

Your Guide to AM²

The newest comics convention in the Southland

By **Kat Avila** | Published on LatinoLA: June 20, 2011



Forget Comic-Con International in San Diego ... it's sold-out! The 20th Anime Expo (AX) at the L.A. Convention Center? Nah, the site isn't as fun as the Disneyland area, which is where the competing twin convention AM² (pronounced "A-M-squared") is being held over the same July 4th weekend at the Anaheim Convention Center.

A sizable portion of the AM² staff used to work for AX, so it's not terribly surprising that bad boy AM² is not only using the same date but the same site AX was most strongly associated with before it moon-walked to L.A.

To lure you to the doors of this newcomer convention, AM² organizers have slapped "IT'S FREE!" stickers on entry to the convention, the popular Exhibit Hall, live programming rooms and workshops, video rooms, and many other events. This is ideal for first-timers and the curious. But if you want to trim off time waiting in lines and improve your chances of getting into events with limited seating, it's best to buy a "passport." (If Comic-Con had had a similar pass, I'd still be going; CC stopped being fun when I realized I was paying a sucker fee to wait in long lines for events only to be turned away because they were filled to capacity.)

Anaheim's AM² 3-day passport costs \$50 and will be cash-only onsite. L.A.'s AX has 4-day passes at \$75 for adults and \$35 for children ages 6-12. Anaheim's AM² passport gives you access to exclusive but highly anticipated events such as "Meet the Guests" and the cosplay showcases. With the passport comes a substantial discount to Disneyland, as well as dining and shopping discounts at nearby establishments during the course of the convention.

If you're looking for a different flavor of clothing fashion, music, and comics, AM² is guesting in H. Naoto's fashion line and music band Sixh. (name is spelled with a period) who hang up ghost-kei (gothic + host/ess club look = ghost). It's a flamboyant mixed-gender look that would scare you to the border, but then you'd come back for a second peek. Meanwhile, character brand and comic creator Gashicon of Hangry & Angry (also the name of a related musical duo) will sullenly meow for gro-kawa (grotesque + cute = gro-kawa).

Musical guests at AM² are cute-girls-with-guitars SCANDAL, GothLoli cellist Kanon Wakeshima (who did the closing theme for the TV anime of Matsuri Hino's "Vampire Knight"), kanon x kanon (Wakeshima joined by An Cafe's bassist Kanon), and wild visual-kei bands heidi. (pronounced "haiji" and spelled with a period) and Sadie.

More conventional guests are animation directors Akihiko Yamashita (Hayao Miyazaki's "Howl's Moving Castle"), Sunao Katabuchi ("Mai Mai Miracle"), and Miho Shimogasa ("Sailor Moon"). Masao Maruyama, co-founder of animation studio Madhouse, will also be around.

AM² promises to be a fun, creative, and unique way to celebrate the July 4th weekend. But so is AX. What it will get down to is how much money you have to burn, how far you want to drive, and which convention has the guests you want to see. If you're cruising to either AM² or AX or both, why don't you leave a comment after this article and explain your choice. If you're going to be in Artist Alley at AM², give a holler so we can tag you. Happy July 4th!

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