

Rhys Darby - For Matthew

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One of our dear crewmates, Stephanie, lost her son back in 2022. They both watched S1 together, and tragically he passed away not long after. Stephanie has been an active member of our crew for years now, and she reached out to Rhys and he made a lovely Cameo for her.

Some of you may have already seen it as she's been kind enough to share it with us previously, but after talking with Stephanie and hearing about who Matthew was, I wanted to put together a small dedication to him, and share Stephanie's words with you with her permission.

-- Dedication --

Matthew was 39 years old when he passed away, one of the original OFMD crewmates. He was a quirky, deaf, funny, and talented man who gave the world kindness despite the struggles he went through. He loved theatre, movies, video games, local art, and independent restaurants, and made a positive impact on everyone he met.

Matthew made his debut as a professional backyard wrestler in 2002 in the Phoenix New Times, and he worked on many well known video games in the industry doing development and quality assurance. He was truly a child a learning, and a true pillar of support in the community, and spent a great deal of time laughing and bringing light and joy to the world.

With his last wish, he donated his body to science, continuing on his loving and supportive legacy. Matthew was a wonderful man that was lost far too soon and his mother Stephanie, as well as anyone who knew him miss him so very much. Below is his obituary if you'd like to learn more about this wonderful crewmate of ours.

We salute you Matthew. You are the embodiment of all the kindness, acceptance, support, and loving things that embody Our Flag Means Death as well, and we're honoured to have you amongst us in spirit. You are greatly missed, but never forgotten.

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Matthew Branley Haugen

PHOENIX – On June 15, 2022, Matthew Branley Haugen passed away in Phoenix, Arizona after a 39 year battle with his ongoing medical issues. Matthew is survived by his mother Stephanie Schaar, his father Mark Haugen, brother Corrigan (Julie), sister Kelsey, nephew Hudson, niece Harper and close friends and extended family. He was preceded in death by his maternal Grandma Hannah and Papa Nick, his paternal grandparents Bill and Judy, his Uncle Paul, cousin Brian and his beloved dog Barkley. To know Matthew was to love him and to find someone who was so unique left a mark in your heart.

Matthew was born on February 15, 1983 in Phoenix Arizona. He graduated from Horizon High School and Paradise Valley Community College. He especially loved his theater classes where he had the opportunity to play a comedic role in the school theater production where he brought down the house with his sword play and charismatic stage presence. Matthew valued local culture and invested himself in small communities between the art scene and independent restaurants. Wherever he lived, he was a regular somewhere and was enthusiastically welcomed by name. He was a night owl who loved watching movies and playing video games in on-line communities where he met people from around the world. He also did a stint as a professional backyard wrestler and his persona was featured in a 2002 documentary and in the Phoenix New Times on the backyard wrestling scene. He was part of the Q and A at the



Hollywood premier which he attended with his brother. He actively pursued d/Deaf and HOH rights and insisted on quality closed captioning for all.

Matthew had a long career in the video gaming industry with Activision, Infinity Ward, and Vivendi in the Los Angeles area where he made his mark on the development and quality assurance teams for Call of Duty, Guitar Hero, and other commercially successful games. Upon his return to his childhood home in Arizona due to his health issues, he provided patient assistance for a dialysis patient and some in hospice care. In 2016, Matthew found his true calling to help provide services for children with autism (Autism Arizona) leading to a long-time relationship with Aidan and his family. He connected with them through his caring heart and sincere desire to provide support. His keen sense of understanding the world through Aidan's eyes led him to be able to build a connection and communicate within a non-verbal world.

Even though Matthew would face obstacles and limitations with his body across his range of medical issues, he turned his life into such a positive adventure despite the hardships he was dealt. His hilarious personality could find humor and joy even in the darkest of times. Doctors and nurses gravitated to his direct conversations and twisted perspectives of life as a frequent flyer of emergency rooms and hospitalizations. Matthew supported many causes and loved learning about them and how he could help. Matthew enjoyed documentaries, dramatic series, and high quality films just as much as watching “trash tv” and following 90 day fiancé and Married at First Sight. He loved horror, sci-fi, and superheroes and was obsessed with retro gaming, films, collectibles, and nerdy pursuits.

In another example of Matthew's compassion for others, it was his wish to donate his body to a medical school program for learning and teaching. The family will be having a celebration of life in the fall or winter where Matthew will be remembered in his unique style. At that time, a foundation will be set up in his name to support causes that were important to him.

--- Stephanie ---

"...I wanted to share something with the fandom about my journey with OFMD and wondered if any of you have experienced some personal growth right along with Ed and Stede (and of course many others in the crew).

My 39-year old son told me there was a show we had to watch that just dropped. He says "you'll love it because Taika's in it and we love pirates." I laughed and said, "I'm in."

I had no idea what it was about, but he and I had watched Black Sails together and he's right—we love pirates. Within minutes of the pilot, I was completely won over and enjoying every moment of piracy on the Revenge. "What we're about to do will be perilous". From that moment on, I was in deep. We binged the first 3 episodes, rewinding to replay scenes and went mental when we realized that we had to wait a full week for 2 more episodes. My son and I would text about it non-stop and we both started quoting lines and getting even more invested. He was sending me meme's and screenshots and we started living our best pirate life.

