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2007 Summer Comics Conventions Season

Just around the corner are two of the largest conventions of their kind in North America: Anime Expo and Comic-Con International

By Kat Avila | Web Published 6.10.2007

Ah, Southern California summers - checking out the tanned surfer boys and beach bunny girls, going to Disneyland with out-of-state friends, finding love and adventure around a bonfire after cruising the coast, beginning a new workout program, and going to comics conventions.

That's right.

Just around the corner are two of the largest conventions of their kind in North America: Anime Expo, the largest anime and manga convention (June 29-July 2), at the Long Beach Convention Center, and Comic-Con International, the largest popular culture and comics convention (July 26-29), at the San Diego Convention Center.

Chase Wang of BAM! Marketing, Publicity & Promotions is the press representative for the 16th annual Anime Expo (<http://www.anime-expo.org/>). He promised, "Anime Expo 2007 will be the most incredible anime/manga convention of the year! Not only will there be an amazing lineup in the Exhibit Hall of dealers with authentic goods, but there will be 24 hours of fun for all! There is karaoke, concert events, live programming, and the Animatsuri Summer Festival! Our concert lineup will be amazing with performances from Halko Momoi, Anna Tsuchiya [of "Kamikaze Girls" movie fame], Chiaki Ishikawa, ORESKABAND [entertainment ska rock], SOS Brigade (Aya Hirano, Minori Chihara, Yuko Goto), and the WORLD PREMIERE OF S.K.I.N. (Yoshiki [J-rock revolution founder], Gackt, Sugizo, and Miyavi)!"

Don't forget to bring your camera as a huge attraction of Anime Expo is the cosplayers, people who dress up as their favorite Japanese animation, video game, and comics characters, such as Naruto, Sailor Moon, and from Final Fantasy. A lot of creativity and hard work go into the more spectacular fantasy and sci-fi costumes.

I asked Javier Tamariz, manager and public relations for Animedia ("The #1 Anime Portal in Latin America," <http://www.animedia.com.mx>) and Animediatype magazine, if he was coming this summer. He said yes, explaining, "Anime Expo has become a must-go for me and my fiancée, mostly because it offers a great diversity of events and personalities to have fun with. The only problem with Anime Expo lately is that it is growing too much and it's starting to limit what we can really do. But hopefully we'll have a blast, like the other years we have been able to go."

Another press associate attending from Mexico is Animematic editor Carlos Edwin Guzman () <http://www.animematic.com>, "because it [Anime Expo] is a completely different experience to be able to talk with the people behind my favorite shows." Not just the press corps can get close and personal with the directors, chara and mecha designers, voice actors (Japanese and American), manga artists, and musical guests, but the fans can too through related panels and workshops.

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The popularity of anime and manga is an international phenomenon. I met German editor Christopher End at a previous Anime Expo. He works for AnimaniA, Germany's leading anime magazine. He is also the press representative for the 9th annual AnimagiC, Germany's largest anime and manga convention (<http://www.AnimagiC-Online.de>, July 27-29), in Bonn at Beethoven Hall. He wrote, "We are in the middle of an editorial deadline, so we're focusing on the next issue of our magazine AnimaniA, while handling at the same time [AnimagiC] requests from press, publishers, guests of honor, and attendees. ...[F]rom year to year we have more requests to take care of. First, more and more Internet-based fan sites are opening, and second, traditional media are trying to cover the 'manga hype.'

"While the fan sites are quite a growing number, they are easy to handle as in general they are well informed. The professional media on the other hand - well - professional, but sometimes have absolutely no idea what we are doing. So you have to explain every time again answers to questions like, "What is manga anyhow?" and "Why do ALL girls in anime look so sexy?"

About the same time as AnimagiC is the 38th annual Comic-Con International (<http://www.comic-con.org/cci/>) in San Diego. Walking into the crowded and noisy Exhibit Hall is to get lost in the belly of the monster. Pre-registration is strongly recommended as Saturday sold out last year for the first time in Comic-Con history.

In 2007, Sergio Aragones's comic GROO (with scripter Mark Evanier) and Los Bros Hernandez's (Gilbert, Jaime, Mario's) alternative comic LOVE AND ROCKETS celebrate their 25th anniversaries. Their creators are on Comic-Con's impressive special guest list, which includes FAHRENHEIT 451 sci-fi writer Ray Bradbury, THE SANDMAN comics and fantasy writer Neil Gaiman, and NEW YORK TIMES bestselling author and cross-genre (horror/fantasy/romance) writer Laurell K. Hamilton.

Jose Cabrera, aka Crying Macho Man (<http://www.cryingmachoman.com/index.html>), invites LatinoLA readers to visit him at Comic-Con. "This summer Crying Macho Man will be hitting the biggest convention of 'em all - Comic-Con. My intention is to network with some of the big names in the business and intend to leave a 'sticky' impression, and I also intend to sell my book, PRIME CUT. See you all there."

Artists are the foundations of the comics conventions, and you will find plenty of them there. Still, others have no plans to attend any as they have projects to finish. Writer and cartoonist Luis Montero (<http://virumca.com/graforismos/>) of Madrid, Spain, is one of them. He has an amusing cartoon called "ojos gemelos: graforismos" (twin eyes: graforisms) featuring an eyeball who has "escaped the tyranny of his body." Both the English and Spanish versions can be read at ComicSpace.com (<http://www.comicspace.com/twineyes/>).

Asked about summer projects, Luis responded, "I have a couple of interesting projects for this summer relating to my ojos. First, I'm gonna release an animated short film, about four minutes long. At the moment it's called "Eye Paradise," but that's still a working title. It's kind of a surreal thriller about three cops prosecuting an eye who has escaped its former body, everything, ...done in a film noir style. The premiere will take place in an art gallery here in Madrid.

"And secondly, I'm gonna release an animated music video for an independent Spanish band called Mano de Santo. The music is kind of Pet Shop Boys, but the video is a tribute to a '50s French movie, "Le ballon rouge" [The Red Balloon]. It's a nice story about a lonely boy who finds a red balloon and becomes close friends."

To all artists and related professionals, whether you are

attending the conventions or not, have a "hot" summer. Maybe we will see you around town at the beach, art gallery, or at Anime Expo or Comic-Con International.

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