits the legdrop, and Buster Douglas comes in to count the fast three count, and to top it off Savage kicks out at two but he counts three anyway. Savage lips off Douglas and gets KO'd. This ending would be rehashed at Wrestlemania XIV. There's about five minutes of taunting and stalling before the inevitable one-punch shot, however. I'll call it about *1/2 I won't even get into the farce of using the biggest fluke champion in the history of boxing as a credible boxer.
- Warrior gives an, uh, interview? I'm seriously creeped out after hearing what sounds like a drug-induced speaking-in-tongues session.
- Intercontinental title match: The Face-Painted Moron v. The (Late) French Canadian Steroid Sucking Machine. Warrior charges into the ring and hits Bravo with an axehandle off the top to start. Earthquake pulls him out, and Warrior escapes, runs under the ring, and pulls Jimmy Hart in with him. When Hart emerges, his pants are missing. Um, yeah. Bravo gets the advantage as they proceed to do the same choreographed match that they'd done 5601 times before this. BEARHUG OF DOOM! by Bravo. Vince: "Warrior breathes a different air than any man I've ever known." Can't argue with that one. Warrior hulks up (it occurs to me that Val Venis making the big comeback would involve a completely different form of self-energizing...) and Warrior hits the THREE CLOTHESLINES OF DEATH! followed by the SHITTY SHOULDERBLOCK OF DOOM! and the SPLASH THAT DOESN'T QUITE MAKE CONTACT BUT PEOPLE STILL HAVE TO LIE DOWN FOR OF DOOM! for the easy pin. 1/4* Bravo and Quake beat up Warrior and Hogan makes the save, but of course Warrior doesn't appreciate the help. They do the big staredown as we cut to commercial.
- Vince McMahon takes us back to the Royal Rumble as Hogan & Warrior do the CRISS-CROSS OF DOOM! Then we go back to the SNME I just reviewed as they fend off Genius and Perfect but disagree afterwards.
- Hulk Hogan interview. The Warrior is apparently the strongest force ever to attack Hulkamania. I thought it was male-pattern baldness, but what do I know?
- Warrior gives a PCP-enhanced ranting interview about walls filled with fear and children riding on Warrior's back for protection. This guy is a fucking maniac.

- Buster Douglas gives his closing comments. They might as well have had a big neon sign across the screen saying "Buy Wrestlemania" for the whole show.

The Bottom Line: Two lousy matches and a half an hour of interviews? Feh.

The SmarK Retro Rant for the Main Event #4 - November 1990

- Taped from Fort Wayne, IN

- Your hosts are Vince McMahon & Roddy Piper

- So with SNME going down the crapper, ratings and quality-wise, by 1990, we get this strange experiment. Originally taped to be a 90 minute Saturday Night's Main Event show, complete with a controversial tag team title switch, the show was instead moved to prime time and chopped down to an hour. The result was not only horrible ratings, but the Rockers' tag title win over the Hart Foundation being erased from history until the recent retroactive change has seemingly given them the belts again. Oddly enough, both Michaels and Jannetty would go on to win the belts with different partners anyway.

- WWF title: Ultimate Warrior v. Ted Dibiase. Warrior was tanking badly as champion by November and a title change was imminent, while Dibiase was a non-factor by this point and was reduced to feuding with his own hired help by Wrestlemania VII, so that shows you have well this one was destined to do. Warrior powers Dibiase into the corner to start, but he slugs back, so Warrior dumps him with a clothesline. Back in, Warrior clotheslines him off the top and slugs away in the corner. Blind charge hits knee, however, and Dibiase takes over with the middle rope elbow. Piledriver gets two. Another is reversed and Warrior shoulderblocks him down, but gets dumped. We take a break and return with Dibiase dropping a fist for two. He grabs a side headlock, and clotheslines Warrior down. Warrior comes back with a backslide for two, but Dibiase suplexes him for two. Another is reversed to a sunset flip for two by Warrior, and Dibiase tosses him. Back in, Warrior reverses a suplex and starts no-selling, and they collide for the double KO. Warrior recovers and comes back with some rope-shaking, and the clotheslines and shoulderblocks follow, so Virgil runs in. (Warrior d. Dibiase, DQ, 9:50, ***) As much as I bust on Warrior's in-ring prowess, Dibiase handled him like a champ and got a really good match out of him here. And of course the Macho King runs in afterwards and lays out Warrior to set up the fateful title change at Rumble 91, and the eventual WM classic between Warrior and Savage.

- Nikolai Volkoff v. Sgt. Slaughter. No match, as Slaughter lays him out and whips him with the riding crop, and the camel clutch follows. Jim Duggan makes the save. (Volkoff d. Slaughter, DQ?, no rating)

- Mr. Perfect v. Big Bossman. Texas Tornado was busy borrowing the IC title at this point, so Perfect doesn't have it. Perfect stick and moves to start and leads Bossman in a chase, but walks into a clothesline. Bossman hammers him in the corner and whips him into the turnbuckles, then hairtosses him around the ring and into the post. Backbreaker and Bossman goes up (!), but misses a splash. Perfect necksnaps him to take over, and gets two. Small package gets two. Perfect slugs away and undoes a turnbuckle, but Bossman blocks and sends him into it. Ear-wringer and Bossman comes back, but Perfect whips him into the exposed steel. Perfect goes to finish, but gets cradled for two. They slug it out and it's the Perfectplex, but it only gets two. Criminal. Bossman dumps him and goes after Heenan, and gets counted out. (Perfect d. Bossman, COR, 8:29, *1/2) Could we actually have a FINISH to a match tonight? Just one?

- And now, Blow Away. Where to start with this one? This was a fake infomercial for a weight-loss product which revolved around a gag with Buddy Rose. Basically, Rose pours a magic powder all over himself, eats whatever he wants, and when he blows the powder off he loses weight. Except of course

he doesn't lose any weight and looks exactly the same. This bit was, to say the least, famously bad and completely bombed on every level, as no one got the joke or those who did get it didn't think it was funny. Mostly the latter. Now, on a deeper level, from what I understand the skit was a tryout of sorts for hot Stampede manager Dr. Jonathan Holliday, as Stampede itself was a feeder system for the WWF by that point. The skit was his baby, and he decisively did not win himself a job with it, although it would have appealed to Vince's sense of humor.

- Rick Martel v. Tito Santana. Martel attacks to start and tosses Tito, but runs into the post. Back in the ring, Tito gets a double axehandle and starts working the arm, then blocks a monkeyflip with the a stomp to the face. Back to the arm, and a small package gets two. He says on the arm, but Martel grabs a chinlock, so Tito reverses to a hammerlock and forces Martel to go to the ropes. Martel chokes him out and works him over in the corner, and gets a backbreaker. He goes up and gets brought down by Tito, who goes nuts in the corner and dropkicks him. Backbreaker and top rope clothesline get two. Figure-four is reversed by Martel for two. Boston Crab finishes. (Martel d. Santana, boston crab -- submission, 6:43, **1/2) Kind of disappointing compared to previous outings from them, but at least it's a clean finish.

The Pulse:

It's the show with BLOW AWAY. What more do you need to know? Throw it out the window and watch Impact or something instead.