

RINGSIDE



Ringside, Vol. 1: Kayfabe

Joe Keatinge , Nick Barber (Illustrations)

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RINGSIDE is a series set within the world of professional wrestling, written by JOE KEATINGE (SHUTTER, GLORY, TECH JACKET) and drawn by acclaimed illustrator NICK BARBER, combining the ensemble drama approach of THE WALKING DEAD with interconnected rotating perspectives akin to "The Wire." RINGSIDE explores the relationship between art and industry from the view of the wrestlers themselves, the creatives they work with, the suits in charge and the fans cheering them all on. But that's just the beginning.

The real violence is outside the ring. Collecting issues 1 through 5.

Praise for RINGSIDE:

"Keating and Barber's RINGSIDE is a realistic peek behind the scenes and into the lives of several characters connected to a glory-seeking world, but their lives are anything but glorious and that's the compelling hook this issue sells so well." - Comicbookresources.com

"RINGSIDE is a realistic drama set in the world just outside the wrestling ring. Keatinge and Barber present a modern-noir comic book that mixes gritty characters, realistic situations and goes to the dark corners of life that people try to avoid. This comic delivers a compelling first issue and the series promises to be a deep and emotional ride. This is definitely worth picking up." -- Comiclist

Ringside, Vol. 1: Kayfabe Details

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Author : Joe Keatinge , Nick Barber (Illustrations)

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From Reader Review Ringside, Vol. 1: Kayfabe for online ebook

Brandon says

Retired wrestler Dan “The Minotaur” Knossos receives a call from an ex-boyfriend in trouble. Flying back to the US from Japan, Dan soon learns that Teddy is in deeper than expected and Knossos may have to sacrifice everything just to pull him out.

Ringside combines two of my favorite things: professional wrestling and crime fiction/noir. How could I not love this? Truth be told, while I feel like this series has a lot of potential going forward, I felt like the first volume could have been a lot better. I enjoyed the bits with the newcomer riding the road with the old-timer as the grizzled veteran dishes out wisdom to the rookie. Writer Joe Keatinge gets a lot right and nails how past-their-prime-performers deal with the fading spotlight but it came across a little like fluff when compared to the seriousness of the main story.

I’m hoping the series can find its legs by the time the second volume is released now that I have good sense of who these characters are. The art is a bit lacking - it looks like a sloppier version of David Aja’s work on Hawkeye - although some of the splash pages are pretty cool (watch for Dan’s first exposure to pro-wrestling in a flashback).

Kudos to Keatinge for putting out a comic book about professional wrestling - an industry that is dominated by macho men (pardon the pun) - and showcasing gay characters at its core. I believe this series has a lot to offer and although I was a little underwhelmed by “Kayfabe”, I’m interested to see what’s coming next.

Paul Allard says

Wrestling and bloody violence – not brilliant

This comic collection deals with the world of wrestling and the fate of washed-up wrestlers at the end of their working life. It also looks at the underside of the profession. With numerous flashbacks which are unexplained and sporadic, this is an unsatisfying and confusing mess. If flashbacks are going to be used, at least label them as such. I’ll read Volume 2 and hope that it’s better organised and better-illustrated as well.

Quentin Wallace says

I've never read a graphic novel quite like this one. It deals with the world of professional wrestling, but the REAL world of pro wrestling. There's no superheros here, just guys working together to put on great shows.

Having studied some of the way pro wrestling really works, I saw a lot of things that were familiar to me. The meeting of the writers where the owner (basically Vince McMahon) dresses down the writers is something I've heard about numerous times. One of the writers says something long the lines of "I've been here six months and I'm one of the old guard". The turnover of writers in the pro wrestling business (specifically WWE) is also something I've read about over and over. Supposedly Vince McMahon changes his mind so much it's almost impossible to keep a running script going. That was just one scene, there were

many more about the backstage politics that truly drive the industry.

So you get a glimpse behind the curtain at the pro wrestling business, but that's really just the backdrop. We also have a crime drama going on, and some real human drama as well.

The art is good, reminds me of the work of Eduardo Risso and fits the story well.

If you're a pro wrestling fan with any "insider" interest, you really need to read this one. If you're not a wrestling fan but still like crime drama in comics, this may be worth picking up. Very original material.

Jesse A says

A good 'Southern Bastards' feel to it.

Kenny says

This is not just about wrestling. Like all great literature, it covers the human condition in all its glory and shame.

Wayne McCoy says

'Ringside, Volume 1' by Joe Keatinge and Nick Barber takes place inside the world of professional wrestling and gives it a bit of a noir twist.

