

PUBLICITY CASE STUDY • A SHUDDER ORIGINAL

DARK MATCH

How a wrestling-horror release became a mainstream conversation

Lee Meltzer

CONSULTING, LLC

Campaign: October 2024 – February 2025
Premiered on Shudder January 31, 2025



THE BRIEF

One genre film, three audiences to win

A greedy indie wrestling promoter takes a too-good-to-be-true offer for his grapplers to perform at a private show, only to find the audience wants far more than a performance. The job: reach horror fans, wrestling fans and the mainstream at once.

DIRECTOR

Lowell Dean

STARRING

Chris Jericho,
Ayisha Issa,
Steven Ogg

RELEASE

Shudder, Jan
31, 2025



THE RESULT

≈260M *media impressions*

UVM-based reach, January 2025 reporting period (standard PR reporting)

109

individual press hits

27

verified reviews, 8 from Rotten
Tomatoes–certified critics

604K

viewers for the trailer on AEW
Dynamite (TBS)

THE STRATEGY

A 360° rollout across three verticals

HORROR

FANGORIA, Bloody Disgusting,
Dread Central, Rue Morgue

WRESTLING

AEW Dynamite, Sports
Illustrated, Fightful, 411Mania,
WrestleZone

MAINSTREAM

USA TODAY, The Guardian, New
York Post, Mashable, TV Insider

Exclusive trailer &
clip drops

Broadcast integration

National dailies & wires

Talent interviews
& podcasts

HEADLINE WIN · BROADCAST

The trailer went
primetime on TBS

604K

viewers saw the trailer play and on-air mention
during **AEW Dynamite** on January 29, 2025, two
days before the Shudder premiere.

EXCLUSIVE ASSETS

Every asset drop was an exclusive

WORLD-PREMIERE TRAILER

30M

ScreenRant debuted the trailer to 30M unique monthly visitors, backed by a social push across Instagram and X.

EXCLUSIVE CLIPS

3 → 10

Dread Central, Bloody Disgusting and Sports Illustrated's **The Takedown** premiered clips, picked up by seven more horror and wrestling sites.

In print across the national dailies

Dark Match review – satanism meets wrestling in backwoods grindhouse gorefest

Phil Hoad

Presumably there are easier ways to invoke Satan than organising a multi-bout wrestling tournament-cum-occult ceremony, but practicalities are low on the priority list of Lowell Dean's fifth feature. *Dark Match*'s chief preoccupation is cramming in as much grindhouse gristle as possible as a bevy of luchadores perform for a mob of rabid cultists, with much haemoglobin decorating the arena floor. Energetically executed in order to hide an essentially knuckle-trailing concept (true to the wrestling tradition, to be fair), it somehow ends up less fun than it should be.

As a heel for the 80s Saw wrestling league, Miss Behave (Ayisha Issa) is disgruntled at never getting a title shot. So when her cokehead manager Rusty (Jonathan Cherry) receives a \$50,000 offer for his posse to take part in a private tournament at a backwoods com-



▲ Ludicrous lucha libre... *Dark Match*

fyce".

Dean pulls out all the retro stops, bathing his extravaganza in lurid giallo hues, cloaking Miss Behave's premonitions in gauzy VHS-vision, and weaving his camera fairly around the ring. Given the cultist milieu it's rather reminiscent of Panos Cosmatos's 2018 banger *Mandy*, but quite some way short of the same degree of unhinged perversity. Dean's brand of satanism seems for show in comparison, with the elements having only superficial bearing on these supposedly ritualistic bouts.

