The 2000s

THE MODERN AGE OF COMIC-CON

Comic-Con exploded in the 2000s, becoming a veritable pop culture juggernaut. While Comic-Con kept its focus as *the* “big tent” comics show, Hollywood movie studios and TV networks discovered the power of the Con to preview new films and shows.
Comic-Con celebrated the 50th anniversary of EC Comics by bringing in as many of the still-living artists as possible, along with Adele Kurtzman (widow of Harvey) and Anne Gaines (widow of Bill). The Autograph Area expanded and moved to the Sails Pavilion on the upper level. This was a big year for the Internet, with online companies taking space on the Exhibit Hall floor and participating in an “Online Showcase” programming track. Anime continued to explode, prompting an “Anime Showcase” programming track. Sunday became Kids’ Day, with lots of programming geared to all ages. Hollywood started to gear up with director Bryan Singer, who talked about X-Men, which opened the weekend of Comic-Con. But the biggie was New Line’s showing of a featurette on the making of the Lord of the Rings trilogy, complete with an unannounced appearance by Sir Ian McKellen, who stopped by on his way to New Zealand to begin filming.
The San Diego Convention Center opened a gigantic new expansion in 2001, doubling its space. The ground floor now included exhibitor space in Hall D (although use of the rest of the new portion—Halls E through H—was yet to come). This turned out to be the last year for Comic Book Expo and ProCon, with the former being folded into Comic-Con. The big addition for 2001 was Preview Night, an advance view of the Exhibit Hall on the night before the official opening of Comic-Con. Something else new this year was the CCI-IFF—Comic-Con’s Independent Film Festival—which launched as Film Fest Friday. One of the major programming highlights was author Michael Chabon (The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay, which took place in the comics world) interviewing comics icon Will Eisner. Hollywood programming stepped up, with studios presenting advance looks on such films as Tim Burton’s Planet of the Apes, From Hell, Jet Li’s The One, and John Carpenter’s Ghosts of Mars. But the must-see event was a first-time appearance by Sam Raimi to talk about Spider-Man. Because of the Masquerade’s popularity on Saturday night, tickets (issued free) were introduced for the event.

**NOTABLE GUESTS**

BRIAN MICHAEL BENDIS
Comic book writer
Daredevil, Ultimate Spider-Man

MICHAEL CHABON
Author, The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay

FRANK CHO
Comic book writer-artist,
Liberty Meadows

JULIE DOUCET
French-Canadian cartoonist,
Dirty Plotte

BRIAN & WENDY FROUD
British fantasy illustrators,
film designers,
Dark Crystal, Faeries

DAN SPIEGLE
Comic book artist,
Blackhawk, Crossfire

JHONEN VASQUEZ
Comic book writer-artist,
Johnny the Homicidal Maniac

Jeff Smith’s incredible Bone cover for the Souvenir Book.
Green Arrow was one of DC Comic’s big books for 2001, written by Kevin Smith with covers by Matt Wagner, who did this official T-shirt design.

**OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP:** Will Eisner with author Michael Chabon. Eisner was one of the influences on Chabon’s award-winning novel, The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay.

**MIDDLE ROW, LEFT:** Kevin Smith introduced his daughter, Harley Quinn Smith, to the world.

**RIGHT:** Batman and Robin kept Comic-Con safe for citizens of all ages.

**BOTTOM:** The programming rooms became more sophisticated in the 2000s in both appearance and technical equipment.
Attendance jumped an astounding 10,000 in one year. The Exhibit Hall expanded into Hall E in the new addition of the Convention Center. With the increased size, areas on the floor were set up to congregate specific kinds of exhibitors: the Independent Publishers’ Pavilion, Gold and Silver Age Pavilion, and Lord of the Rings Pavilion, plus areas for manga, toy manufacturers, game companies, major comics publishers, and alternative comics publishers. More programming rooms were added in the Convention Center, and Ballroom 20 in the new section of the Convention Center became home to the big media programs, the Eisner Awards, and the Masquerade. This was the last year the Inkpot Awards were given out at the Eisners, thus ending Scott Shaw’s popular run as MC for the Inkpots. The CCI-IFF expanded to all four days. The Hollywood floodgates truly burst open, with numerous big-name celebrities showing up both announced and unannounced: Arnold Schwarzenegger (Terminator 3), Ben Affleck (Daredevil), Ron Perlman (Hellboy), and Elijah Wood with fellow hobbits Dominic Monaghan and Billy Boyd (Lord of the Rings).
The Exhibit Hall expanded to the Convention Center’s Halls F and G, with Artists’ Alley and the Art Auction in Hall G, while the Art Show moved to the opposite side, in Hall A. The big Thursday night event was the Star Wars Fan Film Awards, hosted by Jeremy Bullock (“Boba Fett”). Major changes were made to the Eisner Awards ceremony: the Inkpot Awards were now given out at spotlight panels, and a newly designed Eisner trophy was introduced. Comic-Con received unprecedented coverage in the mainstream press, from publications such as Entertainment Weekly, Variety, and USA Today as well as from CNN, CNBC, Entertainment Tonight, and Access Hollywood.