In this volume there are three different stories that interweave and share the world of wrestling. In one plotline, an older wrestler takes a younger one under him and shows him how things work. A second, and somewhat minor in this volume, story involves management of the wrestlers and a new writer who has come on board. In one, an aging wrestler who went by the name of Dan Knossos,aka, The Minotaur, has been living in Japan. When one of his friends gets in trouble, he returns stateside to see if he can help. He doesn't have the skill set for the kind of rough work involved so he enlists a friend that works as a bounty hunter for a bail bonds company. He ends up in the kind of real world trouble that his career couldn't have prepared him for.

It's a good look at the world of wrestling entertainment and the kind of people who become wrestlers and what happens to them when their career is over. It's also not a bad crime comic. I liked the writing. i'm still not sure if I'm crazy about the art. At times, I really liked it, but then it lost some definition in some panels and seemed a bit too formless. It's a good read and I look forward to reading more.

I received a review copy of this graphic novel from Diamond Book Distributors, Image Comics, and NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. Thank you for allowing me to review this graphic novel.

Sam Quixote says

Dan “The Minotaur” Knossos is a retired wrestler looking for his estranged ex-boyfriend Teddy, a search that takes him down into the depths of the criminal underworld...

Joe Keatinge is an inconsistent writer who can sometimes produce a good comic but *Ringside*, Volume 1: *Kayfabe* is one of the bad ones. A wrestling comic about over-the-hill wrestlers sounded interesting, and the concept still might work with a better creative team, but *Ringside* doesn’t.

The stoic old tough guy who comes to town to knock seven bells out of the local criminal wildlife has been done better more recently in *Southern Bastards*, so it was an interesting choice to show our hero as being all bark and no bite. I thought it was a clever commentary on wrestlers as actors portraying tough guys but, outside of their characters, they’re just ordinary guys - until Keatinge needed Dan to be The Punisher/Batman and beat the snot out of the bad guys towards the end. Ho hum, there goes any shot at original storytelling in this comic, falling back on predictable tropes.

The theme of retired wrestlers having a tough time making a living gets repetitive real quick. The dull subplot features an older wrestler training a younger wrestler, showing us that the older dudes are in rough shape after years of matches, hardly make any money at cons, and struggle to make a living. Got it, didn’t need to have it repeated over and over all the way through. Also, if you’re a wrestling fan, and that’s the demo this comic is mainly targeting, you’ll already know this so it’s a redundant observation.

Nick Barber’s art is so rudimentary, it’s extremely underwhelming and unattractive. Also, the characters are so indistinctly drawn that the ending’s meaning is lost on the reader - who are those guys we’re looking at? Are they Dan and the other dudes? Terrible.

It’s a nice idea for a comic but Keatinge/Barber botch it with *Ringside*, making the series the Bushwhackers of the Image Comics lineup. Check out *The Resurrection of Jake the Snake* documentary for a vastly more compelling look at retired wrestlers.

Aldo Haegemans says

It helps I’m a wrestling fan for me to appreciate this book more. There are insider terms that are funny for those Who understand the business. May not be for every one. I do think the story is deep enough for casual readers Who are Looking for a New comic.

Alex Sarll says

I've long said that if I ever got into a sport it would likely be wrestling, because it's so close to comics. Joe Keatinge has seen that too, but taken it a step further, seeing the parallels behind the scenes in both businesses - the shoddy treatment of veterans who built it all up, the suits hooked on safe retreads of old stories, the kids burning to be into an industry that'll likely break them even if they do succeed. And yet he still loves them both. So with debut artist Nick Barber, who has just the right unobtrusive, versatile style for this, he's created *Ringside*. Our ostensible lead used to be one of the greats, but now he's fucked up, burned out, and getting in deep shit once he comes back to town to find his ex, who has got himself in even deeper

shit. But it's clear that the project is consciously modelled on modern cable TV, with the 'camera' often checking in on other characters and plots entirely to paint us a multifaceted picture of this world, and the supporting characters gradually building up until even by the end of this first volume it feels more like an ensemble piece. And it earns its place in that company. Already very good, and could easily become great.

(Netgalley ARC)

Nicolo Yu says

Ringside is a comicbook that gives us the story of two wrestlers, and this is a review of the first trade of the opening arc appropriately titled in the pro wrestling business term, "Kayfabe".

The two wrestlers in this story are Daniel Knossos, a former professional wrestler and his former contemporary, Davis. Make no mistake, Dan is the main character here, Davis is an ancillary character at best, but the pro wrestling industry story is told through his own arc within the main story.

