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# TV Show – The Walking Dead’s “T-Dog” Irone Singleton Talks Exclusively to CultureMob

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We've got three episodes under our belt, and 10 more to go for Season Two. Fans want details on what's going to happen to

the survivors. Will there be others? Will [Merle Dixon \(Michael Rooker\)](#) be back (word is not this season)? Who's going to stay in the group and who's going to go their own way?

I'm getting emails and instant messages on [Facebook](#), asking me what I know. Since that information is on lock-down it's hard to get details from any of the cast, so you have to read between the lines and then guess.

For example, last week, at [The Walking Dead](#) panel in Seattle at [ZomBcon](#), fans cheered for their favorite characters with cast member [Norman Reedus](#) who appeared. As the panel progressed fans discussed the motivation behind character Lori Grimes ([Sarah Wayne Callies](#)) for sleeping with Shane ([Jon Bernthal](#)) so soon after her husband Rick ([Andrew Lincoln](#)) supposedly dies after a gunshot wound. As we saw hinted in episode two, 'Bloodletting', things weren't so rosy for the couple before the pandemic. I guessed at this, and was wondering when the show would get around to enlightening us as to her actions. For all we know, Rick was a lying, cheating husband.

We get snippets of who they were before the pandemic, and we get to see who they are now, but we don't always know why they do what they do. The character development is part of what makes *The Walking Dead* so intriguing to millions of people. The ratings on the show are setting records for cable TV! 11 million people watched the Season Two premiere two weeks ago, that had 7.3 million on the first showing and combined to 11 million for the back-to-back premiere of episode one which aired twice.



Principal cast of The Walking Dead.

- [Disney's Toy Story On Ice: an Interview with "Andy" - Cole Davis](#)
- [TV Show - The Walking Dead's "T-Dog" Irone Singleton Talks Exclusively to CultureMob](#)
- [The Zombie Apocalypse Takes Seattle at ZomBCon 2011](#)
- [The Walking Dead's Norman Reedus Talks Season 2 at ZomBcon in Seattle](#)

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Another character who has been there from day one (or in the real world, episode 2) is [T-Dog](#). Best known in the show as the guy who drops the keys to the handcuffs that led to Merle Dixon cutting his hand off to escape the cuffs. I had a very cool opportunity to speak exclusively with T-Dog, actor [IronE Singleton](#). Now that the show has been picked up again (there will be a season 3 already announced) the writers are going to have the time to explore and develop all of the main cast including T-Dog.

Irone Singleton: So, how do I sound?

**Allie Hanley:** *Ha Ha Ha! – You sound smooth, like Barry White.*



IS: So how are you Allie?

**AH:** *I'm really well, thank you. I contacted you like last November when the show first came out, and we just never really connected until now. So many good things are going for you! You are becoming a big Hollywood star with multiple Emmy nominations for The Walking Dead (TWD), and appearing alongside Sandra Bullock for [The Blind Side](#) (TBS), which took home an Oscar and a nomination, we finally get to talk!*

IS: This is crazy right? It's like a dream come true!

**AH:** *You are doing awesome! Your resume on IMDB really didn't have a lot listed before TBS and TWD. How did you land this role on AMC's top rated, record breaking TV show? It's just going crazy with ratings, and fans!*

IS: Insane! I think it all started with [TBS](#). That movie grabbed onto America's heart-strings, and people were just so familiar with me as [Alton](#), people just recognized me. And from there I just started working. I landed on the biggest TV show in America

– possibly the world. People from all over the world are tuning into *TWD*. It’s amazing and I count my blessings.

**AH:** *Your role in TBS is very short, but very memorable. I didn’t put it together, until maybe the second time I saw you on TWD. When you were on TBS, you looked really tough. You looked the part and were so believable as a ghetto thug, how far away is that from who you really are?*



As "Alton" from The Blind Side

IS: That’s the opposite end of the spectrum. I am hoping that everyone knows that I am the polar opposite of the character on *TBS*; But coming up in that environment as a child, I didn’t have to go far in my character development to play that guy.