Animation came to the forefront, with programs from Cartoon Network, Warner Bros., Nickelodeon, Bill Plympton, Disney, ASIFA, and the traditional Mark Evanier–presented “Cartoon Voices” panel. Hollywood was back again in even greater force with Kill Bill (Quentin Tarantino), Gothika (Halle Berry), American Splendid (Harvey Pekar), Lara Croft: Tomb Raider (Angelina Jolie), Van Helsing with Hugh Jackman and Kate Beckinsale (also on hand for Underworld), Spider-Man 2 (Alfred Molina), and the TV reboot of Battlestar Galactica, with Edward James Olmos, and Katee Sackhoff.

OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP LEFT: Stan Lee was an almost-constant presence at the show through the decade.

RIGHT: Halle Berry and Angelina Jolie represented a new level of star power at Comic-Con.

MIDDLE ROW:
LEFT: Simpsons creator Matt Groening signed at the Bongo Comics Booth.

MIDDLE ROW, RIGHT: The new design of the Eisner Awards was inspired by a page from Scott McCloud’s Understanding Comics, and suggested by Will Eisner himself.

BOTTOM: This Masquerade entry featuring characters from Miyazaki’s Spirited Away shows the level of craftsmanship and hardwork contestants were putting into their presentations.

NOTABLE GUESTS

BRIAN AZZARELLO
Comic book writer, creator, 100 Bullets

SAL BUSCEMA
Comic book artist, Incredible Hulk, Capt. America

PHILIPPE DUPUY & CHARLES BERBERIAN
French cartoonist team, Get A Life, Maybe Later

STEVE JACKSON
Game designer, publisher, Munchkins, Ogre, Car Wars

GEOFF JOHNS
Comic book writer JSA, Flash, Green Lantern

LARRY LIEBER
Comic book writer-artist, Rawhide Kid, Iron Man

KEVIN O’NEILL
Comic book artist, The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen

This page top and above: Alex Ross’s cover art for the Souvenir Book and the official T-shirt presented his work for a DC Comics anthology, The World’s Greatest Superheroes, which was a compilation of his series of graphic novels written by Paul Dini.

LEFT: Bart Simpson put in an appearance on the cover of the third Comic-Con Update magazine for 2003.
Attendance jumped by an unbelievable 25,000. This was the year Hall H was added to accommodate the huge crowds for the Hollywood programming, and exhibitor space expanded to 460,000 square feet, accommodating over 1,000 individual companies. The floor now included a Star Wars Pavilion and a special area for illustrators. Programming themes included the 75th anniversaries of Tintin, and the Tarzan, Buck Rogers, and Popeye comic strips; the 40th anniversary of Creepy; and the 10th anniversaries of Mike Mignola’s Hellboy and Batton Lash’s Supernatural Law.

Michael Chabon gave an impassioned speech asking for better comics for kids. Hollywood presentations continued to wow audiences, with sneak peeks from directors and casts of Constantine (Keanu Reeves), Batman Begins (Cillian Murphy), Sin City (Rosario Dawson), Fantastic Four (Jessica Alba, Michael Chiklis), Blade: Trinity (Jessica Biel, Ryan Reynolds), Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow (Jude Law, Giovanni Ribisi), The Incredibles (Brad Bird, Serenity (Josh Whedon and cast), and Shaun of the Dead (Simon Pegg and Edgar Wright). ABC screened the pilot for a new series called Lost and brought along stars Matthew Fox, Dominic Monaghan, and Evangeline Lilly.

This page, top: 2004 marked the 10th anniversary of Jack Kirby’s death, and Comic-Con commemorated the occasion with this cover, utilizing art pencilled by Kirby’s before his death and inked by artist Michael Thibodeaux. It featured a plethora of Kirby incredible characters over the years.

Middle: Superman by Jim Lee bursts his chains on the official T-shirt for 2004.

