The 1970s were the formative years of Comic-Con. After finding its home in the El Cortez Hotel in downtown San Diego, the event continued to grow and prosper and build a national following.
MINI-CON
MARCH 21, 1970
The basement of the U.S. Grant Hotel, Downtown San Diego

Attendance: 100+

Officially known as "San Diego's Golden State Comic-Minicon" (the hyphen in Minicon comes and goes), this one-day event was held in March to raise funds for the big show in August, and was actually the first-ever West Coast comic convention. Most of those on the organizing committee were teenagers, with the major exceptions of Shel Dorf (a recent transplant from Detroit who had organized the Triple Fan Fair there) and bookstore owner Ken Krueger. Shel led a comic book fan/collector contingency that included Richard Alf (who fronted the funds for the first show), Mike Towry, Barry Alfonso, Bill Lund, and Bob Sourk. Krueger, who had been part of science fiction's first fandom, was mentor to a group of young fans (many from Crawford High School in San Diego) that included Greg Bear, Dave Clark, Roger Freedman, John Pound, Bill Richardson, and Scott Shaw (nicknamed "The Woodchucks" after the group in the Donald Duck comics).

FORREST J ACKERMAN

Comic-Con's first-ever guest was the popular editor of Famous Monsters of Filmland, the favorite movie magazine of many of the fans of that era. He paid his own way and returned to Comic-Con numerous times over the years.

MIKE ROYER

Best known as Jack Kirby's inker on his Fourth World books for DC Comics, Mike also worked on Tarzan and Star Wars with Russ Manning.
Called “San Diego’s Golden State Comic-Con” because organizers were afraid people wouldn’t know where San Diego was located, this first full-fledged Con contained all the classic Comic-Con elements: big-name guests from comics and SF/fantasy, programs, an Exhibit Hall (called the “Hucksters Room”) with collectible comics and movie memorabilia, an Art Show, a “Chalk Talk” (including Jack Kirby and editorial cartoonist Bob Stevens), a charity art auction, movie screenings (including Flash Gordon serials), and a Souvenir Book, which also featured the event’s program. In other words, it set the mold for just about every other convention to follow. Attendees included such pros as Mark Hanerfeld (from DC Comics), Mark Evanier, and William Stout. The chairman was Ken Krueger, aided and abetted by Richard Alf, “founder and advisor” Shel Dorf, John Hull, and Scott Shaw! Tickets cost $3.50 for all three days; hotel rooms cost $12.00 for singles, $15.00 for double occupancy.

- PROGRAM -

SATURDAY
9:00 Registration
11:00 Opening Address
11:30 Wayne "Angry Larry", "Fan-Fare" (with and without)
1:00 History of Comic-Con
3:00 Jack Kirby
5:00 Auction
5:30 Ray Bradbury
7:00 "Comics and Conceptual Art" (Open Bids)
9:00 "Angry Larry", "Fan-Fare"
SUNDAY
2:00 "The Golden Ring", Joe E. Rose
3:00 Lunch
5:00 Auction
7:00 "The Golden Ring", Joe E. Rose
9:00 Auction
11:00 Auction

OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP: Jack Kirby sketches in one of the first “Chalk Talks” featured at the convention.

BELOW: A crowd watching one of the programs listed on the Saturday and Sunday Program schedule.

THIS PAGE ABOVE AND BELOW: Kirby’s cover for the 1970 Souvenir Book. The digest-sized booklet also featured exclusive art by various artists, including the Fantastic Four by John Romita (below left), Scott Shaw’s R. Crumb tribute (below middle), and Wee Pals by Morrie Turner (below right).

RIGHT: Author Ray Bradbury in the first of many Comic-Con appearances until his death in 2012.

Ray Bradbury

Convinced to waive his usual appearance fee when told Comic-Con was a nonprofit organization, science fiction writer Ray Bradbury became a frequent guest at the show for the rest of his life.

Jack Kirby

Comic artist supreme Jack “King” Kirby jump-started Comic-Con by allowing Shel Dorf to visit his home with a group of young comics fans. Kirby, most famous for his work creating the Marvel Universe, would attend every Comic-Con (except for one) until his death in 1994.

