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Comic-Con International, Part 2

by [Kat Avila](#)

Aside from special guest Yoshihiro Tatsumi whom I reported on in the September issue, there were a number of other interesting people I met and spoke to at **Comic-Con International** 2006 in San Diego. Tag along as I recreate my convention experience (if you can stand to hear yet another **Comic-Con** report).

Wednesday, July 19

My sister and I eat an early dinner at the Tin Fish Restaurant. I get a fish taco plate with fries and cole slaw. Later, as I wait in line to pick up my press pass, I check out the camera equipment of my peers. What a dedicated journalist I am — checking out not the guys, but their cameras!

At 6:15 p.m., the doors open to the Exhibit Hall for Preview Night. The hall is much more packed with people than I have seen in previous years. I stop by the **KOCCA** (Korean Culture & Content Agency) booth to see what Korean manhwa artists will be signing autographs. One of them is an artist whose work I don't care for; I try to keep a polite smile on my face when I hear his name mentioned.

At the **J-List** booth, they have a sign that asks, "Do you have Pocky?" (It's a popular Japanese snack.) Then I watch a convention goer being interviewed on camera by a hand puppet. While searching for great buys, I think to myself, "Some artists look cooler than their comics."

Everywhere I turn are video games. A perky attendant gives me a demonstration of a **Nintendo** DS Lite video game called **Spectrobes**.

Thursday, July 20

I wander over to the Portfolio Review Area to see who is reviewing and what types of artists they are looking for. Curiosity satisfied, I next attend the "Comics Editors on Comics Editing" panel to learn that you need a published comic to show how good a writer you are and that an 8- to 10-page comic is the perfect business card.

At the Art Show, I like how C. Blake Williams adapted what most of us identify as Ouija boards and turned them into beautiful works of art. Williams refers to his creations as "mystical talking spirit boards." Jonathan Gage had incredible woodcarved dragons on display; the minimum bid for "Dragons at Play" was \$3,500.

The art of conceptual designer Gary Montalbano caught my eye in the Exhibit Hall. When I ask for an interview, he says I can have it if I buy something. I smile weakly. Like many small press people, I don't get paid in cash for my writing. While I ponder my reply, he gives me the interview anyway. Montalbano works as a designer of animation and live action, and he has worked for all of the major studios. He started his own publishing company in 1990. Designing surrealism is what he does. It looks real, but you've never seen it before.

Yayoi Neko is an artist I first met at **Yaoi-Con** 2005. The sequel to her OEL yaoi manga **Incubus** should be out early next year, she says. This time around she was able to write more dialogue and to focus more on the art. She hopes to be able to produce at least 10 volumes of **Incubus** and adds she is developing an unrelated graphic novel for **Antarctic Press**.

At the **Udon Entertainment** booth, it is explained to me that a "raw edition" of a comic is what retailers receive for every 25 comics they buy and this special penciled format is hard to get unless you are a retailer. By purchasing a foil cover issue of **Street Fighter II** with cover art by Jo Chen, I not only get a raw edition of the first issue but it is

autographed right then and there by writer Ken Siu-Chong and penciler Alvin Lee.

Maximum PC has a "Gaming University" in the midst of the Exhibit Hall. I sit down to listen to an **Alienware** representative talk about gaming computers and dual graphics, dual core processors, dual hard drives, and MIMO technology. I try my best to understand what he's saying, and I get a free "Player" t-shirt for being an audience member.

Friday, July 21

"Bike ride! Pedicab!" becomes a familiar call as my sister and I walk the few blocks from our hotel to the San Diego Convention Center instead of taking the shuttle.

It's Friday, and I decide to let myself be awed by human inventiveness and creativity. But I'm not particularly pleased when a booth attendant cleverly blocks my picture-taking by moving in front of my camera without saying anything. If I'm annoying you, please tell me. I'm tired, not stupid. The press is not your enemy!

I attend "PlayStation: PSP University." You can surf the Web with a wireless connection using the PSP (PlayStation Portable console) browser. Game demos, of course, are the most popular download.

"The press is not your enemy!" I want to repeat when I'm told there is no press reservation list for the world premiere of *Afro Samurai*, though I had made a seat reservation in advance via e-mail at their request. So I go instead to "**Clickwheel: Comics for Your iPod**" where one of the panelists laughs, "We don't talk about books on this panel." Distributor **Clickwheel** brings comics to an audience that normally wouldn't have seen them in traditional locations: "Take 'em wherever you're going, read 'em whenever you want."

In the Exhibit Hall, I spot Elvis Presley. I also manage to find the **DrMaster Publications** booth to say hi to Marketing Director Shawn Sanders. He talks about how they signed video game designer Yasushi Suzuki to do an original manga

for them called **Purgatory Kabuki**. If the warrior graphic featured on the promotional flyer is any indication of the interior artwork, then "wow."

The area around the **Uglydoll** booth is so congested that I throw in the towel on my interview with the creators. Like one person said, "A lot of lines here." Later I read that online and on-site registration for the convention were closed that Friday for the first time in **Comic-Con**'s history because the center couldn't hold any more people.

Saturday, July 22

Saturday is scary. So many people! I attend spotlight panels on Kazuo Koike (writer for **Lone Wolf and Cub** and **Crying Freeman**), Yoshihiro Tatsumi ("grandfather of alternative manga"), and Yoshitaka Amano (artist for Neil Gaiman's **The Sandman: The Dream Hunters**). The **VIZ** panel hosts **Rurouni Kenshin** creator Nobuhiro Watsuki who says, "Drawing manga isn't something you do for yourself. I'm always thinking of how I can draw this so readers understand."

At the **Mythic Entertainment** booth, Marketing Manager Juli Cummins patiently demonstrates the subscription game **Warhammer Online** whose advantage over regular video games is its "persistent world." There is constant development, with conditions having changed when you log back on. She asks me if I want to try. I regrettably pass. Maybe next time.

Sunday, July 23

"I saw two hot men in kilts," says one passerby to her friend as I walk over to the spotlight panel on **Eragon** writer Christopher Paolini. He wouldn't say when the final book in the trilogy was coming out, but he did say it would have a beautiful emerald green dragon on the cover. (**Eragon** has a blue dragon and **Eldest** a red dragon.)

I visit with Andy Chang of **Metal Box Comics** in the Small Press Area. He does the all-ages comic **Northwood Meadows**, which deals with work, searching for and finding it. The animal characters, he says, just jump into reality.

They take things very simplistically. Bear will never find a job that he really wants, but he keeps trying. Chang says the comic is a way to introduce certain topics to children. He released issue no. 4 at this year's **Comic-Con**. I leave Chang's booth with a promotional "pumpkin duck" and a laminated clip-on staff badge featuring a picture of Phil DePenguin, a member of the Northwood Meadows ground crew.

I stop by the **mimoco** booth to speak with CEO Evan Blaustein. They make art flash drives or "mimobots" with monster exteriors. If you lose the drive cap, you lose half your character. They launched at **Comic-Con** last year with a square foot of table space at the **Circus Punks** booth and only one design. This year **mimoco** has its own booth with 25 designs, including two convention exclusives. When the technology becomes obsolete, you still have an art collectible, Blaustein points out.

Even as crowded as **Comic-Con International** was this year, I still found it very enjoyable — and at least I didn't lose my camera as I did at last year's convention.

LINKS TO VISIT

[Comic-Con International](#) — Official web site.



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