

True Blue for “TRUE BLOOD,” Part One

Written by Jorge Solis
Saturday, 09 April 2011 09:05



With two issues of IDW’s TRUE BLOOD: TAINTED LOVE in stores now, and the hit HBO’s TV series set to return June 26, artist Joe Corroney spoke with FANGORIA about illustrating the comic book series and what readers should expect from this second volume. For Bill and Sookie fans, Fango also has an exclusive look at the first five pages of TRUE BLOOD: TAINTED LOVE #2.



FANGORIA: How did your career as an artist begin?

JOE CORRONEY: My professional career began when I was actually still a sophomore in art college. I drew my first published comic book series at that time, and later that year, began illustrating for a role-playing game publisher. Once I graduated a few years later, I sent my portfolio to a publisher producing STAR WARS gaming books for LucasFilm and they hired me to illustrate for them. Working on STAR WARS for a number of years early on opened the door for me for other artistic opportunities in the comic book and entertainment industries later.

FANG: How did you become involved in the TRUE BLOOD comic book series?

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CORRONEY: Well, I’ve been illustrating for IDW Publishing since 2005. The first comic book series I illustrated for them was SPIKE VS. DRACULA, which was actually based off another vampire TV series, BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER. Years before that, I was also creating horror artwork for White Wolf Publishing, from 1998-2000. I was doing lots of werewolf, vampire and zombie art; so the horror genre has been a regular part of my career for awhile now, just like STAR WARS has been. I’m also a really huge horror film buff, so I really do enjoy working with the material whenever I can.

With TRUE BLOOD, IDW was interested in acquiring the license to produce the comic books based on the TV show. My publisher contacted me and asked me to produce a cover on short notice for the pitch meeting with HBO. My colorist collaborator, Brian Miller, and I had about a weekend to turn it around for them. I was a huge fan of the show since the very first episode, so I was inspired to create something really special for the project. I believe the artwork helped with HBO’s decision to work with IDW, so they started work on producing the comics. Once we swapped out a character with another one later on for final design, the artwork Brian and I illustrated ended up being used as the cover for the first issue. Because I was involved at an early stage with the project and I was already a fan of TRUE BLOOD, they asked me to contribute further for the comic book series.

FANG: You have the cable series and the Charlaine Harris’ Sookie Stackhouse novels as extensive background. Is it easier as an artist to have all the references laid out for you? Or is it difficult to take liberties from the source material?



CORRONEY: I’d say it’s easier in some cases having the visuals for the characters and the settings set up already, though the comic book series adheres to the continuity set up within the TV show and not the novels actually. Since I’m already familiar as a fan with the characters and the environments, it has helped me to be able to add extra flourishes of realism in my artwork, whether it’s a certain expression or reaction a character might have in a certain scene, or if it’s a specific setting we’ve seen before on the show.

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Though I suppose it can also get tricky in some cases to keep the look and feel of the show consistent from scene to scene too because we are doing things in the comic series that haven't been done or seen on the show before. Since it's a comic book, there aren't the same restraints for plot or budget issues necessarily that the TV series might encounter, for example. But that's what also makes working with TRUE BLOOD in this medium really exciting for us as creators and hopefully for the fans too.

Luckily, I'm working from a really great script by Marc Andreyko and Michael McMillian, who also plays Reverend Steve Newlin on the HBO series, that is tonally and wholly consistent with the show down to every nuance. Seriously, with each issue's script I'm constantly impressed with how the dialogue and the actions of the characters ring true to their TV counterparts. There's really a lot of time and attention to detail on everyone's part to make this the best TRUE BLOOD comic book we can make.

FANG: Your artwork in TAINTED LOVE #1 has an essence all its own, especially with the protagonists' expressive features. You do not replicate the characters' real-life counterparts. You actually keep the spirit of the TV series in your artwork. Was that a conscious effort or did it happen by accident?

CORRONEY: I'm not sure if it was completely by accident, but I'm not really over-thinking it either. I mean I'm drawing the best Bill, Sookie, Jessica and Eric characters I can, but I'm also shooting from the hip a little bit more than I normally do as opposed to my cover art. I'm not tying myself down to just drawing photos from the TV series for every panel either. With this script, that's just simply impossible anyway, so I'm relying on my abilities as a cartoonist to keep the storytelling moving and the figures feeling animated when I can. I'm also working with a really great artist for my layouts, Stephen Molnar, who's coming up with some really dynamic shots for the story.

We're working within very set deadlines for each issue of the comic, so there simply just isn't the same amount of time for me to labor over every likeness, like I'm known for in my cover artwork. That's a different rendering style all together that would just take much longer for the colorists and me to replicate for 22 pages and with a really tight deadline schedule. For my interior art, it's really a matter of balancing the essence of the characters while focusing on the storytelling, but not disregarding the likenesses at all whatsoever. That's really a key approach with drawing any comic book based on a licensed property.

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TO BE CONTINUED



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