A.E. Van Vogt

Alton Elton van Vogt was one of the most popular and influential authors of the Golden Age of science fiction. When he made his appearance at Comic-Con in 1970, his books included Star, Empire of the Atom, the Isher series, and the Null-A series.
Still called “San Diego’s Golden State Comic-Con, 1971 was the only time the event was held on a college campus. Out-of-town attendees slept in dorm rooms at Muir College, UCSD in La Jolla, at a rate of $3.50 for single rooms and $6.00 for doubles. The convention chair was Richard Alf. The attendee list featured future pros such as John Clark, Bruce Hamilton, Steve Leialoha, Fred Patten, and Bill Wray. In addition to the notable first-time guests listed on the next page, Forry Ackerman, Ray Bradbury, and Jack Kirby returned. Milt Gray and Bob Konikow showed two special reels of Warner Brothers cartoons, a popular presentation that was repeated in succeeding years and which evolved into the feature film Bugs Bunny, Superstar.

The Con continued to add new features: This year it was a juried Art Show, which continues to this day.

NOTABLE GUESTS

KIRK ALYN

The first (and only) actor to portray Superman, Clark Kent, and Blackhawk in the serials, Alyn was at Comic-Con in 1971 to promote his memoir, A Job for Superman! He would return in 1976.

LEIGH BRACKETT

Known as the “Queen of Space Opera,” Brackett was also a screenwriter, with movie credits as diverse as the 1946 adaptation of Raymond Chandler’s The Big Sleep, and the first draft of Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back.

The husband of writer Leigh Brackett, Hamilton was one of the great writers of the Golden Age of Science Fiction. His books included the Captain Future, Star Kings, and Star Wolf series. He also wrote comics and contributed many memorable Superman and Batman stories from the 1940s into the mid-1960s.
Now called “San Diego’s West Coast Comic-Con,” the show was held for the first time at the El Cortez Hotel in downtown San Diego, which would become one of the most-loved venues for the event in its 50-year history. The room rate was $13 single/$16 double. Convention memberships were $2.50/day and $5.00 for all three days. The convention co-chairs were Richard Alf and Mike Towry. Animator Bob Clampett (Bugs Bunny, The Beany and Cecil Show) came out of retirement to meet fans for the first time, and came back in subsequent years. The Souvenir Book was filled with drawings from such fan favorite artists as Carl Barks, C. C. Beck, Steve Ditko, Will Eisner, Frank Frazetta, Charles Schulz, Curt Swan, and Alex Toth.

ABOVE: Bob Clampett with volunteer Wendy All;
RIGHT: Clampett art in the Souvenir Book.

LEFT: The 1972 Comic-Con logo, now called “San Diego’s West Coast Comic-Con.”

BELOW LEFT: A 1970s badge.
BELOW RIGHT: Superman sketch by Curt Swan, the dean of Superman artists.

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ABOVE: Bob Clampett with volunteer Wendy All;
RIGHT: Clampett art in the Souvenir Book.
The show officially became “San Diego Comic-Con,” a name it would keep until 1995. The event expanded to four days; it moved from the El Cortez Hotel to the Sheraton Hotel on Harbor Island, near the airport, for one year, due to the Con committee getting a late start on planning. The chair was Bill Lund and co-chair was Steve Schanes. The guest list kept growing with appearances by comic book greats Neal Adams and Carmine Infantino; Bradbury, van Vogt, and Kirby all returned. The first celebrity brunch was held, in which attendees could sign up to be seated with their favorite guests.

The Souvenir Book expanded to 96 pages, including a Neal Adams cover, and featured Mark Evanier’s song parody, “Comic-Con Tonight!”

**OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP:** Neal Adams’ cover featured The Spectre and Deadman battling.

**MIDDLE LEFT:** Shel Dorf with guest June Foray. **RIGHT:** Jack Kirby, Neal Adams, Mike Friedrich, Bernie Lanský, and Ed Nizborski.

**BOTTOM:** A shot from the Exhibit Hall, circa 1973.

**RIGHT:** The guest list continued to grow as shown in this poster for the 1973 show’s “4 Fantastic Days!” Star Trek’s Walter Koenig was also on hand.

**BELOW:** Snoopy sends his regrets, but his “owner,” Charles Schulz, would be a guest at Comic-Con in 1974.

**BOTTOM:** A map of the Con’s facilities at the Sheraton Hotel on Harbor Island.
The show returned to the El Cortez Hotel for the rest of the decade. This was Comic-Con’s only six-day show, from Wednesday afternoon until the following Monday at noon. Bill Lund was Con chairman. It was the first year for the Masquerade, MC’d by June Foray, and for the Inkpot Awards banquet (cost for the meal: $7.50). The All-Human Orchestra made its first appearance, and actor Patrick Culliton performed The Houdini Mystery Show. The dealers’ room, with over 100 tables, had special midnight sales on Friday and Saturday. Bjo Trimble coordinated the Art Show, and films showed continuously in the Don Room. The Golden Voyage of Sinbad, with stop-motion special effects by fan-favorite Ray Harryhausen, had its world premiere at the Con. The Souvenir Book (the last of the digest-sized ones), featured a centerspread jam featuring an epic fight between the awesome powers of Broom Hilda and The Demon. Poor Snoopy and Linus are caught in the middle. Art by Russell Myers, Charles Schulz, and Jack Kirby.

