

## WONDERCON 2026 MASQUERADE

### CONTESTANT INFORMATION, RULES, AND ONLINE ENTRY FORM

This on-stage event will be on Saturday, March 28, starting at 8:30 p.m. in the Anaheim Convention Center's 2,000-seat North 200A ballroom. The show will run for two and one-half hours, and contestants will need to report **at least** 90 minutes before the show for costume prejudging and photography. A WonderCon badge valid for Saturday, completed entry form, and costume photos are required for participation. The optional contestant orientation on Saturday morning is highly recommended.

### MASQUERADE RULES

- (1) Costumes **must be of original construction or show significant modification of pre-existing materials**. No costumes are allowed that are purchased or otherwise obtained from a commercial or professional source. This is a show to celebrate creativity and craftsmanship, not shopping ability. It is expected that some costumes may include, as minor elements, some purchased items. If your entry utilizes many of these, check with the Masquerade Coordinator for approval. As a general rule, at least 75% of what you bring onto the stage must not have been purchased. You need not have created the costume all on your own, perhaps a friend or family member contributed, but it was not bought.
- (2) Competing costumes are not to be worn at the convention on Friday or Saturday prior to the show, so please keep your entry safe and out of sight until Saturday evening to surprise the judges and audience. Very briefly posing for photos outdoors near the fountains is allowed beforehand. You may of course wear your costume after the Masquerade and on Sunday!
- (3) Maximum time on stage: 1–2 people: 1 minute 30 seconds. 3–6 people: 2 minutes. 7 or more: 2 minutes 30 seconds. If you would like more time on stage, check with the coordinator beforehand. Show off your costume well and enjoy yourself, but remaining on stage too long can lessen the impact of your presentation, but don't be too quick to exit from the stage either!
- (4) Prohibited items and actions: Liquids, messy substances, smoke, fog, flame, or anything that may pose a danger or set off fire alarms are not allowed on stage. The unsheathing of bladed weapons is not allowed without clearance from the coordinator. No throwing items into the audience or touching the emcee. Nothing is allowed that would earn a movie an "R" rating. No nudity. Violating these rules can disqualify you and possibly result in a security escort off the premises.
- (5) Category definitions: If you are unsure if your costume is an original design or a re-creation, or perhaps you feel it belongs in both categories since it contains both original and copied design elements, we will simply let the judges at the event decide after they closely study it and your reference images.
  - Re-Creation: a costume copied from a pre-existing design, such as from a movie, TV show, comic book, video game, artwork, Broadway show, collectible statuette, toy, or from history.
  - Original Design: a design original to the maker/wearer. It may be inspired by a work of fantasy, science fiction, mythology, fan art, comic books and so on, but is not a copy of a pre-existing design.
  - Young Fan: ages 12 through 17. Young fan costumes also are in one of the two other categories.

(6) Eligibility of costumes: If your costume appeared in a previous Comic-Con International Masquerade, it may also compete here. Previous WonderCon Masquerade costumes may not compete again, nor may costumes already worn extensively at WonderCon this year or prior years. If your costume has been previously presented at conventions and fan events other than WonderCon or Comic-Con International, it is fully welcome here. All participants must have a WonderCon badge valid for Saturday.

(7) Contestants agree to report in with Masquerade staff in the backstage rooms no later than 7:00 p.m. Saturday (6:00 p.m. is best) and to allow video recording and photography of themselves in their costumes for judging and for non-profit promotional purposes, such as for display on our website.

(8) The Coordinator may reject an entry on the basis of inappropriate or unsafe behavior or content, or because of too many purchased items, or because the construction materials or techniques used do not meet the criteria of quality and content for the show, or because the event has reached its limit for entries.

(9) Children under age 12 are not accepted in the show and, for safety concerns, are not allowed on stage or in backstage areas. Entrants under age 18 must have a parent or guardian accompanying them backstage who will be asked to sign a permission and release form at the convention. Minors may not perform combat simulations on stage.

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**HOW TO ENTER:** Submit a completed entry form no later than March 9. Reserving a slot early is highly recommended as the number of entries are limited! You do NOT have to have your costume completed to submit an entry form early, but completion photos of the costume that you will be wearing will be required for review to ensure the criteria for sufficient original crafting, quality, and content are met. Until your photos are approved your entry is only tentatively accepted. You may email your costume photos to **masq@comic-con.org** the same day you submit your entry form or submit a form now and email photos at a later date, but no later than March 9. "Work in progress" photos are acceptable if only a small amount of work remains. Group entries must provide photos of all the costumes. When we fill up with contestants, we will create a waiting list to fill spots that arise from cancellations.