By the end of the season, we had laughed, cried, and thoroughly discussed every aspect of Ed and Stede's growing relationship. We felt the pain of the cliffhanger and became "mentally devastated by what [we've] witnessed" and we certainly didn't bottle it up.

We talked non-stop about the show. It became a daily thing. Articles, interviews, pictures and joining in the quest for renewal. Once it got renewed (PRIDE month), we were on the lookout for any posts or information about signs of filming, etc. We couldn't wait for the second season and were counting down the months after we knew filming wrapped.

Then the unthinkable happened. My son went into the hospital after having a slow recovery to multiple surgeries. Cliff Notes version: He was admitted and within 24 hours, he was in ICU on life support. My son had an extensive medical history beginning when he was an infant. 42+ surgeries and many air-evacs to Children's Hospital so it was kind of the norm to go in and be out within a few days or week and be on the road to recovery again.

If you met him, you wouldn't even know he had all the medical issues he had because he worked

full time and carried himself like a stand-up comedian--always laughing and telling stories. He was a video gamer who had worked in the industry for 7 years until he had to take a leave to handle his medical issues and have a job that didn't exceed 40 hours.. He was really a character and had a lot of funny mannerisms.

This time was different. He didn't rally and 10 days later he tragically died from a fungal infection that they couldn't identify until it was too late to treat.

He died in June, 2022, and the grief has been unrelenting and unbearable. I have literally shut down and spent the months grieving and in so much pain that I can barely leave the house and see anyone. It has broken me. When I saw the actual date that S2 would drop, my emotions were so intense because I didn't know how I could possibly watch it without him. I finally went on and rewatched Season 1 to prepare for Season 2 and found myself crying through the entire 10 episodes every time I thought of his witty banter during the season.

I wasn't sure I could handle Season 2 without him. I talked about it a lot in Grief therapy and decided I would watch it with him and for him. I would try the first episode and see if I could do it. I would imagine all the conversations we would have had.

Matthew understood being different. He was Deaf and spent so much time in and out of hospitals and was bullied and teased his whole childhood. Even with all of that, he grew up to be loving, kind, accepting of all, and a VERY FUNNY guy.

On the day I started S2, I remembered that Matthew enjoyed being on the groups on Reddit for OFMD. Having never done Reddit, I was nervous, but decided I would see if the online community would be something that would give me the thing I missed so much . . . his commentary.

I couldn't believe how it opened my world up. Everyone was so nice and open to discussion about OFMD. The banter, information and excitement has been so restorative for me. It has given me a lot of healing to say the least.

I binged the first 3 episodes for S2 and went through it with all of you watching Blackbeard fall into the worst version of the Kraken that he had been and felt every emotion during the s2e3 Merman scene. Laughing and crying, laughing and crying, I waited for each week craving their reunion would finally happen and celebrated on-line with the entire fandom as we shared our analysis and thoughts.

Having a show that means so much to me has truly made me so happy. I loved that Ed and Stede are a middle aged couple and that they both had to grow so much to get to the point where they could be together in life as a beautiful and loving couple. I appreciated the writing so much because DJ and crew did really give us what he said he would, but in a far better way than I could have ever imagined.

I still need a s3 because I want to see Ed and Stede mature even more as a couple--no more leaving each other! I also want to see them meet up with their found family.

I want to see the new Revenge adventures, Spanish Jackie and Swede, Izzy legacy moments, Zheng, Oluwande, Wee John, Jim, Archie, Fang, Frenchie, Black Pete, Lucius, Buttons the sea gull, the perfect music and emotional parallels to past episodes and, of course, revenge for Minor Prince Ricky, Is that asking too much? I'm sure I left out so much else I want to see, but you all get it because you are stuck in this vortex right along side of me.

I dream of HBO/Max renewing this sooner rather than later so I can start thinking of when they will be filming and following all the hints that unfold. This show means so much to me and I am grateful that it exists.

I feel like I can be a better version of an ally to the community I love so much by immersing myself within all the representation in this treasure trove of storytelling. I learn so much by seeing these relationships develop into deep and committed love and have such respect for all of us who just want to see these relationships normalized everywhere in society. We all benefit from inclusion and I am very very grateful for this show. It means more to me than I could ever explain.

I'm sorry I rambled, but I am just so appreciative of all the people in this group who just share and talk and roll around in all our in-depth chatter.

I celebrate this series and everyone that worked so hard to provide this beautiful story. I feel my son's presence every moment I watch it (on repeat) and discuss it every single day.

Izzy's (Con's) death scene touched me deeply . . . thinking about losing my son and how that felt and how I held onto him for as long as I could so I wouldn't forget how it felt to hold him. Taika's commitment to the pain of losing Izzy felt like it paralleled all my feelings since the loss. Izzy's deathbed voice and words have lived in my heart ever since.

Con and Taika were top tier and seeing all the crew's emotions as they watched what was happening felt so raw and touching. I also felt so much from s2e3 when Ed is dead and Stede is begging him to live . . . I lived that as well, convinced that my son would somehow prove them all wrong and open his eyes. I said it over and over and when Ed opened his eyes, I just felt every single emotional hurdle.

Yes, I was a bucket of tears through it all, but I also felt a lot of healing. I'd love to hear from any of you who have had some kind of evolution or growth from this gift of a show."

You can reach out to Stephanie [here](#) on twitter if you'd like to discuss some of your experiences as well.

Cameo Source

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