With Miss Behave and Joe Lean bunkered up apocalyptically in the changing rooms as their colleagues dwindle, the film is also a bit of a John Carpenter throwback, to the likes of *The Thing* and *Assault on Precinct 13*. But considering the innate ludicrousness of the premise, these seem like the wrong Carpenters: a bit of *Big Trouble in Little China* smarm

tion to a programme prominently themed "air/water/earth/fire" bouts, as well as the sinister leader's (Chris Jericho) toast "to sacri-

Continued on page 41

The Guardian (US) · Jan 28

Horror films

Continued from Page 1F

'Companion' (Friday)

Sophie Thatcher plays an artificial intelligence girlfriend who goes against her programming and turns a getaway with her human beau (Jack Quaid) and his pals into a gory mess. **Where to watch:** In theaters

'Dark Match' (Friday)

A bunch of indie wrestlers travel to a rural small town for a night of matches, then realize they've been lured there by a cult to be in-ring sacrifices to their dark lord. **Where to watch:** Shudder

'Heart Eyes' (Feb. 7)

Olivia Holt and Mason Gooding are co-workers mistaken to be a couple by the infamous Heart Eyes Killer, a Seattle psycho who turns every Valentine's Day into a bloodbath. **Where to watch:** In theaters

'The Monkey' (Feb. 21)

The key to the water



Ayisha Issa is a wrestler who grapples with a cult in "Dark Match." PROVIDED BY SHUDDER



chiller stars Tyrq Withers as a young athlete willing to go to extremes to be a G.O.A.T. and decides to train at the isolated compound of an aging quarterback (Marlon Wayans). **Where to watch:** In theaters

'The Bride' (Sept. 26)

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USA TODAY Network · Jan 31

'The Rule of Jenny Pen' (March 7)

'Saw XI' (Sept. 26)

ALSO RAN IN

New York Post · The Bergen Record ·
The Columbus Dispatch · amNewYork ·
USA TODAY

TALENT & PODCASTS

The cast carried the story

Chris Jericho, Ayisha Issa, Steven Ogg and Lowell Dean in TV Insider, Mashable, ComingSoon, Flickering Myth, Fightful, amNewYork and more.

FEATURE EPISODE · TALK IS JERICHO

“The Best Satanic Cult Wrestling Action Movie Ever”

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Exclusive Interview – Chris Jericho on Shudder’s Dark Match and 80s horror movies

JANUARY 27, 2025 BY EJ MORENO

Wrestling legend Chris Jericho talks new horror film Dark Match...



If you’ve watched professional wrestling in the last 30 years, you’re bound to have seen Chris Jericho perform. Known for his reinventing styles and excellent promo skills, the wrestling icon took time away from the ring to enter the horror world.

Chris Jericho sees morbid and hilarious similarities between his new horror movie **Dark Match** and early wrestling career

By Dean Moses

Posted on January 27, 2025



Wrestling legend and Ring of Honor World Champion Chris Jericho sat down with amNewYork Metro to discuss his new horror movie **Dark Match** and the connections the gory flick has to his early career.

Insider/Dark Match



Chris Jericho has held many titles in his distinguished pro wrestling career; now, he’s branching out into horror movies.

The wrestling legend and current Ring of Honor world champion recently sat down with amNewYork Metro to discuss his new horror movie “Dark Match” and the connections the gory flick has to his early career.

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Premiering on Shudder on Jan. 31, “Dark Match” tells the story of a greedy, independent wrestling promoter who accepts a too-good-to-be-true offer to have grapplers perform at a private show, only to discover the audience wants far more than just a performance.

Playing the charismatic cult leader Prophet, Jericho told amNewYork Metro that even though the film is a fantastical take on the independent wrestling scene, there are still aspects that both hysterically and morbidly reflect real life.

Lee Meltzer Consulting · 08

REACH BY CHANNEL

Mainstream outlets drove the most reach



Broadcast: 604K viewers (AEW Dynamite, TBS)

Podcasts / Radio:
~250K streams

Online figures are estimated unique monthly visitors; social is impressions.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

27 reviews, a majority positive

27

verified reviews

56%

positive

8

Rotten Tomatoes–certified critics

POSITIVE NOTICES FROM

FANGORIA

Punch Drunk Critics

FandomWire

San Jose Mercury News

THE TAKEAWAY

A niche genre release, turned into a mainstream conversation.

EXCLUSIVE ASSETS

Every drop gave an outlet a reason to lead with the film.

BROADCAST INTEGRATION

Primetime TBS exposure, straight to the wrestling base.

MULTI-VERTICAL PRESS

Horror, wrestling and national media at the same time.

Lee Meltzer

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