Upon arrival at WonderCon, contestants should sign in at the Masquerade desk in the convention center lobby to complete important show forms. If you don't sign in by 10:30 a.m. Saturday, we may assume you have canceled and release your spot to someone on the waiting list. Please return completed show forms by 12:00 noon on Saturday, either at the desk or at the contestant orientation. All contestants and their helpers will need Masquerade backstage passes, obtainable at the desk and at the orientation. Desk hours will be 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Friday and Saturday. Contestants may bring a personal helper backstage with them if needed, also with a Saturday badge required.

We strongly suggest attending the **Masquerade contestant orientation** from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon on Saturday in convention center room 201ABC, where we will discuss your technical needs and answer questions. You will not need your costume then, but if you wish you may bring it and any other show items and store them there until 6:00 p.m., when we all walk over to the ballroom. This practice room will contain a rehearsal stage available for practice all day, with similar dimensions to the Masquerade stage in the ballroom. You can also perform final assembly or repair on your costume in room 201ABC as well. We will have worktables, mirrors, repair supplies, plenty of chairs, and large bathrooms right next door.

Please do not wear your contest costume at the convention before it is seen in the Masquerade. Our audience of 2,000 come to spend the evening seeing something very special, not what they've already passed by in the halls. This will also protect your costume from wear or damage that can occur wearing it during the day, especially if the weather is warm and the crowds large. Posing for photos near the fountains is allowed beforehand, but only briefly. We have seen great costumes drop out due to damage from earlier in the day or the wearer's exhaustion, so keep yours out of sight until Saturday night so it will be a surprise for the audience and look perfect for the judges and all the photos.

**MUSIC:** If you are incorporating music (recommended), pre-recorded narration, or any other recorded sound with your presentation, email an MP3 or MP4 file to **masq@comic-con.org** by March 11 (earlier is better) to allow us time to review it for any needed changes. There will be NO microphones given to contestants, so any speech must be on your recording, or printed for the emcee to read. We pay ASCAP and BMI for music performance rights, so we can play any copyrighted music at the event without issues. If you want music but cannot decide what fits, let us know and we can provide some. If you prefer presenting your costume in dramatic silence, you of course may do so.

**STAGE INFORMATION:** The performance area of the stage will be 32' wide by 24' deep, elevated 30" from the floor. Going up to stage level will require climbing steps. Normal entry will be stage right (when you are facing the audience, your right is stage right), with exit on stage left. Groups may enter and exit from both sides. The lighting will darken between presentations but will not go completely black for safety reasons. Curtains at stage left and right will conceal the stair entry areas. The emcee will be at stage left, and the judges will be seated at the center-front of the audience. We will send you a diagram of the stage, backstage areas, and additional information after receiving your entry form to assist you in your planning. Special arrangements to accommodate those with disabilities or language issues are possible if we are informed of the specific needs in advance.

**IMPORTANT CHECK-IN TIME:** When arriving for the show that evening, backstage check-in time starts at 6:00 p.m., but **no later than 7:00 p.m.**, and you must be stage-ready no later than 7:15 p.m. to allow for reference photos and for the judges to take close-up looks of your work. If you do not check in by 7:00 p.m., we will have to assume something caused you to cancel and we will remove your entry because certain technical aspects are set in advance. In the backstage rooms we will have mirrors, worktables, private pipe-and-drape dressing rooms, and large bathrooms available for changing. Or you can dress elsewhere and then report backstage already in costume. If you dress away from the convention center, please try to cover your costume if you can and avoid lingering in public areas as you make your way to the ballroom. We will also have an emergency costume repair kit with various glues, glue guns, duct tape, fabric tape, sewing supplies, spirit gum, wire, staplers, drinking straws, and more, plus a member of our team to assist you with repairs if you need help.

Following your stage appearance you will be escorted to the photo area to pose for a few minutes for a group of photographers. You must remain in the backstage areas until the award presentations conclude since you may win an award and be called back on stage to receive the award and applause too!

**LARGE OR HEAVY ITEMS:** Experienced contestants and stage performers know the rule: "Surprise the audience but never surprise the backstage crew." We love elaborate costumes and presentations but inform us ahead of time and try to plan to transport items yourself or with your helpers. Our backstage crew are happy to assist you, but they are not intended to be your primary means of carrying heavy

items. You may bring your costume, props, and other items into convention center room 201ABC any time after 10:00 a.m. on Saturday to store them until 6:00 p.m. if you like.