**AH:** *That role obviously led to your role as T-Dog on TWD, but it’s hard to know the difference between Alton on TBS, and T-Dog -even though you have been in almost every episode of TWD, we haven’t really gotten to see who T-Dog is. Can you elaborate a little bit on who the character is and what you know about his background... [in episode 2 & 3] right now T-Dog is disenchanted as a member of the group. He’s talking about leaving.*

IS: T-Dog is a passionate guy – and overtly compassionate. It’s noticeable with him by how he connects with his allies; But as T-Dog – when I do my character work – I go as far back as I can go in my real life and bring it up to the present moment, and closely as I can to the present date. So that I won’t have to do so much homework in devising my character. So T-Dog grew up just like I did, in the inner-city, and ended up going to school, and receiving a football and academic scholarship and after that T-Dog veers off into another direction. So everything that I experienced all the way up until the age of 22, that is who T-Dog is. He’s a blue collar/white collar type of person. He’s the everyman, anybody – he’s similar to anybody that you would see at your neighborhood grocery store, bank, or local Starbucks.

He’s a good guy, and totally unlike the guy from *TBS*.

**AH:** *Back to Season One, when you have the confrontation with Merle, your character has an opportunity to rip him up as he was handcuffed to the pipe, and your character backs down... that goes*

*along with your description of him being an everyday guy. Now, we are in Season Two, and T-Dog has been through a lot, how are we going to see T-Dog grow, and change from that guy in episode two, to season two?*



Norman Reedus, Irone Singleton, Andrew Lincoln, Steven Yeun

IS: Although the fans haven't seen it yet, T-Dog is on a spiritual journey of self discovery. He wants to figure out how can he make it through this situation and keep his humanity, his dignity, intact? Because there are so many characters, particularly the series regulars, I spoke to [Glen Mazzara](#), and he told me that eventually they will get to the point where they will start to develop T-Dog's story arc, which is sort of difficult because we have so many series regulars on this show and they are focusing on them at the moment. But of present time, the fans can't see it, but like I said T-Dog is on a serious journey of self discovery. The fans will soon find out that side of T-Dog when the writers shift focus on him.

**AH:** *This season they are going to do 13 episodes rather than last year's 6, and you had [Frank Darabont](#) executive producing 8 episodes, and now of course he's gone. Also, last year some said that the shooting schedule was fast and furious, and others said it was painstakingly slow and meticulous – along the lines of a feature film shoot rather than a TV show. Tell me what some of the changes have been for you this year, and with Frank now gone?*

IS: I would have to agree with the latter, that the show was slow and very meticulous this season. We knew from the first season, episode two that we were coming back. So production, the crew, had lots of time to prepare for it... and to really focus on what the fans like, telling a great story, and developing great story arc. So we have the time this season and I think everybody is really going to be impressed. If people loved season one episode one, then they are going to love what's coming up this season.



Reedus joked at ZomBcon last week, "that's a real body that I threw up on T-Dog."

**AH:** So Episode 2 as T-Dog you split your arm wide open while trying to flee a group of walkers, Norman Reedus as Daryl Dixon rescues you by throwing a dead body on your character. Last week in Seattle, at ZomBCon he told folks about that scene. He said that while he had a dummy on top of him, you had a real person laying up on you – which I thought was funny. Both of you are involved in a group called *Zombie Survival Crew*?

IS: Yes, The *Zombie Survival Crew*. We get everybody prepared for the coming *Zombie Apocalypse* – whether it be any type of catastrophe – a hurricane, a tornado, an earthquake, any type of disaster we get people prepared for it. [The \*Zombie Survival Crew\* \(ZSC\)](#) spills over into the real world. We just let people know how they can prepare for it. What they should do in case of a real emergency like that. I serve as Commander of the *Brain Brigade*, headed by the beautiful, and lovely, and so very spiritually grounded [Juliette Terzoeff](#). She's awesome. So you guys – if you don't know about *The ZSC*, go ahead and look me up on twitter and [FB](#) and we will get you connected ASAP.

**AH:** So as a coincidence, I went to [ZomBcon last week](#), and I discovered that several members of the crew [who were there in person] are also part of this organization including, Norman Reedus (plays *Daryl* on *TWD*), Sean Patrick Flannery (*Boondock Saints*), and [Sam Trammell](#) from HBO's *True Blood*.

IS: Yes, they sure are. Founding members include Norman Reedus and Sean Pat... and me. Some of the other members are also from the cast of *TWD*.

**AH:** What kind of activities do you do with *The ZSC*.

IS: We disseminate information for surviving a catastrophe, we keep our fans entertained with really good stories, as well as do giveaways and contests for signed T-Shirts and autographs.

