

Reflecting on John Cena’s retirement tour

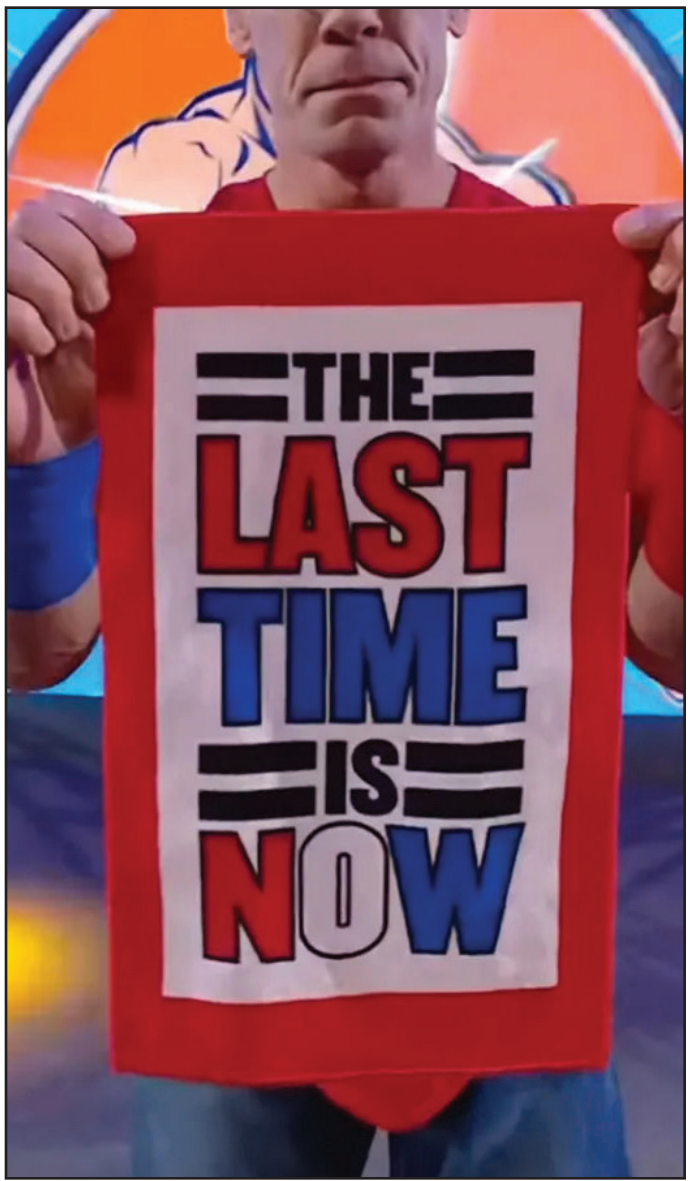
By Jay’Mi Vazquez
Managing Editor

Now that a few months have passed since John Cena officially wrapped up his retirement tour in World Wrestling Entertainment, it feels easier to evaluate it without being swept up in the weekly emotion of it all. The run was ambitious. At times it was genuinely special. At other points, it stumbled under the weight of its own expectations. But in totality, it still accomplished something meaningful. In terms of what worked, Cena wrestled. Although it sounds simple, it matters. The tour was not a nostalgia parade built on entrance music and catchphrases. Cena stepped into the ring consistently and faced a range of opponents, from established headlining talent to newer names trying to cement their spots. His matches during the tour were never going to be five-star technical classics, but they were structured with purpose. He leaned into storytelling, pacing and crowd psychology, which are the

tools that made him the face of the company for over a decade. His final WrestleMania appearance felt appropriately grand. The atmosphere was electric, and the emotional weight of that entrance alone was enough to justify the tour. Months later, it still feels like one of those rare wrestling moments where everyone in the building understood they were witnessing the end of something historic. The tour also did a solid job highlighting the generational shift happening in WWE. His programs with talent like Cody Rhodes were not just about wins and losses; they were symbolic. Cena positioned himself as the measuring stick. Even in defeat, he elevated talent in a way that puts more eyes on the younger generation. That willingness to lose fairly without cheating, outside interference or excuses and to do so frequently added credibility to the idea that this was not about protecting his own reputation. But the tour was not without its flaws. The much-anticipated

heel turn, a wrestling term for when a heroic character suddenly becomes a villain, is the most obvious example. On paper, the decision to shift his on-screen persona from fan favorite to antagonist was a bold creative swing. For years, fans begged to see Cena embrace the boos and lean into the resentment that followed him through the “Super Cena” era. When it finally happened, the initial shock was effective. The crowds reacted loudly, and the buzz about this event was real. The problem with the entire heel turn was its follow-through. The character shift never fully worked. His promos hinted at bitterness but rarely cut deep enough to feel dangerous. In the ring, his style did not drastically change. There was never a clear reinvention; it felt more like a tonal adjustment with this gimmick. Instead of becoming something radically different, he felt like a slightly darker version of the same figure. The heel turn was not the transformative moment many

fans imagined. There were also pacing issues throughout the tour. Some weeks felt repetitive with similar promo beats and sentimental callbacks. While nostalgia is expected in a retirement run, there were moments where it bordered on formulaic. A tighter, more condensed schedule might have made the emotional highs hit even harder. Still, months removed, what stands out most is not the uneven heel experiment or the occasional creative lull. It is a sense of closure. Wrestling rarely allows definitive endings. Legends tend to drift back for one more match, one more pop. Cena’s tour, despite its imperfections, was clearly crafted with some form of intention. It acknowledged his complicated legacy, the mixed reactions, the dominance and the criticism. The good outweighed the bad because the effort felt genuine. John Cena’s retirement tour became more than just a farewell. It became a reflection of an entire era finally taking its bow.



