

Interview: Theodus Crane from The Walking Dead

Theodus Crane, best known for his portrayal of Big Tiny in AMC's highly acclaimed television drama series "The Walking Dead," has immersed himself in the world of entertainment, performing in a variety of avenues since he was a child. He holds a world title in amateur kickboxing, has a background in music as a cellist, and has a solid foundation in dance and in the performing arts, appearing in everything from independent productions to major live shows like Jesus Christ Superstar and Hair. My exclusive interview with Theodus took place at the Spooky Empire May-Hem Convention in Orlando, Florida in May 2013. Theodus, who has been touring conventions since March, showed no signs of slowing down. The soft-spoken actor said happily: "By nature, I'm a nomad."

Having received a vast amount of encouragement from his mother at the beginning of his career, Theodus felt that he was on the right path when he began to take on more and more roles, ultimately landing a role in the legendary live production Jesus Christ Superstar. The role earned him a great deal of recognition, but it was his performance in the role of Big Tiny on season 3 of the hit show The Walking Dead that brought his name into the Hollywood limelight. The name 'Big Tiny' is clearly a play on the actor's impressive height and strength – he does, after all, hold an amateur world title in Sanshou martial arts. Theodus began studying martial arts at a young age, and to this day, it remains an

important part of his life, perhaps even the foundation for his numerous passions. His greatest love, however, is acting, and although Theodus has been able to pursue his passion for both martial arts and acting to date, his choice is clear: "I always said if something came up in acting and it was a choice between the two, I'm choosing acting. That's why I'm not trying to go pro, it's purely amateur because I like doing it. But I do have a tournament coming up for a world title – another world title."

One would think that the transition from world champion fighter/theater guru to a show like The Walking Dead would have been a large one, but according to Theodus, it was the easiest audition thus far: "They actually requested an audition from me. And so the thing about it - it was really cool because I didn't have to do a call back and all that stuff – because normally it's auditions and call backs, meeting directors and all that, and then they choose from there. This one, they just knew right away what they were looking for." He went on to say, "I think they pretty much had a good idea of what they wanted with all of us."

That worked out well for Theodus, who told me that despite always being in the spotlight, he constantly struggles with anxiety issues about performing onstage and onscreen. "I did a lot of stage work, and I used to get really bad anxiety, but I managed it so I would get nervous after the performance. I would go on and just do everything I could." I hadn't heard of actors developing anxiety AFTER a performance,

so I asked: "You don't feel relieved after it's over?" Theodus shook his head. "No, and it lasts for a couple of hours. Auditions are the same kind of deal - I'll leave and it's like 'ah, I should have done this, or I should have done that, or I sucked, blah, blah, blah', but [The Walking Dead] was the easiest audition process. I didn't have to think about it too much because it was a matter of two weeks before I actually got the call."

Given that Theodus's acting background includes a variety of genres, I asked him if he had any favorite type of role, to which he responded: "I love horror - I was raised on horror, suspense, thrillers and stuff like that - Hitchcock, Rear Window - so this is right up my alley. Like I've been going to conventions for years, and I finally get to be on this side of the table, and that's just amazing to me."

To add to an already impressive list of skills and interests, I found out that Theodus and I share a passion for writing. In fact, Theodus has been doing a lot of writing lately: "I've started writing, and I think horror and comedy are the two hardest things to write - and so I'm doing both." He continued with a smile, "Right now I'm learning the process of writing good work. So, I wrote my first short. Going to start writing some more. I have an idea that I want to bust out, and I've actually got other actors interested in it, and so we're - we're gonna make something happen."

Theodus was approached by a number of fans during the interview. One woman rushed up to the table and said: "I have a crush on you!" Theodus smiled, stood up to appear in a photograph, and hugged her. I said: "People love you." To which he replied: "I love people." Theodus, who is quite the jokester and is often referred to as Tickle Me Theo for his well-known tickle attacks, readily admits, "Yeah, I'm a tickler." His fan page is even dubbed 'Theo's Tickle Booth.' When speaking of life after *The Walking Dead* and his future in acting, Theodus tells me that he is happy with where he is: "I don't want to be too big for it, you know? I mean, I would love to get really big in this but this is something I really enjoy and I really like doing." As far as being recognized everywhere he goes? He laughs gently and says: "It's crazy. I'm still getting used to it."

I love to ask the people I'm interviewing whether they would like to share an extra bit of information about something outside of their career – something that most fans may not know but which genuinely attests to who they are as individuals. Theodus's answer to my question was the most surprising and endearing I've heard to date: "I'm part of a dance group – an all male dance group – called the 610 Stompers in New Orleans. It's comical, and it's all for charity, but you know, it's a lot of fun, and it's choreographed and all that." This is an industry where you really have to love what you're doing in order to endure all of the ups and downs. Theodus has an intense but gentle energy about him, and it's obvious to everyone around him that his heart is

clearly in his work. His advice to others: "If you can't be passionate about it, you shouldn't do it." Referring to the future, he smiles and says: "The horizon is broad."

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