**AH:** *Sounds fun and actually that topic is very popular right now. There’s a lot of books being written on the subject, there are Harvard educated doctors writing up survival plans and what-if scenarios. People are taking it very serious nowadays. So, it sounds like your website sounds a bit like tongue and cheek, but also just in case, let’s have a serious plan and be prepared. Would that be accurate?*

IS: Totally accurate. Just like TWD is a TV Show, but there are certain similarities to what we are experiencing during the present time. Given the climate, and the political climate, and what’s happening with people losing their jobs, people are upset about the current state of our economy right now. People are upset about certain decisions our political leaders are making and how it’s effecting us in a way where people are going through a lot of negative times like an apocalypse somewhat.



IronE in his graduation gown.

**AH:** *I’d like to find out more about you and your early days. I know you had a college scholarship and that you played football. I want to know who you are as a real person, and not T-Dog or Alton – the scary thug from TBS. Who is IronE?*

IS: My wife just told me in the background that I am long-winded, so I’ll try to sum it up for you. I was born in the city of Atlanta where I started playing football when I was ten years old.

**AH:** *What part of Atlanta?*

IS: I grew up five or ten minutes from downtown Atlanta in a housing project called Perry Homes. I was a Grady Baby. My father was non-existent. I saw him two times in my life. I had two encounters with him and my mother died when I was 18. She passed away from HIV complications. She was addicted to alcohol, drugs, and crack. That was the thing that inspired me mostly to get my life on the correct path.



IronE's Childhood home in the city limits of Atlanta, GA

God had me covered throughout that ordeal, and allowed me to end up at the University of Georgia where I played football and I was a theater major. I played defensive back for two years I played with [Mike BoBo](#), who by the way is the offensive coordinator for the University of Georgia. I played with [Kirby Smart](#) who is the defensive coordinator for Alabama – but I am rooting for my dogs – Go Dawgs! Woof Woof! Anyway, I also majored in speech communications because I had one year of football left and I decided to pick up another major. I only needed so many hours to accomplish my speech com major, as opposed to some athletes that would just take some PE courses so they would be qualified to play football, I picked up another major that I was serious about and would contribute towards my theatre major education. I ended up graduating from The University of Georgia in 1998 – wow that seems like ages ago!



IronE's childhood bedroom.

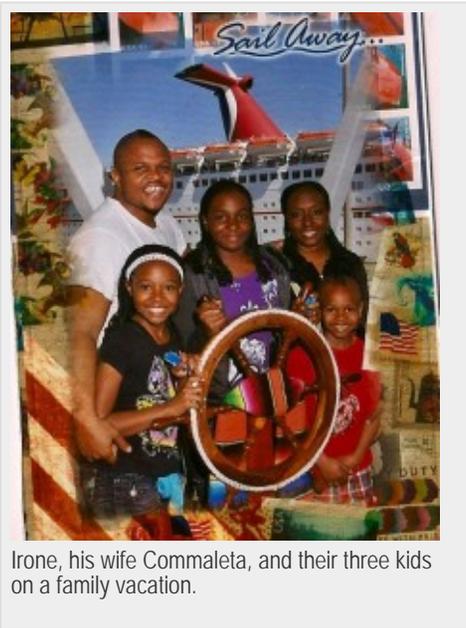
So I left the great city of Athens, GA and came back to Atlanta where I started pursuing my acting on a professional level. Right when I graduated though, before I came back, I picked up a show entitled *Pray Vision*, so that was my first professional gig and it was decent too because I got paid \$400 a day.

[Here's a link with some scenes and comments from people who attended his show *IronE - The Resurrected* that he wrote and acted in: show <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HWtGBA2PqPo>]

**AH:** *That was big money for a college student!*

IS: I know – right! \$400 bucks was a lot for a just graduated college student! That was big money. I didn't party and blow it all though. It went towards my baby. My wife and I had just had a baby my senior year, so it went towards buying Similac and

Pampers for our new baby.



Irone, his wife Commaleta, and their three kids on a family vacation.

So once I finished that show – which aired on public television, and got back to Atlanta I did a whole ton of community theatre and some independent low-budget movie projects; And then I got to the point where I needed to do my own thing, branch out and do something bigger and different. God had put it on my heart to tell my own story. God had been telling me that ever since I had graduated from college, because it was like I had gone through these things for a reason. So that I could inspire and help others through a similar situation.

