

FACE OFF: Eleventh Casualty

Written by Sean Abley
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Austin-based artist, Matt Valentine, managed to secure a spot on FACE OFF, despite having almost no on-set experience.

FANGORIA: So what's the scoop with the semi-sleeve heart tattoo on your arm?

MATT VALENTINE: That's probably the number one question I get. [*Laughs*] I leave that to interpretation, because it kind of keeps the mystery going. All I can say is that it's a representation of the duality of love. Love can be beautiful, an enchanting thing, but it can also be dark and horrifying and painful—which also represents my art in a way. They're hearts, but they're also black hearts. [People say], "Oh, you love somebody. You're in love." And I'm, like, well they're black hearts, so... [

Laughs

] There's two sides to this life, and art.

FANG: Everybody hears how Austin has this wonderful film scene, but I have to tell you, I have friends that make films in Austin and they tell me that's sort of a myth.

VALENTINE: I think Austin was in the mid-90's, [with] Robert Rodriguez, all these independent directors coming out of [here]. And then, I think all of a sudden all the work started going to Louisiana, because it's cheaper to film there. I hear it's more really small independent films [shooting here]. I think it's shrunk vastly in the last couple years.

FANG: What's your day-to-day like there?

VALENTINE: I've actually only worked on one independent short film. That's what was weird. I'm not really a makeup artist. I'm more of an artist that uses makeup as a medium. That's why it was weird to get the call for FACE OFF. Not that I look down on working in film. I'd love to. I've just never had the opportunity to do it. That's why I've had a lot of local makeup artists here who've worked on big films talking about "Who's this Matt guy? Where'd he come from? He came out of nowhere. What film have you worked on?"

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FANG: To get the call for FACE OFF, you obviously had to apply. What were you thinking when you sent in your application?

VALENTINE: I've always been an artist. I've always drawn, I've always painted. I've used my skills to create what was in my mind. It didn't matter what materials I used as long as it became a living, breathing entity that wasn't a piece of art that just hung in a museum. It interacted with people. Like a character from a film that doesn't exist yet. I always wanted to direct and make films. This way, I can create a whole world for a character. I met these guys with a haunted house, and we co-partnered and I was able to create a whole world where these characters would live and exist and interact with people, live in these set designs that were stressed and decayed looking. My idea was, "this is my chance to show the horror industry abominations that no one has ever seen; Hyper-stylized concepts that only exist in my mind now, but on a national level I can expose it to all mankind."

FANG: Do you read the boards now that the show has aired?

VALENTINE: Actually, I didn't even want watch the show itself. *[Laughs]* I really try to stay away from all that. What I was on the show... [FACE OFF] is a game show at the end of the day, even though there are thirteen other contestants and you all get to know each other and have fun hanging out. But at the end of the day, it's a game show, and so I decided to play the game. What you see on there is a player, I'm just playing. It's not really me, per se, because I'm just doing my job. Once my job is over, once the show's done filming, I'm done with it. So I'm, like, "That's stuff's been edited..." and I can handle that. That was a job, and I finished it, and now I go on with my life. I'm not saying I didn't watch the show, but that's one of the reasons I didn't want to in a way. I don't feel that's me, in a way. It's conflicting. It's duality. It's kind of weird in a way.

FANG: Did you come away from the show with new friends? Or are you just done with that gig

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and you've moved on?

VALENTINE: I took a lot of friends from it. I tried hard. At the very beginning, I was very introverted. Where I come from as an artist, I'm a brooding artist who stays in his workshop and can be in there for weeks at a time, not going outside or seeing other people. So to get in front of these cameras, it's totally mind blowing when they're crossing around you. I let my guard down and became really great friends with everybody in the house. Jerry [Angelo] gets a bad rap, but he's an awesome guy. We hung out at his house right after the show. We went to Halloween Horror Nights and just partied it up.

FANG: So what did you get from the show? Was it a career builder? Or maybe just an interesting experience and now you're on to the next one?

VALENTINE: Hopefully I shook things up in the industry, because I'm completely self taught. I've only been doing this about five years, and I've never had a day of schooling. I feel like if someone like me can come up to this level, and make an impact...I've never seen fans of this level for a makeup artist. I'm getting girls sending me these crazy pictures. I'm a makeup artist. It's almost bringing the makeup industry to the rock star level. I feel like it's really blowing up to that level where anything is possible. I'm looking to change the idea of makeup artists. It's not this stuffy old man's game. It's a young man's game. It can be anything you want it to be. You don't have to stick to that paradigm of working in a shop. It can reach different boundaries. But I'm totally open to working on films and working in L.A., working for attractions or theme parks, or conceptual design for movies, anything. I'm really looking forward to all of these opportunities that are starting to manifest themselves.

FANG: On the show, you come off pretty even keeled; sort of a "Still waters run deep..." kind of guy. Unlike Sue Lee, who comes off highly emotional. Did you find the production was trying to up the ante with you to break that calm?

VALENTINE: I think the whole show does that in a way, with waking up for that phobia challenge at 5 A.M. The next challenge is underwater. All these challenges wear on you. They're designed to wear on you. I feel that in itself will eat at you; at your stress level; at your mental state; at your physical state to where, at the very end, you have to bring it. I was literally...my mind was mush at the very end, but I had to hold it together. The hours are ridiculous. To constantly create and design is a mental workout. It is wearing on you. It is designed to pull everything you have out of you. And that also brings the best work out of the

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artists.

FANG: What would you do differently, if you did it again?

VALENTINE: I'd do it again in a heartbeat. What I would do differently would be probably open up more with the contestants early on. It took me awhile. I was more, like, "I don't want to get to know any of you, because you're going to be leaving next week." I was very confident in my design, so why would I waste time meeting people? Then I got to the point where I really started liking these people! [*Laughs*] I created everything that I wanted to create. Everything I made was me. Even the finale, that was my conceptual design, totally, and Ian [Cromer] was just like, "Let's do it."

FANG: What's up next for you?

VALENTINE: I started my own business, [Global Fear Enterprises](#), that's a multimedia FX company. We do graphic design, video production, FX shoots, SFX makeup, set design. We're actually taking orders, we're working with haunted houses, attractions, theme parks, film contacts. We've got a lot of irons in the fire.