

## HELLION FOR HIRE #7: MEMORIES OF SAN DIEGO, PART 1

Memories of San Diego Part One 1993 - 1997

by Billy Tucci 07-19-2006

My ibook died last week and I'm pissed. Some damn thing about the fan not working correctly and thus causing the bloody machine to overheat and shut down after a minute or two. I finally caved in and ordered one of those new imacs with the Pentium chip (Here I come new *Call of Duty!*) but that, like the new ibook I just bought, hasn't come yet due to it being back ordered. The arrival date for both computers is Tuesday. Friggin problem is, I'm leaving for Comic Con International on Tuesday! So for the second week in a row, I'm writing to you on my tried and true (but very tired) Mac G3. We've kept this machine because the O.S. 10 system isn't compatible with the really sweet flat bed scanner I purchased all those years ago. I'm honestly not cheap, but keep the scanner on principle alone. If it doesn't gel with the new imac, I'll get a damn new one.



So here I sit, hacking away on Microsoft Office 98 while staring at a fuzzy screen and reminiscing of days gone by down San Diego way. This, like every year, I'm not mentally or physically ready for the show. To be perfectly honest, I'm *never* ready for any show and am one impossible ass the night before I leave. It's not that I don't want to go, but really shouldn't due to deadlines, but we booked the booth at last year's show, everything is already shipped out and I want to play softball.

But oh what memories the San Diego Comic Con holds! How could I forget 1993 as I and my great friend illustrator Marc Sasso headed down from his L.A. home to show our portfolios and dream of comic book glory. The Con seemed huge that year, but compared to last year's reported 111,000 visitors it was more in tune to a French War Veterans convention. I remember that Marc found some work, but for the most part the editors at Marvel, DC and Image were nothing more than pretentiously nasty shumcks who dismissed this "wannabe" with a snide remark and the wave of the hand. Marc and I weren't invited to any parties and stayed only for the day, but not before sitting next to Leonardo DeCaprio ("excuse me, weren't you in "Growing Pains?") at some greasy spoon - he actually was very, very nice. On the upside, it was at this show where I first met Brian Pulido and Steven Hughes. The two of them were sitting confidently at an Artists Alley table that they may or may not have paid for! Both were incredibly helpful and cordial and Brian was probably the only person at the Con who thought I had any talent. Whether it was genuine or pity he offered me a chance to do a pin up which later on appeared in the **Lady Death Swim Suit Edition** (my first comic book commission!).



Well, things sure changed come 1994 as the happy Crusaders (Deborah, Peter Gutierrez, Barry Orkin and I) were not prepared whatsoever for all the hoopla! Remarkably, there were actually people lined up to see us! It's incredible but true, and we even had to move to an autograph area! If any of you reading this were there, thank you, thank you, thank you! All told, we brought 3,000 books and about 2,000 posters (sold all the books and more than half the posters) and kept on saying to each other "Do you believe this?" It was just amazing, we were even the lead story on the local NBC news story about the Con and the expanded segment made it to an even bigger spot on E! There really was an exciting "Indy Movement" at the time that kind of caught people by surprise. I got the chance to meet Jeff Smith and his wife Vijaya who introduced me to many other indy publishers and cartoonists, and gave me pointers on how to survive in the industry. I also met Joe Quesada, Jimmy Palmiotti and Nelson who though incredibly friendly at the show, pranked me a week later acting as if they were some really whacked out retailers.

To make a long story short, the prank call came just as UPS was delivering the returned posters (after losing the booth) in now destroyed boxes. I was trying to talk to these psycho retailers from Texas and deal with the UPS jerk as the damn posters spilled out all over the stoops to my apartment building. They actually kept me on the line for about an hour, the cruel bastards. I guess they felt bad for me afterwards because they called and told me the whole thing was a joke and to come out to a party in the city afterwards. Guess I finally made it after all!



