

WWE Royal Rumble was underwhelming

By Jay’Mi Vazquez
Managing Editor

The 2026 WWE Royal Rumble, held on Jan. 31 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, left me with conflicted feelings that only grew stronger with time.

On paper, the event accomplished its primary goal by setting the course for WrestleMania 42.

Roman Reigns won the Men’s Royal Rumble, Liv Morgan won the Women’s Royal Rumble and both earned championship opportunities on WWE’s biggest stage.

That alone should make this a successful show.

Yet as a longtime fan, I walked away feeling unsatisfied, like the night played things too safe when it could have taken meaningful risks.

Liv Morgan’s victory was the clear emotional high point of the show for me.

I genuinely felt happy watching her win because it felt earned through years of steady work and connection with the audience. Her popularity does not feel manufactured, and her rise to a WrestleMania title match felt natural rather than forced.

For once, Chief content officer Paul Levesque’s WWE production trusted the crowd’s investment, and I think that decision paid off in a big way.

Her win gave the event

its heart and reminded me why the Royal Rumble can still feel special.

AJ Styles putting his career on the line against Gunther was another moment that stuck with me.

The match carried real emotional weight, and I could feel the gravity of what might be the end of Styles’ WWE career.

That said, I was disappointed that Gunther was positioned as the figure behind that moment.

I personally find his in-ring work repetitive and uninspired, and presenting him as a so-called “career killer” felt hollow. For a moment that was significant, I wanted a more compelling presence on the other side.

The Royal Rumble match itself had surprises, but not enough to truly elevate the experience.

Seeing Royce Keys, formerly known as Powerhouse Hobbs debut and the Bella Twins return gave the crowd some energy, yet I never felt that sense of shock or excitement that defines a truly great Rumble.

I kept waiting for something that would completely change the tone of the match, and it never quite arrived.

There were rumors that Chris Jericho was going to return, and that would have turned this event into a completely different experience.

My biggest frustration came with Roman Reigns winning the Men’s Royal Rumble. I respect Reigns and understand his value to the company, but I was bored by the choice.

I wanted to see WWE take a chance on someone new, someone who could use that victory to define their future.

Instead, the booking felt overly cautious and corporate, as if maintaining the status quo mattered more than sparking excitement.

My personal pick to win the rumble was Bron Breakker.

After a production mishap, it was revealed he was going to be entering number one; arguably the hardest spot to enter a rumble and succeed.

Breakker entered the rumble number two and was quickly eliminated by Oba Femi after being attacked by a random masked man.

In the end, Royal Rumble 2026 did its job, but it did not inspire me.

I enjoyed moments of genuine emotion and strong performances, yet the overall show felt predictable.

For an event meant to symbolize new beginnings, it leaned too heavily on familiarity. I will remember this Royal Rumble, but mostly as a reminder that WWE still struggles to fully commit to the future its fans are eager to see.



Roman Reigns celebrating his Royal Rumble victory, pointing at the WrestleMania 42 sign.



Brie Bella returning to WWE, entering the Women’s Royal Rumble as entrant 29.

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Advisers:	Cindy Simoneau Frank Harris III	Solé Scott Jay’Mi Vazquez	Editor-in-Chief Managing Editor
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J. Cole’s ‘The Fall-Off’ proves he could never



American rapper and record producer J. Cole.

By Jay’Mi Vazquez
Managing Editor

The moment I first listened to J. Cole’s “The Fall-Off,” I knew I was experiencing something monumental in contemporary hip-hop.

After nearly a decade of anticipation and teasers from Cole himself, the album finally arrived on Friday, Feb. 6, as a double album that is the culmination of Cole’s career and possibly his last studio project.

This moment felt huge to me because I have watched Cole evolve as an artist for years, and “The Fall-Off” feels like the kind of ambitious statement only he could make. Listening to this project made me reflect on how rare it is for an artist to take as much time and intention with a body of work as Cole did.

Knowing recording began around 2016 and spanned a decade gives the album a weight I do not get from most other releases.

It feels like a musical autobiography, a journey through his mindset at different stages of life, and that narrative depth is something I really admire.

The two separate halves of the album, representing the perspectives of both a younger Cole and the older, more contemplative Cole, create

an emotional arc that pulled me in more than I expected.

The album starts with a heavy, boosted track, titled “Two Six.” This track truly sets the tone for the project and had me immediately hooked for the remaining 22 tracks.

The first half of “The Fall-Off” feels hungry, aggressive and restless, capturing a version of Cole still fighting for position and legacy.

Tracks like “SAFETY” and “Run A Train” carry an intensity that recalls his earlier work, but with a sharper perspective and tighter execution. “Poor Thang” and “Legacy” lean into introspection without losing momentum, which balanced self-reflection with confidence.

“Bunce Road Blues” stands out as one of the most emotionally grounded moments on the first disc, offering vivid storytelling rooted in memory and environment.

Songs like “WHO TF IZ U” and “Drum n Bass” show Cole flexing technically, while “The Let Out” and “Bombs in the Ville/ Hit the Gas” feel cinematic in their urgency.

By the time “Lonely at the Top” closes the first half, Cole has fully established the emotional and sonic stakes of the project.

The second half opens with “39 Intro,” signaling

a tonal shift that feels immediate and intentional. This version of Cole sounds older, calmer and more reflective.

Tracks like “Old Dog” and “Life Sentence” wrestle with accountability, maturity and the consequences of long-term success. “Only You” and “Man Up Above” slow the pace, allowing space for vulnerability and spiritual questioning.

“I Love Her Again” and “What If” feel especially personal, as Cole examines relationships and alternate paths with a sense of acceptance rather than regret.

The later stretch of the album, including “Quik Stop” and “and the whole world is the Ville,” ties his personal story back to the community and culture that shaped him.

The final track, “Ocean Way,” feels like a perfect ending to the project. It carries the weight of everything that came before it, sounding almost like a quiet farewell rather than a dramatic finale.

The production is restrained, the delivery is reflective, and the emotion feels genuine. It plays less like a conclusion to an album and more like an emotional goodbye from Cole to the version of himself that spent years chasing this moment.

While I ultimately preferred the first half of the album for its energy and urgency, both halves kept me completely engaged. The contrast between the two discs made the listening experience richer, and once I started the album, I had to hear it all the way through to fully understand its message.

“The Fall-Off” proves Cole will never fall off. He is still rising and one of the greatest musical talents of the generation.