

WonderCon Anaheim 2013: Comic Artist's Mecca and Haven

Strong creator-oriented programming for those who want to join the industry, do self-publishing, or pick up tricks of the trade

By **Kat Avila** | Published on LatinoLA: April 1, 2013



A mecca and haven for comic artists, cosplayers, and related creators and fans is the comic convention. It is a place to network and find something to add to one's wall of inspiration. Because of the impact of digital publishing and social media, the convention is also a place for gathering information on changing comic formats and marketing trends.

Comic conventions are not all alike. If I attend an anime convention, I see a very different demographic represented among the professionals. It goes beyond ethnicity but which comic culture is more supportive of what interests women. At superhero-dominated conventions, female artists are often tokens, mutants, or caterers to men's interests. At anime conventions, female creators are the norm since you have a large female consumer base.

That said, I enjoy a convention such as [WonderCon Anaheim](#), March 29-31, because of strong creator-oriented programming for those who want to join the industry, do self-publishing, or pick up some tricks of the trade. WonderCon's home is San Francisco, but for 2012 and 2013 the convention moved to Anaheim Convention Center (ACC) due to their usual venue being unavailable. Recent improvements to ACC, which included the conversion of a street between hotels to a walkway, supported cosplayer photo opps and small gatherings.

This year is the 75th anniversary of Superman. The official WonderCon T-shirt featured the Man of Steel who, by the way, came to the U.S. without the proper papers and lived here without a green card or visa. (For more on this point, you can read Ted Anthony's 2011 feature article "Superman: American patriot, illegal immigrant or both?")

At Friday's Latino comics roundtable session, moderator Ricardo Padilla said of bicultural influences, "It creates something totally original, totally different...totally American." Participants were Javier Hernandez ([El Muerto](#)), Jose Cabrera ([Crying Macho Man](#)), Grasiela Rodriguez ([Lunatic Fringe](#)), and Rafael Navarro ([Sonambulo](#)). Cabrera summarized the Latino melting pot well when he said, "Everyone's got their story."

The lone female panelist Rodriguez did not grow up with comics. Art was "looked down on as not a real job." "I learned not to start worrying about what people like," she said. For her, romance is an important element in her art.

Padilla plugged the [3rd annual Latino Comics Expo](#), which will be in San Francisco, June 1-2, 2013, at the Cartoon Art Museum. Padilla and Hernandez are co-founders of the expo, "a unique opportunity for Latino artists to come together and help each other." The event claims to be the largest gathering of Latino comic artists and comic books in the nation. "Latino Comics Expo is a truly AMERICAN thing... We use our culture; we DON'T use our culture," Padilla reminded the audience.

Later in the afternoon, the hardworking Javier Hernandez presented his popular "Let's Make Comics" workshop for children. The children's suggestions and his humorous one-liners kept the presentation entertaining for the parents. The children created a character design sheet

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with Lollipop Kid and his friend Cupcat whose body was a cupcake. After completing that, the children (and some of us adults) created a four-panel comic with an establishing shot, close-up, suspense-building shot, and resolution.

At panels and workshops throughout the weekend, budding comic artists would hear things like, "Draw something every day. You have to get used to working every day" and "Any review is a good review - even when it's bad."

However, WonderCon still had plenty to offer even if you were not a comic artist. Suspense thriller writer and SoCal resident Dean Koontz made a Saturday appearance to share comical anecdotes about what it is like to be on a promotional book tour. For instance, you never get to eat a proper dinner is what I learned. Complimentary paperbacks of ODD THOMAS were given away to all attendees, part of the support being given the movie release of the same name this spring.

Which reminds me of BMI and White Bear's panel "The Music That Makes You Scream" featuring panelists Tyler Bates, Anton Sanko, Frederik Wiedmann, and Dino Meneghin. Next time you watch a horror flick put it on mute, and you will discover how much of the suspense and fear in the movie is dependent on the sound effects and soundtrack. Also, ever noticed how much comedy good horror flicks have?

Among the books I picked up in the Exhibit Hall was Eric Gonzalez and Erich Haeger's children's picture book ROSITA Y CONCHITA: A rhyming storybook in English and Spanish (<http://muertoons.blogspot.com/>). It takes place on El Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead). Haeger signed my copy with a whimsical skull flourish.

Another exciting find was Timothy Bradstreet's MAXIMUM BLACK, an artbook of his early years with lots of powerful, gritty pen-and-ink drawings. The foreword was written by Mexican film director Guillermo Del Toro. Bradstreet had worked with Del Toro as a conceptual artist and vampire designer on the movie BLADE 2. I returned to Bradstreet's booth later to get his autograph after the artist got back.

The swag that found me included a free T-shirt for donating blood during WonderCon's blood drive and an Archaia Entertainment title "MOUSE GUARD: Labyrinth and Other Stories." This book is their Free Comic Book Day (May 1, 2013) offering, so you might be able to get a copy at a local comic book store on that day.

See you at a comic convention around town!

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