The second contestant kicked out of the mall after the Syf competition show’s zombie challenge also happened to be part of the drama bomb dropped into the show. He rises from the grave to talk exclusively to FANGORIA.

FACE OFF’s sole drama competition within the competition featured four contestants—Conor McCullagh, Megan Areford, Jo Holland (sent home in the previous episode) and the week’s second eliminated artist, Tom Devlin. In a turn of events that seemed to surprise most of the on-line fanbase, Tom and Anthony were sent home while Megan survived being in the bottom three.

FANGORIA: Are you bummed we’re on this call today?

TOM DEVLIN: I’m excited that you’re making this call, because I’m embracing the fact that I got sent home wrongly. I’m using it as a tool to launch my popularity, because the Internet world is pissed off.

FANG: At you, or at Megan?

DEVLIN: No, at the fact that I went home. It’s really given me a lot of strength. My phone has not stopped beeping; the amount of messages I’ve been getting from people is insane.

FANG: I actually had you pegged to win it, or if not, get very close.

DEVLIN: Had I won that zombie challenge… I thought the whole show, there were a lot of talented people, but there wasn’t a thought in my mind that said I wouldn’t win. Until last week when I should have gone home, that was the one time I was, like, “Oh, f**k, I messed up.” [*Laughs*] But other than that, every time I was thinking, “I’m gonna win this show. I’m totally gonna win this show.” And no offense to anybody else—we had some amazingly talented artists—but I really felt that I had the drive and the talent to totally win. I don’t know that I had the amount of personality they were looking for. I think I was cast to be more of a punk, like an asshole—fighting, two-fisted—because that’s how they auditioned me. They kept trying to work me up to get mad, get me to talk shit about Gage [Hubbard] or do this or that. And I did it for the audition to get on the show, and then when I made it on, I felt like maybe I wasn’t doing what they wanted because I felt very singled out.

Even the episode that I killed it in, the “Teddy Told Me To” episode, I’m not even in the whole episode until they’re like, [*offhand*] “Oh, Tom wins.” And then they show my creature for the first time. It was like, wow, that was weird—they totally robbed me of everything I did on that episode, and they just showed everybody not being able to pull silicon out of their molds.

FANG: I wonder, when I see people like you and Conor on this show—or even Frank Ippolito—guys who have actual viable careers already, why you decided to go on the show.

DEVLIN: I think a lot of the people were hoping to get work out of it, but that wasn’t the point for me. I was trying to get exposure. More fan exposure, because I am a fanboy; I love the convention circuit. I love to be at the tables. I was trying to put myself in front of the fans the way Tom Savini did with SCREAM GREATS. That’s how we knew who Tom Savini was. And I wanted to do that. I was trying to spread the word about 1313FX. I do what I love already. I’m not looking to work with Jerry Bruckheimer, I like working with Charles Band and Lloyd Kaufman and Stuart Gordon. These are the people I aspire to work for.

FANG: You and Gage knew each other before the show, and they seemed to be trying to make something out of that. Did they know about your shared past before you actually started shooting?

DEVLIN: They knew from the audition process that we knew each other. They didn’t know to what extent. I think both of us talked about the fact that early in Gage’s career, we worked together a lot. He collaborated with me on several projects. I do look at Gage as a protégé. I don’t know that he looks at himself that way, because he’s very independent. Gage and I worked together a lot at the beginning of his career, and I would like to think he learned a lot from me. Gage and I are friends, and not that there was no competition, because it’s a competition show, but, you know, we weren’t enemies, and I think they were hoping we would be. I think they were looking for a kind of Anakin/Obi-Wan thing—you know, that tension. But they didn’t get it.

FANG: Let’s talk about the team challenges, the one with Megan first. You said it was a result of “piss-poor collaboration…” I actually thought you were talking about both of you, not just about Megan. Am I wrong about that?

DEVLIN: I would say, more or less, it was a bad pair. I don’t think we worked well together. So yeah, I was speaking about both of us. I wasn’t saying, “This is Megan’s fault.” I was saying, if they had put me and Gage together, we would have excelled. If they had put Megan and Frank together, they would have excelled. Me and Megan? We just don’t click. We didn’t work well together. She didn’t trust my instincts. I had a little bit too much faith in what she portrayed. It was a bad team.

FANG: It seemed like you and Jo got along great.

DEVLIN: Me and Jo got along maybe too well. I think I let my guard down a lot because we had so much fun during that challenge, so my attention to detail…I think I got relaxed for the first time in the whole show, and I totally let myself down with that one. All of a sudden we were having fun, we were laughing, we got along. I didn’t really watch over her should to make sure she was doing something, and she definitely didn’t do that with me. And all of a sudden it just got away from us. It got away from me—definitely just speaking for myself.

FANG: Was there a moment when you stepped back and realized what you’d done wasn’t good?

DEVLIN: Yes, there was a definitive moment. There were some tough conditions on that show. We applied those makeups in the warehouse, with fluorescent overhead lighting. After four or five hours of that, we went backstage for last looks. If you watch the show, it was pitch black back there, except for the light bulbs around the mirrors. I don’t know if I’ve ever worked under those conditions on set. You couldn’t see anything. So at that point, I proceeded to way overpaint my piece. The moment I realized this, I was standing on the reveal stage, and when they walked out her face was orange. I was like, “What the f**k did I do? I’m going home.” I knew the beard and eyebrows were goofy, but that was kind of part of my schtick; that was kind of a design. They didn’t get it, they didn’t like it, I understand. But the paint job—when I saw her walk out with this shiny orange, I was just like, “Holy crap.” Because we had the fluorescent light in the show, pitch black on the touchup stage, and then once we went out on the reveal stage, there were blue and yellow lights shining all over the place. It was really tough on all of our works. It was really hard to adjust for the change in lighting every step of the way.

