New comic book superhero is from New Orleans

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NEW ORLEANS — Louisiana has another comic book superhero — on a creature of the swamps, but a black New Orleans six man who puts on a Carnival mask to cleanse the night of evil.

"No room for vermin like them in the night . . . my night," Jack Boniface tells himself after knocking out a couple of street thugs.

Boniface is "Shadowman," hero of a 1-year-old comic published monthly by Valiant, which is one of the biggest selling new lines in the business.

Shadowman can't bounce bullets off his chest like Superman or grow back roaches (No, those aren't a comic novel have created an image of the city, and a nightclub career gives a musician. For the first time in his life, he has adventures at night, how "His daytime persona is a bit of a weak sister. When he plays at night . . . he becomes a cutting-edge musician. For the first time in his life, he finds success."

"At night, he becomes very reckless . . . his night . . ." says Hall. "He can't do more than a human can under extraordinary circumstances," said Bob Hall, who has written Shadowman since last October's issue, No. 6, and drawn him since No. 10.

"But Jack can, under extreme duress, serve as a channel for that ultimate strength or endurance," Hall said in a telephone interview from Lincoln, Neb. He confronts all sorts of danger — a huge lout whom Baron Samedi, the voodoo death-lord, has taken over as a "mule"; a crazed and evil family that has killed, raped or cowed everyone else in some unspecified bayou backwater; a zombie creator named Darque; and a New Orleans vicecop who specializes in drugs, child pornography, and an electrical laying on of hands that lets him consume life.

Sometimes Shadowman's costume, a midnight blue bodysuit emblazoned with a shadow in a doorway between the light and dark, gets ripped to shreds.

If you wondered where superheroes get their designer longjohns, this set came from an elderly woman who keeps Jack's apartment free of the giant roaches (No, those aren't a comic artist's nightmare; they really exist and are called palmetto bugs). That one issue shows crawling across The Times-Picayune in a voodoo shop.

Jack's maid knows about the voodoo that helped create Shadowman (though not, perhaps, about the alien virus that also contributed) and gives him the name when she gives him the suit.

He already had the mask — and in how many other cities would a Carnival mask just happen to be lying about the apartment when its owner began to discover uncanny powers? He doesn't have to wear the mask," said Hall. "How much does a mask really disguise? Eventually it comes out that he likes it. It makes him feel a different person."