Bottom: Carrie Fisher signing in the Exhibit Hall.
Attendance passed the 100,000 mark. The Blood Drive expanded to three days (Friday through Sunday), and was held on the upper level of the Convention Center. The CCI-IFF became a juried film festival, with trophies and prizes awarded to the best films in each of the categories. The Con paid tribute to Will Eisner, who died in January, with several programs, including the showing of an award-winning documentary series on Eisner by Brazilian film director Marisa Furtado. Friday became a special day for programs geared toward comics retailers. The first recipients of the Bill Finger Award for Excellence in Comics Writing were Arnold Drake and Jerry Siegel. The Hollywood juggernaut continued, with advance looks at *A History of Violence* (with David Cronenberg), *V for Vendetta* (with Natalie Portman), *The Fountain* (with Darren Aronofsky and Rachel Weisz), *Superman Returns* (with Bryan Singer), *Aeon Flux* (with Charlize Theron), Peter Jackson’s *King Kong* (Jack Black, Naomi Watts), not to mention *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, *War of the Worlds*, *Zathura*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and TV shows *Battlestar Galactica*, *Bones*, *Veronica Mars*, *Supernatural*, and many more—plus a live performance by Tenacious D with King Kong’s Jack Black!
Attendance went up by nearly 20,000. Comic-Con had now become a must-cover event by just about every entertainment TV show, publication, website, and blog. Daytime programming filled 15 rooms, anime screenings occupied 3 rooms, and games had taken over the Mezzanine. Programs ranged from a conversation between Grant Morrison and Deepak Chopra to a reunion of lifelong friends Forry Ackerman, Ray Bradbury, and Ray Harryhausen. Hollywood-wise, fans were treated to inside info from directors and cast members of movies 300, Pan’s Labyrinth, Children of Men, Spider-Man 3, Snakes on a Plane, Ghost Rider, and Hot Fuzz, plus TV series Lost, Battlestar Galactica, Stargate, Veronica Mars, and others, including the pilot screening of Heroes.

A new movie studio called Marvel Studios held its first-ever Comic-Con panel and announced three new films: Captain America, Nick Fury, and Thor, in addition to the already announced Iron Man and Incredible Hulk. Comic-Con instituted the Icon Award, given to an individual or organization who has been instrumental in bringing comics and/or the popular arts to a wider audience. The first recipient was Frank Miller, and the award was given as part of the televised Screen Awards in October.

Opposite Page, Top Row: By 2006, the Exhibit Hall was maxed out in Halls A through G.
SECOND ROW LEFT: Manga great Yoshihiro Tatsumi at the Drawn & Quarterly booth.
RIGHT: Tobey Maguire made a Hall H appearance for Spider-Man 3.
THIRD ROW: Noted author and New Age speaker Deepak Chopra with comics writer Grant Morrison.
BOTTOM: Frank Miller became the first recipient of Comic-Con’s Icon Award, shown here accepting it from Jessica Alba and Ben Affleck on national TV in October.

THIS PAGE TOP: Comic-Con showed off its international side with the Lone Wolf and Cub Souvenir Book cover by Frank Miller, from the manga reprint series.
RIGHT: Adam Hughes’ iconic flag-bearing Superman was the official T-shirt art for 2006.
BOTTOM: The Events Guide cover poking gentle fun at the 75th anniversary of the beloved Universal Monsters with art by newcomer Chris Samnee.

By 2006, the Exhibit Hall was maxed out in Halls A through G. Manga great Yoshihiro Tatsumi at the Drawn & Quarterly booth. Tobey Maguire made a Hall H appearance for Spider-Man 3. Noted author and New Age speaker Deepak Chopra with comics writer Grant Morrison. Frank Miller became the first recipient of Comic-Con’s Icon Award, shown here accepting it from Jessica Alba and Ben Affleck on national TV in October.
2007

COMIC-CON 38

AUGUST 13–16
San Diego Convention Center

Attendance: 125,000

2007 once again set a record attendance, and for the first time four-day memberships were sold out, as were one-day memberships for Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. The Blood Drive expanded to all four days and was held at the Marriott, the new headquarters hotel. Many programs focused on graphic novels. Mark Evanier hosted a record 13 panels. Two new programming rooms were added in the new section of the Convention Center. Attendees had the opportunity to attend free performances of Shannon Wheeler’s Too Much Coffee Man opera at the Horton Grand Theatre. Star-studded programs offered glimpses at Batman: The Dark Knight, Cloverfield, Stardust, The Simpsons Movie, The Incredible Hulk, Star Trek, Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull, Get Smart, and WolF-e; plus TV shows Heroes, Jericho, Sarah Connor Chronicles, Chuck, Bionic Woman, and lots of animation, including the world premieres of Superman Doomsday. But the big buzz of the show came from Marvel Studios’ Iron Man preview featuring director Jon Favreau and actors Robert Downey Jr. and Gwyneth Paltrow. In October, Neil Gaiman was the latest Comic-Con Icon Award recipient.

OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP ROW: While Marvel Studios did their first Comic-Con panel in 2006, this was the first year they actually had something to show with Iron Man. (Left to right) Robert Downey Jr., director Jon Favreau, Gwyneth Paltrow, and Terrence Howard.

SECOND ROW: (Left to right) Lena Headey appeared for The Sarah Connor Chronicles; Leonard Nimoy was there for the new Star Trek movie, and cartoonist Alison Bechdel won the Eisner Award for Best Reality-Based Work for Fun Home.

