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LIFESTYLE

San Antonio hair salon Toxic Salon turning out wild dye color, mohawks, wolf cuts for the goth, emo, punk sets

René A. Guzman, Staff writer

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Whenever fire performer Crystal Forsythe needs to spark up her hair color, she turns to a stylist in San Antonio with an equally fiery passion for bold colors and brash self-expression.

That's Crystal Terror, owner of Toxic Salon. The name may be abrasive, but the artist behind it has a gentle touch, Forsythe said.

"She's just really honest about what's achievable and what's not achievable,"

she said on a recent evening as her hair was being touched up with pops of atomic red, orange and yellow. “She always prioritizes the health of my hair more than anything.”

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For the past seven years, Crystal Duron, the hairstylist known as Crystal Terror, has whipped up all sorts of vibrant, animelike dye jobs and clipped out all kinds of shaggy wolf cuts, spiky mohawks and other crazy coiffures for the goth, emo, punk and all-around counterculture set.

No matter who pops into her salon at North St. Mary's Street and East Mulberry Avenue, Duron wants them to walk out with their heads held high.

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“It’s the individualism,” said Duron, 31. “The number one thing that I am focusing on for sure is breaking the stigma of it being only worn by hooligans and riffraff kind of people. I’m showing people in the world you can be successful and look however you like and however you feel comfortable.”

That perspective is reflected in Duron’s own look, a goth mix of Siouxsie Sioux style with a bit of Harley Quinn attitude, and it's led to her success.

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The Hair Diagram

Since opening Toxic Salon in 2014, Duron has scared up more than 15,000 followers on TikTok (@CrystalTerror). She also has crafted all sorts of hair and makeup styles for fans of Japanese animation at the last two San Japan anime conventions in San Antonio.

Duron styles artists and aesthetes from across San Antonio and Texas. Her regulars include muralist and San Antonio Street Art Initiative president Shek Vega and Broadway Pinups fashion store owner Debi Lambright.

“It’s awesome to see her grow,” said Lambright, who has known Duron since she was a 15-year-old Southside High School student hanging out at Lambright’s old punk rock shop.

Alynne Urban shows off her hairstyle by San Antonio stylist Crystal Duron, better known as Crystal Terror.

Crystal Duron

Lambright praised Duron not only for starting but maintaining her own business at such a young age. She was only 24 when she opened Toxic Salon.

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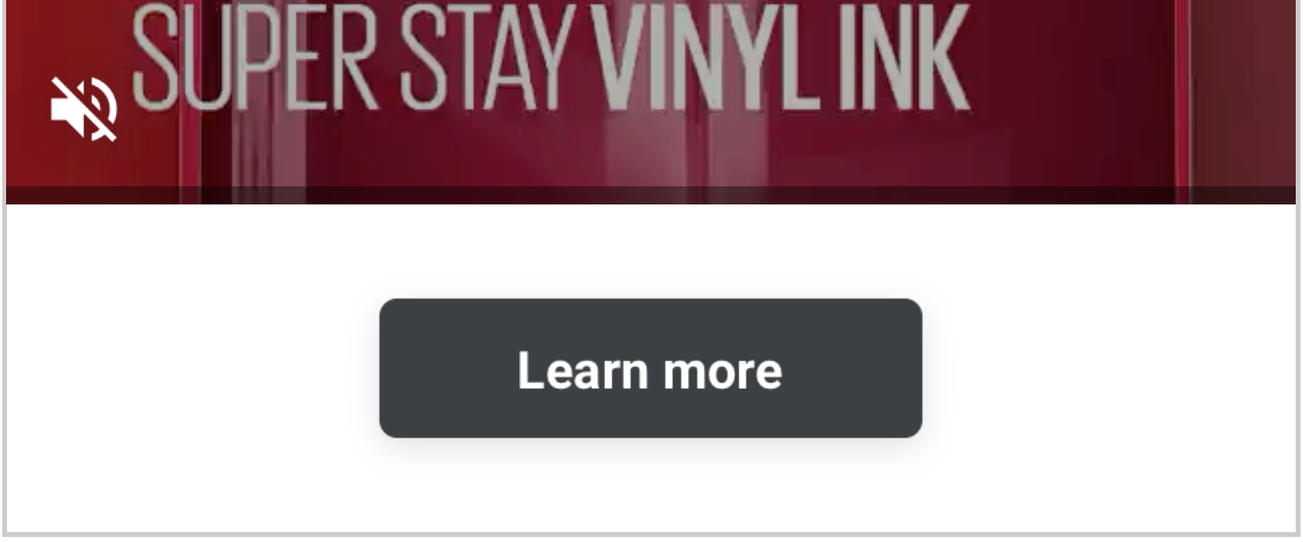

“There’s always going to be that punk rock crowd that’s going to be different,” Lambright said. “She caters to that style, and I don’t think any other salon does that.”

Duron has been crafting edgy hairstyles pretty much since high school, when she’d cut the occasional mohawk with school scissors or trim a friend’s bangs in the middle of class. “And then their mothers were calling my mom," she said.

Not that her family made much of a fuss. Duron said that growing up she had the liberty to be who she wanted and dress how she wanted.

"My brothers and my mom, they never really said anything," she said. "They were just like, 'All right, she's weird. The weird middle child.'"

In her senior year, Duron adopted the name Crystal Terror to match her high school sweetheart Josh Terror (né

Torres). They are still together. Around the same time, Duron started making art out of what she called her “dreams and nightmares of strange horror and sci-fi creatures.”

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In addition to styling hair, Duron still crafts macabre mixed-media pieces using acrylics and spray paints with caulking silicon and plumbing foam. Her latest works, a gaggle of gnarled neon shapes with doll heads, hang on the inky black walls of Toxic Salon.

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She also has exhibited her work at several art spaces, most recently Creative Eye in the Blue Star Arts Complex.

Creative Eye owner and curator Karina Garanzuay said she sees Duron's horror art as original and otherworldly. Yet she also sees in Duron a kindred spirit, one who behind all the tattoos and hair colors is also a self-made woman with a big heart.

"She's a fun-loving person," Garanzuay said, "but she also knows how to get down to business."

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Duron got her cosmetology degree at the Milan Institute of Cosmetology in San Antonio, where she focused on alternative hairstyles and color. She later opened Toxic Salon with help from her boyfriend.

Despite a business full of what she calls her “creepy weird stuff,” Duron said she strives to make Toxic Salon a safe space for anybody who wants to experiment with a new look or just needs a shoulder to lean on. In addition to being licensed stylists, Duron and her staff also are certified by the National Council for Behavioral Health to provide adults with mental health first aid.

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Duron said she would like to extend that helping hand to adolescents, too. She's looking into youth mental health first aid certification, along with ways to educate young customers about what's appropriate for the workplace and that first job.

First and foremost, though, Duron said she wants to give whoever walks through her salon door the confidence and motivation to be the best version of themselves. Fiery hair colors optional.

rguzman@express-news.net | Twitter: @reneguz

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Written By

René A. Guzman

Reach René A. on

René A. Guzman writes about geek and pop culture as well as consumer gadgets and technology. Before joining the Express-News in December 1998, the San Antonio native co-owned a college humor magazine named Bitter, for which he wrote, designed and edited, as well as distributed at various campuses and businesses citywide.

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