The craziness exploded even more come 1995 as it seemed this was the first show after **Shi** really took off. Even though the Con had perhaps 40,000 or less attendees, the show was tremendous. The lines were unending as **Senryaku #1** had just shipped that very week and many hadn't yet seen it! I got to meet Frank Frazetta and hang out with Stan Lee too and reacquaint with my old buddy from Jr. High School screenwriter Steven Peros (more on him in Part 2). It was the first show my mom came out to and we were all so happy the way the show went, she changed her flight plans and went off to Vegas with my nephew Vincent. WHERE SHE WON \$20,000.00 at the slots! Boy, when it rains.... Overall, during the show, I felt as though I was a kid in a candy store, doing business with people who wanted to make cards, statues and posters and spending time with folks who literally changed my life and making for a week I will never, ever forget.

1996, was even bigger as Crusade, Event and Harris Comics all shared an island and brought in our New York "Block Party." That was just insane as the booth was always packed with tons of folks and many more pranks among the exhibitors.



Deborah and I had broken up in late 1994 and I brought my then-fiancée' Angie with me. Angie is an artist herself and the girl I dated before Deb in college (long story), but I think she was a bit overwhelmed by the whole

<http://www.newsarama.com/general/Hellion/07/Hellion07.html>

affair and actually left a few days early. She was actually going to Greece the following week and was probably a bit freaked out of doing the show, her own work and packing for a three week family trip. But while she was there (along with much of my family) we celebrated a wonderful Fourth of July. I remember enjoying the fireworks across the bay then heading off to see "Independence Day" with Jim Lee and Chris Claremont! I also stayed a few days in town and got to visit the amazing Wildstorm offices as Jim and Wildstorm VP John Nee acted as guides and making for one very relaxing "vacation."

Jimminy Crickets it's 11:40pm!

I'm going to cut this short as I've yet to pack and must finish another page before I go -- (yeah right, like that's going to happen!) Oh man, I'm in such deep trouble! Next week will be longer and we'll deal with this year's show. The following column will focus on 1997 to 2005.

I better go and help Deborah. Even though she's still sick, she won't sleep tonight as she's got tons of stuff to do packing and getting the house in order. She's been going full force for the past two days now. Another problem is that my mom is house sitting and I'm afraid she's gonna kill our 110 pd. Silver Shepherd "Sheba." The dog's a big baby and an even bigger pain in the ass as she shits on our rugs every time we go away. Now the damn dog does this EVERY DAY we're away and we're not talking dainty toy poodle shits, here, we're talking hulking, steaming, stinking buffalo burgers! The rug cleaners are coming to take them away tomorrow morning but I've got to move all the furniture, and roll the suckers up. Deb says she'll help me, but I'm not sure if she'll be able to. Guess it's time for me to "Ranger Up!"



It's 11:43pm!

Okay, I've got to finish this page (again, big trouble, big - huge!), scan it and the six others waiting to go Tom Palmer. Only thing I've got to finish is the backgrounds at Stark Tower. It would be done by now, but the Marvel offices seems to have lost its email capability today, so I still have no idea what the hell is inside that weird looking architecture hanging atop the building. You know the one that looks like Ming the Merciless' headpiece? Well, if anyone can help me with that reference please post it on the discussion page! Please help, I'm behind on my deadlines and still have to pack my clothing, artwork and lithographs. On the brightside, the weather will be cooler than it is here on Long Island and I will get to see everyone. I'm especially looking forward to smoking my pipe with my high school buddies (one of which is the aforementioned, Mr. Peros) who have since gone "Hollywood." There will be much drinking, Tom Foolery and Ballyhoo as we toast ourselves as future masters of the universe.

Deb, William, baby Matthew (making his comic con debut) and I have an 11am flight which will put us in San Diego around 3:30pm. Then it's off to the Convention Center to pick up our exhibitor badges and make pro badges for all my friggin "Hollywood" friends who are to damn lazy to go online and get one for themselves. Afterwards I'll set up the booth, eat some dinner, wait for the arrival of my sister-in-law Christine and her two children (also Con virgins) while drinking a beer and finishing off some artwork before going nighty, night.

I really look forward to seeing you all so please stop on buy booth 1801 and say hello. We'll debut our 576 page "Definitive Shi" Collected Edition, a beautiful wooden/engraved comic book holder, sketchbooks and a bunch of new lithographs. Mark Sparacio and I will also be signing at the Marvel booth Sunday at 12pm - 1pm. We'll have some nice giveaways on hand as well.