THIRD ROW: The cast of Heroes.

BOTTOM ROW LEFT: Neil Gaiman with his 2007 Icon Award.

RIGHT: The very first WB bag, promoting the animated film Superman Doomsday, which created the very first WB bag piece of apparel worn by an attendee.

THIS PAGE TOP AND BOTTOM: Adam Hughes’ Star Wars 30th anniversary art was both the Souvenir Book cover and the official T-shirt.

2007

COMIC-CON 38

NOTABLE GUESTS

ALISON BECHDEL
Cartoonist, Fun Home, Dykes to Watch Out For

ALLEN BELLMAN
Golden Age comic book artist, Captain America

DARWYN COOKE
Comic book writer-artist, The New Frontier, Parker series

WARREN ELLIS
Comic book writer, Transmetropolitan, Planetary

LAURELL K. HAMILTON
Fantasy author, Anita Blake and Merry Gentry series

JOE JUSKO
Illustrator, Marvel Masterpieces cards

LILY RENEE PHILLIPS
Pioneering Golden Age comic artist
Several weeks before Comic-Con opened its doors, all memberships were completely sold out, the paradigm that exists to this day. The show was now utilizing every inch of space it could in the San Diego Convention Center, offering over 450 events, with about 60% of those devoted to comics-related programs. The Inkpot Awards got an overhaul with a nifty new trophy design by Rick Geary. Among the anniversaries celebrated were the 75th of Doc Savage, King Kong, and the American comic book; the 50th of Famous Monsters of Filmland and Legion of Super-Heroes; and the 25th of American Flagg. Comic-Con’s quarterly Update publication became the larger Comic-Con Magazine, featuring expanded content. Fans camped out in Hall H and Ballroom 20 for the duration of the show so they wouldn’t miss the stars of movies such as Watchmen, Star Trek, Twilight, The Day the Earth Stood Still, The Spirit, Race to Witch Mountain, Terminator Salvation, and TV show presentations for Heroes, True Blood, Dollhouse, Pushing Daisies, Chuck, Fringe, and The Sarah Connor Chronicles. In October, visionary film director and Star Wars creator George Lucas was the recipient of Comic-Con’s Icon Award.
Comic-Con ended the first decade of the new millennium with a sold-out event and little room to expand, a quandary it would find itself in for the foreseeable future. With Convention Center space maxed out, the Con added the new Hilton Bayfront Hotel’s Indigo Ballroom as a 2,000-seat programming venue. 2009 programming themes included the Con’s own 40th birthday. Comic-Con celebrated with a massive 208-page history book, *Comic-Con 40 Years of Artists, Writers, Fans and Friends!* published by Chronicle Books. Numerous Con luminaries were invited back as special guests and a series of panels (Comic-Con in the ’70s, ’80s, etc.) were on the programming schedule, along with a gala party. Sadly, the event lost two of its founding members: Shel Dorf and Ken Krueger both passed away in 2009. Legendary Japanese animation director Hayao Miyazaki made a rare appearance, alongside other movie programming such as *Iron Man 2*, *Twilight*, *New Moon*, *Sherlock Holmes*, *Zombieland*, *Knick-Ask*, and *Avatar*. TV was represented by *Bones*, *Chuck*, *Torchwood*, and the final panel for *Lost*, to name but a few. Stan Lee became the fourth person to receive Comic-Con’s Icon Award on national TV as part of the Scream Awards.
Almost from the very beginning, Comic-Con issued publications designed to update and inform its attendees about upcoming events. These started out as Progress Reports, mailed to everyone on the mailing list. Over the years they slowly evolved into magazines. The Progress Report became the Update, which became Comic-Con Magazine, and finally Comic-Con Annual. Original cover art, first by Comic-Con volunteers, many of whom—like John Pound, Scott Shaw!, and Dave Stevens—went on to become comic professionals, was the standard from the beginning. The publications became more and more sophisticated, finally settling into a digest-sized, quarterly Update in the 1990s, which soon graduated to comic-size. More and more content was added with Comic-Con Magazine, including articles about special programming themes and interviews with comic artists and TV producers and stars. In addition to being mailed out to everyone on the massive Comic-Con mailing list, the Update and Magazine issues were also distributed to comic shops nationwide. As the Internet became more prevalent, Comic-Con switched over to a regularly updated website, and reserved its publications to onsite books devoted to its events. In addition to these publications that were distributed by mail to our attendees, Comic-Con also published the Events Guide, the Anime Guide, and Comic-Con Today, the Onsite Newsletter, all of which are available for free to attendees, along with the book you’re reading right now, the Souvenir Book.
Onsite publications are essential at Comic-Con. The bottom half of this page shows the evolution of the Events Guide over the years, including the Quick Guide, which spun out from it, and the onsite newsletter, Comic-Con Today.