**LEFT:** The 1974 poster listed all the amazing guests. By this time word had gotten out and more and more professionals of all kinds started coming to Comic-Con.

**BELOW, LEFT:** A Ralph Bakshi piece in the Souvenir Book.

**BELOW, RIGHT:** Peanuts creator Charles Schulz made his only Comic-Con appearance. He’s been seen here on stage sketching Linus.

**BOTTOM:** Legendary film director and writer Frank Capra made a rare appearance to discuss his many films (Mr. Deeds Goes to Town, It’s a Wonderful Life) with his fans.
The guest list for this year read like a who’s who of comics, with Will Eisner, Gil Kane, Stan Lee, Jerry Siegel, Barry Smith, and Jim Steranko, alongside some of the new generation of 1970s comic creators, Frank Brunner, Jim Starlin, and Steve Englehart. Ray Bradbury and Bob Clampett were back, along with the Comic-Con constant, Jack Kirby. Chuck Norris also made an appearance. The Con had grown so large, a “Part II” took place at the El Cortez on November 7–9. It was a three-day follow-up to the summer show. Producer/George Pal showed a sneak preview of Doc Savage: The Man of Bronze. This was the year Comic-Con incorporated as a nonprofit, with Shel Dorf elected as president and Richard Butner taking charge as executive vice president, a position he held for the next seven Cons.
San Diego Mayor Pete Wilson declared the week of Comic-Con “Comic Art Week” in the city. The guest list continued to be stellar, ranging from the rare appearance of illustrator extraordinaire Noel Sickles to underground comix legend Rick Griffin. Charlie Lippincott provided the world’s first preview of Star Wars, a year before the movie’s release. The Art Show featured a display of Milton Caniff originals. The Art Auction by the El Cortez Hotel pool was instigated by Jack Katz (The First Kingdom) and became a tradition; that year a Joe Shuster Superman sketch sold for $250 ($1,223 today). Cartoonist Russell Myers hosted the Inkpot Awards banquet. Tom French became the dealers’ room coordinator, a post he held until his death in 1997. Jackie Estrada joined the Comic-Con Committee and continues as a member to this day.

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Perhaps the most illustrious guest list ever. For the first time major Comic-Con events were videotaped and shown on the hotel’s closed-circuit TV. Fans donated blood to the very first Robert A. Heinlein Blood Drive. The Blood Drive continues to this day, and has become San Diego’s largest event, gathering 22,607 pints over the course of its 42-year history. Sergio Aragones MC’d the Inkpot Awards banquet, with jokes supplied by Mark Evanier, an early hint at Comic-Con’s traditional “Sergio and Mark Show” panel. Another panel that has stood the test of time: Scott Shaw!’s “Oddball Comics” event had its first-ever outing as “Esoteric Comics.” “The good Duck artist,” Carl Barks, was a first-time guest and was interviewed by famed dealer Bruce Hamilton, who would go on to publish his own line of Disney Comics and sell prints of Barks’ amazing duck paintings featuring Donald, his nephews, Huey, Dewey, and Louie, and Uncle Scrooge.

**THIS PAGE, TOP:** Russ Manning’s two signature characters, Tarzan and Magnus Robot Fighter, extoll the virtues of Comic-Con.

**MIDDLE:** 1977 badges by Carol Lay (left) and Jim Valentino, and a ticket.

**BELOW:** Science fiction greats Theodore Sturgeon (left) and Robert A. Heinlein, who lent his name to Comic-Con’s annual Blood Drive.

**THIS PAGE, TOP:** Alex Nino’s cover art graced the first (and only) Souvenir Book that was published at comic book size.

**MIDDLE LEFT:** Carl Barks, “The Good Duck Artist,” toiled in anonymity for many years before taking his rightful place as one of the great comic book writer-artists of all time, with his work on Disney’s Donald Duck and his own creation, Uncle Scrooge.

**RIGHT:** Two more 1977 badge designs, by Scott Shaw (top) and John Pound (bottom).

**BOTTOM:** This 1977 poster combined a whole slew of comic book and magazine characters, from Superman and The Shadow to Momma and Little Annie Fanny. It also announced a special “Making of Star Wars” panel.