So I ended up writing a play entitled *IronE – The Resurrected*. Which focused on my life and depicted my life coming up and all the way through college and just short of landing the part in *The Blind Side*. I had not landed that part – just short of it at the time. So once I performed that show, I got a call from an agent who wanted to represent me, and an agency that wanted to represent me. This was the first time I got a call like that, and it was about ten years after graduating college in 2008. Once I got an agent, a month or so after that I found myself auditioning for *The Blind Side*. Shortly after that I was going toe-to-toe with Sandra Bullock – who is such a beautiful person – beautiful spirit by the way – I love her, and after that premiered then the calls started coming in. Within a year, I landed TWD, and here we are a year after that!

**AH:** *They say what’s happened to you – is that you are more likely to win the lottery than to land roles like this. I know you had ten years of prep from college to The Blind Side, making the right connections, getting an agent, they really say you are more likely to win a lottery than get roles like this! So it’s pretty amazing.*

IS: Thank you so much Allie and I am going to have to say – if you don’t mind... and I agree with you. It probably is a lot easier to win the lottery than landing on an Oscar, and an Oscar nominated movie, and then a year later landing on a TV show of this magnitude. So, I think it’s a proof lesson that when my Mom died, and I started to focus on pleasing God, and I knew that God was the reason I made it through it all. But I had to listen and obey. I am going to get to the point where I totally dedicate myself to God and whatever is in his liking. So I live everyday to serve that purpose, and to help other people and to inspire people. Once I got on the track, God started doing amazing things for me in my life. So although it is such a blessing to be a part of something like this but I am not surprised just totally elated. It’s just an attribute or a testament of how I choose to serve.

**AH:** *So between TBS and TWD you’ve had some other opportunities including a film with [Nicolas Cage](#), [January Jones](#), and [Guy Pearce](#) – who I ran into several times at our hotel this past Comic Con in San Diego. I think he was staying on the same floor as me at The Hilton.*



IS: Yes, that film is called [Seeking Justice](#). I play one of Guy Pearce's henchmen and we end up chasing Nic Cage throughout the movie because his wife is abducted and raped. And Nic Cage's character wants to get revenge and so he goes to the authorities who do nothing for him. So, our vigilante group seeks him out, and we tell him that we can get revenge for him or vindicate his wife's rape if he makes us a promise; And that promise is a lot bigger than he expected. So once he takes us up on the offer, and once we come through on ours, his character decides that it's too much of what we are asking. When he opts out of the promise the chase begins and that's when it gets really good.

**AH:** *Do you know when that comes out in the US?*

IS: I don't know Allie, there's no release date yet here in the US. Maybe they are waiting on his latest movie *Trespass* to die down, then they will release this one. I honestly don't know.

**AH:** *Tell me about this other film that you just wrapped production on called, [A Box for Rob?](#)*

IS: Yes, I play a character named Tim who is an FBI agent – quite a stretch from the character I play in *TBS*. We are trying to track down a serial killer. It’s full of lots of twists and turns and I think people will enjoy it. It’s going through the film festival circuit right now. It was just accepted into the [Lucerne Film Festival](#) in Switzerland, and also a festival in DC and one in Charlotte, NC. We are hoping to get it to Sundance.

**AH:** *With all the roles we discussed today you certainly are avoiding being typecast.*

IS: *TWD* broke the basic cable record for viewership. We established the record last year with 6 million viewers but this year we topped that. Now I would like to say that the reason I am not getting typecast is because I have turned down roles similar, because when people saw me on *The Blind Side* they wanted to cast me in similar roles so I turned down immediately after the premiere of that film because I did not want to get typecast. I look back on that and am happy I made that decision.

**AH:** *With respect, you did look very mean and tough in that role and I know from your background after speaking with you today that you are very different from that character as well as your T-Dog role. What are you like in real life?*

IS: Right, I’m 5’10” and weigh in at 230 pounds which is a lot of residue from my football days. I am trying to get it down so it doesn’t look so big on the screen.

**AH:** *Well, frankly you don’t look fat on TV if that’s where you are going, you look like a powerhouse to me. If you connected on a Zombie’s head with a baseball bat it would fly! You look strong. I know there is pressure in Hollywood to be thin, and one of your castmates on TWD looks very thin right now. Do you feel pressure yourself as a man and an actor on a popular TV show?*

IS: No, I don’t feel that pressure at all. I’ve been fortunate in that I’ve been in a bubble. Not only did I land *The Blind Side* from Atlanta but also *TWD* from Atlanta. So I have not been out there in the things of Hollywood and been subjected to lots of the criticism that other actors might be subjected to. However, I do feel a desire to drop the weight so I can play a larger variety of roles. With my size people might want to typecast me as a bouncer or a big mean thug – something like that. So I want to broaden my appeal. So that’s the reason I feel a personal desire to lose a few more pounds.

