

The Rise & Fall of ECW

Although it officially still exists today, thanks to its resurrection by WWE, the original ECW died when owner Paul Heyman was left with no choice but to file for bankruptcy in April 2001. When it all began, Heyman said he saw the company as the professional wrestling equivalent to the grunge movement, and wanted to focus on taking wrestling in a new direction.

ECW became best known for its tendency to push the envelope with wrestling storylines, contrasting contemporary professional wrestling, which contained many cartoonish gimmicks and was marketed more towards children. ECW, aiming at 18 to 35 year old males, broke a few taboos such as showing wrestlers bleeding frequently, and women wrestlers getting beaten up by male wrestlers.

The group also showcased many different styles of professional wrestling, popularising the ultra-violent hardcore style. The group also invented the Three Way Dance, a match where three wrestlers competed in the same ring at the same time, rather than the standard two. ECW also brought in styles that were popular in other parts of the world, but were rarely seen in North American wrestling. Chris Benoit, Dean Malenko and Eddie Guerrero who had all gained massive success for their scientific technical wrestling in Japan were brought in, as were high-flying, super-quick lucha libre wrestlers Rey Mysterio Jr, Juventud Guerrera and Konnan, from Mexico.

One of the promotion's marquee feuds, and one of the greatest wrestling feuds of the '90s, was the long-standing feud between ECW's everyman and top babyface Tommy Dreamer and the gothic, sinister Raven, which involved many matches between the two over a period of two and a half years, before Dreamer was finally able to topple his foe and win the ECW Championship. Another great feud was between Raven and the blue-collar, chain-smoking, alcohol-drinking character called the Sandman, which included a storyline where Raven kidnapped and brainwashed Sandman's wife and nine-year-old son, as well as the now infamous crucifixion angle, where Raven and his lackeys tied Sandman to a giant wooden cross and placed a barbed wire crown on his head. It was one of the most controversial angles in wrestling history.

Prior to WWE bringing back ECW on a full-time basis, it held a one-off ECW tribute show entitled ECW: One Night Stand, in which WWE wrestlers who had previously competed in ECW reverted back to their ECW gimmicks as a one-off. The show was a huge success, and the DVD of the show went on to become WWE's fastest selling release ever.

The success was noted by a former ECW wrestler, Shane Douglas, who was now working for WWE rival TNA. Douglas subsequently set up Hardcore Homecoming, a reunion of all former ECW employees not under WWE contract. The company promotes ECW tribute shows in and around New York, the former stomping ground of ECW. Any ECW fans wishing to catch an upcoming hardcore Homecoming event can stay in a [hotel in Amherst](#) for accommodation, so if you're a fan of the nastiest, filthiest, most violent wrestling promotion in the USA, this is one you don't want to miss.

About the Author

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