

Tom Holland Breaks Free: Talking Zendaya, ‘The Crowded Room’ and the Future of Spider-Man

After six stints as the web crawler, the 27-year-old Brit opens up about the pressures of mega-celebrity, his superstar girlfriend and his “Spider-Boys” group chat with Tobey and Andrew.



Tom Holland was photographed June 2 at the Hotel Chelsea in New York City. Styling by Michael Fisher Paul Smith sweater, Burberry pants.

Tom Holland is having a rough morning. Not because he partied too hard the night before — though the Marvel Studios superstar had enough reasons to, what with it being his birthday and the world premiere at New York’s MoMA of *The Crowded Room*, the Apple TV+ series that he both stars in and executive produced.

But Holland quit drinking alcohol a year and a half ago. No, this particular migraine comes from waking up to learn that *Crowded Room* — what Holland deems the “hardest thing I’ve ever done” (this according to a guy who has played Spider-Man in six feature films) — has been met by rough early reviews.



Tom Holland THR Cover PHOTOGRAPHED BY ISAAC ANTHONY

“It was a kick in the teeth,” Holland admits, unprompted, over eggs Benedict on the quiet terrace of a hotel in SoHo. “Rolling over, looking up the reviews, and then all of a sudden I was like, ‘Wow. That’s a bad review.’ Sometimes there’s a redeeming quality in there. There was nothing.”

Holland speaks loudly and confidently and in a thick London accent — he grew up there and still calls it home. At first it’s disorienting. Most of his characters are American and voiced in milder tones. Onscreen, he is jokey and self-effacing. Speaking to a journalist, he’s serious and a bit guarded. He makes rock-solid eye contact whenever he wants to convey a point. He is pale, lean — whatever the ideal body fat percentage is, he has it — and delicately handsome. He’s wearing loose-fitting jeans and a Moscot T-shirt

featuring a vintage drawing of a man taking an eye test.

Every star learns to take their knocks in stride. And at 27, Holland is already a savvy veteran of the Hollywood game. He certainly still looks young enough to don the Spider-Man suit once again, perhaps even for another trilogy. Meetings to determine the fate of his Peter Parker are in fact already underway. But he knows that career longevity will ultimately hinge on every move he makes outside the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

Uncharted, his first swing at a non-Spider-Man action franchise, was a win: The 2022 video game adaptation earned \$400 million worldwide on a \$120 million budget. But *Cherry*, a 2021 drama directed by the Russo brothers in which he played a strung-out heroin addict, drew a humdrum response.

Initial reviews of *A Crowded Room* seemed no better. But right after bringing them up, Holland brightens: “There will be good ones. There will be. I try to have a healthy outlook on all that sort of stuff and respect everyone’s opinion.”

As if he willed them into existence, more encouraging evaluations soon began ticking the Tomatometer back up. And Holland’s performance in *Crowded Room* — he plays Danny Sullivan, a psychologically distraught man accused of a shooting at Rockefeller Center — was widely singled out for praise. (It’s the long and twisty path to the “big revelation” at the center of the show — Danny’s diagnosis — that rubbed some critics the wrong way.)

Holland’s brother, Harry, 24, tagged along to the New York premiere to lend emotional support. But his girlfriend, Zendaya — whom he met on the set of 2017’s *Spider-Man: Homecoming* (she plays his love interest, MJ) — did not.

