

Coming soon ... Dreadlock Superhero

Back when comic books were the rage, Jamaicans were fascinated by the heroics of Superman, Batman and Spiderman. Thanks to an American artist, they will soon have a superhero of their own.

That superhero is Drew McIntosh, protector of the Cockpit Country and star of *Dread And Alive*, a comic series scheduled to be released in the United States in late 2010. *Dread And Alive* is the brainchild of Nicholas Dasilva, a 43-year-old San Francisco-based artist. In a recent interview with Arts and Education, Dasilva said he is currently negotiating with Arcana Publishing for *Dread And Alive* to be released as a graphic novel or in western traditional comic form. Drew McIntosh is protector of the Cockpit Country, a wildlife sanctuary in western rural Jamaica occupied by the Maroons, descendants of rebellious slaves who gained freedom from the British in the 18th century. Dasilva said the Maroons and their patriarch, Cudjo, had a strong impact on him when he first read about them over 20 years ago. "As a person of African descent, I noticed that their story is not taught in schools," he said. "They are really the inspiration behind this character." Drew McIntosh is a Maroon descendant who was born in Kingston, but raised in the Cockpit Country. At 15, he loses his father to Shadowcatcher, a formidable obeahman who is also Cudjo's brother. Wary of his evil sibling's intentions, Cudjo passes on an amulet to Drew which gives him special powers. To gain control of the Cockpit Country, Shadowcatcher must wrest this object from his nemesis. Dasilva, who said he visited Jamaica in 1993, took some liberties with history to get his subject across to a diverse demographic. "I've always been intrigued by storytelling, so I wanted to mesh fact and fiction and make a compelling story," he said. A self-taught artist/ animator, Dasilva is of American and Brazilian stock. He grew up in Sao Paulo, Brazil, various parts of the US and Saudi Arabia where his father worked as an engineer. Architectural career He had aspirations of an architectural career, but dropped out of West Virginia's Marsh University after two years to pursue designing. Moving to San Francisco in the early 1990s, he started out as a T-shirt artist and eventually became a Website designer. He has worked on two other comic projects, *Black Jesus* and *Hit List*. The latter was released digitally for the iPod market. A five-member team worked to get Drew McIntosh and cast a reality. Dasilva and partner Rodney Buscemi took care of the artwork with Dasilva, handling writing duties. He says *Dread And Alive* is his biggest, and most satisfying project, to date. "It's been a long time coming, but it's extra special to me because the subject is close to my heart," he said.