**1977 COMIC-CON 8

**JULY 20–24**

El Cortez Hotel
Downtown San Diego

**Attendance:**
Over 4,000

**1977 COMIC-CON 8

**NOTABLE GUESTS**

**CARL BARKS**
Comic book writer-artist, Donald Duck, Uncle Scrooge

**C. C. BECK**
Comic book artist, Captain Marvel

**WALTER GIBSON**
Writer, The Shadow

**ROBERT A. HEINLEIN**
Science fiction author, Stranger in a Strange Land

**MICHAEL WM. KALUTA**
Comic book artist, The Shadow, Starstruck

**B. KLIBAN**
Cartoonist, Kliban’s Cats

**JOE KUBERT**
Comic book writer-artist, editor, Sgt. Rock, Hawkman, Tor

**HARVEY KURTZMAN**
EC Comics writer, artist, editor, MAD magazine creator

**TRINA ROBBINS**
Underground comix writer-artist, comics historian

**ROY THOMAS**
Comic book writer, editor, Avengers, Conan, Alter Ego

**CARL BARKS**
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Comic book writer, editor, Avengers, Conan, Alter Ego

**1977 COMIC-CON 8**
AUGUST 1–5
Convention and Performing Arts Center, Downtown

The 10th Comic-Con moved to downtown San Diego’s Convention and Performing Arts Center (CPAC), which became the Con’s home in the 1980s. The dealers’ room expanded from 200 to 260 tables and featured long-time exhibitors Bud Plant and Ron Turner (Last Gasp) among others. A huge crowd turned out for Craig Miller’s preview of *The Empire Strikes Back*. At the Inkpot Awards banquet, MC’d by Bill Rotsler, Jack Kirby received a special Hall of Fame award. This year also saw Artists’ Workshops take the stage, with such famous instructors as Bob Clampett, Kelly Freas, and Jim Steranko. After Comic-Con, $12,000 of the Con’s funds went missing, never to be found. Con volunteers Jackie Estrada and Dave Scroggy were able to solicit art contributions from generous professionals and conducted an auction through the *Comics Buyer’s Guide*, a popular comics fan newspaper of the time, which enabled Comic-Con 1980 (and beyond) to happen.

**ABOVE:** One of the most successful syndicated comic strip artists of all time, Mort Walker (*Beetle Bailey*, *Hi & Lois*) sketches Beetle and Sarge onstage.

**LEFT:** Although MAD magazine creator Harvey Kurtzman first appeared at Comic-Con in 1977, he sent in this self-portrait for the 1979 Souvenir Book.

**BOTTOM:** John Romita sketches Spider-Man as TV cameras and . . . Spider-Man (?) look on.

**OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP:** The 1979 Souvenir Book was styled after a tabloid newspaper and featured Mort Walker and Russ Manning comic strips on the cover.

**OPPOSITE PAGE, BOTTOM:** A detailed map of Comic-Con’s new home for the next decade, the Convention and Performing Arts Center (better known as CPAC), in the heart of downtown San Diego. Art by Jim Valentine.
As you’ve seen on the preceding 20 pages or so, Comic-Con was blessed with an amazing assortment of art by some of the top professionals in the comics field in the 1970s. Founder Sheldon Dorf had a huge affection for newspaper comic strips and got contributions from many of the top artists of the day, including Charles M. Schulz and Milton Caniff, as well as soon-to-be-pros who were Comic-Con volunteers and founding committee members. Here are some other pieces of art contributed to the Souvenir Books of the 1970s.

**THIS PAGE:** Joe Shuster’s dynamic Superman drawing from 1977.

**BELOW:** Jack Kirby’s Captain America and the Red Skull, inked by Dave Stevens.

**BELOW LEFT:** Bill Keane’s Family Circus son Billy has a question, Dad, in this 1974 drawing.

**Below:** Captain Marvel artist C.C. Beck’s “Sivana Special” from 1975.

**THIS PAGE:** Scott Shaw and John Pound team up for this drawing of Mister Miracle.

**Russ Manning’s Tarzan from 1970.**

**Will Eisner’s The Spirit from 1974.**
CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Bob Kline’s Spock from _Star Trek: The Animation Series_ in 1974; from 1975, Sergio and Alfred E. Neuman take a curtain call while DC’s _House of Mystery_/Secrets hosts look on; Scott Shaw’s Conan the Librarian smells something fishy in the library, in the mid ’70s; Snoopy and Woodstock head to Comic-Con in this drawing by Charles M. Schulz, probably from 1972; and Herb Trimpe’s one-shot wonder for Marvel Comics, _The Phantom Eagle_, showcased the artist’s love for aviation in this undated sketch.