John Cena with his “The Last Time Is Now” banner that he had during every entrance on the tour.

Thrifting has become gentrified for profit



Savers increasing the prices on a discounted TJ Maxx item.

By Jay’Mi Vazquez
Managing Editor

Thrift stores were once predictable places with low prices and practical finds, but that reliability has faded. As thrifting has shifted into a trend-driven resale market, prices have climbed, quality items disappear quickly, and everyday basics are less accessible to the shoppers who once depended on them most. This shift did not happen accidentally. Online resale platforms like Depop and Poshmark transformed secondhand clothing into profitable inventory. A donated jacket is no longer viewed as a simple item of clothing but as a potential return on investment. I have watched shoppers scan tags, search brand names and calculate resale value directly in the aisle. When enough people treat thrift stores as sourcing hubs for profit, the supply of high-quality, low-priced items disappears quickly. Thrift chains have responded in predictable corporate fashion. Many now research brands and price items closer to their online resale value. From a business standpoint, that logic is understandable.

If resellers can flip an item for triple the price, stores want to capture that value first. However, when thrift stores begin pricing items like curated boutiques, their original mission starts to erode. These stores were built to redistribute donated goods affordably to the community, not to compete with online resale markets. I believe it is important to separate accessibility from trendiness. Buying secondhand has clear environmental benefits, and I support that shift away from fast fashion. However, intention and impact both matter. Purchasing large quantities of desirable items to resell at a markup directly affects availability for people who rely on thrift stores for essentials. When winter coats, work shoes or everyday basics are priced higher because they carry recognizable logos, affordability becomes secondary to market demand. Social media has also intensified this transformation. Platforms like TikTok and Instagram amplify thrift hauls, styling videos and resale tips to millions of viewers. The dominant narrative focuses on aesthetic value and profit

margins rather than accessibility. I scroll past videos celebrating underpriced designer finds and cannot ignore that those same items might have been necessary purchases for someone shopping within a strict budget. The economic effect is straightforward. Increased demand drives up prices. Desirable items sell faster. Stores adjust pricing strategies to align with what the market will bear. As a result, shoppers with limited income face fewer options and higher costs. That pattern mirrors gentrification in other contexts, where spaces designed to serve specific communities are reshaped by outside demand and higher spending power. I have personally noticed the difference. At my local Goodwill, basic T-shirts that used to cost \$3.99 are now routinely priced at \$7.99 or more, and items that once blended into the racks are now pulled aside for resale pricing. The experience feels competitive rather than practical. That shift reflects a broader change in who thrift stores are prioritizing, whether intentionally or not. Thrifting becoming popular is not inherently harmful. However, popularity without guardrails alters access. If stores continue pricing based on resale markets and shoppers continue treating donations as business inventory, the people who depend on thrift stores most will continue to feel the strain. Thrift stores do not need to reject growth or visibility, but they should protect affordability as a core principle. If secondhand culture is going to remain ethical, it must remain accessible. Otherwise, thrifting stops being a resource and becomes just another marketplace driven by trends and profit.

CT artist Blackedy is making waves in rap



Connecticut artist, Blackedy.

By Jay’Mi Vazquez
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In Connecticut’s underground music scene, Blackedy is proving that consistency and visibility matter just as much as talent. At 19, he has already built a catalog that many local artists spend years trying to assemble. His work is not built around a single viral moment. It is built on steady releases, clear ambition and a willingness to let listeners hear his growth in real time. Blackedy has released multiple projects which includes “black core,” “black dynasty” and “Eighteen.” Each one reflects a different stage of his development. Early records carry a raw, emotional tone while later tracks show stronger confidence and sharper delivery. The progression feels natural rather than forced. He is not trying to reinvent himself every few months. He is refining who he already is. His singles reveal the same dedication to personal storytelling. Songs such as “no matter the case,” “used 2 me,” “Love U my way” and “i was in love” lean into vulnerability. Instead of hiding behind exaggerated bravado, he chooses to speak openly about relationships, doubt and ambition. That honesty gives

his music weight. It feels grounded in lived experience rather than image. At the same time, tracks like “elevated,” “psycho” and “throwing me off” show a more aggressive and energized side. The contrast between introspection and intensity demonstrates range without sacrificing identity. One of the most important milestones in his recent run was his appearance on “On the Radar Radio.” The platform has become known for spotlighting emerging artists and testing whether they can command attention outside of a studio setting. Blackedy’s performance there mattered because it placed him in a setting where his confidence and command were immediately visible. He showed that he could carry his sound into a performance environment and hold focus without relying on heavy production. Beyond performance opportunities, his independence stands out. He has continued releasing music across streaming platforms without waiting for a major industry co-sign. That approach requires discipline. It also builds a direct relationship with listeners. Listeners are following a catalog that expands month after month, which in turn builds familiarity and

true loyalty. There is also something significant about how young he is. Many artists spend their teenage years experimenting in private. Blackedy has documented his artistic evolution publicly. Listeners can hear the shifts in tone, writing and confidence from project to project. That transparency makes the journey compelling. It turns growth into part of the narrative rather than something hidden behind a rebrand. There is still room for refinement. More focused thematic direction within projects and elevated production choices could push his music further. Greater collaboration outside his immediate circle could also introduce new dynamics to his sound. However, those are adjustments that come with time and exposure. Drive cannot be taught as easily, and he consistently shows that it is one of his strongest traits. With all the work he has put into his music, he has positioned himself as more than a local name. He is building a foundation brick by brick. In a state that often struggles to gain national attention in hip hop, that kind of persistence stands out. If he continues at this pace while sharpening his craft, his reach will extend well beyond Connecticut.