**AH:** *So in research for our conversation today I was looking around on the internet for information on you, and I came across your website [IronE Singleton](#). When I clicked on it, I was surprised to hear you singing about zombies.*

IS: Wow! That’s called ‘The Walking Dead Song’. It was right around the time that *TBS* was nominated for an Oscar. And

what I’m going to do anytime I am part of some huge project, I am going to write a song for it. So besides being an actor I am also a lyricist. So I wrote a song for *TBS* and I wrote one for *TWD*, and it’s kind of an opportunity to perceive the moment, and put the song out with a message in it.

**AH:** *So you are an actor, a writer, a singer, a lyricist, you perform in plays, and you are a founding member of this disaster preparedness group, Zombie Survival Crew. You talk about living your life for God, are you a church member?*

IS: Well I don’t have a church home. My wife and I call our home our church. And there’s an interesting story behind that but we consider ourselves church hoppers. I went to church for about five years when I was 8. I would visit my aunt, who lived outside of the projects. So she made it her purpose to take me to church every weekend when I was over there; And I had an encounter that was not really to my liking. So it affected my view of the church. Now I had an experience with the pastor. What I saw transpire between the pastor and someone else – who I will keep confidential – affected me negatively. It didn’t turn me away from the church but it broadened my view. It taught me that it’s not about where you worship. Its about who you worship and how you worship. So there are times when my wife and I go to the church, but we pray everyday, as I walk I pray. I am constantly praying for others and of course myself. So that’s how I worship.



Irone and his future wife in High School.

**AH:** *How long have you been married?*

IS: 12 years this December.

**AH:** *So she was your college sweetheart?*

IS: My high school sweetheart. Although we met in the 9th grade, I knew her in the 8th grade. She didn't know me, because she was a bookworm and I would just watch her. Sort of stalk her with my eyes and I finally got a chance to talk to her in the 9th grade and started passing notes. She finally called me after I harassed her out of fear of getting in trouble in class, and as they say, the rest is history.

**AH:** *I've only seen you on TV but you come across after speaking with you today as a genuinely sweet guy.*

IS: Thank you so much and I owe a lot of that to my wife. Because I was living the life that was typical of an inner city teenager. And I was living that life. And I knew that when we got together that that was something that she would be opposed to. She never knew the things that I was doing. So I didn't want to disappoint her, and even though my Grandmother raised me, I didn't want my girlfriend – now my wife – I didn't want her to find out about it. So, I just put all that kind of stuff on the back-burner and eventually that all faded away – that whole life. I didn't want to mess up a good thing. I knew she was the one I wanted to spend the rest of my life with. Had she known that it probably would have scared her away. And thank you for that compliment.

**AH:** *As a regular cast member of TWD, are you a fan on the horror film genre?*

IS: My uncle introduced me to [George A. Romero's \*Night of the Living Dead\*](#) when around 11 years old. The horror genre never did stick with me. As a kid I was kind of forced to watch [Friday the 13th, A Nightmare on Elm Street](#) because my Mom got a kick out of it – watching us kids getting scared. It took me later on to realize the effect it has on a psyche of an individual, especially a child who is still growing. Not just physically but mentally. The brain is still developing. It had a major effect on me. So I try to stay clear of anything that was scary. If my Grandmother told me to go downstairs and turn off the light, I would sprint back upstairs because of all the damage that had been done by watching all the scary movies. So, I just sort of stayed away from them. I got back into those when I was cast for *TWD*. So not a huge fan coming up.

**AH:** *Does your own TV show give you the heebie-jeebies?*

IS: Ya it does, but I've gotten to the point now where I have established a relationship with God and I know that it's fiction. I feel that what's going to happen is going to happen. So even if [Jason Voorhees](#) decides to come and get me, and that's in the plan, I've got God on my side. Even if all the Freddy Krugers, Jason Voorhees and zombies come to get me I've got it covered.

Official Preview Episode 4



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IronE was a wonderful interview – really enjoyed speaking with him!

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