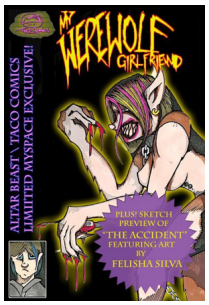
During last month's San Diego Comic-Con, Fango had the pleasure of meeting artist David Castro, creator of Taco Comics. Fans have seen his horrifically stylized T-shirts, hats and drawings at numerous conventions, and Castro subsequently spoke with us about his artwork and his interests in the horror genre.

FANGORIA: Tell us about yourself, and how your career as an artist began.

DAVID CASTRO: I was a 15-year-old runaway living in parks and underpasses for about six months before I joined a party crew. I worked as a minimum-wage laborer till I was about 20, maxing out my credit cards on booze, women and hotel living, figuring there wasn't really going to be much more to life than that. I always doodled as a kid, but not until my 22nd birthday, by which time I had pretty much given up on life, did I realize there was something more to it. I began to draw the monsters I lived among during this period, and I couldn't stop.



FANG: How did you come up with Taco Comics?

CASTRO: It all started with a signature of branding. The Taco Comics logo is DC sideways. Coming from a graffiti background, signature is key. The more I looked at it, I realized it was a taco, so I began the search for the origin of the taco. Contrary to popular belief, it was American born—just like me, and misunderstood. Keeping that theme, I wanted to create short, entertaining comics that were quick, affordable and odd. I began with a short story I wrote for a contest I never entered. It was called "Julie" and was about a lonely compulsive eater who befriended one of her pies. Taco Comics is pretty much the movies I would pay to see. I can't

be the only one with bad taste, right?

FANG: On your deviantART page, you describe yourself as an artist who lives in his dreams. Please tell us more about that, and also your interests and influences from comics, music and horror.

CASTRO: I was introduced to horror at a very young age. In the ’80s B-horror era, my mom never guarded me from the world’s obscenities; for this I thank her. Like most 4-to-5-year-old boys, I loved dinosaurs. I got bored quick, though. I began to imagine them more human. Then I saw the MTV world premiere of Michael Jackson’s THRILLER, and my love of the zombie began. I always had nightmares growing up, and when I began to draw and paint the creatures I dreamed of, the nightmares stopped. I can’t go longer than two days without drawing them, or the dreams come back. Any longer than that, and I start to feel like I’m going insane.

I’m really into ’50s music. They don’t make music like that anymore. I dig anything that has passion and conviction in its tone. Unfortunately, the art of popular music is a bit corrupt right now, so it’s more difficult to find honest stuff. My current favorite bands are Glasvegas, Coheed and Cambria and Glassjaw.

FANG: You have artwork titled “Big Thoughts,” “I’m a Creep” and “Sad Piranha,” among others. Do you have a favorite piece among your gallery?

CASTRO: Only a couple: “Me and Chuck Gettin Drunk” and “The Aristocrat,” which oddly enough are both ink drawings. I see them as photographs of a place I was in and the emotions I felt in that place and time. Everything I make I feel has its own life now, and should not be under my wing. As much as I enjoyed them, they are still impressions of my emotions, almost excrement. I have no use for them anymore. They’re free to do what I intended for them: inspire.

FANG: On your deviantART page, it mentions you enjoy painting, writing stories such as “Morse Cleaver” and drawing on sketch cards. Do you have a preference among them?

CASTRO: The trading cards are warmups for the grind, but sometimes I get caught up in the warmup, and it becomes the grind. I make gas money from the trading cards on eBay. They’re silly rants turned into picture form. Writing is a bit more serious. Believe it or not, those are derived from dreams I am lucky enough to have had with a beginning, middle and end. I’m compelled to write most of them. I often spend the whole day wondering why a character acted a certain way, or why they couldn’t find a more reasonable solution to their problems. But I can’t dwell on it too long; it’s just a dream.

FANG: How was your experience at Comic-Con?

CASTRO: San Diego was a blast and nerve-wracking at the same time. Being an underground artist, it’s easy to get passed by, and being a horror artist isn’t always an easy sale to Superman fans. That’s where the hats come in. My buddy Amer Ali Shihab was there to help me man the booth while we took turns doing live art. The hats are very similar to the trading-card idea—just a bunch of silly rants and brain burps. Not many comic artists like to do live art, but for the people who aren’t artists, it’s very entertaining to watch the process. The hat is a fashion accessory that people don’t have to carry, frame or pack. Just wear and go. I don’t see many artists doing them.

FANG: On your website, you have blazers with painted faces of monsters and Taco Comics T-shirts. Where can customers find these items?

CASTRO: I’m actually working on a series—a jean jacket series, to be exact. The trashier the better. A lot of the clothing you see on my sites are live art deals. When I’m at a convention, I

feel people paid for a show, not a salesman, so I try to entertain. Most of the time people buy them there, but I have only about 10 on hand in the studio. I know it's a bit stupid, but things with more of a personal touch, I prefer to deliver in person, if possible. It adds value and soul to the item, I believe.

FANG: Tell me more about your contribution to the Diesel Jeans Art Show in February 2011.

CASTRO: It actually happened at San Diego Comic-Con: A marketing rep for the company asked me if I wouldn't mind painting one of Diesel's new fragrance bottles. It was a glass fist with Diesel knuckle rings. I couldn't pass this up. Luckily, I had my trusty box of various paints. When I was finished, he took it and left. At that point, I didn't know if he was even who he said he was, but I took the chance. He eventually came back and handed me a bottle to keep. He seemed to dig it. A week later, he sent me an e-mail saying the company was very impressed and gave me the go-ahead to let me in the project for February. He showed me the promo he made, and it looked pretty tough.

FANG: What are you working on now? What's next for Taco Comics?

CASTRO: Well, I have a small team now. Josh Waldrop is the new staff writer, and Amer is another artist. We created an expo to promote Taco Comics and help others in the indie art hustle; it's called Slum Circus [taking place this weekend]. The closest show willing to showcase independent artists and comics other than Slum Circus is about 500 miles away in San Francisco. It's just too far. Hopefully, everyone has a great time. Taco Comics is actually working on a couple of titles, like THE FOLKS OF SUNNY CYPRESS, a senior citizens-vs.-zombies gorefest. That will feature a cover by one of my favorite artists, Dan Harding. It also has a backup story drawn by Amer called "Clavo," about a kid who has a psychotic breakdown while watching his parents get eaten by a zombie. Another comic coming soon is PEE POTATO STEVE, the journey of a boy and his fermented urine. Josh wrote a story called "The Sickness," which will be released as a preview in time for the Long Beach Comic-Con [October 29-31]. We're also scheduled to do a panel there.

FANG: Where else, besides your website, can people find info etc. about your artwork?

CASTRO: If anyone is interested in the sketch cards and other sale stuff, the eBay handle is drock0-562. My deviantART page is at dcastr.deviantart.com . You can also read about us on the Taco Comics blog and MySpace , and join us on Facebook .

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