FANG: So both you and Jo went backstage, Jo thought Megan would call her out, you thought Megan would call you out. When I interviewed Jo, she indicated that she felt that it was possibly strategy on Megan’s part, rather than personal feelings, when she recommended you go home.

DEVLIN: I think a) that strategy could be correct, or b) she knew Conor’s feelings on the situation. I don’t know if she really thought I was the weakest artist; that’s up to her. Because I believe she can’t really see what I see in artists. So maybe she does think I’m a “hack.” I have no real speculation, except I didn’t think I was the weakest artist of the group. I thought I did the worst that day—I do feel I did a worse job than Jo. But Jo had a problem with the lighting, too. Her guy looked orange, and she was trying to bring it down and bring it down, and she got [him] out on the stage and he looked gray, like a ghost. I do think I did worse than Jo, but I also didn’t agree with who won that [challenge]. I thought Megan and Conor’s couple looked ridiculous. Tate [Steinsiek] and Anthony [Pepe] should have won that competition hands down.

FANG: You say that you think Megan knew Conor’s feelings—is Conor not a fan of yours? It didn’t really come out on the show, at least not strongly.

DEVLIN: Really? Maybe it’s because I lived it. [*Laughs*] Conor was not a fan of mine from day one. At all. We made up after the couples challenge—we kind of had a truce—but yeah, me and Conor butted heads. He hated me. He called me a hack all the time. “He’s a hack, he’s a hack. He just makes Halloween shit.”

FANG: What do you think about Conor?

DEVLIN: I think Conor’s immensely talented. That’s what I have to say about him. He’s been doing this for twice as long as I have. I believe Frank and I are both at about 10 or 11 years, and Conor is at 20 years. So that’s a huge jump. Especially because Jo is 21 years old. [*La ughs*] There were such huge gaps between experience levels—I don’t know where the cutoff should’ve been, but Conor could have been a judge on that show.

FANG: Let’s talk about the zombie challenge. Why did you change your concept from wetsuit/shark-bite guy to one who got run over?

DEVLIN: OK, they really, really pushed the wetsuit thing. To be honest, I didn’t draw that sketch that was on TV. I never sketched it out. I never started to sculpt a shark-attack zombie. If I was going to sculpt that, he’d be bloated and drowned and fat. He wouldn’t be an emaciated, gaunt zombie who died in the water—that doesn’t make any sense. One of my initial thoughts, because of [Greg] Nicotero being a judge, was to do a shark-attack zombie, because he loves sharks. And I heard about the dance and I was like, wetsuit’s not going to work, flippers and stuff. It was never an actual fruition. I never did that. So there was really no change, because by the time I started sculpting, I was already doing what I had chosen. I had a couple of characters in mind, and I chose one. They really edited some stuff together—making it look like I was going full bore on the shark-attack zombie, and that never existed. That was fabricated.

FANG: So you didn’t sketch the drawing they showed on air?

DEVLIN: They called me like 30 times asking me to draw that sketch, and I said, “I didn’t draw that sketch in real life.” “Yeah, but we talked about it, so we just want to see it…” “Well, I can’t. I’m not going to do it.” Because I was afraid that when I got eliminated, they were gonna try to play up the fact—because that’s when I mentioned the shark-attack zombie. I was afraid they were gonna be like, “Oh, you changed your mind. You shouldn’t have done that, so you’re going home.” I thought they were going to make me look stupid, so I wasn’t gonna play up to it. And then they didn’t at all. They let me leave with my head held high and not looking dumb, so I was like, “Good!” [*Laughs*]

FANG: I asked Anthony, and I’ll ask you—what is it about zombies that causes makeup FX artists to lose their minds?

DEVLIN: I just think that, especially our generation, we all grew up on THE RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD and THRILLER, and there’s just something amazing about a rotting corpse. You can see in the show—we all went in completely different directions, and they all look like zombies. Except one that looked like a victim. I just feel like there are so many directions you can go with a zombie. There are so many influential zombie films out there that inspired us all to be makeup artists, so that has a lot to do with it.

FANG: Running vs. slow zombies?

DEVLIN: Slow.

FANG: You’re a traditionalist. When I interviewed Marcel, he said you were the messiest guy in the house.

DEVLIN: Well, Marcel’s a neat freak. [*Laughs*] Yeah, I’m a messy guy. Marcel put up with a lot rooming with me and Tate. Tate had, like, pistachios stacked up under his bed 3 feet high, silverfish crawling through them. And I had spoons and beef jerky in my bed. I’d leave cups of milk by my bed, chocolate milk that didn’t get drank. [
Laughs
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FANG: Tom! Gross!

DEVLIN: But it was cool, because it was like we were at camp! We didn’t have to worry about anything.

FANG: I assume Lola [Wallace, his girlfriend] doesn’t allow that behavior at home.

DEVLIN: No, not at all. [*Laughs*] I was on vacation. We were in the “man palace” upstairs. I just slept with all my clothes on because I never unpacked my suitcase, and they were all just on my bed.

FANG: So you work regularly—have you brought any of the other contestants onto jobs with you?

DEVLIN: Because I had some jobs in the works at the time I was on the show, I had a crew working for me—we didn’t have any contact with the outside world, so I didn’t know what was going on at all. The day after Frank left, he came to my shop and started sculpting for me. So he worked for me right away. Gage has been over a couple of times doing some of his own projects; he’s been here preparing for the IMAPS in England. Jo’s been over here using some of my molds. I did the TransWorld Halloween show, and Tate shared our booth with us.

[redacted] *RE-ANIMATOR: THE MUSICAL* [redacted]