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One of the most shocking turns of events on the second season of AMC’s THE WALKING DEAD (out today on DVD and Blu-ray) was the fate of Dale, played by actor Jeffrey DeMunn. A longtime collaborator with series creator Frank Darabont, DeMunn discussed Dale and his final moments with Fango—and also touched on his and Darabont’s next project together, the TNT crime-series pilot L.A. NOIR.

In the “Judge, Jury, Executioner” episode of WALKING DEAD’s second round (released by Anchor Bay Entertainment, details here —and SPOILERS follow for those who haven’t yet seen it), Dale—a wise and respected elder among the series’ group of survivors—is attacked by a ghoul and disemboweled, then put out of his misery by Daryl (Norman Reedus). It was a startling, unexpected demise that resulted in a great outpouring of on-line grief, and stands as one of the season’s most memorable twists. Fango spoke to DeMunn at this month’s Monster Mania convention in New Jersey; look for more of our chat with the actor about his various genre roles in an upcoming issue of the magazine.

FANGORIA: At what point during the second season of THE WALKING DEAD did you know that Dale was not going to be on the show much longer?

JEFFREY DeMUNN: I believe it was roughly halfway through the season when I knew that that was the state of things. I had some discussions with the showrunner [Glen Mazzara] and with the head of AMC.

FANG: How did you feel when you read the script and saw the circumstances of how Dale was

departing?

DeMUNN: I thought it was nice and clean. There wasn't a whole bunch of melodrama or anything around it, it was just, "Well, sonofabitch, there's a zombie."

FANG: It certainly wasn't very clean in the literal sense; was it grueling to be on the ground with the blood and prosthetics for all that time?

DeMUNN: Well, it was cold. And if you're lying on the ground while it's cold, it's *cold*. It seemed like forever, but it probably was only, I dunno…four hours? Something like that. And I'm sorry [*laughs*], but it's not fun getting blooded up. I mean, I would rather have it be by Greg Nicotero than anybody else on Earth, but…

FANG: After that episode aired, there was an huge and instantaneous response from fans; within about five minutes after the episode concluded, there were countless tweets and Facebook messages on-line. Did you expect the reaction that greeted Dale's death?

DeMUNN: To be honest, I was not aware of it, because I am just about one inch past the dial phone. I'm not tuned in, in that sense, to that world, so it was a surprise to me. I heard about it later; people said that everything lit up. But at the time, I had no idea.

FANG: In the WALKING DEAD comics, Dale has much more of a romantic relationship with Andrea than you wound up having on the series. Is that something you regret?

DeMUNN: Yes, I thought that would've been interesting. That's a difficult thing, to have a kind of May/September relationship. If it were real and if it were a powerful event between them that they both had to, in one way or another, try to deal with and explain—I mean, that's tough. It's not easy. I thought that might be interesting—far more interesting than two people of the same age just finding each other hot.

FANG: How was it working with Laurie Holden as Andrea?

DeMUNN: I loved it. We're old friends, and this was our third project together. We did THE MAJESTIC and THE MIST [both with Darabont] before that.

FANG: One element of the WALKING DEAD series not present in the comic was your escalating conflict with Shane, played by Jon Bernthal, as the second season went on.

DeMUNN: Oh, that was great; I love working with Jon. He's fun to act with; we're wonderfully close, tight friends. We're working again together, hopefully, on Frank's next series, L.A. NOIR; we did the pilot together.

FANG: What's your part in that?

DeMUNN: I play the head of a plainclothes detective division that has the responsibility to deal with organized crime as they try to move into Los Angeles.

FANG: I imagine this show has a different kind of feeling from THE WALKING DEAD…

DeMUNN: Oh, night and day. Yes, it's more stylized. But we've only done the pilot, so we haven't really found our feet yet.

FANG: Well, we're all hoping we get to see it go to series.

DeMUNN: Me too! You make a call for me, OK?