Path of Redemption 2012 AAW www.AAWrestling.com $15.00 Reviewed by Joe Babinsack A lot of weird ironies in reviewing this DVD. Jerry Lawler misses the show. Michael Elgin challenges for a World Championship. A World Tag Team Championship team defending belts, but they, of course, hate each other. And a bunch of indy names often seen in other promotions, all doing battle in Chicago.

Well, Merrionette Park, IL, for those who get irked at those sorts of things.

AAW labels itself “Professional Wrestling Redefined” and in this day and age, going back means the future, so they’ve got a product that got my attention, earned my attention and I’ll definitely say that they deserve your attention.

One think I immediately love about AAW is that they dare to have professional wrestling matches. AAW has four scheduled, untitled, ungimmicked, true-to-the-bone matches where opponents are looking to win the match without resorting to tricks, rules or extraordinary circumstances.

The DVD has two Championships defended, one six-way match, a “Falls Count Anywhere Match” and a War Games Cage Match. They do have gimmicks, just not every match.

What a novel concept?!?

What’s also strong is the sense of meaning of the wins and losses. Wrestlers on losing streaks are dropped down the card. Wrestlers with winning streaks are moving up the card. Heels and faces are also interestingly portrayed: they actually seem to be different and act different and get different crowd reactions, and not everyone is the same as everyone else.

Oh, what a warped sense of sensibilities that brings about!

What’s also strong is the announce team of Phil Colvin and Derek St. Holmes. These guys are witty, over-the-top in some ways, but exceptionally wise in the ways of the industry and references (name dropping Brunko Lubich!) and vastly observant. All of which is amazingly refreshing these days.

One of the obvious issues with the venue is a pillar (wood?) smack in the middle of one side of the ring, and that thing just screams dangerous. So while guys are teasing, tempting fate and otherwise avoiding this monstrosity, we’ve got an announce crew that (gasp!) mocks the thing and doesn’t pretend that it doesn’t exist.

While the “pillar” references gets funny fast, well, they are even funnier when you realize that you’ve got a credible announce crew that isn’t blinded by someone talking in their ears, or overly mindful of perceptions, or ridiculously avoiding the white elephant in the medium.

Can I overuse the “what a novel concept” reference?

Probably.

Sticking to my new format of hitting the highs (Pros) and lows (Cons) and avoiding the often long-winded attempts to scrutinize everything, away we go:

**Pro: Silas Young**

There was a time when Young was a guy getting lost in the low-to-mid card of ROH, EVOLVE and other promotions, but in AAW, he's been the Champ for some time, and every time I've watched him work here, he stands out as an awesome talent.

Young doesn't fall into the indie headliner (or indie midcarder) worker, hitting the high spots and working a match like it's a smorgasbord for the fans to enjoy. Instead, he works as a Champion, forcing the opponent to do their best, works to a story, and works with a level of subtlety (or, as Phil Colvin says a few times, "misdirection") that raises his game above … well above most Champions these days.

As AAW Heavyweight Champion, Silas Young has it all. Maybe he doesn't need the mustache, which makes him look more Marion Fontaine than 1970's alternate image Bruno Sammartino, but image isn't everything.

**Con: AAW Championship match finish**

Ok, so I'll backtrack a bit, but the match between Young and Michael Elgin was well built … until the finish. Referees taking bumps only leads to clichés. Now, on one hand, having Mason Beck try to redeem himself with Young and interfere, only to have that not play into the finish – that was fine, but then it dragged out. Elgin getting the phantom pin was fine, but wow, that's a finish as old as the Dusty references in the War Games match.

We can argue about the Journey theme music, but that is a song that will haunt you (Don't Stop Believin')

**Pro: Mat Fitchett**

I'll first say that despite his high-flying, his hanging with three of the indie scene's brightest (BJ Whitmer, Jimmy Jacobs, Arik Cannon) and more than a few spots, I saw Fitchett as a guy who looked a little too young, a little too skinny in the ring.

As in, your typical indie worker.

But the storyline here, building up from a match with Whitmer last month, then getting put over – after putting over Arik Cannon – was very well done.

We watch an industry almost insanely inept at getting new talent, AAW build up a kid as someone to watch, by booking him smartly, by having a heel (of sorts) make some comments, and by keeping him in the spotlight for the right reasons, and letting it play out.

**Pro: Overall product**

Let's be honest, this is an indie promotion, and the venue had this weird stage right at the apron of one side, and the aforementioned pillar on the other side. It had some audience participation issues (too many guys cajoling the crowd for noise), and it sometimes had some slow-motion spots.

But overall, AAW is putting on a product well worth watching. It features talent like MsChif, Young, Colt Cabana and Jacobs/Cannon. It has special feature guys like Greg Iron, and it has several strong factions. It mixes in comedy and serious, traditional and cutting edge, and while the commentary and spots and the language can get very adult, there's very little insulting of the audience.

And that's a big positive.

One very important point about
***Path of Redemption***
is that they put on main event with guys that would never get a main event slot in most other promotions. But they worked hard, put together a great match, and in doing so they filled out a card and made it meaningful from top to bottom.

(insert sarcastic comment about how unique that is, here)

**Pro: Building up of challengers**

Ryan Boz isn't the most impressive looking guy, but after a few matches, his wins and power are impressive and well built up. Whether or not Mason Beck (a tall guy with a good build) stands up to Silas Young, or simply accepts the second fiddle position, he's there to be an obstacle for guys trying to get to the top.

The tag team Champs – this other odd couple of a team, are talented enough to work with anyone, and the way they are playing up their mutual hatred is also entertaining (not over the top).

Question for Debate:

Greg Iron is a definitely interesting talent. He's got heart, he's got a gimmick and he's got a level of charisma that would make anyone take notice. Iron in the promos bonus was very good. Iron in the ring is very good.

The concern with Greg Iron that I have, and I cheer him on regardless, is how he plays out his talent. In tag matches, he makes sense. Here, with Colt Cabana, and taking on heels that make issues very personal, it makes sense.

But the image of Iron in the ring can be jarring. He looks young, he looks vulnerable, and with

his cerebral palsy, there's his attraction and his detraction all at the same time.

I would love to see Gregory Iron get a chance on the big stage.

But will it happen?

Can it happen?

Everything is against him, but perhaps that can help him in the end. He is the ultimate underdog, and everyone loves the underdog.

AAW is definitely a promotion to look for, whether in the Chicago area, or on DVD. And I've not mentioned the MsChif match against Mena Libra (and that vicious desecrator off a bar!) or the situations with the Awesome Threesome (losing to Josh Raymond/Christian Able), or a six way featuring Louis Lyndon (a very eye-opening display by him) or the Clash, or the spectacular Scarlett.

I've got a few more AAW DVD's to look at, and will get to them soon.

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. I've got Beyond Wrestling, ROH Boiling Point, SHIMMER and a peculiar book to review.