

## Jason Doring looks at the NWA Hollywood TV Tapings

David Marquez's NWA Pro Wrestling has been a subject of interest and speculation since first appearing on the Southern California wrestling scene in force in 2006. Following a chaotic co-promotional relationship with New Japan and the famously inept Simon Inoki, Marquez turned his attention toward returning the National Wrestling Alliance to prominence. While a wrestling promoter with true ambition is always admirable and a positive to indy wrestling, NWA Pro often seemed to borrow its business strategy from South Park's Underpants Gnomes. First it was "Book Huge Arena and Santo + ??? = Reclaim the Glory!" While the lucha libre events in Las Vegas drew extremely large crowds (the true number of which is still debated), in the end they were just spot shows that did not build to anything long-term. Additionally, the talent featured on the subsequent DVDs did not have the smart mark favorites that drive DVD sales and the online notoriety that is now key to growing on the independent scene.

Next, it was "Get on TV + ??? = Reclaim the Glory!" NWA Pro struck a deal with ultra-niche "men's channel" MavTV, home of such hit programming as American Tailgater and The Stevie D Show. Beyond bragging rights, a sliver of credibility and the chance for wrestlers to gain experience working matches in a television format, this move made zero sense to me. MavTV's market penetration was (and still is) nonexistent (1.2 million homes), and to parrot the old "tree falling in the woods" expression, do you really "have TV" when no one can watch it?

I went to the Mav tapings on two occasions (I never turn down a free wrestling show within driving distance), but I was disappointed to see that the Mav shows were a barebones production in all regards. Utilizing a basic production setup you would see on any indy show (two cameras, a guardrail and a hundred or so seats) and running out of a bleak, dark warehouse behind a strip club in North Hollywood, there was no big-time aura to the shows that are essential to TV tapings. While the in-ring action featured some high points and several talented locals, the tapings largely consisted of whoever would work for free, ranging from the bottom of the SoCal barrel to barely talented nobodies from NorCal. Angle progression was minimal and there wasn't even any entrance music to wake up the fans or make the wrestlers distinctive. When the show did air, the on-screen graphics added in post-production made the show seem like a public access program from the early 1990s; there's a difference between looking "old school" and just plain "old."

When the MavTV era ran its course, NWA Pro picked up another television deal with DISH Network's community access station, Colours TV. Although Colours is far more widely available than MAV (all 15.5 million DISH subscribers receive the channel), NWA Pro was widely mocked online for acquiring TV on channel 9407, a number that in some cases isn't even possible to punch in on a remote control, and yet another channel with zero name value. While I did not go the first Colours tapings, YouTube footage basically showed me it was more of the same, and I tuned out.

Now, NWA Pro Wrestling is back for a third stab at TV, recently taping a 6-episode pilot run of NWA Championship Wrestling from Hollywood that will be shopped by new partner Big Vision Entertainment, as well as shooting new episodes for the NWA Pro Wrestling Showcase on Colours. Having attended two of the five taping blocks that took place in the past two months, that NWA Pro may have finally put all the pieces together to make an honest, concerted effort to acquire true national television and gain a foothold in the wrestling marketplace.

The domino effect that creates NWA Championship Wrestling from Hollywood's potential success begins with what makes the world go 'round: money. Gaining the overt support of indy wrestling's biggest and best current money mark, Big Vision Entertainment, legitimizes NWA Pro in a way they could not do on their own. Big Vision seemed all too willing to sink those sweet "Ghost Hunters" profits into a top-notch production setup for the initial tapings, scoring a prime location at CBS Columbia Square studios, a polished and impressive retro set, multiple high-end cameras (even a jib cam! I love those) and broadcast-friendly stock entrance music. A professional, cable ready production set-up was the biggest thing missing from previous NWA productions, and their massive improvement in this regard will go a long way toward attracting cable stations.

Of course, presentation is only half the battle. Diehard wrestling fans that will make up NWA Championship Wrestling from Hollywood's audience need to be wowed by match quality in order to keep coming back, and NWA Pro has dramatically consolidated and enhanced their roster from previous efforts. SoCal's top-quality talent, such as Adam Pearce, the Young Bucks, Joey Ryan and TJ Perkins are prominently featured, as well as up-and-comers such as LTP and Terex and NorCal's best in Oliver John's Border Patrol. More importantly, NWA Pro has culled some of the best independent wrestlers from all over the country, making the show more representative of the NWA as a whole. Top-quality talent such as Lance Cade, Trevor Murdoch, Brent Albright and the world's finest, Bryan Danielson, should deliver a satisfying free TV experience, Mix in talented NWA titleholders like "The Legacy" Mike DiBiase and the Skullcrushers (who were way over at the second taping I attended) and you have a balanced, entertaining show.

Every wrestling promotion though, needs a flag bearer, a main event ace to center the company around, and NWA Pro has found the best available option in Blue Demon Jr. While Demon has never been a high-caliber worker and most of his name value is derived from his father's accomplishments, he is still competent enough to hold up his end in main event matches, and is the biggest freelance lucha libre name available besides Santo and Mil Mascaras. Using him potentially cashes in on what remains of the hipster lucha fad. Most importantly though, Blue Demon brings a promotional tie-in/sponsorship with his namesake energy drink. While I don't have any knowledge of how much actual revenue this brings in (if any), just having Big Vision and Full Throttle behind them gives NWA Pro further legitimacy and makes them more attractive in the cable television market.

Finally, as smart marks the world over love to point out, you can't have a great TV wrestling product without great booking, something that has largely been in short supply throughout the decade. I was particularly impressed with the fact that through both tapings simple, organized and effective feuds were built up for all of the titleholders as well as several of the undercard talent. Without giving anything away, Blue Demon Jr. already has multiple potential challengers lined up, as do the Skullcrushers. None of the angles are groundbreaking or innovative, I've always had the opinion

there's really nothing left to innovate in pro wrestling and promoters need to stop trying to reinvent the wheel. All pro wrestling television needs to be is be easy to follow, give the wrestlers a credible reason to fight, and let the talent take care of business. The bookers for NWA Pro are using a plethora of angles straight out of Wrestling 101 and to me it's a refreshing change of pace.

Now that NWA Pro has all the basic pillars of a successful pro wrestling television program in place, my personal hope is that they don't forget the basic purpose of wrestling television, which is to get audiences to BUY something and further grow them company. Television is not the goal, it is the means to an end. If the show helps build to those giant Vegas shows as the culmination of TV angles, or provides more exposure to the rest of the NWA and increases attendance for the regional NWA promotions in California and beyond, than the program is a success. Otherwise, NWA Pro and Dave Marquez's equation is still incomplete.

NWA Pro Wrestling Showcase returns to Colours TV (DISH Network Channel 9407) on January 28th. For more information visit [www.nwawrestling.com](http://www.nwawrestling.com) or [www.colourstv.org](http://www.colourstv.org)