<http://www.newsarama.com/general/Hellion/07/Hellion07.html>

Well, it's time to go. I hope everyone has a safe trip out there and enjoys the con. Remember next column will expound on our great softball victory over DC, and new memories yet to be made. The following will dare to bring in Kelly Hu, Beau Smith and the biting brawl of 98!

Have a great week and hope to see you at the Con!

Tally Ho!

*About Billy Tucci and Crusade Fine Arts, Ltd.*

*Billy Tucci is the award-winning creator, writer and publisher of the graphic series Shi. Lion Eyes Entertainment has recently optioned Shi for a major motion picture with actress Zhang Ziyi is attached to star. An award winning filmmaker in his own right, he's currently writing the screenplay with Kevin Bernhardt. June 2006 will see the debut of a new Shi Convention sketchbook and the 576 page "Definitive Shi" while Billy makes his penciling debut for Marvel with August's "Heroes For Hire" (written by Justin Gray and Jimmy Palmiotti). He's also the creator and writer of Narwain Publishing's "Zombie-sama!" and invites you all to join his message forum on [www.williamtucci.com](http://www.williamtucci.com)*

Discussion Thread: <http://forum.newsarama.com/showthread.php?t=77443>

EMeadow

07-19-2006 04:13 PM

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Ah, the biting brawl of 98.....

That's got to be the panel where there was only like 12 of us in the room, I wanted to show you the cane sword my friend got me for a college graduation present, you took it and started practicing on it as we were leaving the room, then your wife takes it from you, gives it to my friend, and proceeds to tell him you're doped up on meds from the brawl the night before!

Ah, con memories. That's one of my favorites.

Slayton

07-19-2006 06:54 PM

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The weird construct on top of Stark Tower is the Sentry's Watchtower. Basically it's his apartment/HQ. I'd gladly scan some interiors from his limited series for you if you need it.

Predabot1

07-19-2006 09:04 PM

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This column was AWESOME! :D Movies with Claremont and Jim Lee, coffee and chocolate-bars with Stan Lee! Medication and samurai sword-swinging! Less geekyness than the average Marvel-man like me that knows everything about the weird construct! XD

A frightening, over-heating deadline! Problems with the missus and the pets! Why sir, you're a regular Peter Parker... :)

Almost makes you seem less masterful man of comic-mysteries and more human.. XD ;D :D :lol: ^^

Ahaahha.... it's 02:04 Am here... damn...

( May I also say Mr Tucci that your ex-girlfriends all seem both charming and attractive in many ways. ;) :D Hubba! Hubba! Hubba!)

beta-ray

07-20-2006 01:07 AM

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I can try to find some interior shots for you too if need be Mr. Tucci (though my collection is a mess).

Regarding your scanner... what model is it? Is it because it uses some kind of SCSI interface or just that the drivers are not supported?

Billy Tucci

07-20-2006 12:59 PM

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Thanks guys for the heads up with Stark Tower. I still haven't recieved my reference and will try to find one at the show. Which books would they be in? I can just pick them up. I posted a bunch of other pics but I guess because of space they could'nt post them. I'll be back next week on this Con's report, and the following will be part two of this column. I'll be back home so whatever images do not make it to the column, I'll post here.

Thanks,

Billy

If anyone's here in S.D., please stop by booth 1801 to say "hello."

sll01

07-20-2006 11:09 PM

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Wow it sounds like it was a blast back in the day.



I was looking at this photo. and it looks like a Shi Billboard behind you. your standing and you only come up to her knees how tall was that thing?

Slayton

07-21-2006 02:09 AM

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Quote:

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Originally Posted by **Billy Tucci**

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Billy, get the recent Sentry mini by Jenkins and JRJR. There is very good reference in there including even the kitchen as that's where the Hulk sleeps on the floor.

**BlackCatGuy**

07-24-2006 07:15 PM

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Hey Billy, I hope everything went well at Comic-Con! Did you "slam" any of your old high school buddies with your challenge coin? If so, I hope you drank for free all weekend long!:D

Can't wait for the next column!

All times are GMT -4. The time now is 08:33 PM.