

Interview: Shi Creator: William Elliot Tucci

CI: LET'S START WITH A LITTLE BACKGROUND...

Tucci: I was born in West Islip, New York on August 13, 1966 - so send me some birthday cards or I'll be very upset and lonely.

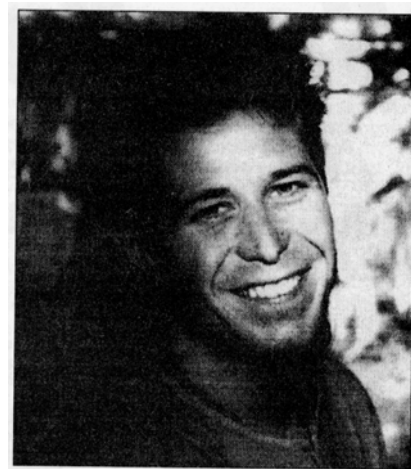
After exams it was off to The Fashion Institute of Technology. I was twice elected President of the Student Association.

But after serving the student body and improving their lifestyles, I was promptly thrown out of the dormitory by the Liberal Marxist faculty - more so for my righteous belief in truth, honour and the American way than for my antics.

After graduating, I enlisted in the US Army. I sliced through my training in a test company and graduated with honours after Infantry, Ranger and Airborne training.

Even had a chance to be instructed by guest SAS! Had a wonderful time till I got injured while serving in the National Guard and left.

I spent the next couple of years designing children's wear, T-shirts and bad mouthing that bastard Bill Clinton."



CI: COMICS SEEM A BIT TAME FOR SUCH AN ACTION MAN. DOES YOUR BACKGROUND GIVE YOU A DIFFERENT SLANT ON THE INDUSTRY?

Tucci: Coming from a fashion illustration background gave me a different slant on comics because I had no idea how it worked, who the artists were and how I was supposed to draw comics. I guess it was this naiveté that gave Shi uniqueness.

But I have since left the book, and spent the last year alienating our fans, by doing the same crap as everyone else.

CI: WHY DID YOU MAKE THE JUMP FROM FASHION TO COMICS?

Tucci: There's no money in fashion illustrating.

I was working for Macy's making next to nothing, then seeing my clothes in TV commercials and movies.

CI: HOW DID YOU GET INTO FASHION AFTER THE MILITARY?

Tucci: I majored in Fashion Illustration at F.I.T. and I joined the Army after college, because I always wanted to serve my country, fire weapons, jump out of planes and hopefully get a chance to kill someone.

I guess I had a lot of unresolved issues.

CI: RIGHT WHAT MADE YOU MAKE THE HUGE LEAP INTO SELF-PUBLISHING AFTER PRODUCING ONLY THE ONE COMICS STRIP FOR RAZOR ANNUAL #1 IN 1993?

Tucci: I basically couldn't get work anywhere unless I was willing to copy Jim

Lee. I was already falling into self publishing when I met Everette Hartsoe and he allowed me to do a small story of Razor with a character I'd created called Shi.

CI: HOW DID YOU COME UP WITH THE CHARACTER?

Tucci: Ana Ishikawa has been with me for 10 years now, going through various forms of background and costume. The more research I was doing the richer and more real she became. It was the most amazing experience, creating someone. Background, family, career decisions...

I think I'll be a good dad someday thanks to it.

CI: WAS IT A TOUGH DECISION GOING SOLO, AS A WRITER/ ARTIST/PUBLISHER?

Tucci: Yes it was, but wonderful nevertheless. But, I've got to tell you, I had this amazing belief in myself and Shi. I felt that something incredible was happening and I just had a feeling that it was going to be a hit. I was so convinced in the whole project that nothing was doing to stop me.

I was this walking cliché telling people to go for their dreams and for some strange reason, it all worked out! Then what threw me was that I wasn't dreaming any more it was really happening. People I'd never met were actually writing me, and even thanking me!

Since I've been focusing on the business aspects, and the future of Crusade this past year, I've come to miss the excitement of drawing and writing. I'm now gearing up to becoming an artist again.

I know that people expect a certain look and feel they can only get from the creator. I guess the two of us are connected in some fashion, like we're soul mates and people want that, so who am I not to give it a whirl again?

CI: FOR THE FANBOYS - JUST WHAT DID HAPPEN TO SHI #0?

Tucci: There never was one. But when I begin my new series - William Tucci's Shi - I will be starting with a zero, and going way back to before *The Way of The Warrior*. And then jumping back right into the events following *Heaven and Earth*.

We are calling it William Tucci's Shi because we want the fans to know that it will be me and only me drawing it. I will be illustrating the new story line *The Ring of Fire*, which Gary Cohn and I will be writing. It will begin late this summer or early fall, but I want to get at least three issues done before publishing the first.

CI: HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT INTER-COMPANY CROSSOVERS?

Tucci: The main reasons why we do inter-company crossovers is really for the fun of it.

Being a comics fan myself, I want to draw other characters, I love Daredevil and, even though it was a difficult time in my life, I still had a ball with it, and those pages are among my favourites.

CI: WHAT NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN COMICS ARE IN STORE FOR SHI?

Tucci: *The Ring of Fire* will have Shi fleeing her native Japan. Ana has made lots of enemies after *Heaven and Earth*. We want to get more in to Asian culture by having Ana finding herself in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Siam and such. Not only will Ana be running from mobsters, Sohei and communists, she will also be hunted by Shi itself, in the form of the Demon Samurai from *The Way of the Warrior* storyline.

Ana will become a character very much like Toshiro Mifune in *Yojimbo* and *Sanjuro* and Clint Eastwood as the Man With No Name in Sergio Leone's spaghetti westerns. Very dark and deadly but of course with a heart of gold.

CI: WHAT'S THE CURRENT STATE OF PLAY WITH THE SHI FEATURE FILM?

Tucci: You'll be the first to know!