**LOADING DOCK & MOBILITY INFORMATION:** The ballroom stage is located on the second floor. If the convention center stairs, escalators, or passenger elevator will not be adequate for you, a freight elevator can manage those giant robots, winged dragons, unwieldy set pieces and so on. Please notify us before the convention if you think you may need the loading dock elevator, or if you would be helped by a wheelchair lift to get up to the 30-inch high stage level.

**REFERENCE MATERIALS:** If your costume is a re-creation, we strongly suggest providing the judges with reference images of what it is based on, since not all of the judges may be familiar with what you are re-creating. You may submit reference materials to the Masquerade staff at WonderCon, and they can be returned afterwards. A large photo or two will usually suffice, please no USBs or tablets. Some contestants supply “build books,” an album or narrow binder showing a series of close-up photos and detailing the design and construction process, sometimes even attaching fabric samples. It is certainly not a requirement but, in addition to helping the judges, it can make for a fun keepsake of your entry. Some contestants have even used them to help obtain professional costuming jobs. One or two booklets are normally enough to bring; the judges pass them around.

**TROPHIES:** The panel of judges will select winners of impressive WonderCon trophies in categories of *Best In Show, Judges’ Choice, Best Re-Creation, Best Original Design, Best Workmanship, Most Humorous, Most Beautiful, and Best Young Fan*. Those winners will also receive complimentary 3-day attendee badges for WonderCon 2027. Note that complimentary badges may be used for 2028 instead and are transferable but may not be resold.

**SPONSORED AWARDS & PRIZES:** Some companies and organizations will be generously presenting their own awards to winners that their representatives will select:

- **Frank And Son Collectible Show**, of the City of Industry, California, “Your one-stop show for ALL your collectible needs,” will take a break from their large biweekly mini-cons to present to the entry their representatives deem to be the audience favorite by applause **\$500** in cash.

- **The Costumer’s Guild West** (CGW), southern California’s non-profit costuming fandom group, will select a winner to receive a one-year membership to CGW, as well as a full scholarship and a complimentary two-night hotel stay to their weekend costuming arts conference, **Costume College®**, held each July. Their 2026 dates are July 30 to August 3 (winner may choose 2026 or 2027) at the Sheraton Gateway Los Angeles Hotel. They will present their award to the entry they select as showing the most promise. Costume College promotes the art of costuming by providing educational lectures and workshops in every aspect of costuming!

- **San Diego Comic Convention**, organizer of WonderCon and Comic-Con, will once again present a special award given in memory of long-time Committee and Board Member Alan Campbell, who passed away and is sorely missed. Alan was a great fan of the Masquerade, often donating his own prizes. The Alan Campbell Award will be **\$500** cash, presented to the entry deemed the best re-creation of a comics or related media character or characters, as selected by one of the guest judges.

**We expect more organizations will join this awards list as the convention approaches.**



## **WONDERCON 2026 MASQUERADE ENTRY FORM**

**ENTRY DEADLINE: MARCH 9, 2026**

\_\_\_\_\_  
CONTESTANT NAME (OR REPRESENTATIVE OF GROUP ENTRY) TODAY'S DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
COSTUME ENTRY TITLE

\_\_\_\_\_  
MAILING ADDRESS

\_\_\_\_\_  
CITY

\_\_\_\_\_  
STATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
ZIP

COUNTRY \_\_\_\_\_ COMIC-CON MEMBER ID: \_\_\_\_\_

YOUR COSTUME CATEGORY IS (MARK WHICH APPLY): ORIGINAL DESIGN \_\_\_\_\_

RE-CREATION \_\_\_\_\_ LIST SOURCE \_\_\_\_\_

YOUNG FAN (12-17) \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER OF PERSONS IN YOUR GROUP: \_\_\_\_\_ LIST AGES OF ANY THAT ARE UNDER 18: \_\_\_\_\_

IF IT IS A GROUP, PLEASE LIST THE FIRST AND LAST NAMES OF ALL MEMBERS, OR USE THIS AREA FOR ANY  
ADDITIONAL DESCRIPTIONS AND COMMENTS YOU MAY HAVE:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Thanks for entering! Remember, this form only tentatively reserves a contestant spot; full confirmation will come after photos have passed an evaluation. Group entries must provide photos of all costumes. We will notify you if your entry is accepted, declined, or on the waiting list. If you do not receive confirmation of receiving your form within three days, feel free to email us at [masq@comic-con.org](mailto:masq@comic-con.org).

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