Still, this book has paces slow as the reader is forced to reassess his initial impression of Dan. Is he a faded performer? an ex-marine? a gay man's lover? mob muscle? It's hard to maintain any traction reading it.

Davis's story runs in parallel but is more about the pro wrestling business and is what probably saves this first arc. Davis is at the twilight of career with physical skills fading and air time fading. Before the end, he takes in the greenhorn Reynolds under his wing, but their time may be cut short as Davis is relegated to developmental and behind the scenes.

This reader remembers reading the first issue and feeling the excitement of a comicbook that explores the darker side of the business of professional wrestling. This trade squanders that goodwill. Although everything is not lost, there may still be a chance this book could recapture some of that back by focusing on what made it exciting in the first place.

Jock O says

Interesting take on the business as its viewpoint focuses more on the drama in the wrestler's lives outside the ring rather than in the ring. As the story progresses, I believe we'll get more of a taste of the in ring / business side of the drama as the young buck upstart makes his move up in the organization (CMW). Lastly, I'm impressed with its use of homosexuality within the culture yet without carrying a harassing tone regarding it. It's refreshing to read a story about revealing wrestler's personal lives as they do what is necessary to survive in the real world while performing in an imaginary one.

Danielle says

Pro wrestling can't love you back.

Combining the worst, most destructive parts of Hollywood and pro-sports, it's a 25 hour a day job. You'll travel 50 weeks a year, frequently while injured, or you don't get paid. It's physically, mentally, and

emotionally exhausting and you'll be lucky to burn out by 40.

But you know this all, already. You saw Mickey Rourke in *The Wrestler*.

The first volume of *Ringside*, Image's ongoing wrestling themed title, shares more than a passing similarity to the 2008 Oscar nominee about washed up wrestler, Randy "The Ram". Here, Danny "The Minotaur" Knossos, was a big name in the old days. Now he's just old. He leaves his job training in Japan to return stateside and make amends with people he left behind, chief among those being his ex, Teddy, who seems to have gotten himself into a heap o'trouble.

Teddy's never been one to keep his nose clean, as a flashback shows him introduced to Dan and us, taking bribes at a party he's supposed to be working security. While Dan's been away, Teddy's been taken by a gang boss for unpaid debts. Dan *could* walk away, join another old buddy at his bail bond business, but instead we're thrown headlong into the underworld.

It's a gritty, ugly book, full of black eyes, blood-drenched wrenches, and muddy color palettes. The contrast between *Ringside* and the other ongoing wrestling title, Boom! Studio's *WWE*, is beyond stark. Their candy colored covers are only the beginning of the E's carefully sanitized PR machine, completely at odds with this title, but probably a lot more fun to read.

Interspersed between flashbacks of Teddy and breaking into the biz, there's also a side story between Davis and Reynolds. Davis is one of Dan's contemporaries, still working the house show and con scenes. He serves to give us our world building by explaining to newbie Reynolds, the audience insert, the perils of the lower card. For every The Rock, there's a hundred Kamalas, doing convention signings until the day they die to pay for their insulin. He shows us how the boys drive through the night, order plain chicken at a series of cheap diners, roll coins to pay for gas, and eventually hear the faithful words, "we wish you well in your future endeavors." And why do they do it, the characters and the real wrestlers they're modeled after? For love of the product that will destroy them, of course. After all,

"No one goes out on top."

Amber says

The writing in this is so fresh, original, and real. And I don't even like wrestling.

Bryson McCheeseburger says

I am the biggest wrestling fan out there and I was so excited to get this graphic novel and see someone finally put wrestling together with comics the right way. Well, I was wrong. If you are looking for a wrestling story, go somewhere else. It's very slow, very drawn out, very very dialogue based... and very boring. I could barely make it through the book. I love IMAGE Comics and all the alternate titles they have, but this one should have been left on the shelf.

Skye Kilaen says

The gay noir pro wrestling comic I never knew I needed, but fell in love with anyway. Retired wrestler Dan Knossos, who was known as The Minotaur, flies back from Japan to the U.S. when he gets a call that his ex-boyfriend is in trouble. Teddy, an addict, is in hock to some very bad dudes for lots of cash. Dan's long-ago guilt for abandoning Teddy to try for success in pro wrestling won't let him walk away from a situation in which there are no good solutions. His personal story trying to save Teddy is interwoven with various other characters in the pro wrestling industry, a grueling field made up of intense travel, Hollywood-level institutional apathy towards anyone who isn't a star, and naive young people with big dreams. It's equal parts crime comic and entertainment industry critique, and every minute I was pretty sure everyone in it was doomed, because noir.

The series is now complete in four volumes, with a conclusion that seemed very right to me.
